

June 2005

Aimhigher - enhancing progression from vocational programmes into HE

This edition of the newsletter has a focus on some of the work based and work related learning activities which Aimhigher South Yorkshire is supporting. If participation in higher education amongst currently under-represented groups is to increase then it is vital that HE responds to the needs of vocational learners, for many of these learners come from just such under-represented groups. At the moment, almost 90% of those with 2 A levels enter HE, whilst the figure for those with vocational qualifications is only 45%. There is still much work to be done to ensure parity of esteem and recognition for vocational learning routes, both amongst learners themselves and with those who act as 'gatekeepers' to progression opportunities.

In addition to the featured projects, Aimhigher supports the Building Pathways project which focuses on vocational pathways into HE (see <http://extra.shu.ac.uk/pathways/> for further information); a vocational 'masterclass' programme organised by BESY; the Rotherham vocational FE/HE summer programme; the taster educational experiences in companies and in FE/HE institutions organised by Open Industry, and the Professions Progression Partnership which focuses on law, architecture and accountancy and is organised by the University of Sheffield and Sheffield Hallam University.

Update

Since the last newsletter Aimhigher has organised a successful series of Continuing Professional Development events for staff engaged in widening participation activities across South Yorkshire. A one day conference on 'Widening participation – what's it all about?' attracted 50 participants. There was a seminar for 20 people on the new admissions tests in Law and Biomedical sciences which some universities are now using to differentiate between very able candidates. The development of staff skills featured in a one day workshop on Project Management. Finally, there was a very successful one day event for 80 people on Disability and HE.

As we move into a new phase of Aimhigher from 2006, it is important that we are in a position to proceed with those projects and activities which have an impact on aspirations, motivation, attainment and eventual progression to HE. To this end, we have commissioned independent evaluations of some of the activities taking place in South Yorkshire. The evaluations focus on projects, participants and institutions. We would like to express our thanks to those who have agreed to be a part of the evaluation programme.

Jed O'Neill, Director of Aimhigher South Yorkshire

Aimhigher - The Future

This edition of the Newsletter is published at an interesting time for those of us who have involvement with Aimhigher. We are all looking forward to seeing the outcome of the consultation about the future of Aimhigher into 2006-08! The consultation document from HEFCE, *Aimhigher: funding for 2006-08 and future of the programme*, did set out some 'non-negotiables'. For example, the level of funding available is 'fixed', as is the new context for the funding of schools. However, there are still significant things to be discussed and decided upon. There will continue to be a considerable amount of local discretion about how we make best use of the resources available within Aimhigher.

The sums of money to support Aimhigher, although less than currently available, are still substantial. The opportunities for Aimhigher to

make real contributions to raising aspirations and achievement towards accessing higher education study and lifelong learning will still be there in 2006-08. There will also be plenty of opportunity for us to build upon and consolidate the excellent work which is now underway across South Yorkshire.

The Area Steering Group for Aimhigher South Yorkshire has been rightly impressed by the wide range of achievements to date. The commitment and imagination that many people have demonstrated is outstanding. On behalf of the Area Steering Group may I thank you for those efforts, and hope we will be able to provide a framework of support which enables you all to continue to bring real benefits to learners in South Yorkshire.

Clive Macdonald
Chair of the Area Steering Group

Apprentices Aimhigher

The South Yorkshire Further Education Consortium's (SYFEC) 'Apprentices Aim Higher' Project intends to raise awareness that Work Based Learning and Apprenticeships can be a route into Higher Education.

We aim to do this through 3 main strands:

- Collate information about all the vocational progression routes into HE, the foundation degrees available and the "bridging" provision available within the sub-region.
- Work in partnership to develop and distribute marketing materials regarding the vocational progression routes into HE and foundation degrees. These materials will be disseminated to all schools and Further Education Colleges within South Yorkshire, as well as to careers advisors and employer representatives.
- Work with 100 work based learning students and 50 local employers to develop new initiatives relating to new progression routes into HE and the development of new foundation degrees.

