Social Mobility through Higher Education

Bridging the Gaps: Current Issues and Focus for 2011/12

May 2011
Bridging the Gaps: Current Issues and Focus for 2011/12

Introduction
1. Foreword ................................................................. 2
2. The Bridge Group .................................................. 3
3. The purpose of this document .............................. 5
4. Context .................................................................. 6

Issues
5. Fees and student financial support .................. 8
6. Information, advice and guidance about higher education ................. 12
7. Employability and the professions .................. 15
8. Data and transparency ........................................ 19

Response
9. Information, advice and guidance (finance and progression) ........ 21
10. Securing progression to higher education and the professions .......... 25
11. Using data to support change .............................. 27

Work Plan
12. Establishing Expert Groups .................................. 30
13. Timeline ............................................................... 31
Introduction

1. Foreword

Higher education has always played an important role in social mobility, but the proactive approach to widening participation in the last decade has elevated it to a powerful engine of advancement. This has created a vast number and range of outreach initiatives designed to inspire, encourage and support successful applications from students from a wider range of socio-economic and educational backgrounds. It has also seen the creation of a foundation of expertise and experience both within and beyond the higher education sector, including in schools, charities and third sector organisations, and professional associations and firms.

Harnessing this expertise to inform policy formation, however, has been an ad hoc and serendipitous affair at best. The loudest voice might get heard over clearer but quieter voices; colleagues busy creating significant change in a smaller arena have no larger stage on which to share their impact; and there has been no mechanism for bringing together a broad range of expertise in a way that is useful to policy makers, whilst remaining impartial and evidence-based.

The Bridge Group seeks to fill that gap – to engage a broad range of colleagues working to promote social mobility through higher education in debate, discussion and the provision of evidence relating to a series of key themes, with a view to producing policy recommendations underpinned by authority, rigour and pragmatism. In short, we seek to bridge the gap between research, policy and practice.

At our inaugural seminar in November 2010, four themes of immediate importance emerged: fees and student financial support; information, advice and guidance; data and transparency; and employability and the professions. In this document we have done some preliminary work with colleagues to expand upon those themes, setting them in their current contexts, outlining the key issues as they affect social mobility through higher education and proposing a series of responses. A number of recommendations warrant further investigation and development, and we set out a work plan to achieve this. We will establish three Expert Groups from June 2011: on information, advice and guidance; collaboration with the professions; and data. These will engage specialists, practitioners and policy-makers with the remit of preparing detailed recommendations.
We are extremely grateful to those who attended the inaugural seminar and who have since given their considerable time and wisdom to the preparation of this document. There has arguably never been a more important moment to engage in this process, and we look forward to continuing to work with colleagues on this crucial task. Improving social mobility has become a priority in the political landscape in recent years, and now sits at the core of Government activity, as outlined in April 2011 in the national strategy for social mobility, *Opening Doors, Breaking Barriers*. Higher education access initiatives have ‘come of age’ and there is a wealth of expertise and experience to be drawn upon. The wider context however, as we all know too well, is one of unparalleled uncertainty and flux for the sector and the individuals who work to promote access to it. There is an opportunity and an imperative to ensure that this expertise and best practice is harnessed to inform policy-making in these difficult times. This document outlines the ways in which we aim to contribute to this task.

2. The Bridge Group

2.1 The Bridge Group is an independent policy association, promoting social mobility through higher education by bridging the gaps between research, policy and practice. The association offers Westminster and other influencers expert guidance on policy, drawing on the expertise of our network and the collation of evidence.

2.2 The Group pursues the following aims:

- To influence the development of local, regional and national policy and strategy relating to social mobility and higher education;
- To promote greater awareness and clearer understanding of the social mobility agenda;
- To identify, share and commission research on matters of relevance to social mobility;
- To establish and maintain a network through which colleagues can share information, experience and good practice relating to social mobility and higher education, and engage with other stakeholders to meet these goals.
2.3 Higher education has a powerful and critical role to play in the promotion of social mobility in the UK. The Bridge Group recognises that this work fits within a broader social policy context. We will not make policy recommendations without due consideration of related policy areas, but the scope of our work will focus on policy relating to higher education. This reflects the expertise of the Group and its associates.

2.4 The Bridge Group was launched by the Rt Hon Alan Milburn at an inaugural seminar, held in November 2010 and hosted at Google UK. A summary of the evidence from this seminar is outlined on the Bridge Group's website: www.thebridgegroup.org.uk

2.5 Many of the policy recommendations that emerged from the seminar helped to inform the Bridge Group's evidence to the House of Commons Select Committee on Business, Innovation and Skills' consultation on the Future of Higher Education. This submission has been published, along with other evidence, by the Select Committee.

2.6 As well as generating specific policy recommendations, the seminar reinforced the founding rationale of the Group. For those in the education, private and third sectors, there is a need for a forum to debate and develop practical policy solutions that seek to impact positively on social mobility.

2.7 The Bridge Group is committed to facilitating debate among our body of associates and developing a clear dialogue with policy-makers. There has been enthusiasm to engage with the Bridge Group from Government departments, think-tanks and expert committees. This process of debate and dialogue will bridge the gaps between research, policy and practice and will promote an approach to social mobility that is evidence-based and practicable. By engaging experts and practitioners from across various sectors, the Bridge Group aims to present policy recommendations that are underpinned by authority, rigour and pragmatism.
3. **The purpose of this document**

3.1 At the Group’s inaugural seminar, the Rt Hon Alan Milburn called on the Group to dedicate itself to providing solutions to the numerous questions and challenges faced by policy-makers. The Group will develop practical, scalable, transferable and affordable solutions to the challenges that face us in this arena. This reinforces the need for the Group to create a coherent work plan in order to focus our efforts on realising this aim and, critically, to ensure that the Bridge Group’s associates are actively engaged in the process.

3.2 This document is the first step in this process. It summarises issues relating to the four themes that emerged from our inaugural seminar and proposes a number of responses. Some proposals warrant further investigation and development, and we set out a work plan for this process. We will establish Expert Groups from June 2011, engaging specialists, practitioners and policy-makers with the remit of preparing detailed recommendations. We are open to forming additional working parties as needed.

3.3 The four themes emerging from the seminar in November and under which we discuss current issues are:

- Fees and student financial support;
- Information, advice and guidance;
- Data and transparency;
- Employability and the professions.

