

November 2005

The future of Aimhigher 2006-2008

Introduction

Raising aspirations, motivation and awareness of higher education have been key elements of Aimhigher since it started, as Excellence Challenge, in 2001. Alongside these themes has gone that of raising attainment. This edition of the newsletter features a selection of activities, supported by Aimhigher South Yorkshire, which have had these objectives as their focus. All of these projects are fine examples of the partnership working between schools, colleges and HEIs that has evolved over the past few years.

'Evolution' is the key word here - things continue to change (see below). One area for further development is that of coherence and cumulative impact of the activities on offer. We need to ensure that there is no duplication of activities across year groups, and that there is progressive engagement between the various sectors that makes sense to the learners we are trying to influence.

Jed O'Neill, Director of Aimhigher South Yorkshire

Latest news

The latest news from the Aimhigher National Partnership Board (NPB) concerns the development of the programme for 2006-08. The major news is that there will be a reduction in funding for all of the Aimhigher programmes in South Yorkshire as set out below, and that responsibility for allocating the total funds available will rest with the Area Steering Group (ASG), rather than with LEA bodies such as Excellence in Cities boards.

2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
£4,658,000	£3,917,624	£3,719,277

The NPB has decided that Area Steering Groups will make decisions on the distribution of funds between the area, LEAs and colleges. Indeed, the ASG is free to decide which individual institutions and organisations will continue to receive Aimhigher funding and on the purposes to which it will be put. This means that schools, colleges, HEIs and other partners cannot automatically expect their Aimhigher allocations to be the same for 06-07 and 07-08 as they were in 05-06.

However, evidence which is emerging from Aimhigher evaluations, locally and nationally, will enable us to invest the resource in activities which work. Indeed, it may be possible to intensify investment in known good practice. Inevitably, this will also mean that some of the current activities may be discontinued. Any changes that need to be made will be introduced gradually.

A revised, or new, strategy for Aimhigher across South Yorkshire will be required by the NPB by 31 March 2006. Draft guidance on the aims and objectives, governance and management arrangements and funding models will be available in November 2005 with the final guidance due in January 2006. The planning process needs to start now - a consultation procedure will be drawn up shortly. In the meantime, the Quality Assurance group is working on data, including Plasc, UCAS and DfES, to enable 'smart' targeting of funds in the future.

Clive Macdonald
Chair of the Area Steering Group

The Get Ahead—Aimhigher Roadshows

The 2005/6 programme of Roadshows are underway, with visits delivered to 3 schools and a further 14 with dates booked.

Independent evaluation has shown the Roadshows to be a very valuable tool in raising aspirations in South Yorkshire. Research carried out by Connexions reveals that the Get Ahead Roadshows "address the objectives of Aimhigher...by presenting young people with a snapshot of university life," and that the format of the event is "effective, imaginative, and well structured."

The Roadshow programme offers an introduction to higher education, using jargon free language. It is delivered on site in school and fits a lesson slot. The

programme is designed to be interactive and the focus is on getting involved, asking questions and giving feedback.

Use of current higher education students is crucial to the success of the Roadshows. Year 8 pupils are given the opportunity to ask questions and engage in stimulating discussion about college and university options and surrounding issues with current undergraduates from a variety of backgrounds, in an informal setting. This is one of the most valuable elements of the Roadshows and helps to make the project so effective.

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Open Horizons

The Open Horizons project, funded by Aimhigher South Yorkshire provides tailor made taster educational experiences in companies and FE/HE institutions for young people in Key Stages 3 to 5.

The programme is led by the Industrial Trust, and involves each student having the opportunity to observe the different careers that exist within organisations and which can be accessed through progression to FE and HE. The visits to companies provide students with the opportunity to discuss these jobs and careers with those people working in the roles. The young people also visit FE/HE institutions to gain an understanding of how they operate, what educational attainment is needed to gain access to them and what benefits they provide. The project demonstrates to young people the route to challenging and rewarding careers through progression to FE and HE.

The Open Horizons programme has included the following;

- A visit by Clifton Comprehensive pupils to Waitrose supermarket to look at the different career options that food retail offers. This challenged their popular perceptions of supermarkets and made them think again about their shopping experiences. In the eyes of the young people the supermarket provides any number of part-time jobs for shop assistants and shelf-stackers. One thing that clearly came out of the visit was that the opportunity for them to witness more than the front-end delivery of services, combined with a university visit which linked into the career options that courses such as 'food science' offer, proved enlightening. The students from Clifton unanimously said that they had 'never experienced being able to go behind scenes of a supermarket before' and that this had opened up their horizons to the possibility of lots of different careers in shop work.

- Two Penistone grammar school sixth form visits linked directly into one of the subjects they were studying and enabled them to tie their experiences directly into the business – Vortex Clothing, a specialist screen-printing company in Barnsley – and the educational establishment – the Textile department at Huddersfield University. The young people from Penistone Grammar were absolutely glowing in their praise of the visit – they attributed their enthusiasm to the fact that they had already studied the subject and described the experience as fun, brilliant, hands on. They welcomed the fact that it was a very interactive session which allowed them to test their own skills. It was a lot more fun that they thought it would be and they now view university much more positively.
- BOC Ltd, The Industrial Trust, SETPOINT South Yorkshire and The University of Sheffield staged a live demonstration of Liquid Nitrogen for Key Stage 4 students at the Octagon Theatre. Nitrogen is the most common gas in air making up approx 78% of the atmosphere. BUT...at -196 degrees C, liquid nitrogen is probably the coldest substance that most people will ever experience. Members of BOC's graduate trainee programme demonstrated its cryogenic properties by freezing flowers, bananas and balloons. Even ice cream was made in moments in front of the audience.

