

Evaluation of Integrated Aimhigher: Tracking Surveys of Young People

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National Foundation for Educational Research

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Tracking Surveys of Young People*

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Executive summary

Background

The integrated Aimhigher programme was established in 2004 as *'a national programme which aims to widen participation in higher education by raising the aspirations and developing the abilities of young people from under-represented groups'*. It brought together two previous programmes – DfES's Aimhigher: Excellence Challenge programme and the HEFCE and LSC funded Aimhigher: Partnerships for Progression (P4P) programme – both of which aimed to widen participation in higher education.

Surveys of young people in Year 11 had been conducted by a research consortium led by NFER for the evaluation of Aimhigher: Excellence Challenge. These found indications that there were gains in GCSE outcomes where young people had participated in activities provided by Aimhigher: Excellence Challenge partnerships particularly visits to universities and meeting with staff and students in higher education. In order to explore further the extent to which young people subsequently made a successful transition at 16 and intended, or had decided, to continue into higher education, DfES commissioned NFER to undertake follow up surveys of the surveyed young people who had completed their compulsory education between one and three years previously (that is, between 2003 and 2001).

Key findings

- The majority of young people had remained in learning post-16 and more than half either intended to go, or were already engaged in higher education. Around 60 per cent of those aged 16-17 and 17-18 planned to continue into higher education while 39 per cent of 18-19 year olds were already in higher education and a further 16 per cent planned to go.
- Young people had participated in a range of Aimhigher-related activities, either pre-16 or post-16. These were, principally, talking with an undergraduate they knew personally or with whom they had been put in contact by their school; day and residential visits to higher education institutions; study and revision classes and the Aimhigher Roadshow.
- Participation in Aimhigher-related activities was associated with aspirations and intentions to continue to higher education. In summary:
 - **Discussions between young people and current undergraduates** about higher education was associated, among young people aged between 17 and 19, with aspiring towards, and choosing to engage in, higher education and with having a positive attitude towards higher education and valuing it.

- Among the oldest cohort, **visiting higher education institutions** was associated with embarking on a higher education course and seeing the value of higher education and was associated with aspiring to higher education among the youngest respondents.
- Participating in an **Aimhigher Roadshow** was associated, among the 18 to 19 year olds, with having a positive attitude towards higher education and seeing its value and with aspiring to higher education among the 17 to 18 year old respondents.
- Having participated in **study skills classes** was associated with having a positive attitude towards higher education, and seeing its value, among those aged 17 to 19.

Aims

The aim of the evaluation of the integrated Aimhigher programme was to estimate the impact of the different interventions that had been provided by Aimhigher partnerships. More specifically, the evaluation aimed to:

- identify, as far as possible, the range and type of Aimhigher-related interventions in which young people had taken part both pre-16 and post-16
- examine the associations between these activities and young people's outcomes (in terms of aspirations, intentions and actions) taking account, as far as possible, of background characteristics.

The research entailed follow-up surveys of three cohorts of young people aged 16 to 17, 17 to 18 and 18 to 19 at the time of the survey. These young people had previously been surveyed when they were in Year 11 and had attended schools that participated in Excellence Challenge, which was one of the predecessors of the integrated Aimhigher programme. Further details of the research methods are provided at the end of this summary.

The experience of 18 to 19 year olds

What were they doing now?

The majority of young people in the oldest cohort surveyed were involved in further learning or employment. Around two-fifths (39 per cent) were participating in higher education, at the time of the survey, and a further 16 per cent intended to do so in future. One quarter (25 per cent) of respondents were engaged in other course-based or work-based learning when they were surveyed.

What Aimhigher-related activities had they participated in?

The majority of this cohort of young people had received information about higher education or had participated in some Aimhigher-related activities post-16. More specifically, many young people had direct experience of higher education through visiting a higher education institution (47 per cent), talking

to higher education staff (37 per cent) and talking with current undergraduates either whom they knew personally (36 per cent) or through contact arranged by their school or college (16 per cent). A minority of the surveyed cohort had participated in specific Aimhigher related activities including the Roadshow (23 per cent), Masterclasses (five per cent) and summer, winter and Easter schools (six per cent). In addition, 23 per cent had participated in study skills classes and 11 per cent in revision classes.

What was associated with their attainment?

The greatest predictor of the attainment of these young people at Key Stage 5 was their prior attainment. Nevertheless, once this and other background characteristics were taken into account, higher levels of attainment were found amongst young people who believed that the benefits of higher education outweighed the costs, who felt that school had prepared them for higher education and who had been able to talk about higher education with staff and current undergraduates when these respondents were pursuing their post-16 activities.

What was associated with choosing to participate in higher education?

The evidence suggests that having experience of, and information about, higher education, along with the opportunity to relate such information to one's own circumstances, may be key factors associated with young people considering and choosing higher education. Indeed, discussions about higher education with staff and current undergraduates, and participating in visits to higher education institutions, were significant factors associated with subsequent entry to higher education. In contrast, a lack of such experience may have contributed to a lack of preparedness for life in higher education. Young people currently in higher education who had not had any previous contact with higher education staff or students were more likely to be unhappy with their higher education course, to feel under too much parental pressure to do well and to have found it difficult to fit in and make friends.

While parental experience of higher education did not emerge as being significantly associated with choosing higher education among this cohort of young people, discussions with family and friends about higher education was one of the strongest predictors of taking up a higher education place.

The experience of 17 to 18 year olds

What were they doing now?

The majority of the 17 to 18 year old cohort, who were approaching the point of transition at 18, had remained in learning post-16 and were content with their choice. Indeed, the majority of those who had indicated, when they were in Year 11, that they would leave school at 16, or were undecided, had subsequently remained in learning.

What Aimhigher-related activities had they participated in?

Most of the respondents in this cohort had received information about higher education (68 per cent) and had been on a visit to a higher education institution (38 per cent). Fewer young people had experienced more intensive Aimhigher-related activities such as summer, winter and Easter schools (nine per cent) residential activities (five per cent) higher education-based revision classes (nine per cent), Masterclasses (four per cent) or the Aimhigher Roadshow (18 per cent).

Whilst most young people had talked about higher education with their family and friends, many had talked with staff and students from higher education. Around one-third (36 per cent) had talked with staff from higher education institutions and 39 per cent talked with undergraduates whom they knew personally and 15 per cent were able to meet with current higher education students through contact arranged by their school or college.

What was associated with planning to participate in higher education?

Around three-fifths of the 17 to 18 year old young people surveyed intended to continue into higher education. Half of these aspired to a pre-1992 institution and half to a post-1992 institution. Young people had a higher probability of planning to embark on a higher education course where they were a long-term planner and not overtly concerned about the financial aspects of pursuing higher education. In addition, experience of an Aimhigher Roadshow, having talked about higher education with staff or students currently in higher education and receiving information were associated with a higher probability of choosing to continue studying to a higher level.

Among this cohort of respondents, whether a young person's parents had participated in higher education did not emerge as being significantly associated with intentions to undertake a higher education course. This may suggest that participation in Aimhigher-related activities among this cohort of young people may help those who had no parental experience of higher education to aspire towards it. However, differences emerged between those who chose a pre-1992 or post-1992 institution, once prior attainment and other background variables had been taken into account. In summary, young people who were aspiring to a pre-1992 institution tended to be those who were undertaking academic qualifications, were from families with less disadvantaged socio-economic circumstances, and had discussed higher education with their teachers at school. Those who were aspiring to post-1992 institutions tended to be eligible for free school meals, to be in part-time employment and to be concerned about the financial aspects of higher education participation. In addition, they tended to have visited a higher education institution.

The majority of the young people were positive about higher education. Such attitudes were associated with being a long-term planner and with some Aimhigher-related activities, including experience of study skills events, receiving information about higher education and having contact with higher education staff and students either pre-16 or post-16. However, there was no additional apparent benefit to meeting with staff and students during both pre- and post-16 courses, suggesting that such contact was associated with promoting a positive attitude towards higher education at whatever stage it took place.

The experience of 16 to 17 year olds

What were they doing now?

Nearly all of the respondents in the youngest age group had remained in further learning post-16 (90 per cent) and most were satisfied with their choice and were undertaking a programme of study at Level 3.

What Aimhigher-related activities had they participated in?

Around half (52 per cent) of the 16 to 17 year olds had received information about higher education when they were in Year 11 and around one third (34 per cent) said that they had participated in a visit to a higher education institution. A smaller proportion had participated in other Aimhigher-related activities such as an Aimhigher Roadshow (22 per cent), a summer, winter or Easter school (18 per cent), Masterclasses (five per cent), a residential event (six per cent) or higher-education-based revision classes (eight per cent).

The majority of young people in this age group had discussed further and higher education with their family and friends. Many had also talked with their teachers in Year 11 about further education (83 per cent) and higher education (57 per cent). Around half (48 per cent) had talked with a further education student and around one quarter (23 per cent) had talked with a higher education student whom they knew personally and nine per cent spoke with an undergraduate through arrangements made by their school and 12 per cent with higher education staff.

What was associated with their attitudes and aspirations towards higher education?

Whilst having a positive attitude towards higher education was associated with higher attainment at Key Stage 4 and family experience of participating in higher education, there was also an association between having a positive attitude and having received information about higher education when in Year 11. Moreover, having a positive post-16 transition was associated with having a positive attitude towards higher education.

An intention to participate in higher education amongst the 16 and 17 year olds was found to be associated with speakers of a first language other than

English and with having parents who had experienced higher education. Making a successful transition at 16 and undertaking academic (rather than vocational) qualifications were associated with intentions to undertake a higher education course, as was having participated in a summer school of up to one-week in duration, pre-16.

Conclusion

The research found that the majority of young people surveyed across the three cohorts had made a **successful transition at 16** and were content with their choices. In addition, while some young people made a definite choice not to participate in higher education, around three-fifths of those aged 16 to 17 and 17 to 18 **planned to undertake a higher education course** in future. Two-fifths of those aged 18 to 19 had embarked on a higher education course and a further 16 per cent planned to do so in future.

There were indications that particular **Aimhigher-related activities** were associated with positive attitudes towards higher education and a positive intention or decision to enter higher education. The findings suggest that, of the range of activities, visits to higher education institutions, discussions with staff and current undergraduates in higher education and participation in an Aimhigher Roadshow and week-long summer school may be the most effective activities as they were associated most strongly with young people's intentions and attitudes.

Family and friends continued to be widely consulted and this highlights the central role of such individuals in informing young people's choices. Aimhigher partnerships may wish to consider ways of further ensuring that activities to promote higher education and raise awareness and understanding among young people are sufficiently broad to include their friends and families to enable them to give informed support and guidance to young people.

The **financial considerations** involved in undertaking a higher education course emerged as one of the main areas of concern for respondents in all cohorts and as an area on which they would like further information. Moreover, a minority of young people who were participating in higher education said that they found it hard to manage their finances. Overall, it appears that ensuring that young people are fully informed about the costs of higher education, sources of financial support, and budget management could be key priority areas for Aimhigher partnerships.

Methods

These findings are based on follow-up questionnaire surveys of 1,222 young people aged 16 to 17, 1,996 young people aged 17 to 18 and 659 young people aged 18 to 19 undertaken in Spring 2005. These young people had previously

been surveyed between one and three years ago when they were in Year 11 and attended schools that were participating in Excellence Challenge. The sample of young people had agreed to a follow-up survey when they were in Year 11 and had provided their contact details.

It should be noted that the sample of young people who responded in each cohort was not fully representative of the previously surveyed cohort. Specifically, female students and higher attaining students were over-represented. In order to address this issue, the descriptive data was weighted statistically. Further analysis was undertaken using multi-level modelling techniques which take into account a range of background factors at student-level, school-level and area-level and thus control for any bias in the responding sample.

The data gathered through the surveys was matched to their previous questionnaire responses and to other administrative datasets, including the DfES's National Pupil Database (NPD), which provides details of young people's background characteristics and attainment, the Individual Learner Record (ILR) which contains post-16 achievements, and NFER's Register of Schools.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The integrated Aimhigher programme was established in 2004 as ‘*a national programme which aims to widen participation in higher education by raising the aspirations and developing the abilities of young people from under-represented groups*’.¹ It brought together two pre-existing programmes that had been introduced with the aim of widening participation in higher education. These two programmes were Aimhigher: Partnerships for Progression (P4P), which had been run by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), and Aimhigher: Excellence Challenge which had been introduced by the DfES in areas that were involved in the Excellence in Cities (EiC) and Education Action Zone (EAZ) initiatives.

During the DfES commissioned evaluation of Aimhigher: Excellence Challenge² the research consortium led by NFER surveyed four cohorts of young people in schools that were participating in the initiative. These surveys found that the GCSE performance in schools that were in Aimhigher: Excellence Challenge areas had improved and that these gains were associated with young people who were designated as part of the cohorts designated as gifted and talented under EiC and the widening participation cohorts designated under Aimhigher: Excellence Challenge. In addition, gains were found where young people had participated in some specific Aimhigher-related activities, such as summer schools, and where the school encouraged young people to think about higher education opportunities and made provision for their students to meet with undergraduates and staff in higher education to discuss further study.

In order to explore the extent to which young people’s experiences of Aimhigher-related activities were associated with subsequent decisions to embark on a higher education course, and to investigate the comparative impact of longer exposure to Aimhigher-related activities, the DfES commissioned follow-up surveys of three of these cohorts post-16.

¹ www.aimhigher.ac.uk/practitioner/resource_material/about_aimhigher/what_is_aimhigher_cfm

² Morris, M. and Golden, S. (2005). *Evaluation of Aimhigher: Excellence Challenge: Interim Report* (DfES Research Report 648). London: DfES

1.2 Aims and objectives

The aim of strand 1 of the evaluation of the integrated Aimhigher programme was to estimate the impact of the different interventions, and combinations of interventions, that had been provided by Aimhigher partnerships. More specifically, the evaluation aimed to:

- identify, as far as possible, the range and type of Aimhigher-related interventions in which young people had taken part, both pre-16 and post-16
- examine the associations between these activities and young people's outcomes (in terms of aspirations, intentions and actions), taking account, as far as possible, of other background characteristics.

This report presents the nature and types of interventions that the young people reported having experienced. In addition, it explores their aspirations, intentions and actions in terms of their transitions at 16 and at 18. The association between these, taking account of other background characteristics, is investigated through logistic modeling analyses.

1.3 Research methods

In order to address the aims and objectives outlined above, surveys of three cohorts of young people aged 16 to 17, 17 to 18 and 18 to 19 were undertaken between March and June 2005. This section provides further details of the surveys and the analysis undertaken.

1.3.1 How were the young people identified?

Between 2001 and 2004, NFER undertook the evaluation of Excellence in Cities (EiC) and Aimhigher: Excellence Challenge. This entailed surveys, in the spring terms of 2002, 2003 and 2004, of young people in Year 11 in a random sample of schools that were participating in Aimhigher: Excellence Challenge. Some young people in Year 11 in each year who responded to the survey, indicated that they would be willing to participate in further research and provided their contact details. By 2005, these three cohorts of young people had completed their compulsory schooling and were in Year 12 and Year 13 (or equivalent), or in their first year post-18, when those who had chosen to progress to higher education immediately would have been in their first year as an undergraduate.³ These three cohorts of young people formed the samples for the survey as follows:

- 4,031 young people who had been in Year 11 in 2002 and were now aged 18 to 19 and in 'Year 14' or equivalent

³ These cohorts are illustrated in Appendix A.

- 7,705 young people who had been in Year 11 in 2003 and were now aged 17 to 18 and in Year 13 or equivalent
- 3,496 young people who had been in Year 11 in 2004 and were now aged 16 to 17 and in Year 12 or equivalent.

As the 15,232 young people may have embarked on a variety of routes after Year 11 they are referred to by their age group, rather than their academic year group, throughout the report. For example, young people who completed Year 11 in 2004, and may now be in Year 12, are referred to as 16 to 17 year olds (or the youngest cohort).

These young people had all responded to questionnaires when they were in Year 11. Therefore their experiences and attitudes at that stage in their life were recorded and could be used for the analysis in order to explore, for example, the extent to which they had accessed Aimhigher-related experiences pre-16 and their comparable aspirations and intentions when they were 15 to 16 years old.

In addition to the responses to the surveys, the analysis was supplemented by two further data sources. When the surveys of young people in Year 11 were carried out, the schools that the young people attended provided details of whether a student was part of the gifted and talented and/or cohort (whether EiC or non-EiC) the Aimhigher: Excellence Challenge widening participation cohorts. Furthermore, background information about each young person, such as gender, ethnicity and pre-16 attainment, was drawn from the DfES' National Pupil Database.

1.3.2 How was the survey conducted?

Each young person who had responded to the survey in Year 11, and who had provided their contact details,⁴ was sent a paper questionnaire in March 2005. The young people could choose to return the paper questionnaire in the reply-paid envelope, or to respond on-line to the same questionnaire. A reminder letter, with a second copy of the questionnaire, was sent to each young person who had not responded by April 2005 and a further reminder letter, which contained details of how to respond on-line, was sent out in May 2005.

In each cohort, the following response rates were achieved:

- 16 per cent of 18 to 19 year olds (659 individuals)
- 26 per cent of 17 to 18 year olds (1,996 individuals)
- 35 per cent of 16 to 17 year olds (1,222 individuals).

⁴ Contact details, particularly for the older cohorts, may not have remained the same for all Year 11 survey participants and it is possible that some questionnaires were not delivered.

1.3.3 What were the young people asked?

The questionnaires aimed to ascertain young people's current activity, their aspirations post-18 (and actual post-18 destinations in the case of the oldest cohort) and the extent and nature of the Aimhigher-related activities in which they had participated. A series of core questions were the same on all questionnaires, which enabled a comparison across the cohorts, while others were relevant to the particular age of the cohort being surveyed and the decisions they would be making at the time of the survey. More specifically, the questionnaires explored:

- Respondents' current activity in terms of whether they were in education, training or employment and the nature of the course or occupation they were engaged in
- Their views on their current activity
- Their views on the extent to which school, or any post-16 institution attended had prepared them for their future
- The Aimhigher-related activities that young people had participated in either pre-16 (16 to 17 year olds) or post-16 (17 to 18 year olds and 18 to 19 year olds)
- Their plans for the future including whether they were considering embarking on a higher education course
- Their attitudes towards higher education, whether or not they were currently in higher education, and the factors that might influence their decision to pursue a higher education course.

1.3.4 Who responded to the survey?

As noted in section 1.3.2, between 16 and 35 per cent of young people in each sample responded to the surveys. To what extent were these young people who responded representative of their peers who had attended schools that were participating in Aimhigher: Excellence Challenge, and had been in the same year group in 2002 to 2004? Full details of the background characteristics of those who responded, compared with those who had been sent a questionnaire, and all those in the same year group in schools in Aimhigher: Excellence Challenge areas are provided in Appendix B. This shows that the young people who responded were representative in terms of the proportion who had been identified as in the widening participation cohort, and that young people in the gifted and talented cohort were slightly over-represented among the respondents. However, there were some significant differences between those who responded and their peers in the cohort as a whole in Aimhigher schools. The most notable of these was the over-representation of females among the respondents and the corresponding under-representation of males in each of the cohorts. In detail:

- 72 per cent of 18 to 19 year old respondents were female, compared with 50 per cent among all young people in their year group

- 73 per cent of 17 to 18 year old respondents were female, compared with 50 per cent among all young people in their year group
- 73 per cent of 16 to 17 year old respondents were female, compared with 50 per cent among all young people in their year group.

Further exploration of responses to the questionnaires revealed that there were several instances where there were significant differences in the responses of females compared to males. For example, in September 2004 female respondents aged 16 to 17 were significantly more likely to be engaged in full-time education at school (38 per cent) than their male peers (23 per cent). In contrast, male respondents were significantly more likely to be engaged in full-time education at college (63 per cent) than female (54 per cent). As the over-representation of female respondents would therefore bias the overall responses presented in this report, and would not reflect the probable experience and views of the wider population, the data was weighted statistically to ensure the data was representative of gender. For example, when the data is not weighted, 32 per cent of the cohort aged 16 to 17 said that they were currently in full-time education at school. However, once the data is weighted, and the effect of the over-representation of females is taken into account, 29 per cent of the respondents indicated that they were currently engaged in full-time education at school.

For this process, the responding sample was statistically weighted to the profile of all young people who were in the same year group in schools that participated in Aimhigher: Excellence Challenge, not to the proportion of males and females who had been sent a questionnaire. The percentages presented in this report reflect the weighted responses of young people. Where the number of respondents to a question is presented, this reflects the likely number once the data is weighted, rather than the actual number of individuals who gave this response.

In addition to the weighted descriptive analyses, further analyses using factors analysis (see Appendix C) and logistic modeling techniques (see Appendices D and E) were undertaken to explore the relationships and associations between young people's background and experiences of Aimhigher-related activities, and their aspirations, attitudes, intentions and actions. This analysis takes into account the effect of the representativeness of the samples of respondents.

1.4 Structure of the report

Chapter 2 explores the experience and destinations of young people aged **18 to 19** who could potentially have embarked on a higher education course at the time of the survey. The factors associated with young people's decisions to

continue into higher education in the short or medium term, or not to do so, are explored.

The experiences and decisions of you people aged **17 to 18** who were in Year 13 or equivalent, are examined in **Chapter 3**. In addition to investigating the nature of the Aimhigher-related activities experienced by this cohort of young people, the chapter examines the relationship between such experiences and respondents' attitudes and aspirations towards higher education.

Chapter 2 presents the experience and destinations of young people aged **16 to 17** who were in Year 12, or equivalent, at the time of the survey. The chapter explores their destinations at 16, and the factors that were associated with these destinations. It examines their experience of Aimhigher-related activities and the extent to which these experiences were associated with their attitudes and aspirations towards higher education.

2. The experience of 18 to 19 year olds

Key findings

- The profile of the respondents to the survey of 18 to 19 year olds was of the higher attaining young people from less disadvantaged backgrounds within the inner city areas involved in Aimhigher. They were not, therefore, fully representative of the cohort from which they were drawn. The basic frequency data has been weighted to compensate for a gender bias in the response, while the multilevel modeling approach overcomes most of the issues associated with the other potential biases.
- Nearly two fifths of the respondents (39 per cent) had already embarked on a higher education course, with a further 25 per cent involved in some other form of further learning, whether course-based (17 per cent) or work-based (including Apprenticeships).
- While pre-16 exposure to Aimhigher activities had been limited, most of the young people who had continued in learning (78 per cent of the cohort) had received information about higher education or had taken part in some Aimhigher activities designed to raise awareness and/or aspirations.
- Not surprisingly, the greatest predictor of attainment at the end of Key Stage 5 was prior attainment. However, once all background characteristics and prior attainment had been taken into account, higher levels of attainment were seen amongst young people who believed that the benefits of higher education outweighed the costs, who felt that their school had prepared them for higher education and who had been able to talk to staff and undergraduates from higher education institutions during their post-compulsory courses.
- Higher attaining girls and higher attaining students who had been designated as members of the gifted and talented in Year 11 were marginally more likely to have opted to follow a higher education course than their peers (higher attaining boys and higher attaining students outwith the gifted and talented cohort, respectively).
- The findings support the hypothesis that experience of and information about higher education, along with the opportunity to relate that information to one's own circumstances, may be the key factors associated with young people considering and opting for a university education.
 - Although parental experience of higher education did not emerge as a significant background variable, discussions about higher education with family and friends during post-16 education (or training) emerged as one of the highest predictors of taking up a university place. Discussions about higher education with school staff and with higher education staff and undergraduates during that time were also significant factors associated with subsequent entry, as were visits to universities and access to information about courses and university life.

- By contrast, a lack of a lack of prior first-hand experience may have contributed either to false expectations or to a general lack of preparedness for the realities of university life.
 - Young people who had not had any contact with higher education staff or undergraduates during their years in post-compulsory education were more likely to be unhappy with their higher education course, to feel under too much parental pressure to do well and to have found it difficult to fit in or to make friends.

The young people in the oldest cohort in this study (the 18 to 19 year olds) were already some months into their post-18 activities by the spring of 2005 when the surveys were administered. Nearly two fifths of them (39 per cent) had already embarked on a higher education course, with a further 25 per cent involved in some other form of further learning, whether course-based (17 per cent) or work-based (including Apprenticeships). To what extent is it possible to identify any distinctive role played by Aimhigher (or its predecessor Aimhigher: Excellence Challenge) in relation to these post-18 destinations or to attainment at 18? Has the policy initiative had a differential effect on any particular groups of young people?

