Working together, parents as researchers

- Yvonne Hillier
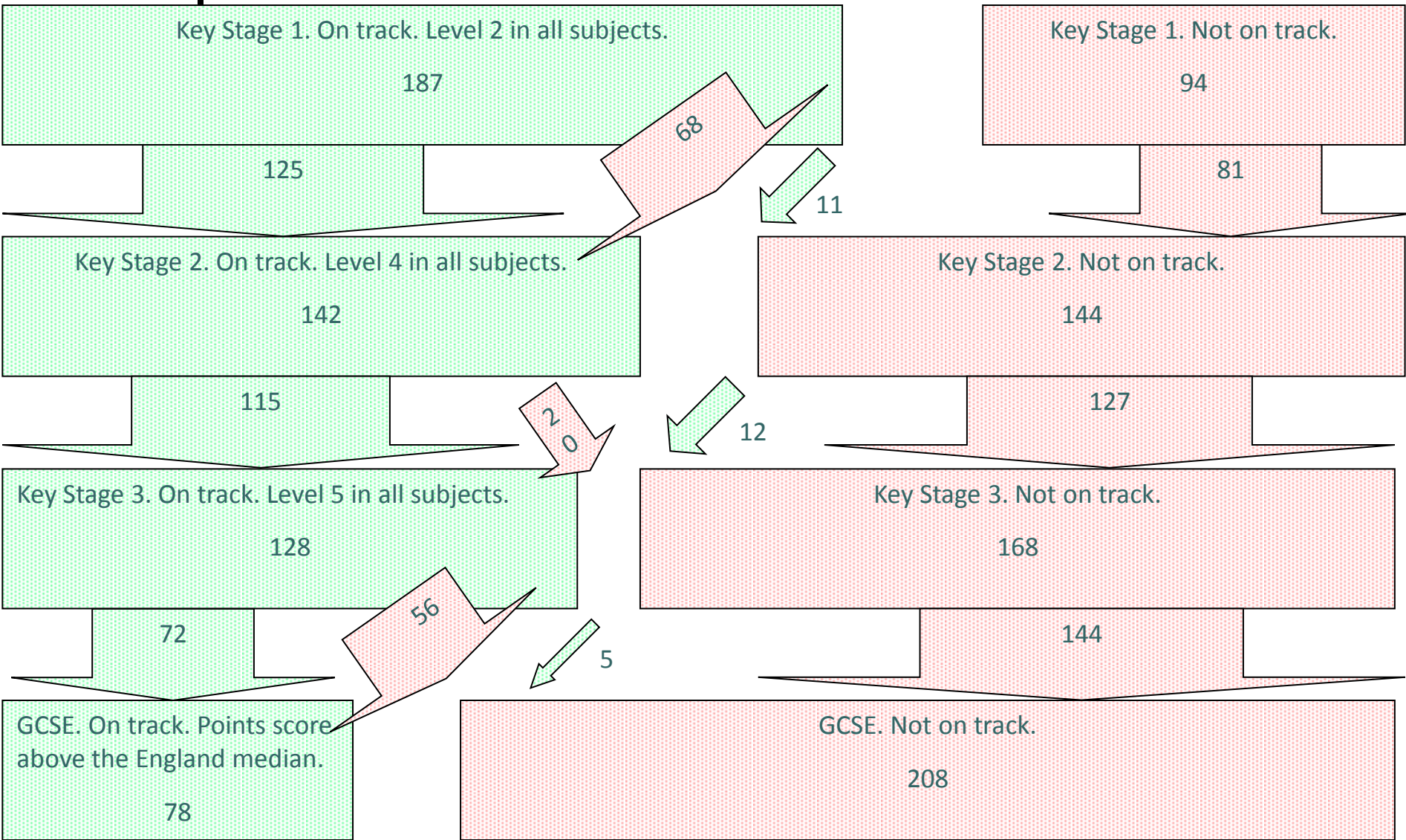- Mandy Curtis 18 Hours Ltd
- Ron Bennett