Other educational visits have been organised to several successful local companies. These have included - Gripple Ltd, a fast-growing, award winning innovative company which designs, manufactures and markets wire joiners/tensioners and other products - Swann-Morton Ltd, created in 1932 to make and sell razor blades but now the world's leading manufacturer of surgical blades.

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Moving on up! The Aimhigher Vocational Summer School 2005

This local initiative involved 70 year 9 pupils, from 8 Rotherham secondary schools, who took part in a residential summer school at the end of the summer term.



The 4-day programme included an overnight stay at Sheffield Hallam University in the new Exchange building, which regular Sheffield students use during term time. Pupils spent 3 busy days, at Rotherham College for Arts & Technology, working in 3 different vocational areas, demonstrating a wide range of skills and producing items for display on the final presentation day at the university.

Several vocational areas were covered:



Hair & Beauty

Nail art; themed designs for wedding days and holidays amongst other things. Hair design; pin ups, braiding and decoration.

Catering & Hospitality
Food production made from a variety of dough based recipes.



Art & Design

Research and design a suitable package for an MP3 player.



A small number of pupils from the Swinton cluster, who were part of the Young Apprenticeship Programme, undertook an accredited Health & Safety course — this formed part of their 2 year apprenticeship in Engineering and Business — to learn about the issues and situations they might face in the workplace. Engineering pupils were involved in the design and engineering of products using professional machinery at Cent (Centre for Excellence Training), followed by a visit to Strategic Training Partnership (STP) where they learnt about the wide variety of courses available in this growing industry.

An invitation went out to the parents of all pupils, affording the youngsters an opportunity to showcase their work, and new-found knowledge on progression routes to further and higher education. The finale was a presentation of prizes and certificates to pupils from all 5 areas of the Aimhigher programme; including special prizes, from the College, for effort and improvement.

During their university visit parents were given a guided tour of the facilities, escorted by Sheffield Hallam's specially trained student crew. When asked about their concerns on entering Further and Higher education, both pupils and parents expressed concerns about finance. Additional information was provided by The Rotherham Credit Union Development Agency, alongside a variety of web addresses and booklets specifically produced for Aimhigher. Members of the Rotherham based Connexions team displayed information and were available to speak to pupils and parents on careers advice and guidance.

The summer school will be repeated in 2006.

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Aimhigher Vocational Classes

Business & Enterprise South Yorkshire, collaborating with partners, has organised a series of Aimhigher for College and University vocational classes. These cover a range of areas of knowledge targeting the widening participation cohort from Year 8-11 and post 16 vocational students from schools and colleges across South Yorkshire.

The project has drawn on a wide range of subject areas and special local expertise in the Universities, Industry and FE sectors including business and finance, computing, arts and cultural studies, engineering, science and mathematics, environment, digital technologies, leisure, sports and medicine. Central to the delivery of the classes has been the application of areas of knowledge in work and the community settings. Enterprise, creativity and entrepreneurship, as well as employability focusing on the emerging economic growth cluster, have been an essential aspect of the vocational classes.

The format of the classes has been varied, depending on the aspects of the area of knowledge to be covered. A professional development session for the tutor, looking at links to the curriculum has been arranged, and the format of the classes mutually agreed working with Aimhigher co-ordinators. The range has included expert demonstrations, practical workshops and skill coaching as well as problem solving challenges. All the classes have included information about pathways to FE/HE and the job roles of the presenters. A favoured format has been a number of sessions involving hands on experience. Two examples of the work are given here:

A digital imaging and application class involved 19 Year 10 students from Elmhirst School in Barnsley. The students were introduced to the Apple Mac platform and film editing techniques, using imovie software, to make a video trailer about their school and neighbourhood. This was followed by 3 sessions on using 'Flash' to create a virtual tour which partially fulfilled the DIDA coursework requirements. The students were also introduced to the creative and digital cluster and a range of jobs within it. The students were able to develop skills and knowledge in web design, whilst the business involved - Salford Thomas Design and Multimedia - had the opportunity to enthuse the young people about careers in the sector.

The Enterprise classes involved a total of 111 young people from Fir Vale School who were introduced to the whole process of entrepreneurship including identifying opportunities, finding markets, business planning, risk taking, industrial design issues, product development, creativity, management skills and the skills and attitudes needed to be an entrepreneur. The students were introduced to a host of issues regarding business set up and transferable skills with presenters and undergraduates, from Sheffield Hallam University Enterprise Centre and Business School, acting as role models.

The classes have had a significant impact on both students and presenters - students are enthused about HE and presenters have become motivated to work with young people.

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Forthcoming Events

Careers in Engineering Seminar, 9am - 1.00pm, 15 December 2005, at Sheffield Hallam University for guidance staff in schools, colleges, Connexions services and other organisations. Jointly organised by the Building Pathways Project and The Open University in Yorkshire. For further details or to book - contact Shaun Long at The Open University in Yorkshire, e-mail: s.k.long@open.ac.uk, Tel: 0113 203 6798.

Aimhigher South Yorkshire is again providing a **Continuing Professional Development Programme** for staff involved in widening participation in schools, colleges and other organisations. Priority for places, which are free of charge, will be given to staff working in South Yorkshire. Surplus places will then be available to staff in the rest of the region. The full programme is being widely circulated and is available from kim@divacreative.com

The first few events are:

Project Management, 12 January and 23 February 2006, Brooklands Hotel and Conference Centre, Barnsley (Two repeats of the successful full-day event from 2004-2005 programme).

HE Progression Framework Workshop, 23 January 2006, The Source at Meadowhall, near Sheffield.

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