

Aimhigher Resource Costs: A Case Study Approach Final Report

York Consulting Ltd

Research Report
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A Case Study Approach
Final Report*

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction and Methodology

1. This report presents the findings of research undertaken by York Consulting Limited (YCL) to estimate the resource costs of Aimhigher activities and interventions through a case study approach. The study was commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) to improve resource costing transparency and to provide cost estimates to feed into the Comprehensive Spending Review.
2. The specific objectives of this study were to establish:
 - the resource costs (detailing their constituent parts) involved in delivering different Aimhigher activities;
 - the factors which cause costs to differ from area to area, and from intervention to intervention;
 - qualitative evidence associated with different marginal costs and delivery volumes;
 - common practices in accounting for fixed costs / overheads;
 - lessons learnt and good practice.
3. The basis of the methodology employed in this study was developed through a feasibility study undertaken by YCL earlier in 2006, which reviewed the methodological efficacy of creating an in-depth costing model.
4. The key feature of the approach adopted for the main-stage research was in-depth exploratory activity with 10 Aimhigher partnerships, supported by the use of a generic costing template. The methodological challenges associated with accessing the information required are highlighted in the main report. Despite these constraints we are confident that the information presented is robust and reliable, and relevant to the Aimhigher context.

Aimhigher Context

5. The context within which Aimhigher operates has implications for this study. The study has taken into account many of the contextual and operational facets of Aimhigher delivery which have a bearing on the costing of individual activities. These include the nature of what Aimhigher endeavours to achieve, different models of overall delivery of Aimhigher at a partnership level, the model of delivery of individual activities/interventions, and the role of schools and FE.

Resource Costs of Interventions and Cost Analysis

6. Aimhigher partnerships were asked to provide costing information for Aimhigher activities e.g. Aimhigher days, masterclasses. Key cost areas analysed were planning, staffing, facilities, hospitality and transport associated with delivering an Aimhigher activity. Analysis was undertaken of 91 returned cost proformas across the 10 case study partnerships. Key activity cost parameters were calculated e.g.

mean and median activity costs; planned and actual unit costs per head; and the high and low cost points.

Variability Factors

7. The underpinning assumption of this costing activity is that there is variation in the costs of delivering Aimhigher activities and that the delivery (and associated) costs of two activities is unlikely to ever be exactly the same. Key findings, in terms of variation, highlighted by this research are:
 - activity can be volume neutral i.e. increasing the number of attendees does not always result in increased costs;
 - activity can be volume critical i.e. increasing the number of attendees can result in increased costs;
 - sourcing at scale (i.e. buying multiple units of activity) generates economic efficiencies, firstly in terms of cost savings achieved through incurring the same fixed set-up costs irrespective of the number of activities purchased, and secondly in terms of bulk discount;
 - goods can be traded between partnerships;
 - up-front costs paid to external suppliers may be expensive, but there appears to be much lower organisational costs associated with third party delivered projects;
 - technology can deliver efficiencies;
 - location affects cost;
 - variations in delivery exist within partnerships.

Good Practice and Lessons Learnt

8. Through the process of establishing the full cost of Aimhigher interventions we have been able to capture a range of cost efficient practices. In addition, a number of barriers to achieving cost efficiency have been highlighted. These relate to the extent to which the real costs of activities are known, reporting arrangements with key partners involved in delivery, addressing the challenge of delivery to a critical mass of young people vis-à-vis specific activity targeted at key individuals, and the extent to which activity can be coordinated across the partnership area as a whole.
9. Identified cost efficient practices to emerge include:
 - coordinated or collaborative activity of centrally run activities;
 - careful planning to establish the optimum number of staff/students to be trained to deliver Aimhigher activities;
 - strategies aimed at reducing travel costs (e.g. travelling road shows, matching group sizes to available modes of transport);
 - use of student ambassadors to support (or replace) HEI staff at school-based events;
 - sourcing at scale to generate economic efficiencies.
10. As has been highlighted throughout the study the nature of Aimhigher is such that it operates very differently in each area and is tailored to local circumstance and need.

Therefore although these represent examples of cost efficient practices to consider they may not necessarily be feasibly employed in all areas. Also it should be stressed that cheaper activity does not necessarily mean better activity.

11. In addition to highlighting cost efficient practices, a series of good practices in relation to the delivery and management of Aimhigher have been presented. Some examples of observations across the case study partnerships include:
 - a clear mapping of activity delivered across the partnership area as a whole;
 - capturing detailed information on each activity delivered (including project outputs, expected outcomes and impacts, resources required and associated costs);
 - developing replica models of delivery (i.e. establishing the model of delivery which comprises the best elements).

Conclusions

12. This study has proved to be successful both in providing the DfES with the information required for the Comprehensive Spending Review, but also in raising awareness of the costs of Aimhigher activities/interventions. While partnerships initially approached the research with some reservations about the purpose and process they have, on the whole, found it a useful and interesting experience. Nevertheless many of the partnerships will admit that it has been a difficult and challenging process.
13. The study has proved advantageous to individual partnerships by providing them with a framework to inform their management of the costs of Aimhigher activity. For example, one case study partnership has commented that they will continue to use the cost template for their own purposes, and another commented that it has prompted them to tighten up their recording and reporting of information.
14. Although we have had to use assumptions to create cost scenarios we are confident that the information provided gives realistic estimates of full costs of the activities. Furthermore, the workings behind this cost information (including resource input costs) provide a framework for estimating costs of other activities which is of use to policymakers and Aimhigher partnerships alike.
15. In terms of cost variation we have found that delivery costs vary significantly between partnerships. It is clear that there can be notable differences in delivery cost between partnerships carrying out what appear to be similar activities. Some of these differences may be explained by the rigour with which partnerships carried out the costing work. We also believe that in some cases there was a level of optimism bias when estimating time and resources spent developing an Aimhigher activity. Other differences may be the result of scale differences, different delivery approaches or due to the location of the activity.
16. Alongside the generation of comprehensive cost information, the exercise has provided a valuable insight into how Aimhigher partnerships operate in different circumstances. The findings relating to the achievement of cost efficiencies outlined

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in Section Six have distinct implications for how Aimhigher partnerships deliver best value for money.

17. Given that most partnerships are generally unaware of the actual costs of Aimhigher activities, effective resource allocation is inhibited. The costing model/framework we have developed introduces a greater transparency which will stimulate more effective decision making and partnership debate. Furthermore, the good practice and cost efficiency measures outlined provide Aimhigher with a valuable starting point for further shaping approaches to the management and delivery of Aimhigher activities.
18. The challenge for Aimhigher partnerships is to adopt an approach to the management of their Aimhigher funding which best enables them to be aware of, and take advantage of, information about marginal costs and economies of scale. The funding approaches (market and accounting models) outlined in Section Three may provide a starting point for partnerships to consider how economies of scale may best be achieved given their management and funding arrangements and other local circumstances.
19. A number of partnerships use cost/prices simply to account for the activities they deliver. This accounting approach can give a false impression of effective resource allocation. Partnerships with features of the market model (where schools have autonomy of funding) may be more aware of market prices but may similarly fail to maximise resource allocation, particularly if activity is not coordinated across the partnership to achieve some of the economies of scale associated with central purchasing/organisation of activities.
20. Neither one of the marketing or accounting approaches is necessarily better, but the features associated with each should stimulate some debate around effective resource allocation. The freedom for schools to spend their Aimhigher monies how they see fit might be considered more valuable than the potential monetary benefits achieved by sourcing activities at scale.

Recommendations

21. The following are posed as recommendations for consideration:
 - in order to raise awareness of the full cost of delivering Aimhigher activities there is a need to shift the culture from *budget spend*, i.e. how the funding is allocated across partners or projects, to *actual cost*, i.e. what it costs to deliver a specific activity to an identified group of participants. This can have useful implications for effective planning and funding allocation by informing consideration of which activities can be delivered within the available budget and how many young people will benefit;
 - all partnerships should be encouraged to move towards what might be regarded as a 'quasi market' model. This does not have to mean any changes to the management of the partnership or the way in which funding is distributed, but would involve using cost information to assign notional

prices/costs to non-traded delivery (i.e. masterclasses, Aimhigher days). This should significantly improve both internal decision making and partnership-wide resource allocation;

- it is important that Aimhigher partnerships are given guidance with consistent messages about expectations in terms of how funding should be used and the extent to which it is beneficial to consider the costs of delivering Aimhigher activities and interventions. This could include, for example, the extent to which Aimhigher funding should be directed at overheads or on direct delivery of activities;
- the reaction to this research suggests that there is likely to be considerable benefit in disseminating guidance on costing and cost efficient practices to all Aimhigher partnerships. A workshop event to launch the standalone guidance document may be an effective way of raising awareness and facilitating buy-in to the concept.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report presents the findings of research undertaken by York Consulting Limited (YCL) to estimate the resource costs of Aimhigher activities and interventions through a case study approach. The study was commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) to improve resource costing transparency and to provide estimates to feed into the Comprehensive Spending Review.

Objectives of the Research

1.2 The specific objectives of this study were to establish:

- the resource costs (detailing their constituent parts) involved in delivering different Aimhigher activities (**Section Four**);
- the factors which cause costs to differ from area to area, and from intervention to intervention (**Section Five**);
- qualitative evidence associated with different marginal costs and delivery volumes (**Section Five**);
- common practices in accounting for fixed costs / overheads (**Section Three**);
- lessons learnt and good practice (**Section Six**).

Report Structure

1.3 The remainder of the report is structured as follows:

- **Section Two** outlines the methodology for this study;
- **Section Three** provides an overview of the Aimhigher context relevant to this research;
- **Section Four** presents the main findings of the research – the resource costs of Aimhigher interventions;
- **Section Five** summarises the factors that contribute to the variance in observed costs;

- **Section Six** summarises good practice and lessons learnt;
 - **Section Seven** presents conclusions and recommendations.
- 1.4 A **standalone “partnership toolkit”** comprising of a guide to costing and a costing template forms a separate output from this study. It is intended that this will act as a tool for planning and cost consideration for all Aimhigher partnerships.

2 METHODOLOGY

- 2.1 In this section the overall approach to the study is outlined along with an assessment of the reliability of the information captured and analysis process undertaken.
- 2.2 The basis of the methodology employed in this study was developed through a feasibility study undertaken by York Consulting Limited earlier in 2006. The feasibility study reviewed the methodological efficacy of creating an in-depth costing model. It was based around exploratory research with four case study partnerships to establish the type and format of cost information available and also to establish a consistent approach that could be adopted for the main-stage research. The feasibility study concluded that a cost model was viable and that the analysis should be extended to 10 case study partnerships to further develop and test the approach.

Reliability of Information and Analysis

- 2.3 The cost study provides new and important detailed information about the costs of different Aimhigher activities and the factors that cause variation in observed costs. We are confident with the overall approach adopted and believe the results to be valid and relevant to the Aimhigher context. For many partnerships, this is information which has not been examined at this level of detail previously, and therefore has been an interesting exercise for all parties concerned.
- 2.4 The costing template and model developed during the feasibility study proved to be valuable in supporting partnerships to identify the relevant cost elements and associated cost levels associated with delivery of Aimhigher activities, and also in eliciting additional information and challenging assumptions.
- 2.5 The partnerships involved have worked hard, in conjunction with YCL consultants, to be rigorous and realistic in their assessments of the costs of Aimhigher activities. Together with appropriate assumptions developed in some scenarios, we are confident that the information collected gives realistic estimates of the full costs of the activities presented.

Approach

- 2.6 The key features of the approach adopted are set out under the following generic headings:
- case studies;
 - research tools;
 - study response rate;
 - addressing methodological issues.

Case Studies

- 2.7 The research involved in-depth exploratory activity with **10 Aimhigher partnerships**. The key characteristics of the 10 partnerships are set out in **Table 2.1**.
- 2.8 The partnership case studies were selected by HEFCE and DfES and were regarded as nationally representative. The selection criteria included:
- ensuring they cover a range of geographical scenarios (e.g. rural, urban and peri-urban) and specifically that a London partnership is included to cover any issues specific to London;
 - one partnership from every region in England;
 - a spread in terms of the level of Aimhigher funding.
- 2.9 All 10 case study partnerships approached agreed to participate in the exercise. The level of partnership participation, however, was variable. Some partnerships were able to identify detailed cost information and contribute to completion of cost templates. Other partnerships were less able and/or willing to provide cost data at the level required for this study.
- 2.10 On average five partners per case study area, covering a range of institutions, borough coordinators, and private companies, were consulted. Some partners required multiple visits or consultations during the fieldwork period.