Working together, parents as researchers

The projects

- Ore Valley project – funded by Ore Valley Forum
- Communities Research – funded by Higher Education Funding Council for England
- Children's Centres and Family Learning, funded by CUPP and Ore Valley Forum
- ESCC Parent Researcher Projects funded by ESCC
- All are mixed-methods, with analyses of data, questionnaires and interviews

How Ore Valley children (don't) progress through school

Key Stage 1. On track. Level 2 in all subjects.
187

Key Stage 1. Not on track.
94

125

68

11

81

Key Stage 2. On track. Level 4 in all subjects.
142

Key Stage 2. Not on track.
144

115

20

12

127

Key Stage 3. On track. Level 5 in all subjects.
128

Key Stage 3. Not on track.
168

72

56

5

144

GCSE. On track. Points score above the England median.
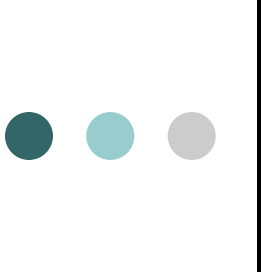78

GCSE. Not on track.
208

Higher education participation

Most wards in Hastings (and Rye) are in the BOTTOM quintile when it comes to young people's participation in HE.

- Baird.   Female 16% Male 15%
- Old Hastings   Female 28% Male 20% (2nd quintile)
- Ore   Female 23% Male 15%
- Tressell   Female 17% Male 11%

These are not the only wards in Hastings with HE participation in the bottom quintile. There are also:

- Castle
- Gensing
- Hollington
- Wishing Tree

- Baird, Ore and Tressell wards also have adult qualification levels in the lowest quintile.

How likely to go to uni before 30?

	School A	School B	School C	School D	School E
Very likely	16.8	21.7	30.3	22.0	28.0
Quite likely	21.2	16.7	27.3	20.0	28.8
Neither likely nor unlikely	23.2	28.3	17.2	26.0	18.9
Quite unlikely	7.4	3.3	4.0	12.0	5.3
Very unlikely	14.7	3.3	16.2	12.0	12.1
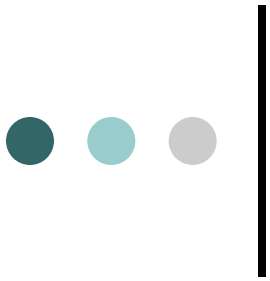
Implications of educational deprivation

o   Until recently there has been no HE in Hastings.

o   Aspirations have been raised quickly in the schools.

o   This translates into a rush into FE. High levels of motivation for learning in the college.

o   Will this lead to increased participation in HE?

o   Even as HE develops, it does not necessarily bring skilled labour directly into the Hastings labour market. People may go elsewhere.

o   Low aspirations are tied not just to culture but also to the realities of the Hastings labour market.

o   The number of apprenticeships is very low – the tourism industries do not have an apprenticeship tradition.

Working together, parents as researchers

- Pivotal moments
- Early years need careful attention
- Current cohort of 17 year olds in Hastings is 'up for it'
- Disengaged still finding it hard – danger of a lost generation
- Transition to HE is still not in everyone's sights, particularly for learners on vocational programmes but this is changing

Working together, parents as researchers

Turning Point – Connected Education

- An innovative and unique form of action research using parents and young people as peer researchers. It enables parents and young people directly to define and influence the development of school policy and practice. By engaging parents as researchers, Connected Education is able to reach those parents most in need and least engaged with schools and the learning process (Turning Point, 2011: 11)

TURNING POINT
turning lives around

Working together, parents as researchers

- What aspirations parents hold for their children and to what extent are these influenced by their own life experiences
- How Children's Centres can capitalise on the willingness of parents both to support their children and their Children's Centre
- How Children's Centres can minimise the barriers faced by some parents in engaging with their children's learning
- How Children's Centres can reach parents whose children need the most support
- How Children's Centres can facilitate positive parent/child interaction
- Who in Children's Centres and the wider community can make a difference to parental involvement

