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<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8248-5368>, Woodhouse, Anna and Brown, Janet (2020) Supporting Underrepresented Communities to Progress to Higher Education across West Yorkshire: A Realist Evaluation (End of Phase 1 Report: December 2018 to July 2019). Project Report. Go Higher West Yorkshire, Leeds.

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# Supporting Underrepresented Communities to Progress to Higher Education across West Yorkshire: A Realist Evaluation

## End of Phase 1 Report:

December 2018 to July 2019

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### Summary

- Towards the end of Phase One, our programme theories are starting to shift in light of what learners and communities need from WP. The analysis reveals that GHWY Uni Connect are developing high quality and effective WP activity and resource that is making substantive difference to learners across West Yorkshire.
- As noted in previous evaluation outputs, analysis of all programme theories emphasises the extensive nature of social, economic and cultural barriers that limit young people from progressing onto higher education.
- Analysis of existent Programme Theories points to emergent models of WP delivery, particularly in terms of 'normalising HE in the community', 'role models' and a deeper consideration of 'youth and learner voice'. In particular, the emergence of a 'youth and learner voice' programme theory has started to take shape through the different ways that young people have contributed and directly shaped activity (such as Learner Voice Live).
- Specifically, innovative delivery models have been formulated based on what our learners and their communities need to consider HE access. Overall, Phase One saw the embedding of highly contextualised WP that takes into account how learners and their wider communities interact with WP outreach (and HE more broadly).

- Over the latter stages of Phase One (December 2018 to July 2019) – GHWY Uni Connect saw increased focus on raising understanding and knowledge about HE. There was a strong focus on activities and learning opportunities for underrepresented communities. The use of 'Role Models' – often engaged in more community focused activity – helped enhance more traditional forms of WP activity.
- In Phase One, GHWY also engaged extensively with external partnerships in terms of activity and delivery. This has helped in reaching out to wider communities that surround young people including parents, schools and colleges, local organisations and employers. Widening the concept of 'community' to include larger number of actors that play a role in WP (e.g. through community grants) should be sustained moving forward.
- Similarly to the Phase One Interim Report (Basham and Formby, 2018), there is sufficient scope to re-write some of the programme theories. In examining the data to ascertain 'what works, how it works, and the wider circumstances WP works' across West Yorkshire, we can start formulating explanations relating to the efficacy of GHWY's approach to WP. An emerging explanation at the end of Phase One is:
- Helping underrepresented communities to progress to higher education is most effective through engaging multiple interventions in relevant spaces at different points in the student life-cycle – especially through the use of representative role models that embed notions of HE inclusivity and future trajectory. Interventions need to take a holistic, respectful and community-based approach but, crucially, must do so through the accommodation of learner voice. Further, by tailoring support in relation to the spaces inhabited by young people and the wider community (e.g. local HEI's and employers), a stronger culture of WP is able to take root in different underrepresented communities.
- Analysis of Phase One indicates that we have a sufficient amount of evaluation data to re-configure our programme theories. In particular, we have sought to do so through the establishment of **Cornerstone Programme Theories** that bring together disparate aspects of GHWY Uni Connect practice. They are essentially meso-level programme mechanisms (e.g. a combination of reasonings and resources) that cut across GHWY Uni Connect activity.

### 1.1 Emerging Gaps/Areas

- Reaching out to parents is particularly reliant on ‘community space’ and ‘role model’ based mechanisms, which have proven to be effective. There may be a need to reflect on forms of engagement.
- There is perhaps an emerging gap regarding the definition of ‘skills’ (or at least, we need to specify what is meant by ‘skills’ in regards to HE entry). We have substantial data on all sorts of learning and understanding, but a slight absence in terms of a dedicated programme theory.
- In the Phase One interim report, we had an emerging gap with regard to CIAG (Careers, Information and Guidance) (PT7), yet we now have data to examine how learners are engaging with careers guidance based initiatives.

### 1.2 Cornerstone Programme Theories

- The analysis is at the stage where some discernible cornerstone programme theories can be considered. These are Programme Theories that cut across much of our outreach activity delivered by the programme. They do so because they encapsulate general principles of practice (i.e. our wider ‘how’ approach, rather than the specific ‘who, where, when and what’ addressed through some of the other theories). The Cornerstone Programme Theories are:
  1. **Affective and Effective Mentoring:** Different forms of mentoring are extensively used across a range of programmes and activities. A significant amount of GHWY activities are reliant on mentoring for effective programme delivery.
  2. **The ‘Role’ of Role Models:** This has emerged as the **key delivery mechanism** across much GHWY Uni Connect activity. Whether it is more traditional outreach activity or community-based initiatives, the use of ‘role models’ (and the ‘right’ role models for the target audience) has allowed for impactful WP activity.
  3. **Experiential Learning:** A significant aspect of activity delivery at GHWY Uni Connect is framed around ‘experiential learning’. This is learning that is developed around practical experiences to encourage engagement amongst learners.

4. **HE and the Community:** This already cuts across much Uni Connect delivery. As communities can be disengaged (or even antagonistic) to HE, working within the community is key in terms of normalising HE in the minds of learners.
5. **Realising and Embedding 'Youth and Learner voice':** This is strongly positioned throughout GHWY Uni Connect provision. In particular, it is a prospective Cornerstone Programme Theory due to the importance of engaging with 'youth and user voice' as a way to target activities in the appropriate way for our learners.

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## 2. Aims

This report details the period from December 2018 to July 2019 (Phase Two began August 2019), and builds upon the December Phase One Interim report 2018 (Basham and Formby, 2018). During this period, Go Higher West Yorkshire (GHWY) developed substantial new activity, especially in areas such as role models, and community engagement (Formby, Woodhouse and Basham, 2020; Formby, Woodhouse, Basham and Roe, 2020) and embedded 'learner voice' more fundamentally across GHWY Uni Connect.

This report has several substantial aims:

- To identify models of effective WP delivery throughout GHWY Uni Connect from December 2018 to July 2019
- To ensure that there is a record of data collection and analysis of this period.
- To reflect, re-frame and re-configure relevant Programme Theories (PTs) in light of collated data towards the end of Phase One (July 2019). Programme Theory underpins "how programme activities are understood to cause (or contribute to) outcomes and impacts" (Westhorp, 2014: 4).
- To develop a series of Cornerstone Programme Theories.
- To create a series of practice-based recommendations for GHWY Uni Connect staff (based on the analysis of activities) – so that analysis will directly inform and feedback future practice.

The report is structured through the separation of different programme theories. It presents an analysis of Phase One data in reference to PTs, developed in light of the Phase One Interim Report (Basham and Formby, 2018). Each Programme Theory section is split into the following:

- A small literature review/base to create a background for each programme theory
- A list of relevant data sources to that programme theory
- A realist analysis of each initiative
- Recommended changes / reflections on future programme theory development.
- Annex A details practice-based recommendations for each individual programme theory
- Annex B provides a research and evaluation plan covering new Cornerstone Programme Theories, emerging gaps and future research areas.

We also provide an explanation of realist analysis for good practice and future usage (for future reports). Towards the end of the report, we present a series of logic models that illustrate how GHWY has operated over this period – and how GHWY logic model has shifted.

## 2.1 Programme Theories

From the inception of Go Higher West Yorkshire's Uni Connect delivery, we developed a series of Programme Theories upon which we have structured our evaluation framework. To begin, programme theories were developed around the ideal practice of delivery staff and other stakeholders, based on a series of initial interviews and focus groups. This helped "ascertain the rationale regarding the assumptions of stakeholders around how a programme works" (GHWY, 2018: 6). In the Phase One Interim report (Basham and Formby, 2018), we analysed the practices based on the following programme theories:

1. Supporting the parent/carer with appropriate information, and improving links with the school, will influence the young person to take the step into HE.
2. Improving understanding of the value of HE, the costs, and the range of jobs available in industry will influence the young person to take the step into HE (e.g. work experience industry visits, employer talks, and employability links).
3. Supporting and mentoring the young person and giving them more focused attention, confidence and support will influence the young person to take the step into HE.
4. Reaching into a young person's community will change culture and support a young person to take the step into HE.
5. Using positive role models to raise awareness of HE will support a young person to take the step into HE.
6. Taking young people/parents and carers out of their usual environment and into new and challenging contexts/places (e.g. industry visits and HE tours) can change perceptions and perspectives and will support a young person to take the step into HE.
7. Good quality, sustained careers information, advice and guidance (CIAG) will ensure young people make informed choices.
8. Good quality CPD will equip school/college-based staff with the skills and information to support young people to make informed choices.
9. Trained teachers get greater job satisfaction and an improved job satisfaction from being given more time to invest in young people on an individual level.
10. Trained teachers benefit from peer support across the NCOP programme and feel less isolated in this position, with a better work life balance than in a purely teaching based role.

#### **Analysis from Phase One Interim Report**

**1. *Supporting the parent/carer with appropriate information and improving links with the school will influence the young person to take the step into HE***

Need to reflect on the delivery of information to parents (tone is just as important as informational needs). Still a question on what types of events most effectively engage parents overall (that also consider their background and circumstances). Need to also engage with parents in their communities, not just schools and colleges making room for further spatial analysis of the community setting and space

**2. *Improving understanding of the value of HE, the costs and the range of jobs available in industry will influence the young person to take the step into HE***

Improved understanding of the value of HE, costs and range of jobs available is essential but initiatives that deliver information through 'practical' experiences enhances engagement much further.

**3. *Supporting and mentoring the young person and giving them more focused attention, confidence and support will influence the young person to take the step into HE***

At this point, mentoring consistently performs well in every evaluation as a method of supporting students to progress to higher education. The dominant explanation is that students respond well to tailored 'one-to-one' support. Yet, a future programme theory could examine the spatial aspect of mentoring further and explore whether different types of mentoring strategies lead to different CMO configurations in different communities and in different institutions.

**4. *Reaching into a young person's community will change culture and support a young person to take the step into HE***

Future empirical work could develop a stronger sense regarding how communities perceive 'culture' – and therefore how WP is then interpreted and adopted. Before making a firm programme theory recommendation, data from the community grants programme can also be analysed.

**5. *Using positive role models to raise awareness of HE will support a young person to take the step into HE***

'Role models' have been particularly effective when students are learning about a sector/career/HE course in the first instance. This is because 'role models' provide a different experience (and knowledge-base) for students to engage with (that often exists outside of their community)

Future amendments to the 'role model' programme theory could be to emphasise the practical experiences as this has proven substantive in engaging young people to take the steps into HE.

**6. *Taking young people/parents and carers out of their usual environment and into new and challenging contexts/places can change perceptions and perspectives and will support a young person to take the step into HE***

Taking young people out of their usual environment has proven to be effective in numerous initiatives (Castleford Housing Project and Go Higher in Healthcare specifically). Young people emphasise that these new experiences 'open up' the possibility of higher education, to ask questions and learn. Yet, further, the evaluations reinforce arguments that outsider contexts (such as HE or businesses) enhance learning and the receipt of information. We have an emerging empirical gap regarding parents. Future evaluation could examine how parents engage with being taken out of their environments into different contexts to learn about progression and higher education.

