

Raising Awareness, Raising Aspiration



RARA is a Targeted Personal Tutoring Support Programme for Narrowing Gaps in Student Achievement.

What is the project objective?

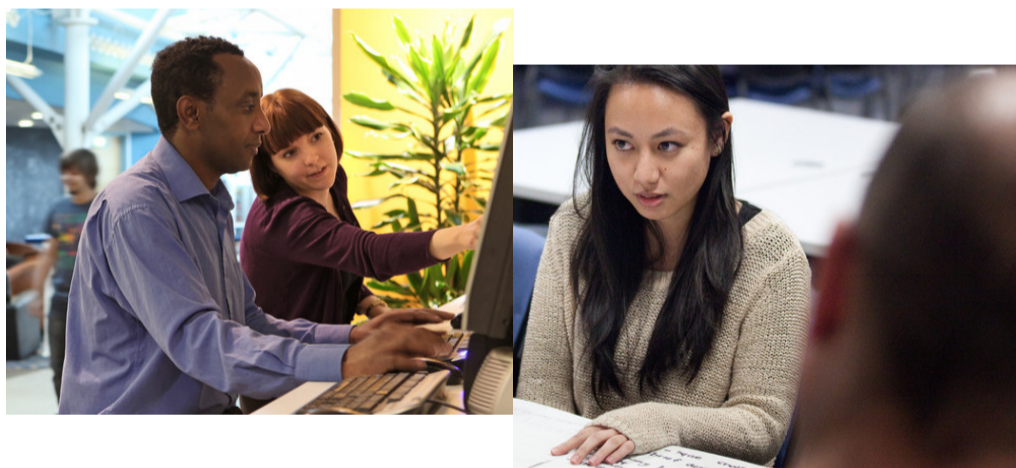
To redevelop personal tutoring to realise its potential as a means to help close the attainment gap for students from BME groups or lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

- > We know the gap remains even after controlling for attainment and other relevant factors (Broecke & Nicholls, 2006).
- > We know access is important – but increasing access to create more diverse student bodies doesn't seem to automatically reduce the gap.
- > **This suggests the issue goes deeper and relates to the quality of pedagogical relationships students have with staff once they enter university.**

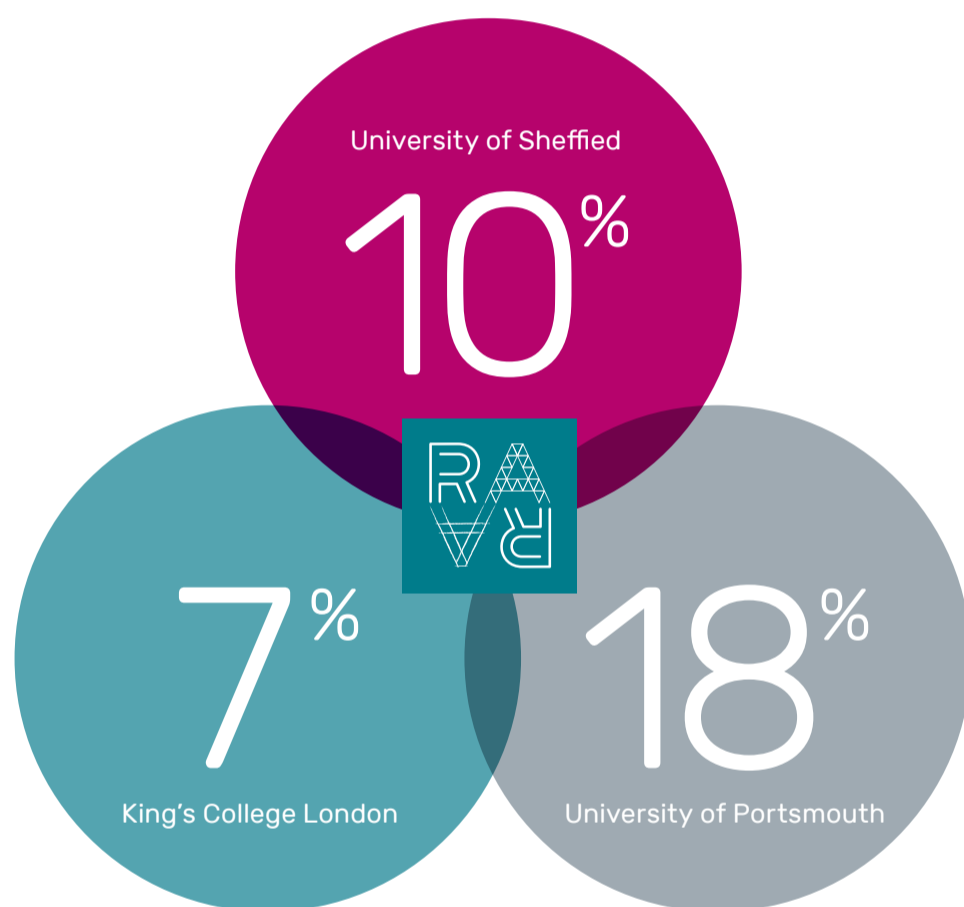
We know also that...