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Table 2.1: Case Study Key Characteristics

Case Study Area	Allocation of Funding direct to Schools (formerly Excellence Challenge) ¹	Market or accounting model ²	Geography	Funding Rank ³	Region	Consultees
1	Partial - vast majority	Mix	Urban	44	West Midlands	9
2	Full	Market	Urban	36	London	2
3	Partial	Market	Urban	19	East of England	1
4	Partial	Market	Rural	15	East of England	9
5	None	accounting - no funding allocated directly to schools & colleges	Semi-rural / coastal	7	South West	3
6	Partial - two small clusters	mix, but nearer to accounting model	Rural	11	North West	4
7	Partial – in 2.5 districts	Varies by district: some fund schools direct, others don't. 20% to area-wide projects	Urban	47	Yorkshire & Humber	4
8	Full	Accounting	Urban	25	London	2
9	Full	Mix	Urban	37	North East	7
10	Partial	Mix	Urban	32	East Midlands	7

¹ Aimhigher: Excellence Challenge, initially introduced as Excellence Challenge was introduced in the Phase 1 and 2 Excellence in Cities (EiC) areas and the Education Action Zone (EAZ) areas from September 2001 (and later introduced in the EiC Phase 3 areas) and was allocated to individual schools. The national Aimhigher programme began on 1 August 2004 as a result of the integration of Excellence Challenge and another previously existing programme - Aimhigher: Partnerships for Progression.

² For an explanation of the market and accounting models see Section Three, para. 3.3.

³ The funding rank provides an illustration of the level of funding each partnership receives, where 1 is the lowest level of funding and 48 is the highest across all Aimhigher partnerships.

Research Tools

- 2.11 The costing model approach was facilitated through the use of a **generic costing template** (Appendix 1) designed to capture cost information at a single activity/intervention level. The purpose of the template was to ensure a consistent approach across the 10 case studies and to prompt key players in each partnership to identify the information required. The template forms a key part of the “partnership toolkit” developed to provide advice and guidance to partnerships on approaches to costing.
- 2.12 YCL team members used the template as a vehicle for unpicking generic cost lines, eliciting additional information from the contacts within the partnerships, and challenging and agreeing assumptions. Developing and clarifying assumptions with partners has been an important exercise in achieving transparency for different activities under varying circumstances.

Study Response Rate

- 2.13 **Table 2.2** sets out the numbers and types of activities for which we received cost information from the partnerships. Initially we anticipated completing 10 costing templates per partnership, equating to 100 cost profiles across a range of Aimhigher activities. The achieved outcome was a creditable 91 cost proformas, however, the distribution across partnerships was not as representative as was anticipated. It is clear that some partnerships were more responsive to the study than others. For example, three partnerships provided 14 complete templates between them, while four other partnerships all provided more than 10 completed proformas each.
- 2.14 This differential response rate across partnerships was largely expected. Some partnerships had more ready access to project costs and as such it was easier for them to complete the cost proformas. In some cases, partnerships were, perhaps not unreasonably, uneasy about consultants approaching third party suppliers and/or schools to uncover what would be regarded as confidential data. Also, the New Relationships with Schools policy agenda has meant that Aimhigher partnerships are very limited in the extent to which they can request detailed spending information from schools.

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Table 2.2: Partnership Responses

Theme	Activity	Partnership 1	Partnership 2	Partnership 3	Partnership 4	Partnership 5	Partnership 6	Partnership 7	Partnership 8	Partnership 9	Partnership 10	Total	
Awareness and aspiration raising activities	Aimhigher Day	1	2			1	1	2	3	2	1	13	
	Taster Day	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	2			11	
Attainment raising	Residential/summer schools				1			1		1	1	4	
	After school clubs				1							1	
	Mentoring	1			1					1	1	4	
	Subject specific enrichment	1				1		1	3	1		7	
	Visits by HE staff			2									2
	Masterclass	2	2		8		3	2		2	1	20	
Vocational activities	Work based learning									1		1	
Information, advice and guidance (IAG)	Careers Fairs										1	1	
	IAG for parents and carers				2				1			3	
	IAG community outreach										1	1	
Staff training	Staff training	3		1					3		1	8	
Progression	Transition support									2		2	
Research and dissemination	Conferences	1									1	2	
	Website									1	1	2	
	Publications	3		3	1					1	1	9	
	Total	13	5	7	16	4		7	12	12	10	91	

Methodological Issues

2.15 The methodology employed was developed and tested through the feasibility study and has proved to be very effective in facilitating the appropriate level of cost information detail. The feasibility study also provided an opportunity to consider some of the challenges that may be faced.

2.16 While we are confident with the methodology employed, in order to place the research and analysis in proper context the remainder of the chapter reviews methodological issues encountered. These include the following:

- (i) access to cost data;**
- (ii) activity comparisons;**
- (iii) partnership characteristics;**
- (iv) aspects of interpretation.**

(i) Access to cost data

2.17 It has been important to work with the Aimhigher partnerships to access relevant information required to build up a full picture of the true cost of Aimhigher activities/interventions. This has required:

- **estimating costs and agreeing assumptions** where actual costs may not be available. This is a particular issue where funds may be dispersed to other partners;
- **overcoming concerns about cost revelation** i.e. acknowledging the true (and full) cost of delivering an activity. This issue related largely to concerns that drilling too deep might reveal that some activities are particularly expensive, or that some partners are contributing significantly more benefits-in-kind than initially thought and that this may prompt these partners to introduce/increase charges;
- **encouraging partnerships to consider how they may be able to cost a wide range of types of activities** recognising that certain types of activities are invariably easier to cost than others, e.g. those activities over which the Aimhigher partnership had complete control such as the development of newsletters and information guides. This has ensured that we have collected costs across a wide range of activities rather than simply those for which it is easiest to access cost information;

- our overall approach has been to **limit/manage the burden on partnerships** by supporting the partnerships in completing the templates recognising that some partnerships were able to take on a high degree of ownership of the cost study, while others have not necessarily had the capacity to do so;
- recognising that **a detailed breakdown of third-party providers' may not always be available**, given the commercial sensitivity around disclosure of this data. This means that while they are able to provide the full costs for a day's activity, a break down of the constituent parts (e.g. planning, resources, staff time) is not always available.

(ii) Activity Comparison

2.18 Throughout the study it has been important to consider how realistic comparisons of activities can be made:

- one of the consistent challenges has been to ensure we are comparing costs for **activities that are like for like**. Activities have been grouped together using the Aimhigher typology (Appendix 5). While this approach initially provides a useful way to group and compare activities, it should be noted that many activities could easily fit into two or more of the activity categories, e.g. a 'Lads into language day' activity could be classed as a Masterclass or a Subject specific class. Similarly, in some cases additional new activity titles have been created;
- we have also had to **maintain a focus on single unit costs**. In some cases partnerships provided costs for multiple units of activity e.g. where a private sector agency has delivered 50 Aimhigher workshops. In such cases, the cost for delivering a single unit of activity was calculated to ensure comparability with other costs received.

(iii) Partnership Characteristics

2.19 The differing characteristics of partnerships has posed challenges in identifying and accessing the level of detail required, and has required the following steps to be taken:

- **consulting a range of partners** in order to access detailed cost information, particularly where governance and management partnership arrangements are devolved from the central partnership;
- **explaining the purpose and process of the study, and alleviating concerns** to overcome the different approaches to, and perceptions of, costing that were observed across the case studies;

- accounting for the **relevant history of the partnership in relation to culture around cost detail** recognising that the partnerships have evolved with different arrangements. For example, in one case study partnership there is tight management of costs due to a history whereby funding is released after receipts are submitted for cost incurred; in other cases this type of arrangement does not exist and therefore the culture of the partnership in relation to cost detail is very different.

(iv) Aspects of Interpretation

2.20 We are confident that the skills and expertise of our team members, combined with the robust methodology developed through the feasibility study ensure an effective overall approach to this research; however there are some particular limitations that should be taken into account when using the outcomes from this research. These relate to:

- there has been **little success in accessing cost information from the schools** involved in Aimhigher due to limited (if any) monitoring and reporting requirements placed on schools. Where practical and possible, key partners have been consulted in order to agree estimates for the types and levels of costs incurred by schools that are applicable to local circumstances. This also means that the information extracted **relates mostly to the centrally run activities**⁴ (that are accounted for by the central partnerships) with less detail on the types of Aimhigher activities supported by schools' own Aimhigher funding allocations;
- while the study provides new and important information on the costs of Aimhigher activities it **does not take into account which activities are most commonly delivered** because the study has not sought to establish detail of the scale of activity within each area (i.e. total number of activities delivered and numbers of young people participating);
- the focus has been on gathering in-depth cost information from a sample of 10 partnerships and therefore there are **some limitations to the comparisons that can be made**;
- some partnerships under-estimated their own planning costs associated with delivering Aimhigher projects due to **optimism bias** e.g. "*it only took me one day to organise the workshop*". Those partnerships who managed the delivery of Aimhigher projects themselves seemed to be able to provide more realistic estimates. Through the analysis process we have sought to address this issue by comparing costs within and across partnerships.

⁴ The role and participation of schools will be discussed in further detail in Section Four.

3 AIMHIGHER CONTEXT

3.1 In this section we draw out some of the contextual and operational facets of Aimhigher delivery which have a key bearing on the costing of individual activities. These are addressed under the following:

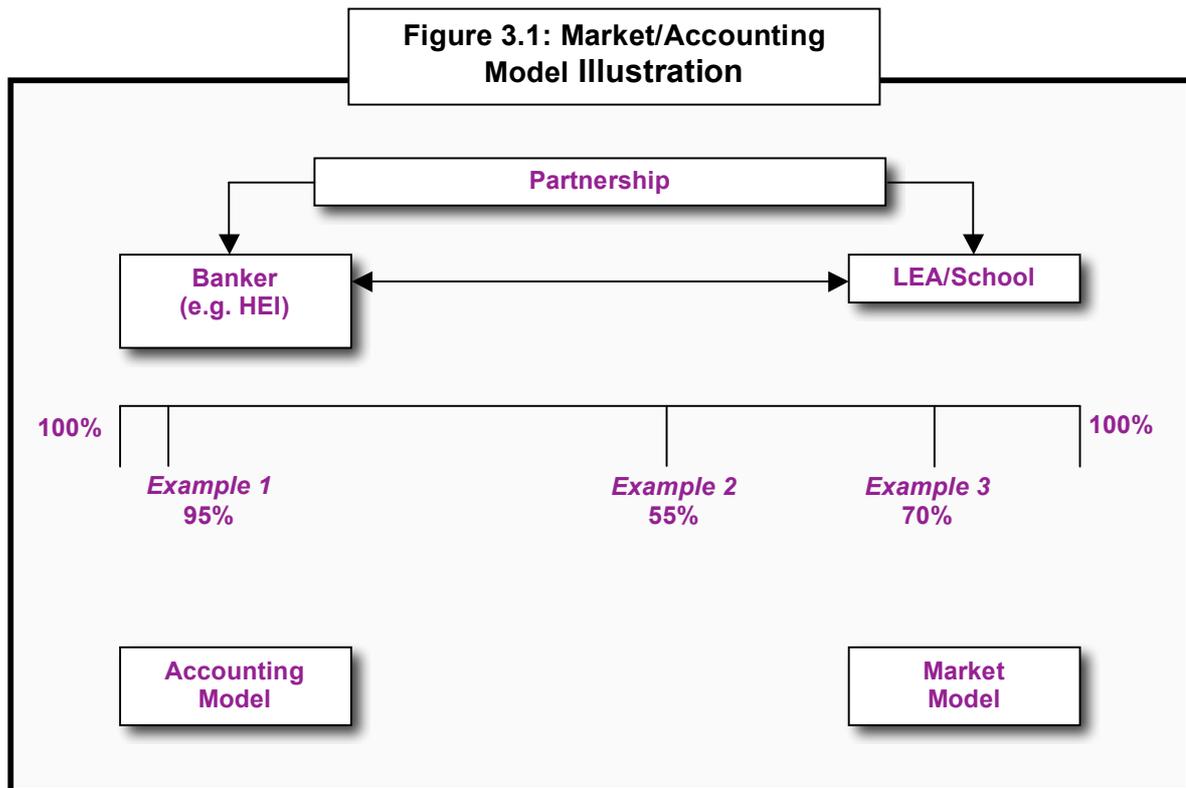
- (i) **market model versus the accounting model;**
- (ii) **treatment of overheads;**
- (iii) **model of delivery;**
- (iv) **school participation;**
- (v) **role of FE Colleges.**

(i) Market Model v. Accounting Model

3.2 The feasibility study identified and developed a model of Aimhigher funding arrangements. At the two extremes of this funding continuum are the 'market' model and the 'accounting' model, as illustrated in **Figure 3.1**. Whilst this model of funding arrangements has stimulated some debate, it highlights that there can be quite different approaches to how funding is used to support the delivery of Aimhigher activities in each area partnership, and key features of these approaches have implications for how costs are determined.

3.3 **In the Market Model** it is assumed that the funding that schools directly receive provides them with a degree of purchasing power to decide which activities they will "buy" for their young people and, to a certain extent, at what level of cost (particularly where more than one partner offers a similar activity), i.e. a market exists. Schools achieve this purchasing power by the nature that, under the New Relationships with Schools policy, the funding Aimhigher partnerships pass to schools is non-ringfenced and can therefore be used by the school to spend on any activity it chooses. In the Market Model service providers, typically universities and colleges, may publish a prospectus of activities. In this model prices/costs of activities are 'explicit'.

3.4 **In the Accounting Model**, there is no market as such, with activities delivered across the partnership to the young people from the schools to participate in at zero cost to the school, with partners using their funding allocation to cover the vast majority of the delivery costs. In this model prices/costs are 'implicit'. They are a device for accounting for the cost of an activity, rather than determining its distribution.