3.4 Many of the responses relate to more than one of these themes and involve actions across sectors and organisations. There are three broad categories:

- Presenting clear messages and good information to prospective students;
- Developing more efficient ways for staff in different sectors to work together;
- Using evidence to inform policy and monitor progress.
4. **Context**

4.1 There are a number of important contexts for this work. The Government's Social Mobility strategy *Opening Doors, Breaking Barriers* provides both the parameters for some of our proposed responses and the springboard for others. The work of the social mobility and Child Poverty Commission provides an on-going reference point for colleagues working in this area; the Rt Hon Simon Hughes’ MP appointment as an Advocate for Access to Education focuses in particular on increasing participation in education by those from the most disadvantaged backgrounds. The Bridge Group’s engagement with the various political parties’ own internal policy processes will allow us to plan our impact in the longer term. Prior to this report, the Panel for Fair Access to the Professions released its final report in July 2009 with recommendations on how to improve access to the professions. This important work outlined the need to tackle issues of entry into the professions that lead to economic inefficiencies and social inequalities.

4.2 Social mobility is about improving life chances and harnessing abilities and strengths for societal progress. The Government has committed itself to improving ‘relative intergenerational mobility’. That is, the ability of a generation to improve their circumstances when compared to the last – the possibility of individuals moving up or down the socio-economic ladder. Fundamentally, it is about ensuring meritocracy.

4.3 One of the most common ways of realising social mobility at an individual level is through capable people from disadvantaged backgrounds gaining access to high-status occupations. The vast majority of professional roles require advanced learning and university degrees and, therefore, universities play a critical role in opening the doors to leading careers and in promoting social mobility.

4.4 The higher education sector is facing significant changes that will directly affect prospective students. Over the next four years, the cuts of 40% to higher education announced in the October 2010 comprehensive spending review and the raising of the fees cap will alter the balance between public funding and private or individual contributions. In 2011-12, English universities and colleges will need to manage cuts of £180 million, in addition to the substantial cuts of the previous financial year. Public funding of widening participation and career services as well as other front-line services will also be affected. From September 2012, English universities and colleges will be permitted to charge up to £9,000 for each year of higher education study but will be expected to direct a significant
proportion of their additional fee income to outreach, financial support and other measures to safeguard access for students from lower-income backgrounds.

4.5 The lack of access to effective information, advice and guidance (IAG) is one of the most significant brakes on access to higher education. Inadequate or inaccurate IAG can deter prospective students and engender bad decision-making. The end of Aimhigher, which did much to promote IAG to hard-to-reach groups, will mean the loss of networks and structures as well as outreach services in many areas. As we move into a quasi-market for higher education, the provision of specialist IAG must become the cornerstone of a system that supports and facilitates access and progression, and detailed consideration must be given to the provision available through the proposed All Age Careers Service, whose remit will necessarily be extremely broad. The increased complexity of the higher education system could have a disproportionately negative impact on students from less advantaged backgrounds, who may be less confident about researching higher education courses and fees and whose schools may be less rehearsed at supporting university applications, especially to the most competitive courses.¹

4.6 The social mobility agenda does not stop at higher education. Access to university is only one aspect of the challenge and only one part of the solution. The professions themselves have a key role in social mobility, though this is not always reflected in recruitment procedures, reporting requirements, or in investor decision-making. In some cases there is a tension in the private sector between the willingness to promote social mobility and the financial cost and practical difficulty of doing so. Promoting more collaborative work between schools, universities and the professions would help to pool resources, avoid duplication, improve targeting, and establish an integrated approach to social mobility that clearly articulates the relationship between study and professional employment.

4.7 A recurring theme at the Bridge Group’s seminar was the need for better data: data that is more accurate and up to date, data that is consistent across sectors and over years. The widespread – and understandable – dissatisfaction with current data provision should not detract from the fact that there is already much data available. It is, however, not necessarily readily available to those who need it, or used to inform policy and processes.

¹ We use the term ‘schools’ throughout this paper to encompass schools and colleges.
5. **Fees and student financial support**

There is little certainty about the impact of the new fees regime on access and social mobility.

5.1 Evidence suggests that, under the current system, tuition fees have not deterred prospective lower-income students from accessing higher education. Lord Browne’s review of funding and student finance noted, “if fees can be deferred, then participation can be protected”.\(^2\) However, survey evidence demonstrates the negative effect that tuition fees can have on attitudes and aspirations to higher education.\(^3\) One survey found that the prospect of £9,000 fees would be a disincentive for students from widening participation backgrounds.\(^4\) Furthermore, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (DBIS) highlights that “a £1000 increase in loans or grants is not sufficient to counteract the impact of a £1000 increase in fees – the coefficient on fees is significantly higher than both loans and grants”.\(^5\) Whether or not the financial burden is deferred until after graduation or incurred up-front, anxiety about debt can be a legitimate deterrent to those from lower socio-economic groups.\(^6\)

---


\(^3\) For the views of current and prospective students, see http://insight.thestudentroom.co.uk/ and www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/researcharchive/poll.aspx?oItemId=2627


\(^5\) Department for Business Innovation and Skills (September 2010) ‘The Impact of Higher Education Finance on University Participation in the UK.’

5.2 We should not assume that the previous increase in the number of low-income students entering higher education will continue. Evidence from Australia indicates that a sustained long-term rise in participation from traditionally under-represented groups requires sustained effort and appropriate funding structures.\footnote{Participation by the lowest socio-economic quartile rose across Australia over the 1990s, despite an increase in fees in 1992 and again in 1997. Over the past decade, however, there has been no further progress. A Government-sponsored review attributes this to a progressive fall in federal funding and student financial support as well as increased competition for places. Bradley, D. (2008) \textit{Review of Australian Higher Education}, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Canberra. www.deewr.gov.au/HigherEducation/Review/Pages/ReviewofAustralianHigherEducationReport.aspx}

Even if higher fees do not deter low-income students from applying to higher education, they are likely to affect students’ choice of institution and courses and their expectations of the outcomes of the degree.

