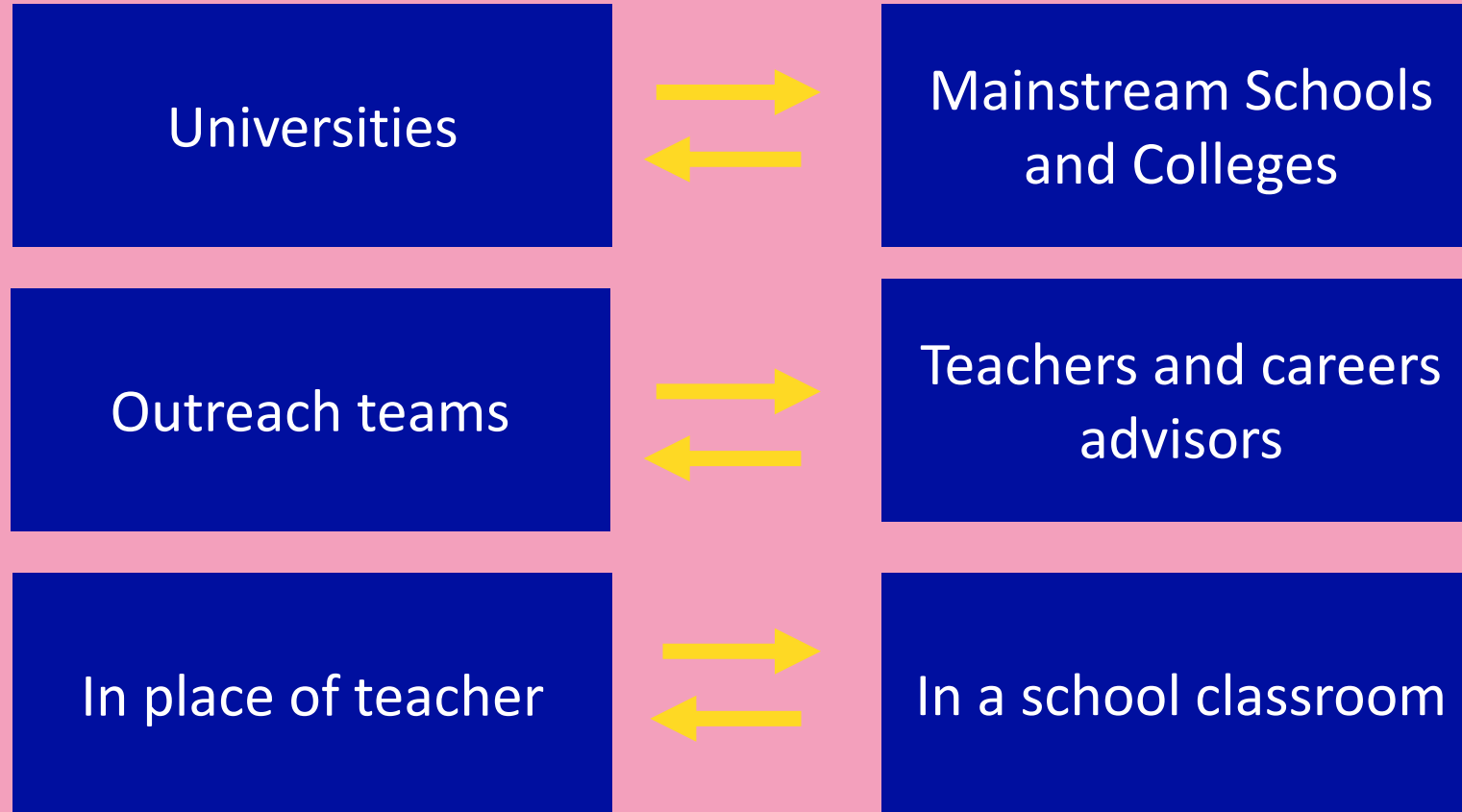# Engaging with Alternative Educational Provision

Dr Alex Blower, Access and Participation Manager
& Kate Venables, Senior Access and Participation Officer (Pre-16)

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How do we engage young people as University Outreach teams?

