

GO HIGHER

West Yorkshire

**Annual Report
2020/2021**

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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 region, working together to reduce inequalities in higher education access, success and progression for people from groups who are under-represented in further and higher education. This academic year, our members re-affirmed their strong commitment to the partnership and to collaborative working by signing a new agreement to 2025.

The 2020/21 academic year has continued to be affected profoundly by Covid-19. Our team has responded swiftly and with creativity to the challenges of the pandemic and, most importantly, have taken the time to listen to the needs of those with whom they work. For example, our Uni Connect Outreach Officers worked together to respond to the challenges of digital poverty and digital fatigue and the restricted access that learners had to information, advice and guidance when considering their options beyond school or college. They produced a fantastic booklet for our Y10 students which provided extensive information to support young people and their families in making informed choices about their next steps at this crucial time.

As individual institutions and a partnership, we have acted on our commitment to the Black Lives Matter movement. GHWY member institutions have established a 'Decolonising the Curriculum' network. This brings together staff in a range of roles and institutions who are at different points in their institutional journey to share progress, emerging practice, experiences and learning from a diverse range of viewpoints.

We actively contribute to and support the local skills agenda, working closely with key stakeholders such as the West Yorkshire Combined Authority and Local Enterprise Partnership, Yorkshire Universities, West Yorkshire Consortium of Colleges and our local

authorities, to better understand regional skill needs and labour market trends. This enables us to enhance the support that we provide to our students and graduates to enable them to transition from study to employment. It also increases employer engagement in Higher Education. Our contribution to the region-wide 'Let's Talk Real Skills' programme has expanded our knowledge of skills challenges faced by smaller enterprises, including those amplified by the pandemic. This is strengthening the skills offer to SMEs to help support business growth locally.

Our collaborative events have been well attended by our partners, keen to share good practice and learn alongside each other. Notable this year was our excellent Evidence and Impact conference. Colleagues from our wide range of partnership organisations attended to increase their knowledge of the research, evidence and intelligence being gathered by our expert team members. This research and intelligence informs the future work of the partnership, as well as our partner organisations.

Collaborative working will continue to play a hugely important role as we address the challenges of the future. My sincere thanks to our GHWY colleagues whose work has been excellent despite the difficult circumstances this year. Thanks also to all of our partners and external stakeholders who support the partnership and give generously of their time on top of their day jobs. By continuing to work together we will deliver more equitable access to, success in and progression from Higher Education: unleashing potential.



WHAT IS GO HIGHER WEST YORKSHIRE?

About:

Go Higher West Yorkshire is a partnership of HE providers in our local area, working to reduce inequalities in HE access, success and progression.

Our mission is to achieve common goals relating to those from under-represented groups in Higher Education, by connecting our unique range of HE provider members with each other and with external stakeholders.

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, plus associated sub-groups such as the Decolonising the Curriculum network, 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.

Our priorities are:

- Under-represented groups
- Informed choices
- Evidence-based practice
- Our focus is West Yorkshire

