

MAPPING AND GAPPING

This Learning Digest identifies learning points for Uni Connect partnerships in relation to mapping outreach needs and understanding the gaps in existing outreach provision within their areas. It is based on evidence collected as part of Uni Connect’s formative evaluation (2019-2021), commissioned by the Office for Students. It is not intended to provide a definitive approach to determining mapping and gapping, rather some useful learning points for consideration. This learning digest is produced by Ipsos Mori, from independent research commissioned by the OfS. It does not necessarily reflect the OfS’s views or position.

The strategic outreach element of Uni Connect (previously ‘Outreach Hubs’) was developed based on partnership and stakeholder feedback on the need to support a wider population of learners who are underrepresented in higher education (HE), beyond the programme’s target learners.

Strategic outreach has a broader remit than targeted outreach and aims to address gaps in existing outreach provision for all underrepresented learners.

This requires Uni Connect partnerships to understand local learners’ outreach needs and map existing outreach provision to identify learners, schools and colleges who would benefit from further support.

Mapping and gapping requires collaboration between local partners and stakeholders, sharing data and knowledge.

With special thanks to all Uni Connect partnerships and particularly to:

- Shaping Futures, <https://shaping-futures.org.uk/contact-us/>
- Stephen Pomfet, Make Happen, <https://www.makehappen.org/contact/>

Key considerations



ASSESSING LOCAL NEEDS AND OUTREACH GAPS

- Consulting local partners (such as HEIs, colleges, local authorities and LEPS) and collecting / reviewing data and maps of existing outreach provision can support identifying outreach ‘cold spots’ – i.e. areas with limited or no existing outreach provision to support underrepresented learners
- The national outreach coverage dataset (with interactive maps) is a useful source of information on current outreach provision delivered in England
- Some partners may not have the analytical skills or expertise in-house to share data in the format requested – offering analytical support can help overcome this potential barrier
- It is helpful to have a consistent approach to what constitutes different levels and types of engagement, such as by quintile, number of engagements, types of activities or likelihood of impact
- **Collecting data on existing outreach and understanding local needs**
 - Understanding existing provision involves collecting data from relevant partners and stakeholders on the range and type of outreach activities currently being delivered to learners
 - Creating a standard template (with accompanying guidance) for stakeholders to enter data on the range and type of existing outreach delivery can help ensure consistency, enabling read-across and the identification of gaps
 - Highlighting the mutual benefits of developing a shared understanding of the landscape of local provision can be helpful in securing engagement of outreach partners / providers and agreement to sharing data
 - Collating and analysing data from multiple sources requires relevant analytical skills and expertise
 - To develop an in-depth understanding of local needs, detailed analyses are useful to generate insights, incorporating a range of data, such as POLAR4, TUNDRA, Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) and Free School Meals data
- **Consulting partners**
 - In addition to understanding existing outreach provision, it can be helpful as part of this work to consult local partners and stakeholders to understand what their future priorities are
 - Using established mechanisms, such as steering groups, can represent an efficient approach to engaging strategic stakeholders in discussion about future priorities
 - Workshops and other interactive activities can also be an effective approach to gathering intelligence and increasing engagement and buy-in of stakeholders
- **Complementing data collected**
 - Gaps in data and intelligence on the local outreach landscape of provision can be supported with the Outreach Compass+ or the Dataset from the National Outreach Coverage Project shared by HEAT
 - It can also be helpful to ask schools / colleges to identify the range of outreach activities they engage with (beyond those delivered by partnerships)

SHARING FINDINGS AND INFORMING STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

- Using data to produce visually engaging and accessible outputs (potentially using data visualisation software) can be helpful for sharing the headline findings with partners and stakeholders and facilitating discussions on the implications of these
- The analysis and discussions with partners should help to identify strategic priorities, including which underrepresented groups to focus on and which interventions and activities are likely to be most effective and / or have greatest impact

Potential issues to be alert to



- Some partners and stakeholders may not collect comprehensive data on the outreach activities they deliver in a way that can be collated and shared with Uni Connect partnerships
- Some partners may not have the systems and / or analytical skills or expertise required to collate and share data on their outreach provision
- It is important to treat databases as ‘live’ and keep them updated
- Existing outreach provision data alone is not sufficient to assess whether the needs of learners, and schools’ and colleges’ needs, are being met – evidence on the quality and impact of provision should also be considered

What does success look like?

