Research Project| 2020

An asset-based approach to Widening Participation for young people in Cumbria

A report commissioned by Hello Future

HASKE
Health & Society Knowledge Exchange

Working with
hello future.
Cumbria Collaborative Outreach Programme

Hello Future have funded a number of research projects. Through the projects we aim to enable our partnership and wider stakeholders to learn more about our target Cumbrian learner cohort. Research projects are developed to capture 'learner voice', inform our evolving Theory of Change and to increasingly improve the effectiveness of our outreach interventions.

OfS Uni Connect Programme

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Acknowledgements

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1 Introduction

1.1 Project Context and Overview

Hello Future forms part of Uni Connect (previously known as National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP) until January 2020) funded by the Office for Students. The programme aims to drive rapid progress towards achieving the Government's goals to double the proportion of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds in Higher Education (HE) by 2020, increase by 20 per cent the number of students in HE from ethnic minority groups and address the under-representation of young men from disadvantaged backgrounds. Hello Future is a partnership of local universities, colleges and employers who are committed to improving access to higher education for young people in Cumbria.

The work of Uni Connect programmes and others has shown a growing awareness of a number of hidden perspectives and assumptions about cultural capital in much 'mainstream' Widening Participation (WP)[1] outreach work. For example, there has often been an assumption that whilst WP students may have plenty of social capital, what they are missing is the cultural capital that more 'traditional' HE students may have access to, and as such conventional WP seeks to remedy this. However this reflects a 'deficit' model of outreach, whereby capital is identified in terms of what the student lacks, almost exclusively from the perspective of the HE institution. Such a model risks overlooking a number of already-existing skills, traits and characteristics which may benefit a student at University. The cultural capital of HE entrants is, on this view, socially formed predispositions, predilections and forms of knowledge that equip individuals, in turn, with competence in deciphering new cultural practices.

Yet students may also hold a range of different social and cultural capital, which provides the capability for success at HE and beyond. Rather than assuming a deficit model amongst WP students and potential students, work should be done to identify existing tools and predilections for engaging in cultural practice.

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[1] Hello Future do not use the term Widening Participation to describe the work they do, which is referred to by both themselves and on Office for Students website as Higher Education outreach. However, WP is the term used mostly in the academic literature, therefore this term has been used in this document for consistency with the academic literature. However, in documents and communication with research participants, the term "Higher Education Outreach" is used, as Hello Future advise that this is more readily understood by people they work with. Furthermore, Higher Education in the context this study is taking place does not just refer to Universities. The work of Hello Future and other Uni Connect partnerships is referred to as Higher Education outreach but this includes progression to any of the awards included in level 4 - 6 (see https://www.gov.uk/what-different-qualification-levels-mean/list-of-qualification-levels for full list. This therefore includes higher apprenticeships (level 4), degree apprenticeships (level 6); HE-in-FE (FE College-based level 4 courses), foundation degrees (level 5). These educational pathways may delivered in settings including Further Education (FE), University (HE) and independent training providers, which can be in the private or charity sector.

These are the 'assets' available to the young people targeted by outreach programmes. As such, an asset-based approach aims at mapping and engaging with the resources – institutions, persons, activities and so on – that provide such capital; as well as understanding how young people interface with such assets, and possible enablers and obstacles for this.

This report documents the research commissioned by Hello Future to investigate the role of assets in the provision of social and cultural capital for young people in Cumbria. The aims of the project were to:

Identify the critical facets of an asset-based approach to Widening Participation for young people from Cumbria.
Using these facets, and other information, to create an asset-based approach (to WP) for young people from Cumbria.

1.2 Methodology

The research consisted of three stages:

1. a **literature review** of a range of academic and policy literature together with evidence gathered in HASKE's previous work in this area;
2. **primary data collection** from interviews with key stakeholders: namely, individuals who bridged both the current landscapes in target learner communities (i.e. HELLO FUTURE wards) and level 4-6 settings ie FE/HE and degree apprenticeships; and
3. collection of **feedback and analysis** on the draft map of assets by strategic-level stakeholders in Hello Future, in order to link the data from practice to policy and management-level contexts and mechanisms.

The first tranche of interviews involved Hello Future outreach staff who were from target Hello Future wards, and had themselves progressed to level 4-6 study. This was to gather data from an informed and current perspective of the landscape on both sides; in order to consider what support, information and guidance they had access to, whether it met their needs and, if not, what would have been of value to them in their transition. Outreach staff were invited to participate in a semi-structured telephone interview, which explored the following:

- What support, information, advice and guidance (IAG) participants were aware of when they were thinking and choosing options after the end of level 3 education;
- whether the support and IAG they were able to access met their needs at the time;
- if not, and with the benefit of hindsight, what would have been of value;
- experiences of the transition to level 4-6 higher education;
- whether the support and IAG they had access to prepared them for the transition to current level 4-6 higher

education settings;

- if not, and with the benefit of hindsight, what would have been of value; and
- what support and IAG would be of value to students to prepare them for the transition to level 4-6 settings as these settings transform in response to the policy emphasis on access, progression and success.

Data was analysed thematically, and based on this an “asset table” was created, mapping out the main areas arising from the interviews. These were then sent to strategic roles in Hello Future (area officers and directors) for comment and feedback, with the aim of adding to and amending the asset table in relation to relevant policy and management contexts.

A further set of tables was created which synthesised all of the collected data in order to present the contexts, mechanisms and outcomes of each existing (and developing) asset, in order to demonstrate the ways in which assets can be both enablers and disablers for young people’s access to HE.

