

GO HIGHER

West Yorkshire

**Annual Report
2019/2020**

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FOREWORD

Foreword by Tracey Lancaster, Chair of Go Higher West Yorkshire and Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Leeds Beckett University



Go Higher West Yorkshire (GHWY) is a diverse partnership of 13 Higher Education Providers in our local area with a commitment to reducing inequalities in higher education access, success and progression for those from under-represented groups.

The 2019-20 academic year has been profoundly affected by Covid-19. Teams in GHWY and across all our member institutions who engage directly with prospective and current students have played a key role throughout the national lockdown and during local restrictions. This includes our Go Higher Progression Officers based in our region's schools and colleges who have worked with individual learners in years 9-13 to minimise the potential disruption to their current education and future plans.

Black Lives Matter, which gained national attention this academic year, will have ongoing implications for our core mission. We started the difficult conversation about race at Board level in January when we screened to members an important film that was created by Ricardo Barker, Senior Lecturer at Leeds Trinity University and Director of Trinity Vision. The film, which was written with input from BAME students, provides an insight into unconscious racial harassment within the Higher Education system and the micro-aggressions that often go unnoticed.

We will continue this conversation in the forthcoming year, making sure we educate ourselves on the issues the movement highlights. We will also ensure our programme is influenced and informed by the issues it raises. As our membership spans HE-in-FE colleges, universities across all mission groups, and a conservatoire, we are well placed to connect these local institutions to enact positive change.

Over the last 12 months we have also delivered and developed a range of activities. In partnership with Leeds City Council we launched Care to Go Higher, an innovative pilot training programme designed for key influencers of care experienced young people to equip and allow them to support young people who have lived within the care system to make informed choices about HE.

Our series of Good Practice Programme events has continued, bringing together staff from across our consortium to share best practice. This included 'Averting Crisis: Supporting the Mental Health of Vulnerable Students', which featured presentations from Leeds College of Building and the University of Lincoln's OfS-funded Challenge Competition project, as well as personal insights from current and former students across the partnership.

We look forward to continuing to work collaboratively to achieve our common goals and to ensure the diversity across our members means there is a higher education course for anyone who is interested in taking their learning to the next level.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all GHWY colleagues for their work throughout this challenging year, as well as our partners for their commitment, and of course, the engagement of all the young people we work with.



WHAT IS GO HIGHER WEST YORKSHIRE?

Go Higher West Yorkshire is a partnership of HE providers in our local area, working together to ensure that higher education in all its forms is open to all who can benefit, regardless of background. The core aim of the partnership is to connect partners to reduce inequalities in HE access, success and progression.

