IntoUniversity Supplementary Schools Project:

Project Evaluation Final Report

Jo Sadler and Paul Grainger

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Acknowledgements

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Introduction

The vision of **Into**University is to provide a national network of high quality, local learning centres where young people are inspired to achieve. At each local centre **Into**University offers an innovative programme that supports young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to attain either a university place or another chosen aspiration.

Young people from Britain's poorest backgrounds face a considerable educational disadvantage; they do far less well at school; they are unlikely to go to university and they have little chance of entering the professions. These young people lack the educational support and aspiration that is often taken for granted in better off homes.

IntoUniversity centres provide sustained academic support, motivation and encouragement to give young people a fair chance of realising their full potential. Each centre provides 7-18 year olds with a combination of after-school academic support, undergraduate mentors and specially-designed study weeks (FOCUS weeks).

IntoUniversity believes that it must start working with children in the primary years if it is to have a decisive impact upon their futures. It continues to give academic and pastoral support right through to university application. **Into**University is the only organisation offering a long-term, multi-stranded programme to young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

IntoUniversity is currently operating 22 centres across London, Nottingham, Bristol, Oxford, Brighton, Leeds and Southampton, with two more centres due to open in September 2017 in both Liverpool and Clacton.

The supplementary school sector and its role in widening participation

It is estimated that as many as 5000 supplementary, 'complementary' or 'Saturday' schools are currently operating in the UK. The tradition of community-generated, based and/or funded educational provision for the socially and economically disadvantaged, is well established in Britain. Karyn Woodley, Chief Executive Officer of the education charity ContinYou, until its closure in 2013, suggested that supplementary schools can be traced back to charitable activity in the 19th Century. Whilst evidence for this remains scant, researchers agree that the 'supplementary movement' came to have an enhanced role after World War II with successive waves of immigration, firstly from eastern Europe and later the Commonwealth and other parts of the world.[1] ContinYou described the characteristics of supplementary schools as follows:

- *They offer a range of learning opportunities, including national curriculum subjects (English, maths, science and others), religious studies, mother-tongue classes, cultural studies and a range of extra activities, such as sport, music, dance and drama.*
- *They run throughout the week in the evenings, or at weekends.*
- *They are set up by local community groups.*

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[1]   https://www.continyou.org.uk/ Accessed 4 August 2017

- *They are voluntary organisations. Very often they rely almost exclusively on volunteers.*
- *They operate from a variety of venues: community centres, youth clubs, places of worship, mainstream schools and other places*.

The Paul Hamlyn Foundation (PHF), which has supported supplementary schools through its Education and Learning programme since 2001, offers a more focused definition, linked to their contemporary profile:

Supplementary schools provide part-time educational opportunities for children and young people, primarily from Black and minority ethnic communities. They commonly offer mother-tongue language classes, faith and cultural studies, and tuition in English, maths and science, alongside activities such as sport, music, dance and drama. They are established and managed by community members, often on a voluntary basis, and operate from community centres, youth clubs, religious institutions and mainstream schools. While many supplementary schools are small local groups run by parents, others are part of larger organisations that provide a range of services.

PHF also helped to establish the National Resource Centre for Supplementary Education to support the impact of supplementary schools on children's attainment in mainstream education. Their research looked at pupil's attainment outside of London to complement a 2012 study by the John Lyons Charity which focused on London.[2] The PHF report, by Evans and Gillan-Thomas, was published in 2015 and measured the impact of supplementary schools on Key Stages 1 to 4.[3] The report concluded that supplementary school pupils performed well in comparison to students not attending supplementary schools. Importantly, in regard to this review, PHF also worked with the Royal Society of the Arts (RSA) to examine the role of supplementary schools in supporting black and minority ethnic young people in progressing to further and higher education and employment.

Maylor *et al* have shown that in recent years supplementary schools have tended to recruit mainly pupils from a Black and minority ethnic (BME) background and that as many as 28 per cent of non-white British children aged 5-16 may be engaged with supplementary provision.[4] In 'Exploring the impact of supplementary schools on Black and Minority Ethnic pupils' mainstream attainment',[5] the same authors pointed out that many such pupils speak English as a second language and therefore are in need of particular specialist support.

Professor Steven Strand has long taken an interest in this field and in supplementary schools in particular. For some time he was Special Adviser to the House of Commons Education Select Committee, which published the *Inquiry into the*

[2] David Evans and Pascale Vassie (2012) *Report evidencing the impact of supplementary education across the beneficial area of John Lyon's Charity*.

[3] David Evans and Kirsty Gillan-Thomas (2015) *Descriptive analysis of supplementary school pupils' characteristics and attainment in seven local authorities in England, 2007/08—2011/12.*

[4] Uvanney Maylor *et al* (2010) *Impact of supplementary schools on pupil's attainment: An investigation into what factors contribute to educational improvements.*

[5] Maylor, U. *et al* (2013) *British Educational Research Journal,* 39, 1, 107-125.

Underachievement in Education of White Working Class Children (2013-2014). He was also consultant to the England Department for Education (DfE) Black Pupil's Achievement Group (2007-2009) and Gender Agenda (2007-2008). Strand (2007) has identified relatively high levels of educational disadvantage in the background of pupils attending supplementary schools. Using the number of books at home as a measure of educational disadvantage he found that just under half of the students in his sample came from homes with fewer than 25 books.[6] Notably, 39 per cent of these pupils cited educational improvement as their principal reason for attending a supplementary school, but in general did not mention any aspiration to progress to university. The correlation between lack of access to a range of reading material at home and the poverty of aspiration was noted by Evans *et al* (2010), who also posited a significant impact on pupil attainment and progression to higher levels of education. [7]

Strand's more recent research has focused on the plight of white working-class boys. His 2015 report[8] showed that both educational attainment and participation for white working-class boys had declined against that of other races (although there remained variations between racial groups) and that they were now the group most at risk of under-representation in higher education (HE). Similar conclusions had been drawn by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (Tackey *et al* 2011). In general minority ethnic students were now found to have, though not uniformly, higher HE participation rates than white students.[9] Previously however Strand et al (2010) had evidenced alarming educational under-performance among particular BME groups.[10] The focus of this DfE (then DCSF)-commissioned research was school-level achievement, rather than progression to HE, though the two clearly articulate. Chowdry *et al*'s (2011) longitudinal cohort study demonstrated a causal link between poor secondary attainment and under-representation at 'high status' universities, amongst socio-economically disadvantaged groups. [11]. Strand (2013) found that relative deprivation continues to be a major factor, but suggested additionally that teacher expectations play a role in denting the aspirations of some minority groups[12].

The Labour Government's response to the under representation of minority groups in HE was to introduce the Aim Higher initiative in 2004. Six years later the coalition government announced the closure of the scheme, stating that it would be replaced by outreach initiatives, as part of a complex formula in the process of moving to student fees and the level at which universities could set them. The Higher

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[6] Strand, S. (2007) Surveying the views of pupils attending supplementary schools in England, *Educational Research* 49, 1, 1-19.

[7] Evans, M.D.R. *et al* (2010) 'Family Scholarly Culture and educational success: Books and schooling in 27 nations,' *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility* 28, 2, 171-197.

[8] Strand, S. (2015) 'Ethnicity, deprivation and educational achievement at age 16 in England: Trends over time', *in DFE Research Report 439B.*

[9] Nii Djan Tackey *et al Poverty, ethnicity and education*, May 2011

[10] Strand S. *et al (2010)* 'Drivers and Challenges in Raising the Achievement of Pupils from Bangladeshi, Somali and Turkish Backgrounds', DCSF.

[11] Haroon Chowdry et al (2011) 'Widening Participation in Higher Education: Analysis using Linked Administrative Data', *Statistics in Society* 176, 2, 431-457. The authors arrive at their definition of a 'high status' university by averaging 2001 Research Assessment Exercise scores, using Russell Group institutions as a benchmark.

