Higher Education and School Partnerships Conference
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Best Practice Seminar

Building a Successful Partnership

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Beacon Authority
2008 - 2009
Reducing Re-offending
2003 - 2008
Winner of 6 previous Beacon Awards

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TOWER HAMLETS

Where Tower Hamlets is

Population (2006) 212,800

Area 19.7 Square Kilometres

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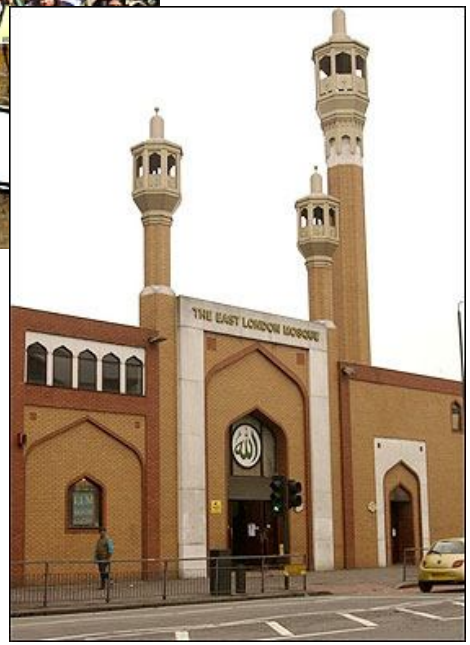
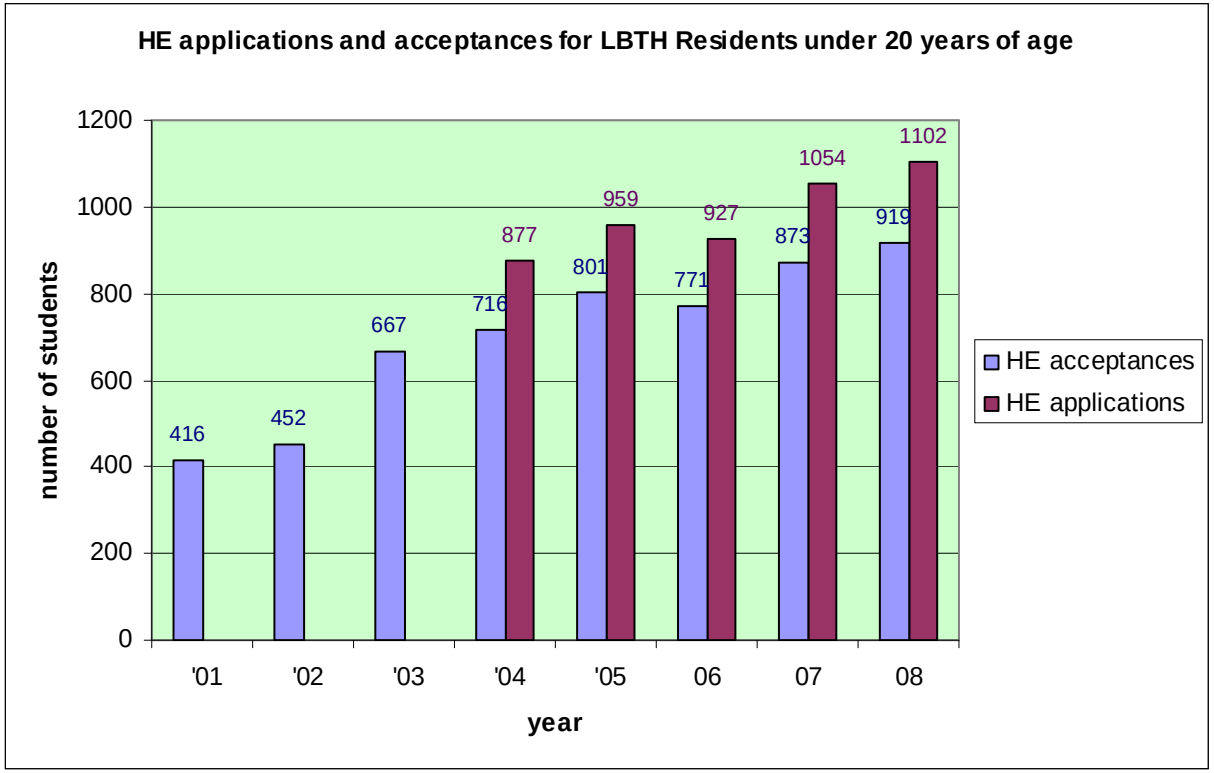


