

December 2004

### Introduction

Welcome to the first edition of the Newsletter for the new Aimhigher South Yorkshire. This edition has a focus on the developments since 1 August 2004 with respect to the integration of the former Excellence Challenge and Partnerships for Progression programmes. The first section looks at the reasons behind the changes and the new governance structures. The second part looks at the new activities which the additional funding has made possible. Finally there is a brief look at what is happening regionally and nationally.

### Aimhigher 2004- 2006

The integration of Aimhigher brings together Aimhigher: Partnerships for Progression and Excellence Challenge, which have both sought to raise aspirations and achievement with the aim of progression to higher education. To date these two initiatives have been developed separately, but the Government's White Paper, *'The Future of Higher Education' (2003)*, signalled a firm commitment to bring the two initiatives together as 'Aimhigher'. The purpose of integration is to build on existing strengths and facilitate a coherent approach to delivery. It will also reduce the bureaucracy and confusion that multiple initiatives cause on the ground. The new Aimhigher will be outcome focused. It will seek to identify and spread approaches which evidence shows to be most effective and offer best value for money.

The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) on behalf of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) will manage the national programme. The management will take place through the National Partnership Board (NPB), which brings together the funders and other relevant parties. The period from 1 August 2004 to 31 March 2006 is one of transition when the activities, funding and governance structures of Aimhigher will be determined. To aid these processes the NPB has made over £2 million available to South Yorkshire.

A governance structure to oversee the integration processes and to determine the use of the additional funding has been established by the key stakeholders. The responsible body for Aimhigher in South Yorkshire is the Area Steering Group (ASG), whose membership is detailed below:

Clive Macdonald, (Chair)	Sheffield Hallam University
Director, Student Services Centre	
Maria Foye, EiB Co-ordinator	Barnsley LEA
Graham Haney, EiC Director	Doncaster LEA
Steve Walch, Principal School Improvement Officer	Rotherham LEA
Bernard Campbell, EiC Director	Sheffield LEA
Nick Berry, Regional Director	The Open University in Yorkshire
Paul White, Pro-Vice Chancellor	University of Sheffield
Andrew Vicars, Headteacher	Birley Community College, Sheffield
Headteacher, Rotherham	To be confirmed
Headteacher, Doncaster	To be confirmed
Headteacher, Barnsley	To be confirmed
Diane Talford, Director	Yorkshire Training Partnership
Joyce Thacker, Chief Executive	Connexions South Yorkshire
Joe West, Chair	South Yorkshire Further Education Consortium
<b>Advisory:</b>	
Tony Belmega, Director for Strategy	LSC South Yorkshire
Rhiannon Evans, Regional Adviser	Action on Access
Jed O'Neill, Director	Aimhigher South Yorkshire

## New Activities

The use of the additional funds has been guided by the following principles:

- the need to embed and increase the breadth of existing activity
- to ensure effectiveness and sustainability
- to further address educational disadvantage
- to support the consolidation and development of vocational pathways into higher education

Given the uncertainty surrounding post-2006 funding for Aimhigher, the decision was made to focus the new funds on creating capacity and ensuring sustainability of the work in the future. To this end, much of the funding is focused on Continuing Professional Development and influencing the key influencers on pupils, students and other learners. The development of the infrastructure of institutions and organisations to provide the support and pathways to progression for work-based and work-related learners figures heavily in the Integration Plan for South Yorkshire 2004-2006.

## New Projects

The following projects have been approved by the ASG and are now underway:

**Credit Unions and Higher Education:** The project aims to promote financial literacy and to remove the fear of debt as a barrier to HE with parents and young people. Using credit unions in Rotherham as a vehicle, the project will support access to HE progression through savings initiatives and the effective use of affordable credit, financial planning and active participation in managing personal finances. Contact: Jane Woodford, [rcuda@legend.co.uk](mailto:rcuda@legend.co.uk)

**Influencing the Influencers:** To raise the awareness, aspirations and motivation of parents and carers to the opportunities and progression routes available to young people through Higher Education. The project will pilot, through an action research model, innovative activities with targeted groups of parents/carers in a variety of locations to engage parents in the guidance process. The project is managed jointly by Sheffield Futures and Lifetime. Contacts: [helen.bale@sheffieldfutures.org.uk](mailto:helen.bale@sheffieldfutures.org.uk) [sue.holland@bdrcareers.com](mailto:sue.holland@bdrcareers.com)

**Building Pathways through vocational learning:** The main aims of the BP Project are to simplify and encourage progression, widen participation in HE through partnership planning and co-ordination by the area's universities and FE Colleges, develop where possible the use of academic credit as a common currency across the partnership, enable learners to move easily within and between institutions with clearly mapped routes and pathways and to maximize access and retention through information, guidance and support. Contact: Judy Smith, [j.a.smith@shu.ac.uk](mailto:j.a.smith@shu.ac.uk)