2 Literature review

2.1 Outreach and the Problems with Deficit-based Approaches

As part of the most recent restructuring of the HE regulatory environment, the Office for Students was formed and charged with ensuring fair access participation and success in HE, for those who are currently underrepresented, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds (Office for Students, 2019a). WP objectives have evolved from a focus on getting more under-represented groups to apply and enrol at Universities, to broaden the focus to cover the whole student lifecycle: application, admission, student experience, continuation, completion and graduate outcome. These activities are commonly referred to as Access and Participation (A&P), defined by the Office for Students as improving "*equality of opportunity for underrepresented groups to access, succeed in and progress from higher education"* (Office for Students, 2019b). In this context, the Hello Future programme aims to drive rapid progress towards achieving the Government's goals to double the proportion of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds in Higher Education (HE) by 2020, increase by 20 per cent the number of students in HE from ethnic minority groups and address the under-representation of young men from disadvantaged backgrounds.

According to Pickering, however:

> 'Despite legislative efforts and targets by the Government to improve higher education participation of the socio-economically disadvantaged, higher education remains stratified, with the socio-economically disadvantaged persistently underrepresented compared to the advantaged.' (Pickering, 2019, p. 57)

There is a broad consensus that the major challenge to the whole lifecycle approach remains the framing of WP in terms of what people are *lacking* in order to enable them to gain equal access to HE, in order to be able to overcome barriers. This "deficit approach," which exists in many contexts alongside education (such as health, youth work, community work and so on) has been criticised for a number of reasons:

- Deficit approaches tend to locate shortcomings within individuals, rather than acknowledging the role of Universities and wider social issues in creating and maintaining limitations to access for all. The success of Access and Participation is often framed within individualist, meritocratic frameworks that reduce the problem of WP to changing the attitudes and dispositions of disadvantaged individuals, rather than broader social, economic and cultural dimensions (Burke and Lumb, 2018, p. 12). Moreover, talented people were constantly confronted by a system that is unable and/or unwilling to recognise their educational experiences (Watts and Bridges, 2006, p. 287). As a result, the deficit approach can perpetuate an assumption that young people who choose not to enter HE have low aspirations; an assumption that has been challenged by research reporting that young people from WP groups often felt that their assets (e.g.

high aspirations, existing educational vocational and academic experiences and their potential) were unacknowledged (CWWP, 2004, p. 4, cited in Watts and Bridges, 2006, p. 283). In addition, participation from rural Cumbria is particularly likely to involve physical and geographic mobility which conflicts with aspirations of many who live in the region (HASCE, 2018).

- Discourses that blame individuals tend to exacerbate feelings of incapability in both teachers and students. Pressure on teachers to meet expectations of excellence and equity was described as highly challenging within existing structures. Academic confidence has a significant impact on students' academic success. Teaching staff perceived competing discourses of collaboration and competition to have an effect on student capability. Students associated with equity policies and discourses are most at risk of being perceived as 'undeserving' and 'unworthy' of higher education participation due to the ways that widening participation tends to be connected to anxieties about lowering of standards (Lizzio & Wilson 2013; Burke 2012; Smit 2012; Yorke & Thomas 2003, p. 68).
- Deficit approaches often fail to identify, or obscure, who is defining groups as WP. As Hayton and Stevenson argue, "current approaches measuring the impact of WP initiatives do not challenge definitions of what and who is valued and who is empowered to make such judgements. They frequently fail to question what constitutes success." (2018, p. 7) As a result, the definition of WP often reflects the cumulative effects of different discourses that are used across our life experiences of education (Burke and Lumb, 2018). In the UK HE context, research has suggested that the understanding of student "potential" or "ability" (or, conversely, lack of potential or ability) can depend on the ways that those with the institutional authority to make such judgments construct a sense of capability from within their specific disciplinary and institutional context. (Burke and McManus, 2009). This is particularly significant given that a student's likelihood of succeeding in HE is formed in part by their own sensibility of belonging; to belong in a field such as higher education, the student must be recognised as having the capability to belong (Burke et al., 2016, p. 18).
- Methods of determining WP groups can overlook existing assets when framed through a deficit lens (Pickering et al. 2019, pp. 59-65). For example, a problem with POLAR as a metric for under-representation in Cumbria is that it is not able to reflect aspects such as alternatives to progression to HE which are valued in the local environment. For example, elite apprenticeships with a major employer can be highly valued by young Cumbrians and their networks, including peers, parents, teachers, as they offer good training, career progression, rates of pay and standing in the community (Raven, 2019, p. 105). Thus, students whose performance at GCSE indicates that they could progress to HE may choose not to because apprenticeships offer them more valued outcomes (Raven, 2019, p. 117); or local job opportunities may be more advantageous in the longer term (Corbett, 2007, p. 438; Watts and Bridges, 2006).
- Conversely, deficit approaches tend to downplay the contribution of educational institutions in reproducing narratives of advantage and disadvantage (Webb, Burke et al. 2017, p. 142). Instead, it has often been problematised as being the difference between the socio-economic advantaged and disadvantaged (Harrison, 2012, p. 39). This can be exacerbated when, as some research has identified, widening

participation is seen as “increasing participation” rather than a transformational project of widening educational opportunities (Curtis et al., Sutton Trust, 2008, p. 4).

2.2 From Deficit to Assets

The challenge for outreach practices is therefore “to find ways to challenge and disrupt entrenched and historical inequalities that are often tied to taken-for granted practices and assumptions” (Burke and Lumb, 2018, p. 17) This has led to the development of approaches which seek to focus on what people *can* do, rather than what they *cannot* do, through modes such as asset-based, strengths-based or capability approaches.