5.3 It is important to distinguish between the actual funding structure and the funding structure as perceived by prospective students from lower-income backgrounds. The initial concern that the most price-sensitive applicants may opt for institutions with lower fees has been mitigated by the relatively flat fees market: most institutions plan to charge between £8,000 and £9,000. Prospective students will need to set this limited variation in fees alongside the variation in financial support – and the latter is likely to be significantly greater. The market in higher education therefore has the potential to be based at least as much on the financial support offered by individual institutions as on the level of fees. First, however, prospective students need to understand what is on offer. Information about financial support will be complex, differentiated by institution in terms of value but also in terms of style and will include, for example, tuition fee waivers, support for accommodation and cash bursary payments. The National Scholarships Programme will add to the complexity.

The students most in need of good information about student finance are the least likely to get it.

5.4 In a study of current fee and bursary arrangements, it was found that “a quarter of potential beneficiaries who were about to start, or had started, university for the first time in 2008/09, were unaware of bursaries ….” Many students think they are ineligible or are deterred by the complexity of the application procedures because information was unavailable or
unclear”.\textsuperscript{8} DBIS’ impact assessment of current funding arrangements finds a similar lack of awareness.\textsuperscript{9} While these findings should be considered in the context of the actual rise in enrolments by low-income students in recent years, £9,000 is significantly more than £3,000, and the timescales for informing prospective students for 2012 entry are a year shorter than for 2006, when the last change in funding arrangements occurred. Some prospective students may receive mixed messages about debt: on the one hand, higher education debt is confidently presented as rational, while on the other hand the Chancellor presented the 2011 budget as addressing the ills of a debt-fuelled model of growth.\textsuperscript{10} The rhetoric and language around this new system must be addressed. The recent announcement that DBIS is mounting a public information campaign for prospective students and their parents about changes to the student finance system in 2012 is welcomed, but the content, tone and targeting will be crucial.

\textit{Paid work during study may reduce the benefits of a degree.}

5.5 Higher fees are likely to place increased pressure on students from lower-income backgrounds to consider undertaking paid work during study in order to offset maintenance costs.\textsuperscript{11} Increasing the amount of paid work leaves less time for academic study. It may also lead to decreased opportunities to develop the networks that advantage students when seeking graduate employment, and decreased engagement with the ‘university experience’ including participation in societies and sports, which are often viewed favourably by prospective employers. While one could argue that paid employment enhances student employability, research indicates that the overall impact is negative. There is a significant risk that both the academic and the wider beneficial outcomes of the university experience, such as access to networks and transferable skills, are detrimentally affected if students feel obliged to work extended hours, particularly during term time.\textsuperscript{12}


\textsuperscript{11} Though the fee is fully covered by the loan, debt-averse students may choose to work more to ensure that their maintenance loan and other costs are minimal to counteract what will be a higher fee debt on graduation.

Perceived financial constraints may prevent students from choosing the higher education courses and institutions best suited for them and most conducive to social mobility.

5.6 The highest levels of ‘value added’ higher education often occur when students live away from home and are immersed in university life. Students from lower-income backgrounds are already more likely to live at home during their studies and this trend may increase under the higher fees regime. While living at home potentially has financial advantages, research indicates that living at home while studying can decrease the opportunity to engage in extra-curricular activities that develop social networks and employability skills, and can limit access to suitable study space. Restricting choices to local institutions can be a problem in itself, where the resulting choice is limited: students living in many areas may have only one provider of higher education nearby and that provider may or may not serve a student’s abilities, interests or career ambitions.

5.7 Students from lower-income backgrounds are already aware of the need to secure employment after graduation in order to repay debt incurred during study and are more likely to favour higher education courses with an obvious vocational link. This trend too is likely to increase with higher fees. Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) statistics indicate that courses in the Arts and Humanities have attracted fewer applications this year, while Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) courses have increased in popularity. Quite apart from arguments over the academic value of Arts and Humanities courses,

---

13 Reay et al (2001) noted in their study that working class transcripts were “saturated with localism that was absent from the narratives of more economically privileged students”; this was linked to material constraints in relation to travel and finance. Reay et al (2001) Choices of Degree or Degree of Choice? Class, ‘Race’ and the Higher Education Choice Process, Sociology, Vol 35, No 4, 855-874.

14 Holley, D.L. (2008) Spaces and Places: Negotiating learning in the context of new technology. PhD dissertation, Institution of Education, London. An important issue among low-income students was that learning space or use of technology (for example a computer) were not always readily available and often had to be negotiated amongst other residents in their household.


There is also evidence of the converse: Heath et al (2008) found that members of ‘non-participants’ networks who had not experienced HE themselves perceived HE to have poor returns in, for example, securing graduate jobs. Heath et al (2008), Network based ambivalence and education decision making: a case study of ‘non-participation’ in higher education, Research Papers in Education Vol 23, No 2, 219-229.

there may be an issue of misconceptions amongst student about career prospects: many prestigious graduate recruiters and firms welcome or even prefer Arts and Humanities courses for building transferable skills.

6. Information, advice and guidance (IAG) about higher education

While guidance is scarce, there is too much information and it is inconsistent in terms of quality and accessibility.

6.1 IAG should be considered in terms of its constituent parts. Of the three elements, information is currently the best served. The range of information sources is expanding, and the higher education sector is becoming more transparent. The greatest difficulty is the broad and disparate nature of provision, its sheer volume, and the lack of quality control, particularly over web-based material. If learners find their way to an apparently relevant information source, they may have little means of verifying its accuracy or contextualising it, and in some instances would need professional help to interpret it. There is a risk that this situation is exacerbated by the proliferation of user-generated reviews and online forums, which can help in clarifying thoughts but must be viewed as subjective and considered alongside sources that are more dependable.

6.2 Advice – tailored information on specific issues – is available from a range of sources. University outreach programmes can provide effective advice on specific aspects of the application process. UCAS makes considerable provision in this area, and many third sector organisations, online providers and schools themselves are in a position to meet this need. The issues here are quality, accuracy and timeliness. In addition, it can be difficult for those outside the education system to access advice.

6.3 The provision of guidance is where there is the greatest shortfall. Good guidance requires a combination of context and expertise, and as such cannot be offered ad-hoc or peripatetically. A three-fold approach is required to address the deficit: maximising the coverage of the scarce resources which exist in the short term; a programme for training additional professionals in the medium term; and a strategy for their deployment within and outside formal education settings. A blend of IAG is critical for those learners who are considering higher education, and prospective applicants should make use of all elements before making decisions about their future. Achieving the right mix is critical
and the Bridge Group aims to take a leading role in supporting the development of a blended approach that will work for stakeholders, applicants and their families.