**Vocational International Project:** Aimhigher will fund the current vocational languages project in its promotion of a vocational approach to the teaching of European languages - supporting research into the current vocational languages pathways available at levels 3,4 and 5; identifying appropriate

progression routes from one level to the next, and helping to identify and cultivate business organisations that wish to actively support the project at all levels. There is also a young apprenticeship perspective and support for HE, in the development of an appropriate Foundation Degree linked to the Project. Contact: [david.else@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:david.else@sheffield.gov.uk)

**Apprentices into Higher Education:** The project will work with local employers and WBL providers to explore the potential for creating "compacts" which test a range of pathways to HE, including the use of e-Learning where appropriate, and will work with LSC South Yorkshire and others to encourage the development of mechanisms to monitor and reward progression from WBL provision to HE. The project will ensure that students making their career decisions at age 13/14 will be provided with information which makes them aware of the full range of progression options available to Apprentices, and thus raise the aspirations of those who might otherwise have seen WBL as a "second class route". The same will apply to 16-19 year-olds who have already entered WBL with negative perceptions about progression routes. Contact: [john.popham@syfec.ac.uk](mailto:john.popham@syfec.ac.uk)

**Open Horizons:** Will provide specifically tailored faster educational experiences in companies and in FE/HE institutions for young people in Key Stages 3 to 5. Contact: [paul.booker@openindustrytry.org.uk](mailto:paul.booker@openindustrytry.org.uk)

**Continuing Professional Development:** There are 3 main strands to this project. The first is to offer training and updating on developments in progression into HE, with emphasis on issues particularly relevant to the widening participation agenda, for senior and middle managers, Aimhigher Co-ordinators and appropriate Gifted and Talented Co-ordinators. More information about the other 2 strands, Aimhigher Associate Awards and Research Placements, is on the next page. Contact Jed O'Neill: [aimhigher.sy@shu.ac.uk](mailto:aimhigher.sy@shu.ac.uk)

**Careers Education and Guidance:** The activity aims to improve the capacity of schools to support Careers Education and Guidance and Individual Learning Planning processes, which in turn will improve support

for the career planning and progression of the Aim Higher target group. A programme of CEG training aimed at improving awareness amongst relevant school staff of the labour market, learning routes and the implications for curriculum planning will be delivered. The programme will include a user-friendly "Effective Signposting" course, equivalent to one day of training per participant, aimed at the wider guidance community; the delivery and development of accredited courses in Careers Education and Guidance, and the delivery of two one-day programmes aimed at tutors involved in developing effective Individual Learning Plans. The activity is jointly managed by Lifetime and Sheffield Futures. Contacts: [jacqui.jameson@bdrcareers.com](mailto:jacqui.jameson@bdrcareers.com) and [janet.martin@sheffieldfutures.org.uk](mailto:janet.martin@sheffieldfutures.org.uk)

**E-Support, information Project:** This is a feasibility study to examine the potential for the development and viability of an electronic support mechanism for the widening participation Y7-Y13 cohort. Contact: [j.ashmore@shu.ac.uk](mailto:j.ashmore@shu.ac.uk)

**Chemistry and Careers:** To raise awareness of opportunities in chemistry for young people, aged 14-19; to provide an opportunity for all 14-19 sectors of education to work collaboratively with a focus on progression and careers advice and guidance, and to involve and forge links with local employers. The project will produce an interactive DVD utilising case studies of employees and focusing on career opportunities in chemistry. Contact: [barry.morgan@rotherham.gov.uk](mailto:barry.morgan@rotherham.gov.uk)

## Aimhigher Associate Awards and Research Placements

Aimhigher South Yorkshire is establishing up to 4 Associate Awards throughout the period 1st January 2005 to 31st March 2006. Awards are valued at a maximum of £10,000 each and are designed to create opportunities for short-term, full or part-time, staff secondments to stakeholder organisations associated with widening participation into HE in South Yorkshire. The secondments are normally expected to be a minimum of 20 days. The purpose is to allow appropriate staff, working in collaboration with colleagues in partner organisations, to enhance their ability to make a significant contribution to the South Yorkshire widening participation agenda. Project outlines will need to clearly demonstrate how it is proposed to disseminate the outcomes of the secondment to interested parties.

The Research Placements are worth £1,000 and are for 5 days; 25 are available until 31 March 2006. The purpose is to allow appropriate staff to gain an insight into the culture and working practices in partner organisations, and to enhance their ability to work in closer collaboration and with a better understanding in developing the South Yorkshire widening participation agenda.

Applications are invited from staff in education institutions and related organisations in South Yorkshire. Priority will be given to applicants who demonstrate an understanding of and contribution to the emerging and agreed partnership priorities outlined in the Aimhigher South Yorkshire Integration Plan 2004-06 which can be viewed at <http://extra.shu.ac.uk/pathways/docs.htm> Details and forms are also available on this site.

