

**A Blueprint for Fairness in the Glasgow Region:
Exploring widening access activities to inform a
collaborative, regional approach**

Research Project – Final Report

Alison Browitt and Dr Robert Ingram

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Research team

Alison Browitt – alison.browitt@glasgow.ac.uk

Dr Robert Ingram – Robert.Ingram@strath.ac.uk

The Blueprint for Fairness in the Glasgow Region Project Board

For further information about the project, please contact Dr Stephanie Mckendry** or any member of the Project Board:

Fiona Andrews (University of the West of Scotland) – Fiona.Andrews@uws.ac.uk

Robin Ashton (Glasgow Colleges Regional Board) – robin.ashton@gcrb.ac.uk

Andrew Comrie (Royal Conservatoire of Scotland) – A.Comrie@rcs.ac.uk

Dr Neil Croll (University of Glasgow) – Neil.Croll@glasgow.ac.uk

Sharon Kelly (Skills Development Scotland) – sharon.kelly@sds.ac.uk

Abigail Kinsella (Glasgow City Council) – Abigail.Kinsella@glasgow.gov.uk

Dr Stephanie Mckendry (University of Strathclyde) – stephanie.mckendry@strath.ac.uk **

Rita Nimmo (Glasgow City Council) – Rita.Nimmo@glasgow.gov.uk

Shona Paul (Glasgow School of Art) – S.Paul@gsa.ac.uk

Dr Bernadette Sanderson (FOCUS West) – bernadette.sanderson@strath.ac.uk

Anna Thomson (Scottish Funding Council) – athomson@sfc.ac.uk

Eleanor Wilson MBE (Glasgow Caledonian University) – Eleanor.Wilson@gcu.ac.uk

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Executive Summary

The Blueprint for Fairness in the Glasgow Region Project was established in response to the Commission on Widening Access (CoWA), and specifically Recommendation 4 of its final report that states *'Universities, colleges, local authorities, schools, SFC funded access programmes and early years providers should work together to deliver a coordinated approach to access which removes duplication and provides a coherent and comprehensive offer to learners'*.

This innovative project is significant in a number of ways. Firstly, it involves the collaborative efforts of a wide range of stakeholders, including every higher education institution (HEI) in the region, all committed to delivery of a learner-centred, whole systems approach to widening access (WA). It answers CoWA's call for joined-up policy and practice. Secondly, it has been developed as evidence-led from the outset: the Project Board devised specific research questions and issues that required exploration prior to the development of practical proposals and programmes; and researchers undertook empirical work and secondary analysis to provide answers. This report details the research questions and findings that will underpin the ongoing practical work of the project.

The specific aims of the research were to map existing WA activity within Glasgow and the west of Scotland, highlighting gaps and duplication/ overlap across the learner journey; to understand issues around WA and targeting in the region, and the effectiveness of current access activities. Quantitative and qualitative research was undertaken with relevant stakeholders in the field of WA and school education to inform proposals for a regional approach.

Whilst this report concerns access to higher education (HE) and the research team engaged with college staff and took account of college-led widening access activity, the focus of the research was primarily on school-based interventions related to encouraging application and progression to university. The report, however, recognises the role of colleges in both delivering Senior Phase vocational study opportunities to school pupils, and the significant contribution made by colleges to widening access to HE, both at college and through articulation to university.

It was clear from online surveys of schools that the majority of existing WA activity focusses on secondary schools and the Senior Phase. The benefits of access provision, specifically in terms of admissions and support of the application process, were clearly noted by research participants. Specialised support to access degree programmes with non-standard application processes was also highlighted as an important element of current provision.

The research suggested that a pupil's participation in WA activities should be linked more strongly to the admissions process, through the provision of access routes, with appropriately adjusted offers, for example. A clearly defined access route can raise aspirations and make HE a realistic and achievable possibility.

Whilst some examples of duplication were highlighted in WA activities within the Senior Phase, we conclude there is little evidence from schools that they are overcrowded with WA programmes, with the clear majority of those surveyed agreeing current provision is 'about

right' or that they would like to see more. Notably, primary/pre-five schools would like more WA provision.

There is 'cluttering' around support with the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) process and personal statements and also the multiple programmes facilitating access to the teaching profession. There is, also, an overcrowding of WA activity in certain secondary schools in one disadvantaged area of Glasgow City. Negative aspects of overcrowding and duplication include issues for teachers in organising and coordinating WA activities in the school. There was also some confusion over which pupils should participate in activities and why and concern that some pupils missed out on activities if several took place at the same time. Outwith Glasgow, overcrowding is not a concern.

There were concerns about pupils' time out of class. It was acknowledged that attainment of qualifications was more important for access to HE than participating in WA activities. All WA providers, and the Project Board, should consider the extent to which any activities complement rather than compete with attainment in schools.

We conclude there is a need for a more joined-up approach to WA in the region, with increased coordination of current provision. The Project Board should consider how best to remove duplication where it is deemed unhelpful to learners. Those involved in access need to work in a collaborative manner with schools and, most importantly, with each other. Improved collaboration and communication is required if schools are to be supported in managing the complex task of working with multiple organisations and identifying which pupils will benefit from which programmes.

Aspiration raising is seen as the most effective aspect of WA activities, followed by Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG). Access routes and preparation for HE were seen as less relevant for primary/pre-five school respondents, but were effective aspects of WA for secondary schools. Attainment raising was seen as less effective in the secondary school sector, but very effective in primary/pre-fives.

Schools and local authorities (LAs) reported that WA activities delivered by partners complement the school provision relatively well, particularly where the school works to accommodate them within their own activities e.g. in Personal and Social Education (PSE) classes. The concept of integrating WA provision within existing curricula brings more challenges than simply overlaying isolated activities. There is, however, potential for significantly more impact if WA providers work in partnership with each other and with schools to enhance knowledge and change practice. In raising awareness of post-school options, WA supports Skills Development Scotland (SDS) careers guidance in school and Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) policy and practice, encouraging positive destinations post-school.

A key theme running through the qualitative research was the benefit of experiential activities. These were primarily through visits to an HE campus and mentoring from student role models or adult professionals. It is clear, WA activities can be transformative for participants, improving confidence, attitudes and behaviours. Aspirations were raised by 'demystifying' and 'normalising' HE through breaking down the social and cultural barriers.

Transitions were highlighted as key points in the learner journey for intervention, particularly since these are points of change which can be challenging for the most vulnerable. There is little WA work done with the early years' transition into primary school, some work on the P7/S1 transition and a great deal around transition to HE. More collaborative activity should be developed to cover those transitions currently less well supported by WA.

WA work is a continuum; activities and programmes that raise aspirations and support informed choice should continue across the learner journey. It was suggested there were gaps in WA provision from pre-five throughout primary school and the Broad General Education (BGE) phase of secondary school. P7 was seen as less of a gap, possibly because P7/S1 transition has been identified as a good time to introduce HE and the WA activities that will be available in secondary schools to young people and their parents/carers. The need to make young people aware of their options at an early age was highlighted. IAG, awareness and aspiration raising is important in the early stage of secondary school, before the first subject choices are made, but it was acknowledged that careers decisions can be made before this.

Three key stages of the pupils' learner journey were viewed as an appropriate time to introduce HE: Pre-Five transition into P1, P5, and early secondary, with emphasis on 'the earlier the better'. As early as pre-five nursery school could be the appropriate time to talk about the terminology and language of HE whilst introducing the idea or 'planting the seed'.

It was also highlighted that primary school was the appropriate time to engage with families and particularly those who were from the most disadvantaged backgrounds. Despite some evidence of parent/carer engagement, the view of teachers and those involved in access was that parental engagement can generally be low with schools. Concerted additional effort is, therefore, required by stakeholders if they are to engage parents/carers in WA.

The reasons for low engagement with parents/carers were complex though, importantly, not due to lack of aspirations for their young people. Parents/carers own experiences of education and lack of knowledge of HE were also highlighted as a contributing factor. For example, a limited understanding of student finance may result in concerns about the affordability of HE.

Besides parents/carers, another key group of influencers for young people are their teachers. Staff across the school require greater insight into WA and would welcome information as part of their professional learning or Continuous Professional Development (CPD). The importance of acquiring subject-specific WA knowledge and for teaching staff to continually keep abreast of changes and adapt to new developments was highlighted. A subject-specific focus will make CPD around WA feel relevant to teachers. There was also support for introducing WA to students undertaking initial teacher training.

In terms of barriers, geographical and travel issues were raised both as a major challenge to delivering and participating in WA activities, as well as for young people eventually accessing HE. It was mentioned frequently with respect to areas outwith Glasgow, but also for young people in the city travelling from their local area. Thought should be given to how best to support WA activities for young people who may experience travel difficulties.

Gaps were highlighted with respect to particular pupil groups accessing and participating in WA activities such as pupils with Additional Support Needs (ASN). There were also gaps identified in the delivery of WA in some subject areas.

Another major barrier to progress was the lack of a collaborative longitudinal tracking mechanism of WA participants that would enable both WA providers and schools to evaluate and evidence the success or otherwise of WA activities/programmes. There was support for use of a unique learner number, also recommended in the CoWA final report, to enable longitudinal tracking of individuals' progress across the learner journey.

We discovered much evaluation is undertaken internally on existing programmes, reportedly to at least Level 2 of the then Office for Fair Access (OFFA) Proposed Standards of Evaluation. Providers would like to do more but said they are restricted by funding, resource and access to data.

Throughout this report, we have highlighted the importance of partnership working in the area of WA. Indeed, it can be argued that developing and sustaining partnerships between relevant sectors in the field of WA is central to CoWA Recommendation 4. Current successful partnerships between schools and WA providers, HEIs, LAs, colleges and other external organisations were cited, as were partnerships between WA partners in colleges and universities. The current regional collaborative partnership of FOCUS West as the west of Scotland arm of the Schools for Higher Education Programme (SHEP) was highlighted as one good example in practice. Support for care experienced and looked after children was also noted as a model of collaboration between HEIs and WA providers.

The competitive nature of the WA landscape arises primarily from targets, from the need for certain numbers of pupils to be recruited to WA programmes for funding or viability requirements and in admissions targets for HEIs. This, perhaps inevitably, creates tensions between the ambitions of collaboration and providing the most suitable pathways for individuals, and the competitive need to recruit to WA programmes and HE courses. Whilst it is challenging to mitigate these, at the very least, targets and targeting criteria for WA programmes should be aligned to the WA outcomes expected from HEIs.

Policy at national, regional and local levels were discussed regularly by research participants. Regional collaboration was understood as vital on a practical level, but HEIs were clear that they do not only recruit students from the local or regional area, therefore a national perspective is essential. The small specialist institutions in particular stressed that they are national HE providers in their subject areas.

National policy should support regional collaboration, however, with alignment of funding and strategies to avoid or mitigate competing agendas. It should provide guidance for collaboration, including a professional community of practice for WA. The tracking and data sharing mechanisms for better evaluation of WA should also be at a national level.

The current sector emphasis on WA targets or numbers was viewed as important by the WA teams and comprised the main reporting requirements of institutions and national organisations. However, it was also recognised that this type of data only partially told the

impact of WA. For example, there is also a ‘halo-effect’ that is not easily measured: the impact on parents, siblings, class-mates or younger years in the school. We conclude, therefore, there is a need to define success beyond numbers and to come to a consensus on valid ways to capture the narrative of success as part of the evaluation of WA.

Recommendations

The recommendations from the research can be viewed in three groups – current widening access (WA) activities that are proving to be beneficial and should be continued; current WA work that may go some way towards addressing issues but should be developed and/or expanded; recommendations for new developments to address gaps in current WA provision.

Recommendations are for consideration by the Project Board, Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and Scottish Government, Local Authorities, providers of widening access, and the school and HE sectors.

Current WA activities that should continue

Recommendation 1: The research showed that experiential activities were beneficial to pupils. We recommend that these real-life HE experiences should continue to be supported and for more pupils to be offered this type of provision to increase awareness, aspirations, knowledge and preparation for HE.

Recommendation 2: Mentoring support to pupils was a key benefit highlighted in the research. WA providers and schools should continue to support and further enhance the role of student and professional mentors in delivering WA provision as role models and advisers providing personalised IAG.

Recommendation 4: Pupils should continue to be supported during the Senior Phase to ease their transition into HE. Funding and focus of WA work with Senior Phase should be maintained to ensure this crucial point of transition is supported including more awareness of the types of learning and teaching styles in HE.

Current WA activities that should be developed

Recommendation 3: It is recognised by policy-makers and research that a clearly defined access route can make the goal of progressing to HE more achievable as well as directly supporting WA. We recommend these should continue to be explored and adopted where possible by HEIs, for example, through use of transparent contextual admissions, admissions processes that provide reduced offers for those who have undertaken Senior Phase WA programmes and development of more articulation routes through college.

Recommendation 6: Geographical and travel issues are a barrier to both delivery of and participation in WA activities, as well as accessing HE. Innovative solutions should be explored

to address these issues from both the providers and schools' perspectives, to enable pupils to access provision.

Recommendation 7: It is recommended that more coordination of current provision should be encouraged through WA providers working in a collaborative manner to help schools with the logistics of working with multiple organisations. This would furthermore avoid duplication and increase efficiencies.

Recommendation 8: Better communication across the sector is required, with more information for and from teachers involved in organising the delivery of WA activities. This includes guidance for getting the right pupil on the right programmes for the best outcome for that individual.

Recommendation 13: Evaluation carried out to meet WA programme, institutional and national targets is primarily through the gathering of quantitative data. We recommend that broad measures of success, beyond numbers, are defined and agreed upon to capture the narrative of success as part of the evaluation of WA. For example, learner driven skills portfolios are used by Skills Development Scotland (SDS) in demonstrating the attainment of Careers Management Skills.

Recommendation 14: More activity and support should be provided to address gaps in subject-specific provision. HEIs should play a more prominent part in delivering WA and awareness raising activities in subject areas that schools do not teach, for example, the extensive range of science and creative subjects offered in HE.

Recommendation 15: Collaborative agreements between WA providers and schools should be further strengthened. These should focus on delivery of WA provision where the work of providers complements the work of teachers in schools and does not compete with attainment, since the latter is vital for access to HE. It could also involve closer partnership with SDS careers advisers in schools in support of Careers Management Skills.

Recommendation 16: There were many examples of good practice with respect to partnership working involving schools, colleges, HEIs, LAs, WA providers and other external agencies. This collaborative work, including college to university articulation activity, supported by national policy, should continue to be encouraged and expanded, where appropriate.

Recommendations to address gaps in current WA provision

Recommendation 5: The research found that HE should be introduced to pupils in earlier years. We recommend organising and delivering more WA activity at this crucial stage of the learner journey through primary school, including the transition to secondary school, to further enhance aspirations and informed choice.

Recommendation 9: WA providers, working with school teachers, must consider what appropriate level of engagement and types of activities should take place in pre-five, through

earlier and later years of primary school. This should include introducing the idea of HE to pupils, using appropriate terminology and 'normalising' HE.

Recommendation 10: Parental/carer engagement in WA, as with education generally, is low. We recommend that appropriate strategies to engage more parents/carers in WA activities should be developed. Interventions should increase awareness of WA and knowledge of financial aspects, in particular. Primary school was identified as the best time to engage with parents/carers in WA, particularly families with the most disadvantage.

Recommendation 11: The research highlighted a need, and desire, for WA to be part of teachers' professional learning. To address gaps in WA knowledge, we recommend introducing/enhancing appropriate CPD packages: these should be available to all staff, not just those involved in coordinating WA, and students undertaking initial teacher training. CPD should cover both general and subject-specific aspects of WA in order to remain relevant for subject teachers.

Recommendation 12: While there was evidence of evaluation carried out by WA providers, there is a need for better collaborative tracking processes for programme evaluations, as WA providers were restricted by resources and access to data. We recommend that consideration should be given to developing and implementing a longitudinal tracking process using existing access to individual institution, local authority and national data systems, to enable providers to undertake more effective evaluations. Ideally this would be at a national level, led by the Scottish Government and SFC.

Recommendation 17: Policy procedures, targets and funding arrangements should reduce the risk of competition across the sector. We recommend that further guidance on how best to deliver WA provision that takes on board institutional, regional and national priorities should be developed by the SFC, Universities Scotland, Colleges Scotland and SDS, for example. Targets and targeting criteria for WA programmes should be aligned to the WA outcomes expected from HEIs by the SFC and Scottish Government.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background and Context

In Scotland there has been a major strategic and policy steer over recent years in the area of widening access (WA), with the stated ambition of the Scottish Government that every young person should have an equal chance of accessing higher education (HE).