Working together, parents as researchers

- Questionnaire design
- Parent volunteers recruited
- Parent volunteers trained
- Pilot of questionnaire by parent volunteers
- Recruitment of parents (first attempt!)
- Recruitment of parents (second attempt)
- Analysis of questionnaire responses
- Focus group questions identified from analysis
- Focus group participants recruited (first attempt)
- Focus group recruited and undertaken (second attempt)
- Analysis
- Report writing

Working together, parents as researchers

Working together, parents as researchers

- We now know that it's not a myth to find it hard to engage parents in East Hastings!
- Reaching parents is not easy
  - Data Protection Act
  - Non statutory provision
  - Timing, crèche facilities

Working together, parents as researchers

- Use of internet and mobile phone
- Go where parents are
- Administrator's role is key
- Time given beyond original allocation
- Commitment of partners
- Ongoing willingness to undertake research and development

Working together, parents as researchers

- Parent volunteer now employed in the Children's Centre
- Centre about to introduce Facebook for parents
- Keen to use social networking to engage parents in further research and development
- Parent researchers now in demand for other projects

Working together, parents as researchers

- On Our Doorstep 2011
- Research conducted with college staff, students and parents from one school participating in the original HEFCE project
- Focus groups with students and parents
- Interviews with college staff

Working together, parents as researchers

- Parents suggest their children have better choices but in a tougher world. They are keen to support their children to study and do well but all the time, they are aware of the need to gain work. They are happy to support anyone going to uni but are concerned about the debt and aware that this may need part time work to help support it. They are not in a position to offer this financial support themselves.

- Students aspired/were applying to University. Fear of debt was the main potential barrier identified by those who aspired to progress to University. Many expressed this as a conundrum between debt incurred versus potential long-term financial gains

Working together, parents as researchers

- Most of the cohort expressed an active desire to get out of Hastings. Some aspired to move to Brighton. Others wanted to go to London or further afield. Reasons for wanting to leave Hastings were varied but were weighted in the following way with the most cited reason first i) lack of job opportunities in Hastings including lack of big companies based there ii) lack of drive by Hastings people and wanting to move to somewhere where people had more drive to succeed iii) wanting to leave their hometown and start new somewhere else

Parental Engagement Project 2012- 2014

Aims

- Identifying the critical interventions required to raise standards,
- Identifying the barriers to learning and the levers to secure success, including more effective partnerships with parents
  - Working with parents to deliver interventions and establish sustainable approaches for longer term improvements
  - To increase the confidence and engagement of parents in supporting their children's learning
  - Schools to develop a deeper understanding of all parents' views on school, learning, communications, and to use this understanding to improve and enhance parental engagement.
- Provide professional development for school leaders in setting up and implementing a small-scale research project

Parental Engagement Programmes

- Each programme had two phases of implementation: Phase 1 - Parent Research including targeted families in receipt of Free School Meals, and Phase 2 – Schools' implementation of actions in response to the findings of the study.

Programme aims: **Improve educational outcomes** for FSM pupils

- **Working with parents to deliver interventions and establish sustainable approaches for longer term improvements**.
- To increase the confidence and engagement of parents in supporting their children's learning
- **Schools to develop a deeper understanding of *all* parents' views on school, learning, and communications, and to use this understanding to improve and enhance parental engagement.**
- Provide professional development for school leaders in setting up and implementing a small-scale research project

What worked well in phase one

- 65% of Project Leads stated that the Parental Engagement Project had changed the relationship between the school and parents.

- A significant outcome of the project was the dialogue and shared decision making between Headteachers, Project Leads and Parent Researchers

Which number best reflects your feelings about reading with your child?