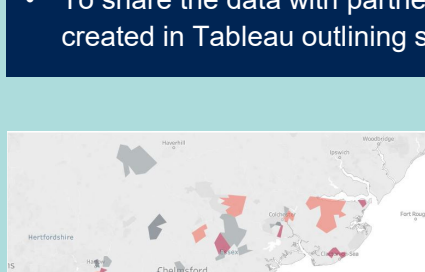


- A comprehensive picture of learners’ local needs and existing outreach activity is developed based on robust data and local knowledge
- Insights are shared with partners and stakeholders to inform a common and holistic understanding of the local widening participation landscape
- Cold spot schools and colleges are identified to inform partnership’s strategic priorities
- Strategic priorities are identified based on strong local evidence, resulting in effective targeting of Uni Connect activities to maximise value and impact
- Relationships with key partners and stakeholders are strengthened through shared intelligence and insight, contributing to a more joined-up approach, increased collaboration and reduced duplication

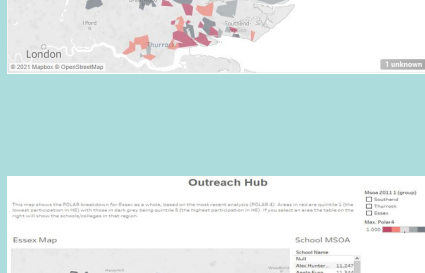
MAKE HAPPEN CASE STUDY – CREATING ACCESSIBLE OUTPUTS & ENGAGING A COLD SPOT SCHOOL

What did mapping and gapping entail?

- Make Happen analysed Low Participation Neighbourhoods (LPN) data from POLAR4
- To share the data with partners, heat maps were created in Tableau outlining schools per quintile



School quintile map – shows the schools and colleges in the region based on the quintile of activity they received. They are mapped using the postcode of the school or college



LPN Map of Essex shows the POLAR4 breakdown of Essex as a whole. In Tableau, if a region is selected, one can see the schools and colleges within the selected area. Areas in red have the lowest levels of participation in HE and those in dark grey have the highest

“ There was one area which you could instantly see, it was bottom. ... It’s an area called Burnham-on-Crouch, which is very difficult to get to. ... They’ve [the school] received 2 outreach activities over the previous 3 years, so they’d had almost nothing. I’d never come across a school that had received that little intervention from anywhere. They’ve been one of our partner schools [now]... probably been 18 months, maybe a bit longer. They’ve had a whole range of activities from us now. **Stephen Pomfret, Make Happen** ”



SHAPING FUTURES EXAMPLE APPROACH – WORKING WITH PARTNERS TO MAP THE LANDSCAPE AND ADDRESS GAPS TOGETHER

<p>Prepare</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct desk research and collect intelligence gathered • Set up a workshop involving all outreach managers across the partnership 	<p>Conduct a workshop, involving two activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activity 1 – to provide a ‘visual picture’ of gaps in provision • Activity 2 – to understand which partners are interested in delivering activities 	<p>LEARNING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In terms of activities, were led by partners
<p>Activity 1 - aims to provide a ‘visual picture’ of where there is over-saturation, gaps, and where over-orientations might be competing.</p> <p>To conduct the activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separate the group into subgroups • Set flipchart papers around the room. • Each flipchart should refer to the discrete learner groups discussed • Give 2 different colour post-it notes to each participant; one colour post-it to write their institutions’ offer to these groups and another colour to indicate other outreach offers they are aware of • Ask outreach managers to add their post-it notes to all flipchart papers 	<p>Activity 2 - to understand which partners are interested in delivering activities.</p> <p>To conduct the activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give outreach managers two different colour post-it notes once again: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – one post-it note is to indicate their APP targets and the discrete learner groups they are targeting – the second post-it note to indicate which gaps they could see that they would be interested in either learning more about, supporting or leading activities in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In some cases this worked, but in others it was a challenge – collaboration could become an inhibitor when there were large groups of individuals involved with limited time to invest • Uni Connect could take the lead, but it will need to allocate more time / resources, which might not be possible
<p>Follow-up – Create working groups to maintain momentum and support delivery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create working groups of partners based on the different underrepresented groups identified • Allow membership to more than one working group • Allocate one member of the central team to chair each group and bring people together • Clarify that the aim of the working groups is to discuss research, share best practice and identify activities that can be delivered collaboratively 		