The Commission on Widening Access (CoWA), established to meet the above goal, published its final report in 2016 (Scottish Government, 2016a). It proposed a number of recommendations (34 in total) to achieve in Scotland the, ‘...goal of equal access for those from deprived backgrounds or with a care experience’, (2016a, p8), the ambition set out by the First Minister in 2014 – that 20% of new entrants to HE in 2030 should come from the 20% most deprived areas in Scotland – with later agreement that this would be measured using the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD)¹.

The first recommendation from the final report was to appoint a Commissioner for Fair Access, one of whose main tasks was to report annually on progress towards equal access against the recommendations outlined in the 2016 report. The first annual report was subsequently published in December 2017 (Scottish Government, 2017).

The rationale behind CoWA, and the appointment of a Commissioner, was not to take forward the WA agenda in isolation. As the first annual report notes, their work ‘...is only part of a larger jigsaw’ (2017, p4). Over recent years a number of education policies linking to WA in Scotland, directly or indirectly, have been implemented at a national level and research has been conducted in the area of WA, all of whose aims are to address inequalities experienced through socio-economic disadvantage and increase access to HE to enhance further the learner journey.

1.1.1 Policy and Research Overview

The Scottish Government’s 15-24 Learner Journey Review, published in May 2018, outlined the Government’s proposals for education provision for 15-24 year olds (2018a). It commented on the WA agenda working alongside the three key pillars of education policy: Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC), Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) and Developing the Young Workforce (DYW), in promoting informed choice for young people. The third annual progress report of the Developing the Young Workforce (Scottish Government, 2018b), Scotland’s youth employment strategy, raised expectations of schools to increase advice on the world of work as part of the curriculum and through collaboration, and set out achievements to date in offering young people more work-related opportunities through partnerships between schools, colleges, training providers and employers.

In response to the CoWA report, Universities Scotland’s Working to Widen Access report presented a number of actions across three key areas; admissions, articulation and bridging

¹ The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) is a measure of relative socio-economic deprivation based on postcode datazones in Scotland. It is used as the main measure of WA by the Scottish Government and SFC. See <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-index-multiple-deprivation-2016/>

programmes, to enhance WA opportunities (2017). The Scottish Funding Council's (SFC) Impact for Access Fund enabled more research to be carried out on WA. The University of Glasgow and Local Authority (LA) partners undertook research on performance and progression of pupils residing in SIMD40 postcode areas who attend schools with higher progression rates to HE (Croll et al, 2016). They explored ways to engage with these young people who were not being offered support through the policy of targeting WA programmes to pupils in lower progression schools. Sosu *et al* (2016) considered how the Scottish Government, working alongside other relevant stakeholders, can address inequalities in access to HE in Scotland by examining policy and programme interventions, including the Schools for Higher Education Programme (SHEP)². A third large research project looked at contextual admissions for WA by mapping and evaluating the use of contextual data in undergraduate admissions in Scotland (Boliver et al, 2017).

In addition to undergraduate degrees at Scottish universities or higher education institutions (HEIs), learners can access HE courses offered by Scottish colleges. This route into HE is an important one, with over 40% of HE level students in colleges in 2016/17 (SFC, 2018, p10), particularly for young people from more disadvantaged backgrounds. Throughout this report, when we talk about HE we are referring to HE in university, college or small specialist institutions. Colleges provide stand-alone HE qualifications as well as an articulation route into university study. Although articulation from college to university was beyond the scope of the learner journey covered by this research, it should be noted it is over a decade since the SFC published the first of their initiatives to support articulation (SFC, 2007). Research has been conducted on how articulation has impacted on the experiences of students. One study explored students' views of the learning, teaching and assessment experiences within both their higher nationals (HNs) and degree programmes and how they adjusted to the transition from college into university (Ingram and Gallacher, 2013). In June 2013, the government's Post-16 Education (Scotland) Bill was approved by the Scottish Parliament and one of its central proposals is to establish a joined-up system that enables learners to readily move between the college and university sectors (Scottish Government, 2013). The main policy thrust within the Act is to enhance the learner journey into and through HE in Scotland in order to increase efficiency, flexibility and to widen access to HE.

The SFC's annual statistical publication on WA provides an overview of the national picture with respect to data on the Scottish Government's access targets, and on the broader measures on WA provision across the college and university sectors in Scotland (2018). These measures include socio-economic deprivation, gender, ethnicity, disability, care experience and age. In 2016/17, 13.8% of Scottish domiciled full-time first degree entrants to Scottish universities were from the 20% most deprived areas and students with care experience backgrounds made up 0.6% of full-time undergraduate entrants. Both groups have student retention rates well below the average; a concern as widening access and widening participation (WP) agendas aim not only to increase entry to HE but success in HE.

Both the 15-24 Learner Journey Review and the final report of CoWA highlighted the need for closer partnership and collaborative working across the sectors in order to improve the

² The Schools for Higher Education Programme (SHEP), funded by the SFC, supports regional collaboration between schools, colleges and universities to raise awareness of and aspiration to HE to increase progression to HE from schools with traditionally low rates.

experience across the learner journey for young people and those from disadvantaged backgrounds, in particular.

1.1.2 The Blueprint for Fairness in the Glasgow Region Project

The Blueprint for Fairness in the Glasgow Region Project was established in response to CoWA, in particular Recommendation 4, and aims to fulfil that recommendation in the west of Scotland: *'Universities, colleges, local authorities, schools, SFC funded access programmes and early years providers should work together to deliver a coordinated approach to access which removes duplication and provides a coherent and comprehensive offer to learners'* (2016a, p14). Recognising a perceived 'cluttered landscape', the overarching goal of the project was to set out to achieve greater coherence and collaboration in WA activity and delivery.

The main instigator behind the project was Glasgow City Council (GCC). A Blueprint for Fairness Project Board was established which comprised members from the following organisations: FOCUS West, Glasgow Caledonian University, GCC, Glasgow Colleges Regional Board, Glasgow School of Art, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, SFC, Skills Development Scotland (SDS), University of Glasgow, University of Strathclyde and the University of the West of Scotland. This collaborative project was funded by the SFC following a successful bid and agreement to host the project was undertaken by the University of Strathclyde. It commenced in February 2018 when two Research Associates were appointed to carry out the research to explore the extent of current WA activities within the west of Scotland.

The project board agreed the aims and objectives of the project and regular meetings had a two-fold purpose: firstly, to provide a steering group to review research findings and provide advice and support for the research strategy, and secondly, to provide a forum for key stakeholders to work together as part of a regional collaborative approach to taking forward recommendations from the research. This will be discussed in more detail in Section 5.

1.2 Aims of the Research

The overall aim of the research was to provide an evidence base for proposals and recommendations to enable stakeholders to develop programmes for action in a coherent and collaborative learner journey approach to access in Glasgow and the west of Scotland.

The specific research aims were to:

1. Map existing WA activity within the region, highlighting gaps and duplication/overlap across the learner journey.
2. Conduct research with a range of stakeholders including, WA providers based within HEIs and the third sector, FOCUS West, colleges, primary and secondary schools, parents/carers and students, to understand issues around WA and targeting in the region, and the effectiveness of current access activities.
3. Inform proposals for a regional approach to access with targeting criteria beyond school progression rates.

There has been some research undertaken, and evidence gathered, on the range of WA activities in the Greater Glasgow region (and elsewhere in Scotland). However, there was no systematic mapping data available on the extent of WA activities from nursery through primary and secondary that will prepare pupils for entering HE, either in college or university. Quantitative and qualitative research was undertaken with relevant stakeholders in the field of WA and school education to seek their views and experiences. The research has also examined targeting criteria and the issues/barriers, and solutions, in terms of support for WA activities.

We have not reported on measures or targeting criteria as, subsequent to the commencement of the project, the Scottish Government Access Data Group was formed to explore this issue in detail. While it was an original aim it became less of a focus as potential changes in measurement and targeting criteria will be implemented at a national level.

Whilst this report studies access to HE, and the research team engaged with college staff and took account of college-led widening access activity, the focus of the research was primarily on school-based interventions related to encouraging application and progression to university. The report, however, recognises the role of college in both delivering Senior Phase vocational study opportunities to school pupils, and the significant contribution made by colleges to widening access to HE whether at college or through articulation to university.

Section 2 of the report provides more information on the methodological approaches adopted to conduct the research. Section 3 focuses on the main findings and three core themes are explored in more detail – current WA activity in the Glasgow region; the main gaps in current WA activity and the key issues around regional collaboration. Section 4 presents the conclusions from the research and discussion of findings and Section 5 explores what additional work could be undertaken to further enhance our knowledge of the key areas around WA activity in the Glasgow region.

Almost 50% of the postcode datazones in Glasgow City are in the most disadvantaged quintile (or 20%) of postcode areas in Scotland, as identified by SIMD (Scottish Government, 2016b). The unique circumstances of the west of Scotland, with a large concentration of schools, pupils and socio-economic disadvantage alongside the strategic drivers from Scottish Government policy represented a timely opportunity to develop and sustain a regional blueprint in the region.

We hope that the findings presented in this report will provide the evidence base for the development of a regional model of widening access engagement, a coherent and truly collaborative learner journey from nursery through to secondary school and into HE. In doing so, this will also enhance engagement with parents/carers, families and communities and draw together universities, colleges and WA organisations in sustainable partnership.

2 Methodology

The research strategy was designed to address the aims of the project through a mixed methods approach with data from a range of sources.

Stage 1 involved secondary analysis of pre-existing data to

- a) Start to map widening access activity in the region and,
- b) Examine school level data to inform the sampling framework for the research and targeting criteria for widening access proposals arising from the research.

Stage 2 involved empirical research to understand the views of education and WA professionals to inform recommendations and proposals, as well as map existing WA activity in the region. Ethical approval to undertake the research was obtained from the University of Strathclyde Ethics Committee.

Stage 3 was to involve consultation with parents/carers and undergraduate students around the conclusions and recommendations from Stages 1 and 2 of the research and the proposals to be taken forward. Stage 3 was, however, beyond the scope of this project with the limitations of the timescale for reporting (detailed in Section 4.2). The most valuable aspect of Stage 3, consultation with parents/carers, has been carried over in recommendations for further work. (Section 5, Further Work).

Stage 1: Data Sources and analysis

Sources of data for secondary data analysis can be found in the Appendix. These include publically available data from the Scottish Government, School Education Statistics. School level data was explored using Microsoft Excel.

Stage 2: Sampling Framework and Fieldwork Strategy

Empirical data was collected from stakeholders using online surveys and focus groups. Table 1 outlines the stakeholder groups; data collection methods used and project timescale.

Table 1: Sample and Fieldwork Strategy

Stakeholders Group	Data Collection Method	Timings (2018)
Local Authority (LA) Education staff	Online Survey	July - September
Widening Access Providers – WA/WP teams at HEIs; Colleges; FOCUS West	Focus Groups (9)	May - August
Widening Access Providers – third sector and organisations with smaller WA projects	Online Survey	July - September
Teachers/ Head Teachers, SDS Careers Advisers and other professionals in schools	Online Survey	May - September
	Focus Groups with a sample/ case studies (6)	June - December
FOCUS West Contact Teachers	Workshop at FOCUS West Teachers Meeting	June

Online surveys were designed and hosted on Qualtrics³. Three similar surveys were created and tailored for each stakeholder group. Participants were invited to complete the survey via email (emails to schools were sent via the LA Education officers in the 13 West of Scotland LAs).

The contact list of WA providers was generated from the mapping exercise identifying existing WA activity in the region.

An example of online survey items is provided in the Appendix.

The completed online survey response, with consent given, were:

- Schools survey – 26 GCC Secondary Schools (87% response rate)
 - 16 Secondary Schools from across 7 LAs outwith GCC (non-GCC)
 - 18 Primary Schools from across 4 LAs, including GCC
 - 2 Pre-Five Nursery Schools
 - 1 Additional Support for Learning (ASL) School
- LA staff survey – 3 responses (23% response rate)
- WA Providers survey – 8 responses (28% response rate)

Semi-structured interview schedules, tailored for the stakeholder group, were used in focus groups with 9 WA providers (WA/WP teams from HEIs, colleges and FOCUS West), 4 secondary schools and 2 primary schools. An example of a focus group schedule is provided in the Appendix.

In addition, a workshop was held with 21 FOCUS West school teachers at the annual FOCUS West Teachers Conference, an event organised for the 37 schools in the West of Scotland with whom FOCUS West work, to capture the views of teachers with direct experience of coordinating with external partners on delivering WA programmes.

2 secondary schools and 2 primary schools in GCC and 2 secondary schools in LAs outwith GCC were identified as of interest for case studies from data in Stage 1 or by recommendation from the Project Board. GCC secondary schools with high proportions of pupils from areas of socio-economic disadvantage (SIMD quintile 1) and long-standing experience of working with a number of WA providers were chosen. Secondary schools in 2 LAs outwith GCC were identified in a benchmarking model generated by a Scottish Government Statistics Analyst (Naylor, unpublished) as performing above their benchmark in terms of attainment in Senior Phase. Primary schools were identified as having experience of working with HEIs on WA provision.

Focus group discussions were audio-recorded, with consent of the participants, and transcribed for analysis.

³ See <https://www.qualtrics.com/>

Stage 2: Data Analysis

Quantitative analysis of closed survey items was carried out using IBM SPSS (v24) statistics software and Microsoft Excel.

Legend for graphs in figures: **GCC Sec** – GCC Secondary school responses
nonGCC Sec – Secondary schools from LAs outwith GCC
Prim/Pre5 – Primary and Pre-Five nursery school responses
ASL – Additional Support for Learning school response
LA– Local Authority staff survey responses
WAP – WA Providers survey responses

It was deemed appropriate to report findings on secondary schools in GCC and in LAs outwith GCC separately in Section 3. GCC was a primary instigator in setting up the project and the increased support in this LA resulted in very high response rates to the online survey. In addition, we acknowledge the variance across the LAs in the west of Scotland – GCC is a large urban centre while the others range from urban to very remote and rural.

Qualitative analysis of open responses from surveys and focus group transcripts was carried out using a thematic analysis approach. Analysis of data from the different collection methods was carried out independently by the two researchers to provide robust conclusions through triangulation.

In total, 153 research participants were involved through participation in focus groups, the workshop or submitting online surveys.

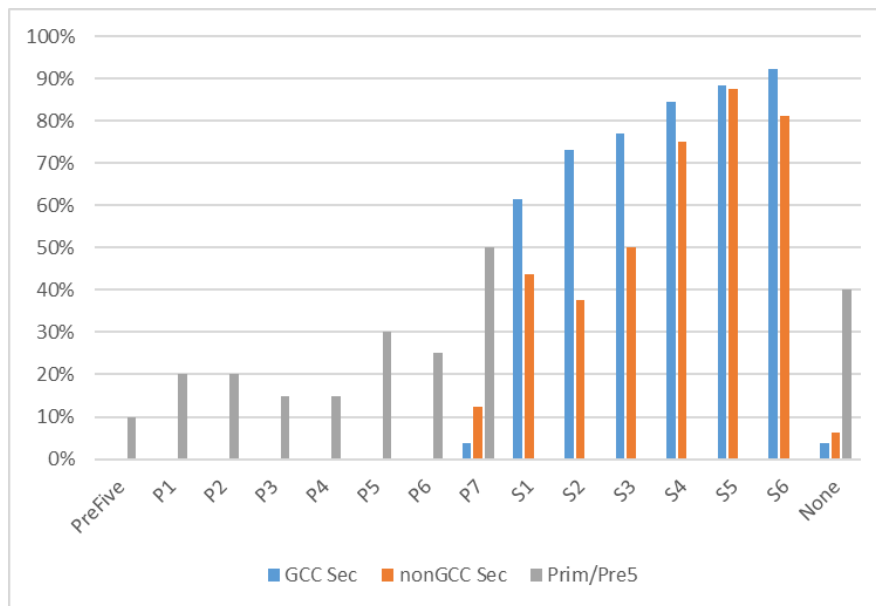
3 Findings

3.1 Current Widening Access Activity in the Glasgow Region

We explored the extent and effectiveness of current widening access activity through surveys and focus groups with the schools and WA providers participating in the research. The aim was to map existing access activity with schools in the region and understand issues and benefits from the perspective of the schools involved as well as those delivering the WA programmes. A map of WA activity has been generated as an output of the project. More details are provided in the Appendix.