There remains, within such developments, a risk of shifting the language of outreach without addressing the core principles of participation. For example, while there has been a shift, following the likes of Sen and Nussbaum, to adopt a “capabilities” approach, the concept of capability “carries multiple and contested meanings,” with “little attention afforded to studying the problematic ways that judgements on capability are made – mostly unwittingly.” (Burke et al., 2016, p. 12) As such, the different dimensions of capability – intellectual, emotional, material and economic – are all significant to outreach projects. As Burke et al. explain:

“Having access to certain material and economic resources such as a computer, internet, transportation and books are important in developing the forms of ‘capability’ that might be recognised by university lecturers. Being ‘misrecognised’ as ‘incapable’ might be exacerbated by a person’s social location and background; for example living in a remote area might make it far more difficult to be recognised as capable when access to Wi-Fi or transportation into university is severely limited.” (Burke et al., 2016, p. 17)

As a result, it is important to situate these approaches in specific concepts which held to unpack the complexity of existing assets in WP groups.

2.3 Assets and Capital

Perhaps the most useful concepts to underpin this are those of social and cultural capital. Bourdieu (1986) and Coleman (1988) developed these concepts based on observations of the benefits that accrued to individuals or families from their social ties. These concepts have subsequently been much developed and used in social and educational research to explain, and attempt to manage, social, educational and economic differences in society (Byun et al., 2012, p. 357).

Social capital refers to the resources that people gain from being a part of a network of social relationships and is acquired through people’s connections to groups and networks. Different interpretations of social capital by Bourdieu, Coleman and Putnam have emphasised different aspects and effects of social capital

(and have been differentially adopted by various ideologies e.g. neo-liberalism) but the meaning of social capital can be captured as “it’s not what you know, it’s who you know” (Giorgas, 2017, p. 207).

Cultural capital refers to social assets (i.e. non-economic assets) that promote social mobility beyond economic means and can be built through education, as this increases knowledge, skills and experience. Cultural capital is widely considered to be largely inherited from the family and has been found to be indicative of future educational outcomes, thus there is a link between cultural capital, higher education and aspiration (Turner, 2017, pp.95-96). Family cultural capital, defined as the status, class, and cultural tastes of a person inherited from their family (Vichie, 2017 cited in Turner, 2017. p. 95) is therefore considered a key influence on decision-making by young people about their post-compulsory education choices.

Subsequent research (e.g. Smith et al., 1995; Israel et al., 2001; 2004 cited in Byun et al., 2012, p. 357) has refined Coleman’s notion of social capital by identifying different levels (i.e., family and school) and different components, structural and process (Byun et al., 2012, p. 359). Granovetter (1973; 1983) distinguished between strong ties (family, friends, colleagues) and weak ties (acquaintances), and suggested that weak ties that link different networks together are often more important in providing opportunities for gaining life advantages (Vella-Burrows et al., 2014, p. 13). A common typology of social capital summarises the location and effect of different types of social capital:

Bonding social capital are strong ties between members of a social network, in similar situations. “Horizontal relationships” between family, friends and neighbours which are useful for “getting by” in life.

Bridging social capital are more distant “weak ties” between members of different social networks. These ties provide access to contacts, information and resources essential for “getting ahead” in life.

Linking social capital are “vertical ties” between groups with different levels of influence and power which allow access to and leverage of a greater range of resources than those available within any one community (Vella-Burrows et al., 2014, p. 13).

In addition, the concept of bonding social capital (and in particular the relationships among family members and especially parents and children) has been refined to include structural aspects such as single-parent or two-parent families, and the number of siblings, which determines the opportunity, frequency, and duration of parent-child interactions (Byun et al., 2012, p. 358). Aligned with this are process aspects, such as interactions between parents and children in discussion of aspirations, involvement in schooling, and educational expectations. Both structural and process aspects have been found to influence young people’s decision-making about PCE choices (e.g. Smith et al., 1995; Israel et al., 2001; 2004).

Simultaneously, bridging capital can affect the assets available to a prospective HE applicant. For example, Curtis et al. (2008) showed that the predicted grades of 'first generation' HE aspirants were generally lower than those of their fellow students. These students were also likely to apply to the more prestigious universities only if they were predicted very high grades. Students whose parents had attended university were more likely to apply with lower predicted grades to prestigious universities.

2.4 Social and Cultural Capital in Rural Context

These dimensions of social capital have particular importance for outreach work in rural areas. For example, Byun et al.'s (2012) project found that those rural young people who talked about their plans with their family had higher educational aspirations than those who do not (p. 372). However, this research also suggested that the unique features of rural settings moderate the effects of structural and process aspects of family social capital. Rural youth may experience unique forms of social capital such as long-standing and supportive student–teacher relationships and close community school relationships, compared to suburban and urban youth (Byun et al., 2012, p. 356). The depth of bonds with parents and the rural community that students grow up with, results in strong attachments to place and community. This can cause rural young people to adapt their educational aspirations to match locally available HE and work opportunities in order to stay, even when they are aware of the advantages of tertiary education. Conversely structural aspects, such as number of siblings, eligibility for free school meals, minority ethnicity, were not significantly associated with educational aspiration in a national study of American rural young people's educational aspirations (Byun et al., 2012., pp. 372-373), compared to their non-rural counterparts (Israel, 2001).