[12] Strand, S. (2013) 'What accounts for ethnic achievement gaps in secondary schools in England?', BERA *Insights*, *Issue 4.*

Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE)'s review of the lessons of Aimhigher (2010)[13] commended the improved collection of data on minority group participation in HE, but found that this remained inconsistent and therefore could not provide for definitive conclusions. The judgement of the report was thus largely qualitative. There were three key findings. Firstly, some target groups of Aimhigher participants had improved outcomes in terms of raised aspirations, raised attainment and improved progression, but there was no clear evidence of long term impact. Secondly, evidence showed high levels of learner enjoyment and reflected an increased learner interest in entering higher education. Learning mentors were seen as an important element in this. Thirdly there was evidence that involvement with Aimhigher was associated with higher than predicted attainment at GCSE and greater confidence among learners that they could achieve successfully.

The outreach initiatives announced by David Willets have proved variable in quality, initiative and impact. They have not been a major feature of the higher education profile in recent years as general levels of UK student participation have levelled off. A decline in 2012, as a consequence of the introduction of fees and loans, was followed by a slow rate of increase, hovering around 42 per cent participation.[14] One example of a high-profile outreach initiative is the Pem-Brooke collaboration between an Oxford College and a Hackney sixth form college. This has clearly been successful in promoting individual progression, but, as with other such initiatives, with only a local and parochial impact.[15]

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[13] Passy R., Morris M., (2010) *Evaluation of Aimhigher: learner attainment and progression* Final Report for HEFCE.

[14] National Statistics, 'Participation rates in higher education: academic years 2006/07 to 2013/14' BIS *Statistical First Release* 2 September 2015.

[15] Grainger *et al. (2015)* 'An evaluation of the Pem-Brooke Collaboration', in *Collaborate to Widen Participation: to, through and beyond Higher Education'* Ed. Hill *et al,* FACE.

IntoUniversity Supplementary Schools Project

LEGEND	
Birmingham	①
Bristol	②
Edinburgh	③
Ipswich	④
Leicester	⑤
London	⑥
Luton	⑦
Manchester	⑧
Nottingham	⑨
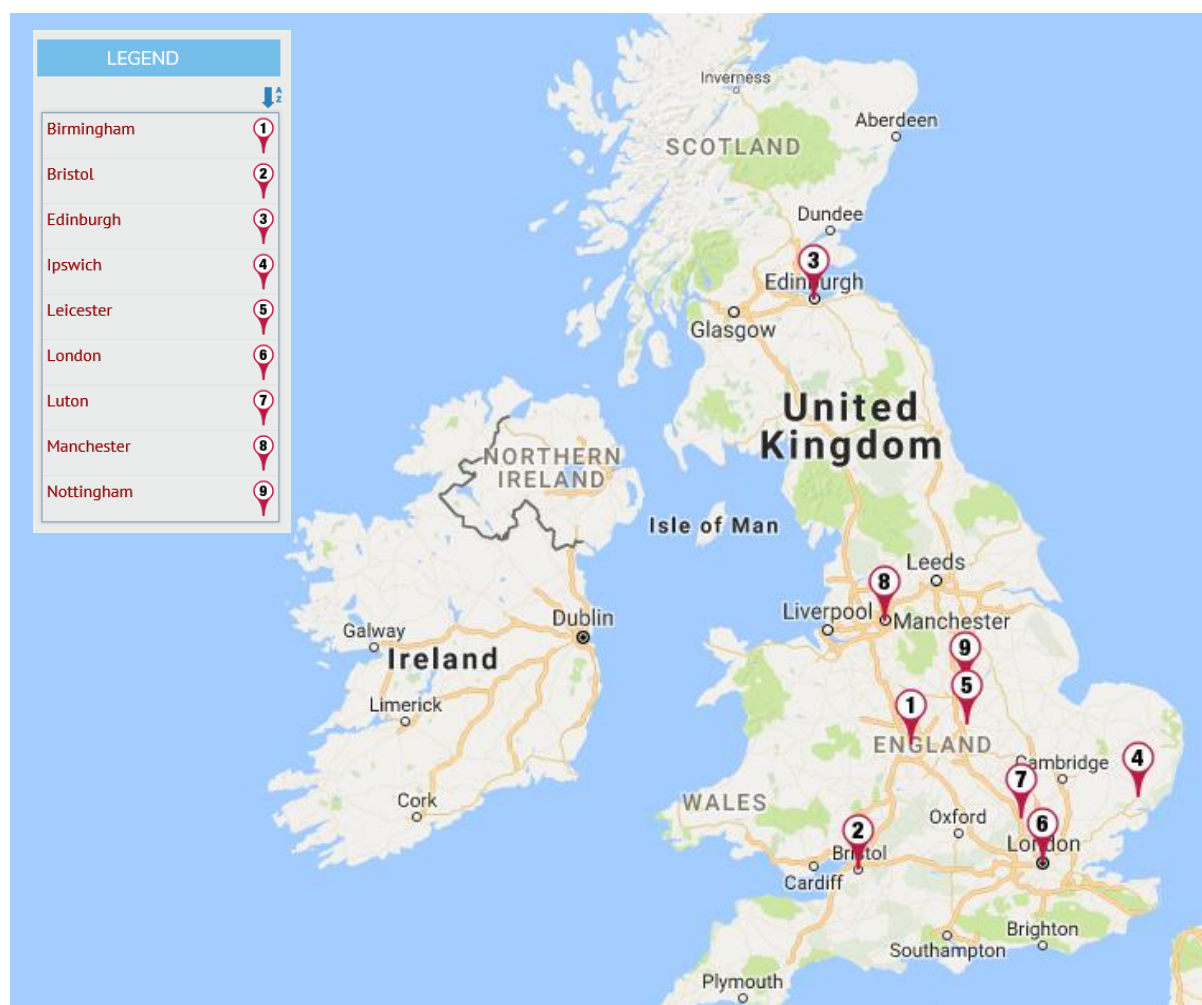
During 2013-2014, **Into**University, conducted detailed research on issues affecting the Supplementary Education sector and the aspirations, preparedness and likelihood of its learners to progress to HE. Drawing on the work of Strand and others, Dr Hugh Rayment-Pickard, IntoUniversity's Co-founder, concluded that 'students who attend supplementary schools are likely to be drawn from families at or at risk of educational disadvantage, are less likely to progress to university than the expected average and are unlikely to be accessing our top institutions.'[16] **Into**University research also demonstrated that the sector is primarily voluntary, with a high turnover of staff, many of whom were insufficiently experienced or knowledgeable in regard to current higher education opportunities, access support and requirements and therefore ill-equipped to provide high quality progression guidance. Schools were not generally in a position to fund access to university sites and widening participation programmes themselves and partnerships between the HE and Supplementary sectors were almost non-existent.

In May 2014 **Into**University commenced the project which helped bring these various research strands together. Its aim was to refocus the role of supplementary schools

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[16] Rayment-Pickard, H. (2014) IntoUniversity

towards progression in to HE, particularly for under-represented groups and so help fill the gap left by highly localised university initiatives:

> *At this exciting time in our evolution, **Into**University has been asked to design and run a widening participation project specifically to support supplementary schools that are not currently able to provide specialist advice for students who could progress to Higher Education'* (**Into**University, May 2014).

This was, nationally, the first specific focus on links between supplementary schools and HE. The three-year targeted support programme was developed specifically to raise higher education progression awareness and aspirations within the supplementary sector and in turn enable a better understanding and more solid relationships to build between the schools and universities.