Engagement by university outreach teams

Universities	⇄	Mainstream Schools and Colleges
Outreach teams	⇄	Teachers and careers advisors
In place of teacher	⇄	In a school classroom

Reflected in policy

Priority B: Develop, enhance and expand their partnerships with schools and other local and national organisations, to help raise the pre-16 attainment of young people from underrepresented groups across England. (OfS, 2022)

The 'common sense' of university outreach work

The most legitimate form of progression to HE is through social and geographic mobility facilitated by moving away from home to a 'good' university

Our practice/pedagogy mirrors that of teachers and careers advisors in schools, because that's how it's done in education

How widening participation works best is through engagement with young people in mainstream educational settings

The students we're working with need to be 'helped' by us in order to do what is expected of them

Doxic Aspiration

'the out-workings of dominant beliefs and assumptions that circulate as common sense' (Gale and Parker, 2015, p85)

A 'belief which escapes questioning' (Wacquant and Bourdieu, 1992, p98)

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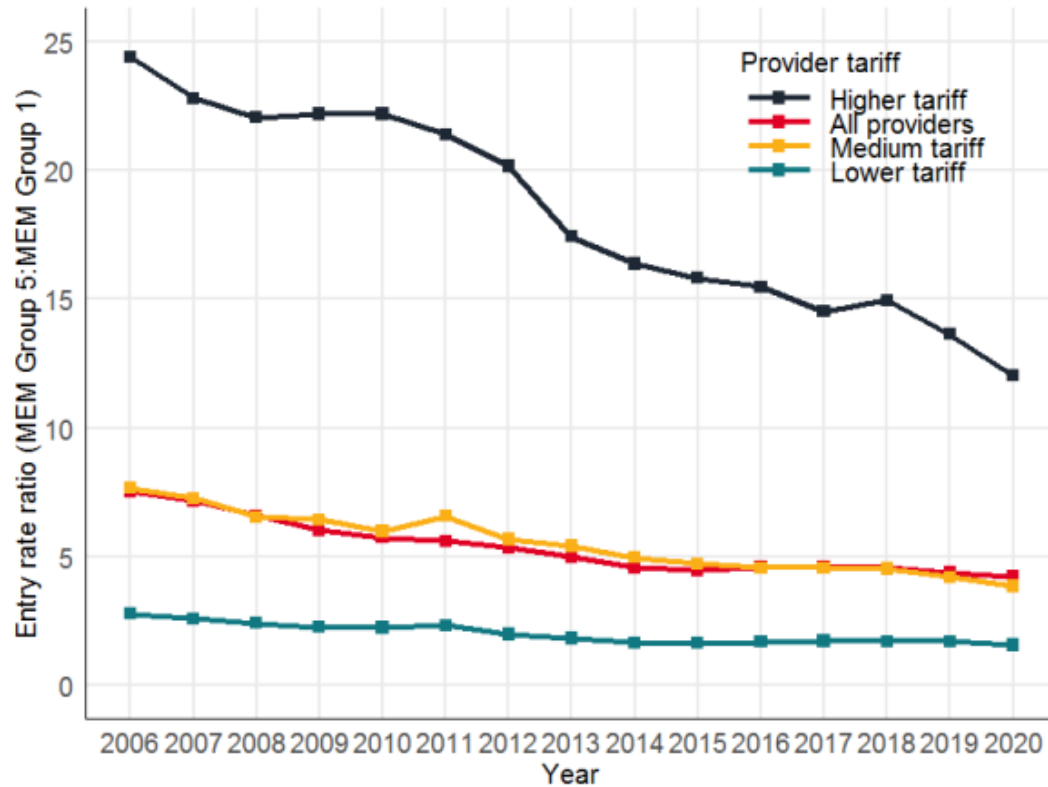
Gaps in HE Participation

FIGURE 2: Entry rate ratio between the most and least advantaged students entering HE by provider type (2006-2020)

	POLAR4 (UK domiciled) (Q5:Q1)	SIMD (Scottish domiciled) (Q5:Q1)	MEM (English domiciled) (Group five: Group one)	FSM (English domiciled) (Non-FSM: FSM)
Overall	2.20	2.99	4.23	1.88
Higher tariff	4.70	3.19	12.02	3.15
Medium tariff	1.92	2.68	3.86	1.98
Lower tariff	1.05	_*8	1.59	1.31

