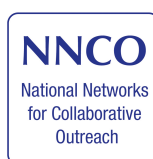


# Working with Parents and Families Project

## Executive Summary

**Aimhigher...**  
London South



**Project Aims:** To explore parents'/guardians' perceptions of higher education and their aspirations for their children.

**Outputs:** The findings are to inform the development of a series of interventions for parents and families that could run concurrently with the AHLS student programme.

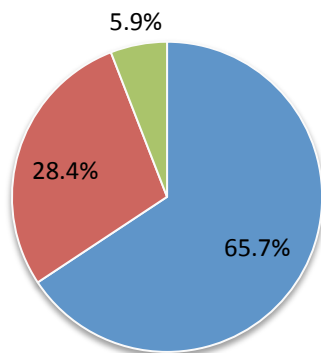
**Methods & Sample:** A paper questionnaire administered via school parent/guardian evening events during March and April 2016. 202 questionnaires were collected from 3 schools. Follow-up discussions with 20 parents.

**Participants' Characteristics:**

- The majority of the parents/guardians were female (65.7%), and from a White ethnic group (69%)
- Just over half (56%) of parents/guardians were from higher socio-economic groups (NS-SEC 1-3).
- The majority of parents/guardians lived in areas with upper rates of higher education participation (POLAR 3 to 5).

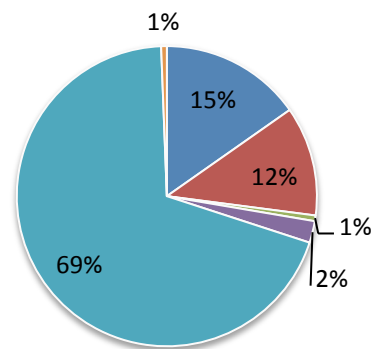
**Participants' gender (n=169)**

■ Female ■ Male ■ Prefer not to say



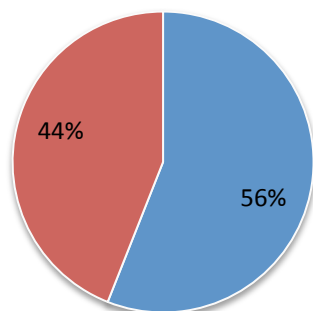
**Participants' ethnic group (n=173)**

■ Asian ■ Black ■ Chinese  
■ Mixed ■ White ■ Other



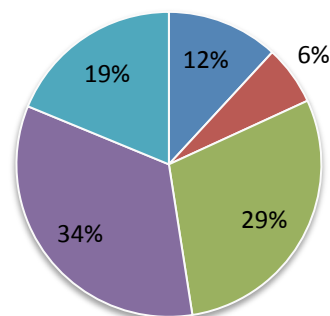
**Participants' socio-economic classification (n=100)**

■ 1-3 NE-SEC ■ 4-7 NE-SEC



**POLAR Classification (n=168)**

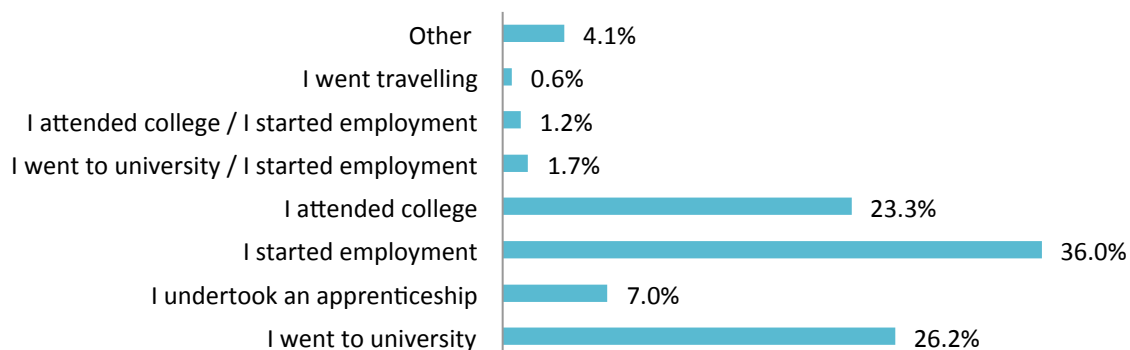
■ 1 ■ 2 ■ 3 ■ 4 ■ 5



## Key Findings:

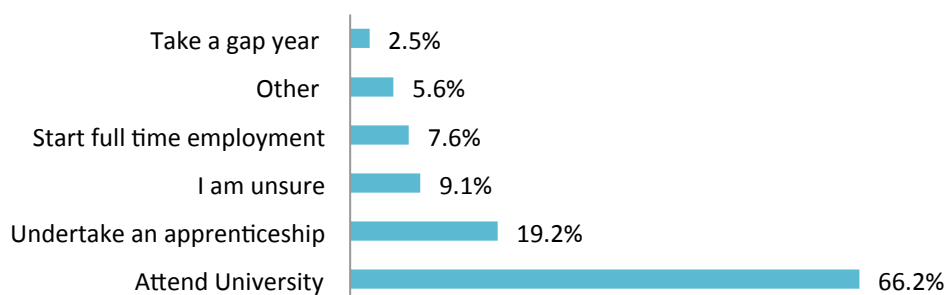
- Only 26.2% of the parents/guardians had experience of higher education, and those that did were typically male and from a Black or Minority Ethnic group (BME).

