



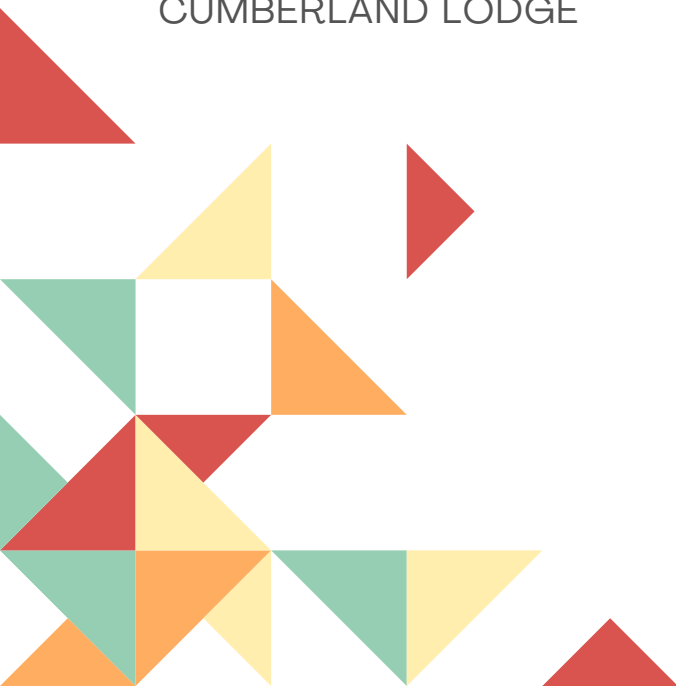
Social
Science
Impact
Accelerator



At the Crossroads: Developing local strategies to support pathways into employment

13 MAY 2024

ROYAL HOLLOWAY UNIVERSITY OF
LONDON, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH
CUMBERLAND LODGE



The Social Science Impact Accelerator

Royal Holloway's Social Science Impact Accelerator programme offers funding, training and support for academics and partner organisations to maximise the real-world impact of our world-leading social science research. Our wide-ranging portfolio includes expertise relevant to the challenges in sustainability, education, health, justice, communities, economic development, inequalities, civic participation, and many others.

This programme is funded by an Impact Acceleration Account (IAA) grant from the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) from 2023-28.

Programme activities include:

- Funding impact and engagement projects
- Residencies, both outward (researchers spending time at a partner organisation) and inward (partner staff spending time at Royal Holloway)
- Training and networking events
- Public engagement bursaries for Early Career Researchers and PhD students
- Impact-focused PhD studentships, with regional partner organisations

We are particularly interested in hearing from prospective partners in our region – as defined by our campuses in Egham in London, and including Surrey, West London, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and the M4 corridor. Please email socialscienceimpact@rhul.ac.uk to find out more about opportunities.



Cumberland Lodge

Cumberland Lodge is an educational charity and social enterprise that exists to empower young people to lead the conversation around social division. Providing them with the skills, perspective and confidence to question, challenge and understand some of the most complex social issues of our time.

Set in the heart of Windsor Great Park, Cumberland Lodge has been home to the educational charity since 1947. They provide a tranquil and safe environment for meaningful discussions. Over the years, generations of young people have benefitted from the transformative experience of being at Cumberland Lodge.

Day-to-day, the buildings and facilities operate as a social enterprise, hosting multi-day residential retreats, workshops, conferences and similar events on a commercial basis for groups of up to 100 delegates. Regular clients include university departments, legal and medical training bodies, and many other public sector, private sector, and not-for-profit organisations.



Conference Programme

9:00 AM

Arrivals

9:30 AM

Welcome: Introductions and Drawing the Map

Melissa Henderson, from Royal Holloway University, will provide our introductory address, outlining the significance of this conference, the goals we have set out to achieve, the collaboration that is intrinsic to our goals, and our planned outputs from the project.

Kate Webb from Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce, will discuss why collaboration is key to developing employment strategies, and their work in developing Local Skills Improvement Plans.

Emily Gow, from Royal Holloway University, and **Ed Newell**, from Cumberland Lodge, will introduce us to the Cumberland Lodge methodology, and how it will inform our experience at the conference.

10:00 AM

Session 1: Roadblocks - Addressing Inequalities

This session focuses on the inequalities that can act as roadblocks and barriers to those trying to enter, re-enter or progress through the workforce. We will consider, from a range of perspectives, the range of structural and policy obstacles which can hinder people in reaching and exceeding their career goals.