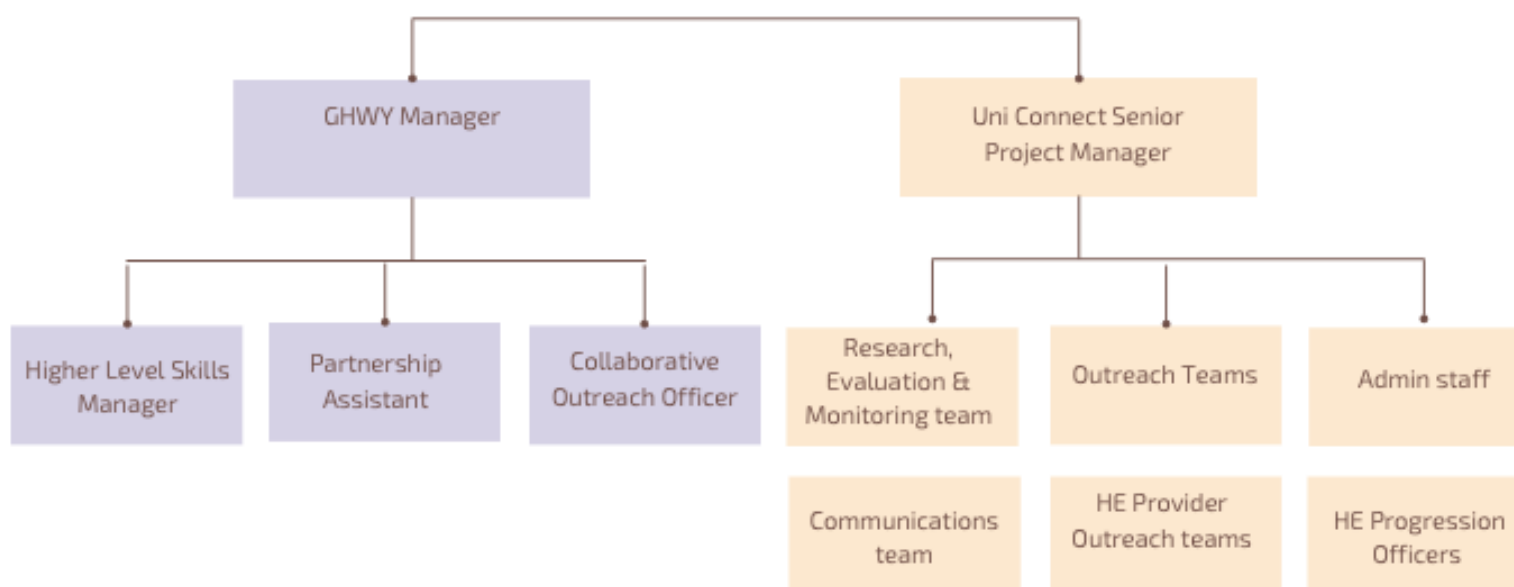
Team Structure



Core, subscription-funded team



Project team



COLLABORATING TO CREATE DEMAND

Collaborative working is an essential element of Go Higher West Yorkshire's events and resources. We have worked on collaborative activities across our HE provider members and with a wide range of partners including employers and local government.

Collaborative taster days

Our Uni Connect Outreach Officers created a range of online [Collaborative Taster Days](#) with our HE provider members and local employers in response to the uncertainties around ability to deliver in-person activities during 2020/21.

The sessions - which cover English, Business and Finance, Education, Policing and Criminology - provide an opportunity to gain insight into subject sectors and careers with input from specialists in that field.

They have been shared with all Progression Officers across our 29 schools.

Let's Talk Real Skills

Member representatives have contributed their expertise to eight sector specific Collaborative Skills Partnerships developed as part of the [Let's Talk Real Skills](#), European Social Fund programme.

These unique partnerships draw together further and higher education, employers and employer bodies to explore training needs and shape new solutions.

Outreach activity for KS2 children in care

We worked in partnership with four of our higher education provider members to produce a programme of [online outreach activities for primary aged children in care](#).

Created with input from student ambassadors and disseminated through local authorities, the content is split into two subjects: Creative Arts and The Science of Humans. The two programmes have been widely promoted across West Yorkshire, including with foster care teams.



COLLABORATING TO CREATE DEMAND

GHWY worked with Leeds Community Foundation to provide funding to communities to increase the number of young people progressing into Higher Education from areas where progression rates are currently low.

Community grants

Eleven community organisations across West Yorkshire were awarded funding in the [second round of Community Grants](#) for projects taking place between March 2020 and March 2021.

They included a study support network, local radio station, and community artwork organisation.

The projects provided community-based HE outreach, taking discussions about HE out of the education context and into communities and families.

The key foci for this funding round were working with parents/carers and the use of role models.

The projects were significantly affected by Covid-19. However many of the organisations were able to creatively address the challenges presented by Covid, responding quickly and flexibly to local needs by e.g. moving activity online.

An evaluation report into the projects will be published in 2021/22 and will be made available on the Evidence and Impact section of our website.

“Role models are important because they are relatable, they have been through the same experience as us and provide an example of what can be achieved.”

Participant, Bradford Study Support Network

Statistical outputs:

Overall the community grant projects engaged with 392 individuals.

Of these 238 were 13-18 year olds, 19 were 19-25 year olds, 117 were parents, and 19 were carers.



COLLABORATING TO RESPOND TO NEED

The pandemic presented numerous challenges that GHWY responded to rapidly and creatively. This included developing and adapting resources for online delivery and working closely with key stakeholders.

Adapting for online delivery

Twenty-seven participants successfully graduated from our [Care to Go Higher CPD programme](#) for key influencers of children in care.