**7. *Good quality, sustained CIAG (careers, information, advice and guidance) will ensure young people make informed choices.***

In terms of CIAG, programmes that have sought to take a career-orientated approach (insofar that they have emphasised a HE as a pathway to a specific career) find that learners tend to respond positively (particularly in terms of learning gain and awareness of different career pathways). However, we have an empirical gap regarding sustained CIAG (especially understanding its impact over of the student lifecycle).

**8. *Good quality CPD will equip school/college-based staff with the skills and information to support young people to make informed choices***

HEPO staff noted some training needs could be more specific in terms of the overall context of their institution. For instance, CPD could focus on ways to ensure effective WP delivery in larger institutions, as well as the challenges of shifting cultures in schools and colleges where WP provision is a relatively new development.

**9. *Dedicated progression staff in schools/colleges have more time to invest in young people and support them in planning for their future***

To enhance WP provision in schools and colleges through the HEPO role, future considerations might examine the case for this position and the spatial significance of it.

**10. *Dedicated progression staff in schools/colleges facilitate the delivery of outreach activity aimed at helping young people to make informed choices***

Dedicated staff in schools allows for substantive WP activity. Yet more empirical data could also examine the extent such activity leads to informed choices (outcome data could be ascertained through the HEAT data). We could devise a new programme theory on the how culture change is achieved in school and college environments

The PTs have stayed consistent throughout Phase One (especially PTs ranging from 1 to 7). However, there have been modifications. Programme Theories 8 and 9 were altered to take

into account non-teaching focused roles (that make-up GHWY staffing base that deliver WP in schools and colleges). Furthermore, analysis of the interim report (figure 1) indicated that modifications were needed part-way through Phase One.

Specifically, alterations to PTs that addressed the role of outreach officers across Go Higher West Yorkshire Uni Connect (PT8, PT9 and PT10) became apparent after we conducted empirical research on the role of such delivery staff in divergent institutions in creating WP-based provision (Formby, Woodhouse and Basham, 2020a; Formby et al, 2020b). This identified that Higher Education Progression Officers (HEPOs) brought a wide range of experiences, up-to-date information and skills to their everyday practice. Specifically, Formby et al. (2020a) found that in contexts where staff could introduce and shape WP, there was increased delivery of outreach activity. In addition, it was also evident that a stronger focus on the role of the relationships shared between HEPOs and learners over the student lifecycle was essential to embedding cultures of WP. The new PTs were created to ensure these considerations were sufficiently captured:

8. Skilled, informed and CPD trained staff ensure that young people receive appropriate support and up-to-date information that helps them to make informed choices.

9. Dedicated progression staff in schools/colleges have more time to invest in young people through the delivery of outreach activity aimed at helping young people to make informed choices.

Furthermore, GHWY Uni Connect activity has always focused on participatory methods and approaches in its delivery of Uni Connect, especially in terms of shaping appropriate support for learners. Yet, the development of 'learner voice' has particularly emerged throughout Phase One as fundamental to all work in GHWY (especially in relation to more community focused activities). The importance of capturing 'learner voice' across the Uni Connect project, and bringing together various strands of WP activity in a new Programme Theory became clear. A new programme theory was devised:

10. Embedding youth and learner voice ensures participatory outreach activity that meets need (through acknowledging community context of the young person) and helps learners to make steps into higher education.

A key consideration regarding Programme Theory development is that it is a fluid and iterative process (see Section Three, 'Methods' below for a more detailed explanation on Programme Theory development). This has meant developing reports throughout to ensure reflective practice and consideration of how and where programme theories need to change (or have

changed in 'practice'). As this report covers the period up to July 2019 and is focused on the end of Phase One, it will reflect on a new set of Programme Theories for Phase Two (see Section Five). In addition, we propose '**Cornerstone Programme Theories**' – these begin to consolidate our different Programme Theories to examine wider and deeper themes. This will support future analysis in developing causal explanations behind 'outcomes' data, especially in relation to Higher Education Analysis Tracker Data (HEAT) as the final report is developed.

### 3. Methods

The report uses a realist evaluation approach to analyse a series of Uni Connect activities where we have identified context-mechanism-outcome configurations (CMOCs) focused on how, why and in what circumstances initiatives have worked. They inform us how outcomes are being achieved and what future considerations are needed for our programme theory framework. Our empirical data takes different formats – some relate more to outcomes (which are typically more quantitative proportional data), whilst others focus more on feedback from respondents (we have typically utilised such data to explore context and mechanistic factors).

This section is going to break down how data is analysed in a realist way. In practice, this works through the following:

- We measure separate contexts, mechanisms and outcomes
- We create (c)context(s), (m)mechanisms and (o)outcomes configurations (CMOCs)

Generally, we have evaluated retrospectively (e.g. after an event through quantitative or qualitative approaches) or we have commissioned specific projects (e.g. qualitative interviews with parents / carers, or focus groups with HEPO staff and management to understand more about WP delivery). We attempt to build into our evaluations questions that relate to 'how, why and in what circumstances' our initiatives are working. As we have collated data on the initiatives, these have been analysed to better understand the different circumstances in which they work. Evaluation materials have been attached in appendices. See below for a summary on realist evaluation.

#### 3.1 – What is Realist Evaluation

RE provides an innovative approach to evaluating WP activity, as it goes beyond 'what works' – instead seeking to uncover underlying explanations behind different outcomes. Realist enquiry asks not only whether interventions are effective or not, but also (and more importantly for locally tailored outreach), moves us to consideration of how, why and in what circumstances WP programmes or activities work. The UK government has explicitly questioned the efficacy of widening participation activity as well as the utilisation of contemporary WP evaluation methodology (DoE, 2019). This highlights the importance of both

finding effective WP activity that promotes access-to-HE for disadvantaged students (Gorard, 2006), and robust evaluation approaches that exemplify good practice in the WP sector. In particular, Harrison (2019) notes that although modern WP is often well-intentioned – some measures have become ‘deadweight’ (an assumption that activities lead to associated and positive outcomes), and stresses that “we need evaluations that focus [on] changes not outcomes” (Harrison, 2019).

RE subscribes to a general causal model – where underlying and unseen mechanisms operate in pre-existing contexts – in turn explaining why outcomes are differentiated. In doing so, it recognises that attempting to establish direct causal relationships between intervention and impact is complex – making it an ideal approach for WP evaluators who are attempting to understand unseen factors that limit HE engagement. An example of the RE approach is the introduction of WP mentoring schemes for learners that qualify for WP criteria (resource), with the purpose of assessing how this shifts the practice of WP outreach workers through increased emphasis on one-to-one work (reasoning) – together creating what is termed a ‘programme mechanism’. Yet, crucially programme mechanisms differ in relation to the contexts in which they operate. In this instance, the introduction of a mentoring scheme will have substantially different outcomes because of wider contextual influences – e.g. differences in the training of staff or different organisational arrangements. Indeed, it is this focus on context(s) that allows RE to be effective in analysing a wide range of WP programmes – especially in the community space. Pawson (2018: 212) notes how contexts in RE include ‘locations’ (spatial and geographical characteristics), ‘individuals’ (e.g. training), ‘interrelationships’, ‘institutional arrangements’ (e.g. organisational arrangements) and the wider infrastructure (e.g. wider social, economic and cultural contexts). Accounting for contexts can elucidate what is happening with WP in different settings.

### 3.2 Key Data Sources and Programme Theories

We base this evaluation on several initiatives that took place from December 2018 to July 2019. Key initiatives:

- Access-all-Areas
  - Go Higher West Yorkshire, Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and Backstage Academy worked in partnership to host the ‘Access All Areas’ event, bringing together employers and training providers to showcase the exciting career and higher education opportunities available within the live events and creative industry.
- Learner Voice Live

- This event showcased participatory outreach projects to parents, teachers, and outreach professionals. This was presented by students themselves with special performances that highlighted a range of Uni Connect activities.
- Focus group with students from Leeds City College
  - Focus group on a range of GHWY activities (mainly campus visits and events)
- Progression Module Plus
  - A targeted module for GHWY Uni Connect learners to support key skills and develop progression plans
- Future Programmes (Notre Dame)
  - A targeted programme at Notre Dame Sixth Form College that gave learners a range of industry and HE-based experiences
- Collaborative Taster Day(s)
  - A series of workshops at different University and non-University settings on what HE life is like (as well as what learners could do with undergraduate degrees).
- Go Higher into Healthcare
  - A work experience programme that took learners out to different healthcare settings across West Yorkshire
- NCOP Double Decker Bus
  - A bus that went across West Yorkshire (particularly targeting 'cold spots' in terms of HE engagement).

Table 1 lists both programme theories and their different initiatives:

Programme Theory	Initiative	Data collection	Potential CMO Data (Context, Mechanism and Outcomes)
1. <b>Supporting the parent</b> with appropriate information and improving links with their school/college will influence the young person to take the step into Higher Education.	1. Learner Voice Live	Two Episodes of 'Learner Voice' Live	Context(s), Mechanisms and Outcome(s)
	2. NCOP Double Decker Bus	Evaluation report (comprising qualitative data)	Context(s), mechanism(s) and outcome(s)

	3. Access All Areas	Parent interview	Context(s), mechanism(s) and outcome(s)
2. <b>Improving understanding of the value of Higher Education, the costs and the range of jobs available</b> in industry will influence the young person to progress e.g. work experience industry visits, employer talks and employability links.	1. Learner Voice Live	Two Episodes of 'Learner Voice' Live	Outcome(s)
	2. Leeds City College Focus Groups	One Focus Group	Context(s), mechanism(s) and outcome(s)
	3. Progression Module Plus	Evaluation Report	Context(s), mechanism(s) and outcome(s)
	4. Future Programmes	Evaluation of Big Celebration (Notre dame)	Context(s), mechanism(s) and outcome(s)
	5. Collaborative Taster Day(s)	Learning gain data; qualitative statements from learners	Context(s), mechanism(s) and outcome(s)
	6. Go Higher into Healthcare	Evaluation Report	Context(s), mechanism(s) and outcome(s)
	7. NCOP Double Decker Bus	Evaluation report (comprising qualitative data)	Context(s), mechanism(s) and outcome(s)
3. <b>Supporting and mentoring the young person</b> and giving them more focused attention, confidence and support will influence the young person to take the step into Higher Education.	1. Learner Voice Live	Two Episodes of 'Learner Voice' Live	Context(s), mechanism(s) and outcome(s)
	2. Progression Module Plus	Evaluation Report	Context(s), mechanism(s) and outcome(s)
	3. Future Programmes BIG Celebration	Evaluation of Big Celebration (Notre dame)	Context(s), mechanism(s) and outcome(s)
	4. Go Higher into Healthcare	Evaluation Report	Context(s), mechanism(s) and outcome(s)