Through research, it was established that there are major gaps in the information available to young people, parents and employers on the vocational progression routes into HE for apprentices. To help bridge these gaps, together with organisations such as Connexions, the LSC and other Aimhigher projects, we are:

- Currently producing leaflets and putting together a website aimed at students, employers and parents giving details of the existing progression pathways from apprenticeship to HE.
- Carrying out research on the views and perceptions held by apprentices and employers regarding HE and whether they believe it is a suitable route to them. We are aware of other existing initiatives which aim to raise awareness on opportunities for work based learning participants, for example the Building Pathways Project, Lifetime Careers, Sheffield Futures and will be working with them in partnership to avoid duplication and to add value to the work they have already carried out.

In collaboration with other SYFEC projects, we are currently meeting with employers within the sub-region, to help us meet the aims and objectives of the project. For example, we are exploring opportunities to bring employers together with Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) to develop new progression routes for apprentices, particularly Foundation Degrees.

**For further information, please contact
Deborah Siddall, SYFEC**
deborah.siddall@syfec.ac.uk

Careers in Chemistry

The University of Sheffield and Rotherham LEA are working in partnership to develop exciting and innovative resources focusing on progression to HE and career pathways in chemistry.

The project has been running over the past year and key milestones have included: a series of 'Royal Institute Christmas lectures' style workshops across the borough to support an inter-school competition in colour chemistry; a fantastic resource pack entitled, 'Reactive 8', with interactive activities and information on various aspects of colour chemistry. The pack has been distributed to all Rotherham schools and colleges, and will soon be available on the virtual learning environment of the South Yorkshire E-Learning project www.e-sy.info

Filming is taking place at local and national organisations, such as Trebor Bassetts and Avecia, to produce a DVD focusing on the activities of the organisation, case studies of the career pathways of employees and teaching and learning resources.

The project has initially focused on colour chemistry but there are plans to develop other aspects of the chemistry curriculum at key stage 4 and 5.

To date, the project has certainly enthused and motivated students, provided a useful and valuable resource on colour chemistry and has support from the Royal Society of Chemistry.

**For further information, please contact
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Vocational Teacher Placements

The aim is to focus on the economic growth sector organisations and to produce teaching and learning resources which will enhance courses in key stage 4 and 5 and facilitate transition from school to college. All four South Yorkshire LEAs and schools and colleges are working in collaboration on this project.

In Rotherham, the focus has been on the Creative and Digital sector and two local businesses in Rotherham have been identified and have agreed to take part in the project – an ICT company in Dinnington (Specialist-IT-Services), specialising in Radio Technology and ICT solutions, and the Music Factory based at Parkgate in Rotherham, specialising in the music industry and event planning. Two members of staff—one from school and another from college are in the process of finalising a work placement. The outcome of the placement will be teaching and learning resources, targeted around a specific curriculum area at pre or post-16.

The work in Doncaster has centred on the Racecourse as a business. Materials are currently being produced along the lines of the Times 100 series. Background materials and assignments will be produced which will be relevant to GCSE, AVCE and BTEC courses.

The two members of staff involved have visited the Racecourse and more activity is planned around Leger week.

Sheffield and Barnsley are focusing on the health and social care sector for their work. One of the Barnsley teachers will be on placement in a hospital whilst the other will work with a Primary Care Trust. The Sheffield staff have examined HSC resources and developed materials for the Applied GCSE. Care Ambassadors will visit all secondary schools and a CD-Rom is under development.

It is hoped that, with each LEA focusing on a different sector, a range of valuable teaching and learning resources can be made available to all schools and colleges across South Yorkshire. Dissemination of the work will also take place across South Yorkshire.

Particularly encouraging with these projects is the way that other resources have been drawn in, such as Objective 1 funding, in order to sustain the initial Aimhigher input.

Jed O'Neill, Aimhigher South Yorkshire
Barrie Morgan, Rotherham LEA

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Vocational International Project (Sheffield)

VIPS is a vocationally based project that seeks to promote a vocational approach to the traditional European languages delivered in schools (principally French/German/Spanish) and which have previously been accredited at GCSE. The project is delivered within a business perspective and participating students are accredited at NVQ level 1, with the opportunity for the more able students to progress through to level 2. The opportunity for young people to develop their linguistic skills, within the workplace as well as the classroom, is an effective approach to raising aspirations by highlighting potential career pathways and the benefits to be gained by progression to HE.

