



**STEP INTO HE FAIR
TUESDAY 9 OCTOBER 2007, HEREFORD RACECOURSE**

What did we try to do and why?

There is only one university in the counties of Herefordshire and Worcestershire (University of Worcester) which means that there is greater emphasis placed on the HE opportunities provided by the FE colleges. We agreed to develop the idea of a HE fair which had been suggested by one of the 14-19 consortia. The aim was to showcase all the opportunities to study HE within the two counties at the university, FE colleges and private training providers. The emphasis was to be on progression using vocational qualifications rather than A levels.

Who helped?

We set up a working group comprising the LLN Manager, and Project Officer, Aimhigher strand leads for 13-19 for both counties, and the work-based learning strand lead, and the Schools Liaison Officer from University of Worcester.

Who was the Fair targeted at?

We split the day into four sessions as follows:

Time	Who targeted at	Activities
10.00 - 12.00	Schools in Worcestershire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exhibition hall with stands • Talk on student finances (preparation exercises sent out in advance) • Question and answer session with student panel
12.30 - 2.30	Schools in Herefordshire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exhibition hall with stands • Talk on student finances (preparation exercises sent out in advance) • Question and answer session with student panel
3.15 - 5.15	Students at FE colleges and the public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exhibition hall with stands • Talk on student finances (preparation exercises sent out in advance) • Question and answer session with student panel • Vocational Progression Routes and Foundation Degrees
6.00 – 8.00	The public and apprentices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exhibition hall with stands • Talk on student finances • Vocational Progression Routes and Foundation Degrees • Skills for the 21st Century

The event was branded as 'Step into HE' with its own logo. The 13-19 Aimhigher strand leads for the two counties worked to get schools and FE colleges attending whilst the Aimhigher work-based learning strand worked to attract apprentices to the event. The

Aimhigher Community strand leads for each county, and the lifelong learning sections of each council distributed leaflets and posters in community settings.

Leaflets and posters were held by Connexions, distributed by each FE College and were also sent to the libraries and supermarkets in Herefordshire and Worcestershire. A total of 2,700 leaflets and 350 posters were distributed.

FE colleges supplied information to their students electronically, banners were displayed at some FE colleges and other settings, plus we placed advertisements in 9 newspapers across the 2 counties.

The Fair

The fair was held at Hereford Racecourse which is a large venue on the north side of Hereford city centre. We invited FE colleges, private training providers, three universities and employers to have stands.

The following agreed to attend:

- Gloucestershire College
- Halesowen College
- Hereford College of Arts
- Herefordshire College of Technology
- Herefordshire Group Training Association
- Herefordshire Primary Care Trust
- Kidderminster College
- Ludlow College
- North East Worcestershire College
- Open University
- Pershore College (part of Warwickshire College)
- Robert Owen Learning Society
- University of Gloucestershire
- University of Worcester
- Worcester College of Technology
- Worcestershire Group Training Association

There were also the following two stands for:

- Aimhigher
- Impartial Advice & Guidance

We planned each session so that half the students were in the exhibition hall, whilst the other half were split between two seminars which lasted 20 minutes each. We had supplied pre-fair preparation materials to each school and college for distribution to their students.

We provided information to the students based on the 14 subject areas of the diplomas, so we were able to give a sheet to a student interested in engineering which listed all the exhibitors which provided HE in that subject.

Who came?

There were a total of 400 visitors, the majority of whom were from the Schools/FE Colleges listed below:

2 Schools from Herefordshire:

- Aylestone High School
- Wyebriidge Sports College

5 Schools from Worcestershire:

- The Chantry
- The Chase
- Elgar High School
- Evesham High School
- Pershore High School

2 FE Colleges from Worcestershire:

- Pershore College
- Worcester College of Technology

What lessons did we learn?

- 1 Evaluation methods: We asked each student to complete an evaluation form (the results of which are summarised, see attached). A prize draw for an iPod nano was offered as an incentive to complete the forms. We also sought feedback via questionnaire from exhibitors (the results of which are summarised, see attached) and asked for informal feedback throughout the day.
- 2 What worked well?
 - The feedback from students was very positive with 89% stating that the event had informed their decision on whether to go into higher education.
 - 95% of visitors said that the event provided them with a good understanding of the higher education provision available locally.
 - The informal feedback from teachers was also extremely good, they welcomed this attempt to show the students what was available locally. They particularly liked the subject sheets, which outlined the establishments that provided HE courses. Complete sets of these were taken back for their Careers Office.
 - The subject-related guidance sheets were welcomed, and demonstrated that it was possible to continue into higher education within the two counties on any of the 14 vocational subjects.
 - The exhibitors found the opportunity to informally network useful, as it is rare for colleges, universities, private training providers and employers to be at the same event.
 - The students enjoyed the seminars and 95% said they found them useful.
- 3 What didn't work well?
 - Less than 10 members of the public attended, and these came in the afternoon session, which meant that the evening session had to be abandoned. Either the marketing of the event or the nature of the event itself failed to attract adult learners and apprentices.
 - 50 minutes was too long for most of the students to spend in the exhibition hall, 30 minutes would have been sufficient.
 - The location was cited as a reason for some of the Worcestershire schools not attending.
 - The afternoon session programme wasn't right: the students all attended each of the three optional seminars which left little time for the exhibition hall. We also found that FE college students had a greater tendency to wander than the school participants.