4. <b>Reaching into a young person's community</b> will change culture and support a young person to take the step into Higher Education.	1. Learner Voice Live	Two Episodes of 'Learner Voice' Live	Context(s), mechanism(s) and outcome(s)
	2. Go Higher into Healthcare	Evaluation Report	Context(s), mechanism(s) and outcome(s)
	3. NCOP Double Decker Bus	Evaluation report (comprising qualitative data)	Context(s), mechanism(s) and outcome(s)
5. <b>Using positive role models</b> to raise awareness of Higher Education will support a young person to take the step forward.	1. Learner Voice Live	Two Episodes of 'Learner Voice' Live	Context(s), mechanism(s) and outcome(s)
	2. Progression Module Plus	Evaluation Report	Context(s), mechanism(s) and outcome(s)
	3. Future Programmes	Evaluation of Big Celebration (Notre dame)	Context(s), mechanism(s) and outcome(s)
	4. Collaborative Taster Day(s)	Learning gain data; qualitative statements from learners	Context(s), mechanism(s) and outcome(s)
	5. Go Higher into Healthcare	Evaluation Report	Context(s), mechanism(s) and outcome(s)
	6. NCOP Double Decker Bus	Evaluation report (comprising qualitative data)	Context(s), mechanism(s) and outcome(s)
6. <b>Taking young people and parents/carers out of their usual environment</b> and providing new and challenging perceptions and perspectives will support a young person to take the step into Higher Education.	1. Learner Voice Live	Two Episodes of 'Learner Voice' Live	Context(s), mechanism(s) and outcome(s)
	2. Leeds City College Focus Groups	One LCC focus group	Context(s), mechanism(s) and outcome(s)
	3. Progression Module Plus	Evaluation Report	Context(s), mechanism(s) and outcome(s)
	4. Future Programmes	Evaluation of Big Celebration (Notre dame)	Context(s), mechanism(s) and outcome(s)

	5. Collaborative Taster Day(s)	Learning gain data; qualitative statements from learners	Context(s), mechanism(s) and outcome(s)
	6. Go Higher Into Healthcare	Evaluation Report	Context(s), mechanism(s) and outcome(s)
	7. NCOP Double Decker Bus	Evaluation report (comprising qualitative data)	Context(s), mechanism(s) and outcome(s)
7. <b>Good quality, sustained careers information, advice and guidance (CIAG) will ensure young people make informed choices.</b>	1. Progression Module Plus	Evaluation Report	Context(s), mechanism(s) and outcome(s)
	2. Future Programmes	Evaluation of Big Celebration (Notre dame)	Context(s), mechanism(s) and outcome(s)
	3. Collaborative Taster Day(s)	Learning gain data; qualitative statements from learners	Context(s), mechanism(s) and outcome(s)
8. <b>Skilled, informed and CPD trained staff</b> ensure that young people receive appropriate support and up-to-date information that helps them to make informed choices.	Sufficient data was generated in terms of programme theory 9 earlier in Phase One – particularly regarding the role of Higher Education Progression Officers (Basham and Formby, 2018).		
9. <b>Dedicated progression staff in schools/colleges</b> have more time to invest in young people through the delivery of outreach activity aimed at helping young people to make informed choices.	1. Learner Voice Live	Two Episodes of 'Learner Voice' Live	Context(s), mechanism(s) and outcome(s)

10. <b>Embedding youth and learner voice</b> ensures participatory outreach activity that meets need (through acknowledging community context of the young person) and helps learners to make steps into higher education	1. Learner Voice Live	Two Episodes of 'Learner Voice' Live	Context(s), mechanism(s) and outcome(s)
	2. LCC Focus Group	One LCC focus group	Context(s), mechanism(s) and outcome(s)
	3. Future Programmes	Evaluation of Big Celebration	Context(s), mechanism(s) and outcome(s)

*Table 1: GHWY Initiatives and Programme Theories from (CMO configurations)*

Rather than asking 'what works', realist approaches focus all data collection with the following in mind by also asking:

- What works?
- For whom?
- In what circumstances?
- And why?

These four questions provide insight into underlying relationships that explain 'how' the outcomes were caused and the influence of context. Data collected on each Programme Theory allows analysis of the separate processes at play, and theorises the relations and connections between pre-existing contexts, the underlying mechanisms that occur (or do not occur), and how associated outcomes then develop. By linking this together, we can develop new 'Programme Theories' which may serve as better explanations of what is occurring in the overall programme. The key aspect of realist research is that it is iterative. This means our approach to assessing and evaluating the GHWY programme relies on a cycle of exploring what works and making appropriate adaptations and changes (if required) to inform future delivery. This report identifies potential CMO configurations – a process which is currently emergent and ongoing. At the end of Phase One, we are in a position where each Programme Theory has substantive data (although there is more evaluation data to add to our framework over Phase Two).

#### 4. Analysis – Programme Theories

The next section goes through the programme theories in reference to specific initiatives that are most relevant.

*Programme Theory 1: Supporting the parent/carer with appropriate information, and improving links with the school, will influence the young person to take the step into HE.*

##### Literature Review

The influence of general parental involvement with learners has associations with higher educational access and attainment. However, the shape of parental involvement is complex and takes different forms such as:

*Good parenting in the home, including the provision of a secure and stable environment, intellectual stimulation, parent-child discussion, good models of constructive social and educational values and high aspirations relating to personal fulfilment and good citizenship; contact with schools to share information; participation in school events; participation in the work of the school; and participation in school governance (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003: 4).*

Furthermore, the nature of parental involvement is additionally influenced by social class, ethnicity, the age of the child (and it typically diminishes as the child gets older). It is often mediated by the learner taking an active role, and by individual educational attainment – with higher levels of attainment associated with heightened parental involvement (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003: 4). Supporting parents with appropriate information about HE also requires acknowledgment of the broader role parents play over the student lifecycle in supporting learners. More specifically, empirical evidence points towards parents as key influencers on the decision-making processes in which young people engage when choosing a higher education subject or institution (Ball et al. 1995, 1999; Brooks 2003, 2004), although the nature of parental involvement takes different forms (e.g. emotional, financial and providing informational based support) (Al-Yousef, 2009). As such, ensuring that parents have appropriate information about ‘progression-to-HE’ will support young people to enter HE as it increases the amount of support on offer to learners.

##### Relevant Initiatives:

- Learner Voice Live
- NCOP Double Decker Bus
- Future Programmes

## Findings

- Analysis of Learner Voice Live points to substantial benefits of contextualised learning and experiences for both learners and parents. This was a showcase of a wide array of Go Higher activities (which have been observed in previous evaluations as impactful, such as the Castleford Housing Project and Young Researchers), yet from examining students involved in Learner Voice Live (YouTube videos/transcripts) it was also evident that there were 'added' benefits from students 'performing' (mechanism) to an audience comprised of parents/carers, other students and GHWY staff who previously worked with and supported them. This resonates with the power of previous performances such as Access-all-Areas (2018):
  - Parent: *'It just brought something alive and it just opened my eyes completely. Every child and every parent must have been awoken in there....It made you want to engage with people because of the passion they had. It just oozed passion'.*
  - Parent: *'The kids were just in awe of the performances so I noticed that my son was really engaged in it but also me too as well so it was fabulous. You know when everything falls into place so I feel now I'm walking away with everything falling into place'.*
- Both learners and parents made note of the importance of reaching out to different communities (especially communities where HE felt more remote). In particular, activities that reached outwards to parents in community spaces were a way of ameliorating such distances. My Ovenden (which featured on Learner Voice Live) specifically invited parents to events to show what learners had made:
  - Outreach officer: *'the last session that we had was a celebration event at Dean Clough galleries where we invited the parents and the families to come along. The girls were able to have their work as an exhibition there. So they're able to show what they've done has an end product'* (HEP, My Ovenden)
- Furthermore, 'Learner Voice Live' emphasised to parents the importance of HE as a potential aspiration as well as the range of options available.
  - Presenter: *can you put some positive words to describe what you seen here today?*
  - Parent: *Inspiring and following your dreams*
  - Parent: *The options. Definitely the range of the options. I'm really shocked.*

- The ‘NCOP Double Decker Bus’ initiative involved a bus that went round different communities. It involved 12 HEPs working collaboratively to provide a physical opportunity to bring higher education information to community ‘cold spots’. It was particularly effective in reaching parents of Uni Connect learners (although, it was also emphasised that diversionary activities were perhaps needed for young children, in order to facilitate more focused discussion with parents). In particular these interactions often were focused on specific information about HE:
  - *‘Some great conversations with parents/carers; many asking specific questions about finance/degree apprenticeships’*

#### Recommended Changes to Programme Theories:

- Evident emphasis on community engagement and reaching out to the community to engage with parents throughout phase one – this has worked extremely well.
- Parents respond to ‘performative’ events extremely well (such as Learner Voice Live and Access-all-Areas).
- Furthermore – parents valued information about HE and HE options in particular throughout Phase One. This needs to continue in Phase Two.

*Programme Theory 2: Improving understanding of the value of Higher Education, the costs and the range of jobs available in industry will influence the young person to progress e.g. work experience industry visits, employer talks and employability links.*

#### Literature Review:

The efficacy of ensuring that young people have information about the value of HE (including costs and careers available) is a widely-held assumption in UK Widening Participation discourse. Perceptions of the value of higher education influence participation more broadly “with those expecting to receive value for money and achieve a good qualification and a positive job outcome more likely to progress” (Bowes et al, 2015: 97). This is reflected in Uni Connect partnerships’ strategic development of interventions aimed at ensuring access to HE-related information, advice and guidance – particularly as learners are less knowledgeable about some of the practical aspects of HE such as costs and funding (Tazzyman et al, 2018: 10). In addition, career provision in schools and colleges has been criticised for being inadequate and patchy (OFSTED, 2013) – leading to the implementation of ‘Gatsby’ benchmarks regarding careers advice and support through workplace experience visits and talks in schools and colleges across the UK (Holman, 2014: 24). There is little mention in the ‘Gatsby’ benchmarks about the intersection of careers advice and higher education outreach as they are treated as separate domains. Future work could examine how careers provision and HE outreach can coalesce.

Empirical work shows that learners begin to engage with careers around GCSEs (Year 10 and 11) – and have sharpened and increased career expectations by the time they approach A-levels (Bowes et al, 2015). However, overall, learners lack awareness of the labour market and the qualifications needed for specific pathways through the labour market (Holman, 2014). This lack of information may impact young people from disadvantaged backgrounds in particular. Therefore, making learners aware of varying career pathways, and opportunities in local and national labour markets from earlier in the student lifecycle is likely to have greater impact. Furthermore, such outreach also needs to inform and involve parents of careers and opportunities, as this also influences HE applications (Bowes et al, 2015: 91).

Improving levels of understanding in relation to the ‘value of HE’, however, is complicated. Different social groups have mixed views on the benefits and value of HE – and therefore may respond differently to information about HE in light of their circumstances and backgrounds. Social divisions such as age, gender, race and ethnicity and disability all impact confidence in individual ability to cope with the demands of HE. Young people approaching the transition point at 18 have increased levels of self-reported confidence and knowledge regarding the benefits of HE (with Black and Asian learners reporting highest levels of confidence and knowledge). Whilst disabled learners tend to be less confident about the benefits of HE and their individual ability to cope with the demands of HE (Tazzyman et al, 2018: 10). Similarly, take-up of extra-curricular activity is also subject to socio-economic inequality. Greenbank and Hepworth (2008) find less involvement with extra-curricular activities amongst their sample of working-class HE students at university – but also emphasise that less involvement begins much earlier in the student lifecycle before working-class students even arrived in HE.