### Participants' post-school decisions



- Although the majority of parents/guardians had no prior experience of higher education, 66.2% wanted their child to attend university when they left school.
- A slightly higher percentage (74.7%) stated they wanted their child to go to university at some point in the future.
- The second most popular choice was for their child to undertake an apprenticeship (19.2%); there was a slight propensity for parents/guardians with no experience of higher education to state their preferred option for their child was an apprenticeship or full time employment.
- Across each ethnic group the majority of parents/guardians wanted their child to go to university. There were no identifiable differences by parents'/guardians' socio-economic status or POLAR3 area.

### Participants' aspirations for their children post-school



- Parents/guardians wanted their child to go to university, for three reasons:
  - A desire for their child to further their education and develop new skills;
  - To increase their child's employment and career options; and
  - To improve their child's future prospects and life opportunities.
- 23.2% of parents/guardians were undecided about whether they wanted their child to go to university, with some feeling it was too early to make the decision or wanting to leave it to their child to choose. 3.7% of parents/guardians said that they did not want their child to go to university in the future, preferring they opt for an apprenticeship.

- Key factors that informed parents'/guardians' decisions about their child participating in university were student loans and debt (52.4%) and graduate employment (40.5%).
- Only 24.4% of parents/guardians felt they had either excellent or very good knowledge of university. While just over half (55.6%) rated their knowledge of university as fair or poor, these parents/guardians were marginally more likely to said they wanted their child to undertake an apprenticeship or start full time employment post-school.
- 73.3% of parents/guardian wanted more information, advice and guidance about the future options available to their children. However, 14.7% were unsure if they wanted such information and advice, which again linked to feelings that it was too early in their child's education.
- The most popular method for receiving information, advice and guidance (IAG) was through websites and face-to-face activities: 54.7% of parents/guardians said they wanted information through the school website and 40.1% said through the AHLS website. In terms of face-to-face activities, 40.1% of parents/guardians said they would like events at school and 31.4% through university visits.
- In terms of the website content, parents/guardians wanted information about:
  - The range of post-16 and 18 options and the application process for each.
  - Qualifications and the progression routes through levels 1 – 7.
  - Study skills.
  - Other student's and parent's experiences case studies.
  - Timelines and key deadlines for decision-making and applications.
  - Other support and webpages.
  - Resources to support with planning their child's future options.
- Parents/guardians wanted face-to-face activities at suitable times and locations, and generally preferred a local venue such as the school. Parents said they would travel further afield, providing the venue related to the event; for example an event about higher education held at a university.
- Parents/guardians held different views about the content of face-to-face events. Themed events about specific post-18 options or industries were suggested, as well as general IAG events. Parents said they would value the opportunity to hear from those in university, apprenticeships and/or employment.
- There was demand to have personalised face-to-face events where parents/guardians could consider their child's individual needs and progression plan.
- Parents suggested utilising the school websites and newsletters to promote the AHLS website and events. Social media was also suggested for promotion, as well as alternative venues such as libraries, shopping centres and tutor centres.

## Conclusions

- The research evidences that parents'/guardians' aspirations for their children are high. Despite having no experience of higher education themselves, the majority of parents/guardians want their child to attend university.
- Parents/guardians perceived higher education study as a positive opportunity that would further their child's education and improve their future prospects, particularly in relation to employability.

- There is a demand amongst parents/guardians for more information, advice and guidance (IAG) about the future options for their children. IAG needs to include information about higher education, apprenticeships and employment, and the specifics in terms of finance, support and graduate outcomes. Additionally, IAG needs to include details about university life and support services available to students.
- IAG should be available via websites (schools and AHLS) with supplementary face-to-face activities. Web-based tools and/or resources need to be inclusive and accessible, and reflect the diversity of parents/guardians. Face-to-face activities need to be at suitable times and locations for all parents to access, taking into consideration those that have work and caring responsibilities.
- This research highlights a need for AHLS to establish a programme of activities for working with parents and families to provide essential information, advice and guidance.

## Recommendations

Based on the research the following recommendations have been made for the AHLS parent/family programme:

- Develop a series of online ‘parent pages’ that include information about:
  - The range of post-16 and 18 options.
  - Application details for post-18 choices.
  - Qualifications and the progression routes through levels 1 – 7.
  - Study skills advice aimed at parents.
  - Student and parent case studies, for example via videos or blogs.
  - Timelines and key deadlines.
  - FAQs.
  - Links webpages (e.g. UCAS, National Careers Service).
  - Resources to support parents with planning their child’s future options (e.g. progression templates or action plans).
- Based on parents’ ideas for face-to-face events, it would be advisable to trial a series of different events and monitor attendance and feedback. Events could include:
  - General sessions about post-16 and 18 choices with the opportunity to speak with staff and students.
  - Themed events that focus either on specific careers and industries or particular post-18 options.
- Consider either developing workshops that offer a personalised approach or explore ways of working with schools to offer 1-2-1 guidance face-to-face or online opportunities for personalised IAG provision.
- Ensure that the event objectives are aligned with the venue to avoid barriers to participation.
- Include elements of audience participation in events, as well as exploration that offer attendees the opportunity to reflect and consider appropriate and realistic options and progression routes that support their goals and aspirations.
- Link with the member schools to agree a means of promoting the website and events. This could be done by including details on the school website and/or including regular updates in the newsletter that correspond with key dates or milestones.
- Consider establishing AHLS social media and include details on the webpages. The social media could link network members to promote activities and raise awareness.
- Embed evaluation measures in events and online where possible, to gather feedback and track impact over time.