VIPS commenced in September 2003, operating in 6 schools with 154 Y10 students participating. The project is set to expand to 15 schools and 320 Y10 students from September 2004, with the original cohort progressing through as Y11 students. The level of demand is such that we anticipate most of Sheffield's secondary sector coming on board within the next 3 years, with a probable complement of around 500 students per year. As such, VIPS represents a major flagship project within Sheffield's 14-19 Learning for Life initiative.

There are two principle factors underpinning the popularity of the project:

- The design of the course, with its vocational emphasis, is more motivating to many students than the traditional GCSE approach.
- Schools perceive an opportunity to ameliorate the decline in languages that has occurred since the decision to remove the delivery of a foreign language as a mandatory element on the key stage 4 National Curriculum.

Sheffield LEA, working with its partner to the project, the Regional Languages Network, is now anxious to further promote a 14-19 perspective to the work by ensuring that a range of progression routes of an appropriate quality are in place to take the initiative forward. The partnership sees the need to establish routes at both FE and HE to allow for progression to levels 3,4 and 5.

Aimhigher is supporting the development of the project.

For further information, please contact—David Else, Sheffield LEA david.else@sheffield.gov.uk

Widening Employability: employment options after Higher Education

The Careers Services of Sheffield Hallam University and the University of Sheffield are working on an exciting project funded by Aimhigher South Yorkshire.

The project is investigating the actual and potential employment opportunities available to recent graduates. The project will create an online information databank, a directory of all South Yorkshire employers who recruit graduates and publications aimed at potential applicants, their parents and carers and employers. The aim is to provide clear information on graduate employment to inform and enhance the decision making process of potential applicants.

The web based databank of information will include the *actual* and *potential* local, regional and national employment options after study at one of the region's higher education institutions. This will include a database of searchable case studies; a newsroom area which will feature relevant articles; detailed information on subject area and course level obtained from the annual Destination of Leavers Surveys, a comprehensive section on what employers are looking for and how skills can be developed to improve employability.

The online employer directory will provide comprehensive information on the range of graduate level employment opportunities in South Yorkshire; identify any key issues that graduates may face when seeking employment and provide detailed information on employers in South Yorkshire.

During the planning stages, the project team have been networking with various other Aimhigher practitioners and establishing links with colleagues with whom we will be working. We are now in the process of deciding on our branding in order to start putting the information database in place and establishing a web presence. Questionnaires for the case studies will be sent out soon, as will letters to employers asking for information that we require to populate the employer directory.

**For further information, please contact
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Aimhigher Associate Awards and Research Placements

These opportunities, publicised in our last two newsletters, are still available as part of the Continuing Professional Development programme for Aimhigher South Yorkshire. There are 4 Associate Awards throughout the period 1st January 2005 to 31st March 2006, at a maximum of £10,000 each, secondments for a minimum of 20 days. The Research Placements are worth £1,000 and are for 5 days; 25 are available until 31 March 2006. Details and forms can be viewed at <http://extra.shu.ac.uk/pathways/docs.htm>

Forthcoming Events

Unlocking Potential—Attainment and Progression into HE, 9.00am-1.00pm, 12 July, The Source at Meadowhall, Sheffield. Dissemination of the work by Lifetime and Sheffield Futures on developing innovative ways of working with parents, carers, teachers and guidance workers to ensure that young people receive impartial, timely and accurate information about their future options and to demonstrate that education progression is worthwhile.

For further details or to book a place - contact Kim Heeramun at Diva Creative Ltd
kim@divacreative.com Tel : 0114 221 0378

Careers Seminar in IT on the morning of 12 October at Sheffield College Square Mile Training, Hillsborough Barracks, Sheffield—organised by The Open University in Yorkshire on behalf of the Building Pathways Project and the South Yorkshire CoVE for IT. Further details will be available later.

Enterprise Week, 14-20 November. Further details from <http://www.starttalkingideas.org/enterpriseweek/>

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