### Relevant Initiatives

- Learner Voice Live
- Leeds City College focus group
- Progression Module Plus
- Future Programmes
- Collaborative Taster Day(s)
- Go Higher into Healthcare
- NCOP Double Decker Bus

### Findings

- This was a prominent programme theory throughout Phase One with a wide range of WP activity designed to embed HE knowledge and understanding. However, some initiatives were focused on different delivery mechanisms – in particular, specific tailored activity (e.g. ‘Progression Module Plus’ and ‘Go Higher into Healthcare’) targeted specific gaps in knowledge. As seen with earlier evaluations, this meant that initiatives with specific focus/environments were able to tap into ‘on-the-job’/practical learning’ mechanisms - and

obtain positive learning gain outcomes as a result (as shown in figure 1 below from Progression Module Plus).

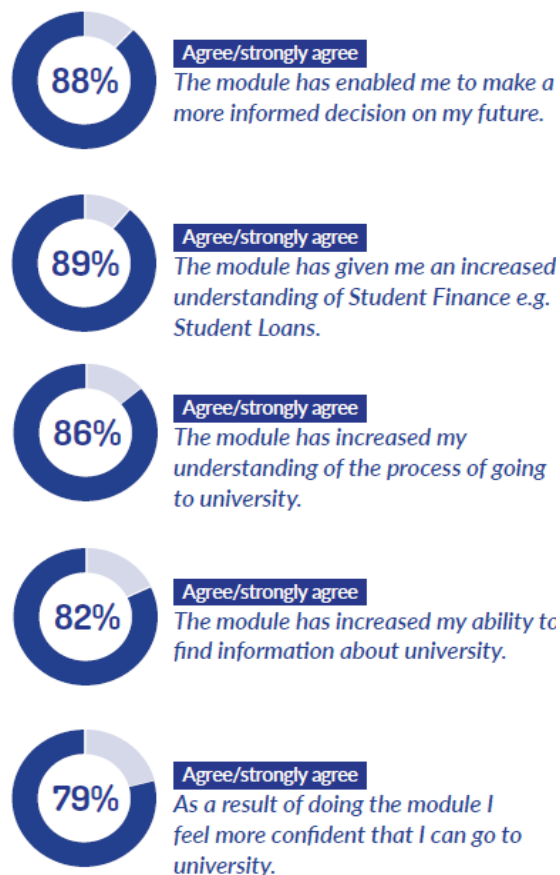


Figure 1: Progression Plus - Outcomes

- The Leeds City College focus group reflected on learners' experiences of a range of activities (including: Campus visits – Universities of Manchester and Huddersfield; Employer talks at LCC; Mock interviews; First Direct events; Herd Farm Outdoor Activity Centre; Video-making activities). Again, a focus on 'practical' experiences ran through this intervention (helping elucidate the range of experiences available through entry to HE) – especially in terms of campus visits that both resulted in students applying (outcomes) and learners experiencing what university life was like:
  - *'I noticed how the students, how they lived there and I just wanted to have that kind of lifestyle and that inspired me to go to university'.*
- Further analysis of the City College focus group with students (which was specifically focused on discussions around HE knowledge and understanding) pointed towards other delivery mechanisms regarding learning and understanding around HE – especially in terms of personal and tailored forms of delivery supported by the HEPO and student ambassadors.

Although some participants knew they could access information about HE online or through department heads and teaching staff, they appreciated the presence of dedicated staff or student ambassadors in particular. Specifically, learners note confidence in the information provided:

- *‘Sometimes the information online doesn’t say the truth and when you talk to the person [...] you just feel more safe about it’.*
- *‘If you’re speaking to someone it gets a lot more information across’.*
- Analysis of Collaborative Taster Days indicated the importance of campus visits to impart information about University courses and subject areas. These were attended by a wide range of schools and colleges across West Yorkshire including Bradford Academy; Carlton Bolling College; Cockburn John Charles Academy; Immanuel College and Trinity Academy Halifax – and were found to be effective for all schools and colleges involved. In particular:
  - Outcome from Collaborative Taster Days was explicitly noted to have a number of beneficial outcomes, especially in terms of the art gallery and Bioethics workshops – again we see the importance of ‘practical/demonstrative’ based mechanisms:
  - *‘I enjoyed visiting the art gallery and the 3D modelling activities’*
  - *‘The art museum in the morning. How interactive it was, I found the bioethics workshop very interesting as it gave people a chance to share their opinions’*
- An interesting outcome about employability visits has been the importance of how such information is delivered – especially in terms of the proximity of HEPO and student ambassador (supporting throughout the day/visit, etc.). This posits that the presence of such staff helps support the delivery of ‘hot knowledge’ (where learners respond more positively to information when delivered by relatable figures) – e.g. role models, HEPO staff and student ambassadors:
  - *‘Most of my group at college [...] we had to figure it out ourselves. We had no support in college [...] having Claire and having the ambassadors there to help us actually benefitted us a lot’.*

### Recommended Changes to Programme Theories

- There is considerable high quality work in this area across GHWY. Also, it is apparent that there is some diversity in terms of ‘value of HE’ based initiatives – some more traditional WP models rely on information about HE in certain sectors, whilst others use the context of HE as a springboard to think about careers.

- Specifically, this programme theory highlights the importance of trust and the veracity of the information being imparted to learners. Learners prefer, and trust, information 'from the horse's mouth', as it were. These ideas of truth and the importance of who delivers the message, also resonate with the Mentoring (PT3) and Role Model (PT5).
- However, a focus on 'practical experience' based mechanisms has emerged and seems to work well in any context where it is employed. In particular, this may be because it brings aspects from other programme theories together (PT6: 'taking students out of their usual environment', PT5: 'role models' and PT3: 'support and mentoring'). This might posit a larger cornerstone PT to investigate.

*Programme Theory 3: Supporting and mentoring the young person and giving them more focused attention, confidence and support will influence the young person to take the step into Higher Education.*

### *Literature Review*

Supporting and mentoring young people is a substantive part of WP in the UK. It has been perceived as central to how WP operates in the school or college setting. Previous research has identified the importance of mentoring-based approaches specifically (Rogers, 2010), especially in terms of supporting mentees non-academically and consistently – driven by the perception that mentors were personally invested in the mentee and their future, although it requires significant resources (Rogers, 2010). Other research has found that e-mentoring has particularly worked well: 'this approach may have helped overcome the social disadvantage faced by the applicants' (Smith et al, 2013: 124).

Pawson develops a framework that explains why it is assumed that mentoring works, noting there are three concepts "as ways of describing differences in the mentor/mentee relationship *and* as explanations of why some partnerships seem to flourish better than others" (Pawson, 2004: 2). These are 'status differences' (the respective social standing of the partners); 'Reference group position' (the social identity of mentor and protégé) and the Mentoring mechanism(s) (the interpersonal strategy that affects change). Furthermore, Pawson (2004) goes into some detail about distinctive mechanisms within the mentoring process:

- Affective contracts? A mentor that offers the hand of friendship. They work in the affective domain trying to make mentees feel differently about themselves.
- Direction Setting? This mentor may provide cognitive resources, offering advice and a guiding hand though the difficult choices confronting the mentee.

- Coaching? Still others place hands on the mentees' shoulders – encouraging mentees into practical gains, skills and qualifications.
- Advocacy? Some mentors introduce mentees to networks, sponsoring them in that opportunity, using the institutional wherewithal at their disposal.

Indeed, taking into account this framework, it is evident that WP specifically relies on a mixture of these different factors and is considerably more complex than on the surface. The nature of mentoring also shifts in relation to individual needs of different groups (such as Year nine to Year 13). For instance, there may be a need for more affective relationships when attempting to build confidence or perhaps more directional relationships when advising on the navigation of HE choices. In particular, mentoring should attempt to locate the needs of the individual learner as well as the context they reside in.

### Relevant Initiatives

- Learner Voice Live
- Progression Module Plus
- Future Programmes
- Go Higher into Healthcare

### Findings

- Support and mentoring is a substantive aspect of many GHWY initiatives – yet different models emerge based on the overall nature of the intervention. For instance, the Future Programmes (engaged with sixth Form students) involved extensive 'coaching' and 'skills' based mentoring throughout their journey to HE (see figure 2).



Figure 2: Future Programme - Design

- The multi-faceted aspect of Future Programmes (and its relatively long-term focus) mean that support (provided by the HEPO/outreach officer) is embedded throughout this particular trajectory – and good relationships could be built as a result:
  - *'Having key staff in the curriculum leading programmes. Having key structure to all 5 future programmes to ensure consistency. Seeing students in person to communicate helped build good relationships. Students seemed more comfortable to ask questions once they had participated in a trip to the careers dept [sic].*
- Other initiatives such as Progression Module Plus sought to support students through more specific and targeted means. Progression Module Plus engaged Uni Connect target learners across West Yorkshire. The programme is delivered via a series of workshops held at institutions within the GHWY partnership. As the aim here was to provide specific guidance on HE access, the model of mentoring and support was more targeted in terms of specific information needed to access University. The model comprised:
  - *'On the programme, learners explore their Higher Education and career options, investigate the financial implications of studying or entering a career, draft a personal statement and gain interview and presentation experience. School and college staff support their students through guided tasks and assessments, and staff from Higher Education institutions add their expertise through the delivery of in-school workshops and campus visits'.*
  - Further, almost all participants (84%) rated the programme as good or excellent in their post-programme review survey, suggesting they found the guidance and support useful.
- Learner Voice Live showcased different mentoring models. This event involved the mentoring of presenters, who attended several sessions at Bradford College TV studio in order to equip them with the skills and confidence to present different GHWY activities.
- Further, events showcased through Learner Voice Live (that learners mentioned and explained) emphasised other mentoring models that worked in the community, such as My Ovenden.
  - Mentoring in My Ovenden necessitated empathy and understanding, and often aimed to engage with lived experience of the learner in their community. This approach helped re-frame barriers to engagement to HE. Outreach officers sought to build confidence and awareness of HE through role models and exploration of the wider community context and perspective. The project used photography as

spur both to subjective reflection and to reimagining local space and identity, increasing participants' inclination and confidence to engage with HE:

- *'I've seen development in the confidence and the girls just using sort of using technology and being proud of their work and hopefully they've been enjoyed being able to go to higher education Institute's like Calderdale college and meet with different people so they met with students who are now go into university they met with tutors who work with that technology and they met professionals in that environment as well' (My Ovenden Mentor).*

#### Recommended Changes to Programme Theories

- Mentoring has been a substantial aspect of GHWY Uni Connect provision, and data indicates it is working really well. However, it is perhaps important to reflect on the nature and overall context of mentoring at different points in the student lifecycle, and how mentoring models might shift as a result.
- There is scope to develop 'mentoring' into a corner stone programme theory through developing and reflecting on different contexts where mentoring occurs. Specifically, community mentoring often means engaging much more with PT4: Reaching out into the community, PT5: Role models and PT10: Learner Voice.
- It is key to have the appropriate support/ mentoring for the correct context/activity, and to vary approaches where necessary.

#### Programme Theory 4: Reaching into a young person's community will change culture and support a young person to take the step into Higher Education.