2.1 Profile of the cohort

The respondents to the survey were not totally representative of the Aimhigher cohort from which they were originally drawn in 2001/02.⁵ Of the 659 respondents to the 2004/05 survey, the majority (72 per cent) were female, compared with 50 per cent in the same cohort across all Aimhigher schools. Basic frequency data used in this report (other than data quoted with respect to the multilevel models) is thus weighted to compensate for this female bias. The respondents were also biased towards white respondents (84 per cent compared with 77 per cent in their original peer cohort), towards those with English as first language (89 per cent compared with 83 per cent) and towards those not in receipt of Free School Meals (85 per cent compared with 78 per cent) and with no special educational needs (94 per cent compared with 90 per cent). In attainment terms, the survey respondents achieved significantly more points at Key Stage 4 (50 total points on average) than their peers in the cohort as a whole (38 total points on average).⁶ The profile of the respondents, therefore, is of the higher attaining young people from less disadvantaged backgrounds within the inner city areas (Excellence in Cities partnerships) and EAZs (now Excellence Clusters) that were initially involved in Aimhigher: Excellence Challenge (now Aimhigher). However, the multi-level model regression analyses which explore the relationship between the characteristics

⁵ This cohort, which was originally involved in a first survey sweep when they were in Year 10 in 2000/01 as part of the evaluation of Excellence in Cities, had previously completed up to four different annual surveys before they were approached in 2004/05.

⁶ Note that these are the point score equivalents in use at the time these young people took part in GCSE examinations.

and the aspirations and achievement of young people statistically control for the effect of any bias.

2.2 What Aimhigher-related activities had these young people experienced?

For this cohort, exposure to pre-16 Aimhigher activities was relatively limited, since such activities were just beginning to be coordinated within partnerships in 2001/02 and some of the young people had been in schools that had not yet become actively engaged in the initiative.⁷ For those who progressed to further education (whether in schools or colleges), however, there were further opportunities for such exposure, post-16. More than three quarters of the cohort (78 per cent of the cohort), for example, followed a full-time education course between September 2002 and July 2003, with nearly 90 per cent of these (69 per cent of the whole cohort) continuing to follow a full-time course between September 2003 and July 2004. During that two year period, many young people appear to have had the opportunity to take part in activities specifically designed to raise attainment or to increase awareness and aspirations with respect to higher education. As Table 2.1 indicates, more than two thirds of the young people had received information about higher education (although it appears that not all may have acted upon it), while nearly half took part in university visits. Participation in other Aimhigher activities such as Roadshows, Masterclasses, or summer, winter or Easter schools, however, was markedly lower, while contact with undergraduates as a result of Roadshows appeared to be limited (14 per cent of the cohort – fewer than those who had attended the Roadshows).

⁷ Any such activities recorded in their responses to the Year 11 questionnaires in 2001/02 have been incorporated into the models reported in Sections 2.3 to 2.6, but are not summarised here.

Table 2.1 Aimhigher-related activities between September 2002 and July 2004: 18 to 19 year olds

Widening participation activities	Yes	No	Not sure	No response
	%	%	%	%
I had information about going on to university/HEI	68	28	2	2
I took part in a visit to a university/HEI	47	50	1	2
I spoke to a Connexions Personal Advisor	41	54	2	2
I went on work experience/took part in placements	35	60	1	4
I spoke to a Learning Mentor	24	69	5	3
I went to homework clubs/study skills classes organised by my school/college	23	74	1	3
I went to an Aimhigher Roadshow	23	71	3	3
I spoke to a student from university/HEI at an Aimhigher Roadshow	14	80	3	3
I took part in revision classes run by a university/HEI	11	85	1	3
I took part in a summer/Easter/winter school	6	90	1	3
I took part in a residential course at a university/HEI during term time	5	92	1	3
I took part in a Masterclass	5	90	2	3
I was mentored or coached by a student from university/HEI	3	92	3	3

N = 659
A series of single response items
Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100
Source: NFER Evaluation of Aimhigher: Strand 1 – Survey of 18 to 19 year olds, 2005

A higher proportion of young people appeared either to have been offered or to have taken up opportunities to discuss higher education with staff in school or college (70 per cent of the cohort – see Table 2.2) than had such discussions with Personal Advisers, university staff, employers or Learning Mentors.

Table 2.2 Individuals with whom young people discussed university/higher education between September 2002 and July 2004: 18 to 19 year olds

Between September 2002 and July 2004	Yes	No	Not sure	No response
	%	%	%	%
I talked about university/higher education with:				
Friends	79	19	1	1
Family	76	22	1	2
Teacher/lecturer/tutor	70	27	2	2
Careers adviser/Personal Adviser(s)	42	55	3	1
Staff from university/HEI	37	60	1	2
Students from university/HEI who I knew through friends/family	36	60	1	3
Employer(s)/other people in work	26	70	1	3
Student from university/HEI arranged through my school/college	16	80	2	3
Learning Mentor(s)	14	80	3	3
Student mentors/coaches from a university	6	89	2	4
Youth worker(s)	2	93	2	3

N = 659*A series of single response items**Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100**Source: NFER Evaluation of Aimhigher: Strand 1 – Survey of 18 to 19 year olds, 2005*

The proportion of young people who had spoken to undergraduates as a result of connections through friends or family (36 per cent) was more than twice that of those who had taken part in discussions arranged through their school or college (16 per cent). Family and friends seemed the pre-eminent source of such discussions, however, as they were subsequently in relation to decisions about which course to follow and at which institution (see Table 2.3). Although their contributions to such decision-making were sometimes less highly valued than the opinions of undergraduates or higher education staff, these findings suggest the continued significance of young people's family social capital in raising awareness of higher education and the need for Aimhigher partnerships to find the means to continue to provide outreach activities, not just to young people, but to the wider family circle.

Table 2.3 Discussions on choice of university and/or course of study: 18 to 19 year olds in higher education

Individuals spoken to:	found it useful*	
	%	%
Family	91	81
Friends	90	73
Teachers	79	83
Staff at a university/HEI	56	89
Student at a university/HEI	54	90

N = 258*A multiple response item***a filter question – all those who had spoken to each type of individual and found the discussion useful
More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100**Source: NFER Evaluation of Aimhigher: Strand 1 – Survey of 18 to 19 year olds, 2005*

To what extent have these activities contributed to raised attainment or aspirations? The following sub-sections seek to explore these questions.

2.3 What was associated with young people's attainment at Key Stage 5?

As indicated in Section 2.1, more than three quarters of the cohort had followed a full-time education course between September 2002 and July 2003, with most of these remaining in tertiary education until July 2004. Data from two sources were used to identify levels of attainment at the end of this period: information from DfES recording academic achievement data for AS and A2s and vocational and other qualifications undertaken in school and Individual Learner Record Data (ILR) for those registered on vocational and other courses in further education establishments. These data were matched to each other (in order to create a single attainment record for individual students); scored according to the QCA 'discounting tables' that provide the equivalences (in UCAS point scores) for qualifications from AS and A2 to a range of vocational qualifications; and then matched to young people's survey data (from 2001/02 and 2003/04). Young people for whom qualifications data had been found were then included in a multilevel model in order to explore the impact of Aimhigher activities on young people's outcomes at Key Stage 5.

Over four hundred of the respondents (431) were successfully matched to the academic data file, while 194 were matched to the learners' record file (this records background data on individual learners, including the courses they are following) on the ILR, 155 of whom were also registered on the academic data file. In total, some 91 per cent (470) of the 517 respondents who initially reported being in school or college between September 2002 and July 2003 appeared to have gained at least one qualification, post-16. Ascertaining the

actual level of attainment for each individual proved highly complex, however, and the research team cannot be certain that every post-16 qualification achieved by every member of the study cohort has been accurately calculated.

- To begin with, some ten per cent of the cohort who reported attending school or college during either 2002/03 or 2003/04 could not be matched to either the academic data file or the ILR. It is not possible to be sure whether this is because of incorrect reporting by the young people or inaccuracies in matching: records in the ILR had to be matched using 'fuzzy matching' (name and date of birth) because of problems encountered in attempting to match the Unique Pupil Numbers used in the National Pupil Dataset to the ILR.
- Individuals may have multiple entries on the ILR, for different years, through different institutions and for different courses. While a variable on the ILR is inserted in order to link the learner record to the qualifications documented on the learner aims file (qualifications started, dropped or completed), this is only noted for the first entry and subsequent entries have to be manually matched and linked.
- Not all courses noted on the learner records file for individuals were linked to a specific entry on the learner aim file, while many young people had more entries on the learner aims file than appeared on their learner record.
- Not all of the qualifications that appeared on the learner aims file were recorded on the 'discounting tables'. This may mean that they do not have a point score equivalent, or it may mean that some qualifications have not yet been accorded equivalences.

Of the 1,834 qualification records initially found for the 194 young people in the cohort who were identified on the ILR, only 744 were linked to an outcome (a grade, score or indication of passing or failing) and, of these, just 355 appeared on the discounting tables. Levels were established for 278 of these qualifications, 127 of which were at Level 3. From the ILR, therefore, it was possible to identify 120 individuals with a 'scoreable' record on the ILR, 62 of whom had achieved Level 3.

This means that, of the 446 young people for whom the research team have been able to establish point scores at Key Stage 5,⁸ the majority (87 per cent) have point scores arising from AS and A2 outcomes. This suggests a significant bias towards academic rather than vocational qualifications, which also reflects the profile of respondents identified in Section 2.1. However, given this bias and the relatively small numbers of young people (466)

⁸ Twenty four of the young people who were matched into the academic data file did not achieve any qualifications for which they could be allocated a point score.

included in the attainment models,⁹ the outcomes presented here should be treated with some caution.

2.3.1 Factors associated with attainment at Key Stage 5

As details in Appendix D, the multi-level modeling techniques adopted enable any bias in the sample of young people to be controlled for statistically. The variables included in the models explained over half of the variance (57 per cent) in the levels of attainment noted at Key Stage 5 and explained all of the variance between institutions (see Appendix E Table E1). This means, however, that there is still much that is unknown about the variation in outcomes for individuals. This may be partly a factor of the numbers of young people and background variables that were included in the models, but may also suggest that there are more factors affecting attainment in operation amongst older students than amongst younger people: similar models for Year 11 pupils explained nearer 80 per cent of the variance.¹⁰

Not surprisingly, the greatest predictor of attainment at Key Stage 5 was attainment at Key Stage 4. An association with being designated as gifted and talented (pre-16) was also evident: higher attaining students who had been designated as gifted and talented in Year 11 were associated with 57 UCAS points more than their peers with the same prior attainment – equivalent to an additional AS qualification at just under grade A, or an additional A level at just under grade D.¹¹ It is not known, however, whether the 89 young people in the gifted and talented cohort, pre-16, were also so designated post-16, nor whether they may have benefited from any additional Aimhigher activities specifically for gifted and talented students during their time in the sixth form or at college.

Young people who appeared to believe that the benefits of higher education outweighed the costs (36 per cent of the cohort) appeared to have higher levels of attainment at Key Stage 5 than their academic and social peers. From a policy perspective, this is encouraging, as is the finding that, when all known background characteristics and prior attainment had been taken into account, higher levels of attainment were seen amongst young people who felt that their

⁹ The low numbers (446) and the relatively large number of variables that needed to be included in the model (nearly 60) increases the chances that spurious associations may be found between background variables and the outcome variable. Every effort has been taken to reduce the appearance of such type 1 errors, but it is not possible to guarantee that they do not appear.

¹⁰ See Morris, M. and Rutt, S.(forthcoming). *Evaluation Of Aimhigher: Excellence Challenge: Longitudinal Pupil Analysis Report*. London: DfES

¹¹ Given the numbers of young people in the survey, any point score equivalents should be treated with caution and are used only to illustrate the apparent size of the effect. They should not be taken as an accurate measure of impact.

schools had prepared them for higher education or who had been able to talk to staff and undergraduates from higher education institutions.¹²

The model indicates that the 131 young people who transferred from a school without a sixth form into a further education college were associated with higher levels of attainment (once background variables had been taken into account) than those who stayed in their 11-18 school or transferred into a college from an 11-18 school. This challenges some of the findings from other research analyses that suggest that young people attain more highly at Key Stage 5 in schools or sixth form colleges than in colleges of further education, but may suggest that, for some young people, the college environment may add more value, post-16.

2.4 What was associated with young people's attitudes towards HE?

As will be discussed in Section 2.5, around two-fifths (39 per cent) of the cohort of 18 to 19 year olds had embarked on a full- or part-time higher education course. This section explores the attitudes towards higher education of those who had, and those who had not, continued into higher education. In both groups, there are some indications that Aimhigher policy-related activities may have contributed to a young people's views of the value of higher education and positive attitudes towards it.

2.4.1 Young people not in higher education

While 22 per cent of the young people in the cohort stated that nothing would encourage them to go into higher education, some 16 per cent of the young people in this group had indicated their intentions to enter higher education at some point in the future. Those with the most positive attitudes to higher education, in terms of their belief that they were both capable of, and would enjoy, studying at this level and that they had the social competencies and parental support to follow such a course, tended to be those from backgrounds other than white UK and to come from homes in which at least one parent had been educated to degree level. They were also significantly more likely to be in further education rather than a work-based route.

At a policy level, young people who had visited a Roadshow or who had been a member of the gifted and talented cohort were significantly more likely to have indicated positive attitudes towards higher education, whilst those who had taken advantage of study support opportunities, or were in receipt of an

¹² The negative association between being in work, rather than in education, in 2002/03 and subsequent attainment in 2003/04 may be more a measure of the fact that such young people (only 10 in the cohort) might still be only part way through any post-compulsory courses and therefore not yet have achieved a Level 3 qualification.

EMA, were significantly more likely to have both indicated positive attitudes towards higher education and to suggest that the longer term benefits of higher education outweighed the costs. Young people who had accessed such opportunities (for financial and study support) were also more likely to have indicated that they believed that higher education was worthwhile.

Higher assessments of the value of higher education appeared to be reported by young people who had discussed higher education with school and university staff and undergraduates, as well as with their family and friends; these young people also appeared to have a more positive attitude towards higher education. By contrast, those with the most negative attitudes were those who reported receiving no information on higher education and had not taken part in any related discussions, whether with family, friends, undergraduates or education professionals. Whether this lack of discussion was simply the result of a lack of interest on the part of the young person in the first place, or whether it reflected a lack of opportunity, is unclear. Certainly, those following the work-based route were significantly less positive and significantly more negative than the rest of the cohort, feeling that the familial, social and educational consequences of aiming for higher education were too great, whether in terms of academic pressure, the attitudes of their peers or the reactions of their parents.

Financial concerns were not universal, but were most evident amongst girls and amongst young people who had spoken to university staff during post-compulsory education or training. This latter point is interesting: does it suggest that such exposure raised young people's awareness of the potential costs of higher education courses to the extent that they became more concerned about how to meet the costs of courses? Or does it simply reflect the fact that young people who were in contact with higher education staff did so because they wanted to know more about courses and were already aware of the financial implications?

2.4.2 Young people in higher education

Amongst the young people who were already in university, those who had a high level of cultural capital in relation to higher education (with family members and/or friends who had been educated, or were being educated, to at least degree level) appeared to have been less likely than their peers to have visited more than one university (or to have visited the same university more than once) during post-compulsory education. This may suggest that the cultural capital that was provided by their family and social circle may, for them, have been sufficient to encourage them to take up a university place. The question that arises, however, is whether this is sufficient to ensure that they make an effective transition to higher education.

Certainly, amongst the young people already in higher education, young people who had not had any contact with higher education staff or

undergraduates during their years in post-compulsory education were more likely to be unhappy with their course, to feel under too much parental pressure to do well and to have found it difficult to fit in or to make friends.¹³ This suggests that a lack of prior first-hand experience may have contributed either to false expectations or to a general lack of preparedness for the realities of university life.

Exposure to experiences of higher education also appears to have contributed to a greater belief in the importance of obtaining a degree. The potential value of a university education (in terms of its contribution to longer term prospects, for example) was most likely to be have been reported by young people who, post-16, had visited a higher education institution or a Roadshow and had contact with higher education staff. Young people who had been designated as a member of the gifted and talented cohort in Year 11 were also more likely to have attached some worth to higher education.

Such interventions, however, do not appear to be associated with any reduction in financial concerns. Indeed the young people currently in higher education who expressed the greatest worries about their current and future finances were those who had made a number of visits to higher education in the past, or who had attended a summer school or who had contact with undergraduates. Whilst such concerns do not appear to have prevented them taking up a place (encouraged, perhaps, by the contacts they had) they were more likely than other young people to be worried about whether they could afford to continue on their current course. It would seem that, while Aimhigher-related interventions may have contributed to a greater valuation of higher education and more positive attitudes towards it amongst young people from families with little or no experience of higher education, such interventions have not been able to overcome some of the worries that young people have about the continuing cost of their education.

Whether these worries are real or symptomatic of other concerns is unclear. By contrast with the young people not yet in higher education, young people in higher education who had been in receipt of EMAs (post-16) were the group least likely to have indicated that they thought there was a point in continuing to follow a higher education course. This suggests that even overcoming (or partly overcoming) some of the financial barriers to learning may not be sufficient to overcome existing cultural barriers or to encourage young people to continue with their higher education.

¹³ These feelings were also more evident amongst those from non-white backgrounds, although it is not possible, from the current data, to identify the reasons behind this.

2.5 What were the young people's destinations after 18?

In a year that saw an eight percentage point increase in accepted UK applicants (aged under 21) to higher education,¹⁴ the largest proportion of survey respondents had taken up a university place, following either a full-time or a part-time course (see Table 2.4). While 20 per cent of the cohort were employed in a full-time job, most of the rest of the cohort were continuing in learning, either following the work-based route, through Apprenticeships or through other forms of work-based training. Some six per cent suggested that they were taking a gap year or other break from study. The intention to enter higher education at some future date was not limited to such 'gap year students' however. In total, some 16 per cent (106 respondents) noted their plans to take up a higher education place in September/October 2005 or 2006.

Table 2.4 Post-18 activities: 18 to 19 year olds

Main activity – September 2004 and present	%
In full-time education at a university/HEI	38
In a full-time job (over 30 hours a week)	20
In education at school or a further education/sixth form college	17
Apprenticeship/Advanced Apprenticeship	7
Taking a break from study or work (e.g. gap year)	6
Out of work	2
In part-time education at a university/HEI	1
Other work based training (not Apprenticeship)	1
Looking after home or family	1
Doing something else	3
No response	4
N = 659	

A single response item

Due to rounding percentages may not sum to 100

Source: NFER Evaluation of Aimhigher: Strand 1 – Survey of 18 to 19 year olds, 2005

However, these destinations did not necessarily reflect young people's stated intentions when they were in Year 11. Indeed, three per cent of those 57 respondents who had thought to leave education at age 16 had continued in learning and were now in higher education; 22 per cent of those who had planned to leave after two years in further education (150 young people) were now following a higher education course.¹⁵ By contrast, of the 333 respondents who had suggested, in Year 11, that they would be going to

¹⁴ <http://www.ucas.ac.uk/new/press/news190106.html>

¹⁵ A total of 109 respondents were not sure what they wanted to do in the future when they were surveyed age 15 to 16. Of these nearly half had remained in learning (49 per cent) and a quarter were in higher education (25 per cent).

university at age 18, only 60 per cent (198 individuals) had so far taken up a place, although a further 72 young people planned to go in future. These differences between aspirations and eventual outcomes may reflect a difference between attainment and aspirations (with attainment being either higher or lower than anticipated); they may reflect changing socio-economic or family circumstances for the young people; or they may, indeed, reflect the impact of post-16 experiences, including Aimhigher activities (see Section 2.5). Moreover, they may reflect the challenge for many young people when considering their futures in Year 11, in knowing what they may wish to undertake or aspire to three years later when making their post-18 choices. Previous research into Aimhigher: Excellence Challenge, which entailed face-to-face interviews with young people, illustrated young people's uncertainty about higher education and 'a general apprehension to commit to such a decision at this stage in their educational career'.¹⁶

While the majority of the respondents believed that their current activities were interesting (92 per cent), were enjoyable (88 per cent), and would help them in the future (81 per cent), it is clear that, for many, their current occupations were not necessarily the result of a lifelong ambition, as can be seen in Table 2.5 below.

Table 2.5 View on post-18 activities: 18 to 19 year olds

Young people's views	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Not sure %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	No response %
It will help me in the future	50	31	11	4	3	2
What I am doing is interesting	49	43	9	6	2	2
I enjoy what I'm doing	44	44	6	4	1	2
I made the right choice	41	33	18	4	2	2
I feel I am learning new skills	40	47	6	4	2	2
I am getting useful experience	36	50	7	4	2	2
It is what I have always wanted to do	24	26	20	17	10	2
It is better than I expected	17	36	29	13	3	2
I am thinking about doing something different	9	15	12	31	31	3
I wish I could change what I am doing	7	7	14	39	31	3
I like what I am doing but do not think that I can afford to continue	3	7	15	40	32	3
I am doing it because there is nothing better to do	2	9	8	38	41	3
It is worse than I expected	2	7	10	41	38	3

N = 659

A series of single response items

Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100

Source: NFER Evaluation of Aimhigher: Strand 1 – Survey of 18 to 19 year olds, 2005

¹⁶ Judkins, M., Golden, S., Ireland, E. and Morris, M. (2005). *Implementing Aimhigher: Excellence Challenge – the experience of ten partnerships*. London: DfES.

Just half of the 659 respondents agreed strongly or to some extent that their current activities were what they had always wanted to do, suggesting that career or course decision-making at 18 is not necessarily fixed at an early age for all young people. While career intentions dominated the factors that respondents considered had influenced their post-18 decisions, the proportion citing such long-term plans was just over one third (37 per cent) of the cohort. This also suggests that there may be a window of opportunity for Aimhigher partnerships to incorporate activities designed to raise awareness of different courses and of different potential careers amongst young people pre-and post-16.

Further exploration of the young people's responses indicated that those who were engaged in higher education, work-based learning and course-based learning post-18 were significantly more satisfied with their current activity than those who were in employment or those who were not in further learning or employment.

However, there is also a need to make sure that such activities are realistic and reflect the reality of possible courses: a lack of enjoyment and a failure to meet expectations, rather than the innate difficulty of the course or job, were the primary reasons young people gave for changing post-18 pathways (see Table 2.6).

Table 2.6 Reasons for stopping or switching a course or training programme or full-time job: 18 to 19 year olds

Reasons	%
I did not enjoy what I was doing	40
It was not what I expected	33
I got bored with it	26
I had financial problems	24
I had finished the course	21
I did not get on with the people	20
I fell behind with the course work	15
I got a job/preferred to be employed	13
I had problems travelling to my course/training/job	8
There was too much work to do	7
I found what I was doing too difficult	6
The job was no longer available	5
Other reasons	29
No response	2
N = 93	

A filter question. All respondents who had indicated they had stopped or changed a course or training programme, or had stopped or changed a full time job.

More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100

Source: NFER Evaluation of Aimhigher: Strand 1 – Survey of 18 to 19 year olds, 2005

A total of 35 young people had changed due to finishing the course, getting a job or because their job was no longer available. The remaining factors could be said to be related to the extent to which young people had made an informed choice. Young people who had changed their activity tended to suggest that they would have valued receiving more (or more effective) advice and guidance. A total of 45 per cent of these ‘switchers’ said that they would have liked more help in deciding what to do from September 2004 compared to 31 per cent of all respondents. Furthermore, compared with just over one quarter (27 per cent) of all respondents, nearly two fifths (39 per cent) said that the advice they had received since leaving school in 2002 and July 2004 was not helpful.

Although just four per cent of the total survey cohort (ten students) said they had changed their higher education course or institution (or dropped out altogether), a further four per cent said they intended to make such changes during 2005/06 (see Table 2.7). This has financial and other implications for both the young person and the institution.

