Analysis of the delivery and impact of the BME mentoring work undertaken through the Aimhigher programme in Hertfordshire.

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Summary.

Partnership working between organisations across Hertfordshire was a key feature of the Aimhigher programme. This informal report looks at one aspect of the collaboration with Hertfordshire County Council and specifically with Youth Connexions. Aimhigher funding provided an impetus to the work with black and minority ethnic (BME) groups and a particular focus on the barriers young people from these communities face regarding education and progression. The combination of Aimhigher and Youth Connexions funding provided a dedicated team of Personal Advisors and resulted in a positive impact on the lives of hundreds of young people in the Dacorum and South West areas of the county.

The scope of the BME work was wider than the remit of the Aimhigher programme and there are many factors involved in learner achievement and progression, so it is not possible to evaluate the influence of the BME work in that way. It is interesting however, to consider a sample of learners from a period of time, and to look at the short term impact of the work and the longer term progression of the group. There is much more analysis that could be done. This report has been prepared with the assistance of Youth Connexions as part of Aimhigher Hertfordshire final reporting.

Carole Linnell
Aimhigher Coordinator.
Aimhigher Hertfordshire is a partnership led by the University of Hertfordshire and including Hertfordshire County Council. Since the beginning of the programme in 2004, funding has been allocated to partners for specific purposes and work in the county. One of these purposes has been to provide intensive Personal Advisor support to specific underachieving Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities. Initially funding was subcontracted to Watford Racial Equality Council and then, as this closed, to Watford Community and Voluntary Service (CVS). Watford CVS employed 3 Personal Advisors to undertake the work and play a role as part of the Youth Connexions team which was also part funding the activity. In addition they had a high profile within the local community, supporting cohesion initiatives and linking with other groups. Initially the proportion of Aimhigher funding was high, but during the final 3 year phase this fell to less than a third of the total cost of the service, with other strands of Youth Connexions supporting the rest. A short strategic review of Watford CVS this year confirmed that “the CVS is well respected for the work it does”, and, “the skills, energy and commitment of staff were consistently praised”.

A.2 The Aimhigher remit.
Aimhigher was a national, government funded initiative that ran from 2004 to 2011. The mission was to widen participation in higher education (HE) by raising the aspirations and developing the abilities of young people from under-represented communities. Overwhelmingly these are people from lower socio-economic groups and disadvantaged backgrounds. The Aimhigher partnership in Hertfordshire aimed to break down barriers and encourage all learners to reach their potential.

A.2 Purpose of analysis
A great deal of work was recorded as part of the BME Aimhigher initiative in Hertfordshire. There was meticulous recording of interventions made and the immediate outcomes of this one to one work with young people. The purpose of this report is to pull together some of that information gathered at the time and also to provide a longer term view of the impact.
Part B  Methods

B.1  Method of working

Each of the 3 PAs were expected to carry a case load of up to 25 clients and worked mainly across Dacorum and South West Hertfordshire. Two of the PAs worked mainly with young Muslims, and the other with members of the African Caribbean community and young people of mixed heritage. Most referrals came from schools or college, and the one to one interventions also took place there. A report at the beginning of 2009 indicated that 82% of learners were in (school) Years 9 to 11.

The PAs supported learners to address a multitude of problems, while keeping a clear focus on raising educational aspirations and achievement through:
- providing positive feedback;
- building self-confidence and self esteem;
- identifying positive role models;
- challenging negative influences;
- identifying targets;
- agreeing action plans.

B.2  Example of standard reporting.