#### Literature Review

The delivery of community focused WP activity is a relatively new development in the UK (IntoUniversity, 2017). This has been prompted by greater understanding regarding existent 'gaps' in HE participation that can be observed at the 'ward' level (Office for Students, 2020). Working with communities to support learners (and their families) has been found to create effective WP that encourages access-to-HE (Scull and Cuthill, 2010). Such approaches consider different contexts – helping elucidate how WP is working in distinct community spaces (Lumb and Roberts, 2017: 22). Furthermore, by positioning WP in the community, there is increased scope for embedded 'sense of place' (Cresswell, 2009). Pretty et al. (2003: 274) argue that 'sense of place' "emerges from involvement between people, and between people and place". By tapping into the social relations that learners inhabit daily, it has been found that WP has the potential to be transformative in the support it offers learners to access HE (Scull and Cuthill, 2010).

Understanding the role of community 'needs', 'context', 'place' and 'identity' – and how such factors frame HE participation regarding learners and their families – has become a pertinent aspect of WP evaluation (Harrison, 2018). Reaching into a young person's community refers to community playing more substantive roles in supporting young people into HE. Community focused WP has been found to be effective both in the UK (IntoUniversity, 2018) and internationally (Scull and Cuthill, 2010). Rayment-Pickard notes:

We launched IntoUniversity in response to the alarming number of young people from Lancaster West who were leaving school aged 16 with few qualifications or prospects. What shocked us was that this outcome was routine: young people expected nothing else. Not going to university was just normal (Rayment-Pickard, 2018).

This meant that WP responses had to be framed as a different sort of 'normality' – especially in regards introducing ideas of HE and breaking down some of the traditional barriers that around HE. Further, how learner choice plays out regarding HE is "woven into regional cultural and economic histories" of the local community – and there are further complications for WP delivery as "universities are also bound up in specific cultural and economic regional histories" (Donnelly and Gamsu, 2018: 374). For GHWY, the need to engage with the local community has formed a central aspect of the Uni Connect delivery and RE. It is a delivery model that cultivates 'buy-in' from the community – where stakeholders feel they are contributing to WP alongside schools and colleges to enhance existent WP activity and provision (Scull and Cuthill, 2010; IntoUniversity, 2017). HEFCE analysis indicated that there were 27 wards in West Yorkshire that had lower than expected HE participation and were quantified as Polar 3 Q1 'Low Participation Neighbourhoods' (HEFCE, 2014). These wards were concentrated across Leeds, Bradford and Wakefield and have formulated the core focus of GHWY Uni Connect activity. There is, however, considerable sociocultural diversity throughout these wards and this has engendered different types of WP activity.

At more local levels, differences in community context shape how learners perceive HE. Hinton (2011) notes the importance of feelings of 'belonging' to a community space and how this affects learners' capacity to frame what is 'possible' (Hodkinson and Sparkes, 1997). More recent empirical work points towards the importance of beginning with learner sociocultural context through the examination of a 'possible self' (Harrison, 2018: 5) – and how HE is perceived by learners in their future trajectory. Other spatial inequalities include a lack of knowledge of HE (Brooks, 2003), relative spatial mobility (Christie, 2007), and 'contingent choosing' whereby learners feel that by participating in HE they are differentiating themselves from their family and wider community (Ball et al, 2002: 354).

For GHWY, establishing inclusive models in the community is central, as we are able to tap into the ‘social capital’ of the community space – treating it as a social environment where “potential resources...are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (Bourdieu, 1986: 248). Based on this programme theory, a series of community based initiatives engaged individuals in target wards. Specifically, the role of ‘Outreach Officers’ (based in each of our Higher Education Partners, but working collaboratively to represent GHWY and deliver Uni Connect) are positioned in the community, encouraging more established WP activity that is tailored to specific community spaces. This helps re-configure WP to be outward facing, and better positioned to support learners and their families in the context of their own communities (Scully and Cuthill, 2010). The types of outreach activity they deliver are tailored to the needs of the young people and communities in which they operate. Yet, some prominent examples include setting up and running informal activities explicitly positioned as separate to formal school or college settings, such as creative/art focused projects; individual interventions (e.g. one-to-one mentoring); liaison with local community groups (to engage with parents and carers), setting up information stalls in local community spaces and working with local youth groups.

#### Relevant Initiatives

- Learner Voice Live
- Go Higher into Healthcare
- NCOP Double Decker Bus

#### Findings

- Many of GHWY’s Uni Connect initiatives engage with the community space. Learner Voice Live showcased some of the strongest aspects of Go Higher’s community work – such as the Young Researchers project. This gave GHWY learners the opportunity to reflect the relationship between the higher education and community spaces:
  - YR: *‘There was a group of us that had to go out into the community and find out some research about what people in the community thought about higher education...We found out that there are many people in our community who think University is a good thing however there are many people who think it is a very distant thing and can’t get really there’.*
  - *‘Now I’ve been part of the young researchers, I have a much clearer view on what I want to do when I leave school. For me, my next step will be going to college to study A-levels. A year ago, I had no idea what I wanted to do or where I wanted to do. We are all keen on making sure others have the same experience we had’*

- Similarly, Our Ovenden exemplified the importance of engaging with learners in their own community spaces but also emphasised the importance of using the 'community setting' as a vehicle/mechanism to reach out to learners about HE:
  - *'My role is to go out into the community and work with different groups bring in higher education to the community and doing that through different projects so the project that we've been working on here is a photography project called 'Our Ovenden'. We've been working with the group going out into the community and taking images on their mobile phones and looking at things in a different way and a more positive light'.*
- However, it is also important to note that community can refer to a wider set of contexts. In particular, Go Higher into Healthcare finds an alternative approach to community engagement that is framed through work experience in a local health/community context. In this instance, different placements are offered to GHWY learners at healthcare providers throughout West Yorkshire:
  - *'As a result of this project work we hope to generate an informed student pool drawn from the wider community, where students are capable of progressing into careers across the healthcare sector'.*
- Go Higher Into Healthcare has identified a particularly effective way of showing the benefits of HE to learners that want to work in a medical context (especially if that is relevant to the local community setting in which they have grown up). In other words, such initiatives make the link between the West Yorkshire community, HE and medical careers. One learner notes links between their own community context and the medical placement:
  - *'For anyone who speaks a second language you can use that to sell yourself [in your personal statement]. When I was in a GP Practice, I observed the issues that can occur with communication when a patient cannot make themselves fully understood. I live somewhere that is multi-cultural and I happen to speak two languages – I realise how important it is for healthcare professionals to understand cultural and language differences when deciding on treatments'.*
- The NCOP Double Decker Bus had specific success in reaching sites that are challenging to access, however, it was at its most effective when paired with busy events with substantial turnout.

- *'Sites that were particularly good were at festivals such as Beeston, Leeds...and the Bradford Science Festival – this is due to the amount of organic footfall through the day'*
- *'Think success of the event due to long-established community festival with lots of footfall'.*

#### *Recommended Changes to Programme Theories*

- This is evidently a strong aspect of GHWY – much of our activity engages with the wider community context where possible.
- As such, we have substantive evidence of engaging with the community space (community grants). However, we should also reflect on a wider definition of community that takes into account other domains and sites. For instance, local employers might denote a different type of 'community' engagement, strengthening the links between outreach work, parents, HE, and local employers.
- This Programme Theory already acts as a cornerstone PT (as it bring together a substantive amount of GHWY activity – PT1: Parents; PT3: Mentoring; PT5: Role Models and PT6: Environment).

*Programme Theory 5: Using positive role models to raise awareness of Higher Education will support a young person to take the step forward.*

#### *Literature Review*

The use of 'role models' is a significant aspect of WP – especially in conjunction with engaging learners in the community spaces. Specifically, "young people are acutely aware of the function of role models, in helping them move forward" yet they also "may lack access to the sort of role modelling that would be of most use to them" (Cochrane, 2010: 7). At its core, 'role modelling' is a process whereby models typically act as a resource for identity adaptation through the observation of prototypical behaviours (Higgins & Kram, 2001; Singh Vinnicombe & James, 2006; Wright & Wright, 1987).

Role models can take many different forms including outreach staff, students and student ambassadors. Sanders and Higham note, "HE students can provide learners with a role model from which to develop more accurate perceptions of students and challenge negative stereotypes" (Sanders and Higham, 2012: 19). Modern UK WP engages with role modelling extensively, especially in terms cementing mentoring relationships with learners. It is often targeted to address 'a gap' or 'deficit' in terms of relevant knowledge and experience. As Baars et al note, it is "harder for white working class boys to access informal information and role models who can describe the 'lived experience' of higher education and communicate its

tangible benefits” (Baars et al, 2015: 5). Responses are often framed in identifying relevant role models that speak to learners’ individual lived experiences and circumstances.

Yet, it is important to note that relevant role models do not just include those with experience of HE but the surrounding network around learners including families, teachers and friends and advisory outreach staff – and that learners will engage with their own contacts when reflecting on HE access and choices. This means that ‘role models’ should go beyond a carefully constructed version of learners’ identities and should embody the qualities that learners want to aspire to (Barrs et al 2015: 15).

### Relevant Initiatives

- Learner Voice Live
- Progression Module Plus
- Future Programmes
- Collaborative Taster Day(s)
- Go Higher into Healthcare
- NCOP Double Decker Bus

### Findings

- The use of role models was apparent across the majority of initiatives in the latter part of Phase One. Activities that engaged with practical experience of HE / careers in particular utilised ‘role models’ as a delivery mechanism. Data from the **Learner Voice Live** found:
  - *Learner: So in two years, we did like UCAS sessions so that helped us find out what points and which unis which would be best for us. As well as Mark organized a trip to Overbury Sindall [construction site] in Manchester. So we got a chance to go on-site, speak to people who are in the construction industry, and see which path we might want to take down’.*
- In particular, interventions that focused on allowing learners to speak and engage with professionals in the ‘trade’ (whether that was HE or an external employer) offered opportunities for learners to reflect on their own pathways and trajectories.
- Future Programmes was particularly effective at engaging with different role models in University settings. There is also evidence that it improved learners’ understanding of the benefits of HE:
  - *‘I really benefited from different speakers, they gave me a good insight into the different engineering programmes available and made me more aware of university requirements’.*
  - *‘Talks from speakers were helpful with the technical knowledge of their subject area’.*

- A further aspect of ‘role models’ was a tendency amongst learners to engage with outreach officers and HEPO staff as a key part of their trajectory towards HE (as has been the case throughout Phase One). Analysis of the NCOP Double Decker Bus found that student ambassadors could also play a key role in this regard, especially if they had lived experience of HE and specific knowledge regarding courses.
  - *‘Student Ambassadors were AMAZING (Leeds Beckett). Engaging young people outside of the bus’.*
  - *‘My student ambassador at the healthcare event was fantastic. She provided subject specific insightful information to young people in an informative and relatable manner, her knowledge of health care was a huge bonus and valuable to any interactions which she had at the event’.*

### Recommended Changes to Programme Theories

- This is a substantive programme theory, and there is sufficient evidence here that role models are playing a vital role in learning delivery and raising awareness of HE.
- However, there is perhaps some type of variation in what is termed a ‘role model’, and the contexts in which we use ‘role models’. For instance, for outreach officers in the community space, the ‘role models’ play very different roles than others might in the context of a school or college. As HEPs/HEPO staff are considered ‘role models’, there is a need to reflect on how these different identities are performed.
- Further, there is a need to ensure that role models who can relate to prospective learners (for instance, as student ambassadors with specific HE/career knowledge) are able to be integrated into GHWY activities where suitable.