Table 2.7 Future plans: 18 to 19 year olds

Plans for September 2005	%
Continue in my current university/HEI course	40
Stay in, or go into, any paid employment	32
Stay in, or go into, paid work with good career prospects	26
Study for a qualification (e.g. NVQ, GNVQ, A Levels)	15
Start university/HEI	15
Gain work experience for my university/HEI course	8
Look after home/family	8
Do voluntary work	6
Change to another university/HEI course	3
Take a break from work/study	3
Change to another university/HEI	1
Something else	2
Don't know at the moment	4
No response	2
N = 659	

More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100

Source: NFER Evaluation of Aimhigher: Strand 1 – Survey of 18 to 19 year olds, 2005

Indeed, financial concerns were relatively high amongst the reasons young people gave for not continuing their current activities. Nearly one quarter of this sub-set of the cohort said that their changes in direction were due to financial problems. Clearly, such problems were not confined to those following higher education courses. Nonetheless, amongst the 258 respondents currently following undergraduate courses (see Table 2.8), nearly

one third suggested that they were having problems managing financially, while others said they could not afford to live away from home, were finding it difficult to combine studying and working part-time, or suggested that they really could not afford to be at university.

Table 2.8 Views of higher education: 18 to 19 year olds in higher education

Statements	True for me %	Not true for me %	Not sure %	No response %
My parents are very pleased I am at university/HEI	93	1	4	2
Some of my friends from home have gone to university/HEI	92	5	0	2
I enjoy studying for a degree/other HE qualification	88	4	6	3
It is easy to make friends at university/HEI	84	6	8	2
It is easy to fit in at university/HEI	81	6	10	2
I have a brother, sister or cousin who went to university/HEI	59	38	2	2
I find it very difficult to manage financially at university/HEI	31	49	18	2
I cannot afford to live away from home at university/HEI	29	53	16	2
Having a part-time job affects my study at university/HEI	16	60	19	5
I cannot really afford to be at university/HEI	15	64	19	2
I don't know anyone from home who has been to university/HEI	12	84	2	2
My parents put me under too much pressure to do well at university/HEI	11	77	11	2
The work at university/HEI is too hard for me	4	74	20	2
I am seriously considering leaving university/HEI	4	90	4	2

N = 258

A series of single response items

Due to rounding percentages may not sum to 100

Filter question: all those in higher education

Source: NFER Evaluation of Aimhigher: Strand 1 – Survey of 18 to 19 year olds, 2005

For those not currently following such a course, financial concerns also loomed large, with 42 per cent, for example, sure that they would not be able to manage financially were they to take up a university place and a further 20 per cent unsure as to their ability to cope with living costs and fees (see Table 2.9). By contrast, concerns about workload were limited; only four per cent of those in higher education felt the work was too hard for them

Table 2.9 Views of higher education: 18 to 19 year olds who are not in higher education

View of university	True for Me %	Not true for me %	Not sure %	No response %
Some of my friends have gone to university/HEI	66	18	5	12
I think I would find it easy to make friends at university/HEI	63	11	15	12
My parents would be very pleased if I went to university/HEI	63	10	16	12
I think it would be easy to fit into university/HEI	52	11	25	12
I think I would enjoy studying for a degree/other HE qualification	45	29	14	12
I would find it very difficult to manage financially at university/HEI	42	27	20	12
I don't think I could afford to go to university/HEI	40	29	19	12
I have a brother, sister or cousin who went to university/HEI	39	44	4	13
My exam results are good enough to get me into university/HEI	37	30	21	12
I could not afford to live away from home at university/HEI	36	32	20	12
The work at university/HEI would be too hard for me	14	38	36	12
I don't know anyone who has been to university/HEI	14	71	3	12
I would not want to go to university/HEI if it meant leaving my family	14	59	15	12
I think my parents would put me under too much pressure to do well at university/HEI	10	66	12	12
I would not want to go to university/HEI if it meant leaving my friends	8	68	11	12
My friends would think I was a snob if I went to university/HEI	3	79	6	12

N = 374*A series of single response questions**Due to rounding percentages may not sum to 100**A filter question: all those not in higher education**Source: NFER Evaluation of Aimhigher: Strand 1 – Survey of 18 to 19 year olds, 2005*

Comparison of the perceptions of those young people who were not currently participating in higher education with those who were currently engaged (Tables 2.8 and 2.9) suggests that choosing not to pursue a higher education course had been an active choice for many young people. For example, while 88 per cent of those who were undertaking a higher education course said that they enjoyed studying for a degree, only 45 per cent of those who were not participating felt that they would enjoy such study. Furthermore, 37 per cent of those not currently studying in higher education said that their examination results were sufficient to gain entry to higher education, 38 per cent did not believe that the work would be too hard and 32 per cent did not think that they could not afford to undertake a higher education course.

2.5.1 What courses did young people in higher education choose?

Over half of the 258 respondents in higher education were studying at a post-1992 institution (53 per cent), while more than two-fifths were studying at pre-1992 institutions (41 per cent). A small proportion of those studying higher education courses were based in further education institution (seven respondents). The majority of respondents were studying towards a degree of Bachelor of Art or of Science (80 per cent). Of the remainder:

- Thirteen respondents were studying for a Foundation degree (five per cent)¹⁷
- Ten respondents were studying for an HNC or HND (four per cent)¹⁸
- Seven indicated they were studying for a Master's degree (three per cent).¹⁹

The subjects that were being followed were predominantly those that reflected a national increase in applications in 2004/05 (an upturn that has not necessarily been followed in 2005/06). The most frequently cited subjects were:

- Science related subjects (49 respondents), such as psychology, geography and sports science
- Finance and business-related subjects (45 respondents), such as business studies, management and accounting
- Creative arts (32 respondents), such as design, dance and photography
- Health-related subjects (27 respondents), such as nursing and medicine

¹⁷ Applications for places on foundation degrees have shown significant increases in recent years, according to UCAS figures.

¹⁸ Applications to follow HND courses showed a downturn between 2004 and 2005.

¹⁹ Some courses, such as astrophysics and engineering, are four year courses leading to a Master's degree rather than a Bachelor's degree.

- Social sciences (22 respondents), such as sociology, economics and social work.

In deciding to embark on a higher education course, most of these 258 young people had discussed their choices of institution and course with their family and with friends (see Table 2.3) and most (80 per cent) said they found this discussion helpful. However, inputs from undergraduates and higher education staff, while less common, appeared to be even more valued, with a total of 90 per cent and 89 per cent, respectively, of those who had taken part in such discussions finding them helpful. Indeed, some 15 per cent of the young people who had taken up a higher education place so valued the potential contribution of discussions between undergraduates and young people yet to go to university (whether or not they had been given the opportunity themselves) that they were now involved in activities to encourage younger people to participate in higher education.

To what extent is it possible to identify any association between the sources of information young people used and the activities in which they took part and their eventual destinations? Are there differences between those who had decided not to go to university and those who had taken up a university place?²⁰

2.6 What was associated with young people's choices at 18?

The basic frequency data suggested that there may have been some differences between the 258 young people who had taken up a higher education place and the 374 who had not (see Tables 2.8 and 2.9). Levels of family and peer group familiarity with higher education (contributing to higher levels of social capital with respect to continuing education) appeared to be greater amongst the university entrants: over half (59 per cent) had a sibling or cousin who was (or had been) in higher education, compared to 39 per cent of the non-entrants, while 92 per cent of the undergraduates in the study noted that some of their friends from home had also gone to university, compared with 66 per cent of those who were not higher education students. Once background data and attainment levels had been taken into account, did such differences remain constant?

²⁰ The numbers that had either elected to apply to pre-1992 institutions (that generally had higher entry requirements) or post-1992 institutions were too small to allow the construction of multinomial models, so that a comparison of the attitudes of those who had applied to different types of university could not be undertaken. Instead the analysis focuses on the differences between those who had and had not taken up a place in higher education.

2.6.1 Destinations at 18²¹

Amongst this cohort, GCSE attainment at 16 did not appear to be a strong predictor of subsequent entry to higher education (see Appendix E, Table E2). There were two key exceptions, however: higher attaining girls and higher attaining students who had been designated as members of the gifted and talented in Year 11 were marginally more likely to have opted to follow a higher education course than their peers (higher attaining boys and higher attaining students outwith the gifted and talented cohort, respectively).

One must remember that the responding sample is biased towards females and towards higher attaining young people at GCSE, however, and so potential comparisons with boys and lower attaining students at GCSE who had progressed to further education *and* had followed Level 3 courses were limited.

The part played by family and friends in encouraging young people to consider higher education appeared to be a key influencing factor.²² Although parental experience of higher education did not emerge as a significant background variable for this cohort, discussions about higher education with family and friends during post-16 education (or training) emerged as one of the highest predictors of taking up a university place; 82 per cent of the young people included in the model had taken part in such discussions. Discussions about higher education with school staff (75 per cent of the cohort) and with higher education staff and undergraduates (52 per cent of the cohort) during that time were also significant factors associated with subsequent entry, as were visits to universities and access to information about courses and university life.²³

These findings continue to support the hypothesis that experience of and information about higher education, along with the opportunity to relate that information to one's own circumstances, may be the key factors associated with young people considering and opting for a university education.

²¹ The destination models did not include all of the attitudinal data with respect to young people's attitudes towards higher education. In devising the survey, some of the questions that were asked of those in or not in higher education had to be posed differently in order to make sense to the recipients, even though they sought to identify similar reactions. During the subsequent process of factor analysis, the factors that emerged (though similar) reflected differences in grouping and weighting between the two groups in the cohort and so additional analyses, using analysis of variance, was used to explore different views of higher education (see Section 2.6).

²² The apparent relationship that was noted between the 70 speakers of a first language other than English and entry to higher education needs to be treated with caution. This variable, recorded on PLASC (the Pupil Level Annual School Census), does not take into account levels of fluency. One cannot test, therefore, whether the association that was noted reflects the situation for bi-lingual students or for all speakers of first languages other than English.

²³ The negative association noted between speaking to a learning mentor or Personal Adviser and entry into higher education may be as much a reflection of the nature of such contact (which is often about support in complex situations) than about any negative impact of any individual discussions.

Nonetheless, it is worth noting that, once prior attainment and other background characteristics had been taken into account, young people who felt that their schools had prepared them for adult life and work were less than half as likely as their academic peers to have taken up a university place. Does this suggest that they had already identified preferred career paths that may not have required a higher level qualification or, perhaps, that, in some cases, their academic expectations or aspirations had been limited, or that the potential value of a higher education course had not been conveyed? Certainly, the young people who felt most strongly that the benefits of university outweighed the costs involved were significantly more likely to have embarked on a university career than their academic peers from the same backgrounds and socio-economic circumstances.

For some young people, however, concerns about finances had been sufficiently great to prevent their application to university. Young people who expressed concern about the costs of a university course or who believed that they could not afford to live away from home in order to follow such a course, for instance, were significantly less likely than their academic peers without such concerns to have taken up a place in higher education.²⁴ These financial concerns were an even greater predictor of non-participation than young people's lack of satisfaction with their post-16 activities.

2.7 Conclusion

Amongst the young people in this cohort, there appears to be some association between Aimhigher-related activities and levels of attainment at 18, as well as with such activities and entry into higher education. In particular, the creation of a climate in which opportunities are available for experiencing higher education and taking part in discussions about higher education (with higher education staff and undergraduates as well as with teachers, family and friends) seems to have been associated with higher levels of attainment at Key Stage 5 and with the likelihood that young people would take up a place in higher education. The young people themselves reported that discussions with undergraduates were helpful. The lack of such opportunities, indeed, seemed to be associated with greater degrees of discontent amongst young people during their undergraduate course.

The story is not straightforward, however. While there appeared to be some strong associations between Aimhigher activities and entry into higher education, there was also a higher incidence of financial concern amongst

²⁴ This did not mean that the members of the cohort who had chosen to follow a degree course had no financial concerns: many had clearly taken on part-time work while they studied. In addition, the positive association that was also noted between part-time work (whether for more or less than 15 hours a week) and going to university may be simply a reflection of the fact that the majority of those not in higher education were in full-time rather than part-time work.

young people who had most exposure to higher education through contact with undergraduates, through visits or through summer schools. Moreover, while parental experience of higher education did not emerge as significant, discussions about higher education with family (and friends) were one of the most significant predictors of entry into higher education. In addition, family and friends were the pre-eminent source of discussions about higher education in general as well as about specific institutions. The findings suggest that young people's families have a significant role to play in raising young people's awareness of, and aspirations towards, higher education and there is a need for Aimhigher partnerships to continue to develop outreach activities to young people's wider family circles.

3. The experience of 17 to 18 year olds

Key findings

- The majority of the 17 to 18 year olds had received information about higher education or had been on a visit to a higher education institution. Fewer young people had experienced more intensive interventions such as summer schools, residential activities, higher education revision classes, Masterclasses or the Aimhigher Roadshow.
- Most young people discussed higher education with family, friends and teachers. Nevertheless, around one-third had talked with staff or undergraduates from higher education. Although most of the contact with undergraduates was through young people's personal contacts, 15 per cent had such contact arranged by their school or college.
- The majority of young people had remained in learning post-16. In most cases this was at school or college but eight per cent were engaged in a work-based route.
- Most of the young people were pursuing level 3 qualifications post-16, which could enable them to access higher education courses. The majority (71 per cent) of those who had intended to leave school at 16 had in fact remained in learning and 90 per cent of those who had been undecided had remained engaged in learning post-16.
- Although the majority of young people were content with their post-16 choice, around one quarter had changed since making the transition at 16 and just under one in ten currently thought that they had made the wrong choice and wanted to change.
- Participation in Aimhigher-related activities did not emerge as being associated with post-16 choice but discussing higher education with family and friends were associated with post-16 destinations. This reflects the key role of such people in informing young people.
- Around three-fifths of young people intended to continue into higher education. Half of these young people aspired to a pre-1992 institution and half to a post-1992 institution.
- The majority of the young people who had decided in Year 11 to continue to higher education had indeed pursued this plan but there were indications that some young people changed their minds. Around half of those who were unsure when they were in Year 11 now planned to continue to higher education and one-third of those who had planned to leave education and learning at 18 now planned to continue.
- Young people had a higher probability of planning to go to higher education where they were a long-term planner and not worried about the financial aspects of undertaking a higher education course. Although Aimhigher-related activities were not associated with *post-16* choices, experience of an Aimhigher Roadshow, talking about higher education with staff or students in higher education institutions and receiving information about higher education appeared to be associated with a higher probability of choosing to pursue a higher education course.

- Young people who were aspiring to a pre-1992 institution tended to be those who were following academic qualifications, were from families with less disadvantaged socio-economic circumstances and had discussed higher education with teachers at school. Those who were aspiring to a post-1992 institution tended to be eligible for free school meals, in part-time employment and concerned about the financial implications of higher education. In addition, they tended to have visited a higher education institution. Whether a young person's parents had participated in higher education did not emerge as being significantly associated with young people's aspirations.
- The majority of young people were positive in their attitude towards higher education and this was positively associated with being a long-term planner and with Aimhigher-related activities including engaging in study-skills events, receiving information about higher education and having contact with staff and students from higher education either pre- or post-16.

3.1 Introduction

The cohort of young people who are the focus of this chapter were aged 17 to 18 at the time of the survey and, consequently, would have been in Year 13 where they were in education post-16. These young people had previously been surveyed when they were in Year 11, which was two years prior to the post-16 survey reported here. At that stage, the young people attended schools that were involved in Excellence Challenge which, as outlined in Chapter 1, was one of the predecessors of Aimhigher. At the time of the post-16 survey, in spring 2005, those young people in the sample who had remained in education would have been approaching their examinations and many who were considering higher education would have already applied for places.

A total of 1,996 young people responded to the survey, which represented 26 per cent of those to whom a questionnaire was sent. The young people who responded were not wholly representative of their peers in the same schools. Young people who were female, those with higher ability and those who were of Asian heritage, were over-represented, while those who were recognised as having special educational needs (SEN) were under-represented. More specifically:

- 73 per cent of respondents to the survey were female and 27 per cent were male, compared with 50 per cent of each gender in Aimhigher schools
- 15 per cent of respondents were of Asian heritage compared with 11 per cent among their cohort in the same schools
- 92 per cent of respondents were not recognised for action on the register of SEN or had a statement of SEN, compared with 85 per cent of their peers in the same schools.

- 18 per cent of respondents were eligible for free school meals, compared with 22 per cent of the cohort in their schools
- respondents to the survey gained significantly higher points at Key Stage 4 (49 points on average) compared with their peers in the same schools (40 points on average)
- 14 per cent of respondents to the survey were designated as gifted and talented compared with nine per cent among their peers.

Further details of the sample of respondents are provided in Appendix B. As discussed in Chapter 1, exploration of the responses found significant differences between those of male and female respondents. Consequently, the basic analyses reported in this chapter were weighted to account for the effect of these differences. Such weighting was not necessary for the multi-level model analyses, reported in Sections 3.3.5, 3.4.3 and 3.5, through which any differences are taken into account.

3.2 What Aimhigher-related activities had these young people experienced?

Aimhigher partnerships provided activities post-16 for young people with the aim of raising aspirations and achievement. Many of the 17 to 18 year olds who responded to the survey had participated in such activities that may have been organised through Aimhigher, as shown in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1 Aimhigher-related activities experienced over the last two years: 17 to 18 year olds

Widening participation activities	Yes	No	Not sure	No response
	%	%	%	%
I had information about going on to university/HEI	68	29	2	1
I spoke to a Connexions Personal Advisor	41	55	3	1
I went on work experience/took part in placements	39	59	1	1
I took part in a visit to a university/HEI organised through my school/college	38	59	1	1
I went to homework clubs/study skills classes organised by my school	30	68	1	1
I spoke to a Learning Mentor	21	74	3	2
I went to an Aimhigher Roadshow	18	78	3	2
I spoke to a student from university/HEI at an Aimhigher Roadshow	14	82	3	2
I took part in a summer/Easter/winter school	9	89	1	2
I took part in revision classes run by a university/HEI	9	89	1	2
I took part in a residential course at a university/HEI during term time	5	92	1	2
I took part in a Masterclass	4	92	2	2
I was mentored or coached by a student from university/HEI	4	93	1	2

N = 1996*A series of single response items**Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100**Source: NFER Evaluation of Aimhigher: Strand 1 – Survey of 17 to 18 year olds, 2005*

As can be seen in Table 3.1, most of the young people surveyed had received some information about higher education and around two-fifths said that they had been on a visit to a higher education institution arranged by their school. Nearly one-third had attended a study skills session and around one-fifth had attended an Aimhigher Roadshow with 14 per cent stating that they had spoken with a student at an Aimhigher Roadshow. These young people had spoken with a range of individuals about higher education, as can be seen in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 Individuals with whom young people discussed university/higher education over the last two years: 17 to 18 year olds

Over the last two years	Yes	No	Not sure	No response
	%	%	%	%
I talked about university/higher education with:				
Friends	84	15	1	1
Family	82	17	1	1
Teacher/lecturer/tutor	73	25	1	1
Careers adviser/Personal Adviser(s)	41	56	2	1
Employer(s)/other people in work	39	59	1	2
Students from university/HEI who I knew through friends/family	39	59	1	1
Staff from university/HEI	36	61	1	2
Student from university/HEI arranged through my school/college	15	83	1	1
Learning Mentor(s)	13	83	3	2
Student mentors/coaches from a university	11	85	2	2
Youth worker(s)	6	92	1	2

N = 1996*A series of single response items**Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100**Source: NFER Evaluation of Aimhigher: Strand 1 – Survey of 17 to 18 year olds, 2005*

Family members, friends and teachers emerged as the individuals with whom the majority of young people had discussed higher education. This highlights the potentially critical role played by these individuals in young people's perceptions of higher education and decision-making in relation to their future choices. This suggests, therefore, that there may be value in Aimhigher partnerships ensuring that such individuals are well-informed and able to provide relevant and accurate information to young people.

Individuals with current experience of higher education had been sources of contact for many young people, around two-fifths of whom had discussed higher education with a member of staff from the sector. Although it was more common for young people to have discussed higher education with a current undergraduate whom they knew personally, 15 per cent of 17 to 18 year olds reported that their contact with a current undergraduate had been arranged by their school or college.

As noted above, nine per cent of 17 to 18 year olds surveyed said that they had participated in a summer, Easter or winter school. Where they were able to

state how long the event had lasted, it appeared that these events were generally for one week or less duration, as can be seen in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3 Time spent at summer, Easter or winter schools and/or residential activities: 17 to 18 year olds

Activity	Less than a week %	One week %	Two to three weeks %	More than three weeks %	No response %
Summer School	19	29	7	3	42
Easter/winter schools	13	11	2	2	71
Residential activity	25	15	2	1	57

N = 235

A series of single response items

A filter question, all those who indicated that they had taken part in one of these activities.

Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100

Source: NFER Evaluation of Aimhigher: Strand 1 – Survey of 17 to 18 year olds, 2005

As noted in Chapter 1, a national project focusing on health careers was established through the integrated Aimhigher programme in 2005. Although these young people had limited opportunity to experience this specific initiative before responding to the survey, they may have experienced health-related activities as part of Aimhigher more generally. A minority reported that they had been given information about careers in health and had visited a hospital, met with health professionals and engaged in work experience, as shown in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4 Information given to respondents about careers in health: 17 to 18 year olds

Information given	Yes %	No %	Not sure %	No response %
I was given information about careers in health	24	69	5	3
I talked to a health professional to learn more about careers in health care (e.g. nurse, physiotherapist)	14	81	2	3
I visited a hospital or health centre to find out about careers in health	9	87	1	3
I did work experience in a health-related area	10	86	1	3

N = 1996

A series of single response items

Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100

Source: NFER Evaluation of Aimhigher: Strand 1 – Survey of 17 to 18 year olds, 2005

3.3 What did young people do after Year 11?

The young people who responded to the survey had participated in a wide range of Aimhigher-related activities post-16. What effect did these activities have on their choices for post-16 and post-18 study? This will be explored in the following sections.

3.3.1 What were the post-16 destinations of 17 to 18 year olds?

The 17 to 18 year olds completed compulsory education in the summer of 2003 and, at the time of the survey in spring 2005, had spent nearly 18 months in their chosen post-16 activities. The majority (83 per cent) had **continued their education**, most often attending a full-time course at college (49 per cent) or school (29 per cent). Eight per cent were pursuing the **work-based learning** route at the time of the survey – six per cent were in an apprenticeship and two per cent in a job with training. A minority of respondents did **not appear to be in further learning** at the time of the survey. Nine per cent said that they were in a full-time job (without training) and about five per cent were not in employment, education or training but were out of work, looking after a home or family and doing '*something else*'. In addition to their main activity, just under half of the young people (47 per cent) had one or more part-time jobs and were working for an average of 14 hours a week.

Nearly three-quarters (71 per cent) of the young people who were engaged in further learning were currently working towards qualifications at level 3, which could potentially enable them to access higher education in the future. Table 3.5 details the types of qualifications that these young people indicated that they were studying and indicated the wide range of choices and routes that young people pursue after Year 11.

Table 3.5 Qualifications studied by 17 to 18 year olds

Qualifications	%
A Levels (A2)	46
AS Levels	15
BTEC National Diploma or similar diploma	12
Key Skills	9
12 unit AVCE	8
NVQ Level 2	7
3 or 6 unit AVCEs	5
NVQ Level 3	4
Intermediate GNVQ/BTEC First Diploma	4
GCSEs	3
Foundation GNVQ	2
NVQ Level 1	2
Other vocational qualification	2
Other	3
Not currently in education/none	9
No response	8

N = 1996

More than one answer could be so percentages do not sum to 100.

Source: NFER Evaluation of Aimhigher: Strand 1 – Survey of 17 to 18 year olds, 2005

3.3.2 Did the 17 to 18 year olds change their minds between Year 11 and making the transition at 16?

The majority of young people, therefore, had decided to continue in further learning after Year 11. Indeed, comparisons of the young people's intentions (when they were in Year 11) with their subsequent decision, revealed that a number had changed from a plan to leave education at 16, or being uncertain, into a decision to remain in learning. More specifically 71 per cent of the 157 young people who intended to leave at 16 had instead remained in learning and 90 per cent of the 330 young people who were uncertain about what to do next when they were in Year 11 had chosen to remain in learning.