Below is an example of standard end of year reporting for 2008-09, which was accompanied by the details of the school and colleges interventions and notes/feedback concerning individuals. As this report shows, the scope of the work was much wider than the individual learner caseload.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme (A brief description of types of activities)</th>
<th>Volume / outputs (numbers of participants, schools etc)</th>
<th>Impact: What were the outcomes of the activity? e.g. increased applications to summer schools (short / medium term to be identified)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Awareness and aspiration raising activities</td>
<td>One to one work with clients in schools/colleges and outreach centres</td>
<td>Raising motivation, confidence and self esteem. Helping to realise their aspirations and how to achieve them Girls gained in depth information on possible careers, assistance with UCAS/personal statements/CVs Advice on PVE agenda</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group work (Asian Girls Group Westfield)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group work Asian Boys</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Promoting Summer Activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Attainment raising activities</td>
<td>Supporting young people age 13-19 in schools/colleges and outreach</td>
<td>Ongoing: Group educational aspirations heightened. Support with peer pressure Good feedback from teaching staff. Participation in open weekend activities. Young people participating in volunteering opportunities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Involving young people in voluntary activities</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Informing young people about leisure activities</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Informing young people about getting involved in community projects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Vocational activities</td>
<td>Involving young people in voluntary activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Informing young people about leisure activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Informing young people about getting involved in community projects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 4. Information, advice and guidance activities | Meeting with young people to discuss options  
Group work with young people, mentoring/anger management.  
One to one interventions with young people.  
Informing Young people about career conferences and Youth Connexions service.  
Assisting schools with pupil review day  
Participated in school open day. | Awareness of local recruitment opportunities and careers  
Consultations with young Muslims about meeting their needs within the community, exploring possible initiative/funding opportunities  
Heightened awareness of their options (apprenticeships/college/sixth form/university/work)  
Enabling young people to contact colleges/sixth forms, completing college application forms, preparing for college interviews  
Advising young people job searching techniques, how to improve CVs, interview skills.  
Improved behaviour, with heightened educational attainment and career aspirations.  
Offering young people intensive ongoing support.  
Young people gain insight to their future career, opportunity to identify whether a particular career is for them.  
Informing parents/carers of youth connexion service, and specific roles of Watford CVS PAs |
| 5. Staff development and training | Meeting/advising newly appointed young carers worker  
Attend conferences incl BME, Narrowing the Gap, TAHMS.  
Integrated Practice Networking | Appreciation of service objectives, with opportunity for referrals from other agents.  
Informed worker of young carers group  
And assisted to develop future young carers programme. |
| 6. Progression | Gather information from various reports/research work/conference with regards to raising aspirations and attainment of client group.  
Assisted in the development of mentoring programme in the Watford area  
Participation in programme to reduce NEETs group/September guarantee initiative. | Advised TAMHS worker of ways project may work in schools, focused on advantages/disadvantages |
| 7. Research & dissemination activities | Participation in meetings/development groups. | Improved knowledge and guidance towards best practice models, impact on service delivery.  
Tackling educational disengagement  
Working with Watford Borough Council and St Albans to explore PVE funding for young Muslims, in order to provide activities and projects |
| 8. Other | Exploring funding opportunities for development of community based initiatives for young people |  
Increased knowledge of local recruitment opportunities and careers  
Consultations with young Muslims about meeting their needs within the community, exploring possible initiative/funding opportunities  
Heightened awareness of their options (apprenticeships/college/sixth form/university/work)  
Enabling young people to contact colleges/sixth forms, completing college application forms, preparing for college interviews  
Advising young people job searching techniques, how to improve CVs, interview skills.  
Improved behaviour, with heightened educational attainment and career aspirations.  
Offering young people intensive ongoing support.  
Young people gain insight to their future career, opportunity to identify whether a particular career is for them.  
Informing parents/carers of youth connexion service, and specific roles of Watford CVS PAs |

5.
Part C   The wider picture

C.1   Examples of existing good practice
i) Mentoring has played a large role in the work of Aimhigher since the beginning of the programme. A Mentoring team based at the University of Hertfordshire have provided a range of schemes, many of which used undergraduate students who were trained as mentors to work in our target schools. Some schemes have specifically targeted looked after children, and children who have been excluded from school, or at risk of exclusion. During the final phase of Aimhigher (2008-11) the Associate scheme was rolled out nationally with the majority of partnerships (including Hertfordshire) receiving additional funding during 2009-11. The Associate scheme also used undergraduate students and used a combination of group, one to one, and e-mentoring. The larger part of the Aimhigher investment in Mentoring activity has been with the University based team on a ratio of around 4:1. A report commissioned during 2011, "Making a difference through mentoring" (Roberts, A. and Weston, K., August 2011) explores the concepts, practices and results of some of this work.

ii) During 2008-09 a report was commissioned by the African Caribbean Achievement Network of Secondary Schools to provide a study of the practices that enable three schools in South Hertfordshire to outperform the local and national averages in raising achievement for pupils from Black backgrounds at the end of Key Stage 4. The schools chosen were not Aimhigher target schools and the programme is not mentioned as part of the study. However this excellent research report (“How we are making the difference”) does provide a detailed account of the wider issues involved in BME work and can be accessed here:

http://www.thegrid.org.uk/learning/mecs/achievement/making_the_difference.shtml

C.2   Equality Impact Assessment

Youth Connexions undertook an equality impact assessment when it became clear that Aimhigher funding was going to cease at the end of 2010-11. Unfortunately the loss of Aimhigher funding was one of many cuts in government funding, some of which were in-year cuts, and the decision was taken to decommission the PA posts at the end of Autumn term 2010. The assessment aimed to identify the potential impact on the equality of Youth Connexions service delivery for young people from specific BME communities. The formal consultation took place between September and November 2010 and it included:

- a questionnaire sent to all of the schools in which the PAs work
- a separate questionnaire sent to a sample of 100 young people who had been supported by the PAs
- a questionnaire to a range of other stakeholders as recommended by Watford CVS. (See appendices).
The purpose of the young people’s questionnaire was to elicit the level of satisfaction with the service and the importance to the young person of the ethnicity of their PA. The purpose of the stakeholder consultation was to gather general feedback on the overall satisfaction with the service and their community.