Tower Hamlets - Background

- Ethnically diverse: 49% minority ethnic, 33% Bangladeshi (Secondary School population 56% Bangladeshi)
- High social deprivation – 3rd most deprived borough (from 354 in England), 55% eligible for free school meals (England 15%)
- Young population: 20% under 15 (London 18%, England 18%) 37% aged 20-34 (London 27%, England 20%)
- High number living in social housing: 58% (England 18%, London 25%)
- High unemployment: 14.4% of over 16s (London 7.8%)

Progression to HE

Although HE Participation Rates are still relatively low, numbers have increased steadily from 2001 to 2008 (c.120%)



Which Universities do Tower Hamlets Students go to?

Based on the 919 eighteen & nineteen year old students accepted into HE in 2008:

- The vast majority stayed close to home
- Over a quarter (c.27%) went to either Queen Mary or UEL
- Just five universities accepted over half of our students (the two above plus Westminster, Greenwich and City)
- 80 students (8.7%) were accepted at Russell Group universities
- 215 students (23.4%) were accepted at 1994 Group universities.

School/ College Links With Universities

All of the schools in Tower Hamlets receive funding from the London East & Thames Gateway Aimhigher Area partnership. They have access to links with universities including:

- Access to the 'menu of activities' provided by the LETG partner universities
- Arranging their own links with other universities using Aimhigher funding
- Engaging with activities coordinated by the LA centrally
- Involvement in other HEFCE funded projects such as MoreMathsGrads, London Engineering Project, Routes into Languages, etc
- Privately sponsored links such as the Tower Hamlets Clare College partnership.

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The Partnership with Clare College

Some History...

- Set up in 2000, with the help of several City firms, including Clifford Chance and KPMG.
- Initial business links were through the Development Office at Clare College, and the EBP – our main links at each firm are all alumni of the University.
- Firms provide funding for activities based both in Cambridge and in London (e.g. transport costs, meal costs) as well as venues for our events. They also help pay for the SLO.
- The College has worked with London schools for a long time – the partnership provided a way of formalising and strengthening our links.

Development

- Initial work was organised on an *ad hoc* basis, through either the Admissions Office or the Students' Union. Mostly visits to Cambridge, with little diversity
- College then appointed a fellow to be a formal SLO – this saw an increase in the number of visits and also more diversity (e.g. subject focus days, visits to the schools to speak)
- Latest step has been to appoint a full-time SLO, which has resulted in an even greater range of activities being made available…

Our current programme

- Visits to the University for age groups from Years 7-12
- Subject focus days for GCSE students
- Admissions advice and preparation for students applying to Oxbridge
- Talks in schools about Cambridge/HE in general – our focus is very much on raising aspirations, not recruitment
- Music links – e.g. opera workshops, choir exchanges
- Maths mentoring
- Corporate Mentoring Scheme
- HE fairs and events.

The future

- Using a similar, although different, model we are now opening up links with schools in Coventry and Warwickshire – Development Office plays a key role
- Expansion of current work in Tower Hamlets to encompass schools in neighbouring boroughs of Hackney and Newham
- Student Ambassadors scheme to take successful students from the area back into their old schools to serve as role models
- Improve interactions between Admissions Tutors and sixth form teachers.