TABLE 1: 2020 entry rate ratios for POLAR4, SIMD, MEM, and FSM

	Men	Women	Entry rate ratio (Women:Men)
Overall	31.3%	43.0%	1.38
Higher tariff	11.4%	15.3%	1.34
Medium tariff	10.7%	14.0%	1.30
Lower tariff	9.2%	13.8%	1.50

TABLE 2: 2020 entry rates and entry rate ratios for gender (UK domiciled)

www.ucas.com/about-us/news-and-insights/ucas-reports

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A feedback loop?

Universities

Schools and Colleges

Who's not in the room?

Are we engaging meaningfully with those who are?

In Gillies' (2006) research with working-class mothers who were experiencing marginalisation as a result of the inequalities which they experienced, she comments that their involvement in school life were often more orientated toward *'keeping children safe, soothing feelings of failure and low self-worth, and challenging injustice'* (p.292)

A Black Country Mum

'They don't sort of, they don't seem to care like the teacher's that we had. I don't whether that's because they've had everything taken away from them. You can't do this, you can't do that, you can't do the other. Erm and they just seem to, Chris came home the other day and something had happened at school and I said where was the teacher? And he said sitting watching. Erm a few months ago he came home and he had marks on his back, and I said what are those marks? Oh they was throwing 2 pence pieces in class. Well where was the teacher? Sitting there doing nothing.'

'Never liked her. Known her since she was tiny and don't like her, she thinks she's better than she is and she was, the things that she was saying Chris had done, he's done this, he's done that, well Chris would never of done those things because he's not that kind of person.'

The historical connection of the family to the locality meant that, in some instances, engagement with teachers were enmeshed in a web of interaction that went beyond the 'here and now'. On occasions such as the instance described above, Judy believed that her prior experience provided contextual information which she used to form judgements about incidents involving Chris and members of the teaching staff. (Blower, 2020, p171)

So, with this in mind, how would we build a model which was designed to engage with young people who probably aren't already on a pathway toward HE?

We've established the approach we want to take

Expectations
Harrison and Waller, 2018

Risk
(Archer, 2014; Ball, Reay and David, 2002)

Strengths
(Ledwith, 2020)

Structures
(Hodkinson and Sparkes, 1997)

- Community first at pre-16
- Voluntary participation
- Informal learning
- Sustained engagement
- Building trust
- Championing young people's voices

But how does this play out at a practical level with a project?