Working with our partner higher education providers we adapted the sessions to run in a virtual format and participants were given their own bespoke account area on the GHWY website to access information, resources and videos.

Outreach Officers helped to find staff and students to speak at each session, so they all retained a “live” element that enabled participants to interact with higher education. Attendees demonstrated improved knowledge across a range of areas, [as detailed in our evaluation report](#).

Shaping Your Future Starts Here workbook

Uni Connect Outreach Officers, in collaboration with colleagues from many partners, created a handbook for local Year 10 students after the pandemic disrupted their engagement with schools. ‘[Shaping Your Future Starts Here](#)’ met the demand for wellbeing materials, bridged the digital divide, and produced something unique to the world of online outreach. Distributed across 51 GHWY schools, it took thousands of students through the FE and HE process, and provided wellbeing tips and advice. The LEP has also circulated the e-version within its networks.

Collaborating with LEP

The pandemic all-but removed the opportunities for many students to undertake work experience, GHWY worked successfully and collaboratively with the Leeds City Region Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) on a wide range of exciting initiatives including the Inspiring Journeys Virtual Careers Fair and the [Virtual Work Experience resources \(VWEX\)](#).

The resources feature inspirational employer and HE student ambassador role models, animations and challenges that gave students the chance to gain vital insight into the world of work, key industry sectors and higher education during lockdown.

142 schools have currently registered for the VWEX with a potential reach of 74,000 students. So far 86% of learners who have completed evaluations said they would take part in VWEX again.

“Just wanted to email to say that the workbooks have arrived and they are better than I expected - they are wonderful. We are going to use as part of or PHSCE (Health, Social and Citizenship Education) planning for next year and we may use for the year 11s.”

Teacher

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.

Progression to further study

The Go Higher Skills Group (GHSg) has begun to explore the progression barriers experienced when progressing from level 5 study and into postgraduate study.

Discussions have explored a range of interventions needed to enable a greater number of candidates to succeed, including better understanding of awarding gaps; contextual applications; more effective marketing; and increased support through outreach, coaching and mentoring.

LMI workshop engagement

GHSg members have engaged in two Labour Market Information (LMI) round table discussions hosted by Yorkshire Universities. These combined analysis of vacancy and recruitment data and available Graduate Outcome data.

Discussions highlighted the need to promote the transferability of graduate skills and to encourage greater graduate recruitment from small and medium sized enterprises.



EVIDENCE BASED PRACTICE

The work of Go Higher West Yorkshire is driven by evidence-based practice, which ensures that the most effective activities and support models are resourced.

GHWY Evidence and Impact Conference

Over 150 people attended our [Evidence and Impact Conference](#), which brought together professionals from across and beyond the education sector to share recent research and evaluation relating to Widening Participation in the West Yorkshire local context. Hosted online, it featured 16 presentations as well as discussion groups and workshops. To enable the discussions to continue and allow dissemination of good practice, we have set up an Evidence and Impact TEAMS channel.

Learner led research and learner voice in Widening Participation

We have undertaken a review of learner led research and learner voice across the sector, drawing on academic literature and reports from Uni Connect partnerships (including GHWY) together with empirical research to draw up some recommendations for good practice when using Learner Led Research and Learner Voice in widening participation settings. The report will be available in 2021/22.

Student ambassadors: the role of role models in Widening Participating

A co-produced, multi-methods study has been conducted, examining the role and function of student ambassadors as role models during widening participation activity. The resulting report, providing recommendations for HE providers in using student ambassadors effectively for widening participation work, will be available in 2021/22.



EVIDENCE BASED PRACTICE

Go Higher West Yorkshire has commissioned research into the experiences and needs of specific under-represented groups

Understanding and meeting the needs of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic learners in West Yorkshire

GHWY recently commissioned external researchers to complete an extensive investigation into the educational landscape and opportunities for progression to HE for young Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people in West Yorkshire.

Taking into account the limitations of using Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic as an over-arching category, which risks making invisible the experiences of and inequalities between different ethnic groups, the research examines the experiences of young people from five distinct ethnicities - Black African, Black Caribbean, Mixed Heritage, Polish and South Asian - and presents the findings accordingly.

The young participants were also given the opportunity to conduct their own research interviews with parents or carers, with their reflections on family expectations around young peoples' progression to HE forming part of the findings. The resulting research report, together with a Toolkit of practical recommendations, will be available online in 2021/22.