The **Into**University Project Team (a Project Co-ordinator and two facilitators), planned and delivered a programme of 'Higher Education in FOCUS' university visits for young people and families and 'Teachers' Toolkit' training workshops for school staff and parents, in partnership with the participating schools and universities. The Project offer was taken up by schools based in Nottingham, Bristol, London, Leeds, Manchester, Leicester, Birmingham, Ipswich and Edinburgh. The geographical scope of the Project aligned with, but extended, **Into**University's core programme delivery via its local centres, as well as substantially broadening the initial (three cities) target scope of the Project. To date the **Into**University Supplementary Schools Project has engaged 1530 young people, 367 parents and teachers, 69 supplementary schools and 19 universities. The following report offers an evaluation of this important initiative.

Evaluation of the project

This Project Evaluation is a collaboration between **Into**University and the UCL Institute of Education. The research was conducted over three years (running parallel and almost equal to the duration of the Project delivery). Participating schools and partner universities who agreed to support the evaluation were asked to give their verbal feedback individually, via response to a standardised set of questions (targeted to either school or university respondent). Telephone interviews were considered most appropriate given the geographical reach of the Project and bearing in mind participants' time constraints. Questionnaires were developed for beneficiaries who could not, or were not expected to take part in interview (these were specifically designed to elicit a more nuanced understanding of the programme's impact some time after engagement and additional to the workshop evaluations participants completed on the event day). Following completion of the Project, **Into**University conducted telephone surveys with a 25 per cent sample of school student and teacher beneficiaries, surveyed over 100 university staff and reviewed the on-programme evaluation data.[17]

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[17] A summary of these findings is presented in Annexe A.

Research aims

This evaluation proposes to ascertain the extent to which the **Into**University Supplementary Schools Project: raised learners' aspirations, motivation and confidence to consider higher education progression opportunities; improved the competence and confidence of staff and families advising young people in supplementary schools; increased awareness amongst the HE sector in regard to supplementary schools' concerns and needs and precipitated, or had the capacity to consolidate, partnerships between universities and supplementary schools.

It is essentially based therefore, on the following research questions:

- Does the programme improve the quality of information, advice and support accessible to the supplementary sector in regard to HE options, access and participation?
- Has the programme made universities more aware of the supplementary schools sector as a potential target for future outreach activities?
- What is the evidence to support the partnerships that have come about between supplementary schools and HE as a result of **Into**University's work?
- What are the needs of the supplementary sector in regard to HE progression advice and guidance going forward?

Research findings 1: impact on schools

School leader interviews

Research methodology

Supplementary School leaders whose school had participated in the **Into**University Supplementary Schools Project were invited to reflect and comment on their perceptions, awareness and experiences of higher education progression opportunities and support in their sector, prior to and following, engagement with the **Into**University programme. Each leader's feedback was captured during a semi-structured interview lasting around thirty minutes. All interviewees' discussions were prompted by a series of questions relating to school and community aspirations, aims and expectations for HE progression, support involvement and needs as well as the nature of their partnerships with the HE sector and **Into**University[18]. Thirty three school leaders participated in interviews[19] across the delivery cycle of the Project, with one leader giving two separate interviews, owing to the longevity of their engagement and scope of the support they had taken up.

Summary

Every one of the school leaders interviewed gave very positive overall feedback on their school's experience with **Into**University. Their responses pointed to a variety of learning outcomes for the learner and family participants and also attested to beneficial impact on not only themselves as professionals but also their school's

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[18] Appendix i)
[19] Appendix ii) numbered per school

readiness and capacity to develop aspirations-raising programmes and partnerships. During and following **Into**University events, leaders observed attitudinal and behavioural shifts amongst the young people who attended, which demonstrated in their opinions, increased confidence in respect of potential r future opportunities, enthusiasm to succeed and motivation to make progress. Learners were thought to be engaging in more frequent and focused discussion about their learning and career options and were asking informed and nuanced questions:

*…One student has said she would like to do radiography but doesn't know enough about how to get into it? This sort of thinking has come about as a direct result of our being involved with the **Into**University Project.*

They were able to learn the technical names of courses – jargon as well as everyday words (e.g. the proper name for the course you might apply to if you want to be a doctor).

Some young people were in a demonstrably clearer position about whether university is the right choice for them:

Now we've done the workshop we've got kids who are being forced to think ahead – one child came out and said he didn't want to go to university but he's only eight and it's good he's at least thinking of other options.

One scenario in particular stands out – a boy told me that now he'll apply to university whereas before he didn't think it would be possible for him to go! I think it will encourage young people to aim higher. I spoke to every participant one to one afterwards and they said that they're more motivated – as one young person wrote in her feedback, 'to achieve (my) dreams'. It definitely makes a difference.

The events themselves were considered to enable the acquisition of new and helpful knowledge about career and learning pathways, the university environment and experience amongst the young people and their parents. Parents were thought in addition, to be obtaining greater reassurances for their concerns and considering HE as an option where they had maybe not done so before. Some were discovered to be considering HE not only as an option for their children but for themselves too and actively seeking further information in order that they might support the young people more effectively. It was believed that parents learned from seeing their children engaged in the process, material and in beginning to articulate their aspirations. Some leaders reported an enhanced understanding of young people's preferences, family issues and concerns and a subsequent realisation of gaps in the school's historical support offer. As a result, changes had been made, or were being planned to the delivery approaches and content. In many cases there was an increased or 'renewed' motivation amongst leaders to engage in activities and partnerships which might increase and support progression.

Some of the schools' hopes for the future pointed toward change for the positive if they can continue to benefit from this sort of support and use it to develop learning partnerships within the Supplementary and mainstream sectors. For many of the schools interviewed, the capacity to establish and maintain links with the HE sector

is predicated upon their continued engagement with a support model like the **Into**University Supplementary Schools Project. Reports that schools-HE partnerships do not generally exist seemed common (and where they did support was often infrequent and activities 'ad hoc' or occurred by chance). One leader described having 'tried – and failed – to establish direct partnerships with HE.' In her experience, there was little understanding on the part of the HE institution (HEI) about the school's 'limited resources', compounded by the school's lack of knowledge concerning the HEI resources and systems it might tap into:

> *Partnership working is key to our ethos but sometimes it can take a long time to find the right person to speak to about access. Even now I've reached the end of the chain I still haven't found the appropriate contact – it's depressing because universities are massive organisations but their community engagement links and remits are not obvious.*

Schools expressed their desire for a more consistent or 'systematic' offer, supported by open communications and accessible information, but also their difficulty managing the 'logistics' of external visits and 'large scale' events. Leaders agreed their need for a professional, supportive, inclusive and flexible approach and praised **Into**University specifically in this regard:

> *We operate exclusively on Saturdays so logistically it's very difficult for us to establish and maintain partnerships with the mainstream. **Into**University is plugging a gap for us in this respect. It's new, it's interesting and points to another set of possibilities for our young people and parents.*

> ***Into**University create a nice atmosphere and they're well organised and professional in their communications. I don't have to check things too thoroughly and I trust them.*

School profiles in brief

As is characteristic of the Supplementary Schools sector, an incredibly diverse range of cultural, ethnic, learning, geographical and linguistic communities was served by the schools interviewed. They varied in pupil size between '16 regularly attending' and '500 each week'. Smaller schools (those with less than 50 pupils)[20] were often supported primarily by less than 10 voluntary staff, the largest having over 50 both employed and voluntary (though to have quite this many would seem atypical). Most of the schools in this sample supported primary aged children, through to Key Stages 3 and beyond. A number offered early years or primary to adult provision. Three catered for ages 3-18, one 0-18, one 5-19 (via for example 'youth groups' for 14-19 year olds) and another, age 7 through to 24.