Case Studies

AC was one of three students to gain a place at Clare College in the same year from Tower Hamlets College, after doing his GCSEs at Bow Boys' School. Whilst at Clare studying Law, he was awarded a bursary by Clifford Chance (one of the sponsors of the partnership), and has since graduated and gone on to start a training contract with them. He is an excellent example of someone who has benefited from the partnership from the word go – from helping him to aspire to and gain a place at Cambridge to securing him a training contract with a large law firm.

LD is currently studying classics at Clare. She came to the attention of LA adviser (AW) when applying successfully for a place on the Eton College Universities Summer School, and chose Latin as her subject preference. After the summer school, she was put in touch with the Director of Studies in Classics, who had previously delivered some workshops to G&T Year 7 pupils.

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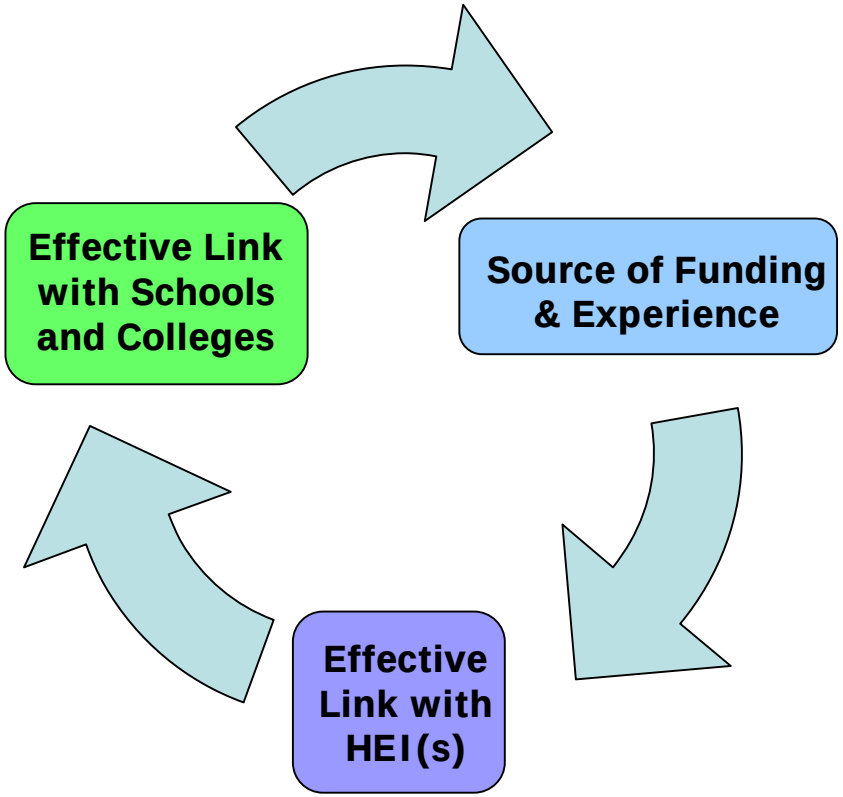
Key Factors for our Partnership

- Funding and experience brought by funding organisations. The partners provide funding for the SLO post at Clare College. They are also an invaluable pool of knowledge when it comes to job applications, interviews etc. They provide mentors for one of our schemes, who come from all sorts of backgrounds.

- Effective management of links with school and colleges. It is important that information gets to the right people in each school and that all communications are clear and straightforward to respond to. Sufficient notice must be given and events must avoid clashes in school calendars.

- Someone in the university to coordinate activities and liaise with academics and students. This is essential to getting anything organised – it is vital that there is someone who knows the system and, more importantly, the people, and who also has an idea of other things on offer from their HEI.

A Summary Diagram...



Questions for Group

Think of an example of a school-HE link that you are involved with.

- How did this link come about?
- What makes this particular link successful?
- What are the barriers to forming new links with HEIs?
- How can we overcome these?