Programme Theory 6: Taking young people and parents/carers out of their usual environment and providing new and challenging perceptions and perspectives will support a young person to take the step into Higher Education.

### Literature Review

By taking young people out a usual environment and giving young people new experiences (e.g. different experiences than what they may be used to in their everyday), WP is able to provide new and challenging perspectives – and particularly aim to broaden horizons of young people where possible. This ensures that WP supports young people to expand a range of ‘possible selves’ through opportunities attached to higher education (Harrison, 2018).

### Relevant Initiatives

- Learner Voice Live
- Leeds City College focus group
- Progression Module Plus
- Future Programmes
- Collaborative Taster Day(s)

- Go Higher Into Healthcare

### Findings

- Taking out students from their usual environment has been key throughout phase one. In particular, learning based activities such as Go Higher in Healthcare, Progression Plus and Future Programmes all have aspects of provision rooted in campus or workplace visits.
- A prominent example of taking learners out of their usual environments was Go Higher in Healthcare through the organisation of 'work placements' where learners could experience what it was like to work in healthcare.
- Future Programmes looked to reflect on the circumstances of learners with a focus on new and atypical experiences away from learners 'usual environments (e.g. a videogames festival). The figures 3 and 4 (see below) are examples of some activities that where learners were taken to environments that demonstrated what careers are possible through higher education.



Figure 3: Future Programme – Yorkshire Games Festival



Figure 4: Future Programme – Visit to BBC Media City

- Activities which sought to engage young people with their wider communities, such as some of those showcased at Learner Voice Live, reflect on learners' relationship to their environment in a different way – where activities take place in light of learners' own community space. Learner Voice Live showcased Castleford Housing Project, Young Researchers and Our Ovenden as examples where learners can engage with a familiar environment (as part of reaching out into the community space). However, participation in these projects engendered new ways of seeing or experiencing their communities and localities. This offered the opportunity for learners to engage with the ideas of 'HE' on their own terms:
  - Outreach officer: *'we called it the Castleford housing project - to the young people and we set them up in housing companies and they sort of project manage there and there was a quantity surveyor and they did loads of research we went on a site visit to an actual building site and we took our construction students...and it was brilliant.'*

#### *Recommended Changes to Programme Theories*

- This is a substantive programme theory that runs across a lot of GHWY – however, there is some variation in terms of *how* taking out learners from their usual environment is deployed

*Programme Theory 7: Good quality, sustained careers information, advice and guidance (CIAG) will ensure young people make informed choices.*

The use of Careers, Information, Advice and Guidance (CIAG) in educational settings is a core part of supporting young people (DfE 2018, p. 12) – in particular such provision assumes that

quality careers guidance and support will help learners make better and more informed choices. The basis of these arguments is that it is key for unlocking access to HE for disadvantaged and underrepresented groups and a way of facilitating intergenerational mobility (Houghton et al, 2020). However, an important aspect here is that careers provision delivery can be complex and that there are contextual factors that shape “a school’s careers provision, including its location, history, ethos and values; its self-evaluation development plans; the position and status of the careers policy, careers advisor, and the students’ profile/background” (Houghton et al, 2020: 1).

### Relevant Initiatives

- Progression Module Plus
- Future Programmes
- Collaborative Taster Day(s)

### Findings

- A substantial amount of sustained careers information, advice and guidance occurs in more formal module based initiatives. In particular, Progression Module Plus, had several workshops in different areas that were framed in terms of prospective careers – and this also had the added benefit of improving engagement on the module itself:
  - *‘Many [learners] were interested in pursuing careers in the workshop sessions they had registered to attend and this enhanced their engagement with the content and participation in the event overall’* (Feedback from the Progression Module Plus Evaluation Report).
- Similarly, Future Programmes, sought to engage with professionals in different careers through workshops. In particular, the focus here was to facilitate dialogue at events so that learners could be inspired (again reflecting on ‘role models’ as a potential delivery mechanism):
  - *‘Hearing professionals’ career stories to see the different routes and careers in the media. Creating a personal connection; seeing yourself within the people speaking to you – being able to achieve what they have’* (Feedback collected at Futures Programme Celebration Event).
- We also featured extensive Career, Advice Information and Guidance provision in some Collaborative Taster Days – particularly ‘construct your career’. This event involved a series of workshops on construction, design and engineering. Learners that took part noted:
  - *It helped to decide my future pathways. I now know what opportunities are available to me in the future* (feedback from ‘Construct Your Career’ event).

- *The opportunity to speak to people from LAU [Need title here] helped me to think more about opportunities/pathways after college, that I have already considered (the foundation diploma) and helped me to decide if it is right for me (feedback from 'Construct Your Career' event).*

### Recommended Changes to Programme Theories

- This is an identifiable gap (from the initial interim report). However, we now have more empirical data to analyse this programme theory more fully, although there may be a need to articulate what 'CIAG' is.
- Our dominant model has been to deliver 'CIAG' through workshops and events or learning modules. This approach has worked in a range of different contexts – with a particular focus on practical experiences and first-hand knowledge.
- From previous evaluation, we also know that some of this activity can be undertaken by outreach staff (such as HEPO/HEPs), who engage with CIAG through a more dominant focus on HE as a 'pathway' to acquire different careers. There could be interesting analysis on what CIAG means in that context.

*Programme Theory 8: Skilled, informed and CPD trained staff ensure that young people receive appropriate support and up-to-date information that helps them to make informed choices.*

### Literature Review

Research shows that increased guidance and support for young people is essential in regard to progressing to HE – although this can be both 'formal' and 'informal' (Hughes et al, 2010). Yet, the role of CPD (Continual Professional Development), however, is slightly under-researched in the context of Widening Participation (and outreach officers). Moore et al (2013) emphasise the importance of CPD in varying respects noting how training and development are especially key in terms of supporting staff that work with under-represented groups. They argue "staff development would appear to be crucial in the light of repeated findings that emphasise the centrality of teaching and learning relationship" (Moore et al, 2013: 130). One area to reflect on here is the extent that outreach officer's roles and responsibilities vary significantly, and how that might impact different CPD based approaches and strategies (particularly in terms of identifying what types of CPD benefit staff in different contexts).

More widely, the benefits of training are consistently evident. In particular, benefits of training are apparent with staff in numerous contexts. Previously, AimHigher Partnerships focused on staff training as a means to understand progression routes at primary schools (Action on access, 2009). Further, training available for specialist roles such as student ambassadors is particularly effective (Moore et al 2013). In particular, both training and CPD have to be relevant to staff and the activities in which they engage.

### Relevant Initiatives

- Over the Phase One (part two) period, there is an empirical gap for this programme theory. However, overall we have collected substantial amounts of data on outreach staff and the support they provide for learners.
- It is clear that having staff on the ground, building relationships and building trust, is really important. More work is needed, though, to understand the particular skillsets at play and the impact of CPD – on the individuals who receive it, their institutions, and ultimately, the young people with whom they work.

Programme Theory 9: Dedicated progression staff in schools/colleges have more time to invest in young people through the delivery of outreach activity aimed at helping young people to make informed choices.

### Literature Review

Research indicates that outreach staff in communities and schools typically make significant differences in terms of helping young people make informed choices. This is because they allow for a platform for activity and intervention to take shape (Formby, Woodhouse and Basham, 2020a). More broadly, the efficacy of getting staff into schools has been noted in the national evaluation data from Phase One: “locating NCOP staff within schools and FECs to co-ordinate and/or deliver outreach activities boosts the capacity of the schools/FECs to engage with the programme”. Further, this has helped to “support the professional development of teaching staff by raising their awareness of the routes to, and opportunities in, HE” (Tazzyman et al 2018: 3).

Specifically, this approach is essential to achieve positive progression outcomes as dedicated staff can be embedded within schools and colleges (GHWY, 2018a), resulting in more localised approaches. Rather than an ‘off-the-peg’ approach, dedicated staff can develop delivery plans aligned with the particular needs of the young people in their school or college (Formby, Woodhouse and Basham, 2020a; GHWY, 2018). Such an approach takes account of the social and cultural context of the school or college and the wider community within which it is situated. For example, young people in inner-city Leeds, are likely to have different needs and different attitudes to young people in the ex-mining communities that surround Wakefield, and a more dynamic, bespoke approach to outreach delivery can take this into account. As such, the activity can range, for example, from role-model work to inspire and build resilience in boys at risk of disengagement, to travel-confidence initiatives for young people in more remote areas. The presence of outreach staff allows such bespoke outreach activity that complements more traditional staples of WP delivery such as personal statement workshops, mentoring, student finance talks, parental engagement and residentials.

### Relevant Initiatives

- Learner Voice Live

### Findings

- The interim report identified that dedicated progression staff in schools and colleges play a substantial role in supporting WP activity in schools and colleges (Basham and Formby, 2018). Furthermore, we have established ways in which staff can shift and influence institutional cultures through establishing 'sense of place', creating space for WP activity to take place (Formby, Woodhouse and Basham, 2020a). Through interviews with HEPOs during Learner Voice Live, there was an emphasis on positive relationships with learners:
  - HEPO: *I think may actually be in school and having the relationships with young people and them knowing who I am and that they can come to me and makes a massive difference to the impact that I can have. There are two hundred and fifty-one students in our year eleven and I wouldn't want you to test me on it but I reckon I could name every single one of them at if I saw them in the corridor* (Feedback from HEPO from Learner Voice Live).
- Furthermore, these relationships help learners negotiate challenges in their institutions:
  - *Having that relationship with the young people means that I'm able to tailor things to them and having that status in school means I can go and fight their battles and fight their corner with other staff to get the things that they really want and need.* (Feedback from HEPO from Learner Voice Live)

### Recommended Changes to Programme Theories

- Dedicated staff play a significant role in colleges and schools – particularly through the relationships they form with learners. Overall, both Phase One reports (including the interim report) emphasise the importance of such staff.
- However, throughout Phase Two there perhaps needs to be some scope to examine the extent to which institutional change is occurring in schools and colleges, especially to ascertain what support is necessary to embed cultural change regarding Widening Participation.

### Programme Theory 10: Embedding youth and learner voice ensures participatory outreach activity that meets need (through acknowledging community context of the young person) and helps learners to make steps into higher education

Ensuring that young people's voices are part of research is an important aspect of modern Widening Participation. Understanding young people's perspectives and how concepts such as youth and childhood are constructed means taking into account children's and young people's viewpoint in a deeper and more fundamental way (Punch, 2002). As a result, a significant amount of youth-related policy has looked to engage with young people in recent

years. For example, Case and Haines (2020) highlight the importance of 'child-first' approaches in youth justice services – resulting in fairer and more relatable approaches that engage with young people as much as possible.

Similarly, modern WP has also looked to frame provision in terms not just of supporting young people, but also to consider the extent WP empowers and takes into account young people's perspectives about leaving school or college, WP and higher education. Prominent examples include designing and delivering WP activities as acting mentors and higher education ambassadors e.g. Year 13 Uni Connect students working with year 9 Uni Connect students (OfS, 2018). The advantage of creating such user-lead WP is that learners can ensure that WP is working most effectively for those that engage and use it the most. Tangible benefits include building appropriate skills and confidence. Another approach is to invite learners to design and formulate what WP should and can be – ensuring their viewpoints and perspectives are fundamental to provision. Further, it allows enhanced WP that engages through focusing learners' interpretations of their community, and interests that matter to them.