More than twenty of the schools provided the teaching of English, mathematics or both of these subjects (for one school this formed 'the majority of the curriculum'; this was a key funding criterion for another) with a number additionally delivering science. The curriculum focus in the remaining schools was on community language/s, heritage and identities (personal, community and in one case political);

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[20] This categorisation is taken from Maylor *et al* (2010)

transition to and through, learning and/or engagement. The wide range of languages delivered (these include Tamil, Polish, Russian, Lithuanian, German, Arabic, Malayalam, Spanish, Portuguese and Persian) reflected the multiplicity and diversity of the communities supported by the schools. A number of the schools specialised, or grounded their offer in one or more community languages. The schools generally sought to enhance their academic offer with a range of cultural and leisure/'extension' activities targeted to the learners, families and communities they support. Where specifically questioned, leaders attested to maintaining strong community links and good relationships with parents – for many this was considered integral to school development and ethos.

School ethos

School leaders regarded their school's primary focus as either enhancing achievement in learning, or engagement in learning and the community (local, UK-wide, country of origin) or a combination of both. Many worked to enable the preservation of 'original' cultural heritages and languages whilst foregrounding the need to 'create a well-rounded individual who functions competently and confidently'. For all interviewees, progression to higher education if not integral to the school mission, was an important concern for families and a desired outcome for members of the school 'family' (more than one leader described their school in this way) to facilitate life-long learning, progression and success. One leader commented that 'HE progression is fundamental to our aims and ethos' and another, 'essential to community cohesion'. A number considered that 'to support young people to have broader aspirations and better information about opportunities' was key to this process and that, given the close community relationships they had established and sought to maintain, supplementary schools would be in a unique position to take it forward.

Learner and family aspirations and expectations

For all schools interviewed aspirations could run high amongst young people and their families. One leader commented that 'all the learners have aspirations to "go to university", even if they're not sure what this means?' Another observed that 'parents of younger children have set their sights on HE as the desired progression route'. Others identified specific (professional, competitive entry) progression routes which are especially well regarded amongst parents in their local community. Aspirations did not always match expectations, however. The community served by one school had a strong tradition of progression to small local businesses which was also attractive to learners who might wish to follow in the footsteps of older siblings, or due to the nature of the business itself. Another leader asserted that 'young people often follow their friends when choosing a career'. Conversely, a school leader whose students were opting for university over employment in (and potential leadership of) family owned businesses, registered success in offers of places, but 'not on courses we would ideally have liked them to secure places on'.

Barriers to HE progression

The interviewees cited a range of perceived barriers to progression for the learners they supported. These included lack of social mobility and 'cultural capital' amongst families; lack of confidence and focus on setting and achieving goals amongst the learners themselves; economic disadvantages (further impacting on social mobility); competing pressures in mainstream schools and under-familiarity with the UK HE system. One leader thought that the **Into**University experience had helped her to identify some of the issues she perceived as most pressing for families:

> *I've realised a couple of key challenges in regard to our young people's and families' attitudes to HE. Most of the young people don't realise it could be a really good choice for them and parents don't always know what the options are or think it's beyond their child's aspirations or ability.*

She went on to recall a scenario from the workshop event which suggested further concerns in regard to HE access and finance:

> *One parent said it was her first opportunity to visit a university and she really wants this for her child but doesn't know what to do to support them. Another said 'I hear it's really expensive – you have to pay nine thousand pounds up front per year?' They're just not aware of how things work.*

There was a general feeling that whilst young people and families may aspire to go to university, they often lack the knowledge, skills, appropriate information and support to realise such an aspiration. When this was potentially accessible, either via engagement with the supplementary school or as part of a learner's mainstream provision, it was often (effectively) 'too little too late'. This was compounded by an apparently prevailing assumption amongst families that younger learners (those of primary school age for example) should be concentrating on their more immediate next steps.

One leader cited gender discrimination as an additional problem amongst the particular communities their school supported. Another who was also a governor in a mainstream school perceived not only a lack of strategic direction and resources to provide comprehensive and timely career guidance but also 'a lack of clarity on the steps required within a progression route'. This interviewee also surmised that not having experience of the curriculum, parents may not know the right questions to ask or the range and types of support that might be available via the school. Many discussed the general resource limitations within their own sector, with one identifying this as a barrier in and of itself.

Current school support and partnerships

Where support was offered, this tended to be single interventions or individual and targeted (though still somewhat 'ad hoc'). One school ran a one day event each year focused on careers and progression, with workshops delivered by HE and business representatives. Another reported having established its link with **Into**University via an existing partnership with Manchester Metropolitan University, although prior events had been targeted mainly to staff. The school's leader considered that plans

for future events had 'been given a new focus since the visit' and that its university partnership was 'definitely developing'

For a number of the schools, the **Into**University programme facilitated first time physical access to UK university for young people and their parents. None of the schools interviewed had, in their opinion, sufficiently consolidated partnerships with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and most cited lack of resources (funding, staffing and time) as reasons for this. Two schools described beneficial links with the mainstream sector (especially around targeted information and progression through the current learning programme) although another identified partnerships focused on sustaining support for progression as 'the missing links':

> *the vast majority (of Supplementary Schools) are run by volunteers but between us we could run regular workshops.*

In general, the schools would welcome stronger and more consistent links across the range of educational and social partners, in order that they might pool resources and generate strategies for and programmes of, progression support. One leader described both a lack of knowledge about Supplementary Schools in the HE sector and a reticence to share information, experience and support between the schools themselves:

> *We've got so many Supplementary Schools within our area but it's everyone for themselves- a bit of a 'monoculture'.*

This might seem counter-intuitive, given the diversity of the sector, though perhaps less surprising when taking into account its primarily voluntary character, the potentially very large range of communities served across, for example, a single city region and the specificity of targeted support Participant schools were nevertheless universal in their desire to support higher education progression and access and most saw their engagement with the **Into**University Supplementary Schools Project as a way in which to bridge gaps in related knowledge, communication and resources:

> *Most of the young people hope to go to university but they will mainly be the first in their families to do so. We need to partner with other organisations to help inspire our learners at a young age. This was the reason to get involved with **Into**University – we don't always have the resources to do this ourselves.*

Engagement with **Into**University

Embarking on a partnership **Into**University meant for most of the schools interviewed, a structured opportunity for learners and parents to experience the HE environment- which for some was an entirely new experience:

> *We looked at the **Into**University programme because in it university became something tangible and more relevant to young people. We wanted the children to get a better understanding of what's involved- in part due to their lack of knowledge about the system but also because they're first generation HE, they're very young and some of them really have no clue about it whatsoever!*

Several schools wanted specifically to openup opportunities for younger learners and complement their existing school careers and progression day. One leader needed the focus of the support to fall as much on raising attainment as aspirations. There was a general feeling that the **Into**University programme structure would be sufficiently flexible, the content practical and delivery style supportive enough to meet the needs of the school, its learners and families alike. A number had come across the **Into**University programme through a 'chance' encounter but thought that it aligned sufficiently with their schools' missions and (not that these were mutually exclusive) progression requirements or plans.

Participation in the IntoUniversity Supplementary Schools Programme

Seventeen of the schools interviewed attended a full day **Into**University event, which included a visit to a university. One school attended for half-day only but commented that 'the visit was a bit short' and therefore 'there was just too much to fit in in the time'. Most had invited parents with between 'one or two' to more than ten attending. Learners, parents and teachers participated in workshops which were delivered by members of the **Into**University team on site at the university and designed to promote awareness of HE opportunities, its environment and requirements for progression. Leaders highlighted in particular, the 'quizzes', 'competition' and 'project-style' activities, campus tour, question and answer session and mock 'Graduation' ceremony. Many pointed to participants' discovery, during these practical activities, of potential pathways they had not previously heard of, or were unaware might be open to them:

From the conversations that I've had with those who attended, people didn't know about the range of courses on offer (Forensics for example was something completely new to them). For families from Asian backgrounds it's always be a 'doctor' or a 'lawyer' and there's pressure to follow either route.