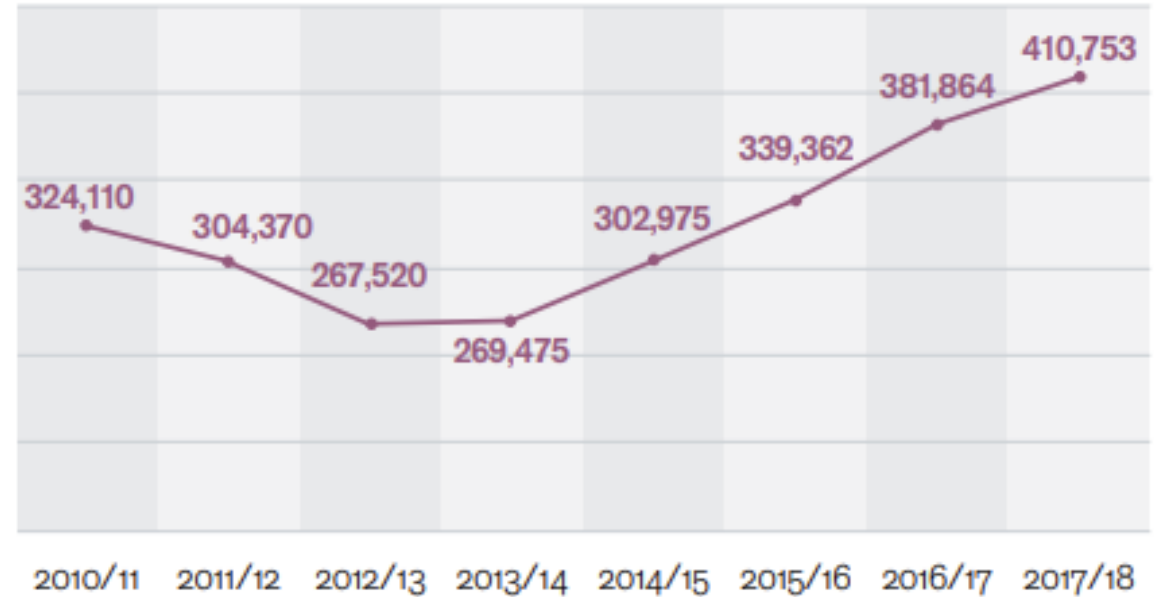# Alternative Educational Provision

Rates of school exclusion

Number of permanent exclusions in England

5,080 · 5,170 · 4,630 · 4,949 · 5,795 · 6,684 · 7,719 · 7,905

2010/11 · 2011/12 · 2012/13 · 2013/14 · 2014/15 · 2015/16 · 2016/17 · 2017/18

Number of fixed-term exclusions in England

324,110 · 304,370 · 267,520 · 269,475 · 302,975 · 339,362 · 381,864 · 410,753

2010/11 · 2011/12 · 2012/13 · 2013/14 · 2014/15 · 2015/16 · 2016/17 · 2017/18

Demographic data

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Factors impacting rates of school exclusion

Race

Gender

Poverty

Mental health

Having a social worker

Special Educational Needs
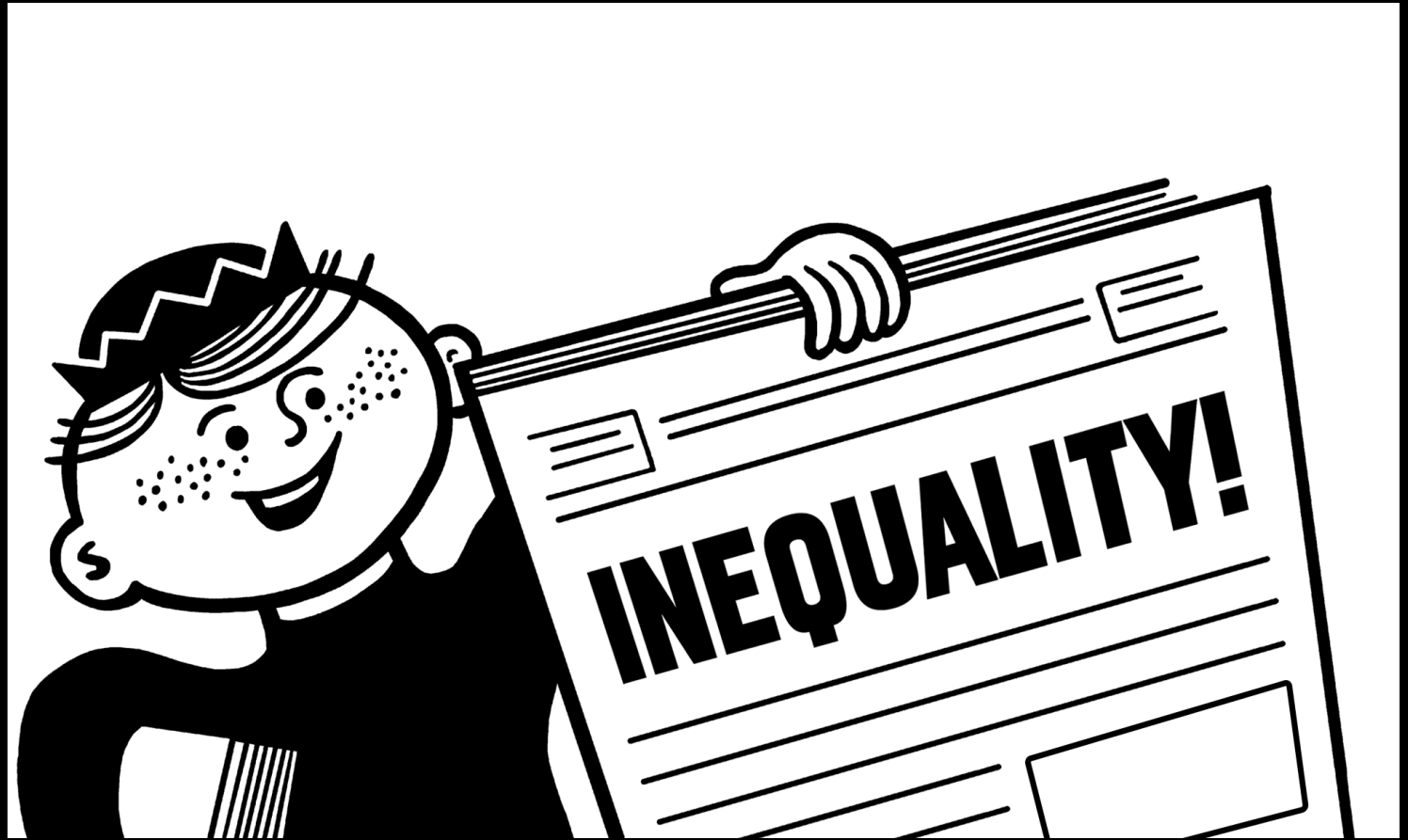
A Youth Work Approach