Would we do it again?

The event was expensive in terms of staff time (it took a tremendous amount of organising), and cost (approximately £11,000). The working group will meet up in December to discuss next year, but we think that we will run the event again because it was such a good opportunity to show all the different ways of accessing HE within the two counties.

It was also important to focus on progression with vocational qualifications rather than A levels. We will focus on schools and FE colleges next year, finishing the event mid afternoon. We will also try holding it in Worcestershire (which has a much bigger population) for students who were unable to attend due to distance this year. The students genuinely appeared to benefit from the event; hopefully the organisations exhibiting will do so as well in terms of student registrations.



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SUMMARY OF VISITORS EVALUATIONS

A total of 211 Surveys were completed, the results of which are shown below.

BEFORE THE EVENT

1. How did you hear about the Event?

99% School/College Staff 1% Poster/Flyer

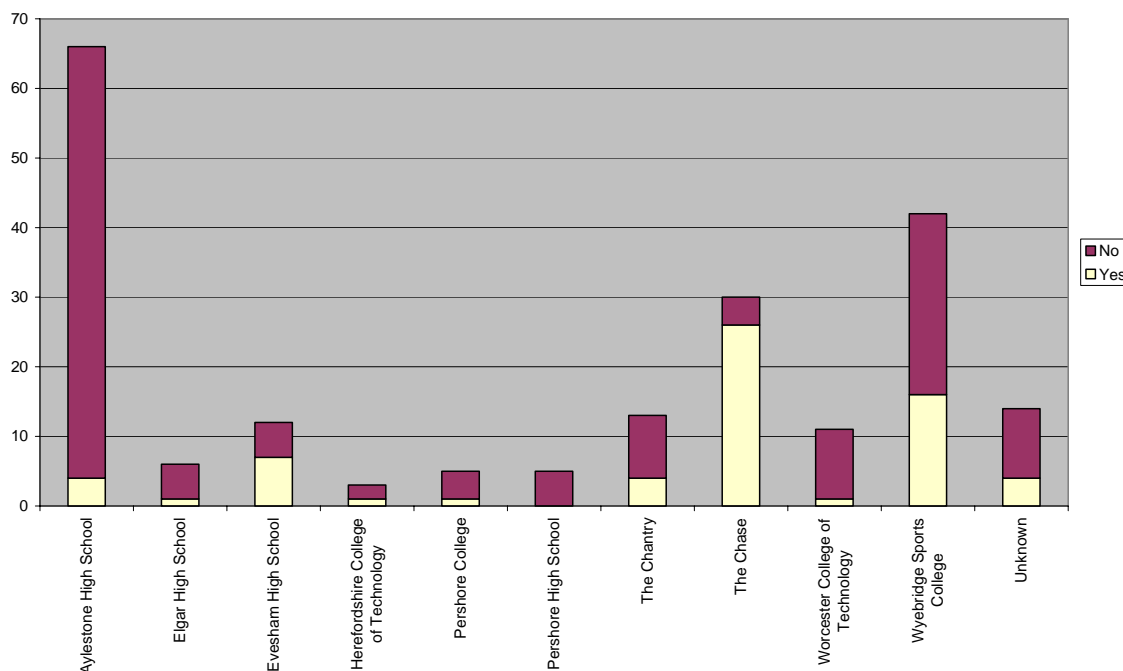
2. Did you have a good understanding of the purpose of the event before you arrived?

62% Yes 38% No

3a. Did you receive a preparation exercise before the event?

31% Yes 69% No

A breakdown of these results are shown by School/College below:



3b. If yes, was the preparation exercise useful?

89% Yes 11% No

EXHIBITORS

4. Overall, did you find the exhibitors ...

31% Very Helpful 48% Helpful 18% Quite Helpful 3% Not at all Helpful

5a. Were the exhibitors able to answer all of your questions?

99% Yes 1% No

5b. If no, what questions were they unable to answer?

- There is nothing to do with animals except our own college (Persnore College)
- Information on Fire Service

TALKS

6a. Did you find the choice of talks useful?

95% Yes 5% No

6b. If no, what other talks would you find useful?