It was clear from the school surveys that the majority of existing WA activity focusses on secondary schools and the Senior Phase, in particular, see Figure 1. Moreover, half of GCC secondary school survey respondents and 38% of secondary schools outwith GCC (nonGCC) said all year groups, S1-S6, participate in WA activities. Primary/Pre-Five schools were more likely to say none of their year groups participate in WA activities (40%) and half of the respondents said their P7 year group was involved.

Figure 1: Which year groups in your school participate in Widening Access/Widening Participation activities?



Senior Phase is the focus of WA activity as this is the stage when support is needed for applications and access to HE. It is also the stage where results of WA are more immediate and easier to measure, in terms of applications and entrants to HE.

‘If you’re working with S1, you can’t see if it’s impacted on their ultimate destination, if they take part in another programme, you can’t really quantify, well what impact did that have in 1st year?’ (WA Provider, Focus Group)

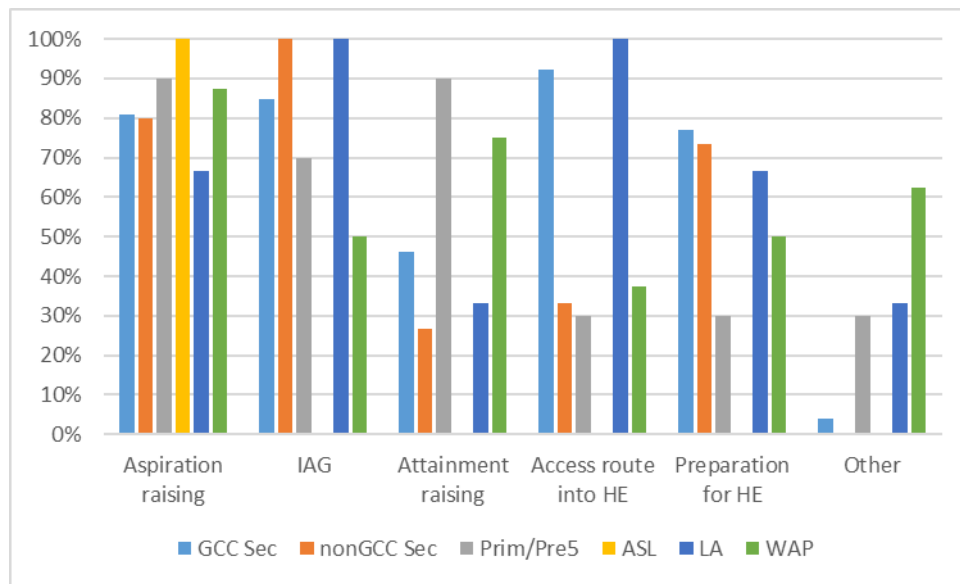
With increasing pressure to demonstrate impact of WA towards national and institutional targets and to justify return on investment, it is unsurprising that pupils in the Senior Phase of secondary school are the primary target group for WA programmes. It should also be noted that in 2008 the policy steer from the SFC resulted in funding for WA activities to be limited to S3-S6 year groups for FOCUS West and similarly from 2010 for SHEP.

3.1.1 Benefits of Current WA Activity

Survey responses revealed a level of consensus on the most effective aspects of WA activities, see Figure 2. Aspiration raising is seen as the most effective, followed by Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG). Access route and preparation for HE were seen as less effective for Primary/Pre-Five school respondents, unsurprisingly, given how far their pupils are from entry to HE. These were effective aspects of WA for other respondents, with GCC secondary schools and LA education staff most aware of the access routes to HE due to some involvement from colleges, universities and other HEIs. Attainment raising was seen as less effective in the secondary school sector but very effective in Primary/Pre-Fives and by the WA providers who were surveyed.

‘Other’ responses describe a range of benefits such as providing funding, building confidence and social capital.

Figure 2: Which aspects of Widening Access activities do you think are most effective? Please choose as many that apply



Qualitative analysis of survey and focus group responses from secondary schools and WA providers confirm that current WA activity is effective in providing benefits for participants. Comments include:

'All programmes are beneficial in raising aspirations for our young people, familiarising them with FE/HE establishments and processes, supporting them to apply and gain entry to HE and FE. Support young people with option choices. Give young people the confidence and can do attitude. All fantastic!!' (Secondary School, Survey)

We discovered that a large amount of evaluation is carried out on existing programmes, reportedly to at least Level 2 of the three levels in the, then named, Office for Fair Access (OFFA) Proposed Standards of Evaluation (Crawford et al, 2017)⁴.

Providers would like to do more, but said that they are restricted by funding, resource and access to data. Secondary schools agreed they had the opportunity to provide feedback/evaluation, particularly those schools with the most WA activities (primary schools, less so). These evaluative findings are used to shape ongoing continuous improvement and this iterative process is communicated to all stakeholders, including schools and LAs.

Secondary schools who work with many providers are likely to have longer term programmes. Strong partnerships that have been built between schools and WA providers were highlighted. Schools were very positive in reporting they had seen their feedback acted upon.

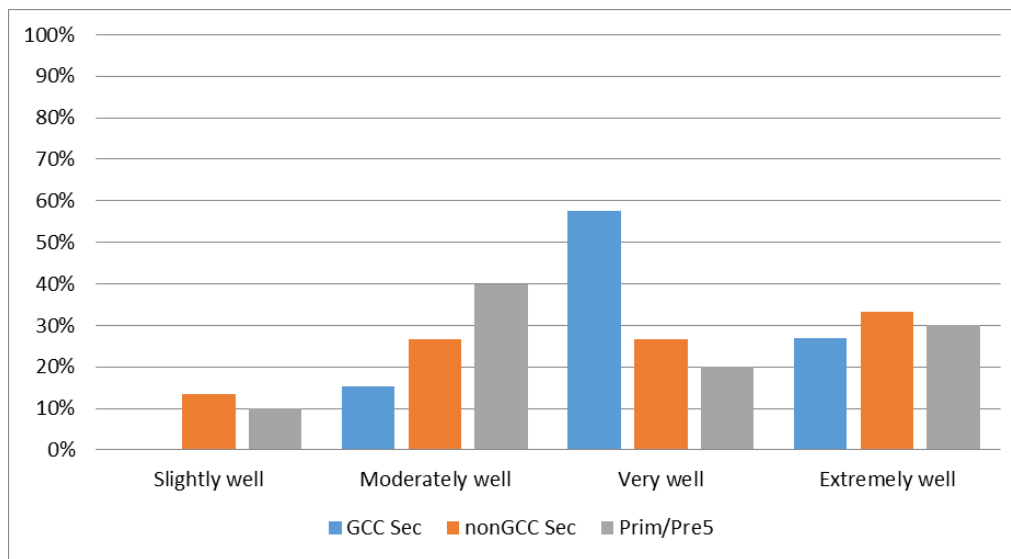
Schools and LAs reported that WA activities delivered by partners complement the school provision relatively well, see Figure 3. 85% of GCC secondary schools reported that these activities complement the provision in schools extremely or very well, compared to 60% of

⁴ Evaluation that meets the requirements of OFFA Level 2 are those where the collection of data on the impact of access programmes demonstrates a successful intervention but does not indicate a direct causal effect.

nonGCC secondary schools and 50% of primary/pre-five. While WA providers work hard to ensure this is the case, one school commented that this does not happen by chance, and the two-way partnership involves the school making efforts to ensure external activities fit with school provision:

'We bring it into the school... we accommodate it, because it's really important and our young people benefit from those programmes... ...it could be a bolt on, but we make sure it's not... that's the work of the school.' (Secondary School, Focus Group)

Figure 3: How well do externally provided Widening Access activities complement the school provision for your pupils?



The main benefits of WA can be described as experiences, support for applications/admissions, aspirations and informed choice and transitions.

Experiences

A key theme running through the qualitative research was the benefit of experiential activities. We heard these were primarily through campus visits and mentoring – the topics mentioned most frequently as the most beneficial WA activities provided, and the most popular with participants.

'I think getting an experience is the gold dust of it, whether that's coming on to campus or just talking to mentors or even talking to staff.' (WA Provider, Focus Group)

HE experiences were seen as beneficial in terms of normalising the idea of HE. Campus visits provide the experience of being on a university or college campus, in a lecture theatre or other study space and crucially, can make real the context of HE, away from the school classroom. Some programmes also introduce academic work and experience of HE study, illustrating the differences in learning and teaching styles between school and college or university. They are able to utilise the facilities on campus to experience subjects not delivered in school.

'I think that allowing them to go up to university is really beneficial, and actually see what it's like on campus and the classes that they've chosen... some just taking part in a day or the full week, so I think that's really beneficial so that they actually get a flavour of what it's like to be at university' (Secondary School, Focus Group)

'They're doing actual university style work and it's the fact of being in these surroundings and doing that work and succeeding' (WA Provider, Focus Group)

'it's about engendering sense of belonging, both here on campus and when we're out and about. It's also about ensuring that the young people that we're working with, we are helping them to obtain cultural capital. Because we know that there's a deficit there. The schools can't do all of that, they don't have the facilities, they don't have the finances.' (WA Provider, Focus Group)

Recommendation 1: The research showed that experiential activities were beneficial to pupils. We recommend that these real-life HE experiences should continue to be supported and for more pupils to be offered this type of provision to increase awareness, aspirations, knowledge and preparation for HE.

Mentoring was frequently raised as an essential part of WA, although the term 'mentor' was not always used. We use the term to refer to mentors in the truest sense of the word, but also in reference to current students who help deliver aspects of programmes and are able to answer questions from the perspective of someone who is not so far ahead in age and stage of their learner journey.

'...meet current undergrads and ask them things that they potentially wouldn't feel comfortable asking their teacher... I think the whole experience kind of de-mystifies that.' (WA Provider, Focus Group)

Mentors provide role-models as they are often from similar backgrounds to participants or even from the same school. They, therefore, provide reassurance that accessing HE is achievable and, more generally, in the choice of HE as a post-school destination.

'...we used to say to pupils, this is possible because this person or these people have done it. We have been able to bring in ex-pupils to prize giving ceremonies who have gone onto having a career to say to pupils, we've put pupils through this and this is what they've achieved. Rather than someone they don't really know' (Secondary School, Focus Group)

Mentors can be adults providing mentoring support to the young person; particularly WA activities delivered by third sector or career-based organisations, such as MCR Pathways. These adults can provide support and IAG, fulfilling a stable role for a care experienced young person or filling gaps in the knowledge and understanding of processes and possibilities for young people whose parents have not had experience of HE themselves.

The importance of individualised support was raised; staff from HEIs and WA programmes who provide this role could also be described as mentors.

Recommendation 2: Mentoring support to pupils was a key benefit highlighted in the research. WA providers and schools should continue to support and further enhance the role of student and professional mentors in delivering WA provision as role models and advisers providing personalised IAG.

We found transformative experiences were described as outcomes of WA. Positive benefits in terms of confidence, attitudes and behaviours that had been transformed with the new experiences and opportunities offered by WA activities are outcomes that are not captured by numbers and targets. WA providers wanted success to be acknowledged by qualitative outcomes, in addition to quantitative measures.

'She was not ready two years ago, now she is. That is very successful. There's not a spreadsheet where I can put that.' (WA Provider, Focus Group)

There is also a 'halo-effect' that is not easily measured, that is, the impact on parents, siblings, class-mates or younger years in the school due to individuals from their community engaging in WA activities. This is an area that could be explored in further research into broader measures of success of WA.

*'... we can't measure the bigger impact beyond just getting into HE. For example, feedback we had from primary engagement was that a group of parents who came to the parental engagement session have now applied to SWAP and Access courses and are then themselves going back to HE.'*⁵ (WA Provider, Focus Group)

Support for applications/admissions

As the majority of existing WA activity takes place in the Senior Phase of secondary school, the benefits in terms of admissions and support of the application process were mentioned frequently. Many programmes provide IAG and support the UCAS application process including personal statement writing.

Specialised support to access degree programmes with non-standard application processes was highlighted; often these are selective programmes with competitive entry. That support can only be offered by the HEI due to the specialised knowledge required. This might involve preparation for an applicant interview through mock interviews or gaining work experience and support in how to highlight this in a personal statement. Without support, these requirements can be barriers to accessing HE for otherwise well-qualified students.

'what we all do is a very individualised approach to potential applicants, whether they're in school, college or care experienced and that is so key to being able to redress the balance and give them the additional skills that could help their university application not just stand out, so that they can gain a place and then succeed at university once they get there... to set up interviews, academics,

⁵ The Scottish Wider Access Programme (SWAP), funded by the SFC, supports access to higher education for adult learners returning to education.

shadowing, possible work experience placements, just access to additional opportunities' (WA Provider, Focus Group)

Widening access to HE is supported by contextual admissions through contextual offers. However, the offer-making processes and criteria vary widely (Boliver et al, 2017) and the CoWA report set out recommendations for the sector to align processes (Scottish Government, 2016a). WA activities in school can support contextual admissions through IAG, as described, or providing credit based academic/project work to introduce new learning and teaching styles to pupils to prepare for study in HE.

Participation in WA activities could be linked more strongly to the admissions process through the provision of access routes, ideally with appropriately adjusted offers as well as guaranteed consideration. A clearly defined access route can raise aspirations and make HE seem a realistic and achievable possibility.

'[Name of WA programme] gives pupils the opportunity to consider their future and how University could fit into that. Many had not thought this was an option before and many needed the support of an adjusted offer to secure a place.'
(Secondary School, Focus Group)

'there are institutions that tie their programs much more closely to admission, and I think that works very well and is something that everybody should be looking to, to aim for' (WA Provider, Focus Group)

Recommendation 3: It is recognised by policy-makers and research that a clearly defined access route can make the goal of progressing to HE more achievable as well as directly supporting WA. We recommend these should continue to be explored and adopted where possible by HEIs, for example, through use of transparent contextual admissions, admissions processes that provide reduced offers for those who have undertaken Senior Phase WA programmes and development of more articulation routes through college.

Recommendation 4: Pupils should continue to be supported during the Senior Phase to ease their transition into HE. Funding and focus of WA work with Senior Phase should be maintained to ensure this crucial point of transition is supported including more awareness of the types of learning and teaching styles in HE.

Aspirations and informed choice

Aspiration raising was found to be the most effective aspect of WA activities in the survey responses (see Figure 2). Through the qualitative research, we found evidence this was achieved through IAG, but also 'demystifying' and 'normalising' HE, and the idea of progression to HE as a post-school destination, by breaking down the social and cultural barriers through experience of university and role-models:

'All programmes break down barriers between pupils and university. Pupils are exposed to the range of activities/subjects on offer at HE/FE. Pupils develop their

pre-dispositions/assumptions as to what university is like and the 'type' of young person that goes there. They see that university is not only for the middle/upper classes whose parents assume progression to university, but also for young people from socially challenging areas who work hard and realise their aspirations.'
(Secondary School, Survey)

Cultural barriers were highlighted when it comes to understanding of subjects such as the creative arts and how they link to valuable careers. There can be scant knowledge by pupils and key influencers of the range of subjects available to study in HE and, therefore, IAG for WA covers this. Making the link to careers to allow informed choice is a big part of WA. For example, WA promotes informed choices when making decisions about applying to HE by linking to careers advice:

'...raising awareness and developing skills and confidence towards FE and HE applications, informing students and parents about subject choices, pathways, etc... support, advice, & preparation for applying to selected careers, and a better understanding of those careers before applying.' (Secondary School, Survey)

As such, WA links to careers advice in school, provided by SDS Careers Advisers, and DYW policy and practice in encouraging positive destinations more generally. WA providers don't only promote the more traditional route to HE, directly from school, but highlight options and pathways to inform choice:

'there was a big focus from the universities on there's not just one route, and it's not just at this age, and that was good, that was the first time I, I mean I am aware of it, but it's the first time I'd really heard the universities really labouring that to young people at an early age' (Secondary School, Focus Group)

In focus groups, WA providers also highlighted the need to make young people aware of their options at an early age. IAG, awareness and aspiration raising is important in the Broad General Education (BGE) stage of secondary school, before the first subject choices are made, but it was acknowledged that careers decisions can be made before this. For some subjects, the development of relevant skills needs to start at a younger age.