Supporting white boys from working class backgrounds in West Yorkshire

Using video and digital research methodologies, an external research team commissioned by GHWY spoke to a number of white boys from working class backgrounds across West Yorkshire about their experiences of education and attitudes to HE.

The team also spoke to educational stakeholders working with white boys from working class backgrounds in the region.

The resulting research report, which contains a wealth of empirical data as well as recommendations for practice based on the findings, will be available online in 2021/22.

Practitioner toolkits for working with Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic young people, and white boys from working class backgrounds

Arising from two commissioned research reports (see above and left) into the education experiences and attitudes to HE of young people, the Practitioner Toolkits offer evidence-based recommendations for practitioners working with young people from these specific under-represented groups.

“For Black Africans, there's a big thing about Nigerians being doctors and engineers and lawyers. But you don't really see that with Black Caribbeans. We're usually shown in the entertainment industry as being comedians. I'm just wanting more role models.”

Black Caribbean KS4 participant

EVIDENCE BASED PRACTICE

Go Higher West Yorkshire has commissioned research into the experiences and needs of specific under-represented groups

Understanding and Meeting the Needs of Gypsy, Roma, Traveller (GRT) Young People in West Yorkshire

GHWY commissioned external researchers to complete an extensive research investigation into the educational landscape and opportunities for progression to HE for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller young people in West Yorkshire. The resulting research report, which contains a wealth of empirical data as well as recommendations for practice based on the findings, will be available in 2021/22. A dissemination event, to share initial findings and provide opportunities for those working in widening participation and/or with GRT young people locally, took place in July with over forty participants attending from education, local government, and third sector organisations across the region.

Youth voice projects: SEND, refugee, learner led research

Youth Work Unit Yorkshire and Humber is delivering [two youth voice projects](#) on our behalf. Working with young people who identify as disabled/having a specific learning difficulty and refugee and asylum-seeking young people, it is conducting a youth consultation to explore views on HE. It is also running a social action project, where participants can raise awareness of the value of HE in their communities.

Care to Go Higher evidence report and dissemination

We have widely disseminated a report that presents impact and insights from the pilot of our Care to Go Higher programme.

[Care to go higher: Equipping key influencers of care-experienced young people](#) was heavily featured in a TASO evidence review and formed the basis for two webinars that attracted 64 audience members from key West Yorkshire stakeholders and higher education providers across the country.

The report also attracted interest from the DfE, OfS and the National Network for the Education of Care Leavers.

CARE TO GO
HIGHER:
EQUIPPING KEY
INFLUENCERS OF
CARE-
EXPERIENCED
YOUNG PEOPLE

OfS Uni Connect Programme
GO HIGHER
A GO HIGHER WEST YORKSHIRE
EVIDENCE REPORT
REPORT BY NATALIE ALDRIDGE



Website developments

Over the coming months we will be redeveloping our web pages for employers. This will build upon the resources already in place to demystify and promote higher and degree apprenticeships. Information will be provided to help employers navigate higher education, particularly small and medium sized businesses.

The structure will be built around three core strands – new skills, new talent and new ideas. Case studies will be used to evidence the benefits gained from creating work experience, internship, apprenticeship, graduate recruitment opportunities and to champion work force diversity and investing in skills development.

We have developed connections with employer networks and regional business service teams to gain early feedback and ensure that our resources resonate with regional employers. Further information will be shared as these pages take shape.

Beyond Care Newsletter

GHWY's monthly Beyond Care e-newsletter was launched in May to connect those working with care experienced young people across the region to Higher Education through regular monthly news, events and updates

It updates members about our work, events, and sector news as well as spotlighting the work of our partners in supporting those from a care background.

[Register to receive copies of the newsletter to your inbox.](#)



FINAL THOUGHTS

Helen Sykes, GHWY Manager

I would like to begin, as ever, with sincere thanks to all staff across the GHWY teams and those who continue to work alongside us in support of our activity to reduce inequalities in Higher Education access, success and progression.

The disruptions that the Covid-19 pandemic has brought about have made the 2020/21 academic year undoubtedly one of the most challenging for many of us, both professionally and personally. Whilst it has not been easy, I have seen staff remain committed to their work and react in numerous positive ways: investigating alternative modes of delivery, reaching out to support each other, and looking to find new opportunities in support of our aim.