The Government recognises the importance of IAG and asks several sectors to contribute to improvements.

6.4 The Government has been quick to acknowledge the importance of IAG, highlighted in its strategy for social mobility, Opening Doors, Breaking Barriers. One of three key components of the Government’s approach for the school years is “raising children's aspirations through access to high quality advice and guidance, coupled with a radical change in how we engage with businesses, universities and wider society”. The expectations on schools are high and they will be incentivised to deliver through the introduction of a ‘destinations measure’ at Key Stage 4 (and one at Key Stage 5 by 2012/13). Correspondingly, universities are rightly expected to provide clear and accessible information. Existing initiatives will be supported and promoted, and the Education and Employers Taskforce will promote a new programme, ‘Inspiring the Future’, to mobilise up to 100,000 people from all sectors and professions to engage with schools to talk about their jobs and career routes. Details of this programme are being developed; it will be important to coordinate new and existing outreach, and to exploit new opportunities such as alumni engagement strategies.

6.5 Section five above outlines a number of issues and key messages for prospective university entrants, particularly those from families with no experience of higher education. These messages tend to have, at best, a low profile in the information about higher education in common circulation, which tends to focus on matters common to all universities and avoid suggesting significant differences between universities – especially in terms of benefits. While this is an understandable stance for publicly funded bodies, it does not necessarily serve the interests of prospective students. It is not typically emphasised to prospective applicants, for example, that different universities and courses can lead to very different graduate outcomes, and that students may be entitled to more or less money, depending on where they study, and which course is undertaken. Furthermore, it is not adequately emphasised to university students that they should take up opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities and work experience, but they should also ensure sufficient time is left for study.

6.6 The Education Bill states that schools are responsible for the provision of higher education IAG. The quality of current provision varies enormously, and is often least adequate in schools in the most deprived areas. There is no centralised or external support for this work (from Local Authorities, for example, or a national provider), it is not assessed by Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED), nor is it emphasised on the Self Evaluation Forms (and therefore not prioritised by schools), and there is very little initial training or continuing professional development (CPD) for those staff delivering it. A recent paper on the topic notes that international evidence points to the need to revitalise the professionalism of career guidance.18

6.7 Schools that deliver good IAG typically have an experienced staff member whose primary, or sole, responsibility is access to higher education. Schools that deliver unsatisfactory provision in this area typically share this critical responsibility between staff members, often in the context of limited experience of high-achieving students. The overwhelming outcome is that pupils from more disadvantaged backgrounds can suffer in three ways: not being encouraged to aspire to higher education, receiving poor quality advice, and making inappropriate choices of A level or other courses that restrict options and make them less likely to enter, or to succeed in, higher education.

6.8 In further education colleges and sixth-form centres staff are more likely to be trained in guidance and have a specific responsibility in that regard. Whilst they can face key logistical constraints, such as a broader careers remit, a considerable caseload in the larger institutions and limited time to familiarise themselves with students before advising them on making decisions, some of the best examples of higher education guidance practice are found in sixth-form form centres in particular and should be replicated.

6.9 Adult learners and those seeking to return to education face additional challenges in gaining access to good IAG. Unlike those of school age, adults cannot be reached as a cohort, and many remain unsupported in all three elements of IAG because of the lack of a centralised national service. Information resources are usually targeted at school-age students; advice can be hard to find in the absence of provision outside of a formal learning environment; and guidance is almost impossible to access. The Adult Advancement and Careers Service, currently being

piloted in ten areas, may provide a vehicle for higher education IAG to this cohort but its focus is currently employment and retraining, as its ‘Jobcentreplus’ and ‘nextstep’ orientation suggests. Adults on Access courses fare better but may still struggle to find information relevant to their needs or attend extra-curricular information events such as university open days.

7. Employability and the professions

The professions are important in leveraging social mobility but there are not necessarily incentives or requirements to contribute.

7.1 There are many barriers for prospective entrants to the professions and these have a profound effect on social mobility, as well as to the UK’s long-term economic growth. In his foreword as chair of the Panel for Fair Access to the Professions, the Rt Hon Alan Milburn noted that “one in three jobs today is professional and millions more professionals may be needed by 2020 as our economy becomes ever more service-oriented and professionalised”. Ensuring that capable young people can aspire to and access the professions is a fundamental aspect of the social mobility agenda and crucial for economic growth.

7.2 The terms ‘the professions’ and ‘professionals’ have become synonymous with career and class status. While the definition of the professions will continue to expand, the need for specialist knowledge through higher education to confer expertise remains, for our purpose, a defining feature. Some professions – law or medicine, for example - may invest members with power over others. While the Equalities Act 2010 requires public bodies to be mindful and promote access on all protected characteristics, including socio-economic background, this is not the


20 We use the term ‘professions’ in this paper to encompass the professions and professionals, using as a starting point the Oxford English Dictionary’s broad definition of professions as vocations “in which a professed knowledge of some area of learning is used in its application to the affairs of others …”. We add the following criteria, assuming that in most instances all four criteria would need to be met for a role to be regarded as professional: a) Requires a university education and specialist knowledge b) Has entry restricted by something more than market forces c) Potentially has influence over the lives of others d) Has the potential to confer social and cultural capital on the person holding the role.

21 www.equalities.gov.uk/equality_act_2010.aspx
case for the private sector. There are also still too few professions that require the publication of information about their entrants in terms of socio-economic or educational background.22

7.3 There is often little incentive, particularly in terms of a business case, for the private sector to promote and monitor socio-economic diversity. There may be a tension between the willingness to promote social mobility and the financial cost and practical difficulty of doing so, especially when the rewards are unclear. This can affect, for example, outreach to lower-achieving schools and the choice of universities for recruitment. In some cases a lack of coordination may result in inefficiencies in outreach; there is little data, for example, on which schools receive visits from employers.