- > Non-traditional students "struggle to learn the rules of the HE game" (Stuart et al, 2011)
- > What Works? report notes that students want to get to know their Faculty, and prefer pastoral support delivered by academics (Thomas, 2012)
- > Positive relationships (with staff, with peers) is a factor known to influence student outcomes (Cousin & Cuerton, 2012)
- > "Staff are agents of change" for students – can instigate a dialogue about HE 'rules' (HEFCE, 2015)

This is why we believe effective, high quality Personal Tutoring can make a real difference to attainment gaps.



A diverse coalition of universities dedicated to closing their attainment gaps and sharing their practice.



What are we bringing to the project to scale up and share?

- > Several institution-wide strategic initiatives to improve personal tutoring, including PATS (Sheffield) a package featuring an online platform and a series of policy and CPD initiatives, and King's Principles of Personal Tutoring and Online Personal Tutoring Portal.
- > Experience of a range of training and development activities and accreditation frameworks, including several HEA assessors, and Fellows in the project team.
- > Extensive research in this area, including the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education's Trust Me!! Project – looking at how to build pedagogies of Trust; The BME Student Attainment Gap research; and Sheffield Student 2013, a longitudinal tracking project of students from lower SEC backgrounds.
- > Experience of monitoring the attainment gap as a Key Performance Indicator, and the formation and testing of metrics to monitor this.

Key deliverables:

- > The implementation of a PATS-like approach to personal tutoring at all three institutions. In pilot faculties across 2017/18 academic year: Engineering (Sheffield), Dentistry (King's), Creative and Cultural Industries (Portsmouth)
- > An evidence-based best practice toolkit and CPD package to tackle closing the attainment gap, which can be rolled out nationally to support personal tutoring, aligned to national HE CPD frameworks.
- > Added-value research, evaluation into attainment gaps and personal tutoring. With a big data set being generated, and a team of leading and talented HE researchers supporting the project, the opportunities for sharing additional research and insight with the sector are numerous – join our mailing list and watch this space!
- > A National Best Practice Support Menu, which will provide 'courses' of reflection drawn from the three diverse institutions and subject areas, enabling scalability, and empowering staff to 'test' varied approaches. Each 'course' on the menu will tackle a 'wicked issue' connected to deploying personal tutoring frameworks that work to reach all students. 'Courses' from the menu could include items such as: 'Engaging senior leadership teams and making your case'; 'Having the productive conversation with IT'; 'Embedding Student engagement in co-creation of practice'. These will be shared with staff across the sector to realise their roles as 'agents of change' (HEFCE 2015, p99).

Learn more, keep in touch, & build connections

Sign up for our mailing list to be the first to hear about resources, updates, blogs, and events:

- > www.raratutor.ac.uk
- > @rara_tutor

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