3.5 Figure 3.1 illustrates the relative market/accounting position in relation to three example partnerships:

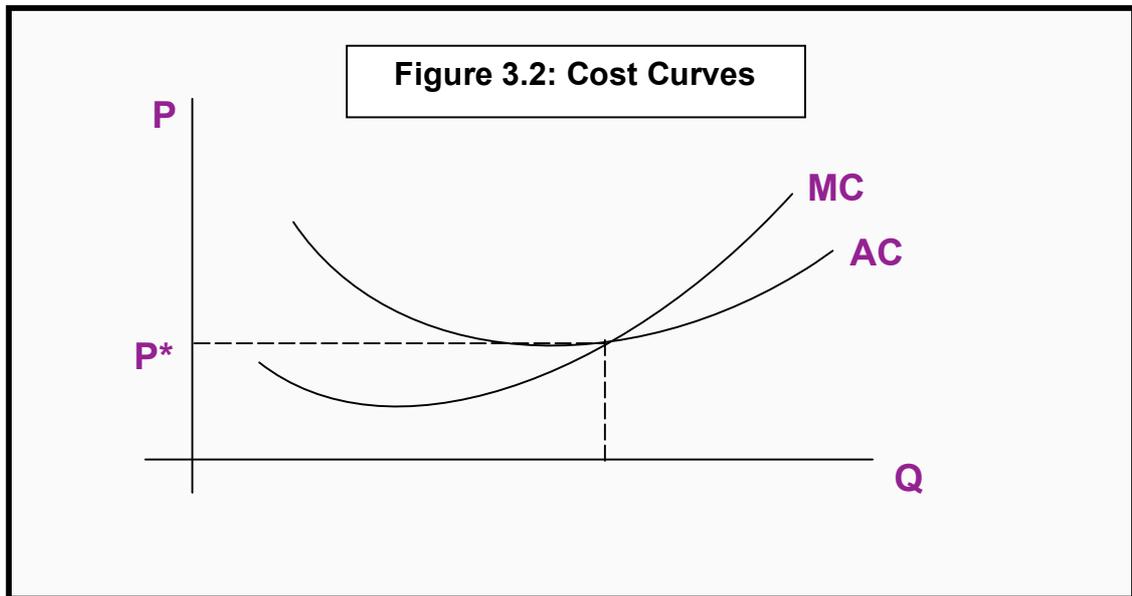
- Example 1** exhibits features associated with the **accounting model**, with 95% of funding managed by the central partnership and therefore also accounted for by the central partnership. In this case it is likely that the partnership would refer to the actual cost of delivering activities as cost information is used as a means for accounting for activity rather than a means by which schools may select which activities young people participate in;
- Example 3**, on the other hand, predominantly exhibits features associated with the **market model** where the majority of funding is devolved to schools. This provides the schools with a degree of purchasing power to decide which activities they will “buy” for their young people and, to a certain extent, at what level of cost (particularly where more than one partner offers a similar activity), i.e. a market exists. In this example service providers such as universities and colleges may refer to prices/costs as detailed in a published prospectus of activities;

- **Example 2** exhibits features of a **mixed model** where 55% of funding is managed centrally and the remaining 45% distributed to schools or boroughs/districts. In this case there will be mix of different types of prices/costs of activities – some implicit and some explicit.
- 3.6 These three examples present the most obvious extremes that will exist on the funding continuum but, in reality, it is more likely that any one partnership exhibits a combination of features associated with all three models. Furthermore, funding arrangements will also be subject to influences of other partnership factors such as the partnership set-up, context and history.
- 3.7 The distribution of funding does not necessarily relate to the partnership model (i.e. centralised or devolved) though it is likely that devolved models will exhibit more features of the market model and similarly centralised models are likely to exhibit features associated with the accounting model.
- 3.8 Of the 10 case study partnerships, three exhibit features associated with a market model, two operate under an accounting model and the remainder operate a mixed model (see Table 2.1). The fieldwork and analysis processes have been designed to account for these differences and to work to the actual costs wherever possible.
- 3.9 It is recognised that the delivery of Aimhigher activities and interventions do not take place within a rational economic market. Therefore the purpose of illustrating these approaches is to highlight that these models give rise to different cost outcomes, and some of the reasons why differences in perceived or advertised costs may be observed.

(ii) Treatment of Overheads

- 3.10 The feasibility study highlighted different partnership approaches to dealing with overheads. For example, in some partnerships overheads were included in the cost of individual interventions while in others they were excluded. The variations in the extent to which overheads are included in the cost models impacts on the average and marginal costs for each activity, with every activity and every partnership exhibiting a different marginal and average cost curve.

3.11 **Figure 3.2** below shows where the marginal cost curve (MC) cuts the average cost curve (AC), where P is the price per young person and Q is the quantity of young people participating in the activity. This theoretical model highlights that, for delivery of an activity, cost efficiency is best achieved by ensuring that the number of young people participating is as close as possible to the point where the two curves cross each other. The cost (marginal cost) of adding additional young people to the group before this point is reached will be less than the average cost and therefore, in theoretical terms, it makes sense to increase the group size, to make best use of the resources available.



3.12 An additional issue faced in dealing with overheads relates to where partnerships are being encouraged to “ensure that funding is concentrated on front-end activities”, i.e. delivery of events/activities, and are therefore unwilling or unable to detail some of the less explicit hidden costs. For example, we have seen guidance (developed regionally), which one case study partnership has been working to, which suggested that funding should be “**concentrated on front-end activity with minimal amounts spent on overheads**”.

3.13 The issue of variations in overheads has been dealt with during the cost study by identifying a key set of overhead-type costs that can realistically be apportioned to the delivery of individual activities/interventions. It does not include the generic costs of “partnership working” i.e. the costs of delivering nothing, since every partnership operates under very different circumstances and it would be unrealistic to simply assign a proportion of the total partnerships working costs to every activity delivered. The focus on only those overhead costs attributable to specific activities and interventions ensures that comparisons can be made on the basis of broadly similar cost curves.

(iii) Model of Delivery

3.14 There are a range of factors relating to the model of delivery of Aimhigher activities/interventions that influence the associated delivery costs. These factors include:

- **duration of activity** – the duration of the activity can vary even where the same activity is delivered, but under different circumstances;
- **distance travelled** – costs will vary depending on the distance travelled either by young people and/or staff. This means that an activity may be more costly for young people from a school located further away from the location of delivery than other schools;
- **type of resources** – some activities may require specialist resources e.g. technical equipment;
- **target group involved** – in rural areas, in particular, the focus may be on identifying target *individuals* rather than *groups* of young people thus resulting in greater costs associated with coordinating the activity for a dispersed group of young people. In other circumstances the target group may require additional support at additional cost, for example, younger students may require smaller group sizes;
- **location** – a key factor affecting the cost of delivering the activities is location. This can range from delivery in school, to delivery at HEI/FE or private providers. For offsite activities there are additional costs associated with room hire and transport;

- **level of participation** – the actual number of young people taking part in an activity does not necessarily equal the planned number of participants. This has an impact on the cost per person if the resource inputs remain the same regardless of the number. This is a particular issue at ‘open door’ events where the number turning up can be quite unpredictable.

3.15 This variation has been captured, where available, in order to make a comparison of the cost of an activity delivered under different circumstances. The cost information and analysis presented in Sections Four and Five has thus sought to determine how the costs may vary depending on a range of factors.

(iv) School Participation

3.16 While schools are key partners in Aimhigher, the nature of the arrangements are such that although schools are in receipt of Aimhigher funding there is no mandate on the schools to report how the funding has been used. As a result, it has not been possible to access detailed cost information from the schools. During the feasibility study we were fortunate to consult with three schools in an area where the LEA coordinators work quite closely with the schools and were able to gain some indication of the type of costs incurred.

3.17 Schools typically participate in Aimhigher activities in two main ways:

- **through “purchasing” activities from the central Aimhigher partnership** (or from borough/district coordinators) (as in the market model described earlier);
- **through consultation with departmental staff within schools** the Aimhigher funding may be used to support aspiration or attainment raising activities in class.

3.18 The consultations undertaken suggested that Aimhigher is viewed by the schools as a “flexible” fund with the budget commonly used for ICT resources, staff supply and transport. For information, Appendix 2 provides an illustrative example of how Aimhigher funding has been used in one school.

(v) Role of FE Colleges

- 3.19 FE Colleges can be providers of HE courses, and FE students themselves are also potential participants in HE. Therefore, it is important the FE Colleges are engaged in Aimhigher. However, their role, profile and level of involvement varies.
- 3.20 FE Colleges often perform a similar role to that of schools, where they are allocated funding but with limited requirements to report exactly how the funding has been used, and the central Aimhigher partnership may have little leverage to influence the Aimhigher activity delivered. However, this is not always the case particularly where there may be strong and close relationships between all partners involved, and where all partners work closely to agreed objectives and deliver activities agreed via the central partnership.
- 3.21 In some partnerships the accountability of FE may be via an HEI and not directly to the central partnership i.e. funding could go to FE, but allocated by the HEI. In this case, if the HEI does not report back to the central partnership the detail of funding it can be difficult to get realistic estimates of costs incurred by FE providers delivering Aimhigher activities.
- 3.22 Across the 10 case study partnerships we have identified relatively low levels of explicit FE activity. Examples of FE activities include a partnership which operates a student mentoring programme to provide support and encouragement to students undertaking vocational courses. Another Aimhigher partnership runs a 'Moving towards healthcare management' masterclass, specifically aimed at Level 3, non-traditional health and social care learners. The same partnership also produces an Aimhigher information pack on progression routes into HE, targeted at Level 3 vocational learners. In addition to specific activities targeted at FE establishments, there are also numerous generic activities undertaken by partnerships which include FE groups in their target audience, for example, HE Finance Guides and Progression Routes websites.

4 RESOURCE COSTS OF INTERVENTIONS AND COST ANALYSIS

4.1 In this section, we provide an overview of the costings for the various Aimhigher activities for which we have received cost proformas. Prior to presenting the resource costs, we set out the context and assumptions behind the data analysis.

Costing Model

4.2 The costing model adopted has involved a process of **identifying all resource inputs** associated with the delivery of each activity (regardless of which partner has funded each resource) and the **likely levels of costs associated with these resource inputs** (using actual cost data or estimates/assumptions). As an example, this means that when estimating the cost associated with an HEI visit day, the costs to the HEI of hosting the event are included, as well as the costs incurred by the schools in providing transport for the young people attending.

Assumptions

4.3 The assumptions that are set out below have been used to ensure that the costs presented represent a realistic assessment of what it typically costs to deliver Aimhigher activities and interventions.

4.4 Over the course of the study we have therefore had to make decisions about **what costs to reasonably include** in the completed cost templates. In summary the following cost allocation decisions were taken and maintained across all case studies:

- **training courses** – costs for training delivery have been included. The time costs for staff attendees have been discounted, unless it is explicitly claimed as a real cost from Aimhigher partnerships;
- **room hire** – again, only where Aimhigher partnerships are incurring direct costs for hiring venues are costs counted. School classrooms or sports halls when used during normal school hours are not counted, on the basis that they would be used anyway, irrespective of Aimhigher i.e. there is a zero opportunity cost to Aimhigher;

- **planning costs** – where planning costs may not be readily identifiable assumptions can be made about the amount of time required to plan particular activities and therefore the associated resource cost, calculated by pro-rata of the salary of that coordinator or administrator;
- **teacher salaries** – these have only been included explicitly when schools have incurred additional costs as a result of an Aimhigher project e.g. attending an off-site event with a small group of students, requiring the school to pay for cover staff. Where Aimhigher activities form part of the school day - e.g. a drama workshop held on-site and during the school day, and no additional cover is required, no staff costs are counted. We realise that this approach does not represent full cost accounting in the truest sense, but it was felt that inclusion of notional teacher costs would generate an inflated and unrealistic picture of the costs for running school-based activities;
- **on-costs** - the subject of on-costs arose early on in consultations held with HEIs. On-costs are additional costs above an employee's basic salary and may include management, administrative and facility costs. Following the Transparency Review, Universities employ a full economic costing approach to assessing their costs. So, for example, at one university a ratio of 1.06 is applied to all staff time costs to give a full economic cost for one hour of a lecturer's time. For this study we have not included on-costs in the cost templates. The principle reason is the difficulty of establishing levels of on-costs across the various delivery agencies. While universities are now required to use a full cost accounting method, we understand FE colleges do not use the same approach and there are commercial sensitivities around asking external suppliers their specific levels of on-costs;
- **in-kind support** - for some projects, there are significant levels of in-kind support provided either by the public or private sector. While a true full economic cost model would take account of all of these costs, in some cases it was considered inappropriate to include them. As an example, an E-mentoring scheme uses business mentors who provide 30 minutes of their time per week, over 39 weeks, to reply to emails from school children. There are over 200 mentors on the scheme so, applying a notional day rate of £300 per day for the average business mentor's time, a figure of around £150k is soon calculated for in-kind support. While interesting, including these in-kind costs is not helpful when making cost comparisons with other projects.