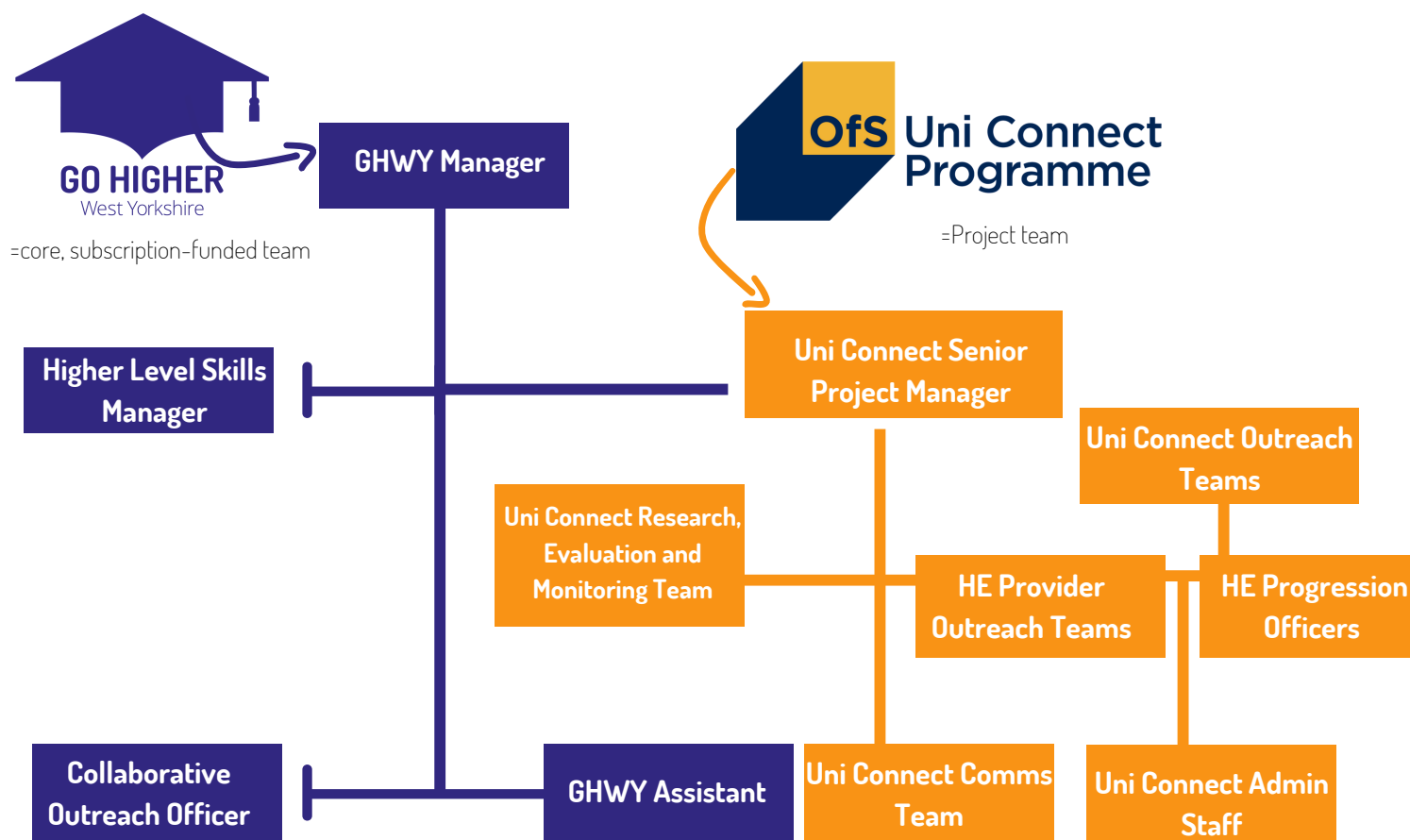
We do this by:

- Collaborating to create demand for higher education for those from under-represented groups
- Collaborating to respond to the needs of our target audiences and our member institutions

This is through:

- The work of the Access and Participation Strategy Group and the Go Higher Skills Group, both of which bring together senior and strategic representatives from across the partnership
- Delivering Uni Connect in West Yorkshire; this is focused on local areas where higher education participation is lower than might be expected given the GCSE results of the young people who live there

Team Structure



COLLABORATING TO CREATE DEMAND

Our flagship work with and for care experienced young people, under the Care to Go Higher strand, has continued to strengthen throughout 2019-20.

CPD for key influencers

Our most notable achievement is the pilot delivery and evaluation of a [CPD programme for key influencers](#).

The [first cohort 'graduated' in February 2020](#) (see image below), leading to a comprehensive evaluation process and the production of a report.

The report, which will be published soon, will be widely disseminated in 2020-21. It will highlight best practice and implications across higher education and children's services sectors.

Care Leaver Covenant

The GHWY collaborative [Care Leaver Covenant received its latest refresh](#), with many member institutions adding to their 'offer' to prospective and/or current students.

In addition, we developed a [package of supplementary resources](#) for 2019-20, designed to help key influencers discuss higher education with care experienced young people. Use of these resources will help us to better understand the value of the Care Leaver Covenant in our local communities.

Direct engagement

Outreach with care experienced young people has continued throughout 2019-20, despite Covid-19 disruptions.

In March, pre-lockdown, we facilitated [foster family outreach](#) at the University of Bradford.

During lockdown we developed a [support resource](#) for care leaver and estranged students, as well as piloting a new [online outreach project](#) designed to help care experienced young people aged 16+ to develop skills in the context of lost learning.



Quotes from CPD attendees:



"I can guide and advocate for care leavers as a result of attending the course."

"This is something that everybody needs to do, to give the inspiration for their kids to get [to HE], because there's lots of possibilities."

COLLABORATING TO CREATE DEMAND

Collaborative working is an essential element of Go Higher West Yorkshire's events and activities. This remains the case for our Uni Connect, where we have worked on collaborative activities with a wide range of diverse partners including employers, HE partners, sporting organisations and local government.

Young carers go higher

GHWY has produced a resource and training package to help ensure HE remains an option for young carers who are grappling with the complexities and increased responsibility that Covid-19 and lockdown present.

Young Carers Go Higher (YCGH) was created in cross-agency collaboration with our partners, charities, and young carers amongst others. It will enable community practitioners to work directly with young carers, who are under-represented in HE, and engage or re-engage them with their educational aspirations.