The majority (88 per cent) of those who had intended, when they were in Year 11, to leave education after two years at a school or college had indeed remained in learning post-16. Moreover, 97 per cent of the 965 students who intended to progress into higher education appeared to have continued to pursue this plan by remaining in learning post-16.

These findings indicate that many young people had pursued the plans that they had made. Most of those with a long-term plan to progress into higher education had made decisions that were supporting that plan, and had remained in learning. Nevertheless, while around a quarter of those who had

planned to leave school had continued with their intention and left school at 16 to pursue other destinations including the work-based route, a large proportion of those who had thought that they would leave school had instead continued in further learning. This suggests that there may be opportunities for Aimhigher partnerships to work with students, even at the point of transition at 16, to provide support and guidance as they decide whether to continue in learning.

3.3.3 Did the 17 to 18 year olds change activity after 16?

Nevertheless, not all young people in the cohort had remained in the activity that they had initially chosen at 16. Nearly one-quarter (24 per cent) of 17 to 18 year olds had stopped or changed a course or training programme and five per cent had stopped or changed a job in the time period between September 2003 and when they were surveyed in spring 2005. Most of the 556 respondents who had changed a course, training programme or job (62 per cent) had stayed within the same type of activity. In other words those who had been pursuing a course had changed to a different type of course. Over a fifth of respondents, however, had moved out of learning (21 per cent), whilst two per cent had moved into learning.

The reasons given for stopping or changing course or training programme were related primarily to their views of the activity, stating that they had not enjoyed their choice (48 per cent), or felt it was not what they had expected (24 per cent) or were bored (23 per cent). In addition, 11 per cent said that they had got a job and preferred to be employed. Some had difficulties with the content of the course and had, for example, found it too difficult (16 per cent), fallen behind with course work (14 per cent) or felt that there was too much work to do (11 per cent). Six per cent reported that financial difficulties had led them to change activity. Around one-fifth (22 per cent) the reason for change was simply that they had completed the course.

3.3.4 What did the 17 to 18 year olds think of their current activity?

This cohort of 17 to 18 year olds appeared to be broadly satisfied with the activity that they were doing, as shown in Table 3.6. As was the case with the 16 to 17 year olds, most of those aged 17 to 18 felt that they were doing something that was enjoyable, interesting, gave them useful experience and would help them in the future. Nevertheless, a minority appeared to be less certain about their choices, as just under one-fifth (19 per cent) were not sure that they had made the right choice, and eight per cent felt that they had definitely made the wrong choice. In addition, a small proportion thought that the activity they were doing was worse than they had expected (11 per cent) and/or that they wanted to change what they were doing (15 per cent).

Table 3.6 Views on post-16 activity: 17 to 18 year olds

Young people's views	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Not sure %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	No response %
It will help me in the future	49	34	10	3	3	2
I made the right choice	39	32	19	5	3	2
I don't have to travel too far	36	41	6	11	4	2
I feel I am learning new skills	34	48	9	5	3	2
I enjoy what I'm doing	32	50	8	6	2	1
What I am doing is interesting	30	52	8	6	2	2
I am being treated as an adult	29	43	13	9	4	2
I am getting useful experience	26	50	14	7	2	2
It is what I have always wanted to do	23	33	25	12	6	2
It is better than I expected	13	32	33	16	4	2
I wish I could change what I am doing	7	8	16	38	31	1
I am thinking about doing something different	7	10	18	32	33	1
It is worse than I expected	2	9	13	44	30	2
I am doing it because there is nothing better to do	2	9	12	39	37	2

N = 1996*A series of single response items**Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100**Source: NFER Evaluation of Aimhigher: Strand 1 – Survey of 17 to 18 year olds, 2005*

The value of ensuring that young people receive appropriate advice and guidance is reflected in the finding that the 538 young people who felt that they had not made the right choice, or were unsure whether they had done so, were less likely to report that they had found career guidance helpful (32 per cent compared with 42 per cent of all respondents). Moreover, they were more likely to indicate that they would have liked more guidance (82 per cent compared with 68 per cent of all respondents).

The majority of this cohort of young people, therefore, had made the transition at 16 into further learning to either a course-based, or work-based route and were satisfied with their choice. Such a transition will have been influenced by a range of factors such as personal background and attitude, parental expectations and experience, school-level factors and other interventions including participation in Aimhigher-related activities. Which of these factors appeared to be most closely associated with young people's choices?

3.3.5 What was associated with young people's choices at 16?

The analysis explored the factors that were most closely associated with young people making a transition into further learning through the course-based or work-based route at 16, taking into account the influence of a range of variables (see Appendix E Table E3). It revealed that young people had an increased probability of making a positive transition at 16 where they:

- **Were satisfied with school in Year 11** – young people who indicated that they were not dissatisfied with their schooling, when they were in Year 11, were twice as likely to make a positive transition at 16, over and above other influential factors (mean odds multiplier of 2.04)
- **Had discussed higher education with friends and family** – young people who had talked about higher education with their friends and family were almost twice as likely to have made a positive transition at 16 (mean odds multiplier of 1.99)
- **Felt that school prepared them for studying at 16** – young people who believed that this was the case were significantly more likely to have made a positive transition at 16 (mean odds multiplier of 1.86).

This analysis reveals the importance of young people's attitudes towards, and experience of, their schooling and education in general in potentially influencing their choices at 16 and continuing in learning. Although the Aimhigher-related activities in which they had participated did not emerge as being associated with a positive transition at 16, these findings highlight the value in ensuring that young people have a positive experience of school and feel adequately prepared for learning after 16. Moreover, it suggests that Aimhigher partnerships could usefully engage with family and friends of young people with the aim of ensuring that the important discussions that 17 to 18 year olds have with these people about higher education are informed and accurate.

3.4 What was associated with young people's attitudes towards HE?

The 17 to 18 year olds who were or were not considering going to higher education in the future, provided an insight into their views of higher education. This section explores their views and the factors that emerged as being associated with having a more positive, or less positive perception of higher education.

As can be seen in Table 3.7, most of the young people surveyed had a positive perception of higher education. They felt that they would enjoy studying for a higher education qualification and would fit in and make friends easily. In addition, the majority reported that their parents would be pleased if they went

to higher education and knew friends or family members who had progressed into higher education.

Table 3.7 Views of higher education: 17 to 18 year olds

Views on university	Yes	No	Not sure	No response
	%	%	%	%
My parents/carers would be very pleased if I went to university/HEI	79	7	12	2
I think I would find it easy to make friends at university/HEI	66	11	21	2
Some of my friends have gone to university/HEI	66	25	7	2
I think I would enjoy studying for a degree/other HE qualification	61	22	15	2
I think I would find it easy to fit in at a university/HEI	58	13	27	2
I have a brother, sister or cousin who went to university/HEI	50	43	5	2
I think my exam results will be good enough to get me into university/HEI	44	24	30	2
I would find it very difficult to manage financially at university/HEI	37	32	29	2
I could not afford to live away from home at university/HEI	33	37	28	2
I don't think I could afford to go to university/HEI	31	37	30	2
I think my parents/carers would put me under too much pressure to do well at university/HEI	15	67	16	2
I don't know anyone who has been to university/HEI	15	78	5	2
The work at university/HEI would be too hard for me	15	40	43	2
I don't want to go to university/HEI if it means leaving my family	14	69	15	2
I don't want to go to university/HEI if it means leaving my friends	10	75	12	2
My friends would think I was a snob if I went to university/HEI	4	89	5	2

N = 1996

A series of single responses

Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100

Source: NFER Evaluation of Aimhigher: Strand 1 – Survey of 17 to 18 year olds, 2005

There were mixed views among the 17 to 18 year olds respondents in relation to whether they could afford to participate in higher education. Similar proportions of respondents believed that they could afford to go to higher

education (31 per cent), that they could not afford to go to higher education (37 per cent), or that they were unsure if they could afford to go or not (30 per cent). Furthermore, as can be seen in Table 3.8, two-thirds of respondents thought that most people who went to higher education ended up in debt (66 per cent), which was a higher proportion than the younger respondents (54 per cent of 16 to 17 year olds). In addition, over half, (52 per cent) thought that it was necessary to have a part-time job in order to live while in higher education.

Table 3.8 Attitudes towards higher education: 17 to 18 year olds

Perceptions of university	Agree	Disagree	Don't know	No response
	%	%	%	%
People that get degrees/other HE qualifications get better jobs	74	14	11	2
Most people who go to university/HEI end up in debt	66	13	20	1
The cost of university/HEI will be worth it in the long run	64	9	26	2
The only way people can afford to live at university /HEI is to have a part-time job	52	25	22	1
People who go to university/HEI have to be very clever	25	59	14	2
Life at university/HEI is just like school	5	68	25	1
Students at university/HEI never do any real work	4	79	15	2

N = 1996

A series of single response questions

Due to rounding percentages may not sum to 100

Source: NFER Evaluation of Aimhigher: Strand 1 – Survey of 17 to 18 year olds, 2005

Overall, the 17 to 18 year old respondents felt that there were long-term benefits of participating in higher education, with nearly three-quarters believing that having a degree was a career advantage (74 per cent) and 64 per cent feeling that the cost of higher education would be worth it in the long run.

Thus it appears that this sample of young people were broadly positive in their attitude towards higher education but that this view was not universal. What was associated with these differences in attitudes? In order to explore the factors, including experience of Aimhigher-related activities, that were associated with young people having a positive attitude towards higher education, the young peoples' responses to the questionnaire were grouped through factor analysis into composite variables (see Appendix C) which indicated the degree of positivity in their attitudes towards higher education.

Multi-level model analyses then explored the range of factors that might be associated with young people's attitudes (see Appendix E Table E5).

It appeared that young people's attitudes towards higher education were associated not just with their personal attitudes and, to some extent the choices that they had made at 16, but also with their experience of Aimhigher-related activities. More specifically, young people tended to have a more positive attitude towards higher education where they were:

- a **long-term planner** who had always intended to pursue the route they were taking and were content with their choice
- had experience of attending a **study-skills**-related activity in Year 11 such as revision classes or masterclasses
- had **received information** about higher education
- had **contact with staff or students from higher education** when they were in **Year 11**
- had **contact with staff or students from higher education post-16**.

These findings suggest that providing young people with an opportunity to learn about higher education, particularly through contact with staff from higher education, could have a positive impact on their attitudes towards higher education over and above a range of other influential factors. Further exploration indicated that having contact with staff from higher education *either* pre-16 or post-16 were influential. No significant additional effect was found through having such contact *both* pre-16 and post-16, though it should be noted that, as contact pre-16 was influential, leaving all contact to post-16 risks losing potential students who might not choose to make the transition into further learning at 16.

In addition to these key factors, young people tended to have a more positive attitude towards higher education where they:

- Felt that they would be encouraged to go to higher education if they did not have to worry about debt
- Felt that they would be encouraged to go to higher education if they knew more about higher education
- Felt that they would be encouraged to go to higher education if they could find the right course
- Felt that they would be encouraged to go to higher education if they considered that it would improve their career prospects
- Had discussed higher education with friends and family
- Had gone to college from school (rather than school sixth form)
- Were pursuing an 'academic' route post-16.

These findings indicate again the important role of friends and family in informing young people's attitudes and perceptions. In addition, it appears that young people who have a positive attitude towards higher education might be further encouraged to participate in higher education if they had more information, could find the right course and perceive a potential effect on their future career prospects and could minimise their concerns about the cost and potential debt.

3.5 What was associated with young people's aspirations to progress into HE after 18?

3.5.1 What did the 17 to 18 year olds plan to do after 18?

The 17 to 18 year olds had similar aspirations to the 16 to 17 year olds with nearly three-fifths (59 per cent) of respondents intending to go to higher education at some point in the future. Twenty-seven per cent of respondents were planning to continue their education in other ways, some through work-based learning (14 per cent) and some through course-based learning (13 per cent). A minority (nine per cent) of respondents intended to go into employment and five per cent intended to do other activities.

Most of the 59 per cent of respondents who planned to continue to higher education, were intending to study for a Bachelor's degree (63 per cent), but a small proportion also indicated that they wanted to study for and HNC or HND (seven per cent) and a Masters degree (five per cent). The most commonly cited subjects were similar to those chosen by the 16 to 17 year olds and included:

- Science-related subjects (219 respondents), such as sports science, psychology and chemistry
- Health-related subjects (157 respondents), such as nursing and medicine
- Finance and business-related subjects (154 respondents), such as business studies, management and accounting
- Creative arts (149 respondents) such as design, fine art and drama
- Social science subjects (90 respondents) such as social work, politics and sociology.

Where respondents provided details of the institution they intended to attend, it emerged that the proportion who wanted to go to pre and post-1992 higher education institutions was evenly balanced, with 45 per cent of respondents wanting to go to pre-1992 institutions and 42 per cent wanting to go to post-1992 institutions. Two per cent of respondents (17 respondents) wanted to

study in a further education college.²⁵ The factors associated with preferring a pre-1992 or post 1992 institution will be explored in Section 3.4.3.

Compared to their plans when they were in Year 11),²⁶ the majority of the 965 young people who had planned to continue into higher education still aspired to undergraduate study. However, a number of young people had changed their mind and now planned to go to higher education. More specifically, around half of the 330 young people who had been unsure about their post-18 plans when in Year 11 now aspired to higher education. Over one third (37 per cent) of the 505 young people who had intended to leave education after two years of post-16 study now aimed to continue into higher education and 12 per cent of the 157 young people who had intended to leave school at 16 now planned to continue into higher education.

It appears, therefore, that although some young people were fairly decided about their pathway through further and higher education, and continue to pursue that aim, other young people had changed their mind and chosen to pursue a higher education course between the ages of 16 and 18.

3.5.2 What did the 17 to 18 year olds think about the support they had received to make decisions about their post-18 choices?

The majority of 17 to 18 year olds in the sample planned to continue in learning to higher education in the future and, indeed, some young people had decided this course of action having previously planned to leave education at 16 or 18. In making decisions about their future, these 17 to 18 year olds would have sought and received advice and guidance from a range of sources. This section explores their views of the advice and guidance they received.

Around half (49 per cent) of young people said that they had found helpful the careers education and guidance that they received post-16, while 17 per cent were unsure and 13 per cent said it was not helpful. Nineteen per cent reported that they had not received any careers education and guidance support post-16.

While 44 per cent of the 17 to 18 year olds who responded to the survey felt that they had received sufficient guidance to support their decisions about what choices to make at 18 to embark on in September 2005, the same proportion (44 per cent) said that they would have liked more guidance and a further 12 per cent did not know. More specifically, as can be seen in Table 3.9, the majority were seeking help to identify the best choice for them and support with planning how to make the next immediate step. Nevertheless,

²⁵ The remainder of respondents did not respond to this question, or gave responses that could not be categorised.

²⁶ Forty-one respondents had not answered both questions in the 2003 and 2005 questionnaires and, therefore, were not included in this analysis.

around half identified a need for more information about higher education and a similar proportion would have liked details of the financial support available.

Table 3.9 Type of help that young people would have liked in choosing what to do next: 17 to 18 year olds

	%
Help in finding out which career suits my skills and abilities	77
Information on jobs I could apply for	67
Help in planning what to do next	61
Information on courses or training I could apply for	60
Information on local job opportunities	54
Information on financial support for further study (e.g. higher education maintenance grants, Access Funds)	51
Practice for interviews	49
Information about university/HEI	46
Help in making applications or writing CVs	44
Opportunities for practical experience or work experience	43
Information on national job opportunities	30
Other help	4
No response	<1

N = 877

More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100

A filter question: all those that indicated that they would have liked more help or guidance

Source: NFER Evaluation of Aimhigher: Strand 1 – Survey of 17 to 18 year olds, 2005

As shown in Table 3.10, around half of the 17 to 18 year olds surveyed said that they would like more information about higher education. Table 3.8 presents further details of the information relating to higher education that young people said that they would like to receive. The majority of respondents said that they would like information about the costs associated with pursuing a higher education course. Furthermore, these young people appeared to want to know more about the experience of being an undergraduate and learning in higher education and information that was specific to them as individuals. Although fewer were concerned about the more generic process of applying to higher education this was true for around a quarter and suggests that, even at this stage in their educational career (in the second term of Year 13 or equivalent) some young people could still benefit from provision of simple advice on applying to higher education and finding appropriate courses.

Table 3.10 Information young people would like to know about higher education: 17 to 18 year olds

University information	17 to 18 year olds %
How much it will cost me to go to university/HEI	61
What help I could get to pay for university/HEI	59
What learning at university/HEI is really like	52
What it is really like to be a university/HEI student	48
What different universities/HEI are like	46
How to find out what degrees/other HE qualifications would suit me	44
How to find out what courses are available	41
How to apply for university/HEI	28
No response	25
N =	1996

A multiple response item

More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100

Source: NFER Evaluation of Aimhigher: Strand 1 – Survey of 17 to 18 year olds, 2005

A minority (eight per cent) of the respondents appeared to be clearly decided against higher education. However, the remaining young people, including those who were considering higher education, were able to identify whether a range of factors would encourage them to continue into higher education, as outlined in Table 3.11.

Table 3.11 Factors which would encourage respondents to go to higher education: 17 to 18 year olds

Factors about university	This would encourage me %	This would make no difference %	I'm not sure %	No response %
Finding the right course for me	84	10	4	3
Being able to improve my career prospects	82	9	6	3
Not having to worry about getting into debt	76	15	6	3
Knowing more about university/HEI and student life	63	26	7	3
Being able to go to a local university/HEI	44	47	6	3
Being able to study part-time	34	50	13	3
Being able to do a degree or other HE qualification at a local further education college	33	48	15	3
Other	3	4	3	90
N = 1996				

A series of single response items

Due to rounding, percentage may not sum to 100

Source: NFER Evaluation of Aimhigher: Strand 1 – Survey of 17 to 18 year olds, 2005

The main encouraging factors for these 17 to 18 year olds were: finding the right course, being able to improve their career prospects, not having to worry about getting into debt and having more knowledge about higher education. Young people were less inclined to indicate that being able to study locally, part-time or at a further education college, would encourage them to go on to higher education. This suggests that these ‘less traditional’ approaches to higher education did not appeal to most of the respondents to this survey.

3.5.3 What was associated with 17 to 18 year olds’ aspirations to higher education?

This section explores the association between the young people’s background and attitudes, the school that they attended, their experience of Aimhigher-related activities and advice and guidance received regarding higher education and their intention to continue in learning to higher education or not (see Appendix E Table E4 for details). As noted above, around half of the young people who planned to progress to higher education aimed to attend a pre-1992 institution and a similar proportion intended to go to a post-1992 institution. To explore fully the aspirations of 17 to 18 year olds, the analysis explored three groups of 17 to 18 year olds who were:

- Those intending to continue into higher education and attend a pre-1992 institution (508 individuals)
- Those intending to continue into higher education and attend a post-1992 institution (518 individuals)
- Those who did not intend to progress to higher education (953 individuals).

Young people’s **background and attitudes** were associated with their future intentions. Young people aged 17 to 18 had a higher probability of deciding to continue into higher education in both pre-1992 and post-1992 institutions where they were:

- not of **white UK heritage** – being of white UK heritage was associated with a lower probability of progressing into higher education
- not worried about the **financial aspects** of undertaking a higher education course
- a **long-term planner** who had always intended to pursue the route they were taking and were content with their choice
- **not as satisfied with their current activity** in terms of whether they were learning new skills, felt treated as an adult and gaining useful experience

The latter two findings may indicate that some young people are thinking about their longer-term aims and perceiving their current activity as a means to this end, rather than an end in itself. Consequently, they were less inclined to

feel that their current activity was useful and through which they were gaining experience, compared with those who did not intend to go to higher education.

There was evidence that experience of some **Aimhigher-related interventions** were associated with an increased probability of a young person choosing to participate in higher education at either a pre-1992 or post-1992 institution. Young people aged 17 to 18 had an increased probability of deciding to progress to higher education where they had:

- experienced an Aimhigher roadshow – young people who had participated in a Roadshow were around one and a half times as likely to choose to participate in higher education
- talked about higher education with staff from higher education institutions – young people who had experienced this were around three times more likely to plan to progress to higher education
- received information about higher education – young people who had received such information were between three and six times more likely to have a plan to progress into higher education.

However, they had a reduced probability of saying that they planned to go to higher education where they had talked with an adult such as a Learning Mentor or Personal Adviser in Year 11. This may reflect the nature of the students who meet with these professionals who often work with young people with complex lives and the focus of discussions may have been on their immediate social, personal and educational needs and less on longer-term educational opportunities.

There was a positive association between young people's intentions to continue to higher education and stating that they would be encouraged to do so if they knew more about higher education and if they thought that it would improve their career prospects. Conversely, the possibility of studying locally was negatively associated with intending to go to higher education.

Significantly, amongst this cohort parental experience of higher education did not appear to be associated with young people's aspirations to go to higher education, over and above the other variables considered. Previous research has indicated that young people whose parents have participated in higher education have a higher probability of embarking on an undergraduate course. Aimhigher aimed to encourage young people with no family history of education to participate in higher education and the findings from this analysis suggest that participation in some Aimhigher-related activities may have been more closely associated with the aspirations of these young people (at least at this stage in their educational career) than their family history.

It appears, therefore, that providing young people with information and opportunities find out about higher education through meeting with higher

education staff, including through an Aimhigher roadshow, could increase the probability that they will then choose to take a higher education course. Within the group of young people who planned to progress into higher education, some differences emerged, over and above the factors reported above, which were associated with deciding to attend a pre-1992 or post-1992 institution. Young people aged 17 to 18 had a greater probability of attending **a pre-1992 institution** where they were similar in all respects to students not intending to do so except that they:

- had more books in their home (odds multiplier of 1.21)
- had discussed higher education with teaching staff at their school (odds multiplier of 2.74)
- were pursuing an ‘academic’ route – taking A Levels and AS levels only post-16 – and not a ‘vocational’ route (odds multiplier of 2.17 for academic route and 0.47 for vocational route)
- were speakers of a first language other than English²⁷
- considered that they would not be encouraged to go to higher education if they could attend a higher education institution locally (odds multiplier of 0.70).

In addition, females were significantly less likely to be planning to go to a pre-1992 institution and more likely to attend a post-1992 institution (odds multiplier of 1.48 to attend a post-1992 institution and 0.66 to attend a pre-1992 institution). While this may be due to a number of reasons, such as the nature of the courses at post-1992 institutions which may have been more appealing to the female respondents to the survey, it may also reflect different aspirations among female and male respondents.

Young people who were planning to attend a **post-1992** institution, were similar to those planning to go to a pre-1992 institution in all other ways, except that they tended to:

- have visited a higher education institution (odds multiplier of 1.61)
- have a part-time job currently (odds multiplier of 1.78)
- have been known to be eligible for free school meals when in Year 11 (odds multiplier of 1.75)
- consider that they would be encouraged to go to higher education if they did not have to worry about debt (odds multiplier of 1.58).

These findings may indicate that, even where young people planned to progress to higher education, differences exist in the background characteristics and experience of young people who intend to choose a pre-

²⁷ Speakers of a first language other than English, reflects people who are fluent speakers of both English and an additional language.

1992 or post-1992 institution. It appears that, in general, those who planned to intend a pre-1992 institution were engaged in a 'traditional' academic route, come from less disadvantaged socio-economic circumstances, (as assessed by the number of books in the home) and may have attended schools where the expectation of higher education destinations are part of the ethos between staff and students. Conversely, those who planned to progress to post-1992 institutions appear to be more likely to be those with more challenging socio-economic circumstances as indicated by their eligibility for free school meals, engaging in part-time employment post-16 and having concerns about potential costs of higher education. Nevertheless, the finding that young people in this group were more likely to have visited a higher education institution may reflect the focus of Aimhigher-related activities on the 'widening participation cohort', who may be from less affluent backgrounds, and may indicate the impact of such visits on the aspirations of these young people. However, it is worth noting that being designated as being in the widening participation cohort did not emerge as being significantly associated with aspirations to higher education.

3.6 Conclusion

The majority of the young people aged 17 to 18 who responded to the survey had remained in learning post-16 and most planned to continue into higher education. Nevertheless, there was evidence that young people changed their minds, quite markedly in some instances, between Year 11 and Year 13 or equivalent when they were surveyed. This suggests that there continues to be value in partnerships supporting, informing and guiding young people in their choices beyond the transition at 16.