In-kind support only becomes a significant issue when you seek to continue delivery beyond the point where in-kind support is exhausted. For example, if the volume of mentoring above expanded beyond that which could be delivered in 30 minutes, charging might be applied at the market rate. This reflects the time opportunity cost of the mentors' time. The inclusion of in-kind costs tends to be more of a feature of the Accounting Model than the Market Model. If included in the Market Model, there would be no purchase of an activity.

Resource Costs

- 4.5 For ease of interpretation we have grouped the activity costs together under the Aimhigher typologies e.g. Aimhigher days, masterclasses. **Table 4.1** below briefly outlines the core cost areas and the typical cost components of each category.

Table 4.1: Aimhigher Cost Parameters	
Cost Parameter	Description
Planning	Costs for staff time involved in setting up the activity. Should include the core time spent by activity deliverers and also any additional staff time e.g. clerical support, central Aimhigher support etc.
Staffing	Core staff time costs incurred in the delivery of the Aimhigher activity.
Facilities	Costs incurred to hire facilities at which to hold the event e.g. meeting/ seminar rooms. Where events are held at school facilities costs have not, in general, been included.
Resources	Costs for specific resources required to undertake the Aimhigher activity e.g. Aimhigher packs. Other costs included under this title include printing costs for materials and development costs for websites.
Hospitality	Costs incurred for food, drink and accommodation. Any development activity costs are also included under this title. Where events are held at schools, no costs have been counted as it is assumed students would have lunch at school, irrespective of an Aimhigher activity taking place.
Transport	Costs for transporting activity attendees and/or activity deliverers to an event.
Other	Any other costs incurred in the delivery of an Aimhigher activity e.g. supply teacher costs.

- 4.6 An illustration and overview of the costs to emerge is set out in **Table 4.2**. It should be noted that the highest and lowest unit costs detailed for each activity are provided as an indication of the variation in costs observed across different examples of delivery of similar activities under varying circumstances.

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4.7 Much of this variation can be explained by differences in approaches to delivery of the activities including factors such as location of delivery, nature of the young people involved and group sizes. These factors are described in detail in Section Three and a further discussion around variation in costs is set out in Section Five.

Table 4.2: Overview of Aimhigher Costings

Theme	Activity	Sample size	Mean cost (£s)	Median cost (£s)	Average group size	Average unit cost (£s/ head)	Highest unit cost (£s/head)	Lowest unit cost (£s/head)
Awareness and aspiration raising activities	Aimhigher days	13	2,470	1,193	104	24	102	4
	Taster Day	11	3,195	2,538	61	53	90	32
Attainment raising	Residentials	4	33,625	30,786	70	479	650	212
	After school clubs	1	5,420	5,420	16	339	339	339
	Mentoring	4	59,616	23,374	246	243	343	191
	Subject specific enrichment	7	50,578	23,135	353	143	454	54
	Visits by HE staff	2	785	785	80	10	11	9
	Masterclass	20*	1,890	783	65	29	120	5
Vocational activities	Work based learning	1	95,176	95,176	100	952	952	952
Information, advice and guidance (IAG)	Careers Fairs	1	80,258	80,258	4,800	17	17	17
	IAG for parents and carers	3	2,314	1,330	75	31	40	26
	IAG community outreach	1	35,909	35,909	64	561	561	561
Staff training	Staff training	8	7,942	4,132	115	69	473	12
Progression	Transition support	2	101,685	101,685	95	1,076	1,102	616
Research and dissemination	Conferences	2	10,464	10,464	91	115	240	75
	Website	2	49,738	49,738	187,000	0.27	0.28	0.27
	Publications	9	8,706	7,787	6,365	1.40	5.00	0.65

* 21 cost profiles were received for masterclasses, but one profile was discounted as a cost outlier.

- 4.8 The remainder of the section lists the detailed cost profiles for each of the Aimhigher activities for which cost information was provided. A sample of completed individual cost templates are provided in **Appendix 3**. In addition a summary of the individual resource input costs has been presented in **Appendix 4**.

Awareness and Aspiration Raising Activities

Aimhigher Days

Aimhigher Theme	Awareness and aspiration raising activities				
Activity	Aimhigher Days				
Definition	Aimhigher days are workshops/lectures for young people studying for GCSEs or other intermediate courses. They are designed to raise awareness of, and interest in, higher education. Workshops are generally delivered by public sector workers e.g. outreach officers, HEI staff and/or private sector consultants.				
Background	Duration	0.5 to 1 day	Sample size	13	
Costs	Mean cost (£s)	Median cost (£s)			
Planning costs	478	367		Average planned group size	94
Staffing	1,397	825		Average actual group size	104
Facilities	242	0*		Average planned unit cost (£s per head)	26
Resources	113	0*		Average actual unit cost (£s per head)	24
Hospitality	96	0*		Highest unit cost (£s/head)	102
Transport	144	1		Lowest unit cost (£s/head)	4
Other	0	0*			
Total cost (£s)	2,470	1,193			
Variability factors	<p>Significant scale efficiencies were achieved when partnerships second external suppliers to deliver workshops to multiple schools. For example, in one partnership a drama tour delivered to 111 schools cost £4 per head. Delivery of multiple workshops minimises the developmental costs for the activity and partnerships may also be offered bulk purchase discounts.</p> <p>Higher per head costs were evident for more specialist activities requiring specific inputs. For example, an awareness raising day using computer software and supervised by six external lecturers cost an average of £102 per student.</p> <p>Aimhigher days are relatively non-intensive activities i.e. delivered to a large audience. On average, an Aimhigher day is delivered to around 100 students. There is little evidence to suggest that delivery costs are higher with increased student numbers. So, partnerships delivering Aimhigher days to larger student groups are, on the whole, achieving a lower cost per head. This of course has to be balanced with the potentially lower impacts of an extensive approach.</p> <p>Activities delivered off-site (i.e. not at a school venue) tend to be more expensive than those delivered in schools. Such events incur additional transport, facilities and hospitality costs not associated with activities delivered directly in schools.</p>				
Sample partnerships	8 partnerships				
Additional comments	The actual cost per head incurred is slightly lower than the planned incurred cost, as a result of, in general, more students participating in activities than was originally planned.				

* Where the median figure is 0, this means that more than half of the partnerships responding reported there were no costs in this area.

Taster Days

Aimhigher Theme	Awareness and aspiration raising activities				
Activity	Taster day				
Definition	Taster days, generally held over one day, give young people the opportunity to experience a university campus and get an insight into student life.				
Background	Duration	1 day	Sample size	11	
Costs	Mean cost (£s)	Median cost (£s)			
Planning costs	391	127		Average planned group size	60
Staffing	1,266	1,069		Average actual group size	61
Facilities	397	180		Average planned unit cost (£s per head)	54
Resources	310	292		Average actual unit cost (£s per head)	53
Hospitality	356	370		Highest unit cost (£s/head)	90
Transport	462	500		Lowest unit cost (£s/head)	32
Other	14	0*			
Total cost (£s)	3,195	2,538			
Variability factors	<p>A one day visit to a University is a relatively uniform activity and as such costs across the various partnerships are largely similar and there is less deviation from the mean than for other types of Aimhigher activities. Per head costs range from between £32 per head (lower transport costs and proximity to HEIs) and £90 per head. Even for the more rural partnerships transport costs are not unduly high.</p> <p>The cheapest Taster Day held by one of the partnerships cost only £777. This was only a half day event, held for 14 students. As such, there were only limited hospitality and staffing costs, compared with other Taster Days.</p>				
Sample partnerships	8 partnerships				
Additional comments					

* Where the median figure is 0, this means that more than half of the partnerships responding reported there were no costs in this area.

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Visits by HE Staff

Aimhigher Theme	Awareness and aspiration raising activities				
Activity	Visits by HE staff and/or students to schools/colleges				
Definition	Visits by HE staff and/or students to schools/colleges to raise awareness of HE opportunities and to encourage students to consider HE as a possible option, once they leave school.				
Background	Duration	0.5 days	Sample size	2	
Costs	Mean cost (£s)	Median cost (£s)			
Planning costs	63	63		Average planned group size	80
Staffing	424	424		Average actual group size	80
Facilities	0	0		Average planned unit cost (£s per head)	10
Resources	250	250		Average actual unit cost (£s per head)	10
Hospitality	0	0		Highest unit cost (£s/head)	11
Transport	48	48		Lowest unit cost (£s/head)	9
Other	0	0			
Total cost (£s)	785	785			
Variability factors					
Sample partnerships	1 partnership				
Additional comments	While there was only one partnership providing costs for visits by HE staff, the unit cost per head of this approach is very low £11 and £9 in both the examples cited.				

Attainment Raising Activities

Student Mentoring

Aimhigher Theme	Attainment raising activities				
Activity	Student mentoring				
Definition	Intensive subject specific mentoring for students, delivered by undergraduates or the business community. Mentoring may be delivered face to face or on-line as part of an e-mentoring service.				
Background	Duration	0.5 – 1 day	Sample size	4	
Costs	Mean cost (£s)	Median cost (£s)			
Planning costs	10,098	7,605		Average planned group size	262
Staffing	43,251	12,161		Average actual group size	246
Facilities	869	500		Average planned unit cost (£s per head)	228
Resources	3,125	1,500		Average actual unit cost (£s per head)	243
Hospitality	502	443		Highest unit cost (£s/head)	343
Transport	1,273	1,165		Lowest unit cost (£s/head)	191
Other	500	0			
Total cost (£s)	59,616	23,374			
Variability factors	<p>Key variability factors include the volume, type and intensity of mentoring support provided. Mentoring is a resource intensive activity, often delivered over a long period of time. As such, the costs associated with setting up and delivering mentoring services are high both in absolute and per head cost terms, compared to other Aimhigher activities.</p> <p>One partnership runs an e-mentoring service which has high initial set-up and running costs. Using this approach it costs £191 per head to mentor a student over the course of an academic year. Given that the mentoring is based on weekly email communication, it may be less effective than one-to-one mentoring.</p>				
Sample partnerships	4 partnerships				
Additional comments	Mentoring services are often delivered by external parties e.g. graduates and business people. The time costs associated with this are sometimes relayed to Partnerships e.g. graduates receive a <i>per diem</i> or hourly rate fee. In other cases, e.g. with mentoring by business people, the costs associated with providing the mentoring are absorbed by the participating businesses e.g. E-mentoring project. These in-kind costs have not been reflected in the above costing data.				

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Master Classes

Aimhigher Theme	Attainment raising activities					
Activity	Masterclasses					
Definition	Subject specific seminars and lectures often for pupils, sometimes for higher ability students, to help them realise their potential and understand the HE opportunities available to them.					
Background	Duration	0.5 – 1 day	Sample size	20		
Costs	Mean cost (£s)	Median cost (£s)				
Planning costs	244	120		Average planned group size	59	
Staffing	1,022	650		Average actual group size	65	
Facilities	109	0*		Average planned unit cost (£s per head)	32	
Resources	104	0*		Average actual unit cost (£s per head)	29	
Hospitality	94	3		Highest unit cost (£s/head)	193	
Transport	105	10		Lowest unit cost (£s/head)	5	
Other	4	0*				
Total cost (£s)	1,890	783				
Variability factors	<p>The most expensive (£s per head) masterclass for talented and gifted students cost £193 per head for a one day course. The reason for this was there were only 8 attendees.</p> <p>Other examples of where the costs were higher than average include a language course (£76 per head) which was run in conjunction with three schools necessitating higher planning and transport costs. Progression Plans masterclass (£69) involved use of specialist computer packages, requiring high additional staff numbers. Finally, one partnership visited the Royal Shakespeare Company (£59 per head) which was an evening event, for relatively few students.</p> <p>Two partnerships in particular cited low costs for running masterclass type events. A common theme for both these partnerships was that masterclasses were held at off-site locations i.e. not on school premises. In such cases, the transport, facilities and hospitality costs associated with hosting a masterclass are much lower. The decision to host masterclasses at schools rather than at third party venues, perhaps reflects the relatively disperse, rural nature of the two partnerships.</p>					
Sample partnerships	7 partnerships					
Additional comments	<p>Delivery of masterclasses by external suppliers is a cash intensive activity with high day rates sometimes charged by providers. However, these day rates normally include all the third parties' on-costs for organising and running an event.</p> <p>Events classified as masterclasses, on average, have lower numbers of attendees (64 students), compared with Aimhigher Days (101 pupils). This is reflective of the more intensive and specialist nature of many of the masterclasses which may be student or subject specific. Despite the lower numbers of attendees, the costs associated with hosting a masterclass are similar to those for an Aimhigher Day, both circa £2k on average.</p> <p>A three day Archaeology trip was discounted from the average costing figures. This masterclass is held as a three day event and as such incurs much higher costs than other masterclass events - £250 per head or the equivalent of £83 per head per day.</p>					

* Where the median figure is 0, this means that more than half of the partnerships responding reported there were no costs in this area.