A number perceived that their students often struggled to make career goals tangible and felt that involvement in the visit might go some way towards demystifying the concept and process of progression in learning:

Before the young people went on the event I don't think they were looking all that far ahead. They didn't see the stepping stones to their chosen careers. The session leaders were very helpful in facilitating this sort of research. One student would quite like to become a pilot but had no clue as to what this might involve. He is now more confident about his next steps –the information was not at all off-putting, it has enabled him to get more of a focus.

Additional support for staff had been introduced on the day, via the online 'Toolkit'which **Into**University has developed for teachers. Some teachers found the session resources informative and intended to reutilise them.

One school network has a 'specific remit to support parents to understand UK HE' and devised a series of targeted workshops, which were planned in partnership with and delivered by, **Into**University. Colleagues agreed to provide an initial 'one hour' information session at parent meetings in the schools, thereby 'maximising

attendance' at the Saturday school workshops. Four were planned in total 'focusing on the current education system'. This decision was taken specifically in order to introduce parents unfamiliar with the system, to its structure, processes, qualifications and recent changes to these. The sessions concluded with facilitators 'showing the ways a parent could connect with their children's schools'. At the point of interview two of the activities workshops had been delivered, with 'over 50 in attendance' at each. These had been arranged to precede the university visits which parents were also offered the option to attend. The leader noted that the parents at one of the network schools would subsequently be attending a university visit.

Feedback on participation

All interviewees were keen to share their own, learners and parents' positive responses to the input they had received and their school's participation in the day workshops. One commented that 'the advice and information was very practical, realistic and comprehensive. The spread of activities across the day was good and the full day focus enabled a lot of information to be communicated.' Another enjoyed the collective nature of the experience and found a useful opportunity to, as it were, 'test the water' with learners for whom such an experience was entirely new.

Most were especially pleased with the parental engagement in and feedback on the programme. At the information workshops developed specifically for parents, the school leader observed that:

*There was lots of time for questions and responses, which was really valuable…Parents were really engaged and hungry for information. They took away handouts and stayed to ask more questions- the **Into**University Co-ordinator had to stay for a full hour extra!*

In her opinion

*The feedback was really good – **Into**University were informative, friendly, open and accessible. The session was pitched at exactly the right level…*

Some interviewees commented that whilst some of the parents had attended university themselves, this was not in the UK so an introduction to UK HE processes and requirements was particularly beneficial for them. And in the view of one leader:

Because of the language barriers, information and support capacity amongst parents is low even if they have been educated to Higher level in their country of origin.

There was a general feeling that like the young people, whatever their level of education, the parents were exploring 'new territory'. This enabled in one example, the realisation that their children could not only think about career opportunities but potentially prepare for this:

(the parents) were very happy with the way things went. At the beginning no one had a clue about what they wanted to do in their future, but on the day they were encouraged to plan for this. The parents saw this and were impressed.

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Another perceived a potential shift in attitudes and relationships between not only the young people and parents, but the parents themselves, saying, 'it's opened up possibilities that resonate with parents and enable common bonds to form.' For some of the schools, increased aspirations to progress to university was not limited to the young people alone (one had the opportunity to offer a separate session for its 'thankful' parents; at a university visit parents of another school indicated their desire to attend a targeted workshop):

They came out with the idea that it's never too late to be able to study if you're interested! Some saw that it might actually be manageable to study part time.

Armed with this fresh knowledge and afforded a more confident approach, parents were seen to be better equipped to support young people to make choices about higher education:

(following the visit parents) have positive feelings about university. There is a renewed willingness amongst the community to engage with the children and they look forward to engaging with HE. Now they think about university, whereas before it wasn't really something they'd considered and they also think about how their children might get there.

During one of the telephone interviews, a parent who was passing offered to give her feedback. She was clearly of the view that the Project has the potential to increase opportunities and motivation for all family members to focus on their futures:

*I thought this was very beneficial for children and parents. It was a real eye opener for us and for the kids – they can now really look forward to something. They have a real picture of what university looks like and can imagine what to do in future. Personal choice opens up for the parents too – you are unlimited to what you can do and experience with the facilities that are available. Kids can do the necessary research if they make a bit of effort. It just takes ambition and hope! **Into**University is very positive for the younger generation- they can relate to the student ambassadors and experience university as if they're experiencing it for themselves. It means you're a grownup and have expectations that you need to reach.*

All schools were in agreement that their learners had benefited from attending, with a number perceiving a positive impact on individual awareness of the HE environment, subject knowledge and skills. One highlighted the importance of exposure to the university environment, not only to enhance young people's awareness of their own learning, but to broaden cultural understanding:

One child asked me, 'why are there so many Chinese people here?' I said 'because anyone can study here.' He was surprised that overseas students had the option to study in the UK – he thought the university just served local people!

This leader also noted a positive impact on group dynamics during the event:

It was good that we were able to take such a mixed group as the young people could learn from each other's different perspectives. A sort of temporary

unofficial mentoring relationship was established which is good for enabling bonds to form, as well as raising aspirations.

The 'Graduation Ceremony' at the end of the visit event seemed especially popular. Leaders commented on the aspirational nature of this activity for the both the learners and their parents. The opportunity for the young people to 'wear the cap and gown' and make presentations on their preferred and possible pathway choices was seen as 'motivating and inspiring'. Some leaders mentioned the taking of photographs by participants and described the event generally as 'memorable'.

Interviewees commended **Into**University's approach to delivery, describing facilitators as 'engaging', 'professional', 'friendly', 'confident', 'passionate and inclusive'. One added that '**Into**University appear to be a very energised organisation'. Activities were thought to be 'interactive', 'fun and imaginative' with information made 'accessible' to all participant groups. There was one suggestion that 'perhaps some of the delivery methods could be more creative' as 'our parents tend to need lots of visuals so they can absorb the information effectively'. One school had taken up previous offers of university visits but said that 'the (**Into**University) visit was the one that received the best feedback in terms of presentation, delivery and planning.'

Impact on professionals in the supplementary schools sector

One interviewee was keen to comment on the effect of the **Into**University programme on his own personal and professional development:

I myself am not from the UK and have never attended a UK university. I personally learnt a lot from the experience and now feel far more confident to deliver information and advice about progression opportunities and processes in this sector…I have definitelychanged the way I speak to parents, students and work with other schools.

This leader had already shared this new learning at borough level, with the intention to 'promote the **Into**University programme and encourage other Supplementary schools to take advantage of the support.' Additionally the school has arranged a focused workshop with the Royal College of Music as 'students have a range of interests so it is important to introduce them to a range of pathways'. One leader described having attended and arranged careers and progression events 'where the young people just wander around and grab freebies' but said that the **Into**University programme 'was completely different and it has changed my way of thinking in regard to events like this'. Another described a shift in her perception of needs and attitude towards addressing them:

By participating in this event I feel I've learned about the parents and young people. I have recognised the gap between what families actually need and what they think they need…It's made me feel I need to do more to persuade people that university is not just for middle class white kids.

A group of four schools collaborated on a professional development workshop on higher level pathways, for 15 of their teachers. This was something the school leader

interviewed was particularly pleased to have had the opportunity to do as 'it's difficult to find in our sector and costly – we don't have the resources to cover this ourselves.' Whilst the group normally support younger children, it was considered beneficial to update knowledge and focus on vocational routes. The leader commented that the 'interactive and easy to digest' session enabled the staff to reflect on the former university visits they had undertaken with their young people, introduced them to new information and teaching techniques. She believed the training had offered a 'springboard' and hoped that the schools network could organise more regular events such as this, 'directly with the university.' The interview concluded with the assertion that:

Now I feel more confident to talk to parents about the different routes – especially the vocational ones – they are not well informed themselves and can tend to think A levels are the only way.