7.4 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is increasingly important, with a strengthening correlation between organisations’ CSR activities and their profitability.23 There is variation within and between sectors, but little has been done to integrate CSR practice and reporting with social mobility policies. While environmental off-setting, for example, is usually a key component, other aspects of social responsibility which impact on mobility, such as community engagement, recruitment procedures and the provision of information, are given less importance in CSR. As further scrutiny is placed on businesses to monitor and evaluate their practices, there is the possibility that this will change, and improved data (on the quantity and impact of engagement activities, and on recruitment procedures and outcomes) should have the effect of calling attention to good practice, highlighting areas for improvement, and enabling progress monitoring. This latter effect will help inform the business case for work in this area, but there is still much to do. While the risks associated with neglecting environmental factors in CSR have been clearly articulated through research and in the media, the case for social mobility activities in CSR must be made more clearly, as should the risks associated with disregarding this area. Communicating this message solely to the professions will have little effect: until consumers are convinced of the importance of social mobility activities in CSR, and this has an observable impact on their purchasing decisions, it is unlikely that there will be meaningful change.

22 For example, the Legal Services Board has recently consulted on requiring individual firms and Chambers to publish information on their staff, including details of their socio-economic and educational background.

23 The results of a recent survey of over 650 global corporations, undertaken by The Corporate Responsibility Officers Association (CROA), indicate that a majority of companies believe that the purchasers place a value on corporate responsibility when making decisions. Over 30% of those surveyed reported a direct correlation between their corporate responsibility efforts and enhanced profitability. www.croassociation.org
Universities have a critical role in producing employable graduates.

7.5 Higher education plays a key role in access to the professions. As the gatekeepers to advanced qualifications, this role is not solely fulfilled by the act of admitting students. We are therefore pleased to note the Office for Fair Access' (OFFA) recognition of higher education institutions' work on employability as part of access agreements. The link between employability and higher education has been encouraged in the UK to a greater extent than in many other countries. Historically, the Robbins Report (1963) and the Dearing Report (1997) highlighted the importance of higher education in stimulating the acquisition of skills vital to the modern economy. It can become problematic to view higher education for employability's sake alone, but, as noted earlier, the majority of students from lower-income backgrounds would share the concern for tangible benefits and a return on their investment. Students' expectations of career benefits are likely to increase alongside the rise in fees.

7.6 Students from lower socio-economic backgrounds are less likely to progress to graduate jobs and will earn less than their counterparts from more privileged backgrounds. Choice of degree course may play a role in this, but the Milburn report noted that employers sometimes find it difficult to fill graduate vacancies due to applicants' lack of generic transferable skills. University students tend to develop these skills through extra-curricular activities and students from less privileged backgrounds are less likely to participate in such activities. Professor Mary Stuart's research on extra-curricular activities provides an insight into the different university experiences of students from different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, and indicates that this is due in part to the individual characteristics and preferences of the students and in part to the opportunities available at the universities they attend. Stuart points to the role of peer-to-peer learning and networks as well as work experience. The skills learned during study, but not necessarily through it, affect graduate outcomes considerably.

---


25 Many would defend the value of higher education and the furthering of knowledge for their own sake. In addition, many people recognise that higher education is valuable in preparing students more broadly for unpaid roles in the family and community.


27 ‘Unleashing Aspiration’, op. cit.

Employers have a role in producing employable applicants.

7.7 Work experience can facilitate graduate employment but can also build valuable skills that support employability more generally. The Milburn report noted the importance of work experience and internships: “internships are an essential part of the career ladder in many professions. They are part and parcel of a modern, flexible economy”.29 However, many internships are not publicly advertised and may be more accessible to students who already have an informal connection with the employer, thus disadvantaging students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. The Government's Opening Doors social mobility strategy echoes Milburn and highlights the importance of work experience and the need for recruitment to internships and other work experience to be fair and transparent. Opening Doors points to examples of good practice among professional bodies and firms, and proposes a business compact on social mobility to help such practice to become more widespread. The Bridge Group is keen to consider how current good practice can inform this compact and ensure that coverage – by sector and geography - is as broad as possible.

29 ‘Unleashing Aspiration’, op. cit.
8. Data and transparency

Accurate, timely and relevant data can significantly enhance the effectiveness of policy interventions aimed at improving social mobility through higher education, but it is sometimes of poor quality or not used well.

8.1 Data can provide evidence of inequality to help leverage change, or to help indicate issues requiring further exploration. Data can inform the design of interventions and the targeting of participants, to help ensure that funds are used efficiently and produce the maximum return. For example, in order to design effective measures to promote diverse intake into selective courses, it helps to know which institutions high-attaining applicants from more disadvantaged backgrounds apply to and whether trends vary by geography, age and subject studied. The targeting of policy interventions in social mobility has been widely discussed, but unsatisfactory and unreliable data continues to damage work in this area. There are many instances where the impact of policy interventions in widening participation has been significantly diminished, not through lack of quality or appropriate timing, but by ineffective targeting and an inability to ‘reach the right group’.

8.2 Data can also help to quantify the impact of specific policies or programmes and to monitor overall progress in widening participation at the institutional level and across university mission groups and regional areas. While there is an abundance of data, here too there are problems. Data used within the school sector typically does not link up with that used in higher education, making longitudinal analysis difficult. The widening participation performance indicators currently used by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) collectively give some indication of an institution’s progress relative to others, but they are deeply flawed and do not command respect. Data used by many employers is different again.

30 http://www.hefce.ac.uk/widen/target/

31 The social class indicator relies on self-declared information and a classification system not intended to be hierarchical; the state school indicator is outdated, given the wide variation in school performance in the state sector; changing definitions of indicators lessen the value of trend data; and data becomes available only after considerable delay. The benchmarks present further problems. The National Audit Office (NAO) has added its voice to these arguments. See NAO (2008), ‘Widening participation in higher education’ p. 8.
8.3 How data is employed and the extent to which it is used, is inconsistent. The process of translating data into useable intelligence is often neglected, and data may not be presented in a form that can be employed to help inform decisions at the organisational and individual level. In some cases, data is used to good effect: for example, an increasing number of universities use contextual data in assessing applications, and it is making a difference. In other cases, institutions gather and report on data, but fail to use the results to inform their policies or procedures. Many institutions and employers appear to make little use of contextual data for the purpose of supporting applicants from diverse backgrounds.
Response

The Bridge Group makes a number of recommendations to address these issues. Some can be acted on now, with the Bridge Group ready to provide advice on implementation.

9. Information, advice and guidance (finance and progression)

Prospective students and their families or supporters need clear information about fees and financial support as soon as possible — from Government and higher education institutions. Information must be tailored to students’ circumstances.