Residential Courses/Summer Schools

Aimhigher Theme	Attainment raising activities				
Activity	Residential courses/summer schools				
Definition	Residential courses may be run for students thinking about embarking on a specific university course area (e.g. engineering) or to provide students from disadvantaged backgrounds the opportunity for a more in-depth experience of university life. Generally run over two or three days, the residentials may have workshops and/or practical sessions run by the hosting university or local businesses.				
Background	Duration	3 days	Sample size	4	
Costs	Mean cost (£s)	Median cost (£s)			
Planning costs	1,003	1,106		Average planned group size	78
Staffing	13,139	10,028		Average actual group size	70
Facilities	8,443	8,860		Average planned unit cost (£s per head)	431
Resources	482	413		Average actual unit cost (£s per head)	479
Hospitality	7,938	7,884		Highest unit cost (£s/head)	650
Transport	2,621	2,495		Lowest unit cost (£s/head)	212
Other	0	0			
Total cost (£s)	33,625	30,786			
Variability factors	<p>Key variability factor is the duration of the residential course. Fixed unit costs such as accommodation and food increase proportionately with length of the residential course.</p> <p>Another variable is where the event is being held. For example, one partnership ran camps held at outdoor pursuit centres where the cost per night is only £25 per head, including evening meal. For residential courses hosted at a university, students are charged significantly more to stay and eat in university accommodation.</p>				
Sample partnerships	4 partnerships				
Additional comments	Residential courses may differ in their objectives; some may be designed to provide young people with their first experience of a university setting. In other cases residential courses may be run to promote a specific subject or career choice i.e. engineering.				

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Subject Specific Enrichment

Aimhigher Theme	Attainment raising activities				
Activity	Subject specific enrichment classes				
Definition	Subject specific enrichment classes designed to improve student performance in a specific study area. The programme of activity will be more than a one off workshop and will be delivered over a longer timeframe such as a term or an academic year.				
Background	Duration	Various	Sample size	7	
Costs	Mean cost (£s)	Median cost (£s)			
Planning costs	3,495	935		Average planned group size	357
Staffing	43,363	22,200		Average actual group size	353
Facilities	440	0*		Average planned unit cost (£s per head)	142
Resources	1,057	0*		Average actual unit cost (£s per head)	143
Hospitality	1,131	0*		Highest unit cost (£s/head)	454
Transport	716	0*		Lowest unit cost (£s/head)	54
Other	377	0*			
Total cost (£s)	50,578	23,135			
Variability factors	<p>The activities classified under the attainment raising activities vary significantly in type and scope. As such, making valid costing comparisons is not easy.</p> <p>The types of activities include additional support classes. Held over one year, these classes provided extra one-to-one support for KS4 pupils. Around 68 students received 16 hourly tutor sessions over a 1 year period. The main cost of this activity was the student tutor bursaries, totalling £84k of which Aimhigher money paid half and schools contributed half.</p> <p>Other interesting subject specific projects include the Fashion Show project. This five day project was designed to raise awareness of the educational and career opportunities in the fashion industry.</p>				
Sample partnerships	5 partnerships				
Additional comments					

* Where the median figure is 0, this means that more than half of the partnerships responding reported there were no costs in this area.

After School Clubs

Aimhigher Theme	Attainment raising activities				
Activity	After school activities				
Definition	After school activities designed to raise the aspirations of young people.				
Background	Duration	4 days	Sample size	1	
Costs	Mean cost (£s)	Median cost (£s)			
Planning costs	240	240		Average planned group size	16
Staffing	4,000	4,000		Average actual group size	16
Facilities	0	0		Average planned unit cost (£s per head)	339
Resources	0	0		Average actual unit cost (£s per head)	339
Hospitality	380	380		Highest unit cost (£s/head)	339
Transport	800	800		Lowest unit cost (£s/head)	339
Other	0	0			
Total cost (£s)	5,420	5,420			
Variability factors					
Sample partnerships	1 partnership				
Additional comments	<p>There was only one sample for this activity, so the results may not be representative.</p> <p>Held over four days, the Ballet Boyz provided dance and physical theatre classes for 16 young people.</p>				

Vocational Activities

Activities for Work Based Learners

Aimhigher Theme	Vocational activities: work based learning				
Activity	Engaging and developing learners in the workplace				
Definition	Activities to engage learners in the workplace to encourage progression to HE. Activities may also involve working with employers to develop learning modules, accredit in-company training etc.				
Background	Duration	1 year programme	Sample size	1	
Costs	Mean cost (£s)	Median cost (£s)			
Planning costs	7,855	7,855		Average planned group size	50
Staffing	72,569	72,569		Average actual group size	100
Facilities	0	0		Average planned unit cost (£s per head)	1,904
Resources	12,101	12,101		Average actual unit cost (£s per head)	952
Hospitality	617	617		Highest unit cost (£s/head)	952
Transport	2,034	2,034		Lowest unit cost (£s/head)	952
Other	0	0			
Total cost (£s)	95,176	95,176			
Variability factors					
Sample partnerships	1 partnership				
Additional comments	<p>There was only one sample for this activity, so the results may not be representative. The activity targeted older learners than the more traditional Aimhigher activity typically targets, and is probably a less common activity among partnerships.</p> <p>The project sought to engage with learners from 10 local companies to encourage progression through HE via the workplace. The bulk of the project focussed on working with employers to plan and accredit activity that would meet company needs and on delivering various modules in-company to learners.</p>				

Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG)

Careers Fairs

Aimhigher Theme	Information, advice and guidance (IAG)				
Activity	Careers fairs for students, parents and carers				
Definition	Careers fairs designed to promote specific vocational career choices for young people e.g. the Army, nursing etc.				
Background	Duration	2 days	Sample size	1	
Costs	Mean cost (£s)	Median cost (£s)			
Planning costs	18,367	18,367		Average planned group size	4,800
Staffing	3,267	3,267		Average actual group size	4,800
Facilities	5,626	5,626		Average planned unit cost (£s per head)	17
Resources	35,050	35,050		Average actual unit cost (£s per head)	17
Hospitality	5,066	5,066		Highest unit cost (£s/head)	17
Transport	7,441	7,441		Lowest unit cost (£s/head)	17
Other	5,441	5,441			
Total cost (£s)	80,258	80,258			
Variability factors					
Sample partnerships	1 partnership				
Additional comments	<p>There was only one sample for this activity, so the results may not be representative. The partnership delivering the careers fair acknowledged that this was a resource intensive activity. However, costs were shared across a range of partners and the event was felt to have been a success. At only £17 per attendee, the event is comparable in unit cost terms with many of the other Aimhigher activities reviewed. Some of the costs outlined above e.g. transport and hospitality were originally paid for by Aimhigher, but these costs will in future be passed on to participating schools.</p>				

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IAG Community Outreach

Aimhigher Theme	Information, advice and guidance (IAG)				
Activity	IAG Community Outreach				
Definition	Community outreach work to provide IAG for young adults to inform them about FE/HE opportunities and to help them access FE and HE.				
Background	Duration	1 year programme	Sample size	1	
Costs	Mean cost (£s)	Median cost (£s)			
Planning costs	3,436	3,436		Average planned group size	64
Staffing	30,000	30,000		Average actual group size	64
Facilities	0	0		Average planned unit cost (£s per head)	561
Resources	1,600	1,600		Average actual unit cost (£s per head)	561
Hospitality	0	0		Highest unit cost (£s/head)	561
Transport	873	873		Lowest unit cost (£s/head)	561
Other	0	0			
Total cost (£s)	35,909	35,909			
Variability factors					
Sample partnerships	1 partnership				
Additional comments	There was only one sample for this activity, so the results may not be representative. The majority of the funding goes towards the wages of the IAG officer, who works almost full-time on the project. The project is essentially an intensive and mobile outreach programme, so there are low costs in terms of resource overheads.				

Events for Parents for Carers

Aimhigher Theme	Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG)				
Activity	Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) events for parents and carers				
Definition	Aimhigher events focussed specifically on engaging with parents and carers to raise their awareness of the Higher Education opportunities for young people.				
Background	Duration	1 day	Sample size	3	
Costs	Mean cost (£s)	Median cost (£s)			
Planning costs	351	120		Average planned group size	92
Staffing	636	715		Average actual group size	75
Facilities	133	0*		Average planned unit cost (£s per head)	25
Resources	895	200		Average actual unit cost (£s per head)	31
Hospitality	196	285		Highest unit cost (£s/head)	40
Transport	103	10		Lowest unit cost (£s/head)	26
Other	0	0			
Total cost (£s)	2,314	1,330			
Variability factors	<p>One IAG event involved the purchase of a re-useable stand at a cost of £2,000 which comprised more than half the activity costs. This stand will be re-used in future activities at a marginal cost.</p> <p>The most expensive event, in terms of cost per head, was an HEI day for 50 parents. This event involved hosting parents and students at an HEI for one day, so there were additional transport and hospitality costs associated with this event.</p>				
Sample partnerships	2 partnerships				
Additional comments					

* Where the median figure is 0, this means that more than half of the partnerships responding reported there were no costs in this area.

Staff Development and Training

Staff Training

Aimhigher Theme	Staff development and training				
Activity	Training for careers guidance and teaching staff				
Definition	Training courses for teachers and college staff to educate them about the principles and best practice in Aimhigher or in a subject specific area, for example learning how to use a piece of computer software such as the Pathfinder programme.				
Background	Duration	1.5 days	Sample size	8	
Costs	Mean cost (£s)	Median cost (£s)			
Planning costs	1,511	1,063		Average planned group size	134
Staffing	3,450	2,114		Average actual group size	115
Facilities	2,447	800		Average planned unit cost (£s per head)	59
Resources	256	155		Average actual unit cost (£s per head)	69
Hospitality	121	0*		Highest unit cost (£s/head)	473
Transport	55	0*		Lowest unit cost (£s/head)	12
Other	103	0*			
Total cost (£s)	7,942	4,132			
Variability factors	A key variable in the costs of training courses is who is being trained. Large scale training for 620 Aimhigher Ambassadors equates to only £12 per head. In contrast, intensive training for 20 teachers provided by an external consultant cost a partnership £473 per head for a 2 day training course.				
Sample partnerships	4 partnerships				
Additional comments					

* Where the median figure is 0, this means that more than half of the partnerships responding reported there were no costs in this area.

Progression

Transition Support

Aimhigher Theme	Progression				
Activity	Transition support				
Definition	Intensive one to one support provided to those students that show signs of drifting away from education. The mentoring support is designed to help students make the progression from school to FE and HE.				
Background	Duration	1 year programme	Sample size	2	
Costs	Mean cost (£s)	Median cost (£s)			
Planning costs	2,936	2,936		Average planned group size	133
Staffing	96,588	96,588		Average actual group size	95
Facilities	390	390		Average planned unit cost (£s per head)	767
Resources	593	593		Average actual unit cost (£s per head)	1,076
Hospitality	184	184		Highest unit cost (£s/head)	1,102
Transport	995	995		Lowest unit cost (£s/head)	616
Other	0	0			
Total cost (£s)	101,685	101,685			
Variability factors	<p>The two Transition projects analysed were markedly different in the intensity of support provided. The Student Ambassador project cost only £6k and involved undergraduates providing relatively light touch advice and guidance to wavering pupils.</p> <p>In contrast, the Transition Support programme was a fully staffed programme employing staff to work full time at individual schools to provide intensive one to one assistance for pupils.</p>				
Sample partnerships	1 partnership				
Additional comments					

Research and Dissemination

Conferences and Seminars

Aimhigher Theme	Research and dissemination				
Activity	Staff conferences				
Definition	Conferences for education practitioners to share best practice and raise awareness of Aimhigher interventions and widening participation issues.				
Background	Duration	1 day	Sample size	2	
Costs	Mean cost (£s)	Median cost (£s)			
Planning costs	1,218	1,218		Average planned group size	100
Staffing	2,706	2,706		Average actual group size	91
Facilities	5,923	5,923		Average planned unit cost (£s per head)	105
Resources	433	433		Average actual unit cost (£s per head)	115
Hospitality	0	0		Highest unit cost (£s/head)	240
Transport	44	44		Lowest unit cost (£s/head)	75
Other	140	140			
Total cost (£s)	10,464	10,464			
Variability factors	The two staff conferences cost roughly the same to hold i.e. around £10k. The key variability factor is the number of staff attending the two conferences. At one conference there were 44 attendees, equating to £240 per head, compared with a conference where 138 people attended, equating to £75 per head.				
Sample partnerships	2 partnerships				
Additional comments					

Publications

Aimhigher Theme	Research and dissemination				
Activity	Publications				
Definition	Publications designed to raise awareness of education choices and/or to provide specific information on subjects such as Higher Education Finances.				
Background	Duration	NA	Sample size	9	
Costs	Mean cost (£s)	Median cost (£s)			
Planning costs	1,621	1,250		Average planned group size	5,889
Staffing	788	237		Average actual group size	6365
Facilities	22	0*		Average planned unit cost (£s per head)	1.5
Resources	5,174	6,300		Average actual unit cost (£s per head)	1.4
Hospitality	44	0*		Highest unit cost (£s/head)	5.00
Transport	5	0*		Lowest unit cost (£s/head)	0.65
Other	1,052	0*			
Total cost (£s)	8,706	7,787			
Variability factors	<p>Once a publication has been designed and typeset, the marginal cost of producing additional copies is relatively low. As such, publications like the 15,000 HE Finance Guides cost less than £1 per head. In contrast, the 2000 copies of the IAG publications cost one partnership £3.30 per head.</p> <p>One partnership developed an E-newsletter sent by email. The cost of this equated to only £0.65 per head for ten issues of the E-newsletter.</p> <p>The quality and length of publications is not clear from the data - two factors that affect unit cost per publication. Anecdotally, the HE Finance Guide produced by a partnership which cost only £0.85 per head was a very high quality, glossy publication.</p>				
Sample partnerships	4 partnerships				
Additional comments					

* Where the median figure is 0, this means that more than half of the partnerships responding reported there were no costs in this area.