Impact on school planning and delivery

When questioned about whether their school had changed, or had made any plans to change its approach to the delivery and/or structure of progression support in their school since partnering with **Into**University, some commented that they did not perceive or foresee any or much difference. A number commented, however, on ways in which the **Into**University experience had influenced both the shape and content of their offer:

….the young people are already showing aspirations to progress to university and into careers. Before we embarked on this, our focus was purely on subject study. Now the subject of HE comes up regularly and students ask questions and mention new subjects they've come across through the visit and subsequently. Now it's like, 'what's Entomology?'

*Before our partnership with **Into**University we didn't privilege this sort of activity due to the age of our young people. Having done the visit, we would definitely include this event in the Calendar, or have a workshop at the very least, in order that the young people can be systematically supported.*

A school which had originally engaged **Into**University to extend its existing day offer to a wider range of learners, had made plans to combine this with the **Into**University Supplementary Schools Programme next year. Another school planned to look at HE opportunities in its parent support workshops. One leader ascribed the changes their school had made, to having 'learned from both the delivery and resources' at the **Into**University event. Another leader described their school's struggle in the past, to find volunteers to act as academic mentors. As a result of **Into**University having 'helped us to develop our university links', the school now had undergraduate mentors from a research-intensive institution 'regularly visiting and working with our young people on STEM subjects'. This was perceived to have had a particularly beneficial effect on the young people, who 'are very engaged and really love the support!'

Implications and suggestions for future

Most interviewees felt that wherever there may be an opportunity, they would wish to link a programme like this with related preparatory and 'follow up' support. One described the programme as 'just a drop in the ocean' and was doubtful whether impact could be at all sustainable without more productive partnerships between the Supplementary and mainstream sectors. This leader wondered whether this was something **Into**University could work to facilitate (along with links to HE Widening Participation departments), suggesting the establishment of an online forum focused on progression support and links. Another suggested that the 'Teacher Toolkit' might be a way of developing and formalising a schools' network, with the inclusion of contact information and details of support offers. This leader called for 'some level of peer assessment or to form mentoring relationships with other schools in our sector' and hoped the Toolkit might enable schools to register their expertise and needs, 'or give exemplar progression routes via case studies'. One interviewee who used social networking sites as well as the school's own website to communicate with parents, was planning to share resources from the visit day and invite feedback independently.

Four of the five leaders who were interviewed during the 2014-15 academic year seemed unaware of the launch of the teacher toolkit and two of those when questioned were unsure whether they would have the staffing resources (time for one, suitably 'qualified' staff the other) to utilise it effectively. The leader who acknowledged the Toolkit 'was introduced to teachers briefly on the day' felt that a specific and separate event dedicated to its information and use prior to the workshop would have been more beneficial, as 'teachers are going to the event pretty much in the dark.' This leader would also have preferred **Into**University to have met at the school in advance of the event, enabling input from the school on the types of activities and possible destinations on offer and then to plan together for the visit. There was a general feeling that preparatory materials were restricted to the day schedule alone and that parents and teachers would benefit from a better understanding of the aims and nature of the project, in order that they may support the learners more confidently and effectively on the day itself.

A few schools made specific recommendations for future additions to the event content and programme. One would like to see the inclusion of 'alternative routes' such as 'Apprenticeships' and also suggested 'some practical activities which are subject based and linked with opportunities to meet subject specialists'. This was echoed by another leader, who thought the day might benefit from 'a more serious activity like a lecture, on a generic (but interesting and interactive) topic?' General requests for follow up included information on HE applications, support with researching options, 'personalised advice' and refresher workshops for young people and teachers (delivered on the school site). The overwhelming majority of interviewees expressed their desire for the **Into**University-school partnership to continue and grow. This was irrespective of whether the schools were making their first forays into the area of HE progression support or attempting to build and improve their programmes. One leader said that 'we would be keen to engage

further with universities and professionals whenever and however possible.' Another indicated their intent to 'develop an ongoing partnership with **Into**University':

>   *I would always choose them for this kind of work…In sum I'd say that **Into**University deserves praise and as a needs-led organisation they are perfect for us.*

Research findings 2: impact on universities

Higher Education Partner Evaluation

Methodology

Six staff were interviewed from five universities[21]. Five of these were widening participation (and/or recruitment) leads and one, a student ambassador who had supported a number of **Into**University events. A sixth university was approached, but declined to participate on the basis of having only supported the event by providing rooms. The semi-structured interviews took place over the telephone in late 2016 and early 2017 and staff were principally asked the following questions:

- Before working with **Into**University what was your awareness of the character and needs of the Supplementary School sector?
- How would you describe your experience of working with **Into**University and what were your opinions on its Supplementary Schools project?
- Has your involvement with **Into**University raised your awareness of the project beneficiaries' concerns and requirements?
- Do you have any plans to develop partnerships with the Supplementary Schools sector?

Existing awareness of the supplementary sector and its needs

Only one of those interviewed attested to having 'a little prior knowledge' of the sector concerned. This was not in fact through the work of the university widening participation team, but via the interviewee's former professional role in mainstream secondary education. In general, the universities had no particular history of, or remit for, working with supplementary schools. One colleague commented that the 'sector is hard to reach…We had no idea which schools existed let alone who the key contacts were'. Others expressed surprise at the range of supplementary provisions in their area, the level of attendance at and willingness to participate in, the events. Two of the staff interviewed acknowledged that introduction to this sector has presented not only an 'untapped resource' but a 'captive audience' for widening participation work. A desire to explore the area further and consider possibilities for future activities was shared by all the institutions involved. One asserted that 'every single child would meet our WP criteria and we will follow this up.'

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[21] Appendix iii) A-E

Feedback on the IntoUniversity Project planning, design and delivery

University staff gavesome enthusiastic reviews in regard to the event content, management and participant response. The day was generally described as 'excellent', 'very well thought through and engaging', and 'genuinely inclusive' through to 'fantastic' and 'very inspiring'. Colleagues praised the 'passionate', 'professional and approachable' facilitators, who 'were in charge of the room' and sustained engagement across the 'very diverse age range'. The student ambassador went so far as to say:

A couple of young people last year were excruciatingly shy but the facilitators managed to turn them around completely. It brings out the best in everyone – young people and teachers alike – it's a very rich experience. The material is very well balanced and project-based so it's inclusive from the outset. The approach to problems is practical and involves the participants in their positive development and resolution. Opinions count no matter whose – but it's organised so there is no chaos or overlap – suggestions are incorporated easily and firmly. Even when the kids are excited the movement between activities is professionally managed with humour; the facilitators are highly motivated and their enthusiasm is infectious.[22]

Others noted the 'fun', 'interactive' and 'hands on' nature of the activities which were thought to give 'a better balance of information' and 'motivate the young people by getting them thinking'. Five of the respondents commented specifically on the success of the activities – as well as the event as whole – in supporting young people not only to consider aspirational career and progression choices, but to do so in a more focused and informed way. One remarked that the project also offers 'a good introduction for the adults who are influencing the young people in their decision-making.' Two interviewees said that parents and school staff had requested repeat activities, immediately following the event in question. All the HE staff appeared confident about the generally positive experience and impact of the **Into**University project 'for everyone involved'. One mentioned that it had provided the first opportunity for the learners to attend a university visit. Another observed that '**Into**University are plugging a gap' by putting universities in touch with supplementary schools. A recruitment leader whose team usually targets older learners concluded that '**Into**University made this whole thing easy.'

