

East London Connect



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East London Connect Impact Document

Vision

“To provide the next generation of young people with the educational and career opportunities to have economic power to actively participate in the regeneration of East London”

Introduction

Millions have been invested in the economic retransformation of East London. But whilst this investment has led to thousands of new homes being built and many companies attracted to the area, much of this regeneration remains inaccessible to the local community.

Accommodation prices are unaffordable to most of the local Newham resident- a Borough with the lowest minimum wage in London. This is compounded by the fact that many of the well-paying jobs in Stratford require qualifications that are not available in the local community.

Our solution: East London connect aims to provide a real and sustainable solution to these problems. Working across two main areas, Education and Careers, we hope to address the skills gap in Schools and local employment agencies in the borough. In doing so, we will provide the next generation of young people with new opportunities and skills to build a better future.

This impact document outlines our specific projects and how they are helping to address this problem.

Section 1: Education

The issue of social mobility in 2017 means that young people from underrepresented groups in poor parts of London are unable to access equal work and education opportunities. Without such opportunities they risk perpetuating poverty and widening the socio-economic divide. We believe the key to solving these issues is through effective educational and career support. East London Connect run two specific projects in Schools to enable young people from disadvantaged and ethnic minorities to discover and utilise the opportunities available to them.

Our approach and research

Diversity and ability: our approach

As part of the widening participation agenda in the UK, it has become increasingly important for Universities to make sure that all young people have higher education opportunities regardless of background¹. At East London Connect, we want to help young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and mixed ability to apply and study at Russell group universities. Whilst many w

idening participation projects target only the most gifted and talented pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, we would like to work with a variety of abilities over a significant period of time. This approach follows a growing body of literature that suggest young people's academic ability can change over time. Indeed, there is little evidence to support the notion of linear progression through different year groups and universities². Through having a university mentor, we can help pupils improve Academic performance by giving expert advice and support.

Re-evaluating colour: new approaches mentoring

There is an alarming under-representation of certain ethnic minorities and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds at Russell group universities in England. The most recent UCAS figures in 2016 show that only 2.3% of young people from the most disadvantaged backgrounds applied for higher tier universities such as the Russell group³. There is still a massive gap between the most advantaged and disadvantaged pupils going to top universities; young people from the most advantaged backgrounds are 10 times more likely to attend a Russell group university than those from disadvantaged backgrounds⁴. Furthermore, when we look specifically at underrepresented ethnic groups it is important to distinguish what constitute Black and Ethnic Minorities (BME) heritage to understand where the greatest

¹ Report by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) 2014. National Strategy for Access and Student Success.

² Education Datalab 2015. Seven Things You might not Know About our Schools. <http://www.educationdatalab.org.uk/getattachment/blog/march-2015/Seven-things-you-might-not-know-about-our-schools/EduDatalab-7things.pdf.aspx>. See also Differences in degree outcomes: The effect of subject and student characteristics. Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) 2015.

³ UCAS Analysis and Research 2016.

⁴ UCAS Analysis and Research 2016

under-representation exists. Research shows that BMEs participation rates are not homogeneous for people categorised within this group. For instance, Bangladeshi, Asian and mixed white were less likely to apply to higher ranking universities such as Russell groups⁵. Whereas Black and Caribbean pupils were less likely to apply to lower ranking institutions⁵. Therefore, looking at specific groups can shed light on the real figures of under-representation amongst BMEs. For example, there are more black and Caribbean students at university of East London than at all Russell group universities combined. The national figures for black and Caribbean students at across all universities is 2.34%⁶. East London Connect will directly address the problem by specially targeting projects at black and ethnic minorities as well as those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Our work coincides with a growing need for a new and healthy approach to understanding BME achievement. In some quarters of the educational sector, there has been an unhelpful correlation between ethnic minorities and ability with negative connotations. The focus and emphasis on difference in BME attainment and their white counterpart may subconsciously “reinforce wholly inaccurate stereotypical perceptions that some ethnic groups are ‘naturally’ talented’ in certain areas of the curriculum or inherently culturally disposed to learning, while others are not⁷”. Indeed, even in 2017, a consortium of universities is conducted research into the apparent need to “increase” and understand black and ethnic minorities achievement⁸. There is also evidence that ethnicity can have “statistically significant and negative effect on degree attainment⁹”. This apparent ethnic achievement ‘deficit’ is developed at an early stage in the educational system and grows. For instance, “the selection criteria reinforce the prior underachievement of African Caribbean pupils in primary schools, and in consequence may inadvertently create a feeling of low academic self-esteem for these pupils, with the danger that pupils will ‘live up to’ perceived lower academic achievement¹⁰”. The work of East London connect using high achieving mentors at Russell groups will hopefully readdress this negative image and highlight more effective ways of working with ethnic minorities in low social economic areas.

We will use university mentors from different backgrounds to inspire and support the young people mentioned above. Recent research indicates that young people from disadvantaged backgrounds make decisions to go to university between the ages of 14 and 17 years old¹¹. The same research found that lower aspiration may be one of the reasons for their under-representation at higher ranking universities¹². Thus, we will be working with pupils aged between 14-16 to help raise aspiration and support them to apply to Russell group universities.