Receiving information about higher education, and having discussions with staff and students from higher education institutions, were positively associated with young people's aspirations and attitudes towards higher education. In addition, attendance at an Aimhigher Roadshow was positively associated with aspirations, and attendance at study-skills-related activities was positively associated with attitudes towards higher education among this cohort of young people. This suggests that such interventions may be among those which are more effective in raising young people's aspirations and generating positive attitudes towards higher education.

Although overall, whether a respondents' parents had experience of higher education did not emerge as significantly associated with aspirations to continue into higher education among this cohort, there were indications that young people's background, in terms of their socio-economic circumstances, could be associated with the type of higher education institution they considered attending. Young people who intended to choose a post-1992 institution tended to be those who were eligible for free school meals, in part-

time employment and were concerned about the financial implications of higher education. While there are a range of reasons why a young person might choose one institution over another, Aimhigher partnerships may wish to explore the types of institutions that young people are considering applying to and their reasons for making these choices in order to investigate any pre-conceptions they may have.

4. The experience of 16 to 17 year olds

Key findings

- Nearly all respondents had decided to continue their education post-16 (90 per cent) and most of those who were in full-time education, were studying at Level 3 (64 per cent). The 16 to 17 year olds were largely positive about their post-16 activities however a minority were dissatisfied with their choices.
- In Year 11 most respondents had received information about further education (95 per cent) and visited a further education college (71 per cent) and around three-quarters had spoken to a Connexions Personal Advisor (72 per cent).
- Around half of 16 to 17 year olds had received information about higher education (52 per cent) in Year 11, and around a third (34 per cent) took part in an organised visit to a higher education institution. A smaller proportion had participated in an Aimhigher Roadshow (22 per cent), a summer or other holiday school (18 per cent) or spoken to a student from higher education.
- Respondents had most commonly discussed further and higher education with their family and friends, however many young people had also spoken to their teachers (83 per cent about further education and 57 per cent about higher education) career or Personal Advisors (44 per cent about further and 77 per cent about higher education). Around a half of young people had spoken to a further education student (48 per cent) and around a quarter had spoken to a higher education student (23 per cent).
- Around a quarter of 16 to 17 year olds had received some information about health related careers, post-16 and 68 per cent of these indicated that they were considering undertaking a health-related higher education course.
- Progression to learning post-16 was negatively associated with having a white UK background and no associations were apparent between post-16 transition and Aimhigher-related activities.
- A positive attitude towards higher education was associated with a number of background characteristics including family experience of higher education and attainment at GCSE. There was also an association with some Aimhigher activities including receiving information about higher education in Year 11, and receiving information about careers in health post-16. A positive post-16 transition experience was also linked to a positive attitude towards higher education.
- There were also links between background characteristics and intentions to go onto higher education. A positive association was found between a desire to go to higher education and speakers of a first language other than English and parental experience of higher education. Associations were also apparent between successful post-16 transition, studying for some academic qualifications post-16 and plans to go to higher education. There was also a link between attending a summer school of up to one-week in duration and intentions to go on to higher education.

4.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the experiences of the 16 to 17 year old respondents, a total of 1,222 of whom participated in the survey (representing 35 per cent of those who were sent questionnaires). All young people involved in the survey also completed questionnaires in Year 11 when they were attending schools in areas that were designated part of the Aimhigher: Excellence Challenge initiative.²⁸ At the time of the survey these respondents had completed Year 11 less than one year earlier. They were only a few months into their chosen post-16 activity and may have been attending schools or colleges which were part of the integrated Aimhigher programme. This chapter examines the extent to which there appear to be links between the 16 to 17 year olds' post-16 choices, attitudes and aspirations towards higher education and any Aimhigher-related activities in which they may have participated pre-and post-16.

The respondents to the survey were not completely representative of their peers who had been in the same year group in schools in Aimhigher areas. Respondents were more frequently female, higher attaining young people who were not eligible for free school meals and did not have any reported special educational needs. Details of the significant differences between the two groups are given below:

- A greater proportion of 16 to 17 year olds who responded to the survey, were female (73 per cent respondents compared to 50 per cent of their peers in Aimhigher schools)
- A greater proportion of respondents to the survey were not recognised as having any special educational needs (89 per cent of respondents compared to 82 per cent of their peers)
- Respondents to the survey achieved significantly more points at Key Stage 4 (48 points on average) than their peers in the cohort as a whole (38 points on average)
- Fewer respondents to the survey were known to be eligible for free school meals (21 per cent) compared to their peers (24 per cent).

Due to the marked over-representation of females in the survey, the data presented in the basic frequencies in this chapter is weighted to compensate. However, data quoted in the multilevel models is *not* weighted because this analysis takes into account the effect of any differences between individuals.

²⁸ Most 16 to 17 year olds (84 per cent) had attended schools that were in Excellence in Cities (EiC) Phase 1 or 2 areas, or Education Action Zones (EAZ) and as such may have been participating in Aimhigher: Excellence Challenge since 2001. A small proportion of respondents (17 per cent) had attended schools that were in EiC Phase 3 areas, and as such, may have been participating in Aimhigher: Excellence Challenge since September 2003.

In terms of the Aimhigher policy, the 16 to 17 year old respondents were broadly representative of individuals in Aimhigher schools who returned their address for further communication after Year 11: a similar proportion had been identified as gifted and talented (ten per cent compared to eight per cent of their peers) and designated part of the widening participation cohort (13 per cent compared to 12 per cent of their peers). There were only slight differences between the ethnic background of respondents and their peers and the extent to which they were speakers of a first language other than English. Please see Appendix B for more details on the profile of the respondents.

4.2 What Aimhigher-related activities had the 16 to 17 year olds experienced?

As can be seen in Table 4.1, the majority of the 16 to 17 year old respondents said that they had experienced some Aimhigher-related activities when they were in Year 11. Most had been involved in activities and experiences related to further education, such as receiving information about further education and visiting a college or sixth-form. In addition, many had information about, and experience of, higher education during Year 11. Around half said that they had received information about higher education and around a third took part in an organised visit to a higher education institution. Some young people had also taken part in aspiration-raising activities such as participating in an Aimhigher Roadshow, attending summer or other holiday schools and speaking with a student from higher education.

Table 4.1 Aimhigher-related activities respondents were involved with in Year 11: 16 to 17 year olds

Widening participation activities	Yes	No	Not sure	No response
	%	%	%	%
I went on work experience/took part in placements	76	21	2	1
I had information about going on to further education (in school or college) after Year 11	95	3	2	<1
I visited a further education college or sixth form college	71	26	3	<1
I had information about going on to university/HEI	52	37	10	1
I took part in a visit to a university/HEI organised through my school/college	34	62	3	1
I took part in a summer/Easter/winter school	18	79	2	1
I took part in a residential course at a university/HEI during term time	6	91	2	1
I took part in revision classes run by a university/HEI	8	87	5	1
I went to homework clubs/study skills classes organised by my school	55	42	2	1
I went to an Aimhigher Roadshow	22	70	7	1
I took part in a Masterclass	5	87	8	1
I spoke to a Learning Mentor	43	50	7	1
I spoke to a student from university/HEI at an Aimhigher Roadshow	15	78	7	1
I was mentored or coached by a student from university/HEI	3	93	4	1
I spoke to a Connexions Personal Advisor	72	23	5	1

N = 1222*A series of single response items**Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100**Source: NFER Evaluation of Aimhigher: Strand 1 – Survey of 16 to 17 year olds, 2005*

Where students had taken part in a summer, Easter or winter school, or other residential activity, these had generally lasted for one week or less although around one quarter of young people said that they had participated in summer schools that had been of two to three weeks' duration or more, as can be seen in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Time spent at summer, Easter or winter schools and/or residential activities: 16 to 17 year olds

Activity	Less than a week %	One week %	Two to three weeks %	More than three weeks %	No response %
Summer School	14	34	20	4	29
Easter/winter schools	14	16	5	<1	66
Residential activity	18	13	1	2	67

N = 258*A series of single response items**A filter question, all those who indicated that they had taken part in one of these activities.**Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100**Source: NFER Evaluation of Aimhigher: Strand 1 – Survey of 16 to 17 year olds, 2005*

As can be seen in Table 4.2, the majority of young people had discussed their **further education** plans with family and friends, while teachers and Personal Advisors had been a point of contact for nearly as many of the 16 to 17 year olds respondents. This suggests that family and friends seem to be a key focus for discussion but that young people also seek the views of teaching and Connexions staff.

Table 4.3 Individuals with whom young people discussed further education during Year 11: 16 to 17 year olds

During Year 11	Yes %	No %	Not sure %	No response %
I talked about further education with:				
Teacher(s) in school	83	14	2	1
Careers adviser/Personal Adviser(s)	72	24	3	1
Learning Mentor(s)	31	62	5	2
Staff from college	46	50	3	1
Employer(s)/other people in work	25	70	3	2
Student from further education college/sixth form	48	48	2	2
Youth workers	8	88	2	3
Family	91	8	1	1
Friends	90	9	<1	1

N = 1222*A series of single response items**1219 respondents responded to at least one part of this question**Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100**Source: NFER Evaluation of Aimhigher: Strand 1 – Survey of 16 to 17 year olds, 2005*

Although in Year 11 it appears that young people's main focus was on further education, many reported having discussions relating to **higher education**, as can be seen in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4 Individuals with whom young people discussed higher education during Year 11: 16 to 17 year olds

During Year 11	Yes	No	Not sure	No response
	%	%	%	%
I talked about higher education with:				
Teacher(s) in school	57	36	4	4
Careers adviser/Personal Adviser(s)	44	49	4	4
Learning Mentor(s)	19	72	5	4
Staff from HEI	12	80	4	5
Employer(s)/other people in work	15	77	3	4
Student mentors/coaches from a university/HEI	8	83	4	5
A student from university /HEI who I knew through friends or family	23	69	4	4
A student from university/HEI arranged through school	9	82	4	5
Youth workers	5	87	3	5
Family	75	20	2	4
Friends	70	24	2	4
N = 1222				

A series of single response items

1186 respondents responded to at least one part of this question

Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100

Source: NFER Evaluation of Aimhigher: Strand 1 – Survey of 16 to 17 year olds, 2005

It appears that, while they were in Year 11, many young people were also considering their longer term plans, as the majority had discussed **higher education** with family and friends and teachers and, to a slightly lesser extent, Personal Advisors. A small proportion of the young people aged 16 to 17 who responded to the survey indicated that their school had arranged for them to meet with a higher education student or to be mentored by a student in higher education. In addition, nearly a quarter said that they had discussed higher education with a current undergraduate who they knew through personal contacts. This suggests that, for this group, the extent to which their social contacts included undergraduates may still have a bigger impact on the extent to which they were able to learn about higher education from current undergraduates.

As noted in Chapter 1, a strand of new activities, which focused on informing young people about health professions, was incorporated into the integrated Aimhigher programme. There is an indication that this strand may have been experienced by young people in this cohort during the course of their post-16

studies. As can be seen in Tables 4.5 below, around two-fifths of young people said that they had been given some information about careers in health. Over two-thirds (68 per cent) of the young people aged 16 to 17 who indicated that they had been given some information relating to careers in health were considering undertaking a health-related higher education course in the future. However, it is not possible to determine whether the information they received had influenced their choice, or whether they had sought information because of a pre-existing interest.

Table 4.5 Information given to respondents about careers in health: 16 to 17 year olds

Information given	Yes	No	Not sure	No response
	%	%	%	%
I was given information about careers in health	22	63	12	3
I talked to a health professional to learn more about careers in health care (e.g. nurse, physiotherapist)	10	82	4	4
I visited a hospital or health centre to find out about careers in health	6	88	3	4
I did work experience in a health-related area	10	84	3	3

N = 1222

A series of single response items

Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100

Source: NFER Evaluation of Aimhigher: Strand 1 – Survey of 16 to 17 year olds, 2005

In summary, in terms of the 16 to 17 year olds' involvement in Aimhigher, the majority had participated in activities and had discussions with various people about further education and many had also participated in activities and spoken to people regarding higher education. The impact of these experiences on young peoples' progression at 16 and their attitudes and aspirations towards higher education is investigated in later sections of this chapter.

4.3 What did the 16 to 17 year olds do after Year 11?

4.3.1 What were the post-16 destinations of the 16 to 17 year olds?

Ninety per cent of the 16 to 17 year olds had spent from September 2004 to February 2005 in some form of learning and only a small proportion (eight per cent) had been pursuing other activities. Table 4.6 gives more details on what the 16 to 17 year olds chose to do post-16 and section 4.3.6 looks at factors that influenced these choices.

Table 4.6 Post-16 activities: 16 to 17 year olds

Most frequent activity	%
On a full-time course at college	57
On a full-time course at school	28
Apprenticeship or Advanced Apprenticeship	6
In a full-time job	3
Out of work	2
Other work based training (not Apprenticeship)	1
Something else	1
Looking after home or family	<1
No response	3

N = 1222

A single response question

Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100

Respondents were asked to give information on their activities month-by-month. As such this table reflects the activities that the respondents were doing during the larger part of this time period

Source: NFER Evaluation of Aimhigher: Strand 1 – Survey of 16 to 17 year olds, 2005

In addition to their main activities listed above, over one-third of respondents were working in one or more part-time jobs (36 per cent), on average for 12 hours per week.

Those 16 to 17 year olds who were in full-or part-time education at school or college after Year 11, were studying for a variety of qualifications, most frequently at Level 3 (64 per cent). Table 4.7 below shows that nearly half of those in full-time education were studying for AS-Levels.

Table 4.7 Qualifications: 16 to 17 year olds

Qualifications	%
AS Levels	49
Key Skills	13
BTEC National Diploma or similar diploma	11
GCSEs	9
Intermediate GNVQ/BTEC First Diploma	9
NVQ Level 2	6
Foundation GNVQ	5
12 unit AVCE	5
NVQ Level 1	5
A Levels (A2)	3
3 or 6 unit AVCEs	4
NVQ Level 3	3
Other vocational qualification	2
Other	3
Not currently in education/none	5
No response	5
N = 1222	

More than one answer could be so percentages do not sum to 100.

Source: NFER Evaluation of Aimhigher: Strand 1 – Survey of 16 to 17 year olds, 2005

4.3.2 What were the 16 to 17 year olds views on the support they received to progress at 16?

The majority of young people had decided to continue their learning in some way, after Year 11, but what kind of support had they received in making this decision? Around half (55 per cent) of those aged 16 to 17 said that the careers education and guidance they had received in Year 11 had been helpful while 22 per cent were unsure and 19 per cent said that it had not been helpful. A minority (four per cent) reported that they had not received any such guidance. Over half (58 per cent) would have liked more help, although nearly one-third (31 per cent) said that they had not needed more help in making this decision.

Table 4.8 illustrates the nature of the additional help and guidance that the 16 to 17 year olds would have valued.

Table 4.8 Type of help that young people would have liked in choosing what to do next: 16 to 17 year olds

	%
Help in finding out which career suits my skills and abilities	86
Information on courses or training I could apply for	72
Information on jobs I could apply for	68
Help in planning what to do next	68
Practice for interviews	61
Help in making applications or writing CVs	59
Information on local job opportunities	55
Information about university/HEI	48
Opportunities for practical experience or work experience	45
Information on national job opportunities	31
Other help	6
No response	<1

N = 703*More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100**A filter question: All those who indicated that they would have liked more help or guidance*

The findings suggest that most of the young people were seeking individual support and guidance that was related specifically to them as an individual, such as finding out what career might suit them and how to plan for their transition after Year 11. It also indicates that the young people, as might be expected, were more concerned about their immediate next steps and identifying appropriate courses and jobs to embark on after Year 11, while fewer were seeking information about higher education. Nevertheless, nearly half of the young people who would have liked more information identified a need for further details relating to higher education which emphasized the need for Aimhigher activities that can provide young people with such information.

4.3.3 Did the 16 to 17 year olds change their minds between Year 11 and making the transition at 16?

As already discussed, most 16 to 17 year olds continued in education at after the age of 16, but did any of them change their minds about what to do post-16?

Comparisons of the 16 to 17 year olds post-16 intentions in Year 11 and their subsequent activities at the time of the survey revealed that a large proportion of those who had planned to leave education at 16 or were unsure what they wanted to do, when asked in Year 11, were actually still in learning at the time of the survey. The majority (78 per cent) of those who had intended to leave education at the end of Year 11 (133 respondents) were still in learning at the time of the survey, and 89 per cent of those who were unsure what to do had

also remained in learning. However, the majority respondents who had actually intended to continue learning after the age of 16, had stuck to their plans at the time of the survey. Most of those who intended to stop studying after further education (87 per cent of 312 respondents) and after higher education (98 per cent of 547 respondents)²⁹ were still in learning at the time of the survey. These findings suggest that Year 11 is a key decision-making time in young people's lives and Aimhigher partnerships may wish to consider targeting support relating to post-16 transition at young people who do not plan to continue in education post-16, or who are undecided about their future.

4.3.4 Did the 16 to 17 year olds change activity after 16?

As well as changing their minds during Year 11 about their post-16 plans, a small proportion of respondents also stopped or changed the post-16 activities that they were doing at the time of the survey. Whilst the majority (79 per cent) had remained in the same post-16 activity, 11 per cent had stopped or changed a course or training programme, whilst two per cent had changed a job. Of those that had made a change, most (65 per cent) had moved between activities of a similar type, however, nearly two-fifths (19 per cent) moved out of learning, whilst only a small proportion (two per cent) moved into learning.

The reasons these respondents gave for changing their activity were most commonly related to respondents views of the activity such as a lack of enjoyment (61 per cent), failure to meet their expectations (34 per cent) or becoming bored of the activity (19 per cent). These findings highlight the importance of ensuring that young people are fully informed about their next step so that their expectations are realistic.

4.3.5 What did the 16 to 17 year olds think of their current activity?

As discussed, the majority of the 16 to 17 year olds did not change their post-16 activities and were also largely positive about these activities, as shown in Table 4.9. Most agreed (or strongly agreed) that their activity was enjoyable, interesting, was a useful experience, was helpful for the future and that they were learning new skills. However, amongst a minority the responses suggest some uncertainty and dissatisfaction with their choices. One fifth were not sure that they made the right choice and one-in-ten felt that they were only doing it because there was nothing better to do. The 315 young people who felt that they had not made the right choice, or who were unsure, appeared to be more likely to feel that they would have appreciated more advice and guidance. Whilst 42 per cent of those who did not feel that they had made the right choice said that they had found careers guidance helpful, this was the case for 55 per cent of all respondents. Moreover, 71 per cent of those who

²⁹ Thirty-eight respondents had not answered one or both of these questions in the 2004 or 2005 questionnaire and as such could not be included in this analysis.

felt that they had not made the right choice said that they would have valued more guidance compared with 58 per cent of all respondents.

Table 4.9 Views on post-16 activity: 16 to 17 year olds

Young people's views	Strongly agree %	Agree %	Not sure %	Disagree %	Strongly disagree %	No response %
I enjoy what I'm doing	32	51	10	4	2	2
What I am doing is interesting	28	55	9	5	2	2
I don't have to travel too far	33	41	8	12	4	2
It is what I have always wanted to do	22	33	27	11	6	2
It will help me in the future	47	37	10	2	2	2
I made the right choice	32	39	20	4	3	3
It is worse than I expected	3	10	13	41	29	3
I feel I am learning new skills	34	50	9	3	2	3
I like what I'm doing but do not think that I can afford to continue	2	4	14	41	37	3
It is better than I expected	12	34	33	14	5	2
I am doing it because there is nothing better to do	3	8	12	39	36	3
I am getting useful experience	29	50	13	4	2	2
I am being treated as an adult	30	41	14	8	4	3
I wish I could change what I am doing	7	9	17	36	29	3
I am thinking about doing something different	8	13	16	32	28	3

N = 1222

A series of single response items

Due to rounding, percentages may not always sum to 100

Source: NFER Evaluation of Aimhigher: Strand 1 – Survey of 16 to 17 year olds, 2005

4.3.6 What was associated with 16 to 17 year olds choices at 16?

The 16 to 17 year olds had participated in some Aimhigher-related activities focused on further education and had also received some careers education and guidance for their progression at 16. Many young people had changed their minds in Year 11 about what to do after finishing school and some had also changed or stopped their post-16 activity. So, what factors were associated with the choices that young people made at this key time? A multi-level model analysis was carried out to investigate the links between respondents' characteristics, pre-16 experiences and their progression at age 16 into further learning through course- and work- based routes (see Appendix E Table E6).

The analysis revealed that whilst background characteristics appeared to have an affect on young people's post-16 transition: there were strong negative associations between young people from a **white UK** background and progression to further learning at age 16. Young people from this group were less than one-fifth as likely as other young people, with the same prior attainment and socio-economic characteristics, to go to higher education. No links, however, were apparent between entry into post-16 learning and Aimhigher activities in Year 11. The link between ethnic background and progression at 16, suggests that some young people from a white UK background may need particular support or encouragement in making the transition between Year 11 and post-16 education.

The analysis also revealed that young people who had **talked to youth workers and employers** in Year 11 about higher education, were more than twice as likely as their peers to go into learning post-16 (an odds multiplier of 2.60). It should be noted that only a small proportion of the cohort involved in the analysis spoke to an employer (three per cent) or youth worker (15 per cent) about higher education, but this finding may indicate the value for young people of contact with a wide range of individuals when making decisions about their future.

Having looked back at the choices that young people made when they were 16, the support they received in making these choices and the things that informed their decisions, the remainder of the chapter looks at young people's future plans, more specifically their attitudes and aspirations to higher education.

4.4 What influenced 16 to 17 year olds' attitudes towards higher education?

More than half of the 16 to 17 year olds surveyed, planned to progress on to higher education courses once they had completed their post-16 activities (60 per cent). This section examines young people's attitudes towards higher education and the factors that were associated with the extent to which they had a positive attitude towards it.

4.4.1 The 16 to 17 year olds attitudes towards higher education

As Table 4.10 shows the majority of respondents were felt positively towards higher education. Most felt that they would enjoy studying for a degree and would find it easy to make friends and to fit in. There were mixed views about the difficulty of studying at higher education: whilst some respondents felt that they would do sufficiently well in their level 3 examination results to go to higher education nearly half of respondents were unsure whether or not the work in higher education would be too hard for them. There was much uncertainty about finances in higher education. Over one-third were not sure

if they could afford to go to higher education or live away from home and two-fifths said that they would find it difficult to manage financially.

Table 4.10 16 to 17 year olds views of higher education

Views on university	True for me %	Not true for me %	Not sure %	No response %
I think I would enjoy studying for a degree/other higher education qualification	59	20	18	3
I don't think I could afford to go to university/HEI	30	32	35	3
I think I would find it easy to make friends at university/HEI	64	12	21	4
I think my parents/carers would put me under too much pressure to do well at university/HEI	18	58	20	3
I don't know anyone who has been to university/HEI	18	69	8	4
I think my exam results will be good enough to get me into university/HEI	37	24	37	3
I don't want to go to university/HEI if it means leaving my friends	10	71	16	3
I would find it very difficult to manage financially at university/HEI	40	23	25	3
My parents/carers would be very pleased if I went to university/HEI	79	6	12	3
The work at university/HEI would be too hard for me	17	33	47	4
My friends would think I was a snob if I went to university/HEI	4	82	10	3
I think I would find it easy to fit in at a university/HEI	52	14	30	4
I don't want to go to university/HEI if it means leaving my family	14	62	20	3
I could not afford to live away from home at university/HEI	30	29	38	4
Some of my friends have gone to university/HEI	42	42	13	3
I have a brother, sister or cousin who went to university/HEI	45	46	6	3

N = 1222

A series of single responses

Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100

Source: NFER Evaluation of Aimhigher: Strand 1 – Survey of 16 to 17 year olds, 2005

Many of the 16 to 17 year olds reported that their families and friends had positive attitudes towards higher education and that they had some history of higher education amongst their social group. Only a small proportion of respondents did not want to go to higher education if it involved leaving their family or moving away from their friends.