Further details from Jed O'Neill, [aimhigher.sy@shu.ac.uk](mailto:aimhigher.sy@shu.ac.uk) or Tel: 0114 225 3749.

## National news

The National Partnership Board (NPB) has approved 8 nationally funded Aimhigher projects. Brief details are below. The South Yorkshire Chemistry project lead has already made contact with the national lead; and 6 schools from South Yorkshire are participating in the project to raise aspirations through football. Jonathan Higgins, the Sheffield LEA Aimhigher Co-ordinator, is the Yorkshire and Humberside representative on the national steering group for the football project.

### National Projects

#### **Chemistry: the next generation**

Contact: Professor Paul Cullis, University of Leicester, Tel: 0116 2522130, e-mail: [pmc@le.ac.uk](mailto:pmc@le.ac.uk)  
This project aims to develop materials and activities

to raise the aspirations of potential students to take up courses in chemical sciences.

#### ***Raising aspirations, achievement rates and participation in higher education of looked-after children and children in public care***

Contact: Tim Farthing, Tel: 0116 2707942, e-mail: [tim.farthing@citycluster.co.uk](mailto:tim.farthing@citycluster.co.uk)

This project will provide information, advice and guidance for children and their carers through local conventions and producing a video/DVD.

#### ***RAISE – Raising Aspirations Into Science and Engineering***

Contact: Colin Wilkinson Tel: 01642 384249, e-mail: [colin.wilkinson@tees.ac.uk](mailto:colin.wilkinson@tees.ac.uk)

This project will run activities such as summer schools, discovery days and awards events focused on science and engineering.

### **Higher Education Gateway for Gifted and Talented**

Contact: Ken Sloan, Tel: 024 765 74411, e-mail: [ken.sloan@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:ken.sloan@warwick.ac.uk)

The project aims to raise expectations among under-represented groups from England's top five per cent of gifted young people. It will provide a web portal to give national exposure to regional activities, as well as providing online study groups and a forum for staff.

### **Overcoming specific learning difficulties as a barrier to participation in HE**

Contact: Katherine Hewlett, Tel: 0207 911 5764, e-mail: [hewletk@wmin.ac.uk](mailto:hewletk@wmin.ac.uk)

The project aims to raise awareness of the issues surrounding pupils with specific learning difficulties, within schools and Aimhigher partnerships, and to deliver specific activities for such pupils.

Raising attainment, awareness and aspirations through football Contact: Rob Halsall, tel: 0161 247 1024, e-mail: [r.halsall@mmu.ac.uk](mailto:r.halsall@mmu.ac.uk)

The project aims to raise attainment and awareness among pupils through out-of-school 'catch-up' homework/coursework sessions. In addition, football coaching will be offered to pupils and parents/carers to encourage engagement with the scheme.

### **National Compact Scheme**

Contact: Ceri Nursaw, tel: 0113 343 4019, e-mail: [c.nursaw@adm.leeds.ac.uk](mailto:c.nursaw@adm.leeds.ac.uk)

This project will investigate the special admissions arrangements (including compacts and summer schools) which operate across the HE sector. Building on this, the project will seek to develop a collaborative scheme for these special admissions arrangements.

### **Aimhigher National Mentoring Scheme**

Contact: Professor Andrew Miller, Middlesex University, tel: 0208 4116846, e-mail: [a.miller@mdx.ac.uk](mailto:a.miller@mdx.ac.uk)

This project would bring together and develop three existing mentoring schemes, which include both face-to-face and online mentoring.

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## **Regional News**

Aimhigher has a regional dimension in addition to the Area and National dimensions already referred to. At regional level (Yorkshire and Humberside) there is a **Regional Partnership Board (RPB)** which acts on behalf of the National Partnership Board to scrutinise and monitor Area Plans. The funding bodies and regional organisations, such as Yorkshire Forward, make up the membership of the RPB. The **Regional Forum** is made up mainly of ASG Chairs and discusses possible duplication of effort and strategies for common development across areas. In Yorkshire and Humberside it is proposed to have an operational group, the **Regional Implementation Group**, which will probably comprise Aimhigher Area Co-ordinators, the Regional Strategy Manager and representative LEA Aimhigher Co-ordinators. There may also be a **Regional Advisory Group** with a broad spectrum of representatives to advise the other regional bodies.

This is a quite complex picture and the challenge will be to ensure that the practitioner voice is not lost.

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## **Forthcoming Events**

Yorkshire Universities Annual Conference, 'Developing Knowledge for Regional Growth', 27-28 January 2005 in Leeds. See [www.yorkshireuniversities.ac.uk](http://www.yorkshireuniversities.ac.uk) for details.

Action on Access seminar, 'Globalisation and Widening Participation', 20 January 2005 in London. See [www.actiononaccess.org/events/events.html](http://www.actiononaccess.org/events/events.html) for details.

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