The project has already gained national attention, having been submitted to OfS as a case study from the lockdown. It has also been featured as part of Study Higher and New Bucks Universities' national 'Unlocking the Lockdown' annual access conference.

A version of YCGH will be developed for education and CIAG professionals in late 2020.



The power of partnership working

GHWY has developed sustained relationships with a wide range of strategic partners in local/central government, careers, education, housing and industry. This means we can encourage them to embed the promotion of HE and widening participation within their practice, policies and strategies. Some examples are given below.

- Our staff have worked with partners to develop CPD online resources to support teachers and students. Training has been adapted to be delivered online, which has increased attendance e.g. 30 teachers attended 'Supporting students to write personal statements'.
- Leeds City Region LEP/West Yorkshire Combined Authority – working on joint events such as [Access All Areas](#).
- We have teamed up with Wakefield District Housing on its [Community Leadership Programme](#) to add a HE theme.
- Local Authorities – our staff sit on key strategic groups and feed into key strategies e.g. Wakefield Council's Employment and Skills Strategy and Board and the 14-19 Strategic Partnership (Leeds).
- Third Sector and communities – our staff sit on the Young Lives Leeds Group and work with Leeds Community Foundation to support the [GHWY Community Grants](#) strand.
- Key employers – we work with key employers such as ENGIE on joint projects to promote high level skills and careers e.g. [ENGIE/GHWY Housing Project](#).

COLLABORATING TO RESPOND TO NEED

Go Higher West Yorkshire runs a successful programme of good practice sharing events exclusively for staff working at our HE provider partners. The events, which are part of our mission to reduce inequalities in higher education access, success and progression for students from under-represented backgrounds, are tailored to provide actionable training and good practice applicable to HE providers of all sizes and resource levels.

Beyond care: Connecting Higher Education and corporate parents

The event, held in December 2019, sought to enhance connections between partners and Children's Social Care services to improve care leavers' access to and success in HE. Attended by representatives from all five West Yorkshire local authorities alongside GHWY's HE provider members, it consisted of three presentations delivered by Wakefield Council and the Universities of Leeds and Bradford. There was also a carousel to support both sectors to discuss needs and opportunities.

Envisaged as the first of an ongoing series of events, we aim to hold a follow-up that will see us work with attendees and interested parties to take forward actions proposed at the session.

[Read more.](#)

Averting crisis: Supporting the mental health of vulnerable students

Held online in April 2020, the event responded to the increasing pressures facing students and public concern for the psychological welfare of HE students, with a particular focus on under-represented student groups. It featured a Keynote speech from an alumnus of the University Centre at Leeds City College, plus detailed presentations from the University of Lincoln (discussing their OfS Challenge Competition project) and Leeds College of Building. A panel of students also gave insight about their mental health challenges and solutions.

As a direct outcome of the event, we are setting up a digital network for delegates that will support collaborative progress and facilitate continued discussion on this aspect of student wellbeing and success.

[Read more.](#)

STATISTICAL OUTPUTS

89% of responding delegates attending Averting Crisis stated they felt more equipped to support the mental health of students as a result of the session

COLLABORATING TO RESPOND TO NEED

Our Uni Connect has worked collaboratively with a wide range of diverse partners to respond to need. This has included raising awareness of educational experiences and HE pathways for local black students, and creating innovative ways to engage with young people during the pandemic.

Kaleidoscope project

Notre Dame sixth form College and Leeds City College have collaborated with HE partners and community groups to create the Kaleidoscope project, which focuses on educational experiences and future pathways for black students in Leeds.

Over the past year students and staff have developed a range of activities in collaboration with the colleges' Afro-Caribbean societies. This includes [Talking Heads](#), which brought together academics, college students and undergraduates and gave them an opportunity to have a purposeful and safe discussion about the experience of being a young black person exploring HE today.

The project also held an [Explore History](#) day with sixth form students from Notre Dame and Year 10 students from Mount St Marys. Collaborating with HE partners and cultural community partners Leeds Museums, the Geraldine Connor Foundation, and Heritage Corner the day was designed to provide an exploratory look at history from different cultural and historical perspectives (see image below).

The project has moved online due to Covid-19 and plans are currently underway for a 'virtual' repeat of both Talking Heads and Explore History this autumn.

Other plans include a virtual residential; diversity and banner projects; a collaborative sports and dance day; and practitioner and key influencers CPD events. These activities will be designed or influenced by young people.