In addition, most respondents were positive about the career advantages that attending a higher education institution would bring; with the majority felt that graduates get better jobs and that the long-term benefits of higher education outweighed the costs. (see table 4.11 below)

Table 4.11 Further views of higher education: 16 to 17 year olds

Perceptions of university	Agree	Disagree	Don't know	No response
	%	%	%	%
Life at university/HEI is just like school	8	62	27	3
Most people who go to university/HEI end up in debt	54	18	25	3
People who go to university/HEI have to be very clever	34	47	16	3
Students at university/HEI never do any real work	4	75	18	4
People that get degrees/other HE qualifications get better jobs	74	11	13	3
The only way people can afford to live at university /HEI is to have a part-time job	48	21	27	3
The cost of university/HEI will be worth it in the long run	61	8	27	3

N = 1222

A series of single response questions

Due to rounding percentages may not sum to 100

Source: NFER Evaluation of Aimhigher: Strand 1 – Survey of 16 to 17 year olds, 2005

So, most of the 16 to 17 year olds had positive attitude towards higher education, but as has been seen this was not the case for every respondent. What factors are linked these young peoples' attitudes towards higher education and what role did Aimhigher activities play in their influencing their views? Further analysis presented in this section investigates the relationship between respondents' characteristics and experiences in Year 11 and post-16, and the extent to which they had a positive attitude towards higher education. (See Appendix C for details of the variables included in the derivation of the attitudinal factors).

4.4.2 What was associated with young people's attitudes towards higher education?

The analysis revealed that young people's attitudes towards higher education were associated with family and personal background characteristics, but also with participation in Aimhigher-related activities pre- and post-16 (see Appendix E Table E8). Young people who had a positive attitude towards higher education were:

- those who had **friends and family who had been to higher education**
- those who had **talked to friends and family about higher education**
- those who had **achieved higher GCSE scores**
- those who had **received information about higher education in Year 11**
- those who had **received information about careers in health.**

These findings highlight that, whilst attainment and family experience of higher education are important factors; providing young people with information regarding higher education, particularly career-related information in a specific area of interest, may encourage a positive view of higher education.

There were positive associations between the preparation that young people felt they had received for post-16 transition and their attitudes towards higher education. In particular, young people were more likely to have a positive attitude to higher education, if they:

- felt that their **school had prepared them for studying after Year 11**
- had **talked to staff in schools** such as teachers, careers advisors, Personal Advisors and Learning Mentors **about further education**
- felt that their **post-16 activity fitted well into their future plans** (See Appendix C for a description of the factor analysis).

It is not possible, from the analysis, to identify whether these factors are the consequence of pre-existing attitudes, or have affected current attitudes. However, feeling that a post-16 activity was an appropriate choice does highlight the importance of support for young people, both pre- and post-16, in helping them to make decisions about what to do in the future.

The analysis also revealed that young people with a **statement of Special Education Needs** tended to have a less positive attitude towards higher education as did those from a **white UK** background. Aimhigher partnerships may like to consider the support they offer to young people from a white UK background in their areas, and also, where appropriate, whether young people

with Special Educational Needs have equal opportunities to participate in aspiration raising activities as other young people.

The analysis also revealed a relationship between young people's views of the factors that might encourage them to go to higher education, and having a positive view of higher education. Young people who had a positive attitude towards higher education were more likely, compared to those without a positive attitude, to believe that they would be encouraged to go into higher education by:

- being able to **improve their career prospects**
- being able to **find the right course**
- **knowing more about higher education and student life.**

However, there was a negative association with views of higher education, and feeling that being able to study for a higher education qualification **part-time** or at a **local university/HEI** would encourage young people to go to higher education. This may imply that, while information about higher education, the courses available to them and the career benefits it entails may encourage those with a positive attitude to apply. The possibility of part-time study and/or study at a local university may not always be as beneficial.

4.5 What was associated with the 16 to 17 year olds' aspirations to progress into higher education at 18?

4.5.1 What did the 16 to 17 year olds plan to do after 18?

Having looked at what influenced young people's attitudes towards higher education, this section addresses whether or not young people actually wanted to go to higher education and what factors may have influenced their plans. The 16 to 17 year olds had similar aspirations to the 17 to 18 year olds discussed in Chapter 3 with over half (60 per cent), planning to go on to higher education courses when they had finished their post-16 activity. A small proportion of the 16 to 17 year olds intended to continue their education through work-based learning (15 per cent) such as doing an Apprenticeship or Advanced Apprenticeship, or through course-based learning (14 per cent), such as doing A-levels or an NVQ. Only a few intended to go into employment (five per cent), or do something else (five per cent).

The 16 to 17 year olds who planned to go on to higher education provided details of what subjects they planned to study and which institutions they planned to attend.³⁰ The most popular higher education subject choices were:

³⁰ Please note: the 16 to 17 year olds were not asked what type of course, such as a BA or BSC they were intending to study.

- Science related subjects (140 respondents), such as sports science, psychology and forensic science
- Creative arts (101 respondents), such as design, drama and fine art
- Health related subjects (90 respondents), such as medicine and nursing
- Finance and business related subjects (83 respondents), such as business studies and accounting
- Law (53 respondents).

Two-fifths of respondents who intended to go to university (40 per cent) wanted to study at a pre-1992 higher education institution and over one-quarter (26 per cent) of respondents planned to study at a post-1992 higher education institution.³¹ Six respondents said that they wanted to study at a university outside the UK, whilst four respondents wanted to study higher education at a further education college.³²

Comparison between respondents' post-18 plans in Year 11 and their intentions at the time of the survey revealed that the majority (87 per cent) of those planning in Year 11 to go on to higher education, still planned to do so a year later. Furthermore, a proportion of the young people who had not planned to go into higher education, or were unsure, had subsequently changed their minds. Of the 113 respondents who had previously intended to leave school after 16, 20 per cent intended to go on to undergraduate study at the time of the survey, whilst over a third (34 per cent) of those who had planned to leave after further-education, now intended to go. Over half of those who were unsure what they wanted to do post-18 when asked in Year 11, subsequently planned study in higher education³³.

These findings for the 16 to 17 year olds, and also those for the 17 to 18 year olds discussed in section 3.4.1, suggest that although many young people stick to their future plans, there is a significant proportion of them who change their minds, particularly those young people who were not originally planning to study post-18, or who are undecided. As such, Aimhigher partnerships may wish to target activities related to higher education, at young people aged 15 to 18 years, as this appears to be a key decision making period of their lives.

³¹ Please note: the analysis in this section looks at whether or not the 16 to 17 year olds planned to go to higher education and does not address the type of higher education institution (pre- or post-1992) they planned to go to, as happened in the analysis of the 17 to 18 year old data. This is because smaller proportions of the 16 to 17 year olds had, at the time of the survey decided on which institutions to attend, and as such, it was more appropriate to simply look at their intention to go onto higher education or not.

³² The remaining respondents did not respond to this question, or gave responses that could not be categorised.

³³ Thirty-eight respondents had not answered one or both of the questions in the 2004 and 2005 questionnaires, and, as such, could not be included in this analysis.

4.5.2 What did the 16 to 17 year olds think they would like to know about higher education and what would encourage them to go?

So, many of the 16 to 17 year olds were already considering higher education at the time of the survey. What further information would they find useful and what might help them to make up their minds about whether or not to go? Table 4.12 shows the information relating to higher education that young people aged 16 to 17 would like to receive. The majority of respondents said that they would like information about the costs associated with pursuing a higher education course and what financial support there was available. Information about courses and degrees was also popular with over two-thirds indicating that they would like to find out more about the availability of courses and the types of qualifications that may suit them. In addition, more than half would like to find out about what different institutions are like and what life and learning as a higher education student is like.

Table 4.12 Information young people would like to know about higher education: 16 to 17 year olds

University information	16-17 year olds %
How much it will cost me to go to university/HEI	74
What help I could get to pay for university/HEI	68
How to find out what courses are available	67
How to find out what degrees/other HE qualifications would suit me	67
What different universities/HEI are like	63
What learning at university/HEI is really like	62
What it is really like to be a university/HEI student	59
How to apply for university/HEI	
No response	16
N =	1222

A multiple response item

More than one answer could be given so percentages do not sum to 100

Source: NFER Evaluation of Aimhigher: Strand 1 – Survey of 16 to 17 and 17 to 18 year olds, 2005

As well as information that they would like to receive, the 16 to 17 year olds also indicated what factors would encourage them to go to higher education. Only seven per cent said that nothing would encourage them to go. The factors that would encourage them to go related to finding a course to suit their needs and the opportunity to improve their career prospects (see Table 4.13 below). Money at university was also a concern with three-quarters of respondents feeling that not having to worry about debt would encourage them to go on higher education. Over-two thirds felt that they would be encouraged by knowing more about university and student life.

Table 4.13 Factors which would encourage respondents to go to higher education: 16 to 17 year olds

Factors about university	This would encourage me %	This would make no difference %	I'm not sure %	No response %
Not having to worry about getting into debt	75	12	9	5
Being able to go to a local university/HEI	48	37	9	6
Knowing more about university/HEI and student life	67	19	7	5
Finding the right course for me	85	6	4	5
Being able to study part-time	38	39	16	6
Being able to improve my career prospects	81	7	6	6
Being able to do a degree or other HE qualification at a local further education college	42	33	18	7
Other	3	3	3	91

N = 1222*A series of single response items**Due to rounding, percentage may not sum to 100**Source: NFER Evaluation of Aimhigher: Strand 1 – Survey of 16 to 17 year olds, 2005*

This data on the needs and encouraging factors in relation to higher education for the 16 to 17 year olds, highlights the important role that Aimhigher partnerships may be able to play in supporting young people when they are considering higher education. In particular, it has shown that young people require more information about courses in higher education, what universities and student life is really like and what financial information and support in available.

4.5.3 What was associated with 16 to 17 year olds' aspirations to higher education?

Having discussed the 16 to 17 year olds plans for higher education and what support they feel they need, this section goes on to look at what factors influenced their plans and the role that Aimhigher-related activities may have played in this decision. A multi-level model analysis was carried out to investigate which factors were associated with young people's aspirations to higher education (see Appendix E Table E7).

Strong associations were seen between the **background characteristics** of the 16 to 17 year olds and their aspirations to higher education. More specifically:

- **speakers of a first language other than English** were nearly four times more likely to be planning to go on to higher education than others (an odds multiplier of 3.78)

- those with at least **one parent who had themselves attended higher education** were nearly twice as likely to be planning to go on to higher education than others (an odds multiplier of 1.78)

Young people's **post-16 activities** were associated with intentions to go on to higher education. More specifically:

- Those **studying for an academic qualification were over four times more likely to plan to go to higher education** (an odds multiplier of 4.13)
- Those **studying for a mix of academic and vocational qualifications** were over twice as likely to plan to go on to higher education (an odds multiplier of 2.25)

In addition, studying for an Apprenticeship or other work-based training and working in a full-time job, were negatively associated (an odds multiplier of 0.24) with plans for higher education. These findings suggest that activities by Aimhigher partnerships appear to have been less influential, thus far, for young people who are pursuing a vocational route, than for those undertaking an academic route.

Young people's contentment with their post-16 choice was associated with intention to go to higher education. Those young people who felt that their **post-16 activity fitted well into their future plans** were slightly more likely to want to go on to higher education, compared to other young people (an odds multiplier of 1.14). This suggests that there is a link between making a successful post-16 transition and plans for higher education.

In terms of Aimhigher-related activities, young people who had taken part in **residential activities** of up to one week in length at higher education institutions, such as summer, winter or Easter schools, were nearly twice as likely compared to those who had not taken part, to plan to go to higher education (an odds multiplier of 1.89). In addition, activities provided by Aimhigher partnerships that encourage young people to think positively about higher education may have an impact upon the proportion of young people who plan to go. Young people who had a **positive attitude** towards higher education were one-and-a-half times more likely to want to go (an odds multiplier of 1.52).

In addition, young people who felt that they would be encouraged to go on to higher education by certain things were more likely to want to go there. More specifically those who felt that they would be encouraged to go on to higher education by the following prospects, were more likely to wish to undertake undergraduate study.

- **being able to improve their career prospects** (an odds multiplier of 1.95) and
- **knowing more about higher education** and student life (an odds multiplier of 1.72).

There was a negative association with feeling that being able to study higher education **part-time** (an odds multiplier of 0.30), or at a **further education college** (an odds multiplier of 0.63) would encourage respondents to go.

4.6 Conclusion

The data and analysis presented in this chapter has revealed that the 16 to 17 year olds participated in a range of Aimhigher activities when they were in Year 11, and afterwards. The Aimhigher-related activities that they experienced in Year 11 and in the first year post-16 have been the focus of this analysis. Young people may have experienced activities in Years 9 and 10, which is not reflected in this data. Whilst the data has shown that some activities appear to encourage young people to have a positive attitude towards higher education and aspire towards it, it has also shown that Year 11 and the post-16 period are key decision making times in young people lives and, as such, participation in Aimhigher activities at this stage in their lives may be influential. The data has also revealed that some types of information about higher education may be more effective than others.

The 16 to 17 year olds surveyed had participated in a range of Aimhigher-related activities in Year 11: most had been involved in further education-related activities and many also had been involved in higher education-related activities, such as receiving information about higher education and visiting a higher education institution. A smaller proportion took part in more intensive Aimhigher-related activities such as residential visits to higher education institutions, the Aimhigher Roadshow, Masterclasses and revision classes run by a higher education institutions. In addition, many 16 to 17 year olds had spoken to people such as teachers, Personal Advisors, and undergraduates about higher education.

The analysis showed that in relation to Aimhigher activities, young people who had participated in a residential activity of up to one week in duration, and who had a positive attitude towards higher education, were more likely to want to go there. Furthermore, young people who had positive attitudes towards higher education were those who had higher GCSE results, who had received information about higher education in Year 11, had received information regarding specific (health-related) career pathways, and who felt that they were well prepared for progression at 16. This suggests that Aimhigher activities which may be most effective are short residential visits to

higher education institutions; those that give young people information about higher education, particularly in relation to specific careers of interest and those that raise attainment.

Whilst no links between Aimhigher-related activities and progression at 16 were apparent, other evidence presented in this chapter suggests that Year 11 is a key decision making time for young people and as such Aimhigher partnerships maybe be able to support young people in making this transition. The data examined in this chapter also revealed that Year 11 and a key decision making period for young people in relation to higher education. These findings emphasise the importance of the work that Aimhigher partnerships can do in providing young people with support and information about further and higher education during this period in their lives.

Young people gave some indication of the type of information that they would find it most helpful to receive about higher education. This related particularly to information regarding the financial aspects of higher education, the courses and qualifications they would be most suited to and what different kinds of institutions are like. The analysis also revealed what kind of things might encourage those that were planning to go to higher education, and those that had a positive attitude towards it to apply. These related particularly to knowing more about higher education and being able to improve their career prospects, whilst information about studying higher education part-time may be seen as less useful. In addition, over half of the 16 to 17 year olds said that they would have liked more help in deciding what to do after the age of 16, particularly in relation to finding out what courses, jobs and career paths they would be suited to. Aimhigher partnerships may wish to consider the type of information about higher education that is provided in the activities they organise, and whether or not this is the most useful information to the young people they are targeting.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Young people's destinations and aspirations

This report has shown that the majority of the three study cohorts of young people remained in learning after leaving compulsory education. Nearly all of the 16 to 17 year olds (90 per cent) were continuing their learning post-16 in some way, with 85 per cent following a full-time course at school or college. A total of 83 per cent of 17 to 18 year olds had continued their education post-16, with nearly three quarters of all respondents doing a full-time course in school or college, a year after leaving Year 11 (74 per cent). Over three quarters of 18 to 19 year olds had continued their learning in some way post-16 (76 per cent), with over two thirds in a full-time course in school or college a year after leaving compulsory education (69 per cent).

The report has also shown that, while a proportion of 18 to 19 year olds had made a definite choice not to go to university, many respondents were continuing, or wanted to continue, their education post-18. A total of 60 per cent of 16 to 17 year olds and 59 per cent of 17 to 18 year olds wanted to go in to higher education, whilst 39 per cent of 18 to 19 year olds were already studying in higher education and a further 16 per cent planned to go there at some point in the future.

Across the three cohorts of young people, aspirations to continue their educational career in higher education appeared to be associated with their experience of Aimhigher-related activities such as visiting higher education institutions, having contact with staff and undergraduates in higher education and participating in summer schools. Moreover, among the students in the two older cohorts, participation in such activities appeared to be having a stronger influence over their expressed preferences for post-18 choices than previous parental history of participation in higher education.

5.2 Young people's satisfaction with their destinations

The majority of young people in each of the surveyed cohorts were satisfied with their choice of post-16 destination and only a minority had changed from their original choice to an alternative, including a small proportion in the oldest cohort of respondents who had ceased or changed a higher education course that they had started. A minority of respondents in each cohort indicated that they were not satisfied, stating, for example, that they did not think that they had made the right choice and wished that they could change what they were doing. This suggests that there were a minority of young

people who could have benefited from further advice and guidance in making their choices.

The findings indicated that there was scope for further advice and guidance for young people who were making decisions about key transitions. The responses of the young people indicated that they would have valued more individualised guidance and support that enabled them to explore the careers and courses that would be appropriate for their skills and abilities, both pre-16 and post-16.

5.3 Range and type of Aimhigher activities

The Aimhigher partnerships are engaged in providing activities and opportunities to young people to better inform their decisions about further and higher education through raising their awareness and understanding. The evidence from previous research into Aimhigher: Excellence Challenge indicated that visits to higher education institutions, and in particular discussions with staff and current students in higher education, were viewed as the more effective activities to offer. In addition, the attendance at summer schools was associated with slightly higher attainment at Key Stage 4 than might be expected given a young person's prior attainment and other background characteristics.

The findings from the surveys of young people post-16, presented in this report, reveal that more than one third of the young people in each of the cohorts had visited a higher education institution and that around two-fifths had discussed higher education with an undergraduate they knew personally. Fifteen per cent said that their discussion with an undergraduate had been arranged by their school or college. As noted above, the majority of those aged 16 to 17 and 17 to 18 said that they intended to progress onto higher education when they were surveyed. There were indications that some Aimhigher-related activities were associated with a positive intention to participate in higher education, and a positive attitude towards higher education. Of the range of activities, it appeared that visits to higher education institutions, discussions with current staff and undergraduates, participation in and Aimhigher Roadshow and in a week-long holiday school may be the most effective activities, as these were most strongly associated with young people's attitudes and aspirations.

The analysis suggests that there is value in providing young people with opportunities to access higher education institutions and their staff and students, in order to raise their aspirations towards higher education. These appear to be the types of activities that have the most effect on young people. However, other activities do emerge as influential with different cohorts of young people. Practitioners at a local level may be best placed to assess the

most effective activities for the specific group of young people with whom they are working.

5.4 Family and friends

Across the cohorts, the majority of young people reported that they had discussed their future plans in relation to post-16 and post-18 choices with their family and friends. This highlighted the central role of such individuals in the decision-making processes of young people. Aimhigher partnerships may wish to consider the value of ensuring that activities to promote awareness and clarify people's understanding of higher education are sufficiently broad to include the friends and families of young people whom they are targeting. Thus these key influencers can provide more informed, and more accurate, information, support and guidance to young people.

5.5 Financial awareness

One area of support that Aimhigher partnerships sought to provide was in relation to ensuring that young people had an understanding of the financial support available to pursue a higher education course, and how to manage financially in higher education. The evidence from the surveys suggests that there is an ongoing need for providing young people with information and guidance related to finance. Finance emerged as one of the main areas of concern for respondents in all cohorts and as an area on which they would like further information. Moreover, around one third of those in higher education said that they found it hard to manage their finances and around two-fifths of the respondents in each of the younger cohorts were concerned that would find it hard to manage financially. Similarly, around half of those aged 18 to 19 who were not currently participating in higher education said that one reason for this was that they did not wish to get into debt. Overall, therefore, it appears that ensuring that young people are fully informed about the costs of higher education, and how to source additional funding and manage budgets when pursuing a higher education course could be key priority areas for Aimhigher partnerships.

Appendix A: Cohorts of young people

Figure A: Year in which respondents to the survey completed questionnaires

Cohort	Year			
	2002	2003	2004	2005
18 to 19 year olds	4,031 completed Year 11 survey ³⁴			659 completed 18 to 19 year old survey (16%)
17 to 18 year olds		7,705 completed Year 11 survey		1996 completed 17 to 18 year old survey (26%)
16 to 17 year olds			3,496 completed Year 11 survey	1,222 completed 16 to 17 year old survey (35%)

³⁴ Please note: the numbers for the Year 11 survey represent those young people who participated in the Year 11 survey and expressed a willingness to be contacted again.

Appendix B: Profile of young people who responded to the surveys

In order to provide a context for interpreting young people's responses to the surveys, this chapter presents a profile of the respondents. It presents details of:

- The characteristics of the young people who responded, including their gender, ethnicity and levels of attainment
- The characteristics of all the young people who were sent a questionnaire, and all young people in the schools that were in Aimhigher: Excellence Challenge areas, in order to explore the extent to which respondents to the survey are representative of the wider cohort of students who may have experience of Aimhigher.

A.1 Profile of respondents aged 16 to 17

A total of 1,222 young people aged 16 to 17 (Year 12 or equivalent) responded to the survey. Table A.1 provides further details.

Table A.1 Background characteristics of respondents, all young people invited to participate and young people in Aimhigher schools: 16 to 17 year olds

Characteristic	Respondents	Sample	Young people in Aimhigher schools
	%	%	%
Gender			
Male	27	40	50
Female	73	60	50
Ethnicity			
White	75	75	74
Asian or Asian British	11	11	12
Black or Black British	8	7	8
Mixed	2	2	3
Chinese	1	<1	<1
Other	2	2	2
Prefer not to say	2	3	1
Mother tongue			
English	82	82	82
Other than English	18	18	18
Free school meals			
Receive free school meals	21	24	24
Does not receive free school meals	78	76	76
Special Educational Needs			
No special provision	89	86	82
School action / plus	10	12	15
Statement or assessment	1	2	3
Aimhigher cohorts			
Designated gifted and talented	10	8	No data
Designated widening participation	13	12	No data
N=	1158	3288	185175

N= all those in each sample for whom data was available on NPD

Source: NFER surveys of young people in 2004 and 2005, data provided by schools in 2004 and NPD

Table A.1 reveals that there were some significant differences between the characteristics of young people who responded to the survey and their peers who had been in the same year group in schools in Aimhigher areas. More specifically, a greater proportion of young people who responded were female, compared with the cohort as a whole and fewer respondents were recognised as having special educational needs. Furthermore, respondents achieved significantly more points at Key Stage 4 (48 points in total on average) than their peers in the cohort as a whole (38 points on average). In addition, although the ethnic background of respondents differed significantly from

their peers, this difference was only slight and was not apparent in any specific ethnic group. Moreover, respondents did not differ significantly from their peers in terms of the extent to which English was an additional language.

Although significantly fewer respondents to the survey were known to be eligible for free school meals, the proportion who were identified as part of the widening participation cohort was similar to the profile of the cohort as a whole. Moreover, the proportion of the respondents who had been identified as gifted and talented while in Year 11 was similar to the proportion in the cohort as a whole. Some young people were identified as both gifted and talented and as part of the widening participation cohort. Of the 123 young people who were gifted and talented, and the 141 who responded and were part of the widening participation cohort, 41 were in both groups.

In policy-related respects, therefore, the 16 to 17 year old cohort who responded to the survey (and whose views are presented in this report) were representative of their peers. However, as discussed in Chapter 1, due to the marked over-representation of female students among survey respondents, and the apparent difference in responses between young people of different genders, the data presented in this report has been weighted to account for this.

Table A.2 presents the profile of the 1996 young people aged 17 to 18 (Year 13 or equivalent) who responded to the survey, and their peers.