Young people choose to take part

Utilise young peoples views of the world

Treating young people with respect

Seek to develop young people's skills and attitudes rather than remedy 'problem behaviours'

Respecting and valuing difference

Promoting the voice of young people

Helping young people develop stronger relationships and collective identities

Institute for Youth Work Code of Ethics

Activity as a means rather than an end

When is a game of football youth work?

If the person running the football match is doing it because they have a passion for football and wants to improve the football skills of the young players, creating a winning team and climbing the local league, then they are a football coach.

If football is the means rather than the end and the primary focus is the social and emotional development of the young person then it is much more likely to be youth work.

Working as part of a team, taking on leadership roles, taking personal responsibility for their actions, understanding consequences, even thinking about gender roles and diversity issues are all elements the youth worker can explore with the young people through the medium of football. If the young people were interested in dance, cookery or environmental issues, the worker could equally well use these as the hook too.

National Youth Association

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Engaging with APs at AUB

Work created by AP student (January 2022)

Not about recruitment to AUB, goal is focusing on supporting GCSE attainment and progression onto level 3 qualifications.

Our underlying assumptions going into the project:

- Young people at APs want to be treated as young adults
- They don't have much autonomy in decision making around their education
- They haven't had engagement from HE providers while studying at an AP

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Project aims

- Wanted to facilitate a mechanism whereby young people who had experienced educational marginalisation could access the social and cultural opportunities housed within the University

- Were very aware that we lacked theoretical/practical knowledge and understanding as a basis for developing meaningful activity

- Wanted to engage in a way that was centred around the needs and interests of the young people.

- Aiming to co-create activity and build trust and rapport.