Speakers:

Ijioluwa Adesan - Natwest Ventures

Dominique Unsworth - Resource Productions CIC

Chair: Ravinder Barn - Royal Holloway, University of London

11:30 AM

Break



11:45 AM

Session 2: Licences and Learners - Key Regional Skills Gaps

In this session, we will consider the key regional skills gaps that can hamper pathways into employment. Building on our scoping work, completed in 2023, we seek to explore the areas where there are employment opportunities, and the skills employers are seeking in filling those vacancies.

Speakers:

Amy Gaunt - Voice 21

Simon Barrable - Simon Barrable Consulting

Simon Wright - Windsor Forest Colleges

Chair: Jessie Ricketts - Royal Holloway, University of London

1:15 PM

Lunch

2:00 PM

Session 3: Road Signs - Developing Systems and Directions to Support

Working lives undergo changes at several common points in life, such as finishing mandatory schooling, leaving sixth form, graduation from university, returning from career breaks, or returning from maternity leave. This session focuses on the levers of support and systems of progression which ensure that pathways to progression are clearly signposted and available to those entering, returning to, or progressing in the workplace, and how those systems can help under-served groups.

Speakers:

Ketan Gandhi - Slough Borough Council

Shanique Miller - Resource Productions

Jessi Loftus - Berkshire Careers Hub

Chair: Shiri Lev-Ari - Royal Holloway, University of London



3:30 PM

Break

3:45 PM

Breakout Session: Building On-Ramps

In these sessions, we will break into smaller groups to bring together insights from the day's discussions and try to answer our key questions:

- How can we create long-lasting structures to increase collaboration between education and industry?
- Are there new ways of systematically incorporating varied perspectives into recruitment and promotion initiatives in priority skills areas where there are skills gaps?
- How can skills and education sectors be more responsive to employers' needs to better prepare students for professional success in key priority areas in our region?
- Can we learn from other sectors or localities within and outside our region to improve our approach to upskilling and cross-skilling employees?

These breakout sessions will be organised around three overarching skills areas which were identified at the roundtable conducted as an earlier part of this project. These are:

1. **Language Skills** – facilitated by **Sam McCormick**, Royal Holloway, University of London
2. **Digital and Creative Skills** – facilitated by **Giulia Achilli** and **Yiluji Zeng**, Royal Holloway, University of London
3. **Health and Social Care** – facilitated by **Stefan Brown**, Royal Holloway, University of London



4:45 PM

Signposting: Actions and Next Steps

This final session will summarise the key themes and recommendations that have emerged from the conference. Participants will have the opportunity to reflect on the speaker presentations and discussions, and agree on some next steps for action, under the themes of addressing inequalities, limiting skills gaps, developing support systems and increasing collaborations in our region. The outcomes of this session will inform the recommended pilot interventions that will follow this conference.

Chair: Shailesh Kumar - Royal Holloway, University of London

5:15 PM

Closing Remarks

Ravinder Barn - Royal Holloway, University of London

5:30 PM

Close

Following the conference, guests are welcome to enjoy a history tour of Cumberland Lodge.

6:00 PM

Dinner



About the Speakers



Amy Gaunt

Amy is Director of Learning, Impact and Influence at Voice 21, the national oracy education charity. Amy joined the charity's founding leadership team in 2016, supporting the growth of the organisation from one London school to a network of over 1000 schools across the UK. She is co-author of 'Transform Teaching and Learning through Talk: the Oracy Imperative' and 'Voice 21's Oracy Benchmarks'.



Dominique Unsworth

A Creative Media Producer, Trainer and Skills Advisor for more than 20 years, Dom has made 100+ films and has supported 100s of under-represented Artists and Filmmakers to secure training and work in the Arts through her social enterprise Resource Productions CIC. Dom's passionate about inclusion and access within the Creative Industries and supports diverse regional talent, crew and artists whilst producing commissions for the likes of BBC and Channel 4. She is founder of Berkshire Film Office and co-founder of the British Film Institute backed Screen Berkshire and Arts Council England and SEGRO supported YES: Youth Engagement Slough.



Giulia Achilli

Giulia Achilli, PhD, is Lecturer in Accounting at Royal Holloway University of London, where she is Director of the Centre for Critical and Historical Research on Organisation and Society (CHRONOS). Her research is interdisciplinary, combining accounting, organization and sociological studies with approaches from the arts and philosophy and seeks to contribute to the understanding of accounting and accountability practices within their social, historical and organising context.