9.1 OFFA has rightly encouraged universities to consider carefully their methods for providing information, but they should also strongly encourage all universities to publish their proposed bursary arrangements, having submitted access agreements to OFFA. Information about proposed bursary arrangements, while provisional, is better than no information. OFFA should be resourced to finalise their agreements with universities as quickly as possible so that complete and timely fees information can be made available to prospective students, along with comprehensive detail of bursary provision.

9.2 The Government has launched a communications campaign about the changes to student fees, in order to ensure that learners are not deterred from applying to university as a result of tuition fee increases. Any detailed explanation of the changes and the financial support available should be written in appropriate language and tailored to different underrepresented groups. It should be clear about the issues outlined in section five and in paragraph 6.5 above: higher education study does not deliver uniform benefits. What, where and how students study all influence subsequent graduate outcomes. The Bridge Group could have an important role to play in helping shape these messages more successfully than has been the case in previous student finance campaigns. It is also crucial that the detail is supplemented by strong and positive messages about the benefits of higher education.
The All Age Careers Service: remit and delivery mode.

9.3 As with the provision of finance-related information, so more broadly a successful All Age Careers Service will need to provide tailored advice for a variety of specific audiences, including the gifted and talented from disadvantaged backgrounds, those with disabilities and special educational needs, and those with particular professional vocations in mind. It could also offer students (and their parents) better information on accessing the professions and on appropriate qualification routes at an earlier stage in their education. This service should promote informed option choices (for GCSE and post-16 courses), but also communicate realistic messages about the levels of attainment that are required to access competitive institutions and professions.

9.4 A highly trained careers adviser with specialist higher education expertise in every school is the ideal foundation of an IAG system, but cost constraints and lack of human resources mean that in its initial form, the All Age Careers Service will be unable to deliver this. It is currently envisaged as comprising a mixture of online provision, telephone and face-to-face support. However, considering cost and staffing constraints, there is an opportunity to provide an online service that will be more affordable and flexible, and that would maximise the reach of the scarce resource of career guidance professionals whilst a national strategy for training is developed. Based on colleagues’ experiences, face-to-face opportunities may be especially important for adults, who particularly value opportunities to speak in person, but for many school-aged students one-to-one support online can prove as helpful as face-to-face provision.

9.5 Raising the profile of the All Age Careers Service will be vital in ensuring it reaches adult learners. Access to this demographic will come through libraries, shopping centres, Sure Start Centres, and especially local primary schools in order to reach parents; the use of local partners will ensure maximum impact. Similarly, the timing of any higher education IAG delivery needs consideration; ensuring adult learners have the option of accessing it in the evening makes a significant difference and should be enhanced.
Relationships across sectors are key to a cohesive service.

9.6 To avoid the current environment of duplication and disjointedness in this area, it is critical to consider how the All Age Careers Service will integrate with the outreach provided by ‘Inspiring the Future’, universities and other organisations, and how it will relate to the role of the Careers Profession Alliance, and the place of school-led innovation.32

9.7 Good quality and constantly evolving IAG will depend on strong partnerships between in-school and other higher education access advisers, university outreach staff and the professions. There should be a national network of university and careers advisers who can help with higher education choices as well as recruitment professionals to provide insight into career progression. The Bridge Group aims to explore further the feasibility of a system to provide IAG that combines voluntary provision by universities and the professions with statutory provision in education settings or locally delivered by a recognised service provider. The Bridge Group will also be turning considerable attention to the role of Third Sector providers in an integrated IAG service. The third sector has a vital role to play in providing information and advice, often to those students least likely to be reached through other routes.

9.8 The Bridge Group advocates that universities should play more of a leading role in mobilising, brokering and coordinating purposeful activities that connect the professions to school pupils. With appropriate resource, universities are best placed to play an intermediary managing role to support the professions in engaging effectively with school pupils and adult learners. It is strategically sensible for universities to complement and strengthen their widening participation activities by engaging the professions, and universities have the expertise and experience to support the professions in targeting learners to maximise impact – they already have relationships with key staff in schools, colleges and other adult learning organisations, critical to successful outreach work. There is a risk that universities undertaking this role could be overly focused on marketing imperatives, intensified by the new fees regime. It is therefore critical that resource is dedicated to outreach work at KS3

---


The SSAT Higher Education Related Learning Framework is an example of school led innovation, www.ssatrust.org.uk/community/highereducation/Pages/HERL.aspx
and KS4 (pre-16), where significant outcomes in terms of social mobility can be realised, but outcomes relating to institutional recruitment are more speculative.

9.9 By combining university outreach with outreach from the professions, integrated provision can more actively demonstrate to learners the links between school level study, higher education and professional employment. Universities can significantly increase the engagement of the professions in outreach work through alumni networks and existing links with professional bodies and learned societies. There is also limited research on the most effective ways in which the professions can impact positively on social mobility through outreach activities, and this lack of evidence may be contributing to the reluctance of some organisations to invest in this area. By working in collaboration with universities, relationships can be promoted between the professions and researchers who are trained to help evidence the impact of social mobility activities.

There need to be stronger policy levers to ensure that those providing advice on careers and higher education are appropriately trained and that IAG services are of high quality.

9.10 State schools should be required to have a properly trained teacher with specific responsibility for higher education progression. Initial training should be supplemented by on-going CPD. Additionally, an organisation, such as the Institute of Careers Guidance, should be given responsibility for providing specialist CPD for these staff members, and to provide an online resource for those involved in higher education. Local Authorities, which now have responsibility for post-16 funding and IAG, should be required to appoint a qualified guidance professional.

9.11 The risks associated with misinformation and partiality are high. IAG services provided by third parties (both online and in face-to-face settings) need to be kite-marked to ensure quality control. Information and advice needs to be impartial, accurate and reliable. Several models already exist for this kite-marking, such as the ‘Investors in People’ quality mark, or the Quality in Study Support accreditation system.

33 The Careers Taskforce makes a number of detailed recommendations in this regard. The most specific training is the Advisers Certificate: Applying to HE, validated by London South Bank University.
10. Securing progression to higher education and the professions

Universities, the professions and firms should use contextual data to inform and monitor recruitment.