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Websites

Aimhigher Theme	Research and dissemination				
Activity	Website development				
Definition	Development of websites to promote HE/FE to students and young adults. Websites may be primarily information sources or more interactive sites, helping students to develop their web skills.				
Background	Duration	NA	Sample size	2	
Costs	Mean cost (£s)	Median cost (£s)			
Planning costs	15,200	15,200		Average planned group size	187,000
Staffing	2,826	2,826		Average actual group size	187,000
Facilities	0	0		Average planned unit cost (£s per head)	0.27
Resources	31,712	31,712		Average actual unit cost (£s per head)	0.27
Hospitality	0	0		Highest unit cost (£s/head)	0.28
Transport	0	0		Lowest unit cost (£s/head)	0.27
Other	0	0			
Total cost (£s)	49,738	49,738			
Variability factors	Costs were only provided for two websites. One partnership developed a small website to attract circa 25,000 hits at a cost of £6.6k. In comparison, another partnership developed a more sophisticated website costing £92k, with the ambition of attracting around 350k hits per annum.				
Sample partnerships	2 partnerships				
Additional comments					

5 VARIABILITY FACTORS

- 5.1 The underpinning assumption of the costing activity is that there **is variation in the costs of delivering Aimhigher activities**, and that the delivery (and associated costs) of two activities is unlikely to ever be exactly the same, i.e. every partnership and every activity delivered will have a different cost curve (as highlighted in Section Three).
- 5.2 The observations of each activity presented in Section Four highlight some of the specific factors that the variation can be attributed to. In this section we set out some generic findings in terms of cost variations between different activities and partnerships.

Volume Neutral Activity

- 5.3 For non-intensive activities i.e. short sessions delivered to large audiences (e.g. Aimhigher Days) there is little evidence to suggest that the size of the audience affects the cost of delivering the activity. This makes sense. One would expect the costs associated with delivering a drama workshop to 30 or 50 pupils to be largely the same. In this case the marginal cost per young person, until the maximum of 50 is reached, may be zero (or near to zero) so it makes sense to ensure a group size of 50. Those partnerships delivering Aimhigher days for larger audiences therefore, on paper, look more cost efficient than partnerships delivering activities for smaller groups.
- 5.4 There is a strong caveat to this point. This observation is made on the basis of cost efficiency (not cost effectiveness) comparisons. There will be a critical audience size for such activities, above which, the impact of the activity on attendees is reduced. Whether this is 70 or 100 attendees is hard to say, but at some point partnerships striving for cost efficiencies could risk compromising the effectiveness of interventions.

Volume Critical Activity

- 5.5 For intensive activities i.e. longer sessions delivered to smaller groups, there is a correlation between attendee numbers and delivery costs. Examples include activities such as residentials where there are additional food and boarding costs associated with each additional attendee. Also, for intensive mentoring and subject specific type work, the value of the intervention is based on high teacher to pupil ratios. Therefore, increasing the number of students necessarily means also increasing the number of teachers and, consequently, results in higher delivery costs.

Sourcing at Scale Generates Economic Efficiencies

- 5.6 Partnerships hiring external suppliers to repeat deliver an activity to multiple schools appear to be achieving significant cost savings. These savings are generated in two ways. Firstly, partnerships incur the same fixed costs for recruiting an external supplier, irrespective of the number of activities purchased. For example, a partnership buying one drama workshop is incurring the same fixed set-up costs (recruiting the agency, quality checking their product etc.) as a partnership purchasing 10 drama workshops. So, in the case of a partnership purchasing multiple drama workshops, having incurred the initial fixed setup costs, they can take advantage of the lower marginal cost of buying more than one workshop.
- 5.7 The second economic efficiency is generated by economies of scale. Some of the external suppliers that partnerships buy services from offer a bulk discount. For example, the Cragrats drama group (who provide services for a number of partnerships) offer a significant discount for multiple purchases of activities. A one-off workshop can cost as much as £3,500, compared with £500 per workshop for more than 50 workshops.

Goods Can be Traded between Partnerships

- 5.8 For the most part Aimhigher activities are 'non-tradeable' services, delivered face-to-face to students. However, there are some projects delivered by Aimhigher partnerships that could be 'tradeable' between partnerships. For example, an HE Finance Guide should be a relatively derivative publication useable across all partnerships. There are also examples of where partnerships have produced an expensive resource for their own use e.g. an e-mentoring piece of software. On the one hand, partnerships need the freedom and choice to develop materials and resources that are useful and

specific to their individual circumstances. However, this should not be without consideration of the additional cost burden of numerous partnerships all producing very similar materials and/or individual partnerships developing expensive resources for their own use only.

Up-Front Costs Paid to External Suppliers may be expensive, but there appears to be much Lower Organisational Costs associated with Third Party Delivered Projects

- 5.9 For example, a consultancy may charge £800 per day for a workshop session, but this cost includes all the delivery, resource and transport costs associated with the project. Furthermore, the costs associated with the development and planning of the workshop are also subsumed into the one-off day rate cost.

Technology Can Deliver Efficiencies

- 5.10 Examples have been observed where the use of technology has enabled partnerships to generate significant cost savings. For example, a partnership which originally produced 10 paper newsletters per annum now sends out an E-Zine newsletter by email. The cost of producing one issue of the paper newsletter was £5,500 per issue, whereas one issue of the E-Zine is only £1,200. There are questions about whether the newsletter has the same reach, but the cost savings are certainly significant.
- 5.11 Similarly, an E-mentoring service delivers mentoring services via email between business volunteers and school children. While the initial start-up costs are high for such a project, it is cheaper than face-to-face mentoring projects offered by other partnerships. However, given mentoring is based on personal interaction, again there are perhaps some questions about the efficacy of e-mentoring.

Location Affects Cost

- 5.12 A key factor affecting the cost of delivering Aimhigher activities is location. Some partnerships tended towards delivering activities in schools, with others hosting activities at off-site locations. Interestingly, the two partnerships that tended to host activities in schools were both relatively rural areas. The decision to host activities in school perhaps reflects the logistical challenges in transporting a geographically diverse student body off-site. In general off-site activities are more expensive to deliver than those based in

schools. For off-site activities, there are additional costs associated with room hire, refreshments, transport and potentially the costs of additional teacher cover. In contrast, for school based activities there are no student transport or refreshment costs.

- 5.13 The discussion about the location must also consider that for some activities there is no option but to hold the event off-site. Indeed, for some activities, such as university visits, the main benefits relate to actually going off-site to experience what a university campus is like. For other activity types requiring specialist equipment e.g. computers, it may only be possible to hold the activity at an off-site location.

Variations in Delivery Exist within Partnerships

- 5.14 In addition to variations in the way that different partnerships deliver Aimhigher activities, variations have also been observed within the partnerships. These relate to:

- **the geography of the area** – for example, one case study partnership had to deal with both rural and urban challenges;
- **devolved structures** – some partnerships operate under a devolved structure where funding is allocated to the districts or boroughs in the partnership area. In partnerships such as these there can be significant variation within the area, in comparison to those which operate under a centralised model where much of the management of delivery takes place within the central partnership.

6 GOOD PRACTICE AND LESSONS LEARNT

6.1 This section addresses aspects of good practice and lessons learnt that have been captured or observed over the course of the fieldwork with the Aimhigher partnerships. These are presented largely in terms of cost management and efficiencies.

Cost Efficiencies

6.2 Through the process of establishing the full cost of Aimhigher interventions we have been able to consider factors inhibiting and enhancing efficient practices.

Barriers

6.3 A number of **barriers to achieving cost efficiency** were highlighted through our consultations. These included:

- limited influence on how schools use their Aimhigher funding and also the types of activity schools and FECs engage in;
- balancing the delivery of activities to a critical mass of young people *vis a vis* tailored and specific activity targeted at individual or very small groups of young people;
- not knowing the real cost limits the extent to which informed assessments/decisions can be made about which Aimhigher activities to deliver;
- in terms of our model structure, partnerships are unaware of the shape of their average cost curve and of the optimum point where it intersects with marginal cost, and although it would not necessarily be expected that partners would be aware of these at such a level of detail, a better understanding of the concept of marginal costs and the implications could be helpful;
- the existence of a number of HEIs in the partnership can make it difficult to achieve cost efficiencies since each HEI may have their own overheads incorporated into the costs of delivering activities and each also has their own 'market' in terms of different activities they offer. This means there may be some losses in economies of scale if activities can not be coordinated across all partners;

- where there is no centrally held clear mapping of activity economies of scale which could have been realised may not be identified. This may mean that cost efficiencies (for example where transport could be shared) are not achieved, but also that partners do not share experiences and resources that may reduce planning and preparation costs associated with delivery of future activities.

Cost Efficient Practice

6.4 The nature of the following cost efficient practices indicate that key to ensuring cost efficient practice is undertaking sufficient planning and coordination around what activities are being delivered for whom and by whom. Identified cost efficient practices to emerge include:

- **centrally run activities** may be more cost efficient where they are planned with a long-term focus and are coordinated for collaborative delivery across a number of partners;
- careful planning can help establish the **optimum number of staff/students to be trained to deliver Aimhigher activities** to ensure there are sufficient opportunities for participation in delivery of activities. This enables the set-up costs of training and CRB checks to be shared across a number of activities;
- a number of different **strategies aimed at reducing travel costs** have been observed, with the key underlying success factor being the planning and organisation of transport and considering what is most appropriate in each circumstance, for example:
 - hosting activities in schools;
 - operating travelling road shows;
 - delivering activities at a local level (rather than centrally) - this may increase fixed costs but overall is thought to reduce variable costs such as transport;
 - generating group sizes that are able to use school minibuses to make use of an available resource (incurring only running costs) and avoid incurring commercial costs of a coach;
 - schools can be grouped into 'clusters' (geographically) for particular activities so that they can share commercial transport thus reducing costs and avoiding utilising a 50-seater coach for just 20 young people for example;

- **sourcing at scale to generate economic efficiencies** – as highlighted earlier partnerships hiring external suppliers to repeat deliver an activity to multiple schools are achieving significant cost savings, through incurring the same fixed set-up costs irrespective of the number of activities purchased, and secondly in terms of achieving bulk discount;
- the **use of student ambassadors** is thought to be particularly effective in engaging young people and can also limit costs incurred particularly where they are able to support (or replace) more expensive HEI staff at school events, such as parents' evenings or options evenings.

6.5 As has been highlighted throughout this study the nature of Aimhigher is such that it operates very differently in each area and is tailored to local circumstance and need. Therefore, although these represent some suggested cost efficient practices they may not be feasibly employed in all areas. The point should be stressed that **a cheaper activity does not always mean a better activity**. There are almost certainly benefits to taking students out of a formal school setting to introduce them to new ideas about HE. Other Aimhigher evaluation strands have provided considerable evidence on the impact of different activities so any decisions about the mix of locations and types of activities should consider what this evidence shows.

Good Practice

6.6 Good practice in the delivery and management of Aimhigher can influence more cost efficient practice. Good practice observed across the case study partnerships includes:

- undertaking a clear mapping of activity delivered across the partnership;
- ensuring that the activity delivered is linked to a needs analysis of young people in the local area and makes best use of available funding to meet the needs of the target groups;
- undertaking a reality check as to whether an activity should be delivered again if the number of participants is low;
- modelling costs by varying the student numbers to estimate the optimum group sizes (particularly for higher cost activities);
- using planning/set-up materials (e.g. risk assessments) produced for an activity on subsequent similar activities rather than re-producing;
- developing replica models of delivery (i.e. establishing the model of delivery which comprises the best elements);

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- commissioning activities on an area-wide basis (where possible) to achieve economies of scale e.g. theatre workshops;
- maintaining some control of funding and spend e.g.
 - releasing funding only on presentation of relevant receipts – this approach has been employed in some areas but others have made a conscious decision not to monitor at this level of detail;
 - using a spreadsheet to log spend by each partner and by activity delivered;
- delivering some activities collaboratively i.e. where a generic activity is to be delivered to young people in a number of different schools, there can be gains in terms of staffing and transport required;
- one partnership has spent some time calculating HEI overhead costs to improve awareness and allow monitoring of them;
- capturing information for each project/activity delivered detailing:
 - summary of proposed activity;
 - project outputs/deliverables (i.e. no. of individuals engaged);
 - expected outcomes and impacts;
 - resources required and associated costs;
 - evaluation of effectiveness.
- in one area schools have pooled their allocated funding to be used under the advice and guidance of an Aimhigher borough coordinator.

7 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 In this section we draw some concluding remarks emerging from this study and set out some recommendations for further consideration.