Quote from student:

"I learned about the different perspectives of Black History and how we can express and spread this information."



COLLABORATING TO RESPOND TO NEED

Go Higher West Yorkshire's Progression Officers, who work in schools and colleges across the region, developed a range of creative and resourceful ways to engage with students in all year groups during the pandemic.

GHWY officers adapting to the new 'normal'

Some of the ways in which HEPOs have innovated to engage with students are detailed below.

- [The GHWY Weekly Challenge](#) to promote HE to students and encourage them to research local HE providers. The challenge received positive feedback from parents and some great social media coverage. One week students were challenged to recreate some of their favourite art-work. The winning entry, from a Year 9 student at Immanuel College, is shown below.



One parent from Immanuel College commented:

"I think this is an absolutely brilliant idea and has got my daughter into doing some art that she otherwise wouldn't have had the confidence to do. She always says 'I'm no good at art' or 'I can't do it' but this has got her doing it and we are really grateful to you and the school for doing this initiative."

- [Online subject tutoring](#), using MyTutor to increase students' chances of more positive outcomes and to provide opportunities to explore HE with a current undergraduate student.
- Using effective '[Coping with Covid](#)' resources specifically designed to help students during the pandemic.
- [Online spaces designed to work directly with young people](#). These included a self-service space for FE students to research and access resources, and online group rooms aimed at progression discussions and 1:1 meetings.



COLLABORATING TO RESPOND TO NEED

Sharing good practice and engaging with business to improve employability and skills in the region is embedded in the Go Higher Skills Group. Members take it in turns to present at the quarterly meetings, with some of the topics being summarised below.

- The University of Huddersfield outlined the attributes of its [Global Professional Award](#), which has been built around what employers say they want in graduates. All first year students are enrolled on the Award, which is accredited by the Chartered Management Institute.
- The University of Bradford presented on its successful Office for Students (OfS) Challenge Competition bid for [Graduate Workforce Bradford](#). Bradford Council and Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership (LEP) advised on the priority areas, which include health and engineering.
- Leeds Conservatoire discussed the specific challenges that specialist courses have in engaging students with employability skills. It is partly addressing this through [links with Opera North](#) and a suite of enterprise support and Artist and Business Development initiatives.
- Wakefield College reflected on its unsuccessful OfS graduate employability bid, which had partners including local employers, Wakefield Council and Leeds Beckett University. It has made some progress in creating more graduate level opportunities without funding.

The Go Higher Skills Group also has a close relationship with the LEP, with the Apprenticeship Manager attending the meetings. This enables the group to remain appraised of developments about the Skills Funding Agency, the regional labour market information, and skills needs.



EVIDENCE BASED PRACTICE

Research Analysis Forum

As part of our commitment to demonstrating evidence-based practice, GHWY has [piloted an online discussion forum](#) for members to share, critically appraise and assimilate learning from academic papers and policy reports.

Alongside the curation of an evidence base, the Research Analysis Forum (RAF) creates a sustained approach to good practice sharing and a critical approach to impact evaluation, which values learning what does not work alongside celebrating successes.

To date, the RAF has discussed academic papers related to student mental health and the BAME attainment gap. Collaborative analysis of these papers has helped to identify the strengths and opportunities in members' current policy and practice, providing a baseline for self-assessment and a springboard for new ideas.

We are committed to supporting evidence based practice and, moving into 2020-21, will work alongside members to ensure endeavours such as the RAF meet the needs of the partnership.

If you are interested in joining the forum or have an idea for a paper or topic to be considered for analysis, please get in touch with hello@gohigherwestyorks.ac.uk.



English as an Additional Language resource packages

GHWY has created a variety of resources to support young people for whom English is an additional language. They will help them understand FE and HE progression pathways and to be able to access these equitably to their peers in education.

The packages were developed in response to our 2018 educational opportunities research with English as an Additional Language/English for Speakers of Other Languages young people, partner schools and colleges.

Our [English as an Additional Language webpage](#) already includes progression posters and translated versions of our Educational Journey animation. We have developed a Next Steps progression package for young people to be able to better understand their options at post 16 and post 18 and to be able to access these. These were developed in collaboration with GHWY partners, schools and college practitioners, and young people.

The resources are further supported by direct engagement with young people in school or college. This includes bespoke campus visits, reading schemes, buddy schemes and a young interpreters scheme.

COMMUNICATIONS

GHWY's HE Festival Week

GHWY's first ever online HE Week, which featured a HE Festival, was designed to inspire young people's progress into HE by offering insights into its many aspects.