'we realised that a lot of the time we're losing people before they managed to get to one of our senior school programmes. We also noticed that for some of them, subject choice was a big issue, and that actually they were making the wrong subject choices early on. So, one of the aims of the programmes is to help with subject choices.' (WA Provider, Focus Group)

'you might need to go in sooner than S1, because a lot of pupils have already made up their mind about what they're doing and their aspirations by first year' (WA Provider, Focus Group)

School responses highlighted WA activities supporting informed subject choice, which complemented the work of the school. Respondents argued that such activity through raising aspirations and supporting informed choice, should continue across the learner journey.

'For BGE as well, the part I worked with, we were able to coordinate it so that it came at good timings, so that it did complement, and it did help young people to make choices, because they were quite confused about what subjects to take and for further down the line, which subjects for which careers. So, again, it really helped along with working with SDS and other things in the school.' (Secondary School, Focus Group)

'I think there's a continuum of it, in P7, 6, or 5... it's about raising aspirations and setting expectations, about putting university and HE high on the agenda, and getting those experiences that make it really attractive... But going into Senior Phase, aspiring to do that, right 'I've got the aspirations, I know I can do it, want to do it, what leg ups can I get so I can do it?'' (Secondary School, Focus Group)

We found there is a need to support aspirations especially in the earlier years and to inform key influencers, primarily parents/carers and teachers. Parents with limited experience or understanding of HE, and student finance/debt in particular, may have different aspirations for their child. It was generally agreed that raising aspirations and informing choice could start with early years in terms of 'normalising' HE as an option by introducing the terminology and language of HE.

'particularly the language coming at them at the age would start to build the foundation steps but it is mainly when they hit secondary school that they try to get through their pathway' (Secondary School, Focus Group)

Transitions

Transitions were highlighted as key points in the learner journey for intervention. These points of change can be the hardest for the most vulnerable:

'Every transition I think, I believe is challenging and requires support... I think transitions can be particularly tough on the most vulnerable young people' (WA Provider, Focus Group)

Some WA activities are currently being carried out at points of transition including nursery into primary school, primary to secondary school and the transition from secondary school to HE. Transitions were regularly raised in focus groups. It was apparent from the research that very little WA activity takes place at the nursery to primary transition stage. However, we asked explicitly about the primary to secondary school transition and the transition from school to HE.

1. Transition to HE

Support for transition into HE was seen as a benefit of WA and is undoubtedly reflected in some of the positive responses in terms of 'Preparation for HE' shown in Figure 2. In surveys and focus groups, several schools felt they were already well-supported by their WA partners in supporting their pupils during this transition. One example mentioned several times in WA focus groups were associate student schemes, whereby pupils get early access to HE facilities such as the library and gym and are seen as students.

However, when asked for suggestions for better support for the transition into HE, a number were supplied. These included sharing of information between schools and HEIs; putting forward information about the young person, (a practice that is successful in supporting the transition from primary to secondary school) but also sharing tracking information back to schools. Concerns were raised over support available at the HEI during transition and also on-course.

More emphasis on preparedness for HE, utilising a number of strategies, some outlined above, was viewed as the key to successful transition from school. Continued support on course for adapting to new learning, teaching and assessment styles, as well as the student experience, should also be addressed by HEIs as part of their approach to WA transition.

2. P7/S1 transition

The transition from primary to secondary school is supported heavily by many of the primary/secondary school partners involved. WA providers work with schools during this transition as it has been identified as a good time to introduce HE and the WA activities that will be available in secondary schools to young people and their parents/carers.

We conclude that while current WA activity covers these transitions it was noted that more could be done. For example, one WA provider suggested:

'Maybe it's not before the transition points or some of them. Maybe it is just after, because they've had some experience of them at that point and get them to consolidate the things that they've learned, rather than giving them something they've had no practical experience of.' (WA Provider, Focus Group)

We have shown some of the good practice and benefits of current WA provision in the region. In terms of raising aspirations, gaps in current provision, where more could be done, were emphasised such as with earlier years and key influencers, their parents/carers and teachers. These gaps are covered in more detail in Section 3.2.

Recommendation 5: The research found that HE should be introduced to pupils in earlier years. We recommend organising and delivering more WA activity at this crucial stage of the learner journey through primary school, including the transition to secondary school, to further enhance aspirations and informed choice.

3.1.2 Duplication and Overlap in a 'Cluttered Landscape'?

A core aim of the research was to understand current WA activity in the region to determine whether there was duplication or excessive overlap in provision in what has been described as a 'cluttered landscape'.

Overcrowding

In the online surveys, we asked schools 'How many Widening Access providers are you aware of who work with your school pupils?' and whether this number is 'Too many', 'About right'

or 'Too few (I'd like to see more)'. Figures 4 and 5 show the results for GCC secondary schools, secondary schools outwith GCC (nonGCC) and primary/pre-five schools.

Figure 4: How many Widening Access providers are you aware of who work with your school pupils?

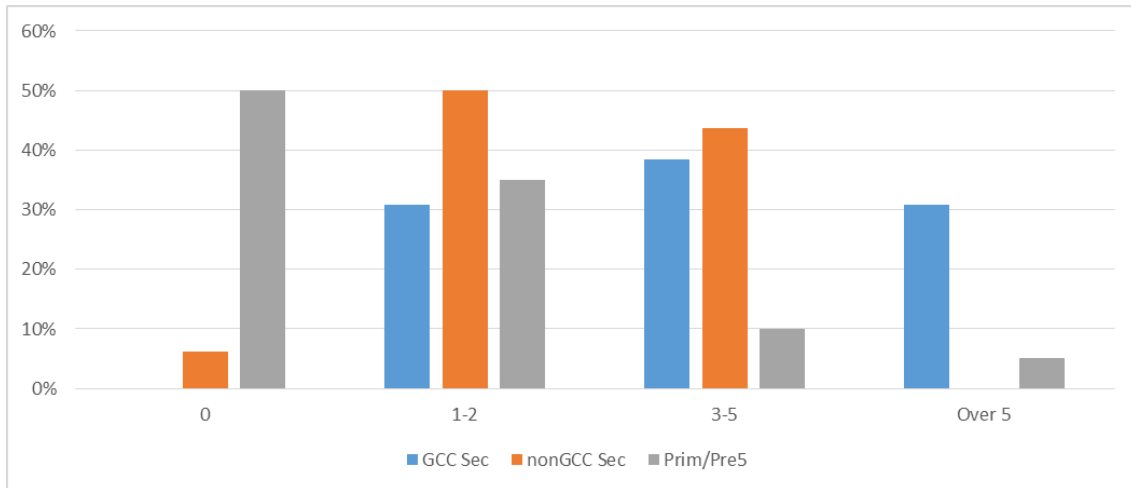
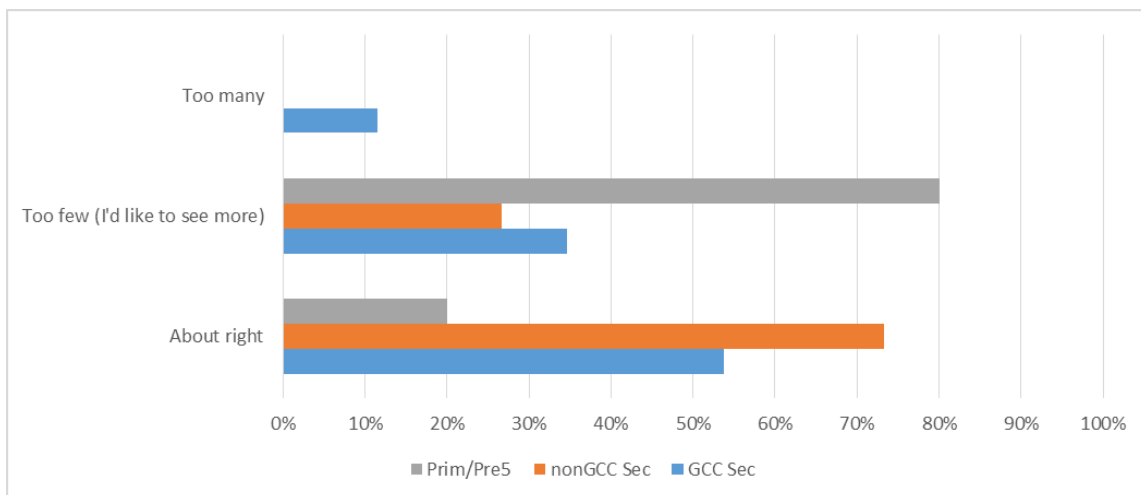


Figure 5: Is the number of Widening Access providers that you indicated too many, too few or about right?



In addition, the ASL school and all three LA survey responses to the same question were 'Too few (I'd like to see more)'. At the FOCUS West teachers workshop, 7 of 10 teachers from the SHEP schools (who are thus more likely to have more WA provision) said the number in their school was 'About right' while 2 said it was 'Too few (I'd like to see more)'.

The schools who indicated they had no WA providers working in their school were asked 'Would you like Widening Access providers offering activities/programmes to be involved in your school?' and 100% responded with the affirmative.

Primary/pre-five schools are the most likely to work with no WA providers (50%), see Figure 4, and 80% of the schools that worked with WA providers said this number was 'Too few (I'd like to see more)' (Figure 5).

There are three secondary schools, all in North East Glasgow, who indicated the number of providers in their school was too many.

We conclude, therefore, that there is very little evidence from schools that they are overcrowded with WA programmes, with the clear majority of those surveyed agreeing current provision is about right or they would like to see more. Notably, primary/pre-five schools would like more WA provision. There is, however, an overcrowding of WA activity in certain secondary schools in one area of Glasgow City and when asked directly if they thought there was duplication/overlap of WA provision, 45% of the FOCUS West teachers polled thought there was. However, when we followed up with some of these schools in focus groups, real concern over overcrowding was less apparent. Outwith Glasgow, overcrowding is even less of a concern.

'within the outer areas... I don't think there is much overlap or universities going in as in Glasgow... if we look at our LA regions, I don't think they are saturated... they're not as saturated as Glasgow schools...' (WA Provider, Focus Group)

In focus groups with WA providers, there was some concern over duplication and overcrowding but all felt their programmes had merit. One participant commented:

'yes it's cluttered, but a lot of what we do works. A lot of what's going on makes a difference and that's not just here, that's from other institutions as well.' (WA Provider, Focus Group)

Duplication

Figure 1 highlighted that the majority of WA activity in the region is in the Senior Phase of secondary school and S5/S6, in particular. It is in support for this stage that some examples of duplication were highlighted. These include help with the UCAS process, as highlighted in the comment by a FOCUS West school teacher: *'Various institutions wanting to offer the same UCAS awareness sessions'* and, more specifically, help with writing personal statements was highlighted in the focus groups. It was acknowledged, however, that there is a need for specialist advice on personal statements for degrees with professional accreditation or oversubscribed degrees. Also, there was evidence of duplication in the multiple programmes supporting access to the teaching profession.

However, it was pointed out that some duplication may be a good thing as the messages are reinforced.

'I am very ambivalent about the desire to reduce duplication because I can see that schools struggle with the amount of provision, but I wonder if the duplication helps to reinforce the message to kids that going to university is a valid option, it's a good option and it's something that should be desired...' (WA Provider, Focus Group)

WA providers and FOCUS West teachers expressed some concern over the number of providers and programmes in schools in terms of negative aspects for schools and individual pupils involved. We also asked schools expressly about this in the surveys.

24% of GCC secondary school responses, 7% of non-GCC secondary schools and 20% of primary/pre-five schools said there were negative aspects for the school in engaging with WA programmes. These include issues around organising WA activities and the time of year to arrange such activities. There was also some confusion over who should take part in the activities and why.

'Organising everything and keeping control of who is doing what and when and how are they getting there and who is to accompany them' (Secondary School, Survey)

'Even the teachers don't know what they're sending people on...' (WA Provider, Focus Group)

'Too many activities can be at the same point in the school year, meaning pupils (and staff) lose focus on them. More time should be built into widening access programmes to give pupils and staff an opportunity to 'properly' reflect on the experience and ask themselves key questions: about what their widening access experience was, why they were chosen to take part, what they got from the experience and how the experience feeds into their immediate career aspirations and subject choices.' (Secondary School, Survey)

44% of GCC secondary schools, 27% of non-GCC secondary schools and 20% of primary/pre-five school respondents thought there were negative aspects of WA for individual pupils. One issue was confusion over the purpose of taking part in WA activities, reflected in the comment above. The concern of *'Pupils required out of class often at crucial times to the detriment of pupil and school attainment'* mentioned by some secondary school respondents and FOCUS West teachers was echoed in the focus groups with WA providers, where it was acknowledged that attainment of Highers was more important for access to HE than participating in WA activities.

'In one school a pupil asked if they could go back to class because they would really like to focus on their school work instead of taking part in all these programs... there is repetition that is potentially taking time away from studying...' (WA Provider, Focus Group)

'It doesn't matter how many initiatives, progression agreements in place, if kids aren't attaining, they're not going to university. And so, if the work we do detract from that then we've failed.' (WA Provider, Focus Group)

However, in contradiction, negative aspects due to disappointment of not being able to take part in more WA activities were also raised:

'Many of the activities are offered at the same time within the school year meaning they are unable to attend all of the courses / events that they wish to as they clash.' (Secondary School, Survey)

Barriers/Challenges

Geographical/travel issues were raised by WA providers and schools in LAs outwith GCC as a barrier to delivering and participating in WA activities. It is particularly an issue for the more remote and rural areas; for both the pressure on funding and resources for WA programmes to visit schools, but also for pupils from further away to participate in visits to an HE campus. Online delivery was suggested as a way to address this issue, with some reservations, for example:

'to engage fully in a kind of E-Learning environment is change your programme and that means compromises...because there are some things you can teach, and some things that you can't... And schools will never be able to do it until bandwidth is a smooth process.' (WA Provider, Focus Group)

Travel was also raised as a barrier to accessing HE; this was the key difference noted between GCC and non-GCC secondary schools in focus groups, where the issue of travel was stressed many times.

'Ah'm no leavin mah bit', which basically meant that they felt very comfortable with anything going on in the confines of [name of town], and it is quite a significant issue that we do find, that pupils are reluctant to go [further afield]' (Secondary School, Focus Group)

That said, it was also mentioned as a barrier by GCC schools and for young people from more urban areas who would still be put off by the need to travel from their local area to access HE.

'The contact teacher, she said it to me for years, I would like the students to make their own way to the campus rather than we provide transport for them because I think that would be quite good for them to learn how to leave the east end of Glasgow and they don't know how to do it.' (WA Provider, Focus Group)

Recommendation 6: Geographical and travel issues are a barrier to both delivery of and participation in WA activities, as well as accessing HE. Innovative solutions should be explored to address these issues from both the providers and schools' perspectives, to enable pupils to access provision.

WA providers raised repeatedly the competitive nature of the WA landscape. This arises primarily from targets for WA placed on programmes and the HEIs that host them. There are tensions between wanting to provide the best support and opportunity for the individual young person and having to meet targets. There is a desire to work more collaboratively across the WA sector – as already happens with respect to support for care experienced and looked after children, but national and institutional priorities create competition:

'Quite rightly, people should be offered a range of things, but we need to work more collaboratively... Because at the moment, it's like a big fish in a little pond,

we're all sitting in there with our rods, trying to get these pupils and they're confused... (WA Provider, Focus Group)

We conclude there is a need for a more joined up approach to WA in the region. While a minority of schools feel they have more than enough WA provision, the description of a 'cluttered landscape' is not necessarily helpful to describe a more complex picture across the region. The majority of research participants felt what they have is right or they would like more and there is little appetite from schools or WA providers to cut the current WA provision. More coordination of current provision through increased collaboration and in helping schools with the logistics of working with multiple organisations is needed. This includes support for getting the right pupils on the right programmes for the best outcome for each individual. This will require better communication across the sector and more sophisticated analysis of pupil data to support more accurate targeting, to identify those pupils who would benefit most.

Recommendation 7: It is recommended that more coordination of current provision should be encouraged through WA providers working in a collaborative manner to help schools with the logistics of working with multiple organisations. This would furthermore avoid duplication and increase efficiencies.