One of the benefits of working collaboratively is sharing the load. This will continue to be important as workloads across GHWY and our member institutions remain high, and it provides support for those looking at more niche aspects of fair access and participation who may otherwise be a lone voice in their institution.

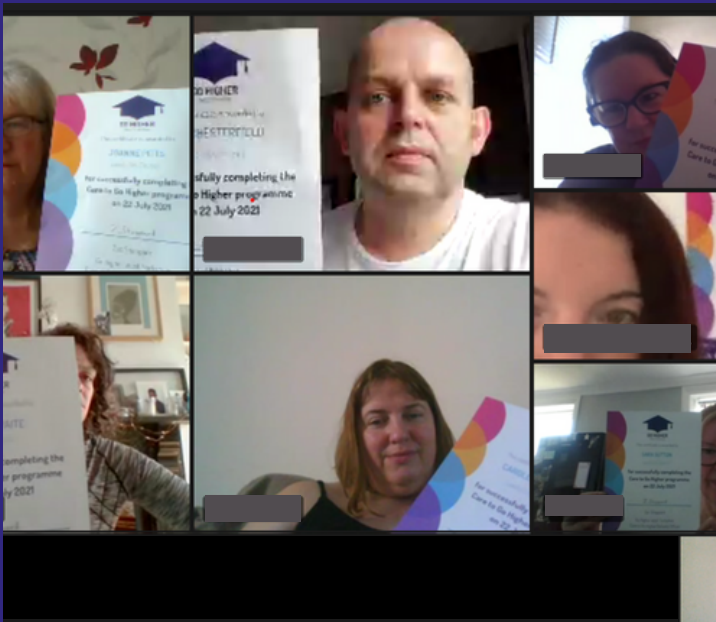
A benefit of working collaboratively through GHWY in particular – with our diverse range of institutions, each with their own cultures and practices – is that it supports inclusion of diversity of voice, perspective and experience, all of which in turn aid learning and improvement in practice. We can also act as an impartial broker between our HE Provider members, making collaboration work more smoothly.



A significant benefit for our stakeholders has been identified as having one point of contact to reach and connect with a range of local HE providers. Prospective students from non-traditional backgrounds benefit from understanding the breadth of HE options available to them which supports informed choices and aids retention once in HE. Current students from underrepresented groups benefit from diversity of thinking to support them to succeed in and progress from HE.

With all this in mind, as we look to the upcoming academic year, broadening the reach of our partnership through our stakeholder engagement will be a key element of how we achieve our goals. The focus for work across our partnership will be the investigation of how we can use our collective voices to develop a framework approach supporting those from underrepresented groups and reducing inequalities in access to, success in and progression from Higher Education. Our partnership's diversity and our willingness to collaborate will remain a strength.





COMING UP IN 2021/22

As well as continuing our work as outlined in this annual report, in 2021/22 we will be delivering:



- Peer and student ambassador mentoring (following on from training delivered by Cosmos)



- Targeted and longitudinal evaluation of Uni Connect



- Sector discussion Teams channel: evidence and impact



- Employer resources to demystify HE, share case studies, and increase the reach of GHWY resources for the benefit of employers and graduates



- Website developments including the launch of our 'Resource Hub', making it easy for teachers and students to filter and access resources based on their needs, and a chatbot supporting users 24/7



- Development of online approach and activity including capability to create and deliver e-learning courses supporting both learners and professional staff



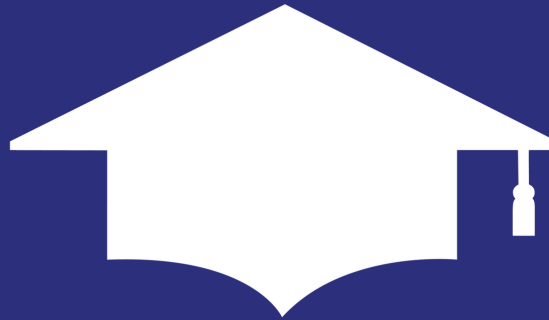
- Continuing the Decolonising the Curriculum network with a focus on collaborative outputs



- Commencing several further staff networks, focusing on supporting staff who work with students from specific under-represented groups



- Social media campaign promoting our resources (developed in conjunction with UniCom)



GO HIGHER
West Yorkshire

Our Partners

Bradford College



University of
HUDDERSFIELD
Inspiring global professionals

