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Matthew Horton

Doctoral Researcher

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Current Status

Part-time (first year)

Background

Since graduating from the University of Swansea, Matthew has worked in a number of public sector positions as senior manager within the fields of performance management and research. This has included working within the NHS, Children Centres, local authority education departments and as an independent consultant. Matthew is currently head of research at the Birmingham and Solihull Aimhigher partnership which consists of 4 local Universities which together deliver widening participation activities across the West Midlands.

Qualifications

- PRINCE2
- MA in the Social Sciences – Open University
- 2:1 BA (Hons) in Psychology - Swansea University

Research Topic

A longitudinal study looking at the impact of University widening participation outreach work on disadvantaged school children's future aspirations, confidence, knowledge of Higher education, attainment and post 16 destinations.

Research Summary

A great deal of evidence has shown that young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to go to higher education (HE), than those from more advantaged backgrounds. Over the past decade government policies and interventions have aimed to redress this inequality with programmes such as Aimhigher which ended in 2010. Robust evidence still continues to be limited in terms of identifying the impact of outreach interventions on learners in terms of raising aspirations, attainment and positive destinations to HE. Much of the evidence is based on small sample frames, and lacks or has poorly applied control samples.

This study aims to address these issues with a large cohort of learners being tracked longitudinally over 3 years. The evaluation aims to establish if there are any casual links between engagement within widening participation (WP) activities and positive learner outcomes (future aspirations, confidence, knowledge of higher education, attainment and post 16 destinations). The study will track in excess of 700 disadvantaged learners over 3 years and monitor their involvement within WP activities. Learners will complete a baseline questionnaire and follow up questionnaires as they access activities, to measure whether there have been any attitudinal shifts. Within the same schools, a control group of 2000+ learners who have not engaged in WP activities will complete annual attitudinal surveys over a 3 period. Other sources of evidence will also be used to explore whether engagement within WP activities is associated with improved KS4 (capped points) attainment and increased UCAS applications/acceptances. It is expected that findings will have wider implications at a local and national level in terms widening participation, identifying causality, what works and value for money.

Research Interests

- Intervention programmes focusing on widening participation in higher education
- Early years intervention programmes (Children Centre's and Family Support Programmes)
- Intervention programmes and respite care for families of children with learning disabilities

Research Supervisor

Professor Peter Davies (/staff/profiles/education/davies-peter.aspx) and Dr Tian Qiu (/staff/profiles/education/qiu-tian.aspx)

Funding

Self Funded

Publications

Issues in Evaluating Family Support Services. Anne Barton, M.E.L Research; Jill Jesson, University of Aston; and Matthew Horton, Early Years and Childcare Service, Stoke-on-Trent (chapter 22). Published in Justine Schneider, Mark Avis and Paul Leighton (2007) *Supporting Children and Families: Lessons from Sure Start for Evidence-Based Practice in Health, Social Care and Education*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

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