Table A.2 Background characteristics of respondents, all young people invited to participated and young people in Aimhigher schools: 17 to 18 year olds

Characteristic	Respondents	Sample	Young people in Aimhigher schools
	%	%	%
Gender			
Male	27	40	50
Female	73	60	50
Ethnicity			
White	76	77	74
Asian or Asian British	15	13	11
Black or Black British	5	5	7
Mixed	2	2	2
Chinese	1	<1	<1
Other	1	1	2
Prefer not to say	2	1	4
Mother tongue			
English	82	84	83
Other than English	18	16	17
Free school meals			
Receive free school meals	18	20	22
Does not receive free school meals	82	80	79
Special Educational Needs			
No special provision	92	86	85
School action / plus	7	12	13
Statement or assessment	2	2	2
Aimhigher cohorts			
Designated gifted and talented	14	9	No data
Designated widening participation	7	7	No data
N=	1952	7524	168327

N= all those in each sample for whom data was available on NPD

Source: NFER surveys of young people in 2003 and 2005, data provided by schools in 2003 and NPD

As was the case among the 16 to 17 year old survey respondents, there were significant differences between the characteristics of the young people aged 17 to 18 who responded to the survey and their peers in the same year group. Significantly fewer males responded to the survey than might be expected given the profile of the cohort as a whole. Consequently, as discussed in Chapter 1, the data presented in this report has been weighted. In addition, the ethnic background of the respondents differed significantly from their peers. Fewer young people who were black or black British were represented and, in contrast to the younger respondents, a slightly greater proportion of

respondents were of Asian or Asian British heritage, compared with their age group in schools that participated in Aimhigher: Excellence Challenge. However, there were no significant differences in the proportion for whom English was an additional language. A significantly smaller proportion of young people who responded to the survey were recognised as having Special Educational Needs.

Among those who responded to the survey, the average total point score in the end of Key Stage 4 assessments was significantly higher (49 total points on average) than was the case among their peers (40 total points on average) and, as can be seen in the table, a greater proportion of young people who responded to the survey were identified as gifted and talented while in Year 11, compared with their peers as a whole. Finally, a significantly smaller proportion of young people who responded to the survey were known to be eligible for free school meals. However, the proportion who had been designated as part of the widening participation cohort while at school was the same as in the sample of possible respondents. In some instances, a young person could be identified as both gifted and talented and as part of the widening participation cohort. Among the respondents to the survey this was the case for 39 of the 274 young people who were gifted and talented, and the 128 who were in the widening participation cohort.

The profile of the oldest group of respondents, those aged 18 to 19 who had completed Year 11 in 2002 in schools that were participating in Aimhigher: Excellence Challenge, is presented in Table A.3.

Table A.3 Background characteristics of respondents, all young people invited to participated and young people in Aimhigher schools: 18 to 19 year olds

Characteristic	Respondents	Sample	Young people in Aimhigher schools
	%	%	%
Gender			
Male	28	43	50
Female	72	57	50
Ethnicity			
White	84	86	77
Asian or Asian British	10	8	12
Black or Black British	3	3	7
Mixed	0	0	<1
Chinese	0	<1	1
Other	2	2	3
Prefer not to say	1	1	<1
Mother tongue			
English	89	90	83
Other than English	11	10	17
Free school meals			
Receive free school meals	15	20	22
Does not receive free school meals	85	80	78
Special Educational Needs			
No special provision	94	91	90
School action / plus	5	7	8
Statement or assessment	2	2	2
Aimhigher cohorts			
Designated gifted and talented	16	10	No data
Designated widening participation	No data	No data	No data
N=	659	4031	154017

N= all those in each sample for whom data was available on NPD

Source: NFER surveys of young people in 2002 and 2005, data provided by schools in 2002 and NPD

Table A.3 indicates that the group of young people aged 18 to 19 who responded to the survey differed from their peers in schools that participated in Aimhigher: Excellence Challenge in some key respects. As was the case among the respondents in the younger cohorts, a significantly greater proportion of respondents to the survey were female and the data in the report is weighted to address this unrepresentativeness. In addition, there were significant differences in the ethnicity of respondents, compared with their peers in Year 11 at the time. A greater proportion of those who responded were white and smaller proportions were of Asian or black heritage.

Moreover, a smaller proportion were young people for whom English was an additional language, compared with their peers. The proportion of young people among survey respondents who were known to be eligible for free school meals was significantly smaller than was the case among the cohort as a whole. Data relating to whether they had been identified as part of the widening participation cohort was not available for this cohort of young people.

In terms of attainment, it appeared that the young people who responded to the survey had achieved significantly more points at Key Stage 4 (50 total points on average) than their peers in the cohort as a whole (38 total points on average). In addition, a greater proportion of the respondents had been identified as gifted and talented when they were in Year 11.

Summary

Overall, these comparisons of some of the characteristics of young people in each of the age groups who responded to the survey, with their peers in the same year groups who had been in schools that participated in Aimhigher: Excellence Challenge, indicates that the views of the respondents may not be fully representative of all young people who experienced activities and interventions, organised through Aimhigher Partnerships, that aimed to raise awareness of, and aspirations towards, further and higher education. The most notable difference between the cohort as a whole, and the respondents, related to their gender. Across each of the age groups surveyed, significantly more females and correspondingly fewer males responded. As discussed in Chapter 1, the relationship between young people's gender and their responses to the survey indicated that, for this initial analysis, the data should be weighted in order to more closely represent the views of the wider cohort. The further analysis, which will use multi-variate regression techniques, will account for the variation in the profile of respondents and the influence of this on responses to the survey.

The findings suggest that the views of young people who had lower attainment at Key Stage 4, those who were recognised as having special educational needs, and those who were known to be eligible for free school meals, may be under-represented among the survey responses. However, as noted in Chapter 1, Aimhigher: Excellence Challenge was targeted at two specific groups of young people – those who were recognised as gifted and talented and those who had the potential to progress onto higher education but had no family history of participation in higher education. The latter group were designated as the widening participation cohort. The findings indicate that the young people who responded to the surveys were broadly representative of young people who were part of the widening participation cohort and/or had been designated as gifted and talented, which may have included higher attaining students. Thus, while the views of the young people who responded may not be fully representative of their peers as a whole, they may reflect the experiences of young people who experienced Aimhigher while in Year 11.

Appendix C: Factor analysis of student attitudes

Exploratory factor analyses were carried out to consolidate the data on each of the surveys sent out to the different cohorts relating to young people's views of their current activities and their attitudes towards higher education. These produced more robust measures of students' attitudes than a consideration of the individual items on the questionnaire alone. The factor analyses also allowed simpler analyses to be undertaken, comparing students' attitudes with other variables (such as their sex, ethnicity and the Aimhigher-related activities they had participated in) than would have been possible if using each of the individual variables.

Factor analysis looks for variables and items that correlate highly with each other. The existence of such correlations between variables suggests that those variables could be measuring aspects of the same underlying issues. These underlying issues are known as factors. Thus, the aim of the factor analyses was to derive a smaller number of 'attitude' composite variables from selected questions on the questionnaire which could be used to explore the attitudes of respondents in more detail.

Factor analyses were carried out on questionnaire items asking about young people's views of their current activities and their attitudes towards higher education.

18 to 19 year olds

Three factor analyses were carried out on the following questionnaire items:

- Respondents **views of their current activity**: 13 questionnaire items
- Respondents **views of higher education: those *not* in higher education**: 23 questionnaire items
- Respondents **views of higher education: those *in* higher education**: 20 questionnaire items.

Items that appeared to relate closely to one another were grouped together as a scale, and after subsequent analysis nine separate factors were identified relating to different aspects of students' attitudes. These nine factors were related to:

- **Satisfaction with their current activity: all 18 to 19 year olds in the survey** (including whether young people enjoyed what they were doing, felt that it is always what they wanted to do, felt that it would help them in

the future, felt that they have made the right choice, did not feel that the activity is worse than they expected, felt that they are learning new skills, thought that the activity is better than expected, were not doing it because there was nothing better, felt that was is a useful experience, did not wish that they could change what they were doing, were not considering doing something different)

- **Concerns about finances in higher education: 18 to 19 year olds who were not in higher education at the time of the survey** (including whether young people felt that they could not afford to go to higher education, would find it difficult to manage financially, could not afford to live away from home at university, thought that most people who go to university end up in debt, thought that the only way that people can afford to live at higher education is to have a part-time job)
- **Positive attitude towards higher education: 18 to 19 year olds who were not in higher education at the time of the survey** (including whether young people felt that they would enjoy studying for a degree, felt that they would find it easy to make friends at higher education, knew people who had been to higher education, felt that their exam results would be good enough to get them into higher education, felt that their parents would be very pleased if they went to higher education, thought that they would find it easy to fit in, in higher education, had friends and family members of their own age who had been to higher education)
- **Negative attitude towards higher education: 18 to 19 year olds who were not in higher education at the time of the survey** (including whether young people felt that their parents would put them under too much pressure to do well at higher education, felt that they did not want to go to higher education if it meant leaving their friends, felt that the work at higher education would be too hard for them, thought that their friends would think they were a snob if they went to higher education, felt that they did not want to go to higher education if it meant leaving their family, felt that most people who go to higher education have to be very clever)
- **Valuing higher education: 18 to 19 year olds who were not in higher education at the time of the survey** (including whether young people felt that higher education was not just like school, thought that higher education students did do real work, thought that people with degrees get better jobs, thought that the cost of going to higher education will be worth it in the long-run)
- **Not enjoying higher education: 18 to 19 year olds who were in higher education at the time of the survey** (including whether young people did not enjoy studying for a degree, did not think that it was easy to make friends, felt that their parents put them under too much pressure to do well in higher education, felt that the work in higher education is too hard for them, did not think that it was easy to fit into higher education, were considering leaving higher education, felt that they had to work harder than other people to get the same grades)
- **Concerns about finances in higher education: 18 to 19 year olds who were in higher education at the time of the survey** (including whether

young people felt that they could not really afford to be in higher education, found it very difficult to manage financially in higher education, felt that they could not afford to live away from home in higher education, felt that having a part-time job affects their study at higher education, thought that most people who go to higher education end up in debt, thought that the only way people can afford to live at higher education is to have a part-time job)

- **Valuing higher education: 18 to 19 year olds who *were* in higher education at the time of the survey** (including whether young people felt that their parents were very pleased that they were at higher education, that life at higher education is not just like school, that people with degree get better jobs, that the long-term benefits of higher education outweigh the costs)
- Family and friend with experience of higher education: 18 to 19 year olds who *were* in higher education at the time of the survey (including whether young people knew people who had been to higher education, had friends who had been to higher education, had family members of their own age who had been to higher education)

17 to 18 year olds

Two factor analyses were carried out on the following questionnaire items:

- Respondents **views of their current activity**: 14 questionnaire items
- Respondents **views of higher education**: 23 questionnaire items

Items that appeared to relate closely to one another were grouped together as a scale, and after subsequent analysis nine separate factors were identified relating to different aspects of students' attitudes. These six factors were related to:

- **Feeling that their current activities fitted in well into their future plans** (including whether young people felt that what they were doing was interesting, thought that it was what they had always wanted to do, thought that it would help them in the future, felt that they had made the right choice, were not only doing because there was nothing better, did not wish to change what they were doing, did not want to do something different.
- **Satisfaction with their current activity** (including whether young people enjoyed what they were doing, did not think that it was worse than they expected, felt that learning new skills, felt that it was better than they expected, felt that it was a useful experience, felt that they were being treated as an adult.
- **Negative attitude towards higher education** (including whether young people thought it would not be easy to make friends in higher education, thought that their parents would put them under too much pressure in higher education, did not think that their exam results would be good enough to get them into higher education, felt that they did not want to go

to higher education if meant leaving their friends, felt that the work at higher education would be too hard for them, felt that their friends would think that they were a snob if they went to higher education, thought that it would be hard to fit in at higher education, did not want to go to higher education if it meant leaving their family, felt that people who go to higher education have to be very clever).

- **Positive attitude towards higher education** (including whether young people felt that they would enjoy studying for a degree, thought that their parents would be pleased if they went to higher education, did not think that higher education is just like school, thought that higher education students did do real work, thought that people with degrees get better jobs, thought that the cost of higher education would be worth it in the long run).
- **Concerns about finances in higher education** (including whether young people felt that they could not afford to go to higher education, felt that they would find it very difficult to manage financially in higher education, did not think that they could afford to live away from home at higher education, thought that most people who go to higher education end up in debt, thought that the only way people can afford to live in higher education is to have a part-time job).
- **Family and friend with experience of higher education** (including whether young people knew people who had been to He, had friends and family member of their own age who had gone to higher education).

16 to 17 year olds

Two factor analyses were carried out on the following questionnaire items:

- Respondents **views of their current activity**: 15 questionnaire items
- Respondents **views of higher education**: 23 questionnaire items.

Items that appeared to relate closely to one another were grouped together as a scale, and after subsequent analysis nine separate factors were identified relating to different aspects of students' attitudes. These seven factors were related to:

- **Feeling that their current activities fitted in well into their future plans** (including whether young people thought that it was what they had always wanted to do, thought that it would help them in the future, felt that they had made the right choice, felt that they did not have to travel to far to get to their activity), were not only doing because there was nothing better, did not wish to change what they were doing, did not want to do something different.
- **Satisfaction with their current activity** (including whether young people enjoyed what they were doing, felt that what they were doing was interesting, did not think that it was worse than they expected, felt that

learning new skills, felt that it was better than they expected, felt that it was a useful experience, felt that they were being treated as an adult)

- **Were unmotivated in their current activity** (including whether young people thought that their was nothing better to do, wished they could change what they were doing, wanted to do something different and did not think that they could afford to continue)
- **Negative attitude towards higher education** (including whether young people thought that their parents would put them under too much pressure in higher education, felt that they did not want to go to higher education if meant leaving their friends, felt that the work at higher education would be too hard for them, thought that the work at higher education would be too hard for them, felt that their friends would think that they were a snob if they went to higher education, , did not want to go to higher education if it meant leaving their family, felt that people who go to higher education have to be very clever, felt that higher education student never do any real work)
- **Positive attitude towards higher education** (including whether young people felt that they would enjoy studying for a degree, thought that they would find it easy to make friends in higher education, thought that their exam results would be good enough to get them into higher education, thought that their parents would be pleased if they went to higher education, thought that they would find it easy to fit in at higher education, thought that people with degrees get better jobs, thought that the cost of higher education would be worth it in the long run)
- **Concerns about finances in higher education** (including whether young people felt that they could not afford to go to higher education, felt that they would find it very difficult to manage financially in higher education, did not think that they could afford to live away from home at higher education, thought that most people who go to higher education end up in debt, thought that the only way people can afford to live in higher education is to have a part-time job)
- **Family and friend with experience of higher education** (including whether young people knew people who had been to He, had friends and family member of their own age who had gone to higher education)

Appendix D: Multi-level model description and variables

An exploration of the relative impact of Aimhigher requires a systematic approach to the analysis of the available statistical data. In order to assess the ways in which, for example, young people's attitudes towards higher education are associated with the range of different policy-related and other inputs to which young people are exposed, a complex set of variables need to be examined. Young people who responded to the surveys come from a variety of home and school backgrounds, have different academic abilities and have been exposed, to varying degrees, to a range of different educational experiences. All of these could be expected to have an impact on their awareness of and attitudes towards higher education, as well as on their aspirations to a university education.

Since the data to which the research team has access is hierarchical (variables can be identified at distinct levels – that of the partnership, the school and the student) the team has adopted the use of a multilevel modelling approach to data analysis. In multilevel modelling, the process is begun by identifying an outcome variable (for example pupil attainment, attitudes or actions), then, for each level of the data, the background variables that might be thought to influence that outcome are defined. Regardless of the outcome variables that are selected, it is expected that there will be differences of outcome at each level:

- **individuals** will be different from each other;
- individuals within one **school** will be **collectively different** from those in other schools; and
- individuals within schools implementing a specific policy, initiative or activity will be **collectively different** from those in schools not implementing the policy initiative or activity.

These differences can be measured in terms of the extent to which each outcome variable is 'conditioned' by the background variables at each level. For example, the effect that being included in the widening participation cohort is having on any pupil can be assessed through comparing the mean observed difference in the attainment, attitudes or behaviour of that young person with the expected mean for all young people in the survey, taking into account the relevant background variables at school and pupil level (including prior attainment).

By analysing the data in this way, it is possible to see the overall effects of each of the variables and identify the variables which have a significant impact. However, it should be remembered that:

- no multi-level model is likely to include every possible variable. The background variables included in the models developed for the evaluation of Aimhigher are:
 - those which are known from past and current research to be relevant to pupil outcomes;
 - those attitudinal variables that appear, from other research, to be associated with different aspects of pupil behaviour and performance;
 - those which are specifically related to the policy area.
- the models do not identify causality in a definitive way, but simply indicate significant factors which appear to bear some relationship to the outcomes. For instance, if the analysis of the data indicated that young people in receipt of free school meals had lower levels of attainment than young people not in receipt of free school meals. This does not mean that being in receipt of free school meals (a proxy for socio-economic disadvantage) caused lower levels of attainment, but simply indicates that the attainment amongst such young people was lower than would have been expected by comparison with young people with the same level of prior attainment and other background characteristics. Similarly, while the self-reported attitudes towards higher education of young people who were considering embarking on a higher education course were more positive than those expressed by other pupils with the same prior attainment score at Key Stage 3, it is not possible to ascertain whether these attitudes entirely pre-dated Aimhigher or whether they had become more evident as a result of the activities in which they had taken part as a result of Aimhigher.
- a multilevel model is only as good as our understanding of the educational processes at work in influencing young people's attitudes, aspiration and motivation.

In order to prepare the data for inclusion in the models, the items in the questionnaires need to be reduced to a more manageable data set. Ideally, data needs to be either *dichotomous* (for example male or not male) or *continuous* (in which the variable can take any value over a given range). The data in the surveys had, therefore, to be manipulated in order to provide information that could be used in the models. This data manipulation has largely been accomplished through the use of factor analysis, although other scoring or pattern identification techniques have been used where more appropriate.

The Models

The multilevel models of pupil outcomes presented here included data obtained from a number of sources.

- Individual data on pupil backgrounds obtained from pupil data forms returned by schools when the students were in Year 11 (these forms also included data on young people designated as part of the gifted and talented or widening participation cohorts under EiC and Aimhigher).
- Data on young people's sex, eligibility for free school meals, special educational needs, first language other than English and ethnicity, obtained from pupil data forms in PLASC.
- Data on pupil prior attainment (at Key Stage 3) and attainment (at Key Stages 4 and 5) obtained from the National Pupil Database and the Individual Learner Record (ILR).
- Background data obtained from the NFER's Register of Schools (ROS). This included data on schools' location, size, age range, management type (Foundation, maintained, voluntary aided, etc.), school type (grammar, comprehensive, modern, etc.), aggregated profiles of SEN, free school meal eligibility, attainment profile, etc.
- Data on young people's home neighbourhood, obtained by matching pupil-post-code data to the 2001 Census. For each pupil, the percentage of people who were unemployed, or in single parent households, for instance, in their immediate home geographical area (classified by the Office of National Statistics as the output area) was calculated and then aggregated to school level (these raw percentages were used in the multilevel models).³⁵ The data for each variable was then divided into quintiles, so that an assessment of the relative deprivation of young people's neighbourhoods could be made (these quintiles were used in the analyses of variance).³⁶ One variable (the percentage of households not deprived on any measure) was calculated at pupil neighbourhood alone, all other Census variables were calculated to represent the pupil catchment of the school.
- Policy specific data (e.g. whether an EiC school or in an EAZ, designation as Beacon or Specialist School etc.).

The construction of the models was an iterative, stepwise process. To begin with, each model was constructed at two levels, with simple residuals at school and pupil levels. In order to identify all significant variables, a procedure was adopted whereby the models were first set up without the background variables in order to establish the amount of variance at school and pupil level for each of the outcome variables. Subsequently, sets of the pupil-level variables were included and those that were not significant were removed. School-level variables were then fitted and all non-significant variables were removed in order to get the most 'parsimonious' overall model

³⁵ This area, known as the output area by the Office for National Statistics, comprises (on average) 123 households or 297 people and is the smallest area available for census data. It therefore represents the highest resolution for the purposes of data matching.

³⁶ It should be noted that these variables represent young people's neighbourhoods, not their own home circumstances. Data on some aspects of young people's socio-economic and family backgrounds was available for a sub-set of pupils, from EiC and Aimhigher: Excellence Challenge questionnaire data, but not for all of the young people used in this study or set of analyses.

(that is, the model that would explain the greatest amount of variance with the removal of all non-significant variables).

During this process, a number of further strategies were introduced at each stage in order to make sure that the various derived variables and background data were not overly weighted in the models. As in all such modelling, background variables were checked to examine their interaction with other variables and, where necessary, specific interaction variables were derived for inclusion in the analysis.

The following tables list the range of background variables, derived variables and interaction terms used in the models for each year group.

Year 14 – list of variables used for modelling

Variable	Label
DESTB	destination: university
OTOTAL	total point score achieved
FEMALE	Female
SEXMISS	missing (female)
BOOKNEW	books in the home
WHITEUK	ethnicity is white uk
ETHMISS	missing (white uk)
PARENTED	parent studied at uni
PARMISS	missing (parented)
MONEY	money worries
MONEYMIS	missing (money)
WORTHIT	benefits of uni outweigh costs
NOTDISS	student is not dissatisfied in Year 11
SATIS	student is not satisfied with current activity
VISITHE	visited /had info on universities Sept02 – July04
STUDYS	did study classes/clubs Sept02 – July04
ADULTS	spoke to mentor/advisor Sept02 – July04
CONHE	spoke to student Sept02 – July04
Q9A1	did work experience/placements Sept02 – July04
Q9D1	did summer/Easter/winter school Sept02 – July04
Q9H1	went to Aimhigher Roadshow Sept02 – July04
PREPEMP	school prepared me for adult life/jobs Sept02 – July04
PREPHE	school prepared me for HE Sept02 – July04
HESTAFF	talked about HE with staff Sept02 – July04
HECONT	talked about HE with HE staff/students Sept02 – July04
HEFF	talked about HE with family and friends Sept02 – July04
HEOTHER	talked about HE with others Sept02 – July04
PTLE15	work part time, for 15 hours or less per week
PTMT15	work part time, for more than 15 hours per week
COLL16	student went to a college from a school without a sixth form
COLL18	student went to a college from a school with a sixth form
WP	widening participation

WPGAT	widening participation & gifted and talented
GAT	gifted and talented
EMA	student awarded EMA
EMAMISS	missing (EMA)
WEEKS1	spent up to 1 week at summer school/residential course
WEEKS2	spent 2 or more weeks at summer school/residential course
AH	Exposure to Aimhigher
SIBHE	has sibling/cousin at HE
SIBHMISS	missing (sibhe)
RATECEG	careers education/guidance was helpful Sept02 – July04
TOTSC8	best 8 GCSE point score
TOT8MISS	missing (totsc8)
HIGHED	full/part time HE Sept02 – July03
WKJOB	work in a job Sept02 – July03
ELSE	doing something else Sept02 – July03
GAP	gap year Sept02 – July03
P16MISS	missing (p16 activity)
MUMDAD	lived with both parents in yr11
Y11Q3H	visited universities in yr11
Y11Q3I	did summer schools in yr11
UNISTAFF	talked about uni with staff in Yr11
UNICONT	talked about uni with uni staff/students in Yr11
UNIFF	talked about uni with family and friends in Yr11
UNIOOTHER	talked about uni with others in Yr11
FSM1	eligible for free school meals
EAL1	English as additional language
SENS	sen stage – Statement
SENA	sen stage – School Action and School Action Plus
LEVEL3	achieved level 3
L3MISS	missing (level3)
FETOT8SC	female & best 8 GCSE score
GTTOT8SC	gifted&talented and best 8 GCSE score

Year 13 – list of variables used for modelling

Variable	Label
SCHOOL	School
PUPILID	Unique pupil identifier
ASP	Aspire to higher education
PLANNER	Planned and made the right choice
SATIS	Satisfied with current activity
NOTRAVEL	Do not travel too far
NEGHE	Negative attitude towards higher education
POSHE	Positive attitude towards higher education
FAMEX	Family have experience of HE
FEMALE	Female
SEXMISS	Missing gender
BOOKNEW	Number of books in the home
BOOKMISS	Missing number of books
WHITEUK	White UK
ETHMISS	Missing ethnicity
PARENTED	At least one parent educated at university
PARMISS	Missing parent education
TOT8SC	Total GCSE score – Best 8
TOT8MISS	Missing GCSE score
MONEYOK	Attitude to money
LEVEL3	Highest qualification is at Level 3
LEVMISS	Missing highest qualification
NOTDISS	Not dissatisfied in Year 11
VISITHE	Visited HE institution
STUDYS	Revision classes, homework clubs, Masterclass
ADULTS	Spoke to learning mentor or/and connexions personal advisor
CONHE	Spoke to student from university or/and Roadshow
Q11.1	Went on work experience
Q11.2	Had information about HE
Q11.8	Went on Aimhigher Roadshow
PREPEMP	School prepared me for employment
PREPHE	School prepared me for higher education
Q6.2	School covered wide range of subjects
Q6.3	School prepared me for studying after 16
Q6.4	School equipped me with useful skills and knowledge
Q6.5	School gave me information about future choices
HESTAFF	Talked to school staff about HE
HECONT	Talked to university staff and students about HE
HEFF	Talked to family and friends about HE
HEOTHER	Talked to others about HE
Q12MISS	Missing Q12
WEEKS1	Residential for 1 week
WEEKS2	Residential for more than 1 week
UNISTAFF	At school talked to staff about university
UNICONT	At school talked to university staff and students about university
UNIFF	At school talked to family and friends about university