⁵ Noden, Shiner and Modood 2014, black and minority ethnic groups to higher education a reassessment, nuffieldfoundation

⁶ UCL Access Agreement 2016

⁷ David Gillborn & Heidi Safia Mirza Educational inequality mapping race, class and gender(2000), p7.

⁸<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/news/2017/mar/ucl-part-consortium-secures-500k-tackle-bme-attainment-gap>

⁹ Equality Challenge Unit and Higher Education Academy. (2008) Ethnicity, gender and degree attainment. London, Higher Education Academy, p.2

¹⁰ Tikly, Leon and Haynes, Jo and Caballero, Chamion and Hill, John and Gillborn, David (2006) Evaluation of Aiming High: African Caribbean Achievement Project. Department for Education and Skills, London. P.7

¹¹ Anders and Micklewright(2015), Education Sciences Journal

¹² Anders and Micklewright(2015), Education Sciences Journal

UCL Mentoring Scheme

Our mentoring programme starts with pupils in year 10 with introductory sessions on Russell group universities to assess and evaluate what their current knowledge of higher education institutions is. For example, we ask whether they would have considered applying to university before this mentoring scheme. We can then cater our sessions appropriately.

Through our monthly sessions with pupils they learn about different aspects of applying to university and give a presentation about a university that interests them.

We evaluate our work on a regular basis through feedback from pupils whether the mentoring scheme is having a positive effect. For instance, what they have learnt, whether the course has influenced their decision to apply for university (see sample evaluation sheets).

In year 11, we work with both teachers and pupils to find out what subjects require extra support to achieve their GCSE requirements at their desired universities.

In addition, we organise university trips to experience sample lectures to help visualise life at university.

In year 12, we will run specific personal statement workshops as well as further guidance/mentoring on UCAS university choices.

The success of these initiatives will be assessed and evaluated at various intervals such as termly, result days and whether the students believe the mentoring scheme helped them get into a Russell group university.

[Pictures our university mentoring scheme with students University College London\(UCL\) African Caribbean Society.](#)



Career days and career skills workshops

At East London Connect we would like to equip the next generation of ethnic minorities with the skills and knowledge to develop successful careers. It is therefore crucial that the pupils have accurate information about careers to make informed decisions. Our work on careers is closely related to our university mentoring scheme, where pupils study greatly influences their career opportunities and expected earnings. For instance, those graduating from non- Russell group universities had an average starting salary of approximately £18,009 per year, whereas average starting salaries for Oxbridge graduates were around £25,582¹³”.

There is unfortunately a bias towards certain top universities which in turn restrict possibilities for social mobility and equal access to certain professions. Also the industry or career the pupils choose also make a difference to earning potential. Whilst 20.5 % of black students were studying STEM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics)¹⁴, these subjects are very competitive and students in these subjects are more likely to be unemployed six months after graduation in comparison to other subjects. Therefore, it is vital we expose our pupils working with East London Connect to a broad range of industries and ensure they have the necessary skills to flourish in a very changing job market.

We are using the latest research on top 10 most skills valued by London employers¹⁵ and running workshops that give pupils an opportunity to develop these important employability skills.

Through specific career days focused on different industries, East London Connect will enable kids to find out about new industries, understand different career paths and ask questions. In addition, these events can also act as a reference point to help work experience applications to show interest in an industry. In February 2017, we ran a career day at Sarah Bonnell in Stratford and spoke to a total of 240 year 9 girls. 70% of the pupils learnt about new industries and over 50% found the career day informative and interesting. These career days play a pivotal role in helping the pupils working with East London Connect to avoid becoming not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). A recent study shows that “The 7% of young adults surveyed who recalled four or more activities while at school were five times less likely to be NEET and earned, on average, 16% more than peers who recalled no such activities¹⁶”. Furthermore, career experiences whilst at school greatly affects a young person’s work readiness, attitude to career advice and pupil motivation¹⁷.

We are partnering with Landsec plc to run specific business and career talks. For example, there is an opportunity for pupils to gain an insight into careers in property management and construction through a landsec introductory course.

Equally, we are helping pupils to look at alternative career paths such as apprenticeships. We will be inviting different employers to schools to discuss apprenticeship opportunities.

¹³ R de Vries, 2014 Earning by Degrees Differences in the career outcomes of UK graduates,p.20

¹⁴ Elevatiaon Networks – Race to the top - The Bow Group, Bow Group p. 19.

¹⁵ DELIVERING SKILLS FOR LONDON: PATHWAY TO EMPLOYMENT CONFERENCE 2017, p. 12

¹⁶ Mann, A(2012), It’s who you meet: why employer contacts at School make a difference to the Employment prospects of Young Adults.

¹⁷ Social Mobility and University Careers Services, The Bridge Group, p.20

Section 3: Road Map and future plans

Expansion of educational projects across Newham and other boroughs in London