Research in Australia on the effect of family and school/community social capital influences on young people's decision-making around post-compulsory education choices pathways in rural areas, found that some family networks were more inclined to focus on helping young people find work locally, rather than encouraging them to consider further education and training (Alloway and Dalley-Trim, 2009, p. 51). Turner's (2017) study of the role of family members on young people's decision-making about going to University in remote areas of Queensland, Australia, found that family social capital was pivotally influential (p. 97). Three significant aspects of this family influence emerged:

- Parents and older family members were often a source of inspiration to young people to go to University;
- siblings provided realistic advice and information, particularly if they attended University themselves; and,
- moving away and being away from home was a significant influencing factor for parents and young people which could have decisive effects, depending on prior and existing knowledge and experience of HE and 'other' places (ibid., p. 105).

In a UK study on the effects of rurality on young people's post-compulsory choices in a remote ex-mining town, Mills and Gale (2008) described the 'inheritance' effect of family social capital. The history of low educational attainment, long-term unemployment and economic marginalisation that young people observed among their parents and community, led them to assume these were the only options available to them. Similar findings emerged in an Australian study of geographical and place dimensions of participation in post-compulsory education and work, where young people were significantly influenced by their educational and career 'inheritance' and expected to follow similar paths to their parents (Webb at al., 2015, p. 3). Living in isolated, rural communities, young people may have limited exposure to alternatives beyond the norms in their community or to new people, ideas and experiences which might disrupt 'strong ties' to the familiar and comfortable (Webb et al., 2015, p. 14). This is reflected in the way that young people did not regard a choice to stay with the familiar and access benefits, such as a strong and supportive sense of solidarity and connectedness, as a deficient option to progressing to HE (Webb et al., 2015, p. 35).

Research on the ways in which social and cultural capital is manifested in specifically rural contexts allows a greater understanding of how assets inform the widening participation process. In short, it becomes clear that the use of such assets is not simply down to the choices of the individual, but rather exist within a network of relationships. For example, research suggests that proximity of the university appeared to be one of the most important factors affecting a student's decision on which institution to apply for; which calls into question the extent to which students who have no familiarity with higher education are making the most informed choices. (Curtis et al. 2008, p. 5 – Sutton Trust)

2.5 Gated Assets

The advantage of situating outreach within the context of social and cultural capital is that it allows differences (rather than deficits) to be identified in particular areas. This can then inform an asset-based approach to widening participation which recognises specific interfaces and resources that provide capabilities for HE entry. For example, in the case of healthcare, Bateson et al. argue that:

"The purpose of widening participation is to broaden and build the workforce skills base by capitalising on the different strengths people bring to the healthcare workforce, in this way building the future workforce whilst contributing to social equality and fairness which in turn builds a healthier society." (Bateson et al., 2018, p. 118).

As such, assets exist which are not typically identified as such from the perspective of HE. Yet, such assets are able to provide a range of strengths such as emotional intelligence and resilience, personal qualities and values, team work and communication skills, and cultural competences. This approach has informed,

for example, the Prato Project at the Glasgow School of Art; an initiative which specifically challenged the assumption that "widening participation students need to abandon their working class cultural identities in order to cope with art school." Instead:

> 'the ambition is not to intimidate the students into hurdling their class position to adopt another cultural identity; rather it is a concerted effort […] to improve the individual's capacities to understand and move within different perspectives on cultural capital, to their own advantage, and ours.' (Neil and Reid, 2011)

However, it becomes clear from the literature that, unlike a blanket "capabilities" approach, understanding assets (both personal and institutional) also requires identifying the ways in which assets can be accessed, encouraged or blocked. For example, a number of key interfaces with HE outreach is provided in a schools context; but these are also subject to a number of filtering systems (or "gates") that potentially obstruct students engaging with them. Gorard and See (2013, p.84) suggested that relying on schools alone to support HE outreach overlooked more localised strategies of education, whereby outreach activities could be used as a "reward" for the most talented and hardworking, rather than those who might benefit the most. If the objectives of the universities and the gatekeepers to school-based activities (such as teachers or careers advisors) are not aligned, the impact of outreach activities may be limited (Pickard et al., 2019, p.70). As a result, it is important to not only map the existing assets within a given area, but also to understand the various "gates" within these assets that affect who can draw upon them.

3 Assets in Cumbria

The following table summarises the assets identified from interviews with Hello Future staff, based on their personal and professional experiences. These are grouped into a more general "asset context," and accompanied by a description of which aspects enable HE opportunities.

Asset context	Asset	Specific aspect of asset
Formal IAG	Careers and jobs information	Information on range of career options and entry routes Links between different progression routes and career options Labour market information
	Information sources about HE	What HE is and how it differs from school Different progression routes Range and content of different HE subjects How different courses are structured and delivered and the implications of this How the same subject can vary between universities and how to find this information and understand it TEF and course content and organisational information and quality rankings Timing of information and HE outreach Case studies of local people who have progressed
	Individual's skills and experience to support decision making and progression	Confidence in own value; confidence in communicating about own achievements and objectives; understanding own skills and interests; growth mind-set skills Information linking hobbies or interests to potential careers and progression routes Understanding of which degree choices and

Asset context	Asset	Specific aspect of asset
		Universities take into account extra-curricular activities Know how to demonstrate and maximise relevance of extra-curricular skills and experience
	Mentoring	
	Outreach trips	
HE	Links between school & HE	Visits to and from HE sites including near, mid-and distant HE options Activities run by HE in schools and colleges Funding for visiting HE Open Days
	HE outreach inc. Residential outreach experiences	Activities run on HE sites Jargon and myth-busting
	Information to support transition to HE	How and where to get help at Uni, for example, hardship funding, counselling Information about daily life at University Understanding of the differences between teacher-pupil social and working relationships and lecturer-student social and working relationships in HE; independent self-study skills and management Information about the non-academic side of HE: joining clubs and societies, balancing social and academic activities
	Structural and institutional changes around HE outreach	Changing application cycle dates and timing Entry requirements Changing areas of outreach focus
Employers	Experience of work	Work experience organised through school or Sixth Form college Part-time work during their secondary education
	Employer outreach	Outreach from employers and apprentice training providers about apprenticeship progression routes at Parent's Evenings, school visits, careers fairs