- Learning opportunity to build a robust programme and evaluation of activity
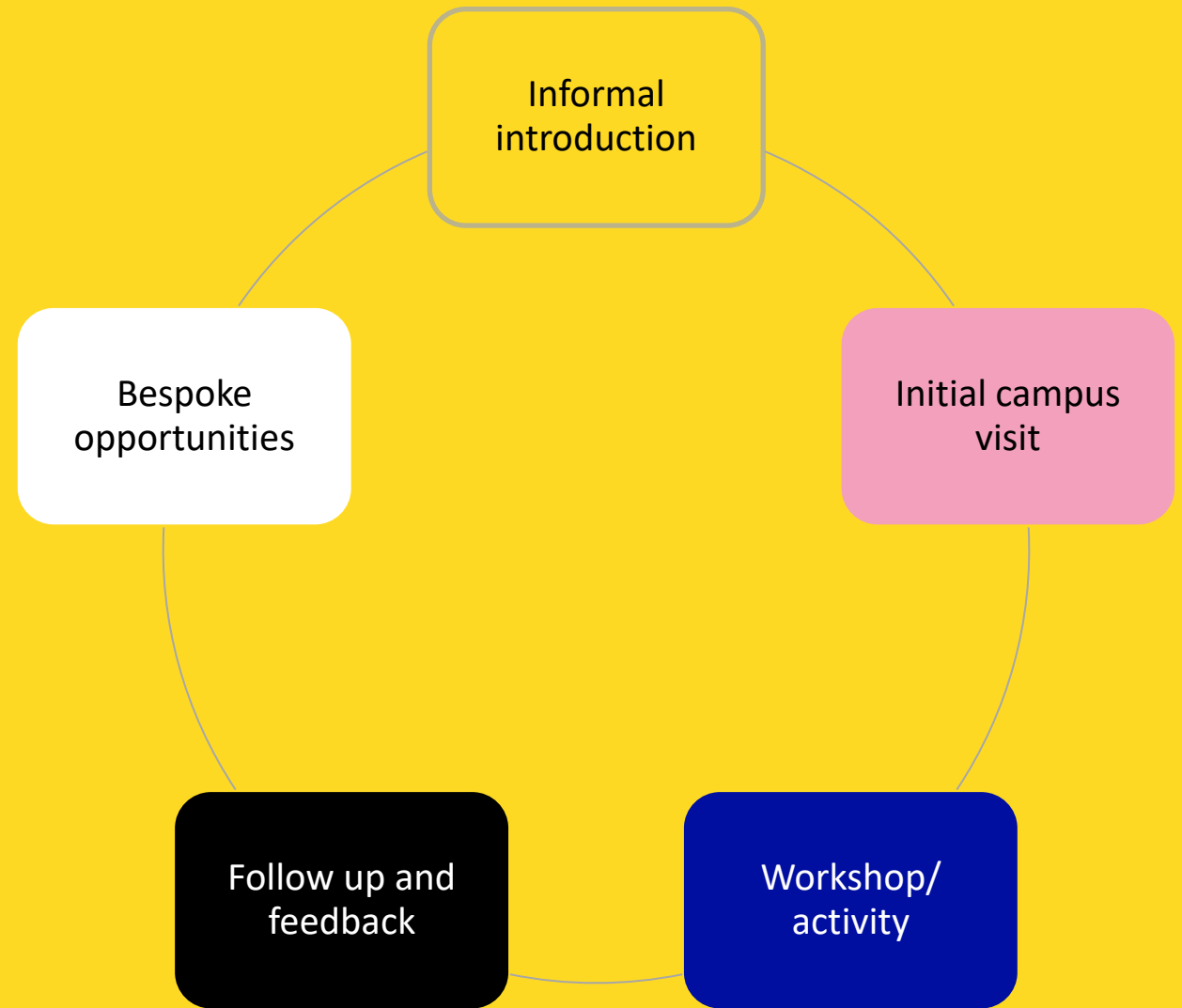

Image created by AP student (June 2022)