UNIOTHER	At school talked to others about university
EQ19MISS	Missing school information on who I talked to about university
Q25A1	Would be encouraged by not worrying about going into debt
Q25A2	Would be encouraged by going to a local university
Q25A3	Would be encouraged by knowing more about university
Q25A4	Would be encouraged by finding the right course
Q25A6	Would be encouraged by improving career prospects
Q25A7	Would be encouraged by going to local FE college
Q25MISS	Missing Q25
PTLE15	Works part time for 15 hours or less
PTMT15	Works part time for more than 15
YPQ2A	Stopped or changed a course
YPQ2AMIS	Missing q2a
COLL16	At college from an 11-16 school
COLL18	At college from an 11-18 school
AH	Exposure Aimhigher
WP	Widening Participation Cohort
WPMISS	Missing widening participation
WPGAT	Widening Participation and Gifted and Talented
GAT	Gifted and Talented
GTMISS	Missing Gifted and Talented
EMA	Awarded an EMA
EMAMISS	Missing EMA
WKJOB	Working in a job
ELSE	Doing something else
NOWMISS	Missing info on what are you doing now
VOC	Studying for vocational qualifications
ACAD	Studying for academic qualifications
MIXED	Studying for a mix of academic and vocational qualifications
CEGPRE16	Careers advice pre 16
CEGPOS16	Careers advice post 16
HEALTH	Information, experience in Health careers
MUMDAD	Lived with both mum & dad
MUM	Lived with mum only
DAD	Lived with dad only
FSM1	Eligible for free school meals
EAL1	English as an additional language
SENS	Special educational needs – statement
SENA	Special educational needs – no statement
FETOT8SC	Interaction – Female*totsc8
GTTOT8SC	Interaction – G&T*totsc8
WPTOT8SC	Interaction – WP*totsc8
CONS	Constant term

Year 12 – list of variables used for modelling

Variable	Label
DEST	Destination
ASP	aspire to HE
POSHEO	positive attitude to HE
FEMALE	female
BOOKNEW	number of books in the home
WHITEUK	ethnicity – white UK
PARENTED	parents educated at university
MONEYOK	no money worries
LEVEL3	achieved Level 3 qualification
NOTDISS	student is not dissatisfied in Year 11
SATIS	satisfied with current activity
PLANNER	planned and made the right choice
POSHE	positive attitude to HE
NEGHE	negative attitude to HE
FAMEX	family experience of HE
VISITHE	visited universities in yr 11
STUDYS	did study classes/clubs in yr 11
ADULTS	spoke to mentor/advisor in yr 11
CONHE	spoke to student in yr 11
Q7A1	did work experience in yr 11
Q7D1	had info about HE in yr 11
Q7J1	went to Aimhigher Roadshow in yr 11
PREPEMP	school prepared me for adult life/jobs
PREPHE	school prepared me for HE
Q10B1	school covered a range of subjects
Q10C1	school prepared me for post 16 study
Q10D1	school gave me useful skills
Q10E1	school gave helpful info
FESTAFF	talked about FE with school staff
FECONT	talked about FE with college staff/students
FEFF	talked about FE with family and friends
FEOTHER	talked about FE with others
Q8AMISS	missing Q8
HESTAFF	talked about HE with school staff
HECONT	talked about HE with HE staff/students
HEFF	talked about HE with family and friends
HEOTHER	talked about HE with others
WEEKS1	spent up to 1 week at summer school/residential course
WEEKS2	spent 2 or more weeks at summer school/residential course
Q21A1	no worry about debt would encourage me to go to HEI
Q21B1	being able to attend a local university would encourage me to go to HEI
Q21C1	knowing more about uni would encourage me to go
Q21D1	finding right course would encourage me to go to HE
Q21E1	being able to study part-time would encourage me to go to HE
Q21F1	being able to improve careers prospects would encourage me to go to HE

Q21G1	being able to do a degree at FE college would encourage me to do HE
Q21I1	nothing would make me want to go to HE
PTLE15	work part time, for 15 hours or less per week
PTMT15	work part time, for more than 15 hours per week
YPQ2A	have not stopped/changed course since Sept 2004
UNMOT	Unmotivated
COLL16	student went to college from a school without a sixth form
COLL18	student went to college from a school with a sixth form
AH	Exposure to Aimhigher
WP	widening participation
WPGAT	widening participation & gifted and talented
GAT	gifted and talented
EMA	student awarded EMA
TOT8SC	best 8 GCSE point score
TOT8MISS	missing GCSE results
WKJOB	now working in a job
ELSE	now doing something else
NOWMISS	don't know what student is doing now
VOC	currently studying for vocational qual
ACAD	currently studying for academic qual
MIXED	currently studying for mix of vocational and academic quals
HEALTH	got info /experience of health careers
RATECEG	careers education/guidance was helpful
MUMDAD	student lives with both parents
MUM	student lives with their mother but not father
DAD	student lives with their father but not mother
SEXMISS	missing gender
BOOKMISS	missing number of books
ETHMISS	missing ethnicity
PARMISS	missing parents education info
LEVMISS	missing qualifications achieved info
Q7MISS	missing Q7
Q8BMISS	missing Q8B
Q10MISS	missing Q10
Q21MISS	missing Q21
YPQ2AMIS	missing Q2a
WPMISS	missing WP info
GTMISS	missing G&T info
EMAMISS	missing EMA info
FSM1	eligible for free school meals
EAL1	English as additional language
SENS	sen stage – Statement
SENA	sen stage – School Action or Action Plus
FETOT8SC	female & best 8 GCSE score interaction
GTTOT8SC	gifted&talented and best 8 GCSE score interaction
WPTOT8SC	widening participation and best 8 GCSE score interaction

Appendix E: Tables of coefficients

Table E1. 18-19 year olds: attainment at 18

Attainment								
Multilevel results								
Parameter	Estimate	Standard error	Sig.	95% Confidence interval				
				Min.	Max.			
Base case								
LEA variance	26170.500	17591.480		-8308.801	60649.801			
School variance	24797.500	15553.970		-5688.281	55283.281			
Pupil variance	234466.600	16724.500	*	201686.580	267246.620			
% of variance at LEA level	9.2%							
% of variance at school level	8.7%							
% of variance at pupil level	82.1%							
Final model								
LEA variance	12600.000	5912.000	*	1012.480	24187.520			
School variance	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000			
School Totsc8 covariance	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.000			
School Totsc8 variance	112.900	51.060	*	12.822	212.978			
Pupil variance	100100.000	7264.000	*	85862.560	114337.440			
% of variance at LEA level	11.2%							
Fixed coefficients								
Parameter	Estimate	Standard error	Sig.	95% C.I.		Effect Size		
				Min.	Max.	Lower	Mean	Upper
Constant	468.6	46.15	*	378.146	559.054			
Worthit (HE benefits outweigh costs)	135.5	35	*	66.900	204.100	6.138	12.432	18.726
Adults (spoke to mentor)	-73.32	32.5	*	-137.020	-9.620	-12.747	-6.821	-0.895
Prephe (prepared me for HE)	120	36.6	*	48.264	191.736	4.483	11.146	17.809
Hecont (talked about HE with staff/students)	133.5	37.91	*	59.196	207.804	5.501	12.406	19.311
coll16 (went to college from school without 6 th form)	161.7	42.71	*	77.988	245.412	6.510	13.497	20.484
totsc8 (Best 8 GCSE point score)	29.74	2.682	*	24.483	34.997	55.918	67.924	79.930
Highed (in HE)	493	192.6	*	115.504	870.496	2.353	10.045	17.737
Wkjob (work in job)	-327.3	109.5	*	-541.920	-112.680	-30.065	-18.158	-6.251
gttot8sc (G&T and Best 8 GCSE score)	8.732	3.605	*	1.666	15.798	1.421	7.449	13.477

57% reduction

Table E2. 18-19 year olds: destinations at 18

Destination		Multilevel results			95% Confidence interval	
Parameter	Estimate	Standard error	Sig.	Min.	Max.	
Base case						
School variance	0.184	0.103		-0.018	0.386	
Final model						
School variance	0.000	0.000	#DIV/0!	0.000	0.000	
Fixed coefficients						
				95% C.I.		
Parameter	Estimate	Standard error	Sig.	95% C.I. Odds Ratio		
				Min.	Mean	Max.
CONSTANT	-4.778	0.8245	*			
MONEY (money worries)	-0.1527	0.04914	*	0.780	0.858	0.945
WORTHIT (Benefits of HE outweigh costs)	1.328	0.2547	*	2.291	3.773	6.217
SATIS (Not satisfied with current activity)	-0.06419	0.01506	*	0.911	0.938	0.966
VISITHE (visited HE)	1.036	0.3889	*	1.315	2.818	6.039
ADULTS (Spoke to mentor)	-0.5238	0.2579	*	0.357	0.592	0.982
PREPEMP (prepared for adult life)	-0.7204	0.2674	*	0.288	0.487	0.822
HESTAFF (talked about HE with staff)	1.341	0.4738	*	1.510	3.823	9.676
HECONT (talked about HE with students)	0.6822	0.2694	*	1.167	1.978	3.354
HEFF (talked about HE with friends and family)	2.055	0.6672	*	2.111	7.807	28.867
PTLE15 (worked part-time for 15 hours or less a week)	0.6073	0.3048	*	1.010	1.835	3.336
PTMT15 (worked part-time for more than 15 hours each week)	0.6473	0.3164	*	1.028	1.910	3.552
EAL1 (English as an additional language)	1.081	0.4056	*	1.331	2.948	6.527
FETOT8SC (female and best 8 GCSE score)	0.06371	0.02013	*	1.025	1.066	1.109
GTTOT8SC (G&T and best 8 GCSE score)	0.09218	0.04285	*	1.008	1.097	1.193

Table E3. 17-18 year olds: destinations at 16

Destination	Multilevel results							
	Estimate	Standard error	Sig.	95% Confidence interval				
Parameter				Min.	Max.			
Base case								
School variance	0.08	0.11		-0.15	0.30			
Final model								
School variance	0.00	0.00	#DIV/0!	0.00	0.00			
Fixed coefficients						Odds multiplier		
CONSTANT	1.58	0.19	*	1.200	1.956	Lower	Mean	Upper
TOT8SC (Best 8 GCSE point score)	0.065	0.01	*	0.049	0.081	1.05	1.07	1.08
NOTDISS (Student not dissatisfied in Year 11)	0.711	0.20	*	0.313	1.109	1.37	2.04	3.03
Q6.3 (school prepared me for studying post-16)	0.619	0.19	*	0.249	0.989	1.28	1.86	2.69
UNIFF (talked to family and friends about HE)	0.69	0.19	*	0.314	1.066	1.37	1.99	2.90

Table E4. 17-18 year olds: aspirations to higher education

Aspiration		Multinomial Models Results										
Parameter	Estimate	Standard error	Sig.	95% Confidence interval								
				Min.	Max.	Post 1992			Pre 1992			Odds multiplier
Base case												
School variance			#DIV /0!	0.00	0.00							
Final model												
School variance	0.05	0.05		-0.05	0.15							
Fixed coefficients												
CONSTANT	-2.73	0.37	*	-3.454	-2.012	-2.849	0.437	*	-3.706	-1.992	Post 92	Pre 92
TOT8SC (Best 8 GCSE score)	0.026	0.01	*	0.012	0.040	0.106	0.011	*	0.084	0.128	1.03	1.11
FEMALE	0.394	0.12	*	0.153	0.635	-0.415	0.140	*	-0.689	-0.141	1.48	0.66
BOOKNEW (number of books in the home)						0.192	0.031	*	0.131	0.253	1.00	1.21
WHITEUK	-0.481	0.13	*	-0.732	-0.230	-0.976	0.144	*	-1.258	-0.694	0.62	0.38
MONEYOK (attitude to money)	0.071	0.02	*	0.030	0.112	0.108	0.022	*	0.065	0.151	1.07	1.11
PLANNER (planned and made the right choice)	0.123	0.02	*	0.092	0.154	0.116	0.017	*	0.083	0.149	1.13	1.12
SATIS (Satisfied with activity)	-0.138	0.02	*	-0.175	-0.101	-0.113	0.020	*	-0.152	-0.074	0.87	0.89
VISITHE (visited a HEI)	0.474	0.08	*	0.317	0.631						1.61	1.00
ADULTS (spoke with LM/PA)	-0.302	0.11	*	-0.525	-0.079	-0.641	0.119	*	-0.874	-0.408	0.74	0.53
Q11.8 (went to AH Roadshow)	0.342	0.14	*	0.072	0.612	0.542	0.139	*	0.270	0.814	1.41	1.72
HESTAFF (talked to school staff about HE)						1.008	0.213	*	0.591	1.425	1.00	2.74
HECONT (talked to HE staff and students)	1.098	0.14	*	0.831	1.365	1.081	0.153	*	0.781	1.381	3.00	2.95
Q25A1 (encouraged by not worried about debt)	0.455	0.11	*	0.237	0.673						1.58	1.00
Q25A2 (encouraged by going to local HE)						-0.362	0.085	*	-0.529	-0.195	1.00	0.70

Q25A3 (encouraged by knowing more about HE)	0.643	0.13	*	0.392	0.894	0.724	0.132	*	0.465	0.983	1.90	2.06
Q25A6 (encouraged by improving career prospects)	0.862	0.21	*	0.452	1.272	0.927	0.223	*	0.490	1.364	2.37	2.53
Q25A7 (encouraged by going to local FE college)	-0.662	0.13	*	-0.923	-0.401	-0.843	0.154	*	-1.145	-0.541	0.52	0.43
VOC (studying for voc quals)						-0.745	0.20	*	-1.135	-0.355	1.00	0.47
ACAD (studying for academic quals)						0.773	0.12	*	0.548	0.998	1.00	2.17
PTMT15 (works part- time more than 15 hours)	0.576	0.10	*	0.390	0.762						1.78	1.00
COLL18 (at college from 11-18 school)	-0.447	0.14	*	-0.723	-0.171						0.64	1.00
FSM (free school meals)	0.561	0.10	*	0.357	0.765						1.75	1.00
EAL (English as additional language)						0.686	0.121	*	0.449	0.923	1.00	1.99
Q11.2 (had information about HE)	1.877	0.21	*	1.469	2.285	1.036	0.256	*	0.534	1.538	6.53	2.82
FETOT8SC (Female and best 8 GCSEs)						-0.038	0.011	*	-0.060	-0.016	1.00	0.96

Table E5. 17-18 year olds: attitudes towards higher education

Attitude	Multilevel results						Lower	Mean	Upper
	Parameter	Estimate	Standard error	Sig.	95% Confidence interval				
					Min.	Max.			
Base case									
School variance	0.248	0.078	*		0.095	0.401			
Pupil variance	5.506	0.180	*		5.153	5.859			
Final model									
School variance	0.000	0.000	#DIV/0!		0.000	0.000			
School KS3 covar.	0.000	0.000	#DIV/0!		0.000	0.000			
School KS3 variance	0.000	0.000	#DIV/0!		0.000	0.000			
Pupil variance	3.152	0.100	*		2.956	3.348			Effect Size
Fixed coefficients									
CONSTANT	1.390	0.172	*		1.053	1.727			
TOT8SC (Best 8 GCSEs)	0.024	0.007	*		0.010	0.038	0.16	0.38	0.60
PLANNER (planned and made the right choice)	0.028	0.007	*		0.014	0.042	0.12	0.23	0.35
STUDYS (revision and master classes)	0.199	0.092	*		0.019	0.379	0.02	0.20	0.38
Q11.2 (had info about HE)	0.907	0.117	*		0.678	1.136	0.68	0.91	1.14
Q6.2 (school covered a range of subjects)	0.223	0.093	*		0.041	0.405	0.04	0.22	0.41
HECONT (talked to HE staff and students)	0.938	0.122	*		0.699	1.177	0.70	0.94	1.18
UNICONT (talked to staff and students in Year 11)	0.517	0.132	*		0.258	0.776	0.26	0.52	0.78
Q25A1 (encouraged by not getting into debt)	0.326	0.111	*		0.108	0.544	0.11	0.33	0.54
Q25A3 (encouraged by knowing more about HE)	0.450	0.098	*		0.258	0.642	0.26	0.45	0.64
Q25A4 (encouraged by the right course)	0.592	0.154	*		0.290	0.894	0.29	0.59	0.89
Q25A6 (encouraged by improving career prospects)	0.729	0.142	*		0.451	1.007	0.45	0.73	1.01
Q25A7 (encouraged by going to local FE college)	-0.284	0.097	*		-0.474	-0.094	-0.47	-0.28	-0.09
COLL18 (at college from 11-18 school)	0.327	0.121	*		0.090	0.564	0.09	0.33	0.56
ACAD (studying academic quals)	0.465	0.104	*		0.261	0.669	0.26	0.47	0.67
HEFF (talked about HE with family and friends)	0.951	0.143	*		0.671	1.231	0.67	0.95	1.23
FETOT8SC (female and best 8 GCSEs)	-0.016	0.008	*		-0.032	0.000	-0.43	-0.22	0.00
HEUNICONT (talked to HE staff and students pre and post-16)	-0.425	0.171	*		-0.760	-0.090	-0.76	-0.43	-0.09

43% reduction

Table E6. 16-17 year olds: destinations at 16

Destination		Multilevel results			95% Confidence interval		
Parameter	Estimate	Standard error	Sig.	Min.	Max.		
Base case							
School variance	0.271	0.186		-0.094	0.636		
Final model							
School variance	0.000	0.000	#DIV/0!	0.000	0.000		
Fixed coefficients							
Parameter	Estimate	Standard error	Sig.	95% C.I. Odds Ratio			
				Min.	Mean	Max.	
Constant	2.752	0.496	*				
Whiteuk	-1.964	0.476	*	0.055	0.140	0.357	
Feother (talked about FE with others)	-0.672	0.326	*	0.270	0.511	0.967	
Heother (talked about HE with others)	0.955	0.476	*	1.022	2.599	6.606	
ypq2a (not stopped or changed course)	2.48	0.291	*	6.751	11.941	21.123	
tot8sc (best 8 GCSEs)	0.092	0.011	*	1.073	1.096	1.120	
ypq2amis (missing)	1.882	0.49	*	2.513	6.567	17.157	

Table E7. 16-17 year olds: aspirations to higher education

Aspiration	Multilevel results					
Parameter	Estimate	Standard error	Sig.	95% Confidence interval		
				Min.	Max.	
Base case						
School variance	0.368	0.106	*	0.160	0.576	
Final model						
School variance	0.010	0.100		-0.186	0.206	
Fixed coefficients						
Parameter	Estimate	Standard error	Sig.	95% C.I. Odds Ratio		
				Min.	Mean	Max.
Constant	-5.482	0.6733	*			
Parented (parents educated at HE)	0.575	0.246	*	1.098	1.777	2.875
Planner (planned and made the right choice)	0.133	0.034	*	1.068	1.142	1.221
Poshe (positive attitude to HE)	0.421	0.044	*	1.397	1.523	1.660
Neghe (negative attitude to HE)	-0.135	0.039	*	0.809	0.874	0.944
q10c1 (school prepared me for post-16 study)	-0.553	0.213	*	0.379	0.575	0.873
Weeks1 (summer school up to 1 week long)	0.630	0.233	*	1.190	1.877	2.962
q21c1 (encouraged by knowing more about HE)	0.540	0.232	*	1.089	1.717	2.706
q21e1 (encouraged by being able to study part-time)	-1.207	0.206	*	0.200	0.299	0.448
q21f1 (encouraged by improving career prospects)	0.7	0.299	*	1.088	1.954	3.509
q21g1 (encouraged by studying at FE college)	-0.5	0.209	*	0.420	0.633	0.954
Wkjob (now working in a job)	-1.4	0.422	*	0.103	0.236	0.539
Acad (studying for academic quals)	1.4	0.237	*	2.596	4.133	6.580
Mixed (studying for academic and voac quals)	0.8	0.294	*	1.264	2.250	4.007
eal1 (english as an additional language)	1.317	0.278	*	2.166	3.732	6.431
fetot8sc (female and best 8 GCSE score)	0.032	0.014	*	1.005	1.032	1.060
q21i1 (nothing would make me want to go to HE)	-2.445	0.850	*	0.016	0.087	0.459

97% reduction

Table E8. 16-17 year olds: attitudes towards higher education

<u>Attitude</u>		Multilevel results			95% Confidence interval				
Parameter	Estimate	Standard error	Sig.	Min.	Max.				
Base case									
LEA variance	0.296	0.210		-0.115	0.707				
School variance	0.200	0.199		-0.189	0.590				
Pupil variance	9.295	0.391	*	8.529	10.061				
% of variance at LEA level	3.0%								
% of variance at school level	2.0%								
% of variance at pupil level	94.9%								
Final model									
LEA variance	0.088	0.060		-0.028	0.205				
School variance	0.000	0.000	#DIV/0!	0.000	0.000				
Pupil variance	5.087	0.211	*	4.674	5.500				
% of variance at LEA level	1.7%								
% of variance at school level	0.0%								
% of variance at pupil level	98.3%								
Fixed coefficients									
Parameter	Estimate	Standard error	Sig.	95% C.I.		Effect Size			
				Min.	Max.	Lower	Mean	Upper	
Constant	5.791	0.467	*	4.876	6.706				
Whiteuk	-0.4653	0.162	*	-0.783	-0.148	-11.511	-6.842	-2.173	
level3 (achieved level 3 qualification)	0.5217	0.1837	*	0.162	0.882	2.450	7.906	13.362	
Planner (planned and made the right choice)	0.0881	0.02279	*	0.043	0.133	4.122	8.362	12.601	
Famex (family experience of HE)	0.1447	0.03659	*	0.073	0.216	4.715	9.347	13.980	
Q7d1 (had info about HE in Y11)	0.547	0.1433	*	0.266	0.828	4.253	8.742	13.231	
Q10c1 (school prepared me for post-16 study)	0.7149	0.1449	*	0.431	0.999	6.526	10.827	15.128	
Festaff (talked about FE with school staff)	0.7578	0.2672	*	0.234	1.282	1.862	6.029	10.196	
Heff (talked about HE with family and friends)	0.6221	0.1813	*	0.267	0.977	3.394	7.916	12.438	
Q21b1 (encouraged by attending local HEI)	-0.4239	0.1478	*	-0.714	-0.134	-11.403	-6.774	-2.145	
Q21c1 (encouraged by knowing more about HE)	0.5453	0.1731	*	0.206	0.885	3.003	7.950	12.896	
Q21d1 (encouraged by findings right course)	0.9029	0.2651	*	0.383	1.422	4.273	10.066	15.859	
Q21e1 (encouraged by part-time study)	-1.164	0.1494	*	-1.457	-0.871	-22.777	-18.199	-13.621	
Q21f1 (encouraged by improving career prospects)	0.9598	0.2308	*	0.507	1.412	6.201	11.730	17.258	
Q21i1 (nothing would make me want to go)	-2.266	0.3118	*	-2.877	-1.655	-23.407	-18.435	-13.463	
tot8sc (best 8 GCSEs)	0.03599	0.007541	*	0.021	0.051	8.293	14.072	19.851	
Health (had info / experience of health careers)	0.324	0.1464	*	0.037	0.611	0.540	4.720	8.899	
Sens (SEN statement)	-2.258	0.584	*	-3.403	-1.113	-12.370	-8.208	-4.047	

45% reduction

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