It was clear from the evaluation and consultation that the work of the Watford CVS PAs had been valued by all stakeholders and the project had produced good outcomes for the young people who benefited from the service.

There was little evidence to make a case for the ethnicity of the PAs having played a significant role in this success, at least from the young people’s perspective, and this will be taken into consideration in the future.

As part of the exit strategy it was stated that "Youth Connexions will aim to ensure that underachieving young people from BME communities continue to be identified and supported to achieve their potential”.

**Part D Further Analysis**

**D.1 Intervention Analysis**

The sample is of 44 Young People who were receiving interventions during the period January to April in 2007. The analysis looks at the whole intervention history for these particular individuals.

**Number of Interventions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Interventions</th>
<th>1-3</th>
<th>4-7</th>
<th>8-12</th>
<th>13-20</th>
<th>21 +</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

64% of those who experienced positive improvements received between 4 and 12 interventions, 33% who experienced positive improvements received 13 or above.

Those who appear to have experienced no positive outcomes all had between 7 and 10 interventions.

**Outcome of Intervention work**

- **30 (68%) of the young people sampled had specific outcomes recorded in their notes, including:**
  - improved aspirations,
  - improved attitude,
  - improved attendance,
  - improved attainment
  - improved behaviour
  - increased confidence
  - improved well-being

The majority of these young people continued on to Further or Higher Education studying a range of subjects from IT to Teaching.
Of the 30 who had outcomes recorded:

- 10 (23%) of the young people sampled had improved educational aspirations, with a corresponding improvement in attainment and confidence.
- 12 (27%) specifically improved their attainment through improved confidence, attitude and attendance.
- 6 (14%) specifically improved their attendance at school or college leading to improvement in their exams and/or course work
- 14 (32%) Young people had improved their attitude, which had a corresponding impact on their attainment and attendance
- 4 (9%) reported an improvement in confidence, which in turn improved their attendance and aspiration to continue in Further or Higher education.
- 3 (7%) were specifically reported to have improved their behaviour at school
- 2 (5%) reported an improvement in their well being at home and in school.
- 14 of the young people sampled had no obvious/specific improvements recorded in their notes.

Level of improvement

It is difficult to ascertain the level of improvement from the notes, however interpretation of the outcomes suggests the majority of young people saw moderate improvements to their lives through this period of interventions and only a few (3) experiencing no positive outcomes.

34% of those who experienced improvements received between 4 and 12 interventions, 32% received 13 or above.

Those who experienced no positive outcomes all had between 7 and 10 interventions. This group was analysed further to look for any particular trends such as the stage at which they received interventions, or the advisor involved. No trend was found.

D.2 Destination Data

The following chart shows the destination data for the whole of the group receiving interventions during January to April 2007, as known when this was produced in December 2010.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School (Yr11) Leaving Year</th>
<th>Ethnic Description</th>
<th>AMA Employed status to NVQ3</th>
<th>1yr BTEC First Diploma Intermediate Level</th>
<th>1yr GCSE/Oth Crs</th>
<th>1yr NVQ level 1 Crs</th>
<th>2yr NVQ level 2 Crs</th>
<th>2yr BTEC National Cert/Dip Adv</th>
<th>Job NO Trng</th>
<th>NEET-Family Support Teenage Parent</th>
<th>NEET-Seeking Employment without training</th>
<th>NEET-Seeking Employment matching to opps</th>
<th>NEET-On-going Matching to opps</th>
<th>New National Diploma - all levels</th>
<th>Sch 2yr AS/A2/IB</th>
<th>Unknown/Address Unknown/Can't Contact</th>
<th>Grand Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2003 Total</td>
<td>Pakistani descent</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006 Total</td>
<td>Pakistani descent</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007 Total</td>
<td>Black-African</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>2008 Total</td>
<td>Black-African</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009 Total</td>
<td>Any Other Ethnic background</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010 Total</td>
<td>Black-African</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
D.2 Destination Data (cont)