Recommendation 8: Better communication across the sector is required, with more information for and from teachers involved in organising the delivery of WA activities. This includes guidance for getting the right pupil on the right programmes for the best outcome for that individual.

3.2 Gaps in Current Widening Access Activity

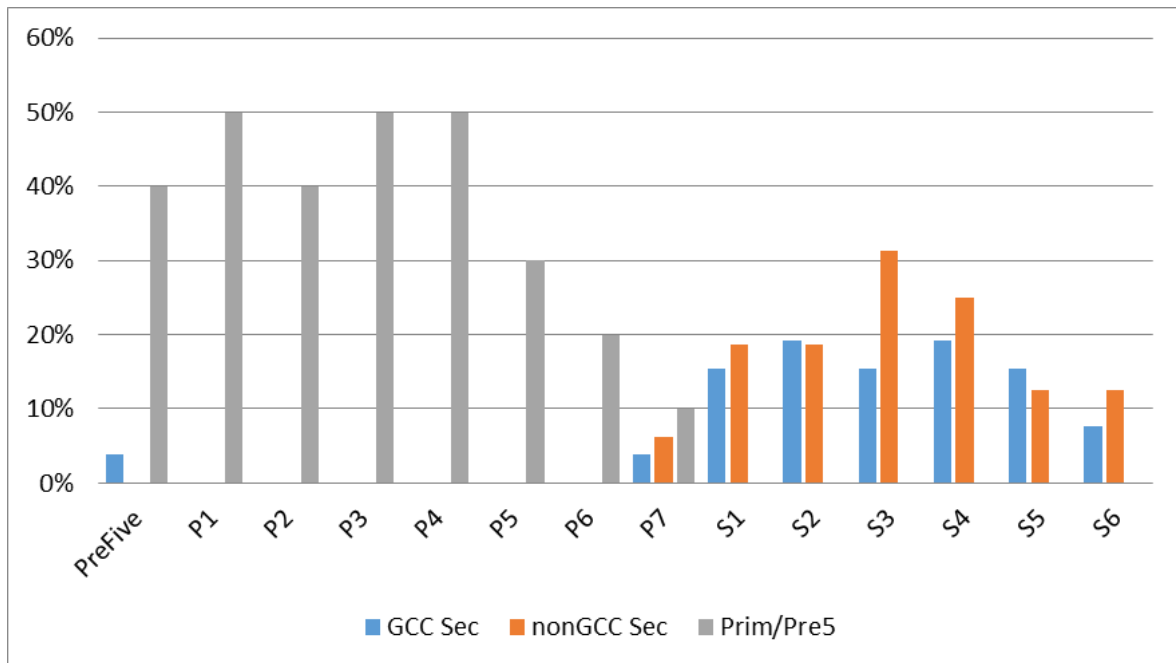
A key finding from the fieldwork conducted with widening access providers, the schools and the FOCUS West teachers were the gaps in existing WA activity and how these should be addressed. These gaps covered four broad areas: earlier engagement with pupils; parental/carer engagement; the knowledge of teachers around widening access, and longitudinal tracking. It was suggested that if these key gaps/barriers were addressed this would have a positive impact on WA to HE.

Firstly, it is worth noting how participants in the schools' survey viewed the current levels of WA provision. We asked respondents whether they thought there is a gap in offering WA activities to any of their pupil year groups. We found that 70% of primary/pre-five respondents indicated there is a gap and with respect to the secondary school sector, 54% of GCC schools said there is a gap, while 53% of non-GCC schools stated the same.

The graph in Figure 6 shows those school survey respondents who believed there are gaps in WA activity across pupil year groups and where they thought these were. Those who completed this question could select more than one option. It can be seen from the graph that half of respondents from the primary/pre-five schools agreed that there are gaps at levels P1, P3 and P4, while two-fifths indicated gaps at Pre-Five and P2. For both Glasgow and non-

Glasgow secondary schools, the pattern was fairly consistent though non-Glasgow secondary school respondents were more likely to indicate there are gaps at S3 and S4, while both thought there were fewer gaps in S6.

Figure 6: What stages of their learner journey are there gaps? Please choose as many that apply



Interestingly, it should also be noted that all of the FOCUS West teachers said there were gaps in WA provision in secondary schools. These included other types of gaps covered in section 3.2.5.

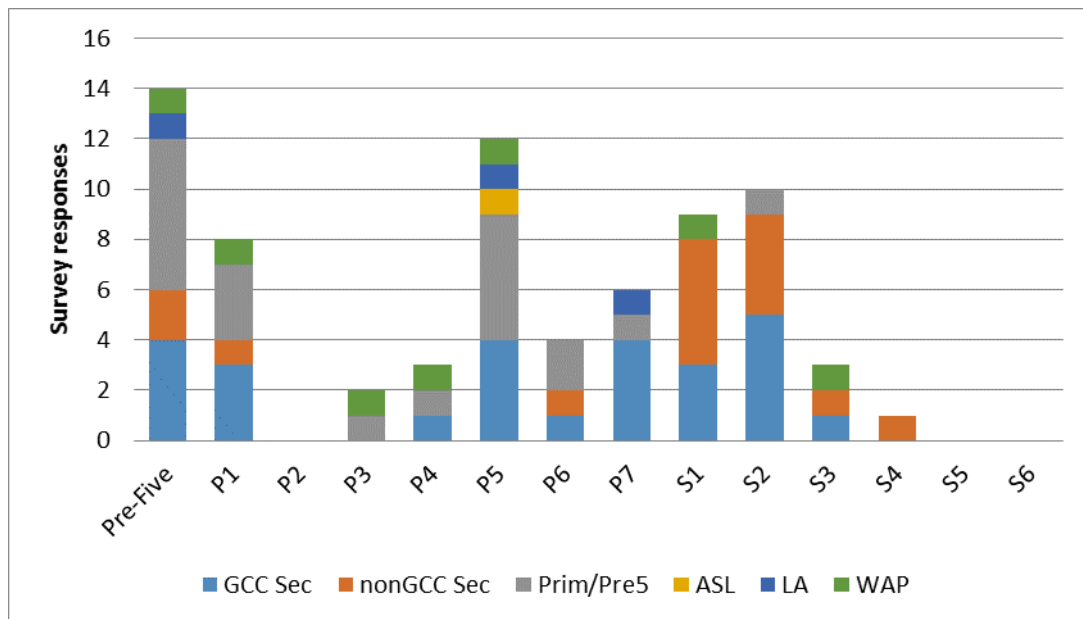
While the findings from the survey indicated there was an issue with respect to gaps in particular pupil year groups, our research also revealed insights into particular levels of engagement and the provision (or lack of) in this area.

3.2.1 Earlier Engagement with Pupils

One of the findings that emerged from the research was the importance of earlier engagement.

Figure 7 illustrates the year groups where survey respondents felt that pupils should be introduced to the idea of HE as an option for their future. The vertical axis shows the number of individual responses to the question. It can be seen that three key stages of the pupils' learner journey were viewed as an appropriate time to introduce HE: Pre-Five transition into P1, P5 and early secondary. In fact, 65% of GCC secondary school responses, and 51% of all secondary school responses, stated that pupils should be introduced to HE as an option for their future before they get to secondary school.

Figure 7: When is the right time to start talking to pupils about higher education as an option for their future?



In our focus group fieldwork, engaging pupils in HE at an earlier stage of their learner journey also emerged as a key finding. The emphasis on ‘earlier the better’ and at primary school (or even before) came over strongly in the focus groups. It was also highlighted that primary school was the appropriate time to engage with families and those who experience disadvantage, in particular.

‘I think it’s definitely primary school. We used to go in and do talks to P6/P7. I remember one primary school I was in; they had actually done CVs which were up on the wall. When I was asking what they wanted to do, quite a few put their hand up and said they wanted to go to university, so they were already aware of it. The earlier the better I think.’ (Secondary School, Focus Group)

‘Place a greater emphasis on early years to prepare children for learning in school...more time has to be spent investing in the social networks and capital currently lacking in many disadvantaged families. This must start early primary.’ (Secondary School, Survey)

We covered the theme of aspirations in Section 3.1 when we explored the benefits of WA. With respect to addressing the ‘engagement gap’, there were discussions in the focus groups on how and in what ways aspiration-raising should be promoted in primaries. Some suggested this period was the appropriate time to talk to pupils about the terminology and language of HE whilst introducing the idea of it. This could be as early as pre-five nursery school:

‘Why not have something from nursery level to show what’s possible... I think the conversation should be early but part of everything. As part of an option package...’ (WA Provider, Focus Group)

‘engaging the nursery pupils, but more importantly their families and carers, bringing them onto campus. That’s an opportunity to make them feel more comfortable within the university setting. Speak to them about the aspirations they have for their children.’ (WA Provider, Focus Group)

The idea of ‘planting the seed’ was referred to in the focus groups when discussing how younger pupils should be introduced to HE. Others talked about ‘normalising’ and ‘demystifying’ HE in pupils’ minds, and using mentors to assist with this task.

‘[Name of WA provider] have started engaging with S2 since last year. I think we should be looking from primary school, at least to inform pupils of their options. The only concern I would have, is you want young people to be aspirational, but you have to be realistic...’ (Secondary School, Focus Group)

‘...think there’s a whole bunch of work that could be done in the earlier years in high school and definitely in primary school or definitely kind of raising more awareness of what the options are for studying creatively and actually planting the first seed of having them think about that.’ (WA Provider, Focus Group)

The need for more work in primary schools to engage pupils in WA activities was also raised in the workshop with FOCUS West Teachers.

The key transition phase, P7-S1, was viewed by many respondents as an opportunity to engage learners with WA. Those who responded to the survey frequently referred to organising more campus visits to college/university and providing careers information for this group of pupils to increase their engagement with HE.

‘Possible careers talks in P7-S1. Also a focus on skills and qualities required for success in further education.’ (Secondary School, Survey)

Recommendation 9: WA providers, working with school teachers, must consider what appropriate level of engagement and types of activities should take place in pre-five, through earlier and later years of primary school. This should include introducing the idea of HE to pupils, using appropriate terminology and ‘normalising’ HE.

Primary School Case-Studies

We held focus groups with teachers at two primary schools in Glasgow that have experience of working with WA teams in HEIs and other providers. We had hoped to have been able to hold more focus groups in primary schools but were unable to complete these within the timescale of the research (see Limitations in 4.2). The research showed smaller numbers of primary schools are involved in WA and these two schools have been used as examples of WA providers working with earlier years. The case studies highlight good practice in the partnerships between the primary schools and the WA providers they engage with. The widening access initiatives/programmes referred to in each of the case-studies are examples that illustrate some of the current work that is undertaken. The case-studies are included in the report with the aim of informing the expansion of work with earlier years.

Primary School Case-Study 1

Primary School 1 in the South of Glasgow City is a medium size school serving a diverse community. Due to the urban location and proximity of a number of local schools, pupils from the primary school go on to as many as 8 alternative secondary school destinations. Between 40-45% of pupils are from SIMD20, the most socio-economically disadvantaged postcodes in Scotland. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is over 20% and the school also has a very high number of pupils for whom English is not their first language, approximately 80% of the school roll.

The management team describe the ethos of the school: *'what we hope to do in our school is set an ethos that learning is fun – you need to be happy and if you're happy at what you do and you're honest about how hard you're finding it people will help you find your way to achieve your goal.'* The school constantly reinforces this positive attitude and helps the children by raising their aspirations through setting small achievable goals and providing as many fun learning opportunities as possible; *'we will jump at any project that comes up...'*

For example, the 'Triple A' day (Ambition, Achievement and Aspirations) for P7 pupils transitioning to secondary school, involves the children interviewing people from varied walks of [working] life. The children are asked what careers they are interested in and the school tries to accommodate this. The school has built up very strong relationships with universities, colleges, and professionals as well as external partners, covering such subjects as the creative arts and STEM. For the former, the school has a filmmaker who comes in and teaches P6 and P7 about cinema. The STEM Ambassador programme, run by the University of Glasgow, has very close links with the school and is very actively involved in promoting widening access to the pupils. For example, STEM Ambassadors deliver workshops to the pupils to enhance their engagement with science, in particular girls.

Primary School 1 was chosen as a case-study due to its involvement with Glasgow Children's University (CU). The University of Strathclyde, in partnership with Glasgow City Council, manages the Glasgow CU which was launched in 2013 and was Scotland's first CU. The scheme, which is entirely voluntary, provides pupils aged between 5 and 14 with a range of innovative and exciting learning opportunities out with their normal school hours and curriculum. The scheme helps pupils to engage with the fun of learning and to perhaps think about university from a young age. The scheme also encourages parents to be engaged in their child's learning. As one of the team put it *'you want to encourage children and parents that the learning is out with the school building as well. That they can still be learning when they go to clubs and trips at the weekend. It's all about going out and seeing what's in your community, what is easily accessed to help parents engage in children's learning...'* The school believes Glasgow CU complements other work that goes on in the school, in particular what is taught as part of Curriculum for Excellence.

The school acknowledge there is not one single factor as to why some parents do not engage in their child's learning. However, they have developed successful initiatives to enhance parental engagement such as running informal crèches and to invite parents in to class to work with their child and experience the learning and teaching environment of the classroom. As one of the team commented *'to upskill the parents and to teach them how to work with their children in a way that will allow them to come on is the best thing we could do for them. It's about getting parents over the door...we opened up our maths lessons and parents could come in and sit in on a maths lesson to see what it looked like...Parents put their children into school and they know good things are happening, but they can see what's happening...'*

Primary School Case-Study 2

Primary School 2 in the North East of Glasgow City is a small school serving an area of socio-economic disadvantage. Over 90% of pupils are from SIMD20, the most socio-economically disadvantaged postcodes in Scotland. Just over 47% of P4-P7 pupils are registered for free school meals and the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is over 20%.

The small size of the school creates a nurturing environment in which every child has at least one teacher who knows them well and who they go to for support. It is these relationships developed across the years at primary school that teachers believe build confidence and coping abilities in the children. They would like to see more support in the early years of secondary school as the relative anonymity of the larger school, where pupils don't immediately have a trusted adult who may pick up on any signs of negative changes to the young person during this transitional life stage, can result in pupils, in particular boys, losing their path.

The pupils are used to external people coming in to the school. The school works with a large number of external partners, requiring flexibility from the teachers and management team to accommodate the organisation of activities delivered by partners from local colleges and universities and other organisations. For example, they work in partnership with Impact Arts, a community arts charity that aims to help people and communities transform their lives through creativity and the arts. The organisation works with children aged 0-12 to boost their confidence, help them realise their potential and improve their engagement with education.

The team believes these activities are important and they are happy to be flexible; it is part of the ethos and the characteristics of teachers in the school. They think higher education (HE) should be introduced to children early, as they state *'to normalise it for them as early as possible...even though they might not really understand what it is all about for that to be a normal place to be for them, it would give them more confidence that's the place where they should be when they are older'*.

Primary School 2 was chosen as a case-study due to their close partnership with Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU). They are the primary school in the Whitehill Learning Community that has taken part in the Caledonian Club programme for many years. The Caledonian Club is GCU's widening participation and community engagement initiative that aims to promote progression to HE and raise aspirations by providing positive and rewarding experiences within a HE setting, on campus, as well as in school. It works across the learner journey from nursery through primary and secondary school with five Learning Communities in Glasgow. The Caledonian Club works with pupils in the school at three key stages of learning transition – P2, P5 and P7. The teachers think the programme is well structured, linking across these three stages and the ongoing support of mentors across all the years provides a level of consistency.

The majority of projects work with whole year groups but the P2 Literacy Project was highlighted. Reading mentors provide one-to-one support for a small number of pupils and these mentoring relationships, with dedicated time and encouragement, not only improve reading and literacy but also confidence and self-belief. These pupils, as the team state *'need that kind of mentor that would read with them and do things...and give them that focused attention that they need'*.

Like many schools and WA programmes, the school has found it challenging to engage with those parents/carers they would most like to reach. The reasons for parents not engaging can be numerous and complex but the resultant absence of encouragement towards learning that some children have at home can, in part, be mitigated by the experience at school with supportive teachers and mentors.

3.2.2 Parental/Carer Engagement

While raising the issue of how to engage pupils with HE at an earlier age, many respondents commented on another linked issue, that of addressing the gap in parental/carers engagement in WA activities. At a national policy level, the issue around increasing parental engagement with education led to the launch of a major Scottish school policy in August 2018 with the 'Learning Together' report (Scottish Government, 2018c).