	Cluster 1		Cluster 2		Cluster 3				Cluster 4		Cluster 5		
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%			Freq	%	Freq	%	
1 = Least +ve	2	2	1	2	3	3	1 = Least +ve	1 = Least +ve	1	3	4	5	1 = Least +ve
2	8	8	3	5	8	7	2	2	0	0	15	17	2
3	22	23	8	14	25	23	3	3	5	14	33	38	3
4	24	25	15	26	72	67	4 = Most +ve	4	5	14	34	39	4 = Most +ve
5 = Most +ve	41	42	29	51				5 = Most +ve	26	70			

Interventions - Planning a small-scale research project

Overall confidence in helping children at home **but**:

- More **information**
- More **contact**
- Willing to attend **workshops** or similar
- Concerns about **what exactly is expected** (and the reverse, thinking they are doing the 'right' thing at home when not)
- How to reach the **parents who themselves are not confident in their own skills**

Examples: Small scale research projects

○ **Communication**:

Parent noticeboards, parent friendly websites

Small scale research projects

Parental participation:

- Visits/visitors (local library, gallery, bookshop)

- Talks, courses, workshops (with/without children), training, forums and social activities (during/outside school)

 - New spaces for parents (shared ownership of decoration/furniture selection)

- Reading clubs

Small scale research projects

New technologies:

- *iPads*, *Alphasmart* keyboards and

Kindle electronic readers

Case studies

"…One 'hard to reach' family were school 'refusers'. Now they're regular volunteers, coming in doing the garden… finding others who can be involved from the village… and will stay in the playground and chat to others [parents]."

Case Studies

…A welcome framework to develop better engagement with more difficult to reach parents

Parent Engagement Programme

Advantages of working with parent researchers

- How happy and willing the parents were to do the survey
- Parents liked having parents interview them although sometimes *too* familiar, i.e. friends with the PR
- Once parents opened up, their opinions and thoughts flowed freely and were really useful
- Anonymous and being parents ourselves helped with honesty
- Generally very well organised by project lead. Venue arranged by project lead – community centre, vouchers for tea/coffee provided
- Teachers *very* engaged on results – meetings planned with parents
- We did our interviews on a progress review day – maybe this helped as parents were already coming into school

Parent Engagement Programmes

- Resilience in the community
  - Parents as researchers
  - Intermediaries
  - Potential for future analysis, development and community action
  - Resilience within the community in addition to individual resilience

Working together, parents as researchers

○ Thank you and please ask questions

© 2007 by Randy Glasbergen. www.glasbergen.com
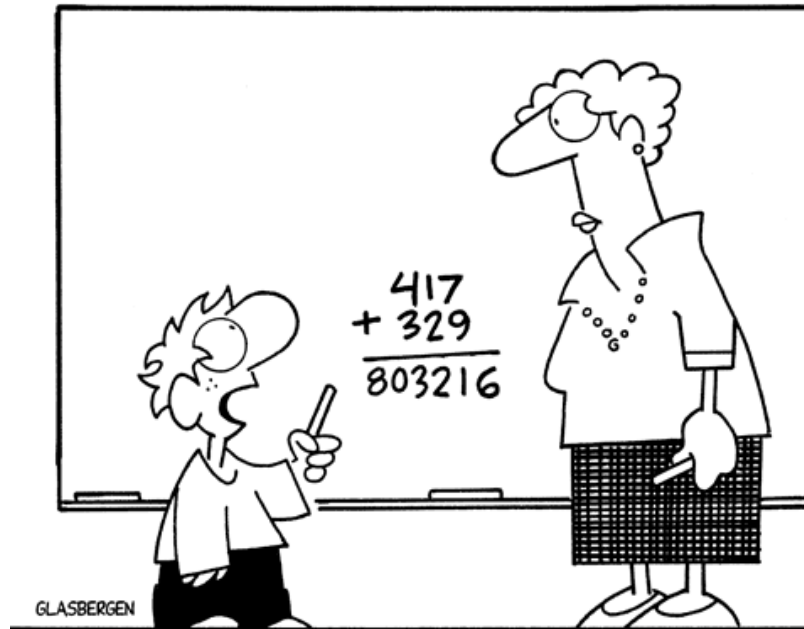
"My dad says persistence is the key to success. So I'm going to keep giving you the same wrong answer until it becomes the right answer!"