Jessi Loftus

Jessi Loftus manages the Berkshire Careers Hub which supports the careers education programmes in 82 secondary schools across Berkshire. With years of experience as a teacher, careers adviser, project and business development manager, Jessi is passionate about ensuring young people have the information and guidance needed to make good decisions about their future pathways. She is looking forward to sharing the work of the hub and the significant improvements schools in Berkshire have made to their careers provision.



Jessie Ricketts

Professor Jessie Ricketts is based in the Department of Psychology, Royal Holloway, University of London and directs the Language and Reading Acquisition (LARA) research group. Jessie researches language and literacy in children, young people and adults. She is particularly interested in how reading benefits children's learning and language. For example, how does learning to read change the way that we process language? Should we emphasise written forms when teaching children new words? How can we support adolescents to read more so that they can expand their vocabulary knowledge? Jessie works closely with teachers, educational charities and policy makers to conduct research and consider its implications for education.



Kate Webb

Kate works with the Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce, helping to lead the Local Skills Improvement Plans for Berkshire and Oxfordshire. She has worked in further and technical education for over 30 years and was a College CEO and Principal for 12 years, leading a complex and successful college merger. She is Managing Director of The KWP Ltd, a company that offers consultancy, project management and support to the education and skills sectors and is also a national FE Adviser working for the Department for Education. She was born in Birmingham and moved south on a narrowboat in 1996 but now lives in Berkshire with two dogs, two children and a husband.



Ketan Gandhi

Known for his insightful and probing 'so what' questions, Ketan is a community development specialist who inspires and motivates stakeholders in fostering meaningful engagement and building trusted relationships to drive impactful change. With a Master's degree in urban education and social policy, Ketan has over 40 years of experience as a public servant, most recently serving as an Associate Director at Slough Borough Council, overseeing a diverse portfolio of services including Communities & Place.

Now operating as a freelance consultant, Ketan's work is underpinned by a strong set of values, including integrity, honesty, and a commitment to delivering demonstrable impact for communities. Ketan is a firm believer in inclusive leadership and advocates for a 'doing with' approach, championing empowerment and active participation. As a product of an apprenticeship scheme, Ketan is a firm advocate of 'growing and developing your own'.



Ravinder Barn

Professor Ravinder Barn is Head of the Department of Law and Criminology at Royal Holloway, University of London. Ravinder is a Fellow of the Academy of the Social Sciences. She served as a sub-panel member for the UK Research Excellence Framework in 2021 (REF2021), for Unit of Assessment 20 (Social Work and Social Policy). Ravinder has a strong track record in policy-relevant impactful research in relation to racial/ethnic, social and gender inequalities. She is the author/editor of eight books and over 100 journal papers or book chapters. She writes on gender, ethnicity, child and youth welfare and criminal justice. Her research on child welfare and migrant groups and gender-based violence is highly regarded nationally and internationally. Ravinder is a mixed-methods researcher. Her academic base is interdisciplinary and spans social policy, sociology, social work and criminology. She is currently the Co-Lead for the Families and Children Research Cluster in her Department.



Shanique Miller

Shanique Miller is a young person from Slough, frequently engaged with aspiring young professionals through her work at Resource Productions. She is a co-leader of their weekly media club, acts as a company representative at school and career fairs, and chairs the Youth Engagement Slough Young People's Steering Group, all while pursuing an apprenticeship as a L3 Publishing Assistant.



Simon Barrable

Simon Barrable is the owner and director of Simon Barrable Consulting Ltd, a management consultancy specialising in education. He has 25 years of experience in the further education sector, 15 of them in senior leadership positions. He has led colleges through major change management programmes, mergers, and quality improvement journeys. He has particular specialisms in stakeholder engagement, the skills agenda, project management, digital education and coaching & mentoring. After head of department and faculty roles in a number of Hampshire colleges, he went on to the Deputy Principal and Principal roles at Portsmouth College. Whilst there he helped move the college from requires improvement to good, oversaw the introduction of iPads for all staff and students, and the establishment of an international student programme. Student numbers grew by over 50% during this period. He taught history and politics for the first 10 years of his career and retains an absolute belief in the power of good education to change lives.