### Relevant Initiatives

- Learner Voice Live (Access-all-Areas)
- LCC Focus Groups
- Future Programmes

### Findings

- Allowing learners to take leading roles in terms of the design and approach of WP activity has been heavily emphasised at GHWY during Phase One. Learner Voice Live specifically ensured that learners both designed and performed WP activity (with support from GHWY staff). In particular, they designed materials for a TV show (that exemplified different GHWY Uni Connect WP initiatives such as Young Researchers / Our Ovenden – also significantly shaped by learners). As such, they took part in a 'News At Six'-style TV broadcast where they could take the lead in how events were framed:
  - *Cuts to News broadcast show with NCOP [Uni Connect] students talking about upcoming event – NCOP [Uni Connect] tonight segment.*

*YP1: And today on NCOP, we are going to be telling you about some special events. The first one is the production park. This is going to be about the arts just in general and this is going to have a lot of live performances and actually some activities that people were there they can actually take part. This is going to be on Wednesday at the 13th of March from 4:00 till 8:30 p.m.*

*YP2: Another event that NCOP is providing is the Ridings events. It is taking place in Wakefield in Ridings shopping centre and it's a event for the local environment to come down and an interactive drop-in event to provide higher education information.*

- In addition, GHWY has also sought to ensure that learners are part of the design process for events. Learner Voice Live and Access All Areas also sought to give learners a platform in other ways, such as designing materials and logo's.
  - *'I'm here today because I won a poster design competition for 'access all areas' as part of GHWY events planning thing - and Nikita got in touch with me saying 'oh we want you to design this logo for an event called 'Learner Voice Live'. So I'm here today to design that logo. The poster for the 'access all areas' event, it was basically supposed to bring across this message that there is an event going on, it had to have all the important information but it also have to link to the company itself'* (Learner reflecting on designing the logo for 'Learner Voice Live' Event).
- Furthermore, where possible, initiatives have been shaped by learners – and this has proven as a mechanism in terms of building confidence and experience. Future Programmes had several workshops dedicated to student projects (such as the 'ASDA Robotics competition', 'Greenpeace Challenge' 'Writing for a student newspaper Task'), whilst Young Researchers sent learners out to research their local communities. This resulted in learners being much more confident and assured about their futures:
  - *YP3: Now I've been part of the young researchers, I have a much clearer view on what I want to do when I leave school. For me, my next step will be going to college to study A-levels. A year ago, I had no idea what I wanted to do or where I wanted to do. We are all keen on making sure others have the same experience we had.* (Feedback from Young Researchers Learner).

#### *Recommended Changes to Programme Theories*

- 'Learner voice' has been regularly engaged throughout GHWY's Uni Connect activity – specifically, there has been increased emphasis throughout the duration of Phase One – especially as 'learner voice' has helped develop high quality WP in numerous ways.
- These include mechanisms rooted in listening and engaging with learners themselves – especially their views on their futures, identities and wider communities.
- In tandem, WP activities have sought to create 'space' where 'learner voice' could be embedded in terms of activity. For instance, Future Programmes uses creative activities/tasks gave learners a platform to engage with – this resulted in substantial

increases confidence, belief and a clearer perspective in terms of the future. Future development could also examine how we bring young people into the design of WP activity – perhaps reflecting on the design of activities and approaches.

- Further 'learner voice' is strongly positioned to be a prospective Cornerstone Programme Theory. This is because it has the potential to be embedded in all that GHWY Uni Connect does (and is so, to a significant extent as it is).

## **5. Discussion**

In analysing initiatives over Phase One, we can make a series of conclusions about the emergent framework of GHWY's Uni Connect work during Phase One. The next section is split into two sections – firstly, programme theories from Phase One are interrogated to ascertain how programme theories have developed throughout Phase One. Secondly, a series of 'Cornerstone Programme Theories' are presented that dig deeper into the specific mechanisms that make GHWY work.

### **5.1 Programme Theories**

#### ***1. Supporting the parent/carer with appropriate information and improving links with the school will influence the young person to take the step into HE***

It is apparent that reaching out to parents is easier in the community space. During Phase One, events with learners that also engaged with their parents/carers worked well because parents responded to 'performative' events (we see this particularly in Learner Voice Live). In communities where there are lower levels of HE participation and HE awareness or knowledge, such events work particularly well. Furthermore, we find that parents explicitly note and value information about HE and HE options in particular. There should be significant emphasis on continuing to build on existing activity.

#### ***2. Improving understanding of the value of HE, the costs and the range of jobs available in industry will influence the young person to take the step into HE***

Throughout the latter half of Phase One, there has been significant activity of this type across GHWY Uni Connect. Different models around the 'Value of HE' are emerging dependent on the settings, community contexts and learner needs. This posits that activities that are exemplifying 'Value-of-HE' need to reflect on what learners and communities feel about HE to begin with – what their perspectives are about HE. In other words, the reason Learner Voice Live and Future Programmes have proven to be so effective in accentuating the 'Value-of-HE' to learners is because they take into account the perspectives of learner themselves.

In the interim report, it was found that "Improved understanding of the value of HE, costs and range of jobs available is essential but initiatives that deliver information through 'practical' experiences enhances engagement much further" (Basham and Formby, 2018:8). This has continued in the latter stages of Phase One. However, what is becoming more apparent is that the focus on 'practical experiences/workshop' based mechanisms works well in any context where it is employed.

### ***3. Supporting and mentoring the young person and giving them more focused attention, confidence and support will influence the young person to take the step into HE***

Throughout Phase One, support and mentoring have consistently performed well in evaluation data – particularly in terms of direct mentoring from HEPOs and HEPs – both in educational and wider communities settings. As noted, learners respond well to tailored ‘one-to-one’ support explicitly (Formby, Woodhouse and Basham, 2020a; Formby et al, 2020b). In the latter stages of Phase One, we have also started to capture some data on ‘mentoring’ in other contexts, including more formal/traditional learning modules. This shows different types of mentoring strategy based on the requirements of support for individual ‘learners’. Specifically, building confidence, belief and sense of identity is a strong aspect of community mentoring. Whereas in traditional learning modules – such as Progression Module Plus – mentoring shifts more towards skill development. Overall, this emphasises how effectively GHWY Uni Connect has adapted where necessary to ensure that learners are getting appropriate types of support and mentoring.

There is perhaps some need to articulate what is meant by ‘skills’ and HE-access (and the support provided to engage and improve individual skills). GHWY Uni Connect has a significant focus on activity about engaging and driving learner skills upwards so that the path towards HE is more easily negotiated. However, outside of mentoring, there may be scope for a dedicated programme theory or modification of existing theory to capture other forms of support.

### ***4. Reaching into a young person’s community will change culture and support a young person to take the step into HE***

Community engagement has become a substantial aspect of GHWY Uni Connect throughout Phase One. Through activities (such as the Community Grants Programme), there has been significant emphasis on reaching out across West Yorkshire. Analysis from the latter part of Phase One indicates that this has continued and proven effective. Learner Voice Live showcased several community based activities that showed the extent to which learners respond well to community engagement. Outreach officers that achieve a deeper ‘sense of place’, in particular, are able to open up a dialogue in the community space where HE becomes normalised (Formby et al, 2020b). It is also evident how important ‘reaching out to the community’ is for other programme theories as well. For instance, reaching out to parents and carers through events in the community has proven to be a significant form of engagement.

Further, there is perhaps a need to reflect on wider definitions of community that takes GHWY activities into other domains and sites. For instance, Go Higher in Healthcare involves substantial engagement with local NHS healthcare settings. Similarly, working with local employers might denote another type of ‘community’ engagement. Bringing different communities together has the potential to strengthen links between outreach work, parents, HE, schools and colleges, the public sector and local employers.

***5. Using positive role models to raise awareness of HE will support a young person to take the step into HE***

Throughout the duration of Phase One, ‘role models’ have proven to be an effective method in supporting GHWY Uni Connect learners as well as raising awareness of HE. The mechanisms here relate to ‘relativity’ (e.g. how a learner relates to another individual) and ‘trust’. ‘Role models’ provide a different experience (and knowledge-base) for students to engage with (that often exists outside of their community). Specifically, ‘Role Models’ have been particularly effective when students are learning about a sector/career/HE course in the first instance – and hearing about that experience from individuals who are active in that field. Any future amendments to ‘role model’ programme theory could emphasise the importance of ‘practical experience’ as this has proven substantive in engaging young people to take the steps into HE throughout Phase One.

In addition, we perhaps need to reflect further on who and what is a ‘role model?’ This would help deepen understanding regarding how role models relate to prospective learners. For instance, student ambassadors could be considered an important role model for learners as they have first-hand experience of University life and courses. In the community contexts, outreach officers are role models who exemplify how the ‘University’ works. What this would mean is a wider definition and alternative models of ‘role model’ practice (again reflecting different contexts and initiatives across GHWY Uni Connect).

***6. Taking young people/parents and carers out of their usual environment and into new and challenging contexts/places can change perceptions and perspectives and will support a young person to take the step into HE***

Taking young people out of their usual environment is a key aspect of GHWY Uni Connect, for example during workshops, subject taster days and university campus visits. Analysis from Phase One points to key initiatives, such as Castleford Housing Project and Go Higher in Healthcare, as integral in opening up the possibility of Higher Education. The mechanisms point towards the importance of ‘new experiences’, which can lead to enhanced learning and receipt of information amongst learners.

However, similarly to the Phase One Interim Report, we perhaps have an emerging empirical gap regarding parents/carers being taken out of their usual environments (although we do have data from Learner Voice Live) that indicates how much parents value atypical activities. Taking into account the fact that there are potentially knowledge gaps about HE amongst parents/carers, and finding ways of engaging these groups through different environments may be an effective form of future engagement.

***7. Good quality, sustained CIAG (careers, information, advice and guidance) will ensure young people make informed choices.***

In the earlier stages of Phase One, we had a slight gap in relation to CIAG. However, we have now developed several programmes that focus more explicitly on CIAG based support and guidance (Progression Module Plus, Future Programmes and Collaborative Taster Days). Programmes that have sought to take a career-orientated approach (insofar that they have emphasised HE as a pathway to a specific career) find that learners tend to respond positively to useful and specific information that gauges learner interest. Furthermore, there has been success with experiential workshops delivered by relevant and experienced role models – we tend to see large learning gains around knowledge of ‘careers’ in such contexts.

However, there is perhaps some grounds to examine what learners think about CIAG – and examining ways in which CIAG is delivered – e.g. through mentoring or more traditional WP. In addition, reflecting on sustained CIAG over time (especially understanding its impact over the course of the student lifecycle) could be beneficial and would provide a deeper articulation regarding what is meant by ‘CIAG’ for GHWY Uni Connect learners.