Asset context	Asset	Specific aspect of asset
		Employer representatives visit schools and colleges to provide information about content of jobs and day-to-day working lives in different jobs
Informal IAG	Parents	Advice and guidance Example and peer role models Family and community identity Traditions e.g. entrepreneurial families, approaches to work etc.
	Siblings	
	Wider family including grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins	
	Friends	
	Community	
	School or Sixth Form college	IAG from teachers Peers in school community
	Community location, strength of community and distance between social networks	Social networking and social communication skills Travel planning and experience

4 Contexts, Mechanisms and Outcomes of Assets

4.1 Overview

This section draws together the data gathered in the first and second tr5.anches of data collection, which includes both the accounts of assets from an operational perspective (first tranche) and a strategic perspective (second tranche). The data has been thematically analysed and represented in terms of contexts, enabling mechanisms and disabling mechanisms, and outcomes. This is method is adapted from realist evaluation methods, where the linking of contexts and mechanisms allows hypotheses to be generated for effective change. In this case, we are using them to a modified purpose: the headings were used to map the constituent parts of an asset, as well as the ways in which assets can be accessed, encouraged or blocked. This allows assets to be understood as not simply "things" which exist, but rather mechanisms for improving capabilities which are gated at particular points to either encourage or block access.

For the purpose of this analysis:

Contexts are defined as elements that are external to any outreach intervention, but may have an influence on the outcome. This would typically include policy contexts and strategic drivers which the assets are embedded within.

Mechanisms are elements which have the power to initiate an event within that context which would not have otherwise taken place. This is, in other words, the elements of the asset in action, as young people access (or do not access) them. These are divided into enabling mechanisms (which allow access) and disabling mechanisms (which may prevent access, or lessen its impact).

Outcomes are elements produced directly from the application of the mechanism to certain contexts.

Data analysis is presented in schematic tables summarising the main contexts, mechanisms and outcomes relative to the assets identified in Section 4. Where appropriate, sources for specific points have been referenced to distinguish the data tranches. Where no reference is provided, information came from Tranche One. Elsewhere:

SL= Strategic Lead, AM=Area Managers, AO=Area Officers

Formal Information and Guidance

4.2.1 Careers Information

Asset Contexts	Enabling Mechanisms	Disabling Mechanisms	Outcomes
Careers information is mainly led by schools and colleges and distributed through schools careers	Most schools have Careers Days which involve a rotation of employers. Outside school, Carlisle Skills Fair is held annually in January, where learners can find out more about different career options and entry routes, from a number of different employers, education and training providers. (AO)	Current careers information for young people can box subjects, careers and pathways together in a linear way, rather than 'spring-boarding' the choices available between subjects and HE education/ careers. This can overlook the variations of jobs in certain sectors, or alternative routes to progressing into them. (AM)	Disparity in uptake by young people for IAG opportunities that have information about careers and routes into jobs they do not know about, beyond familiarity and
	Gatsby Benchmarks ensure common minimum standards for careers information.	Individual schools and colleges can interpret and apply Gatsby Benchmarks (AM).	

Asset Contexts	Enabling Mechanisms	Disabling Mechanisms	Outcomes
plans, including the involvement of local practitioners and employers. (AO)	Learners for workshops delivered in schools (LMI, Progression Routes, Apprentisnakes, Mentoring) are selected by school staff using Hello Future guidance (e.g. workshop capacity and targeted audience).	Young people's engagement and access to this asset is affected if staff, schools and colleges: do not (or cannot) allow careers practitioners into schools do not pass on or support access to information to young people about events and sessions happening outside of school (AM and AO)	expectations related to traditional or locally dominant choices.[2]
	Options Evenings or Careers Evenings provide opportunities for Labour Market Information sessions for Parents and Carers delivered by Hello Future.	Timing of workshop does not always fit with school timetable and/or whether students can leave classes to attend.	
Additional careers related information and experiences are available to some or all schools and colleges from external organisations such as Hello Future, Inspira, Job	Out of school events run by Hello Future (such as cultural trips) are recruited via online marketing (social media), remarketing (from previous attendees) and asking	Young people might be "selected" for participation expectations may be based on socio-economic and behavioural markers rather than perceived HE potential.	Additional careers experiences and

[2] This disparity is seen in uptake for Hello Future activities. In some cases, such as Labour Market Information, young people may access presentations from other organisations, such as Jobcentre Plus.

Asset Contexts	Enabling Mechanisms	Disabling Mechanisms	Outcomes
Centre Plus, which may be targeted at priority groups (AO).	schools to email target learners. (AO)		information that young people have access to varies within and between different schools and colleges and areas (AO).
Employment sector panels, as identified by Cumbria LEP, shape the showcasing of career options.	Progression Routes Assembly aims to provide learners with information on how they can progress from Year 9, throughout their educational journey (through a mixture of paths) and onwards in to their careers. (AO)		
Funding grants (in general) tend to be awarded more to West Cumbria and Barrow in Furness (due to higher levels of disadvantage) leaving gaps elsewhere in the county (SL). This determines the focus of Hello Future activities, for example.		The type of careers / job advice offered within some areas may be biased towards major local employers and skills demand and LEP skills shortages in these areas (e.g. West Cumbria has a strong nuclear focus; Barrow in Furness has significant dominant employers). (SL; AM)	Differences in education and careers choices by young people in different areas which may not optimise their opportunities.

