



Innovative ways of connecting: communicating with parents



'Connect 5': The Inter-relationships between Young People, Families, Education, Careers and their World: Aimhigher Lancashire 3rd National Conference, 2007

This information sheet presents key messages from two workshops; both looked at how universities can connect with and communicate with parents. Diane Stone, from the University of the West of England, Bristol outlines a range of different Aimhigher initiatives for engaging parents. Jane Murphy, from the University of Huddersfield provides details of strategies employed by the university's schools and college liaison team. Together these workshops show how project and university funding can address the call for innovation and embedded work with parents / guardians. They focused on the inter-relationships between Higher Education, young people and their families.

Aimhigher: Engaging Parents

Workshop Facilitators:

Diane Stone MBE, AimHigher Coordinator, University of West of England, Bristol

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Workshop context:

Parents are increasingly recognized as a significant influence upon their children's life choices. From the perspective of an Aimhigher Co-coordinator, Diane Stone explored the innovative ways of connecting with parents. She suggested that it is strongly believed, if one achieves in successfully changing the mind set of parents / carers / guardians then this can lead to a rise in children entering HE.

This workshop aimed to identify ways of working with parents / guardians to raise aspirations for their children and also work with carers of looked after young people.







Aimhigher: Engaging Parents


Aimhigher West Initiatives

- Aimhigher Launch Evenings
- Aimhigher Parents Evenings
- Parents visits to UWE
- Aiming Higher Events with Parents
- Aimhigher Activities for Primary Age Children


The following ideas were generated by workshop participants and highlight the importance of engaging parents in raising aspirations.

TOP TIPS AND KEY ISSUES

-  Think through and plan well for all aspects of a campus visit e.g. transport, refreshments
-  Choose culturally appropriate speakers so your target audience can identify with them easily and feel comfortable in approaching them.
-  Produce culturally appropriate publicity material
-  Use carefully chosen and trained student ambassadors
-  Try using parent ambassadors - as they are themselves parents, those attending the workshop will feel secure approaching them and in voicing their fears and concerns as one parent to another.
-  Try to incorporate a variety of activities to engage with parents. One particularly successful contact with parents is during the latter part of campus visits by primary school children. The children present what they have learned (during their visit) to their parents.

 University of West of England Higher Education presentations for post-16 students

 http://www.uwe.ac.uk/schoolsandcolleges/resources_and_downloads.shtml

 From a previous Aimhigher Lancashire Family Conference See Information Sheet 5
Sethi, J., Houghton, A. (2006) 'Working with the community and voluntary sector to raise ethnic minority families' aspirations about FE and HE' *'Valuing Families, Valuing Diversity': Aimhigher Lancashire 2nd National Conference*, Lancaster University, 2006

 <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/projects/reap/families/Conference06.htm>

Working with families-the view from HEre

Workshop Facilitators:

Jane Murphy, Schools & Colleges Liaison Officer, University of Huddersfield



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Workshop Context:

Whilst working within HE, it is often forgotten to analyse its affects from the Higher Education point of view. Within this workshop, Jane Murphy gave participants an opportunity to hear about the University of Huddersfield's Schools and Colleges Liaison team experience of working with families and how this has been achieved. It also allowed the participants the opportunity to consider some of the questions raised by HE institutes whilst working with families.


TOP TIPS AND KEY ISSUES

1. Institutional context

There are a host of institutional factors that influence what an embedded service like a Schools and Colleges Liaison team can develop and deliver. For example, the institutional history will influence parental perceptions and shape the current provision which is likely to influence the programme devised for working with parents. For example:

- Huddersfield University started as Huddersfield Scientific and Mechanic Institute

- Became University in 1992; Barnsley and Oldham centres
- It has approx. 22,000 students and 2,800 staff
- 7 schools of study- subjects range from Architecture to youth and community work
- Has a new vice-Chancellor- Professor -Bob Cryan and Chancellor- Patrick Stewart

 Remember you can only do what works for you - this won't necessarily be the same as the institution next door


2. Who works with parents?


This workshop presented the view from Here looking at the perspective of a schools and colleges liaison service that comprises of:

- A team of 9, who are part of marketing, communication and student recruitment
- The team is monitored and overseen by a Deputy Vice Chancellor
- They are separate from admissions, but work in conjunction with them
- Work with schools and colleges within 80 mile radius


The remit of the schools and colleges liaison service is to:


- promote the University of Huddersfield
- promote Higher Education in general
- provides an information base for local schools, colleges, other education related organisations, and for the local community
- provide links between schools, colleges and University departments.


 The location of staff involved in working with parents will influence how they work and their particular expertise.


 To make informed decisions young people and their families need both generic awareness raising information about Higher Education and institutional specific details. Collaboration between different groups of staff e.g. Aimhigher practitioners and institutional experts can be very effective.

3. When working with parents remember

 Put yourself in the parents' position when planning events and initiatives. Try and plan ahead for what they may need e.g. directions, parking permits, signage.

 Parents don't just influence their son/daughters they also talk to other parents and people in their local community or at work. This could be their first and only impression of higher education and your institution, so do everything you can to ensure this to be a good one!

 Many hands make light work involve as many staff and student ambassadors as possible. Especially for big events, let staff throughout the university have a contact name and number and some brief details about where visitors are coming from, so that they can help welcome them and direct them to a central meeting point if they get lost!









 Personal experiences from university staff as well as student ambassadors can make all the difference, they can add to credibility to the message and help to break down myths about all university staff '*having beards and wearing jumpers with patches*' (parent interview, FAHED, 2004)

 University of Huddersfield Open Days and programme of activities




 http://www.hud.ac.uk/scl/open_days/index.htm

OPEN DAYS FOR LANCASHIRE UNIVERSITIES

Web links for the university Open Days in the four Lancashire Universities.

-  Edge Hill University Open Days and programme of activities
 <http://www.edgehill.ac.uk/ProspectiveStudents/OpenEvents/index.htm>
-  Lancaster University Open Days and programme of activities
 <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/users/schoolsl/visit.htm>
-  University of Central Lancashire Open Days and programme of activities
 <http://www.uclan.ac.uk/opendays/index.htm>
-  University of Cumbria Open Days and programme of activities
 <http://www.cumbria.ac.uk/Features/OpenDay/OpenDays.aspx>

FURTHER RESOURCES

-  Information Sheet 3: Working with parents to improve access into HE for disabled students
-  Information Sheet 8: Creative and cultural connections: An Aimhigher partnership working with families
-  Briefing Sheet 9: Engaging Families: a partnership approach to targeting parents as partners and learners

National Family Learning Network

The campaign for learning website of the National Family Learning Network provides useful information on how you can adopt a family learning approach to engaging families.

-  <http://www.campaign-for-learning.org.uk/familylearningnetwork/index.asp>

 Aimhigher Lancashire Families Website

Aimhigher Lancashire Families website includes a selection of Briefing Sheets, conference Information Sheets, Staff Development Activities that allow staff to explore in more detail ways of engaging families through school and the community voluntary sector

-  <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/projects/reap/families/index.htm>


Prepared on behalf of Aimhigher Lancashire



For other Information Sheets

This is one of 5 Information Sheets prepared following the 'Connect 5' Aimhigher Lancashire National Families Conference. For further details see:

<http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/projects/reap/families/Conference07.htm>

For further information about working with families, or copies of other resources, contact:

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 <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/projects/reap/families/index.htm>



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<http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/projects/reap/families/Conference07.htm>