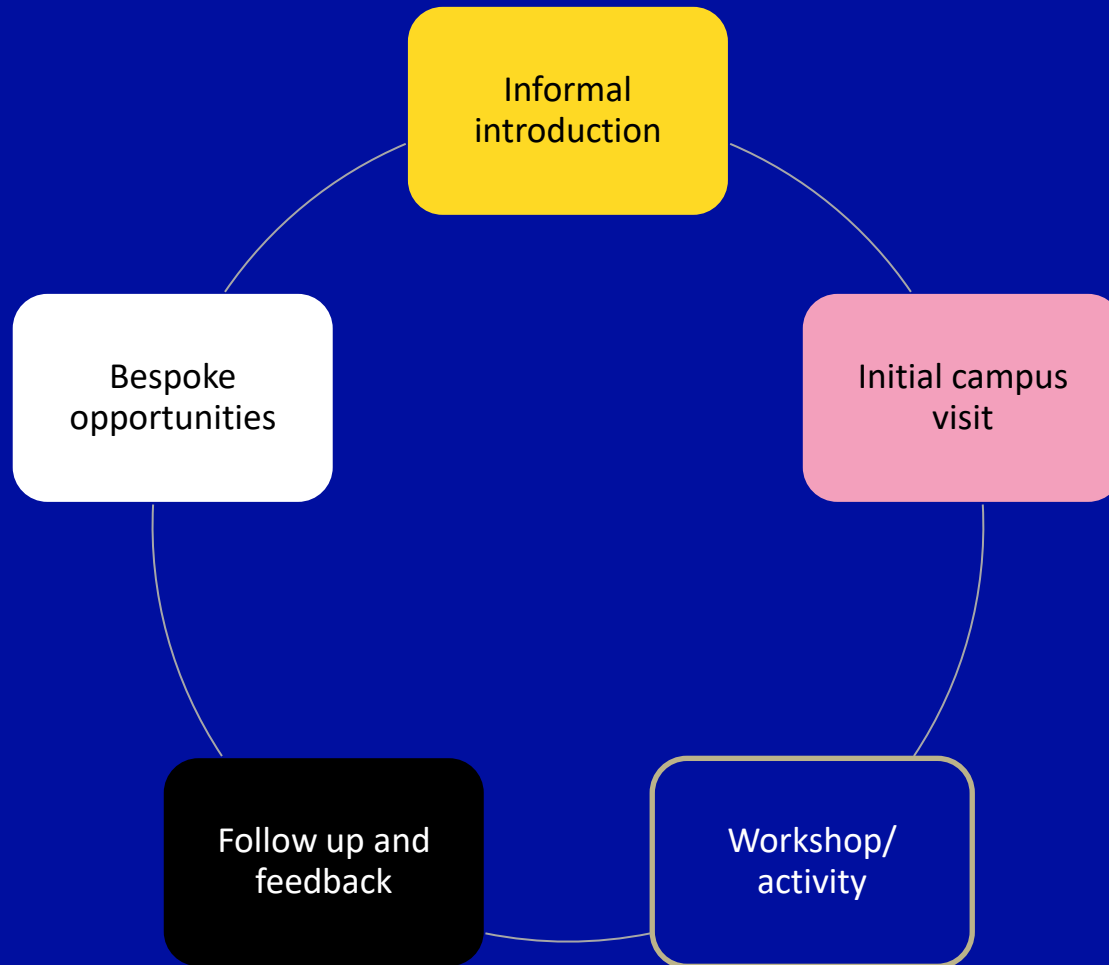# Our approach

1. **Informal introduction**
   - In their environment
   - Relaxed conversation
   - Opportunities
   - Young people = decision makers

2. **Initial campus visit**
   - Exploring AUB
   - Refreshment stop
   - Getting to know each other
   - Opportunities
   - Young people = decision makers

Informal introduction

Initial campus visit

Workshop/ activity

Follow up and feedback

Bespoke opportunities

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Our approach

Informal introduction

Initial campus visit

Bespoke opportunities

Follow up and feedback

Workshop/ activity

3. Workshop/ activities
- Subject specific tasters
- Being a Boy
- Work experience
- Young people = decision makers

4. Follow up
- Revisiting them in their environment
- Support with next steps
- Feedback
- Young people = decision makers

5. Bespoke opportunities
- Based on individual's interests and goals
- Young people = decision makers

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Case study 1

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Case study 2

Workshops

"I didn't know I would like it until I started it and now I can see it as something I'd see myself doing."

- Initial meeting

- First time on campus

- Being a Boy workshop series
  - Hesitance
  - Openness
  - Honesty
  - Bravery

- Expectations

- Level 3 interview

Case study 3

- AUB as a location becoming a safe space and escape for the young person

- Becoming additional trusted adults, that were genuinely interested in their opinions, hopes and plans for the future

- Providing creative opportunities

"X is in her happy place with you guys. I know she has been so looking forward to it. I think given chance she would move in with you all there!"