4.2.2 Information about HE

Asset Contexts	Enabling Mechanisms	Disabling Mechanisms	Outcomes
Universities own information tends to focus more on 'how to apply' rather than spending time focussing on the 'why'. (SL)	Existing information around subjects available at HE and the language used may affect informed decision-making by young people.	Schools/colleges may receive different levels of support or input from universities relating to this information – potentially leaving knowledge gaps (SL)	Accessible information linking subjects studied at school to the different routes and subjects available in HE may be lacking.
		Universities tend to have a shorter term focus, placing more importance on older age students that will progress more quickly (as this provides a quicker return on investment for them). Less information is offered at younger age groups. (SL)	
	If YP are aware of what 'seminar learning' means, and they have experienced that style of learning at school or on outreach trips, they are	Language used around HE acts as a barrier to both young people and parents/carers and other key influencers. For example:	

	better equipped to ask questions at Open Day, in online chats with Student Ambassadors, search in UCAS pages, about how the course is delivered.	information about HE does not always make clear that young people do not have to continue studying a whole subject area, but can specialise at tertiary level. (AM)	
Uni Connect programmes have spent time seeking feedback from learners, Teachers and Assistants, Parents and Carers to identify their needs. This is placed in a Progression Framework. This approach could be adopted by University outreach teams. (SL)	Information that maps the skills gained from studying a particular subject at school, and which is matched to the vocabulary used at university, enables young people to explore different course routes and identify delivery patterns that suit their learning style. (AM)	Importance of Progression Framework asset may sometimes be under-utilised by HEIs delivering HE outreach who skip straight to what is on offer - not why and how you should do it. (SL)	
	Practitioners believe that if learners had more knowledge of this type, that may result in a more positive attitude to HE and/or intentions to progress to HE.	Practitioners perceive there to be a lack of this type of information at present in HE outreach.	
Cumbria LEP providing case studies on local people who have	HE outreach practitioners use their own experience as appropriate although this is obviously limited to the areas they know about.	Practitioners note that there is not often programme-level detail on this.	Perceived differences in understanding of range of content,

progressed into HE level jobs: 'people like me'. (SL)	Outreach work which develops understanding and ability to use skills and experience acquired through extra-curricular activities. For example: using first aider experience with Explorer Scouts as work experience for nursing application. (AM)	Instead, personal experiences arise during discussions in an ad hoc way, and will depend on the practitioners own student experience.	structure and delivery of different HE courses

4.2.3 Individual Skills and Experience

Asset Contexts	Enabling Mechanisms	Disabling Mechanisms	Outcomes
Funding cuts for areas like youth clubs and additional activities in schools are perceived to affect YP's decision-making confidence and practice.	Support that enables young people, especially those who are unsure of their end goals, to focus on their hobbies and passions as a basis for decision-making. Activities specifically to help young people gain these types pf skills and experiences, such as Futures Workshop (Year 9); Growth Mindset (Year 10); Summer Residential programmes (Year 10); and Communicating Confidently (Year 12, often booked for Y11s by schools with no Sixth Form)	Practitioners suggest that for those YP with unclear aims, there is a risk of basing decisions on conventional subjects which are deemed by people around young person to have more worth and value, on the 'tick list' for potential careers or outcomes. (AM)	Varying abilities of YP to have confidence and communicate their own achievements, and know-how to demonstrate and maximise relevance of extra-curricular skills and experience
Drivers in education – improving exam results – can have effects on the way funding decisions are made within a school, and may shape	Outreach trips and Cultural Trip Packages	Geographic and infrastructure restrictions (e.g. lack of central locations in Cumbria).	

approaches to learning styles.	Mentoring activities	Hello Future Mentoring dependent on school take-up.	

4.3 Higher Education

Asset Contexts	Enabling Mechanisms	Disabling Mechanisms	Outcomes
Funding packages are available to schools from Uni Connect projects: Travel Package Fund, HE Opportunities Grant.	HE outreach that develops young people's understanding of how hobbies and passions provide a route to access extra-curricular activities available through HE, thus acquiring a vast range of employability skills to enhance their future prospects. (AM)	Funded visits organised by schools and colleges tend to focus on the same Universities (typically dictated by geography).	If schools plan trips to HE providers further afield, these are usually more intensive and targeted.(AO)
		Opportunities Grant (for individual students) often under-utilised.	
The same subject can vary between universities in structure, topics and delivery.	Practitioners note that HE outreach which facilitates and creates 'lived experiences' provides opportunities for young people to explore whether subjects, course/pathway is right for them and increases their confidence to engage with it. (AM)	HEI visits are a very traditional form of outreach, often dictated by HEIs: there is a comparatively low administrative burden to see large groups at a time, in a one-off trip, which gives prospective students less time to explore in detail (SL).	
	Practitioners note that information on subject diversity this is currently limited and mostly accessed through participation in Year 12 one-	Outreach practitioners report there is still a box-ticking approach within HE to fulfilling lists of requirements related to entry to HE and graduate	

	to-one mentoring. (AO)	level entry jobs. (AM)	Varied accessibility to information for understanding variation of University offers.
Available support at Universities, e.g. hardship funding.	Understanding, agreement and co-ordination between different parts of HE institutions and HE outreach as to whose role this is to deliver and when this type of information is delivered.	HEIs may have finite resources/capacity to meet these needs.	