**8. Skilled, informed and CPD trained staff ensure that young people receive appropriate support and up-to-date information that helps them to make informed choices.**

As noted, during the latter stages of Phase One, there is an empirical gap for this programme theory. However, when examining Phase One overall we have collected substantial amounts of data on outreach staff and the support they provide for learners. The broader empirical picture from that work points to the importance of outreach delivery staff on the ground, building relationships and trust with learners.

There is perhaps a need for more research to understand the particular skillsets of delivery staff and the impact of Continued Professional Development as well, especially with regard to challenges faced in everyday work. Furthermore, this would help identify how to support staff in terms of key activities they engage with: such as effective organisation of WP activity and

effective mentoring strategies (which could be useful in settings where it has proven challenging to embed a WP-based culture).

**9. Programme Theory 9: Dedicated progression staff in schools/colleges have more time to invest in young people through the delivery of outreach activity aimed at helping young people to make informed choices.**

This programme theory shifted in light of the Phase One interim report to examine the role staff play in schools/colleges in the organisation and delivery of WP activity. This has not been a key recent focus (as a considerable amount of empirical research has already been undertaken over Phase One). However, analysis points towards the importance of delivery staff (particularly the relationships they form with learners).

Throughout Phase Two, there perhaps needs to be some scope to examine the extent to which institutional change has been effected as a result of the placement of GHWY Uni Connect staff in school and colleges. It is evident that they often make substantial difference (especially in terms of driving up WP activity in schools and colleges). However, ascertaining the extent of deeper institutional and cultural change regarding Widening Participation also needs to take place.

***10. Embedding youth and learner voice ensures participatory outreach activity that meets need (through acknowledging community context of the young person) and helps learners to make steps into higher education.***

There has been increased emphasis throughout the duration of Phase One on learner voice, culminating in a new programme theory. Analysis from Phase One has indicated the extent to which learner ‘voice’ can contribute to the development of high quality WP in a range of different activities and contexts. It allows for mechanisms rooted in listening and engaging with learners themselves – especially their views on future selves, identities and their wider communities. Furthermore, future development could also examine how we bring young people into the design of WP activity – perhaps reflecting the design activities and approaches.

## **5.2 Cornerstone Programme Theories**

In analysing the Phase One data, it is evident that there are deeper explanations behind why certain programme theories have worked, with many of the theories intersecting with others. As we move into Phase Two, there is perhaps a need to consolidate what these deeper ‘cornerstone programme theories’ are – and how they might illicit further explanation as to how GHWY Uni Connect has worked. To fully articulate these theories, a theory-of-change workshop is recommended (alongside deeper analysis of academic literature). Also, such

theories will require revision and consideration in light of data analysis. The Five cornerstone theories are:

- **Affective and Effective Mentoring:** Different forms of mentoring are extensively used across a range of programmes and activities. A significant amount of GHWY activities are reliant on mentoring for effective programme delivery. Furthermore, different models likely shift in terms of activity and wider context. In particular, two broader mentoring styles emerge – affective mentoring (more in the emotional domain) and effective mentoring (more skills and knowledge based).
- **The ‘Role’ of Role Models:** This **has emerged as the** key delivery mechanism across a lot of GHWY Uni Connect. Whether during more traditional outreach activity or community-based initiatives, the use of ‘role models’ (and the ‘right’ role models for the target audience) has allowed for impactful WP activity. Deeper consideration of ‘role models’ can excavate learner understanding around possible idealised future identities and selves.
- **Experiential Learning:** A significant aspect of activity delivery at GHWY Uni Connect is framed around ‘experiential learning’. This is learning that is developed around practical experiences to drive up engagement amongst learners. Whether in more traditional WP activities, community settings or campus visits/workshops, we find clear evidence of substantial learning gain when emphasis on practical/experiential learning is emphasised.
- **HE and the Community:** This already cuts across much Uni Connect delivery. As communities can be disengaged (or even antagonistic) to HE, working deeply in the community is key in terms of normalising HE in the minds of learners and their parents/carers. It allows a platform of tailored support that reaches out to individual learners and it is also integral in accessing parents and carers (who play a significant role in supporting learners when considering HE). Deeper community consideration could also re-configure different partnerships and find new forms of community engagement (such as engaging with the public sector, external partners and employers) that also form part of the GHWY community engagement strategy.
- **Realising and Embedding ‘Youth and Learner voice’:** This is strongly positioned throughout GHWY Uni Connect. In particular, it is a prospective Cornerstone Programme Theory due to the importance of engaging with ‘youth and learner voice’

as a way to target activities in the appropriate way for our learners. Furthermore, the deeper consideration here is the extent to which embedding youth and user voice enables us to reflect on the identities of our learners. This would help re-frame and re-configure activity so it is more considerate of learners' needs and concerns.

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## 7. Annex A

### Evidence-based Learning for Practitioners

#### Cornerstone Programme Theories: Practitioner Learning

Five **cornerstone programme theories** have emerged. These are programme theories that pull together common themes from the ten already identified, representing the core mechanisms of GHWY Uni Connect delivery. These cornerstone programme theories are as follows, and will be explained in more detail in the Analysis (4.):

- Affective & effective mentoring
- The 'role' of role models
- Experiential learning
- HE and the community
- Realising and embedding youth and learner voice

#### Programme Theory One: Practitioner Learning

Involving parents in HE outreach has been found to be invaluable. One particularly successful way of involving them is inviting them to events where pupils share the work they have produced or experiences they have had during outreach activity.

Parents are keen to receive information about HE, but schools/colleges need to reach out to parents to offer this information. This is especially important in communities with little knowledge of HE: where this is the case, taking information and outreach activity into the community is most successful.

#### Programme Theory Two: Practitioner Learning

Some forms of outreach are much more effective than others in improving young people's understanding of the benefits of HE. These include campus visits, especially when they feature **practical/experiential activity**, such as interactive workshops.

The presence of dedicated outreach staff during outreach activity has also been found to be key. **HEPOs and student ambassadors**, and the knowledge they impart during (and, in the case of HEPOs, before and after) outreach, are especially appreciated by young people.

### Programme Theory Three: Practitioner Learning

Affective and effective mentoring are now a cornerstone programme theory, representing the two forms of mentoring that are used extensively across the GHWY Uni Connect programme. Affective mentoring refers to mentoring in the emotional domain, while effective mentoring refers to mentoring in the practical domain, such as skill sharing.

We have found that mentoring is key in supporting young people to make decisions about HE. Mentoring may be delivered to young people or parents. Mentors are often HEPOs, but can also be other role models such as student ambassadors or community/workplace mentors.

### Programme Theory Four: Practitioner Learning

**HE and the community** is now a cornerstone programme theory.

As communities can be disengaged from (or even antagonistic to) HE, working within the community is key in terms of normalising HE for young people and their parents/carers. This can take different forms, such as outreach into the community, where activities and/or information is taken into the community space.

Understanding different community contexts, such as local employers, is key. For example, **establishing links with employers in the local community** via work experience and other activities has been very successful.

### Programme Theory Five: Practitioner Learning

**The role of role models** in effective outreach delivery has emerged as a cornerstone programme theory.

HEPO and other outreach staff often perform the role of role models, and this is valuable to young people.

However, **role models with whom young people are able to directly relate** – for example, student ambassadors with specific HE or subject knowledge, or professionals working in careers learners are interested in – are even more impactful. Outreach activities which integrate these role models are key to supporting young people into HE.

### Programme Theory Six: Practitioner Learning

**Experiential learning** outside of learners' usual environments is a new cornerstone programme theory.

**Taking young people out of their usual environment** - through campus visits, taster days, or employer visits, for example – is central to much of GHWY Uni Connect's outreach delivery.

We have found that **experiential learning based around practical activities** is extremely successful in encouraging engagement amongst young people and their parents/carers.

### Programme Theory Seven: Practitioner Learning

CIAG has two modes of delivering by GHWY Uni Connect: delivery through workshops and events, often with employer involvement, which focus on practical experience and knowledge; and delivery by outreach staff such as HEPOs, which engages with CIAG through a focus on HE as a pathway to different careers.

It is also worth thinking about how GHWY Uni Connect activity can support schools/colleges in meeting the Gatsby Benchmarks; in that respect, this is a key programme theory.

### Programme Theory Nine: Practitioner Learning

The work of the HEPO has been found to play a significant role in embedding outreach in schools/colleges. Their ability to build relationships with young people, taking on a mentoring and/or role model role, is also valuable.

### Programme Theory Ten: Practitioner Learning

**Youth and learner voice** is the final new cornerstone programme theory. User voice has the potential to be embedded in all GHWY Uni Connect activity. **Listening to young people to help develop WP outreach** with their input will strengthen outreach and help us tailor it to the community contexts of learners.

## 7. Annex B

### Research and Evaluation Actions

Area	Recommendation	Action/s
<b>CT Programme Theory 1: Mentoring</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Consideration of different types of mentoring and contexts in which they occur</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Development of evaluation target resource for HEPs and HEPOs.</li> <li>- Review of delivery plans to scope mentoring activity in 20/21 academic year.</li> <li>- Consider mentoring in the community (factor into community grants evaluation).</li> </ul>
<b>CT Programme Theory 2: Role Models</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Further research and evaluation focus on how role models function</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ambassadors research project under development</li> </ul>
<b>CT Programme Theory 3: Experiential Learning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Further research and evaluation focus on experiential learning</li> <li>- Future work could examine how careers provision and HE outreach can coalesce (in the context of Gatsby benchmarks).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Continued delivery and evaluation of Collaborative Taster days.</li> <li>- Evaluation of Engie Housing Project in collaboration with the LEP and their series of online virtual work experience activities.</li> </ul>
<b>CT Programme Theory 4: Community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Consider wider definition of community that may include businesses and employers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Community Grants learning event to explore this.</li> </ul>
<b>CT Programme Theory 5: Learner Voice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Further research and evaluation focus on learner voice.</li> <li>- Development of delivery that includes space for LV</li> <li>- Opportunities for further</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Potential interview follow up with Learner Voice Live participants.</li> <li>- Development of good practice in embedding LV in delivery (following on from Young Researchers).</li> </ul>

	parent/carer engagement through performative LV activity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Review of PAR approaches across the project nationally (as above, YRs follow up).</li> </ul>
<b>CT Programme Theory development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A theory-of-change workshop is recommended</li> </ul>	TBA
<b>CIAG gap in evidence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Explore how learners are engaging with careers guidance based initiatives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Research underway via C&amp;K careers to inform next steps</li> <li>- Additional budget available for pilot projects in alternative careers provision. Compliance with evaluation to be a condition of funding.</li> </ul>
<b>CPD gap in evidence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- More evidence needed re the impact of this (gap identified both across the project and across the literature more widely)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- GHWY Uni Connect CPD Mapping Project under development.</li> <li>- Network Analysis method to be explored.</li> <li>- 'My CPD journey' activity in HEP/HEPO evaluation target resources.</li> </ul>
<b>Skills gap in evidence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Consider whether a dedicated PT is needed</li> <li>- Consider which activities develop skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Explore how skills are addressed through the Progression framework and identify concomitant activities.</li> </ul>
<b>Parent/carer engagement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reflect on forms of engagement (i.e. in the community and via use of role models)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Community grants evaluation to explore this.</li> </ul>
<b>Institutional change</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- examine the extent to which institutional change is occurring in schools and colleges</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- School and College case studies in progress</li> </ul>