Conclusions

- 7.2 This study has proved to be successful both in providing the DfES with the information required for the Comprehensive Spending Review, but also in raising awareness of the costs of Aimhigher activities/interventions. While partnerships initially approached the research with some reservations about the purpose and process they have, on the whole, found it a useful and interesting experience. Nevertheless many of the partnerships will admit that it has been a difficult and challenging process.
- 7.3 The study has proved advantageous to individual partnerships by providing them with a framework to inform their management of the costs of Aimhigher activity. For example, one case study partnership has commented that they will continue to use the cost template for their own purposes, and another commented that it has prompted them to tighten up their recording and reporting of information.
- 7.4 Although we have had to use assumptions to create cost scenarios we are confident that the information provided gives realistic estimates of full costs of the activities. Furthermore, the workings behind this cost information (including resource input costs) provide a framework for estimating costs of other activities which may be of use to policymakers and Aimhigher partnerships alike.
- 7.5 In terms of cost variation we have found that delivery costs vary significantly between partnerships. It is clear that there can be notable differences in delivery cost between partnerships carrying out what appear to be similar activities. Some of these differences may be explained by the rigour with which partnerships carried out the costing work. As was mentioned earlier, we believe that in some cases there was a level of optimism bias when estimating time and resources spent developing an Aimhigher activity. Other differences may be the result of scale differences, different delivery approaches or due to the location of the activity.

- 7.6 Alongside the generation of comprehensive cost information, the exercise has provided a valuable insight into how Aimhigher partnerships operate in different circumstances. The findings relating to the achievement of cost efficiencies outlined in Section Six have distinct implications for how Aimhigher partnerships deliver best value for money.
- 7.7 Given that most partnerships are generally unaware of the actual costs of Aimhigher activities, effective resource allocation is inhibited. The costing model/framework we have developed introduces a greater transparency which will stimulate more effective decision making and partnership debate. Furthermore, the good practice and cost efficiency measures outlined provide Aimhigher with a valuable starting point for further shaping approaches to the management and delivery of Aimhigher activities.
- 7.8 The challenge for Aimhigher partnerships is to adopt an approach to the management of their Aimhigher funding which best enables them to be aware of, and take advantage of, information about marginal costs and economies of scale. The funding approaches (market and accounting models) outlined in Section Three may provide a starting point for partnerships to consider how economies of scales may best be achieved given their management and funding arrangements and other local circumstances.
- 7.9 A number of partnerships use cost/prices simply to account for the activities they deliver. This accounting approach can give a false impression of effective resource allocation. Partnerships with features of the market model (where schools have autonomy of funding) may be more aware of market prices but may similarly fail to maximise resource allocation, particularly if activity is not coordinated across the partnership to achieve some of the economies of scale associated with central purchasing/organisation of activities.
- 7.10 Neither one of the marketing or accounting approaches is necessarily better, but the features associated with each should stimulate some debate around effective resource allocation. The freedom for schools to spend their Aimhigher monies how they see fit might be considered more valuable than the potential monetary benefits achieved by sourcing activities at scale.

Recommendations

Culture Shift

- 7.11 The feasibility study and main-stage cost study have highlighted that the main focus in relation to funding and costs relates to consideration of budget spend, with limited consideration of the true and actual cost of Aimhigher activities, particularly at an individual activity level. This approach is unlikely to be sustainable as it does not facilitate partnerships in making informed decisions about what activities should be delivered.
- 7.12 Shifting the culture from considering budget spend to considering actual cost should have useful implications for partnership planning, with partnerships considering which activities can be delivered within the funding available rather than allocating the budget to partners with limited planning of how that funding will actually be used, and the specific outputs and outcomes that will be generated.

Assigning Notional Prices/Costs

- 7.13 All partnerships should be encouraged to move towards what might be regarded as a 'quasi market' model. This does not have to mean any changes to the management of the partnership or the way in which funding is distributed, but would involve using cost information to assign notional prices/costs to non-traded delivery (i.e. masterclasses, Aimhigher days). This should significantly improve both internal decision making and partnership-wide resource allocation.

Aligning Messages

- 7.14 It is important that the Aimhigher partnerships are given guidance with consistent messages about expectations in terms of how funding should be used and the extent to which it is beneficial to consider the costs of delivering Aimhigher activities and interventions. This could include, for example, the extent to which Aimhigher funding should be directed at overheads or on direct delivery of activities.

Disseminating Guidance and Increasing the Sharing of Good Practice and Cost Efficient Practices

7.15 The reaction to this research suggests that there is likely to be considerable benefit to disseminating guidance on cost management and efficient practices to all Aimhigher partnerships, including the costing template, detail of resource input costs and good practice. A workshop event to launch the guidance may be an effective way of raising awareness and facilitating buy-in to the concept.

**APPENDIX 1:
COST TEMPLATE**

Costing Template

SECTION A: CORE DETAILS		Description of Activity:
Activity:		
Aim/higher Theme and Activity:		
Model of Delivery:	Location:	Duration:
Max. No. of young people accommodated:		
Planned No. of young people participating:		
No. of groups (planned):		
No. of young people per group (planned):		
Actual no. of young people participating:		
Year Group delivered to:		

SECTION B: COST INFORMATION

Cost Categories and Types	Unit Cost	Unit	Units required/delivered	Total Cost (= unit cost x no. of units)	Issues/Background Information/Assumptions
B1): PLANNING AND SET-UP COSTS					
planning meetings		per person, per hr			
clerical support		per hr			
office expenses		per item			
insurance and legal costs		variable			
training		per hr			
CRB checks					
B2): DELIVERY COSTS					
Staffing					
school liaison officer/outreach		per hr			
academic lecturer		per hr			
student advocate/mentor		per person, per hr			
school staff		per hr			
other (e.g. private trainers)		per hr			
Facilities					
seminar room (HEI)		per day			
lecture theatre (HEI)		per hr			
residential accommodation		per person, per night			
facilities at private provider		per hr			
Resources					
resources/consumables		per person			
resources - other		per day			
resources - other		per person			
audio-visual		per day			
Hospitality					
refreshments		per person			
lunches - catering		per person			
lunches - packed lunches provided by young people		per person			
Development Activity		variable			
B3): ADDITIONAL COSTS					
Transport					
community transport		per "trip"			
coach (53-seater)		per "trip"			
minibus (16-seater)		per "trip"			
staff transport (e.g. HEI staff)		per mile, per staff member			
School staff support		per day			
SECTION C: SUMMARY					
Total Cost:		£0			
Planned Average Cost per person:		#DIV/0!			
Actual Average Cost per person:		#DIV/0!			

**APPENDIX 2:
EXAMPLE SCHOOL EXPENDITURE**

The following table is an illustrative example of how Aimhigher funding is used by schools.

Table A2: Example School Expenditure		
Total Budget = £20,000		
Aspiration Raising Activities	Budget Allocation	Proportion of Budget
Science Olympics (Year 10)	£200	
Geography Field Trip (Year 9)	£1,300	6.5%
Language Open Day at HEI (Year 10/11)	£120	<1%
Educational Activity Centre trip (Year 7)	£1,400	9%
Drama Workshop (Year 12/13)	£1,450	9.3%
Shakespeare in Schools (Year 9)	£678	4.4%
Attainment Raising Activities		
Maths Revision Day (Year 13)	£700	4.5%
Climbing Tuition (Year 10) (course component for GCSE)	£800	5.2%
Science Revision (Year 12)	£425	2.7%
Biology/Geography Fieldwork (Year 13) (for A-level)	£2,500	12.5%
Revision Skills (Year 11)	£650	4.2%
Geography Residential Field Study (Year 10)	£3,900	19.5%
Sixth Form Induction (Year 12)	£1,000	6.4%
Child Development (Year 10/11)	£400	2.6%
	£15,523.00	

**APPENDIX 3:
SAMPLE COMPLETED COST TEMPLATES**

SECTION A: CORE DETAILS

Activity:	Aimhigher Day		Aimhigher awareness raising day. Held at an HEI with assistance provided by student ambassadors	
Aimhigher Theme and Activity:	awareness and aspiration-raising: Aimhigher days			
Model of Delivery:	Location:	HEI	Duration:	1 Day
Max. No. of young people accommodated:	60			
Planned No. of young people participating:	60			
No. of groups (planned):	6			
No. of young people per group (planned):	10			
Actual no. of young people participating:	60			
Year Group delivered to:	Year 9			

SECTION B: COST INFORMATION

Cost Categories and Types	Unit Cost	Unit	Units required/delivered	Total Cost (= unit cost x no. of units)	Issues/Background Information/Assumptions
B1): PLANNING AND SET-UP COSTS					
planning meetings	£15.0	per person, per hr	21	£315.0	Average of 3 x Aimhigher Schools & Colleges staff
clerical support	£11.0	per hr	4	£44.0	Aimhigher Administrator
office expenses	£0.1	per item	660	£66.0	Colour printing worksheets
office expenses	£0.02	per item	240	£5.0	Black & white reprographics (consent & eval forms)
insurance and legal costs	£5.0	variable	1	£5.0	Insurance / risk assessment
training	£18.0	per person, per hr	4	£72.0	Training student ambassadors
B2): DELIVERY COSTS					
Staffing					
school liaison officer/outreach	£10.0	per person, per hr	14	£140.0	2 x Aimhigher assistants (placement students)
student advocate/mentor	£8.0	per hr	42	£336.0	Student Ambassadors actual pay £7.50 per hr
school staff	£180.0	per day	4	£720.0	Supply teaching cover
Planning meetings					
seminar room (HEI)	£180.0	per day	1	£180.0	Student Centre at HEI
Resources					
resources/consumables	£525.0	per day	1	£525.0	Data/video projector, camera & consumables
audio-visual		per day			
Hospitality					
refreshments		per person			
lunches - catering	£3.5	per person	72	£252.0	60 students, 4 teachers, 6 ambassadors, 2 Aimhigher staff
B3): ADDITIONAL COSTS					
Transport					
coach (53-seater)	£263.0	per "trip"	2	£526.0	2 coaches for 2 schools - varies according to distance

SECTION C: SUMMARY

Total Cost:	£3,186	
Planned Average Cost per person:	£53.10	
Actual Average Cost per person:	£53.10	

SECTION A: CORE DETAILS

Activity:	Link Programme - Lads into Languages	Duration:	one day
Aim/higher Theme and Activity:	awareness and aspiration-raising; Aim higher days	This was a day of workshops designed to encourage language take up among students. The days started with a quiz followed by a presentation by a Gymnastic team coach who spoke of the benefit to him of speaking various languages. They then had workshops in the same language they were learning at school, followed by a workshop in a language that they had not had any classes in before. Whilst half the group had lunch the other half met with current FE students studying various languages and heard about their experiences. The afternoon was filled with workshops about the use of languages in the workplace (presentations from one engineering firm and the Army). The day was rounded off by an exercise utilising language skills - designing posters in various languages for the World Cup.	
Model of Delivery:	Location: other		
Max. No. of young people accommodated:	80		
Planned No. of young people participating:	80		
No. of groups (planned):	1		
No. of young people per group (planned):	80		
Actual no. of young people participating:	73		
Year Group delivered to:	Year 8		

SECTION B: COST INFORMATION

Cost Categories and Types	Unit Cost	Unit	Units required/delivered	Total Cost (= unit cost x no. of units)	Issues/Background Information/Assumptions
B1): PLANNING AND SET-UP COSTS					
planning meetings					
clerical support	£55.00	per day	1 person x 5 days	£275	Estimate based on salary of £16,000 plus on costs. Preparing packs, booking venue/transport.
office expenses	£50.00	per item	1	£50	Estimate based on use of phones, fax, photocopier etc
B2): DELIVERY COSTS					
Staffing					
academic lecturer	£20	per hr	1 person x 3 hours	£60	Lecturer accompanied students from local college, cost of their time.
student advocate/mentor	0	per person	4 student ambassadors	0	No charge. Local college students who came over lunch.
school staff	190	per person	9 staff x 1 day	£1,710	Estimate based on cost of supply cover. 1 member of staff at each school plus one involved in the workshops.
other (e.g. private trainers)	250	per day	13 staff x 0.5 day, 4 staff x 1 day	£2,625	Estimate based on charge of £250 for full day. Others involved in the workshops, e.g. Army reps. Did not pay.
Facilities					
facilities at private provider	£250	per day	£1	£250	Discounted rate for venue hire and refreshments. Discounted rate given as the venue was being used for educational purposes.
Resources					
resources/consumables	120	per session		£100	Stationery, student packs, tutor packs, badges etc
Hospitality					
refreshments		per person			Was included in the discounted rate offered for venue hire.
B3): ADDITIONAL COSTS					
Transport					
coach (53-seater)	125	per "trip"	2 coaches	£250	Actual costs
minibus (16-seater)	45	per "trip"	1 bus	£45	Actual costs
staff transport (e.g. HEI staff)	0.4	per mile, per staff member	15 staff x 25 miles each	£150	Estimate based on average mileage costs
SECTION C: SUMMARY					
Total Cost:	£5,515				
Planned Average Cost per person:	£69				
Actual Average Cost per person:	£76				