While some participants in the focus groups and from survey responses recognised that there were some positive levels of engagement by parents/carers in WA, on the whole this tended to be one-off events or certain occasions throughout the year.

'We engage with parents... as well. We don't just engage with them in school. We have two parent's nights across the year and they are very well attended by parents and carers.' (WA Provider, Focus Group)

It was also highlighted that only in some instances the level of parental engagement was good; a small number of providers noted that parents were not keen to be involved in their son/daughters' WA activities. This was not necessarily viewed negatively by WA providers as it enabled them to *'build independent learners'*. It was striking that when teachers in the FOCUS West workshop were asked, from a choice of themes, what was the most important to enhance activities to help in the delivery of WA, the majority chose more WA/WP work with parents/carers/families/communities.

Despite some evidence of parental/carers engagement, the view was that engagement is low with schools in general (the most popular response to the schools' survey was parental engagement with their school was 'OK') and therefore, additional work is required by stakeholders to increase the role of parents/carers in WA.

'I would say that's probably the key to a lot of it, participation from parents is not particularly high. We struggle getting a lot of parents through the door.' (Secondary School, Focus Group)

It should, however, be emphasised that what also emerged was that the reasons for low engagement with parents/carers were quite complex. There was not one overriding factor that explains this low level. Some respondents believed it was due to parents/carers juggling competing priorities, for example work and other family commitments. For others they thought parents/carers believed that the school should take responsibility for this as part of the school curriculum.

Research participants spoke of their pupils living in areas of disadvantage and the consequential impacts of this contributing to parents/carers' disengagement. This is a particular barrier for schools to overcome.

'What it takes to progress in education and attain desirable employment is not well understood by many parents or young people in more disadvantaged areas, especially where parents face disadvantage themselves. Much greater effort needed to break-down parents psychological and attitudinal barriers.' (Secondary School, Survey)

Parents/carers' own experience and/or lack of knowledge of HE, such as having a limited understanding of student finance, were also highlighted as a contributing factor. Lack of knowledge and fear of financial implications was raised by FOCUS West teachers and also in the schools' surveys and focus groups.

'Absolutely, they worry about their kids being in debt. All that stuff I just rehearsed for you, is very prevalent for our young people but I think that comes from their parents to a large extent. So that's a big issue I think.' (Secondary School, Focus Group)

From our analysis of the discussions and surveys, a number of suggestions emerged around how a coordinated strategy should be developed that could contribute to building long-term engagement with parents/carers. It was felt that, where possible, this should be a collective partnership involving providers, schools and other agencies. This strategy should have a particular focus when pupils reach secondary school as it was highlighted in the research that it was easier to engage with parents/carers at primary school.

'I think notoriously within all schools and programmes it's difficult to engage with parents on a face to face basis, the engagement does become less between primary and secondary. That's why we want to engage at a primary school level because the parents are still more engaged; parent and teacher associations, parents' evenings etc.' (WA Provider, Focus Group)

Holding more parents' evenings, workshops and other events involving parents/carers were frequent suggestions. It was raised that more *'community learning based opportunities need to be established.'* A small number suggested more information on WA should be provided to parents/carers and to utilise social media tools more widely to communicate to them. Communication itself, be it through newsletters, fliers, posters etc. should be jargon-free and written in user-friendly language to increase engagement. A particular barrier raised by a number of respondents, including FOCUS West teachers, was cultural differences and the issue of forms and other written material not being accessible to those parents/carers whose first language is not English.

Recommendation 10: Parental/carer engagement in WA, as with education generally, is low. We recommend that appropriate strategies to engage more parents/carers in WA activities should be developed. Interventions should increase awareness of WA and knowledge of financial aspects, in particular. Primary school was identified as the best time to engage with parents/carers in WA, particularly families with the most disadvantage.

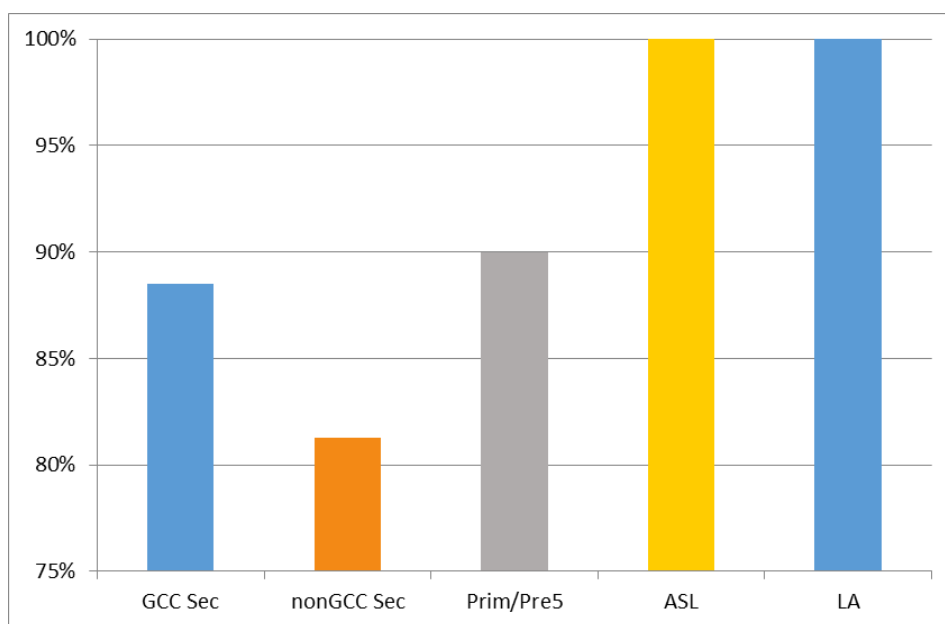
3.2.3 Teacher CPD

The research highlighted the need to engage more with another key influencer for young people; their teachers. There appeared to be a deficit in the knowledge of some teachers involved in organising the delivery of WA activities and a concern that other teachers across the school would have even less awareness of WA. This 'knowledge gap' impacted on the understanding of how WA connects throughout the learner journey and the full range of post-

school options available to young people. Our findings revealed teachers' Continuing Professional Development (CPD) was an important gap in the area of WA.

Figure 8 illustrates that there was very strong support from survey participants for training and development to be incorporated into teachers' Professional Learning. This includes primary schools and early years, moreover, as the majority of primary/pre-five respondents are within GCC, this appears to be a particularly strong endorsement for more CPD for primary and secondary teachers in this local authority. As this inference is based on responses to the research, it is likely that a higher response rate from the other LAs may have led to a similar conclusion with respect to the need for more CPD.

Figure 8: Would you like to see training and development in the area of Widening Access/ Widening Participation included as part of teachers' Professional Learning?



To help address this gap, it was acknowledged that staff across the schools require more information about WA and would welcome this inclusion as part of their learning. It was also raised in the research that CPD should include training in both general and subject-specific aspects of WA as teachers from subject areas may be advising their pupils on HE options. This, in part, was due to the current emphasis from educational policy-makers that the teaching profession is not just about teaching the subject, but also should provide broader career advice to pupils. Policies such as DYW, as highlighted in the recent 15-24 Learner Journey Review, fit well with the WA agenda.

'I think it's something that should be explored [CPD]...for all staff across the school. Now that we're moving in with the SG policy of developing the young work force and I think now the job of the school teacher of just teaching a subject is gone. They have to be aware of the wider career aspirations of the young people in front of them as well. I think having a wider knowledge of WA programmes would help that teacher facilitate WA.' (Secondary School, Focus Group)

Currently, CPD opportunities tend to be targeted at teachers who are responsible for coordinating with external providers of WA programmes, but it was suggested that this area of expertise should be devolved throughout the school.

'I find that the staff I work with are very open and approachable in what the courses are about... I find there is a lot of information there. Maybe the only thing, it's perhaps targeted to myself...who are already a part of that process, there might be interest for other staff in the school who aren't part of targets...but I think it's important for other staff to understand the purpose of it all and how beneficial it is'. (Secondary School, Focus Group)

The importance of acquiring subject-specific knowledge was reiterated in the focus groups, including the suggestion that teaching staff should continually keep abreast of changes and adapt to new developments. A subject-specific focus will make CPD around WA feel relevant to the teachers.

'... sometimes your knowledge from being at university can maybe be outdated once you go into teaching, so even just to keep us abreast with what's going and what you can actually do.' (Secondary School, Focus Group)

There was support for introducing WA at an earlier stage in teachers' professional development, with students whilst undertaking their teaching qualifications.

'There's always been talk about embedding it within the BA in Education...as a module. I don't know what they learn about within those, but I've heard [name of WA Provider] discuss that. Cause then they know about that before they even start....' (WA Provider, Focus Group)

With respect to school survey responses on how teachers could be better supported in increasing their knowledge of WA, a number of suggestions were raised including: increasing IAG to those schools new to working in the field of WA (which some also stated could be used with parents/carers); circulating newsletters on WA; using online resources and organising a number of events to promote WA.

'It would be useful to have separate information for schools who are new to Wider Access.' (Secondary School, Survey)

'A booklet detailing all Widening Access courses from all universities involved. This could be issued to parents/carers.' (Secondary School, Survey)

Recommendation 11: The research highlighted a need, and desire, for WA to be part of teachers' professional learning. To address gaps in WA knowledge, we recommend introducing/enhancing appropriate CPD packages: these should be available to all staff, not just those involved in coordinating WA, and students undertaking initial teacher training. CPD should cover both general and subject-specific aspects of WA in order to remain relevant for subject teachers.

3.2.4 Longitudinal Tracking

Another major gap in the area of WA that emerged was in relation to a collaborative longitudinal tracking mechanism of WA participants that would enable both WA providers and schools to evaluate and evidence the success, or otherwise, of WA activities/programmes.

While WA teams referred to having some degree of tracking procedures and mechanisms in place internally as part of the programmes they work on, a number of gaps were also identified. One area of concern raised was a lack of a collaborative approach across providers, schools, SDS, colleges and universities that impacts on their ability to track pupils/students throughout their learner journey (and beyond).

'For us, there's an information gap about that. We don't know what happens to kids once they get to university. The universities are the ones with that information and they don't like sharing it, so it's very difficult for us to know, if we should be doing more work with pupils on how to survive university socially, how to get support when you're struggling, how to reconcile university work with a home life that might be quite resistant to the kind of things that need to be in place to succeed at university. Without that data...there's no way of knowing how they get on after we've stopped working with them.' (WA Provider, Focus Group)

'...what isn't great for us is we don't see the result of that...but we don't have those destination figures, that would be a really nice thing to see.' (Secondary School, Focus Group)

Some WA teams also spoke about the importance of comparison groups for evaluation, to investigate the success of their interventions. Others pointed out that a collaborative tracking mechanism would help to understand which programme(s) an individual had taken part in, to take into account confounding factors.

'One of the concerns that I have with the evaluations is how can you say with certainty that a particular program [has impact] on a young person or a student.' (WA Provider, Focus Group)

There were discussions on what should be included when developing and implementing a tracking system that would provide a more robust evaluation of WA and impact across the learner journey. It was suggested that using pupils' Scottish Candidate Number (SCN) or an equivalent unique learner number, also recommended in the CoWA final report (2016a, p12), would enable tracking of individuals.

'They've talked for years about these national identifier numbers. I worked in England and our WA project they all had a unique identifier and they were tracked like that...but that's never really come off.' (WA Provider, Focus Group)

Recommendation 12: While there was evidence of evaluation carried out by WA providers, there is a need for better collaborative tracking processes for programme evaluations, as WA providers were restricted by resources and access to data. We recommend that consideration should be given to developing and implementing a longitudinal tracking process using existing access to individual institution, local authority and national data systems, to enable providers to undertake more effective evaluations. Ideally this would be at a national level, led by the Scottish Government and SFC.

The emphasis on targets or numbers was viewed as important by the WA teams and contributed to meeting the reporting requirements of institutions and national organisations. However, as we noted within ‘Experiences’ in Section 3.1.1, it was also recognised that this type of data only partially told the impact of WA. Other criteria were put forward that should be considered when evaluating the success of pupils/students participating in WA, such as pupils developing soft skills and changing attitudes and behaviours. It was suggested there is an over-reliance on quantitative data to evaluate impact and more qualitative evidence should be included. For example, this could be linked to skills development promoted and recorded by SDS when working with young people on Careers Management Skills.

‘But I do think or worry sometimes that we’re too focused on number, quantitative evaluation... speaking from programmes that I run, there’s less of a concern over the qualitative...to get that kind of evaluation, it’s much more really...’ (WA Provider, Focus Group)

‘We are looking at how we can bring together the more superficial quantitative work and whether or not metrics can be good proxies for student performance behaviour etcetera, but also look at how we can capture the deeper stories and make them more meaningful but I don’t think that’s something we’re grappling with alone.’ (WA, Focus Group)

Recommendation 13: Evaluation carried out to meet WA programme, institutional and national targets is primarily through the gathering of quantitative data. We recommend that broad measures of success, beyond numbers, are defined and agreed upon to capture the narrative of success as part of the evaluation of WA. For example, learner driven skills portfolios are used by Skills Development Scotland (SDS) in demonstrating the attainment of Careers Management Skills.

3.2.5 Other Gaps in Current Provision

While these four areas represented the main gaps in current WA provision, there were other areas where it was felt there were gaps in WA activity.

Pupil Groups

Gaps in WA provision for particular pupil groups emerged from the discussions and surveys. In particular, pupils with additional support needs (ASN) were identified as requiring specific

support. It was suggested that specific support/programmes should be available to pupils with Asperger's or who have an attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

There were examples where ASN pupils were receiving appropriate supports, such as through participating in WA summer school activities.

'If they [Disability Team] are speaking to students, it's quite specifically to students with an autistic spectrum disorder, but they will then recommend that they come to SS [summer school] and that would be an additional target group for us.' (WA Provider, Focus Group)

Some schools offer enhanced transition sessions for pupils with ASN who are moving from S6 into HE. They work closely with the relevant contact person in college or university to share appropriate information on pupils to help smooth the transition into HE.

However, despite evidence of some supports being in place it was acknowledged that more should be done for pupils to assist with their transition.

'I would talk about young people on the autistic spectrum... if there is maybe something else out there for maybe young people on the autistic spectrum because it is a major big transition change for them so I think that would be something that I personally would be looking for, and I think that there's a gap there.' (Secondary School, Focus Group)

Concerns about the lack of provision for particular pupil groups was a major discussion point at the FOCUS West teachers' workshop. It was recommended that for pupils with ASN more supports should be available to get them into college or university, including enhancing their preparation for entering HE. Other pupil groups should be supported in their transition to college or university including those with mental health and anxiety issues, and asylum seekers who do not qualify for SAAS funding until they have leave to remain.

Subject-Specific Areas

There were examples of good practice to address knowledge in WA provision across a number of specific subject areas such as Maths or in subjects aligned to specialist providers. Some respondents commented on the subject areas that are covered in their WA activities/programmes and the expertise from staff who teach in these areas. Other providers referred to initiatives in place to improve pupils' subject-specific knowledge such as organising a Maths Summer School in preparation for commencing degree study in the autumn. Close links between university and schools was also raised and the ways in which WA programmes were complementing school activities.

It was acknowledged that close partnership working between different WA providers is central to tackling this issue. Subject-specific provision was particularly important for specialist widening access teams.

'...specialist' information, advice and guidance, because I think a creative education is different from other offers and of course there's specialist information

about being a dentist, or whatever, but I think the specialism is important. (WA Provider, Focus Group)

However, it was generally recognised that more work and support, including more programmes should be put in place to address any gaps in subject-specific provision. This emerged strongly across all strands of the fieldwork. Again, partnership working, particularly between the schools and universities was raised; for subjects that are not taught at school, there is some provision in place but it was suggested that universities should play a leading role in this area.

'...definitely the subjects we don't teach directly, and where there's no adult in this building who will have any experience of that, I think they are definitely areas that need to be promoted by the University because we don't have that expertise in-house.' (Secondary School, Focus Group)

'I also think there should be more subject area specific work. For example, opening up students to the variety of degrees and subjects on offer at university.' (Secondary School, Survey)

FOCUS West Teachers also raised gaps in subjects related to technical education (beyond traditional woodwork such as set design) and more practical-based subject-specific areas such as teaching and nursing. This may be addressed by the newer vocational qualifications and routes being delivered by schools and colleges in Senior Phase. They noted too that resource issues such as staff shortages can have a detrimental impact on teaching any subject to pupils, not just those areas deemed to have a gap with respect to WA provision.