Highlights included online sessions covering student finance, Clearing, and tips for studying solo. There was also a wide variety of blogs on everything from apprenticeships to student life in the new normal.

Content was housed on a stylish micro-site that incorporated information from our member organisations and linked to all virtual events taking place across the week.

Creativity and communication were key to ensure the event was pulled together swiftly. Statistics attest that it was a massive success: activity on our website increased by 329%, it generated 5,355 social media impressions, a score of 9/10 for usefulness, and various earned media coverage.

[Read more.](#)

STATISTICAL OUTPUTS

Resources from the Festival Week were rated 9/10 for usefulness by visitors

Activity to GHWY's website increased by over 300%, compared to the previous month, during HE Festival Week

GHWY Newsletter for HE Providers

GHWY's monthly Newsletter for HE Providers, which was launched in October 2018, continues to update members about our work, events, and sector news. Member blogs have been particularly popular, covering topics including the growth in apprenticeships and the benefit of art subjects in developing a highly skilled workforce.

[An archive of issues is available on our website.](#)



FINAL THOUGHTS



Helen Sykes, GHWY Manager



I am extremely proud of the achievements of the teams at Go Higher West Yorkshire and everything they have delivered on behalf of our member institutions, and I want to thank all the staff involved in this work for their contributions. I would also like to take this opportunity to remember and pay tribute to Katherine Cocksedge, our Progression Officer at The Farnley Academy, who died in December 2019. Katherine worked tirelessly to support the young people in her care and is very much missed.

Whilst we continue to respond, and support our member institutions to respond, to the ongoing Covid-19 lockdown situation both nationally and locally, we have a number of exciting developments planned over the coming year. This includes the expansion of Care to Go Higher, which encompasses all work with and for care experienced young people, including the roll-out of our innovative [Care to Go Higher CPD programme](#).

The strand of work will also include continued improvements to our [Collaborative Care Leaver Covenant](#), which collates the support, information and top tips offered by every member in one document, and the development of Stand Alone pledges across our partnership to raise awareness of particular issues faced by estranged students.

In order to capitalise on the partnership's collaborative achievements we are establishing a Strategic Communications Group. This will help our members to support and deliver coordinated campaigns aimed at a range of relevant audiences, creating more of an impact and having a greater reach than the member institutions working individually.

The group will work alongside the two already in operation: the Access and Participation Planning Group, which focuses on responding together to work with under-represented groups to provide access to HE study, and the Go Higher Skills Group, which focuses on higher level skills needs in our graduates and our region.

The work of this latter group will be enhanced by the recruitment of a new Higher Level Skills Manager, who will be jointly funded by the West Yorkshire Consortium of Colleges. The role will enable partnership working and effective project management between our members in the area of higher level skills. It will also be pivotal in working with higher level skills providers and institutions predominantly in the local area to ensure the successful delivery of Let's Talk Real Skills.

The scope of the Uni Connect project (formerly NCOP) is continuing to develop and over the coming months we will launch an Outreach Hub that will help schools and colleges to access the higher education outreach they need and provide a platform for wider collaboration

We are looking forward to another year working towards our goal of reducing inequalities in higher education access, success and progression, by connecting our member institutions.

COMING UP IN 2020/21

As well as continuing our work as outlined in this annual report, in 2020/21 we will be:



Working with the Access and Participation Strategy Group on the first stages of strategies for access to and success in Higher Education for under-represented groups



Working with the Go Higher Skills Group to support greater engagement from local SME employers with Higher Education

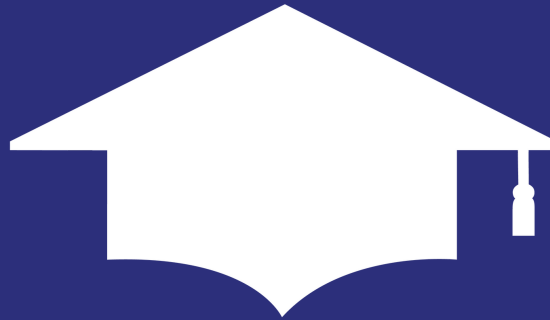


Delivering the OfS-funded Uni Connect project, including piloting a bespoke progression package for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities



Launching a new Strategic Communications Group to support the work of the partnership and individual member institutions





GO HIGHER
West Yorkshire

Our Partners

Bradford College



University of
HUDDERSFIELD



universitycentre
at **wakefield**college