The above data shows around half of the BME cohort still in education and training with a significant number having progressed to Higher Education. There are clearly many documented influences which affect decisions and attainment and we can make no claim here for cause and effect in terms of the direct impact of the programme. We do note however that students were selected by their school because of issues with attitude and attainment, culminating in a risk that students would not reach their potential. The results are therefore noteworthy and can be further set in context by considering their peers. The BME cohort attended a number of different schools and colleges. Three of the schools were Aimhigher target schools and have the following statistics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5 Year Average 2005-06 to 2009-10 No. children taking GCSE</th>
<th>5 Year Average 2005-06 to 2009-10 No. Accepted UCAS Applicants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

D.3 Narrowing the Gap.

Each year an analysis is made by Youth Connexions of all BME groups, looking at key stage 2, 3, and 4 achievements and making comparisons with Hertfordshire and National averages. In 2010 it was noted that at Key Stage 4 the gap decreased for Pakistani, Bangladeshi and White and Black African categories. The gap for “any other black background” at Key Stage 4 was similar to the 2009 national average. The gap was increasing for the Black Caribbean category at Key Stage 4 although particular progress was made at Key Stage 2.

Part E Individual Case Studies.

The following scenarios are taken from 3 case studies made at the end of 2008-09.

E.1 Context: J is male and 15 years old. He was referred by the school Connexions Coordinator, due to concerns that J’s attitude towards school work and staff had deteriorated. Bad behaviour incurred a spate of detentions and internal exclusions. Problems included lack of punctuality with associated disruption, and late completion of homework with a marked tapering off of quality.

Action taken: One to One meetings were held at school, through which reasons were explored behind what was seen as unacceptable behaviour with the potential outcome of not obtaining the best of educational opportunities. J was conscious of the increase in educational demands to achieve, set by the school and his family and having difficulty adjusting to this. He also became appreciative that at times other school mates intent on mischief making would entice him into situations where due to his outspoken nature he would be the individual seen by teachers as causing an incident, with him ending up having to do the detention. He also accepted that although his knowledge of requirement related to completion of homework was adequate, bad organisation resulted in poor quality and incomplete work.

Outcomes:
From the period of time working with youngster outcomes achieved were:
* Improved time management and organisational skills
* Appreciation of benefits to further studies
* Ability to develop life time plan, linking studies to career path
* Ability to deal with adverse situations (not to succumb to peer pressure)
Developed skills where he could calmly represent himself without becoming angry
Detentions and Exclusions became a thing of the past
J sat his GCSE's and obtained, 2xA*, 4XA, 3XB, 1xC, 1xD. J intends to continue with his education by going to school sixth form; he intends to take up Law as his chosen career.

E.2
Context: B is male and 16 years old. He was referred by the school Connexions Coordinator, who had concerns that although B was a very bright pupil he was showing signs of struggling with his preparation for his coming GCSE's and would not attain his full potential.
Action taken: Meetings were held at school, B confided that he was feeling very stressed, and that his preparation for coming exams was not as it should be, he was having difficulty focusing on his school work. He accepted that it would be of benefit to develop a revision plan, better manage this process while making certain that he built in periods of rest. Career options were also discussed which gave B an opportunity to see the benefits of the work he had to apply so that he could ensure himself of a future in the field of IT. He agreed that further studies after GCSE's would be more beneficial to him.
Outcomes:
From the period of time working with youngster outcomes achieved were:
* Better time management
* Developed revision plan which also assisted with stress management
* Clear direction with regards to career option
* Ability to plan further education path
*B obtained GCSE's, 1xA (IT), 7xC, 1xD.
B intends to continue with his education by going to school sixth form.

E.3
Context: N is female and 16 years old. She was referred by the school Connexions Coordinator, who had concerns that low in self confidence and self esteem would hamper achievement of her high level of predicted grades at GCSE.
Action taken:
Meetings were held at school, N stated that although she was quite popular at school she was lacking in confidence and did not have much of a social life. She intended to continue with further education eventually wanting to go to university. As a means of building up her self confidence, she decided to get involved in functions which would include interaction with other young people, this included library duties at school, taking up swimming classes and joining local girls camera club. Various career opportunities were discussed based on her stated interest in design technology and IT, N now began to relate further studies with a more focused career path.
Outcomes:
* Increased confidence and self esteem
* Appreciation of benefits to further studies
* Ability to develop life time plan, linking studies to career path
*N obtained GCSE's, 5xA, 4XB, 1XC, 1xD.
N intends to continue with her education by going to school sixth form; she intends to take up Law as her chosen career