It was also commented in the discussions with WA teams that, in some instances, gaps in specific subjects such as maths, have a negative impact on attainment and ultimately impact on access to HE. Any resource issues, as described above, should therefore be addressed by the leadership of the school before it impacts on pupil attainment.

'I would say, all of the schools we work with attainment is such a key issue. Even with really important subjects like maths, for example, I see Nat5 maths as being a really big barrier to HE.' (WA Provider, Focus Group)

One school focus group suggested that younger year pupils should be targeted to increase their awareness and knowledge of subject-specific areas to help with their later transition into university.

'I think there should be more subject specific stuff to kids that are younger as well. I know you've got specialist stuff for [Name of subject] and things like that but there are...but you need to think about how you would deliver it and the content. Because there are lots of subjects in university that kids haven't even heard of and just don't have a clue about that they might be interested in.' (Secondary School, Focus Group)

Recommendation 14: More activity and support should be provided to address gaps in subject-specific provision. HEIs should play a more prominent part in delivering WA and awareness raising activities in subject areas that schools do not teach, for example, the extensive range of science and creative subjects offered in HE.

3.3 Regional Collaboration

3.3.1 Partnerships

Throughout this report we have highlighted the importance of partnership working in the area of WA. Indeed, it can be argued that developing and sustaining partnerships between relevant sectors in the field of WA is central to Recommendation 4 from CoWA.

The relationships between different stakeholders, how these relationships are built up, the arrangements in place and how WA is organised and delivered (both structured and ad hoc) emerged strongly in our research. We found examples of partnerships that are two-way, between two partners, and those that involve multiple partners across the sector.

While there were examples where partnership working could be enhanced, and we raised in the previous section how it would be beneficial for different stakeholders to build closer relationships to assist in addressing particular gaps in WA activity, overall the positive nature of partnership working was a key finding from the study.

Schools and WA Providers

The direct partnership between schools and widening access providers and the shape this takes was widely commented on. One provider stated in their focus group that having a close relationship with contact teachers was essential because *'so much of it comes down to our good links with teachers in schools'*. Another emphasised the importance of getting to know the school, its culture and ethos, as they put it *'I do as much as I can to feed into the fabric of the schools'*.

Similar types of partnership working to that between the schools and colleges was evident. The school/ college relationship is discussed below. In particular, the partnerships that were built around both structured and flexible relationships between the sectors.

'They [name of WA programme] have the programme but they're always there if you always need something a bit more tailored for a pupil, whether work experience or personal statement, coaching for an interview. I find it very positive that we can pick up the phone and ask for additional support. That has been fantastic.' (Secondary School, Focus Group)

We highlighted in Section 3.1.1 that strong partnership between schools and providers, where the relationship is a two-way sharing of knowledge and collaborative practice, was crucial with respect to the delivery of WA provision. A close collaborative approach was mooted as the key that enabled providers to bring their skills in the field of WA into the school environment and complement the activities that teachers were carrying out with pupils. It

was suggested that activities undertaken by providers in schools, and the knowledge they bring, succeeded in achieving many of the key aims of WA with pupils across this school.

'The range of staff we have had this year have worked very well with our students from S1 to S6. The feedback from the pupils involved has been really positive and has raised awareness in terms of career options. Partners have accurate knowledge about current entry requirements, courses and university experience. The Widening Access events with BGE pupils have been very good in terms of raising aspiration and have complemented well the careers and employability inputs from PSE teachers and SDS.' (Secondary School, Survey)

It was also pointed out by a number of schools that having already well established links with providers, and the knowledge of what programmes they offer, complements what teachers deliver in class.

'They complement the school provision for young people as we know the programmes well and adapt what we do to accommodate them in a coherent way. The programmes are well established so no significant bespoke element to them.' (Secondary School, Survey)

It was emphasised how important it is for pupils to hear consistent messages from both their teachers as well as in the WA activities, in fact it was mentioned several times that pupils are more likely to take notice when the message comes from somebody external to the school.

'They're [pupils] doing their subject choices, their teachers benefit from that additional activity which it helps target what they're already doing and it reinforces that somebody external and university is also saying, 'you need to consider these points', but it's like, my teacher's been saying that etc. so you're complementing them... they're hearing it from the horse's mouth. If they hear it from us. So, it resonates that wee bit more loudly, which the teachers are very keen to have us in.' (WA Provider, Focus Group)

An area of complementary provision, which was raised by a number of respondents in the school survey, was the work of WA providers which fed into the school programme delivered by teachers of Personal and Social Education (PSE). Some schools commented on the importance of this partnership in helping to enhance pupils' WA knowledge, experiences and preparation for HE.

'The [Name of HEI] are long term partners of ours who provide great assistance to our pupils and, in places, complement our PSE programme.' (Secondary School, Survey)

'They have become an essential part of the PSE programme for senior students, as they also cover what life is like as a student, budgeting, interview and application skills.' (Secondary School, Survey)

'Our school programmes in PSE across S1 to S6 integrate well with [Name of WA Provider] and the resource, assistance and expertise provided by our partners has been crucial in assisting our pupils.' (Secondary School, Survey)

Recommendation 15: Collaborative agreements between WA providers and schools should be further strengthened. These should focus on delivery of WA provision where the work of providers complements the work of teachers in schools and does not compete with attainment, since the latter is vital for access to HE. It could also involve closer partnership with SDS careers advisers in schools in support of Careers Management Skills.

College Partnerships

A particularly strong relationship respondents referred to was the colleges' links to both the schools and WA teams based in HEIs. This cuts across a number of different areas. A central role in the relationship that colleges have with schools is to increase awareness of the college route as a post-school destination for pupils.

'For our young people it's a fantastically positive route actually. They go in and do their HND and go onto university. They get to see what it looks like.' (Secondary School, Focus Group)

This type of partnership working also impacts on other linked areas of WA activity, including IAG and raising aspirations in pupils about college being a part of the journey into HE.

'One of the really positive things for us is young people understanding the college bit of HE, how positive HNC/HND's are. For us, we've done huge amounts of work to get our kids one Higher, because one Higher gets you into an HNC. It puts you on a HE route, and kids understanding why that's so important. So college for us is massive.' (Secondary School, Focus Group)

Schools where traditionally a high number of pupils' progress to college have a particularly close relationship with their partner colleges, and schools emphasise how important this relationship is. The geographical location of schools, close to a neighbouring college, has enabled relationships to foster between both sectors.

'We have other ones who are interested in FE, we have a link with the college and they'll come out and work with the pupils over a number of weeks and help them from that point of view... It's important to have that relationship... the vast majority... go to [Name of College].' (Secondary School, Focus Group)

The importance of developing relationships with colleges was not just to raise pupils' awareness of the college route. What the research found, in some instances, was the lack of knowledge and understanding of teachers of the college sector. Colleges themselves attempt to address this issue by building links with schools and inviting teachers into college to get a sense of this type of learning and teaching environment. Equally it was noted that reciprocal arrangements are in place for college lecturers to go into school to enhance their awareness and knowledge of the school sector.

'I think getting school pupils over the threshold, getting them to see what college looks like. We've been doing a lot of stuff about getting teachers in schools, so they know what a college looks like and they've seen our facilities. So, they aren't applying blind.' (WA Provider, Focus Group)

'And we've got a shadowing project going out at the moment which is about getting lecturers into schools...If we just keep doing that we can raise the awareness level.' (WA Provider, Focus Group)

Strengthening the college to university links - articulation

In Section 1 we referred to articulation as an important part of the WA policy agenda in Scotland. The growth of articulation routes, and how the success of articulation can be measured, is in part, down to the development of strong partnerships between colleges and universities. Colleges traditionally have had a strong partnership with post-92 institutions, in part, due to earlier policy and funding decisions.

Widening access providers commented on building relationships with the college sector which, in turn, would enhance partnership working around the area of articulation: *'We're trying to work more and more closely with the colleges to really engage and create partnerships'*.

One of the focus groups suggested that articulation is now embedded within most of the sector. However, while partnerships are particularly strong between colleges and the post-92 institutions, other universities, taking on board recommendations on articulation within COWA, are developing their articulation provision.

'With all the work with the Commission on Fair Access, is some universities further afield have been in contact with Articulation agreements. Ones we wouldn't normally come in contact with, with extra places, so that is a new thing, this year.' (WA Provider, Focus Group)

'Just at the moment, we're doing an articulation mapping and in light of the commissioner's report all the universities are being tasked with strengthening their articulation portfolio and the post 92s are already ahead of us in that sense.' (WA Provider, Focus Group)

The importance of strengthening links between schools, colleges *and* providers was viewed by one provider as crucial. It would help to enhance IAG for pupils around the issue of college as an alternative route into HE and reassure pupils about the time of completion of a degree.

'We've found the pupils might not be aware of that route, that there is that next step they can take to go to university via articulation and that it doesn't add on extra time to their study. They can leave school at the same time as friends and graduate at the same time as them.' (WA Provider, Focus Group)

Other external partners in schools

Other partnerships in the area of WA provision emerged from the research. Structured partnerships in place between schools and work organisations were viewed as important, in particular to promote subject specific areas such as STEM subjects and also aim to address gender imbalances within these professions.

'[Name of Company] is our main partner from DYW Glasgow, we've got a lot of work going on. So, ideal situation next year, we would have our young people in 1st year who have been out to college to have some STEM activities...look at females in STEM; then we start building on that 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th year. So, it's about raising awareness of the growth areas and again WA...' (Secondary School, Focus Group)

The importance of having professional expertise in this area was referred to and there were examples where schools are involved with outside organisations to give pupils WA experiences beyond the traditional setting of the classroom.

'We at [Name of Secondary School] work in partnership with a number of external agencies and as a result of this our young people are accustomed to undertaking activities with professionals out with teaching staff and in various locations.' (Secondary School, Survey)

Widening Access partners and collaborations

The significance of partnerships and collaborative arrangements between different WA providers and other related organisations involved in WA was a key finding from the research. One provider informed us of the ties they have with a charity that has developed close links to schools and universities in the area of access *'we've got a partnership with [Name of Charity]... And that's got a STEM focus'*.

The SHEP programme and FOCUS West, in particular, were raised as good examples of partnership and collaboration between WA providers. FOCUS West not only organise and deliver their own WA activities centrally but, in the devolved model, also provide funding for the partner HEIs to develop and deliver their WA programmes. Some of the FOCUS West schools who completed the survey commented on the range of supports and activities in place. Providers based in HEIs also commented positively on their relationship with their key access partner.

One area where collaboration was viewed as an essential component of stakeholders working together was as Corporate Parents to care experienced young people. A number of WA teams stressed how important this collaboration was and the extent that they have built up close relationships with other agencies to provide a collective partnership in this area.

'We're a corporate parent for every young person in Scotland, we're not just a corporate parent for our own. So, a collective responsibility.' (WA Provider, Focus Group)

'There's a real emphasis on collaboration with other Corporate Parents, we work quite well in collaboration with other universities, colleges and other organisations like, any SQA. We also work in partnership with MCR Pathways.' (WA Provider, Focus Group)

It was also stressed that the success of this type of collaboration was due to the fact that individual providers and other organisations did not view themselves as competitors.

'A network of contacts I have across Scotland, across the UK. Sometimes it's teachers, social workers, it can be key workers, it can be other HEI's. The brilliant thing that we all do with CE [care experience] young people is that we're not competitive over it.' (WA Provider, Focus Group)

However, the issue of competition between WA providers was, alongside differing agendas and meeting targets, raised as a potential barrier to more successful collaborations.

'I think it would be good in an ideal world for Widening Access teams to collaborate and work together but I think there's very much this competition almost and we can't let people see what we're doing.' (WA Provider, Focus Group)

Recommendation 16: There were many examples of good practice with respect to partnership working involving schools, colleges, HEIs, LAs, WA providers and other external agencies. This collaborative work, including college to university articulation activity, supported by national policy, should continue to be encouraged and expanded, where appropriate.

3.3.2 Regional and National Policy

As we described in Section 1, national policy around WA was the driver for establishing the Blueprint for Fairness in the Glasgow Region project; specifically, the research aimed to inform a collaborative regional approach, in response to CoWA Recommendation 4.

In Section 3.3.1, we discussed the clear finding from the research that strong partnerships were essential for successful WA and many already exist across the education sectors in the region. In addition to this, we explored stakeholders' views on optimal levels of strategic policy and governance to enable coordination of WA activity and support a regional collaborative partnership approach. Although there were some differences in opinion, there are pertinent points worth highlighting.

It was generally agreed that the findings and recommendations of the national CoWA review were appropriate and relevant for the region. In order to achieve the ambitions for fair access and implement the recommendations of the Commission, policy should be at a national level to ensure the WA agenda is aligned with other national education and related policy, such as Curriculum for Excellence and DYW, wherever possible.

It is necessary that WA targets are aligned. National targets and institutional measures of success in access to HE, as agreed in HEI Outcome Agreements with the SFC, must be aligned

with the criteria for targeting WA and measures of success for WA programmes, to make best use of resources.

'one of the issues for us, is resource at the moment, which is finite. It would be looking at how we can match, national, governmental, funding council aspirations with current resource, and I think they're not really matched up and that needs looked at, better targeting... who are the pupils that really need the initiatives that we're running?' (WA Provider, Focus Group)

There is, however, merit in the regional approach. The regional approach taken by SHEP, and FOCUS West specifically, was highlighted as a model that has worked well and could work even better. The benefits of SHEP in the west of Scotland include the impartial central coordination that allows it to work across the 13 LAs and the devolved nature of programme delivery as was discussed in Section 3.3.1. Some research participants also commented that there could be lessons to be taken from the other SHEP programmes, despite variances in regional context.

Differences in policy, practice and priorities at LA level in the region were raised. There are benefits of working in partnership with the individual LAs, within their local education practices. One secondary school described their preferred option:

'I think authority-wide rather than national is always best approach because there is such difference between the barriers to accessing HE for each local authority. Transport links: if we can break down that barrier for young people, transport really shouldn't should be an issue for young people, whereas in a much more rural community I'm sure it is obviously...' (Secondary School, Focus Group)

However, this also brings challenges for WA providers to negotiate the multiple LAs in the region. Some felt policy at LA level would be too local and a broader regional approach would be better.

Discussions around better tracking of progress of WA programme participants included the need for local data sharing agreements, but it was generally agreed the most effective way to achieve this would be a national tracking system, as discussed in Section 3.2.4. The benefits for evaluation of both individual WA programmes and national strategy are immense and it was felt the development of regional systems would result in duplication of effort.

'If we look at it collaboratively, the student journey doesn't have to take place in one institution or region. The learner journey follows the learner, not the institution... And that's where the individual identifier comes in. The big question then is who becomes responsible for taking the lead on that and putting the collaborations together? Because there is an issue, we try to work across the sector, we needed a push from SFC, they were funding it, it needs to be asked, who is going to be responsible?' (WA Provider, Focus Group)

In one development in support of evaluation of WA in the Scottish sector, the SFC and Commissioner for Fair Access have commissioned the development of an evaluation toolkit⁶.

The issue of funding was raised many times. This included the need for resource to achieve strategic aims and the negative impact of policy around short-term funding, as well as in relation to the issue of competition between WA providers, already mentioned.

'Funding is a big issue for us and parachute funding, where it's bursts of funding is no good. Some research shows that parachute funding makes the outcomes worse in the long run because the schools become dependent on those bursts of funding and once that's gone the activity just stops.' (WA Provider, Focus Group)

'Collaboration is key however due to the way many organizations are funded they see others in the market as competitors rather than collaborators.' (WA Provider, Survey)

All the HEIs involved in the research were clear that they do not only recruit students from the local or regional area, therefore, a national perspective is essential. The small specialist institutions in particular stressed that they are national HE providers in their subject areas.

'...it should be national rather than regional because if a student is doing an access programme in Dumfries they should be able to have that recognised in Aberdeen... I think this is a good first step, but I don't think it should be any way limited to regional. Students shouldn't be limited.' (WA Provider, Focus Group)

In summary, the consensus from the research participants, and the WA teams in the main, was that national WA strategy and policy is required to support a collaborative regional approach.