Awareness of supplementary sector issues and needs following the IntoUniversity Project

Unsurprisingly given their lack of experience with supplementary schools, all of the university staff felt that they had, effectively, been introduced to a completely new area of work. One observed that 'there is no one list of supplementary schools or contacts – so a whole world has opened up even with the one intervention.' Two others commented that through the project they had been able to make links they would not otherwise have made – and for a further colleague this included internal contacts. Overall the interviews demonstrated a realisation that whilst working with

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[22] Appx. iii)D student ambassador

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the sector is not without its challenges, its schools, staff and families have clear potential to engage with and benefit from, HE participation and partnerships:

Now we are aware, we will follow up but the challenge will be sustaining the contact – a lot of the staff work from personal mobiles for example. The level of aspiration in the supplementary schools attending the event was demonstrably higher than in schools we've previously worked with even amongst the youngest students, which was surprising for us.[23]

Widening participation leads and their teams were already considering (and two had already begun) utilising elements of the **Into**University model and/or tailoring their existing outreach programmes for future work specifically targeted to the supplementary sector. Some recognised that current university facilities and resources could be used in more flexible ways, to minimise costs and to take account of schools' patterns of working. There was a general acknowledgement that regular delivery on a Saturday could present a particular challenge for universities, but that this might be mitigated by larger scale 'one-off' events and use of student ambassadors. The latter was also suggested as a possible approach to requests from schools for mentoring support. Echoing project feedback from the schools, one respondent observed the positive impact university student ambassadors have had on the learner participants.

Further activities planned and delivered for the supplementary sector

Universities D and E had already delivered subsequent events for supplementary schools in partnership with **Into**University. University E was in addition hosting a university-wide free family learning event and was now planning to invite the recently engaged supplementary schools and offer to fund their travel to and from the event. Its widening participation team were considering the potential to offer this annually as well as further targeted support for supplementary schools. University D has delivered nineteen 'Family Days' over the course of a year, which now include a parent and teacher workshop on mature student access. An information session specifically for supplementary school parents was also scheduled. The widening participation lead reported that running family learning conferences in partnership with **Into**University has enabled her team to 'build partnerships with the local authority'. She hoped this would improve their approach to programme planning and facilitate further links. University A was 'looking at formalising dates for future activities' and would 'probably run a large capacity event for a number of schools'. University C believed it had 'made good links with the groups who attended the event' and 'will work with them one to one as well as revisit the contact list and possibly do some outreach'. University B said that it 'would run activities according to year group – careers sessions using ambassadors for example plus a generic overview of the university offer'. Its recruitment lead commented in addition that she 'would be interested to see **Into**University's other work with the sector.'

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[23] Appx. iii)A

Learning from the evaluation 1: ongoing needs of the supplementary sector

The mainly voluntary character of the sector means that surplus resources are not readily available to engage specialist project facilitators or staff qualified in and dedicated to providing progression guidance. Schools frequently draw on the significant amount of goodwill they have succeeded in building amongst their communities and as such will work according to the expertise and talent they find they have at their disposal. They are keenly focused on, if not characterised by the relationships they can create and sustain. It is what enables them to survive, grow and develop despite the fragility of communities, frequently shifting staff patterns and the limitations or uncertainty of funding streams. Many support families with a tradition of low participation in higher education and whilst progression to university is often highly valued by the schools and families it has rarely topped the agenda. Having been introduced to the university environment and key widening participation staff, many of the school leaders were excited about the possibilities of working with universities longer term, to improve the progression opportunities, information and advice they can extend to young people and families. They also recognised the potential importance for professional development across the sector - as one leader noted 'we have the incentive to retrain.' Broadly speaking, they identified the following areas in which HEIs might preferably provide further support:

- Additional (for example student teacher) volunteers
- Subject-specific expertise (e.g. project-based challenges or curriculum extension work)
- Career pathway opportunities and choice (e.g. presentation input)
- Opportunities to update staff knowledge (via published materials, possibly an online forum or 'virtual lecture')
- Interactive and innovative teaching and learning methods
- Mentoring (of individual students and groups)
- Opportunities to network (with other schools and support organisations)
- Facilitating (in some cases help to finance) travel to events
- Translation services (especially materials on migrant communities and HE access)
- Advice on competitive entry courses and requirements
- Information and guidance for parents (in particular, progression and transition through the UK education system, supporting their children to make choices and alternative routes to HE).

Learning from the Evaluation 2: Challenges and Surprises

Challenges:

i.   Post-Project questionnaire distribution

Originally it was hoped that the evaluation could test longer term impact on participants' aspirations, knowledge and attitudes, by encouraging reflection on workshop attendance, progression information and intentions up to a year following the event. An online survey was initially proposed, however internet access and literacy could not be guaranteed across the participant group. A series of paper questionnaires targeted to older and younger learners, parents and teachers was therefore designed for this purpose and sent out to schools via their leaders[24]. There was a real difficulty capturing any additional quantitative impact data using this approach however as participants were particularly resistant to the completion of questionnaires retrospectively. Most schools did not reply to requests for returns and the majority of those who did explained that they were unable either to schedule time for the activity or had not received anything following open distribution. Leaders' telephone responses demonstrated that whilst they could see the value of an independent evaluation, learners and parents were form-weary and assumed duplication. Only two schools returned their questionnaires complete, hence the response was insufficient for a statistically significant analysis.

ii.   Limited response analysis

The numerical data from these returns ran as follows:

Total Older Student Responses   29

Total Younger Student Responses   5

Teacher Responses   2

Parent Responses   0

 (one parent fed back informally during a lead teacher interview)

Older Student Responses:

> *A. The IntoUniversity workshop helped me to:*
> *Probably/Definitely*

Consider university as a future option   22

Find out about course options and requirements   18

Find out about different types of university   23

Understand what studying & socialising might be like   22

Think about possible career options   23

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[24] Appendices iv)-vii)

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Feel more confident about future options   25

Focused more on my schoolwork   26

A better idea of what I want to do for a career   25

Strengthened future plans   20

Changed mind about what I want to do in future   21

Talked to parent/carer about the possibility of going to university   23

Talked to parent/carer about the IntoUniversity workshops   19

Talked to parent/carer about career ideas/options   23

Talked to other family members about university   23

Discussed options with school teachers   15

Attended another HE information workshop   18

Done own research   12

When deciding whether to apply to university how important is:
                                                    Very/Essential

Visiting a university   19

Learning about course options   18

Help to understand entry requirements   18

Information on accommodation   17

Parent/carer attendance   15

Discussing options with family   19

Knowing where to look for information   13

Confidence the choice is right for me   20

Confidence I'll achieve   19

Confidence I'll enjoy   23

B. Current situation:

Have applied to university   7

Will be applying soon as able   14

Unsure but will consider   10

Unsure but don't think it's for me   9

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Prefer to progress to employment   9

The numbers in this latter section are clearly anomalous – owing to a number of students who had misread or misunderstood the instruction to choose only one of the possible responses (and possibly also one or more of the responses themselves). Of those who chose only one response option, the results were fairly evenly mixed across the range. If this data is in any way representative, it would nevertheless appear to demonstrate a positive impact on participants' knowledge, understanding, motivation and confidence in regard to progression opportunities. What seems far less certain, is the extent to which learners are willing - or able - to build on this independently. They may require structured follow-up within the supplementary school with a view also to increase dialogue between the learners and their teachers around option choice.

Younger Student Responses

All of the younger respondents indicated that following the **Into**University workshop, they either 'probably' (4) or 'definitely' (1) 'understand what a university is and what it might be like to go there'. All five respondents indicated that they now have a better idea of what they want to do in future and have considered university as an option. Four had discussed this with parents or carers.

Their responses to questions about future careers and progression were more mixed. One learner indicated that they were definitely thinking about future options, would choose university and knew the direction they would like their future to take them in. Another responded in the negative in all three of these areas. The remainder were clear about whether they did (2) or did not (1) want to go to university, but less confident in regard to future plans.