4.4 Employers

<table>
<tr><th>Asset Contexts</th><th>Enabling Mechanisms</th><th>Disabling Mechanisms</th><th>Outcomes</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Gatsby Benchmarks require learners to have work experience in Year 10 and Year 12.</td><td rowspan="2">Employers may have targets to meet with regards work experience offers. (SL)</td><td>Whether these benchmarks can be met may depend on whether schools can afford work experience placements and have the capacity to facilitate this. (AO)</td><td rowspan="3">Experience of work can affect application for certain degree programmes.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Employers may want to see recruitment return for time they invest. (AM)</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Community organisations may not driven by recruitment agendas or targets for HE recruitment or employer recruitment. (AM)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Range of very different careers programmes across schools</td><td>Outreach from employers and apprentice training providers about apprenticeship progression routes at Parent’s Evenings, school visits, careers fairs.</td><td>Practitioners observe that many schools use a similar contact list of employers to deliver employer outreach in schools (e.g. larger companies such as BAE and</td><td>Potential differences in detailed knowledge of education and careers options for young people in different</td></tr>
</table>

		GEN2). There is a lower perceived level of participation by small or locally developed businesses. (AO)	areas.
	Employer representatives visit schools and colleges to provide information about content of jobs and day-to-day working lives in different jobs		

4.5 Informal Information and Guidance

Asset Contexts	Enabling Mechanisms	Disabling Mechanisms	Outcomes
	Understanding of need for particular experiences of qualifications which can be acquired prior to applying to University.	Young people from a WP background may have less informal access to these kinds of experiences because there are fewer people in their social networks who have got higher education and working in higher level jobs. (AM)	Variations in understanding of the 'lived experience' of HE, e.g. how student debt is managed.
YP decision-making is situated within a localised context of economic, social and cultural capital. These influences can often be 'forgotten' in outreach or 'hard to	Hello Future have a number of interventions for parents and carers (e.g. What is HE, Jargon and Myth Busting and Progression Routes). Practitioners suggest that parents are particularly interested in the Mythbusters focus on student debt (AO)	Currently limited number of schools and parent events that HF involved with Parents that attend HF events/where HF present may not include all parents eg hard-to-reach parents Informal information (parents, carers, teachers etc.) may have partial, out-of-date or biased	

Asset Contexts	Enabling Mechanisms	Disabling Mechanisms	Outcomes
reach'. (SL)	Events such as the Annual Hello Future Conference provides opportunities for stakeholders within these contexts to meet and network (teacher and advisor contacts, University partners, business partners and HF staff). (AO)	information, as evidenced by the experience of a partner organisation outreach staff member, who worked with teachers in a school and had to explain about tuition fee loans to a teacher.	Variations in localised perceptions of HE and career progression.
Difference in ways of speaking and type of language used informally compared to formal outreach. (AM)	Informal settings such as out of school activities can provide better opportunities for discussing progression to HE on YP's own terms.	Work with community groups is often more bespoke, depending on their needs and access (compared to the defined progression pathway of the schools programme).	Variations in access to relatable
	HF staff note that when interventions that are delivered in community setting, they are often more intensive. Thus, they the quality and intensity of intervention can be higher than presentations or workshops delivered in schools (AO)		
	HF have developed case studies of 'people like me' (similar to LEP);	Common meeting areas for community groups is easier to	

Asset Contexts	Enabling Mechanisms	Disabling Mechanisms	Outcomes
	these are being expanded to include mature learners, more degree apprenticeships to apply to a wide range of audience (AO)	operate in more densely populated areas (Barrow, Carlisle), but more challenging in others.	and/or interesting information for YP across the region.
Friendship groups	When HF deliver sessions in school, practitioners note that young people are generally with their friends. This can have a positive impact for initiating conversations about the topics, which may then continue within friendship groups outside formal HF session (AO)	Differences in eligibility for participation in outreach activities based on academic criteria may be a barrier to participation if some members of a friendship group are eligible and others not. Similarly, if an individual is in a Uni Connect target group and their friends are not.	
		Being able to sign up to trips, residentials and community projects with friends can be a determining factor in whether or not young people participate.	

5 Discussion and Summary

5.1 Gated Assets

The literature review demonstrated that while the deficit model is still prominent in WP outreach and intervention work, asset- and capability-based models offer significant alternatives. At the same time, it is important to understand such assets in-depth, because these are not necessarily openly accessible. Instead, assets will always depend upon certain forms of "gatekeeping."

Gatekeeping occurs in two forms:

Gates	Gatekeepers
Contexts and functions that shape the asset itself. *Examples*: Availability of funding for certain projects. Issues for access in deprived areas (e.g. dilapidation/risk from buildings affecting potential delivery). Particular strategic foci of organisations, e.g. the LEP or Uni Connect. Flexibility allowed for access due to timetabling (e.g. sixth form colleges generally more flexible than schools).	An individual or individuals' decision, made by whoever controls access to an asset. *Examples*: Staff in schools and colleges deciding whether and what to book from the range of additional HE and careers information and experiences. Access decisions may be based on expectations of young people's potential. Hello Future decide which programmes to run and how to deliver them.