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Work created by AP student (November 2022)

Key measures of success and outcomes
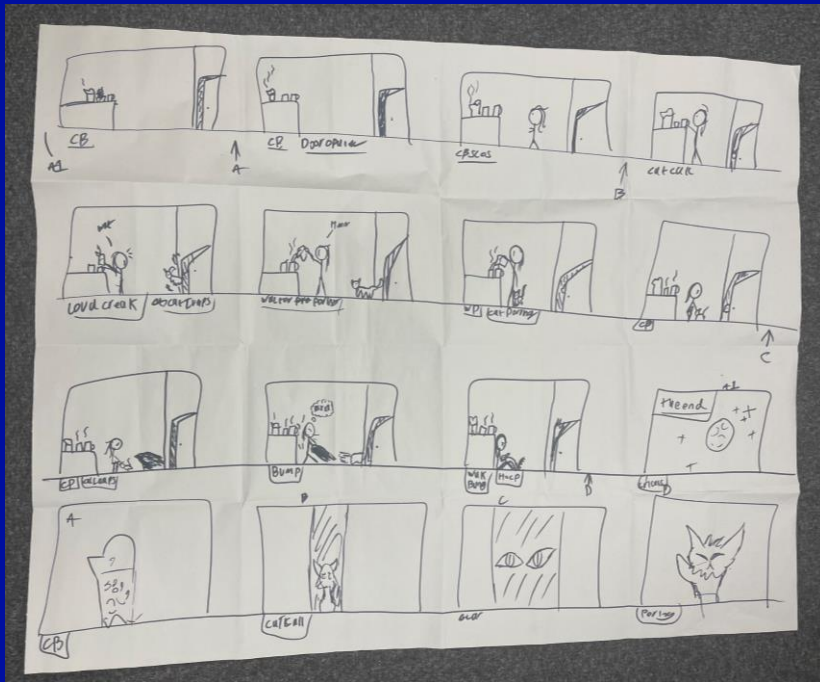
"Confidence was grown in abundance"

Image created by AP student (June 2022)

Feedback from the young people, their trusted adults, staff at the APs and what we have seen:

- Social and emotional health
- Attendance
- Homelife
- Change in expectations (NOT aspirations)
- Support in achieving Gatsby Benchmarks
- Supporting level 3 progression
- GCSE Portfolio Content

Next steps

Poem created by AP student (June 2022)
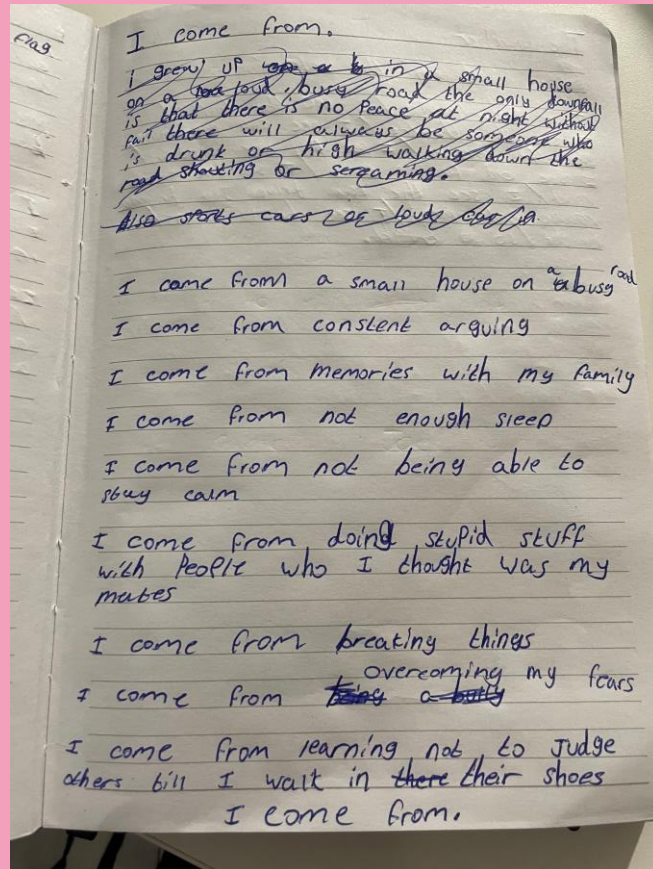
- Working with more APs
  - Including SEN
  - Additional opportunities for PP students
- Local Authority
- Expanding the Being a Boy Project
- Building robust evaluation into the programme design that reflects the nature of the relationships being built

Questions ☺

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