SECTION A: CORE DETAILS					
Activity:	HE in FE Guide - 'your choice' publication	Guide on HE opportunities in local FE institutions.			
Aim/higher Theme and Activity:	IAG: provision of materials on entry routes into HE				
Model of Delivery:	Location: N/A	Duration:	Three months to compile		
Max. No. of copies accommodated:	5000 - lower value actually printed to determine demand				
Planned No. of copies to be printed:	3500				
No. of groups (planned):	N/A				
No. of copies per print run (planned):	3500				
Actual no. copies printed:	3500				
Year Group delivered to:	16-30 young people and IAG Practitioners				
SECTION B: COST INFORMATION					
Cost Categories and Types	Unit Cost	Unit	Units required/delivered	Total Cost (= unit cost x no. of units)	Issues/Background Information/Assumptions
B1): PLANNING AND SET-UP COSTS					
planning meetings	£40	per person, per hr	4	£160	Discussed at several AMG's to agree idea and subsequently had planning meetings to develop a specification for the brochure
technical support	£26	per hr	3	£78	Time to develop an on-line evaluation form
office expenses	£20	per item	1	£20	Phone calls and printer paper
B2): DELIVERY COSTS					
Staffing					
school liaison officer/outreach	40	per hr	45 hours by 2 Programme Officers and ALPS database officer	£1,800	Time taken to do background research, write a spec for the guide, compile mailing list, discuss with designers and 'proof-read' the 'copy-written' guide by Programme Officers. Also includes the time taken for ALPS officer to provide initial data from ALPS for the guide.
other (e.g. private trainers)	250	per item	1	£250	Fee for 'copy writing' guide
Resources					
Initial Design, Amend and Print costs	£6,286	per 3,500 copies		£6,286	No travel costs associated with this as the designers were based in the next office.
Distribution costs	£3,022	per mailing		£3,022	Distribution to all schools/colleges and advisers on mailing list, plus those who provided course information from each institution.
B3): ADDITIONAL COSTS					
Transport					
staff transport (e.g. HEI staff)	0.38	per mile, per staff member	8 miles	£3	Travel to drop off copies to HE Fair and loading/unloading
School staff support		per day			
Evaluation	£40	per person, per hr	6 hours and £50 design/print costs	£290	Associated time and costs for a complete evaluation of all locally produced publications
SECTION C: SUMMARY					
Total Cost	£11,909				
Planned Average Cost per person:	£3.40				
Actual Average Cost per person:	£3.40				

SECTION A: CORE DETAILS

Activity:	Spotting Wonder	Duration:	March - July 08
Aim/higher Theme and Activity:	awareness and aspiration raising; Aim higher days	Description: This project was mainly funded through uplift funding - the Aim Higher contribution was £2600. Each school entered teams of 8 pupils (as many teams as each school wanted could be entered); each team had the aim of putting forward a proposal to build a sporting venue which could be used at the Olympics in 2012. Each team had an industry mentor from the construction sector and they had to go through a range of planning activities: researching staff they would require and the jobs they would do, market research to find the most suitable local venue, identifying a site, designing the actual building and then presenting their plans to a panel of judges. All of the activity was done in their own time, outside of school hours.	
Model of Delivery:	Location: school		
Max. No. of young people accommodated:	120		
Planned No. of young people participating:	120		
No. of groups (planned):			
No. of young people per group (planned):			
Actual no. of young people participating:	72		
Year Group delivered to:	Year 10		

SECTION B: COST INFORMATION

Cost Categories and Types	Unit Cost	Unit	Units required/delivered	Total Cost (= unit cost x no. of units)	Issues/Background Information/Assumptions
B1: PLANNING AND SET-UP COSTS					
planning meetings	£35	per person, per hr	6 people x 2 mtgs x 2 hours	£340	Planning for the year ahead only - more extensive planning had taken place in the first year of the project and is not costed here. costs are based on the average salary of steering group members
Venue hire and refreshments	£40	per session	2 meetings	£80	venues are provided free of charge
clerical support	£7.50	per person, per hr	1 staff member x 2 hrs	£15	based on coordinator's salary
B2: DELIVERY COSTS					
Staffing					
school staff	150	per person	33 staff @ 0.5 day	3135	Launch event, school final, Univ visit & site visits supply cover. Cost of supply for all cover (excluding finals) when teachers were out of school (£190 per day)
school staff	150	per person	10 staff @ 1 day	1500	Borough finals & Grand final supply cover
other (e.g. private trainers)	35	per person, per hr	6 staff x 2 hrs x 10 mtgs	4200	Project Team meetings
other (e.g. private trainers)	35	per person, per hr	5 staff x 4 hrs	700	Launch event
other (e.g. private trainers)	35	per person, per hr	4 staff x 35 hrs	4900	Borough finals
other (e.g. private trainers)	35	per person, per hr	4 staff x 14 hrs	1960	School finals
other (e.g. private trainers)	35	per person, per hr	12 staff x 6 hours	2520	Grand final
other (e.g. private trainers)	35	per person, per hr	2 staff x 4 hours	280	University visit to Northumbria University to see presentation by RIBA.
other (e.g. private trainers)	2500	per item	1 staff	2500	Coordinator fee. This was negotiated at the outset, the same coordinator was used the year before and they felt it had been value for money than so they hired the same person again. Role is to put the whole activity together.
other (e.g. private trainers)	55	per day	1 staff x 12 days	660	Admin support. Preparing for meetings etc. Based on admin salary
other (e.g. private trainers)	100	per item		100	Purchase of financial support for processing payments
Facilities					
residential accommodation		per person, per night			
facilities at private provider	£30	per session	10 meetings	£300	Venue Hire for project group meetings
facilities at private provider	£500	per day	1 event	£500	Launch event
facilities at private provider	£40	per day	2 days	£80	Judging days
facilities at private provider	£120	per day	5 days	£600	Borough finals
facilities at private provider	£1,600	per day	1 event	£1,600	Grand final inc catering
Resources					
resources/consumables	£250	variable		250	Stationery, team packs, postage, phones, fax etc
Hospitality					
Development Activity	2650	variable		£2,650	Grand prize, borough prizes, trophy, goody bags. Each school winner gets £250, Teess Valley winner gets £1,000. Helrow also designed a trophy.
B3: ADDITIONAL COSTS					
Transport					
minibus (16 seater)	45	per "trip"	34 trips	£1,530	Launch event, borough finals, grand final, site visits
minibus (16 seater)	100	per "trip"	5 schools x 1 trip	£500	Univ visit
staff transport (e.g. H/EI staff)	0.4	per mile, per staff member	40m x 28 staff	£448	Launch event, judging days, borough finals, grand final, school finals
staff transport (e.g. H/EI staff)	0.4	per mile, per staff member	100m x 2 staff	£80	Univ visit - based on actual distance travelled
staff transport (e.g. H/EI staff)	0.4	per mile, per staff member	15m x 6 staff x 10 meetings	£360	Project Team meetings
SECTION C: SUMMARY					
Total Cost:	£32,688				
Planned Average Cost per person:	£272.40				
Actual Average Cost per person:	£454.00				

SECTION A: CORE DETAILS			Description of Activity:		
Activity:	WhatNext? Careers Fair		Whatnext? Careers Fair for pupils and parents and carers		
Aim/higher Theme and Activity:	IAG: events for parents and carers				
Model of Delivery:	Location:	other	Duration:	2 Days	
Max. No. of young people accommodated:	4,800				
Planned No. of young people participating:	4,800				
No. of groups (planned):	1				
No. of young people per group (planned):	4,800				
Actual no. of young people participating:	4,800				
Year Group delivered to:					
SECTION B: COST INFORMATION					
Cost Categories and Types	Unit Cost	Unit	Units required/delivered	Total Cost (= unit cost x no. of units)	Issues/Background Information/Assumptions
B1): PLANNING AND SET-UP COSTS					
Marketing Manger	£18.28	per person, per hr	412.5	£7,540	Aim Higher staff time set-up costs
Office manager	£12.00	per person, per hr	85	£1,020	Aim Higher staff time set-up costs
clerical support	£8.14	£s per hour	187	£1,522	Aim Higher Office Staff
Temp. support	£10.50	£s per hour	789	£8,285	Temp support hired to set up event
B2): DELIVERY COSTS					
Staffing					
Student ambassadors		per event	1	£392	Student ambassadors to help at the event
Aim Higher Staff		per hr	1	£1,695	Direct Aim Higher time spent running the event
Electrician		per event	1	£1,180	
Facilities					
seminar room (HEI)	£1,792	per day	3	£5,376	Hire of hall (including security costs)
Cleaning		per event	1	£250	
Resources					
Display equipment		per event	1	£11,620	
Radio advertising		per event	1	£13,526	
T-shirts		per event	1	£131	
CB Radio Hire		per event	1	£320	
Prizes		per event	1	£276	
Photography		per event	1	£381	
Event guides		per event	1	£8,796	
Hospitality					
Breakfast, lunch and dinner	5.92	per person	855	£5,061	Food for exhibitors and teachers
B3): ADDITIONAL COSTS					
Transport					
coach (53-seater)	212	per "trip"	35	£7,420	This cost was originally met by Aimhigher but has now been passed onto schools attending the event
School staff support		per event	1	£5,441	This cost was originally met by Aimhigher but has now been passed onto schools attending the event
SECTION C: SUMMARY					
Total Cost:	£80,232				
Planned Average Cost per person:	£16.72				
Actual Average Cost per person:	£16.72				

**APPENDIX 4:
COSTS OF KEY RESOURCE INPUTS**

Table A4: Costs of Key Resource Inputs

Resource Input	Cost Range⁵	Typical Cost⁶	Observations
Planning & set-up costs	£16-£30 per person per hour	£22 per person per hour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> time required varies per activity cost may reduce over time as an activity is delivered on numerous occasions
CRB checks	£5-£35 per person	£34 per person	
Insurance/risk assessments	£5 per activity	£5 per activity	
Student mentors	£5-£10 per hr	£7.10 per hr	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NB student mentors will also require upfront training and CRB checks
School staff support (supply cover)	£150-£200 per day	£180 per day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> consistent cost across the case studies with little variation NB this may not always be a <u>true</u> cost if supply cover is not actually utilised
Lecturers (HEI)	£20-£53 per hr	£36 per hr	
External speakers	£41-£89 per hr	£51 per hr	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> generally more expensive to use external speakers than lecturers
Aimhigher staff costs (usually HEI based)	£15-£45 per hr	£22 per hr	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aimhigher manager time typically slightly more expensive
Clerical support	£7.50-£26 per hr	£15 per hr	
School liaison officer	£14.90-£40 per hr	£24 per hr	
Learning support assistant	£12.50 per hr	£12.50 per hr	
Private trainers	£150-£1375 per day	£520 per day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Largest variation – due to number of people involved and nature of activity
Pupil travel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coach Mini-bus 	£65-£450 per coach per trip £45-£116 per minibus per trip	£260 per trip £80 per trip	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> travel costs can significantly vary depending on distance travelled and number of young people requiring transport NB using the mode of transport to its full capacity should be considered wherever possible
Staff transport (reimbursed petrol costs)	£0.30-£0.40 per mile	£0.39 per mile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> total cost will depend on distance travelled and number of staff travelling
Lunches	£3-£13 per person	£6 per person	
Venue hire costs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> seminar room lecture theatre 	£50-£1200 per room per day	£370 per day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> varies depending on type of room required (seminar room, lecture theatre)
Booklets and consumables	£0.30-£79.85 per person	£5.90 per person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> varies by type of activity rather than by geography of area or level of costs i.e. tends to be a different product
Residential accommodation	£25-£43 per person per night	£33 per person per night	

⁵ The range represents the range of costs observed within and across all case study partnerships.

⁶ The typical cost represents an average across the average within each case study partnership.

Other costs may include:

- evaluation of the activity including collation of information, analysis and reporting
- insurance / risk assessments (£5 per activity)

**APPENDIX 5:
AIMHIGHER TYPOLOGY**

Table A5: Aimhigher Typology

Awareness and aspiration raising activities
e.g. Aimhigher days, ACE days, generic taster days, primary school provision, pre-entry campus visits, visits by HE staff and/or students to schools/colleges, generic summer schools
Attainment raising activities
e.g. master classes, subject specific extension classes, subject specific enrichment classes, student tutoring, subject related mentoring, subject related summer schools, subject specific after school clubs, subject specific Saturday schools
Vocational activities
e.g. work based learning activities, health care activities, subject specific activities for work based learners and providers, building and/or mapping vocational pathways, vocational work experience placements, links with employers and Sector Skills Councils
Information, advice and guidance activities
e.g. community outreach, events for parents and carers, provision of materials on entry routes in to HE
Staff development and training
e.g. for Aimhigher staff, Connexions Personal Advisers, careers guidance staff, school/college staff, HE admissions staff
Progression
e.g. progression curriculum, delivery of HE units, ASDAN ⁷ units, transition support, curriculum development
Research and dissemination activities
e.g. seminars, websites, booklets, newsletters

⁷ ASDAN is an approved awarding body offering programmes and qualifications to develop key skills and life skills for all abilities, mainly in the 11-25 age group. For further information see <http://www.asdan.org.uk/>.

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