Younger Students were additionally asked to name two university courses they considered exciting and mentioned the following:

Dentistry

Surgeon

Media Studies (x 2)

Music

Art

Business

Law

Teachers' Responses

Both teachers had participated in an **Into**University university visit, one had also attended a higher education information session. Both felt their knowledge of university course options had increased following these activities. One teacher also thought they knew more about the UK education system and how it works, the other indicated they had been introduced to the different types of UK universities. Both

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thought they had made positive changes to the way they support and inform young people with their thinking and decision-making in regard to higher education opportunities, as well as where to get further guidance on access and progression. One seemed fairly confident about their capacity to give appropriate advice from this point on, though the other less was certain in this respect. This teacher commented that if running a similar programme, they would 'add more information on 'difficult courses'. S/he noted some personal learning outcomes from session material on university accommodation and facilities and had shared this learning subsequently back in school.

iii.   Sustaining communications

Despite now having a bank of contacts, some universities have not been able to actively pursue them and schools have consistently reported difficulties finding the time to follow up on this work. There is a risk, if no investment can be made in nurturing relationships at this formative stage, that contacts may 'go cold' or be lost altogether (given the nature of the sector, for example, in the case of frequent staff changes). The responsibility for initiating partnership conversations or agreeing a new project offer is often taken by a single individual with a whole host of existing projects or agendas competing for their time. Universities have raised the challenges of contact primarily by personal mobile, the size and diversity of the supplementary sector even in a relatively defined locale and limitations as to the amount of single-school support that may be envisaged. Supplementary schools have highlighted in turn, the size and complexity of the university infrastructure and a number of basic resource issues impacting on their capacity to consolidate relationships and manage external visits. Nevertheless, there remains a strong will amongst participant schools and universities to work collaboratively and think creatively about how best to facilitate this.

Surprises:

i.   Additional impact : HE

Some possibly unforeseen benefits of the universities' engagement with the project are the personal professional, curriculum and institutional development opportunities the staff believe it has afforded. One lead commented that 'the project aligns with our team and institutional aims for widening participation and recruitment and new possibilities have been opened up in regard to these aims.' Another university has successfully integrated aspects of the project content and flexible delivery model within its targeted work for adults, enabling an extension of the corresponding work stream and broadening of its reach. Its widening participation lead reported on the positive influence the **Into**University project and partnership was believed to have had on the strategic development, refocusing and growth of its outreach programme. In addition, **Into**University's impartiality as an organisation, as well as the approach of its project facilitators was considered key to brokering hitherto unexplored external partnerships. A student ambassador from the same university was very keen to express how much she had enjoyed being involved, indicating that widening participation and in particular, targeted group work had been entirely new to her prior to taking part in the project. She now intended to draw on her experience with the

project and as a mature student, to increase access for adults considering or less aware of, higher learning opportunities.

ii.   Additional impact: Schools

Schools were understandably primarily focused on support to engage and motivate young people and better inform families in regard to progression opportunities and access for their children. Many observed enthusiastic participation across the age range throughout visit events and were especially taken with the engagement of younger learners (those at primary school for example). This was also noted by university staff who had not experienced the same level of interest and commitment amongst mainstream school groups. Supplementary leaders reported that their learner and adult participants were similarly impressed by the sheer variety of potential opportunities they were introduced to at the events. Some described unexpected results arising from individuals' responses to and during, the group activities. Perhaps the least anticipated, but no less significantly impactful outcome of family involvement in the programme was the motivation amongst parents to explore higher level learning opportunities for themselves. This has been precipitated in the views of school leaders by focused discussions on the UK education system, the inclusive nature of the Project delivery and lack of prior knowledge, but nevertheless high aspirations amongst many of the parents.

Recommendations:

Building supplementary schools-HE partnerships

1. Introduction to university student ambassadors has been welcomed by supplementary schools who noted the proximity in the ages of the young people and undergraduates and the impact this has had on the motivation and confidence of the school age participants. Universities have recognised the potential for their ambassadors to support the provision of ongoing support which is not restricted to the university site. This is by no means exclusive to targeted widening participation, but leads have been quick to mention them in regard to future work with supplementary schools.

   Recommendation: Being a readily available, flexible and mobile resource, with evidenced potential to engage younger learners and offer subject specialist guidance, student ambassadors might enable universities to better sustain new links with the sector and the vulnerable communities it typically serves.

2. Mentoring opportunities are often requested as part of a follow-up programme which is tailored to the needs of individual schools and learners. This is not necessarily something that widening participation teams have the immediate capacity to set up, let alone resource longer term. A successful model has been developed and is currently running in one school however, using undergraduate and postgraduate students to support curriculum-based activities relating to their degree subject areas. The benefit to learners and the

wider community is palpable in the view of the school leader, as is the potential to support the student-teacher's career development. Given that the sector is largely voluntary, supplementary schools are experienced in managing and supporting volunteer teachers and teaching programmes and there was a general feeling that any fresh support w would be warmly received.

Recommendation: Universities could consider the creation of additional PGCE placements to support project learning and extension activities within supplementary schools.

3. A number of schools have acknowledged that university-based pathways are not for everyone. One school had plans to link to the FE sector and another had observed the potential HE offer available in colleges. Perhaps as schools were asked specifically about their higher education partnerships, or given that many support to age 18 and upwards, post-16 progression remained largely absent from the discussion, but many regretted not having established better partnerships with mainstream education in general. Most of the schools interviewed either broadly supported the notion of 'widening horizons' and increased choice, or asserted this as fundamental to their ethos and found introduction to the breadth of the current HE course offer significantly powerful in this respect. Physical movement out of the immediate environs of the school remains a logistical challenge however, especially for those hoping to engage more systematically or with larger participant groups.

Recommendation: Any opportunity to consolidate local links, or establish networks which facilitate a freer and more frequent flow of information and support schools to improve the quality of their progression guidance would be highly valued.

4. Supplementary schools are well placed to draw on their community links and many currently utilise alumni and parents to facilitate and support events or act as role models. In their perceptions, such relationships could be closer and better sustained than in the mainstream sector, due to the 'family' environment they have succeeded in creating. Some spoke of a particular 'trust' which had supported them to organise partnership activities, generate interest and arrange follow-up more successfully than they might otherwise have done. Universities have fed back particularly positively on learner participation at events involving supplementary schools. It is possible that sector schools could play a key role in local hubs which aim to encourage and support progression from hard-to-reach groups.

Recommendation: Schools may well benefit from student ambassador training programmes or materials which help frame and contextualise aspirational presentations and activities. In turn, universities might increase or

nuance their widening participation geography without compromising targeting criteria or the potential impact of their core WP delivery.

Concluding remarks

Our research shows that the **Into**University Supplementary Schools Project has had a significant impact on raising the aspirations of under-represented groups to progress to university. Using the vehicle of the well-established supplementary schools movement, **Into**University has been able to access a hard to reach target group and through its work has encouraged school leaders not only to embrace, but to foreground progression in to higher education, augmenting the valuable service they offer to their learners, families and communities. It has contributed significantly to the raising of knowledge, confidence and motivation amongst the beneficiaries of supplementary education, to consider future options and make informed choices.

Further, it has equipped school staff with updated information, innovative strategies and has also increased their confidence, to advise and guide the young people in their decision-making and support their families more effectively throughout the process. It is clear too that this Project has raised awareness amongst university recruitment and access staff and has the potential to impact on the planning, delivery shape and scope, of their outreach programmes. It is to be hoped that this can be sustained and, in time, institutionalised. The Project has enabled many of these colleagues to work in partnership and families to experience the university environment, for the first time. In the opinion of both school and university survey participants, it is doubtful whether this would have occurred (and in some cases been possible), without the support of the **Into**University Project. The opportunity to continue work of this nature and consolidate partnerships such as these will clearly be to the benefit of individuals, communities – an educational sector - which otherwise might be marginalised by the HE system.