10.1 All higher education institutions should continue to be strongly encouraged to employ contextual data in the application and recruitment process. Contextual data can be used in several ways: to help assess applicants, particularly those who are borderline or who are applying for over-subscribed courses; to help all courses to monitor their widening participation intake and, where appropriate, to recognise and value the different experiences of those from disadvantaged backgrounds; and to identify applicants who may benefit from additional support during the application process (for example, through providing additional information).

10.2 The professions and firms should be supported and encouraged to provide information on the socio-economic background of their entrants as part of their CSR obligations. An index or benchmark on the promotion of social responsibility in recruitment should be explored, building on the business compact on social mobility relating to work experience set out in Opening Doors. Professional regulators should address their responsibilities to promote social mobility through their constituencies’ recruitment practices.

10.3 The professions also suffer from a lack of information about what universities are doing to promote employability among their student body. Little is currently done to measure and rank the institutions that give the most ‘value added’ to their students throughout the degree. Recruiters may, for example, use commercial league tables of universities that often reflect historic reputation rather than current employability practices. Alternative league tables might also wish to develop separate rankings for different types of institutions and courses that add considerable value to students, particularly those from under-represented backgrounds.
Alumni are a valuable and under-used resource for universities and the professions.

10.4 Alumni are a dramatically under-used resource in promoting social mobility. We have already mentioned the mobilisation of university alumni to help inspire and inform students from lower socio-economic backgrounds about the professions. Alumni will also become increasingly important in terms of fund-raising (to boost bursary or scholarship funds, for example), and the Bridge Group advocates the continuation of the government matched funding scheme in a reduced form, specifically targeted at fund-raising to improve student access and employability, including bursary funds. Alumni can also contribute to the employability and professional success of students through mentoring, by offering structured, paid placements, providing support during application and interview processes, and by facilitating students’ access to the types of professional networks more affluent students might have established through family links.

10.5 Policy initiatives to mobilise alumni could have a significant impact on this area, at minimal financial cost, and add value to ‘Inspiring the Future’. While formal careers talks or workshops from alumni can support disadvantaged university students, a number of universities have demonstrated that promoting informal online and phone contact is often preferred by students, is more flexible in its delivery, is scalable, and has the potential to develop into something more significant – including placements, consulting on job applications, introductions to other professional contacts etc. Universities should be tasked with managing the supply (encouraging alumni to become ‘professional contacts’) and the demand (encouraging students from disadvantaged backgrounds to take advantage of this resource) for the scheme. A nationally coordinated online facility for connecting alumni and students and standardised marketing and guidance materials would help to stimulate activity in this area. There are risks associated with an initiative of this nature – most alumni are not trained in outreach or IAG – but this can be mitigated through focusing on building transferable skills rather than providing specific information on educational progression and career advice. Alumni can also support students’ professional progress by helping those from disadvantaged backgrounds to access professional networks, which can provide informal support and opportunities. The Bridge Group will explore with institutions the development of employability programmes targeted at more non-traditional students, driven by the mobilisation of alumni, and will consider how this can add value to ‘Inspiring the Future’.

34 http://www.hefce.ac.uk/finance/fundinghe/vol/
11. Using data to support change

The data sets currently available need to be improved, the information within them needs to be translated into useful intelligence and work is needed to connect the three ‘data sectors’ better to one another.

11.1 Data which could be usefully employed to leverage, inform and monitor policy initiatives in this area currently exist in three areas: school, higher education and employment. Discussions about new measures should aim, where possible, to find measures that can be applied across all three sectors, to allow longitudinal analysis.

11.2 **Secondary schools should be increasingly measured on the rate of progression to post-16 education, using the ‘destinations data’ set out in *Opening Doors* (some local authorities and Connexions services already collate this information, but it is not as a matter of course published as an indicator of school quality.) Schools and colleges with level 3 provision should be measured on the rate of progression to higher education, as is the case in Scotland. The introduction of these measures would engender a range of benefits: it will help to focus attention and resources within the school sector on progression to higher education; support universities in targeting their widening participation activities to those schools needing them most; and augment the contextual data available to universities in assessing applicants. (We note that Supporting Professionalism in Admissions and UCAS intended to include progression to higher education in its ‘basket’ of contextual indicators, but has been unable to obtain the necessary data. We hope that the inclusion of this measure in *Opening Doors* will resolve this situation. As noted above, useful information must be made readily available across sectors.)

11.3 Mechanisms need to be sustained for the localised provision of currently available schools data to inform universities’ widening participation outreach programs. These data have two purposes: identifying target pupils and target schools, and monitoring the impact of widening participation programmes. Where Aimhigher presently provides these data for regions, universities should engage with local authorities, Connexions and others as necessary. It is possible that the All Age Careers Service will play an important role in this, particularly if it can identify mechanisms for storing and providing data beyond the school sector.
11.4 With regard to data in the university sector, the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) should review the current performance indicators used to measure widening participation in the higher education sector. As noted in the earlier section, those currently used are inaccurate. While they do collectively give an indication of a higher education institution’s widening participation intake, the flawed measures – and the reliance on self-declaration – mean that widening participation indicators claim little respect, particularly in those parts of the higher education sector with lower Widening Participation intakes. We are aware of research into widening participation performance indicators and a wealth of expertise within universities and would urge HEFCE, HESA and the Performance Indicators Steering Group to draw on and collaborate with these resources in devising more robust indicators.35

Universities, the professions and firms should publish data on applications and recruitment by people from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

11.5 UCAS should more publicly monitor applications and acceptances by designated widening participation groups. UCAS has the technical capacity to do this, but would probably require additional financial resource to provide this ancillary service. We acknowledge that comparing applications with acceptance provides simplified and imperfect information: it takes no account, for example, of applicants’ grades or performance in additional assessment (to do the latter would require a complex and costly multivariate analysis). We do, however, believe that this simplified data would help universities to assess their overall admissions processes, would present a positive picture for the great majority of universities and that this in itself would help to correct the misconceptions of some schools and potential applicants.

11.6 Professional regulators and representative bodies should encourage their constituents to monitor applications and recruitment by socio-economic factors and large firms should do the same.36 In practical terms, this process would augment the current equality and diversity monitoring. The monitoring and reporting of transparent data about application and recruitment from the professions would have multiple advantages. It would give us a clearer picture of how

35 www.hefce.ac.uk/learning/perfind/pisg/

36 Applicants could be asked to provide the postcode of their home during secondary school, which would be analysed with the same postcode tool used by HEFCE and HESA in monitoring university intakes to provide continuity.
recruitment is socially patterned, and to look for variance within, and between, different professional areas. The current approach to promoting fairer access to the professions is too homogenised, partly because not enough is known about recruitment patterns by individual professions.