Emily Gow

Emily Gow manages the delivery of the Social Science Impact Accelerator (SSIA) programme at Royal Holloway, funded by an Impact Acceleration Account (IAA) grant from the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). Emily supports academics to have a positive social impact with their research through building partnerships, and providing advice and guidance to carry out effective public engagement and impact projects. She joined Royal Holloway in 2022 from the charity sector. Most recently, she was the Programme Manager for a schools-based anti-bullying programme at the youth charity, The Diana Award.



Ed Newell

Edmund Newell has been Principal and Chief Executive of Cumberland Lodge since 2013. An economic historian with a special interest in environmental issues, and priest in the Church of England, he was previously a Research Fellow at Nuffield College in Oxford, Chancellor of St Paul's Cathedral in London, where he was the founding Director of the St Paul's Institute, and Sub-Dean of Christ Church, Oxford. Ed is a regular contributor to Pause for Thought on BBC Radio 2. His publications include the co-authored books, *Ethics in Investment Banking* (with John Reynolds); *What Can One Person Do?* (with Sabina Alkire), a theological reflection on the Millennium Development Goals; and *The Sacramental Sea: A Spiritual Voyage through Christian History*, published in 2019. Ed is also a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society and the Royal Society of Arts.



Melissa Henderson

Melissa Henderson is a lecturer of Criminology and Sociology in the Department of Law and Criminology, Royal Holloway University of London. Her primary research interests focus on female prison populations and rehabilitation strategies, particularly the use of mentoring interventions both within prisons and the wider community. Melissa has experience as a qualitative researcher, having conducted multiple prison-based studies on the use of through-the-gate initiatives and improving prisoner health needs. She is also a researcher in death studies, with a focus on the impact of death education.



Stefan Brown

Stefan Brown is senior lecturer in the Department of Law and Criminology. He teaches on the MSc in Social Work and the BSc in Social Sciences. Stefan's research explore mental health and mental capacity. He recently completed his PhD with a study exploring social work perspectives on mental capacity decision making in the context of people with young age dementia. Stefan is interested in equality diversity and inclusion and in particular addressing the attainment gap in higher education and promoting the involvement of black and global majority students in higher education.



Shiri Lev-Ari

Dr. Shiri Lev-Ari is a cognitive scientist studying language from a social perspective. She is particularly interested in how the social environment shapes individuals' linguistic skills and language evolution. She holds a PhD from The University of Chicago and is currently a reader at the Psychology Department at Royal Holloway, University of London.



Iyioluwa Adesan

Iyioluwa is a degree apprentice at NatWest Group, providing digital technology solutions to improve customers experience and optimise business efficiency. He received the BPP University Commendation Award for his contributions to the apprenticeship community, reflecting his commitment to fostering supportive environments for aspiring professionals. In addition to his professional role, Iyioluwa actively engages with local schools and communities to inform students about the benefits of apprenticeships and technology careers. He has also led discussions with digital leaders to promote skills training and collaboration within the industry. Currently, he is involved with the British Computing Society (BCS) and their impactful campaign, "A Force for Good" aimed at addressing digital poverty, where he has developed a digital solution that connects aspiring professionals with meaningful roles, ensuring equitable access to opportunities.



Sam McCormick

Sam McCormick joined Royal Holloway as a teaching-focused lecturer in 2019. She has taught across a wide range of cognitive and developmental areas in previous roles but is primarily involved in teaching study skills and second-year individual differences. Her teaching and research interests focus on reading and vocabulary acquisition and development in an undergraduate population. She is developing a project examining the impact that baseline reading and vocabulary knowledge has on student learning with colleagues at the Universities of Surrey, Roehampton, Reading and Canterbury Christ Church. Sam is interested in e-learning and curriculum design and is an External Examiner at the University of Hertfordshire and Staffordshire University. She is a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy and a member of the Experimental Psychology Society.



Simon Wright

Simon Wright is an Assistant Principal at The Windsor Forest Colleges Group. His remit is mainly focussed on study programmes for 16–19-year-olds. He leads on several strategic priorities including the rollout of the sixth form's T Level programme and independent learning. As part of the college's recent successful Ofsted inspection Simon was shadow skills nominee. The college received the highest Ofsted sub-grading for its 'strong contribution to meeting skills needs'. On the run up to the inspection, Simon was heavily involved in the college's on-going mission to work closely with industry in the design and delivery of curriculum

Delegate List

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