- Animal Care/Animal Management (x4)
- No veterinary (apart from Persnore)
- None of them were about what I was going to do
- Subject I wanted to do in college
- Could have expanded in more detail about money issues
- More dynamic presentations - more activity

7a. Did you ask any questions at the talks?

32% Yes 68% No

7b. If yes, was the speaker able to provide a helpful response?

98% Yes 2% No

OVERALL

8. Did you find the event ...

89% About Right 9% Too Long 2% Too Short

9. Did the event provide you with a good understanding of the higher education provision that is available locally?

95% Yes 5% No

10. Do you feel that the information supplied at the event was helpful?

98% Yes 2% No

11. What other information do you feel would be useful?

- Subject specific information (x11) - subjects requested included Medical Science, Sports Management, Veterinary Work, Catering, Music, NHS Careers, Animal Care/Management (x3)

- List of good national/local universities/colleges (x6)
- No more information required (x6)
- Specific information on courses available (x5)
- What GCSE's are needed and what grades (x3)
- Alternative options to university i.e. the forces (x2)
- More booklets (x2)
- Social Activities (x2)
- Wider range of colleges (x2) – one person requested Hartpury College
- Good Stalls
- Horse racing course
- How much a year does each student have to pay in the local area
- Information on apprenticeships
- More about A Level options and UCAS points
- More feedback from a different range of students
- More sessions
- Sixth Form
- That you can get grants
- Travel - how you could get to college or university

12a. Do you think you will continue on to higher education in the future?

78% Yes

3% No

19% Still Unsure

12b. If yes or no, has this event informed your decision?

89% Yes

11% No



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SUMMARY OF EXHIBITORS EVALUATIONS

A total of 7 Surveys were completed, the results of which are shown below.

How useful was the information that you received prior to the event?

0 x Not at all useful 1 x Quite Useful 2 x Useful 4 x Very Useful

What other information do you feel would have been useful prior to the event?

- A second copy of the information as we supported each other although from different organisations
- A location map

Did you feel that the venue was appropriate for the event?

6 x Yes 1 x No

- Easy to get to, plenty of parking
- Location required people to go out of their way or be taken. A more central location with passing member of the public and after dark lighting
- Good for exhibitors, not really accessible to the public

Did you feel that the opening hours of the event were appropriate?

3 x Yes 3 x No

- The evening session hardly had any visitors. So on reflection, 10am – 6pm would probably be better for future events
- It went on too late. 5pm was a natural end to the day as no-one came in the evening
- It offered scope for everyone
- Obviously the evening session needs to be reviewed
- Too long

Did you have enough time to set up your stand prior to the visitors arriving?

7 x Yes 0 x No

- Even though I arrived late (due to an accident) the staff were very friendly and helpful
- Very helpful on arrival

How helpful did you find the organisers and student helpers?

0 x Not at all Helpful 0 x Quite Helpful 2 x Helpful 5 x Very Helpful

Did you feel the number of visitors was ...

3 x Too Few 3 x About Right 0 x Too Many

- There were too few at the 6pm – 8pm session but the daytime sessions were about right
- The flow of the day was only 'Too Few' because the evening wasn't very well attended, it was ok during the day. Was there sufficient advertising?

Did you feel that the flow of the day was ...

2 x Too Slow 5 x About Right 0 x Too Busy

- It was good to have some breathing spaces between sessions
- It was good for the sessions that were promoted and attended

Overall, did you feel that the students in the first 2 sessions were well prepared?

3 x Yes 0 x No 3 x Mixed

1 x N/A – as we only asked them what they were interested in

Please provide any suggestions for how the event could be improved in the future

- To highlight Impartial Advice & Guidance Table
- Venue – Move where the public would naturally access e.g. leisure centre – if the banner is left out, more people will see it
- Link it to public events, race day, football, three counties show, rugby club, town centre presence
- It's great to be able to speak to year 11's about HE – some might slip through the net before we see them again at UCAS Fairs
- Finish earlier in the day
- May need to review how the event is promoted to adults and apprentices (always difficult to predict)
- Students should be better prepared, especially when the preparation material is all done for them

Please provide any other comments regarding the event below

- I enjoyed the event and felt that the Student Panel went really well
- A lot of effort clearly went in to the event – you can only make it available to the public
- Very good networking opportunity for exhibitors present
- You have to start somewhere! It may be worth advertising the event on buses, youth centres and information points
- Very good refreshments – thank you
- Very well organised event
- Very useful both for access to potential learners and for the opportunity to network
- Many thanks for your hard work in putting the event on
- Excellent event, really well organised. Very keen to see it repeated next year – would like to see more local HEI's represented e.g. UCE, BCFTCS, Bourneville College – which would be of interest to North and East Worcestershire schools. Well done!
- It would have been great to see a wider variety of HEI's at this event – Harper Adams, Welsh border institutions. Again, well done!
- It was an excellent event. The venue was good, the food great, the organisation superb