**IAG for prospective students needs better data.**

11.7 The new fees regime intensifies the need for applicants and students to be well-informed and advised about their options, particularly in terms of graduate prospects. Students are likely to become more discerning about what they can expect from their time at university and long-term outcomes in terms of employability. This may be especially true for applicants who are more financially disadvantaged, where the risks associated with not securing well paid graduate employment are higher. Information relating to graduate earnings and employment must be improved to help students identify the potential return on investment from their course. The Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey is the only indicator of graduate prospects in most university league tables. The survey, which is taken six months after graduation and overlooks students opting for further study, does not paint a sufficiently accurate picture of graduate prospects. The longitudinal version of the DLHE survey, taken three years after graduation, is more useful, and should be incorporated into performance league tables.

11.8 Higher education IAG needs to be more closely linked to university admissions data and labour market information. The UK Commission for Employment and Skills is working on the provision of transparent, accurate, accessible and relevant data in the larger context of careers guidance, and the Bridge Group will focus on the critical role of data in higher education IAG and how it is best made accessible and available to the various user groups.

**Data providers for different sectors need to present a cohesive statistics service.**

11.9 Given the complexity in connecting and analysing a multitude of data sets, the Bridge Group advocates collaboration and cross-departmental coordination between HESA and the Department for Education Analytical Services to provide a cohesive statistics service for educational progression and social mobility. In the longer term, it ought to be possible to track individual students from school through university to professional employment.
Work plan

12. Expert Groups

12.1. This report has investigated current issues and makes a number of recommendations to address these. The recommendations that we see as priority areas of work are summarised on page 33. The Bridge Group is ready to offer advice on some recommendations immediately, but some other proposals will need further development. The Group’s engagement with policy-makers and influencers will be facilitated by Expert Groups, which we will establish from June 2011.

12.2. The Expert Groups will relate clearly to the areas of focus outlined above. They are: information, advice and guidance; collaborating with the professions; and data. We are open to forming additional working parties as needed, and recognise that the parameters of each Group may broaden or narrow as associates help us to define their remit. The Groups are defined below, and their initial focus areas are identified.

12.3. We recognise that there are colleagues who are already working in specialist groups to explore some of these areas. We will communicate with relevant groups and aim to add value to their work by providing complementary expertise and helping to correlate their proposals with related policy areas across sectors.

12.4. This work plan sets out a strategic framework for the Group’s work over the next twelve months, recognising that the changing policy landscape makes it difficult to anticipate a detailed project plan for influencing policy. Alongside its strategic work, the Group will remain alert to the changing policy environment, and respond quickly to ad hoc requests from policy-makers and influencers. We will continue to provide expert guidance on social mobility through higher education when it is needed most, and will balance this with strategically planned activities.
### 13. Timeline

13.1. We plan for each of the Expert Groups to follow the timeline below, although this must remain flexible to respond to the policy environment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Initial membership of the Expert Groups defined</td>
<td>June 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expert Groups meet to clarify terms of reference, to allocate research tasks to members, and to plan meetings for 2011/12.</td>
<td>July 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expert Groups are responsive to calls for advice from policy-makers and influencers</td>
<td>From July 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expert Groups meet approximately every two months</td>
<td>From July 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expert Groups publish initial round of policy recommendations</td>
<td>November 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bridge Group hosts a seminar to discuss initial round of policy recommendations</strong></td>
<td>November 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence from the seminar is published</td>
<td>December 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expert Groups publish second round of policy recommendations</td>
<td>March 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Bridge Group publishes a policy recommendation paper, an amalgam of the Expert Groups’ findings. A launch event takes place.</strong></td>
<td>May 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priority areas of work</td>
<td>Expert Group on Information, Advice and Guidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explore the critical role of data in higher education IAG, and how it is best made accessible and available to the various user groups. Collate key information and statistics that will make a strong impact on prospective students and can be fed through information campaigns.</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explore further the feasibility of a system to provide IAG that combines voluntary provision by universities and the professions with statutory provision in education settings or locally delivered by a recognised service provider.</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explore with institutions the development of employability programmes targeted at more disadvantaged university students, driven by the mobilisation of alumni, and consider how this can add value to ‘Inspiring the Future’.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advise on the Government’s communications campaign about the changes to student fees, to help shape the messages to encourage progression to higher education and the professions. It is critical to tailor these messages to students’ circumstances. There may be some work to do in identifying the messages (in terms of content and delivery) which are most appropriate for constituent groups (which may be differentiated, for example, by age, geography, ethnicity and subject background).</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research existing practice and propose models for universities to play a leading role in mobilising, brokering and coordinating activities that connect the professions to school pupils.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engage with the debate over kite-marking or quality assuring IAG services provided by third parties both online and in face-to-face settings) to ensure quality control</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engage with key stakeholders to add value to the review of the current performance indicators used to measure widening participation in higher education, including the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and the Performance Indicators Steering Group.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work in collaboration with professional bodies and professional regulators to establish best practice guidance on monitoring and publishing transparent data on entrants.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyse and collate research on the best use of contextual information in university admissions to inform information gathering at the application stage.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocate cross-departmental coordination between HESA and the Department for Education Analytical Services to provide a cohesive statistics service for educational progression and social mobility. One of the intended outcomes is to make it possible to track individual students from school through university to professional employment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advise on how effective messages can be communicated to support the inclusion of social mobility activities more clearly in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policies.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Bridge Group was founded in 2010. Its inaugural seminar took place on 10 November 2010 on Social Mobility and the Professions. The Steering Group leads its activities and comprises:

Dr Tessa Stone, Chair
Anthony Dursi
Dr Penelope Griffin
Kenton Lewis
Nik Miller

The Bridge Group is open to individuals with an interest in social mobility policy and practice that is directly or indirectly linked to higher education. Associates should share the aims of the Bridge Group and be willing to contribute their experience to policy discussions. The output of the Bridge Group will be in the form of policy recommendations for Government, influencers and stakeholders, and the network is encouraged to contribute their views and experience.

For further information and to sign up for updates, please access the website. www.thebridgegroup.org.uk