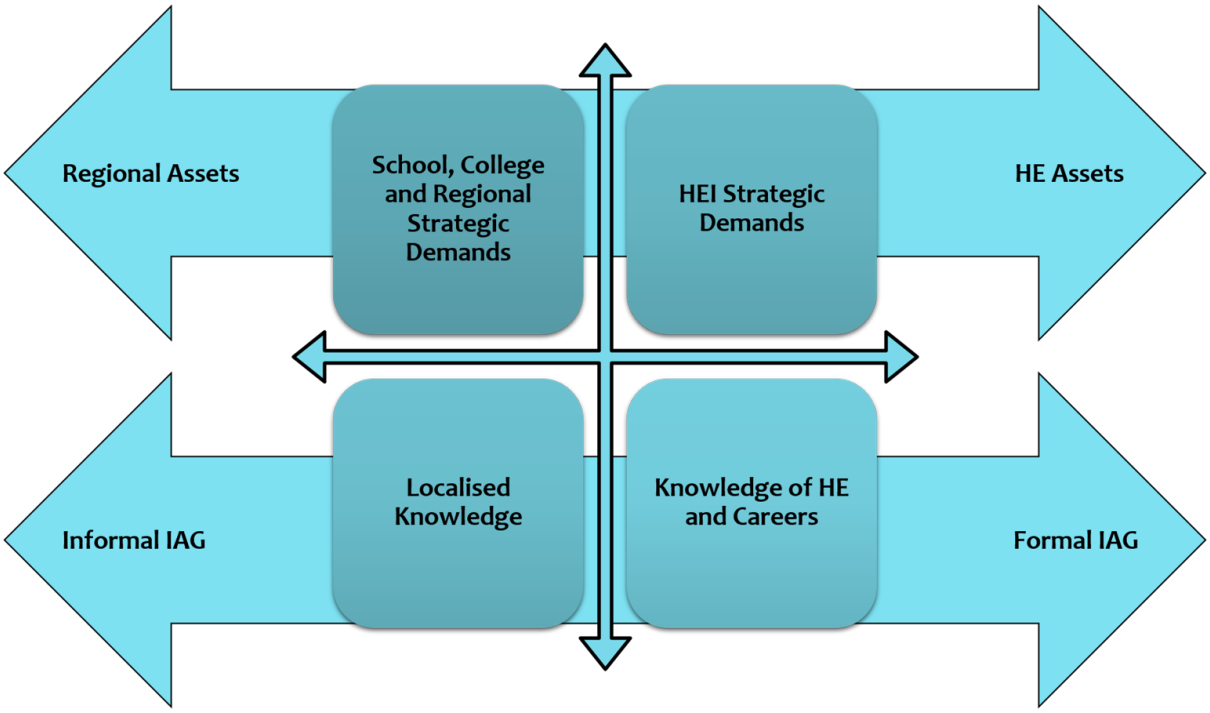
The importance of this distinction is to identify the different wider drivers and contexts which may affect a young person's accessing of a particular asset. Neither "gate" not "keeper" is necessarily fixed in place, and is subject to change; but change may be easier in some instances than others. For example, the ability and capacity of some schools to engage with outreach activities on offer are constrained by issues such as building dilapidation, presence of asbestos, which results in the pupil body being separated into different sites. In areas of high deprivation, school staff effort and focus may be largely expended on ensuring young people have access to food, shelter, safety, before they can think about facilitating access to activities such as mentoring (as one participant noted, young people most in need (of everything) often those that get the least access).

The data collected suggests that understanding how these gates are created and maintained is key to underpinning an asset-based approach to both WP and outreach work. It allows practitioners to identify areas where asset gatekeeping can be addressed, but also to place assets in terms of the broader contexts they are subject to.

5.2 An Asset-Mapping Matrix

During the course of data collection, one participant described how information available to young people about HE can be viewed as a triangle: the base layer, which is abundant, is information online which is accessible and free, but tends to have less impact. The middle layer of information consists of outreach activities such as those of Hello Future. Access to these is largely governed by more local asset bases (such as schools or clubs). Practitioners commented that Hello Future's Schools & Colleges programme is designed for each year group to have 2-3 interventions per year, with the topics relating to the year groups specific needs relating to HE. The top layer, which consists of the information that target learners are asking for most, is the least available and least accessible.

When this availability of information is framed in terms of assets themselves, the data collected for this project suggests that a matrix may serve to illustrate the sets of tensions which emerge as part of the mapping process. This asset-mapping matrix can be presented in the following figure:



This figure demonstrates the links between higher-level demands which shape aspects of the "gates" to certain assets, and the distribution and type of knowledge delivered by "gatekeepers." As the relationships between enabling and disabling mechanisms in Section 5 suggested, there is an inevitable tension between available localised knowledge – which may be based on gatekeepers' personal knowledge of both HE and of the localised contexts (such as the locality of a particular school) – and the more formal information provided by HEIs and outreach organisations. In turn, the strategic demands of HEIs will likely be different to other educational and economic demands of an area, which means that the types of assets offered will differ.

The matrix serves as a way of situating assets available to any individual young person in Cumbria. The position of each asset on the matrix determines the forms of gatekeeping at work, in terms of the drivers involved and the synergy or conflict between each quadrant an asset sits within. Different assets will take up different amounts of space on the matrix: for example, a campus visit to an HEI would constitute a relatively small point, sitting across HEI Strategic Demands and Knowledge of HE. Cultural Trips Packages, meanwhile, may cross into all four quadrants, and be balanced between formal IAG (in terms of the information received while at the trip's destination) and informal IAG (in terms of the informal mentoring that can take place during the journey between practitioners and participants).

6.3 Improving the Asset Map

The data collected for this project has been limited to Hello Future practitioners, managers and strategic leads. The next question to ask is the extent to which the non-outreach assets identified here are considered as such by those involved in their delivery or maintenance. This would include, in particular, community groups and voluntary sector groups, and the parents and carers who constitute a key part of the informal IAG. These are both areas that participants in this report suggested could be key assets in supporting young people's decision-making and knowledge-based, but have not always been engaged with to the extent they might.

In this way, continuing to improve and develop the asset map will continue to inform an asset-based approach to WP and outreach in Cumbria, which makes nuanced use of the specific and distinctive capabilities the region has to offer.

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