'maybe the national approach should be that, the guidance should be steered towards a collaborative approach.' (WA Provider, Focus Group)

This should be informed by consultation with all stakeholders and partners:

'One thing that is potentially missing is, quite often you attend conferences with regards to WP and fair access and the one thing that's always missing is representation from schools and that can be because of costing of a conference, the timing, whatever it is. But actually, if we're talking about all this work and engagement with our school partners having them represented readily at conferences so that they can contribute to the debate.' (WA Provider, Focus Group)

WA providers would like to see a community of practice to create a professional community for WA practitioners. This is in the process of being formed by the SFC and the Commissioner for Fair Access. It was also noted that national policy could impact on the culture of the sector around the purpose of WA; enabling a collaborative approach towards fair access for all to meet the ambitious national targets.

⁶ For more information on the Scottish Toolkit for Fair Access see <http://cfe.org.uk/work/a-scottish-toolkit-for-fair-access/>

‘it is a National Policy thing and a cultural thing for our sector, for all our WP practitioners to feel like being able to say, ‘they chose somewhere else because it’s a better fit for them, and that’s the right choice for that person which is all that matters.’ (WA Provider, Focus Group)

Recommendation 17: Policy procedures, targets and funding arrangements should reduce the risk of competition across the sector. We recommend that further guidance on how best to deliver WA provision that takes on board institutional, regional and national priorities should be developed by the SFC, Universities Scotland, Colleges Scotland and SDS, for example. Targets and targeting criteria for WA programmes should be aligned to the WA outcomes expected from HEIs by the SFC and Scottish Government.

4 Discussion and Conclusions

We started the Blueprint for Fairness in the Glasgow Region research project with a very practical question: “What do we mean by ‘the Glasgow Region’?” This research project was instigated by Glasgow City Council (GCC) in discussion with local HEIs, therefore, Glasgow was always going to be a major focus for the research. Glasgow is the urban centre in the west of Scotland, with the highest concentration of areas of multiple deprivation (identified by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation) in Scotland. However, HEIs in Glasgow attract students from across Scotland, particularly from across a broad geographical area in the west of Scotland, and widening access and widening participation teams work in local authorities beyond Glasgow.

We invited all 13 west of Scotland LAs to participate in the research, many of whom have engaged to differing degrees. We consider findings therefore to be applicable across the west of Scotland LAs and, undoubtedly, much is transferrable across Scotland. The research is of interest nationally and informs national practice and policy.

As the research progressed it became clear that there were much more profound questions to address, or more accurately, definitions to clarify – “What do we mean by widening access?”, “Where are the boundaries between WA and Developing the Young Workforce (DYW)/Career Information, Advice & Guidance (CIAG) in schools?”, and similarly, “Where are the boundaries between WA and universities/colleges student recruitment practices in engaging with prospective students?”

There are undoubtedly overlaps and synergies between WA policy and practice and the practices in schools linked to the three key pillars of Education policy in Scotland: The Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) policy, Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) and DYW (Scottish Government, 2018b). The 15-24 Learner Journey Review (Scottish Government, 2018a) and the final report of the Commission on Widening Access (Scottish Government, 2016a) highlight the need for closer partnership and collaborative working across the sectors in order to improve the experience of the learner journey for young people and those from disadvantaged backgrounds, in particular. There is also undoubtedly cross-over between WA

and student recruitment to HEIs and a tension between delivering local and national aspirations for equity and fairness in access to HE with institutional targets for WA. The research project did not set out to delineate these boundaries, and when they were raised during the research we were limited in addressing these important but secondary questions by the short timescale for the project (see Limitations of the Study, below). As outlined in Section 1, the research aimed to inform increased regional collaboration in Glasgow and the west of Scotland by examining the current WA landscape, identifying duplication and gaps in provision and partnerships that currently function well

The specific research aims were to:

1. Map existing WA activity within the region, highlighting gaps and duplication/overlap across the learner journey.
2. Conduct research with a range of stakeholders including, WA providers based within HEIs and third sector, FOCUS West, colleges, both primary and secondary schools, parents/carers and students, to understand issues around WA and targeting in the region, and the effectiveness of current access activities.
3. Inform proposals for a regional approach to access with targeting criteria beyond school progression rate.

This report has outlined our findings and recommendations from research conducted with a range of stakeholders (research aim 2).

4.1 Conclusions

We conclude that there is a wealth of good practice in WA in the region that is achieved in partnership between WA providers, schools, particularly secondary schools, LAs and colleges. Good practice was highlighted in particular with those WA activities that provide real experiences through visits to HEI campuses and working with mentors. With respect to research aim 1, no evidence was found for major duplication or overlap of WA provision. Rather, a need was identified for more information to be shared and a collaborative 'joined up' approach to ensure WA is not overly clustered in certain schools in areas of disadvantage, but is able to provide for disadvantaged learners, whichever school they attend. However, a number of key gaps were identified: in working with earlier year groups; engaging with key influencers – both parents/carers and teachers; through CPD and tracking.

A series of recommendations have been produced from the conclusions emerging from the research. These are listed in the Recommendations section of the Executive Summary.

The Blueprint for Fairness in the Glasgow Region Project Board will continue to meet beyond the completion of the research project with oversight of implementation groups to take forward some of the recommendations. Initially, three work streams have been established to address issues raised from the research findings in a collaborative manner, with representation from stakeholders in the region. The project commenced with the regular meetings of the project board that provided a forum for key stakeholders to work together. The research has succeeded in one of its main aims, (research aim 3) that of providing evidence to inform the work of implementation groups. (More details on the work of the implementation groups can be found in Section 5, Further Work, and the Appendix.)

Through desk research and consultation, we have created a map of existing WA activity (research aim 1) for use by the partners in: promoting the activities available to pupils in the region to schools and parents/carers; helping to co-ordinate existing activities offered by multiple providers and identifying gaps in provision to be filled by new collaborative projects.

4.2 Limitations of the Study

The original project specification, and the research design to meet it, was perhaps ambitious given the short timescale for the project (10 months). In addition, the timing of the project within the academic year, with the data collection phase coinciding with school summer holidays, caused further delays to an already tight schedule.

As well as limiting the ability to investigate secondary questions as they arose throughout the research, such as those already mentioned, there were original project aims that were beyond the scope of what was achievable in the timescale. One such aim was to engage with parents/carers. In fact, there was a Stage 3 to the research strategy, when focus groups with parents/carers were planned, but this was not possible to progress. We think this is a very important stakeholder group and therefore have included this in the proposed further work in Section 5. Focus groups with students were also planned as part of Stage 3, but we consider these less important due to the large number of studies of WA that have gathered the opinions of undergraduate students as part of the research, for example, see Sosu *et al* (2016). As we noted with respect to the two case studies, we had hoped to hold additional focus groups with primary schools to further highlight current practice and through seeking the views of primary teachers, to gain a better understanding of the requirements for WA with younger year groups.

The research was limited to examine the learner journey through school into HE and therefore excluded important WA activities that occur beyond school. The work with adult returners to education contributes greatly to WA in Scotland, but this was outside the remit of the project. The importance of articulation as a route to university via HE in college was mentioned in Section 1 and was raised during the research. The partnerships supporting articulation routes have been reported, but it was not a major focus of the research.

While a large number of focus group participants were engaged, giving weight to the findings of the qualitative aspect of the research, we acknowledge the limitations of the relatively small number of survey responses. The sample size of survey responses limited the statistical power for the quantitative aspect of the research.

However, it should be emphasised that despite these constraints, and as our report has illustrated, a lot has been achieved in this period and the research findings have exposed aspects of WA activity that merit further investigation.

5 Further Work

This section outlines where we believe additional research should be undertaken within Glasgow and the west of Scotland region to augment that already conducted and which has been presented in this report. We also outline the planned implementation phase to take forward the recommendations arising from the research evidence.

The key areas of work highlighted below would generate even stronger evidence to better inform proposals to be taken forward and would provide real value beyond Glasgow and the west of Scotland region, both explicitly and implicitly.

Primary and Pre-Five Age Groups

Our research found that an area where further in-depth work should be explored is with primary schools and pre-fives. As we presented in our findings, many participants stated that 'it's never too early' to start WA activities and 'the earlier the better' to promote HE as a post school destination, and also that it would be important to consult on how to engage with these age groups and their parents/carers (see below).

We have only been able to conduct two focus groups with 'case study' primary schools to date (see Section 3.2.1), and have not been able to hold any with pre-fives. We believe it would be fruitful to extend this area of work by holding more focus groups with primary and early years' teachers and carrying out more detailed analysis of the data collected. This would give stakeholders more of an insight into this key stage of the learner journey. In particular, as detailed in the recommendations, it would enable the exploration of the appropriate level of engagement and types of activities that should take place in pre-five, through earlier and later years of primary school.

Parent/Carer Engagement

The research has highlighted that work with primary/pre-five age groups also facilitates increased engagement with parents/carers. Moreover, the findings showed that parents are more likely to engage with WA in primary years rather than secondary.

It would be beneficial to carry out further research with parents/carers for two reasons. Firstly, while it has been very useful and informative to gather the views of other stakeholders (WA providers, schools, LAs) on the experiences of, and level of engagement in, WA activities by parents/carers, the research would be further enhanced by exploring the benefits, barriers and gaps with respect to WA activities directly with the parents/carers themselves. Secondly, the research conducted to date will allow us to inform and consult parents/carers on proposals to be taken forward, as originally planned in Stage 3 of the research strategy. In other words, it would be a timely opportunity to investigate in more detail parents'/carers' views, while developing activities to increase awareness of WA, parental knowledge of financial aspects and increase engagement of younger years and their parents/carers in WA.

Engagement beyond the Glasgow region

The project was set up to address how to put in place a coherent, collaborative approach to delivering WA across 'the Glasgow region'. As part of this approach, 12 west of Scotland LAs, beyond Glasgow City, were invited to participate in the research. However, as we detailed in Section 2 response rates from these LAs were low compared to GCC. Further research with LAs outwith GCC would allow consultation on proposals while disseminating research findings.

While we hope our research will be of use to the SFC, as funders, and partners on the project board, we feel it is important to share findings with the sector more broadly and provide real value beyond the Glasgow region, such as by hosting a dissemination event.

Tracking

Further research could add to sector knowledge and capability towards the development of a collaborative tracking process that would enable partners to share data and undertake more WA programme evaluation. We propose a scoping exercise, including exploring the potential of the SDS 16+ DataHub to incorporate this functionality. This work could inform national discussions around tracking and evaluation of existing and new WA activities, beyond the Glasgow region.

Implementation of Recommendations

The Blueprint for Fairness in the Glasgow Region project board has set up implementation groups to take forward some of the recommendations from the research. Initially, three work streams have been established to address:

- 1) Primary into early secondary WA activities and engaging parents;
- 2) Teacher CPD;
- 3) Communications, logistics and metrics.

The remits of the three work streams are in the Appendix.

It will be important to incorporate evaluation research from the start of any proposed initiatives in order to inform their development and demonstrate impact.

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Appendix

A. Data sources

- Scottish schools' datasets can be accessed via the Scottish Government website. These include information on proportions of pupils in SIMD20 postcode areas and claiming Free School Meals:

<https://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/School-Education/Datasets/contactdetails>

<https://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/School-Education/SchoolMealsDatasets>

- Insight Analytical Dataset held by University of Glasgow partners
- School datasets prepared by FOCUS West

B. Online Survey

SURVEY THEMES AND QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS/ HEAD TEACHERS, SDS CAREERS ADVISERS AND OTHER PROFESSIONALS IN SCHOOLS

SCHOOL INFORMATION

1. Please write the FULL school name where you work: (Compulsory)
2. What is your role in the school?
3. Which year groups in your school participate in Widening Access/Widening Participation activities? Please choose as many that apply

Pre-Five

P1 S1

P2 S2

P3 S3

P4 S4

P5 S5

P6 S6

P7

None

WIDENING ACCESS/WIDENING PARTICIPATION ACTIVITIES IN YOUR SCHOOL

4. How many Widening Access providers are you aware of who work with your school pupils?
(Single response)

0 (If chose this option will answer Qs 5 then skip to Q18)

1-2 (If chose this or one of following 3 options will skip to Q6 then proceed through)

3-5

5-10

10 +

5. If you answered '0' to Question 4, would you like Widening Access providers offering activities/programmes to be involved in your school? (Single response)

Yes (then skip to Q18)

No (then skip to Q18)

6. Is the number of Widening Access providers that you indicated: (Single response)

Too many

Too few (I'd like to see more)

About right

7. Please give examples of Widening Access activities your pupils participate in and any benefits they get from taking part. [open response]

8. Which aspects of Widening Access activities do you think are most effective for your pupils?
Please choose as many that apply: (Multiple response)

Aspiration raising

Information, Advice and Guidance

Attainment raising

Access route into HE

Preparation for HE

Other (please specify)

9. How well do externally provided Widening Access activities complement the school provision for your pupils? (Single response)

Extremely well

Very well

Moderately well

Slightly well

Not well at all

10. Please explain the answer you gave for Question 9 [open response]

11. Are there any negative aspects for your school with respect to Widening Access activities?
(Single response)

Yes

No

12. Are there any negative aspects for individual pupils in your school with respect to Widening Access activities? (Single response)

Yes

No

13. If you answered 'Yes' to either Question 11 or 12, please describe the negative aspects (open response)

14. Do you get an opportunity to provide feedback/evaluation on Widening Access activities in your school? (Single response)

Yes

No

GAPS IN WIDENING ACCESS/WIDENING PARTICIPATION ACTIVITIES

15. Is there a gap in offering Widening Access activities to any of your pupil year groups? (Single response)

Yes

No

16. If you answered 'Yes', what stages of their learner journey are there gaps? Please choose as many that apply: (Multiple response)

Pre-Five

P1 S1

P2 S2

P3 S3

P4 S4

P5 S5

P6 S6

P7

17. What more would you do, or change, if anything, to enhance Widening Access activities? (Open response)

18. What are the most effective criteria to identify pupils experiencing disadvantage? (Open response)

19. How could teachers be better supported in increasing their knowledge of Widening Access?

20. Would you like to see training and development in the area of Widening Access/Widening Participation included as part of teachers' Professional Learning? (Single response)

Yes

No

PUPIL TRANSITIONS

21. How could pupil transitions from P7 to S1 be further supported by Widening Access providers? (Open response)

22. How could pupil transitions from school to HE in college or university be further supported by Widening Access providers? (Open response)

23. When is the right time to start talking to pupils about higher education as an option for their future? (Single response)

Pre-Five

P1 S1

P2 S2

P3 S3

P4 S4

P5 S5

P6 S6

P7

PARENTAL/CARER ENGAGEMENT

24. How would you rate the level of parental engagement in your school? (Single response)

Very Good

Good

Ok

Poor

Very Poor

25. How could Widening Access providers better engage with parents/carers? (Open response)

Would you be happy for the researchers to contact you again to follow up some of your responses in an interview or focus group? If yes, please provide your name and email address:

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS SURVEY

C. Focus Group Topics

Topics explored in focus group discussions with school teachers and careers advisers:

- An overview of widening access or widening participation programmes that run at your school;
- The benefits of widening access activities;
- Any barriers or challenges in widening access and providing widening access activities;
- What is needed to fill gaps, if any, in widening access provision;
- Engagement with parents/carers;
- Views on supporting mechanisms for stakeholders to engage in widening access activities.

Topics explored in focus group discussions with WA providers:

- An overview of the programmes you run;
- The benefits of widening access activities, including how you evaluate/evidence these;
- Barriers or challenges in widening access and providing widening access activities;
- What is needed to fill any gaps in widening access provision in the region, including more engagement with parents/carers;
- How we could develop a more collaborative, regional approach.

D. Map of Existing Widening Access Activities

We have developed a map of existing WA activity in schools in all 13 west of Scotland Local Authorities in the form of an Excel spreadsheet. This working and evolving document was developed through collating information that had previously been gathered and desk-based research; data sources are listed below. Further information was collected from school teachers, LAs and WA providers during the research fieldwork.

Data sources:

- Universities Scotland Bridging Programmes Workstream, map of WA programmes
- GCC HE booklet 2018 update (including information collated by MCR Pathways)
- SFC Schools Engagement Framework map 2018
- WA/WP providers/HEI websites
- Blueprint for Fairness in the Glasgow Region research data

Please contact the Project Board for more information (see page 2)

