**Evaluation - Executive Summary**

**The Washington Group- International Women’s day 2019**

On 9th March 2019, the Fylde Coast experienced its first International Women’s Day Festival, held at Blackpool Sixth Form College. Developed and facilitated by The Washington Group and partners, the Festival aimed to inspire participants by addressing gender parity and raising the aspirations of 250 young women aged between 10 -19 who attended schools from the Fylde coast.

What the festival achieved went much deeper than offering participants the opportunity to explore careers and pathways available to them, it provided them with a place to develop their knowledge and confidence of what would be available to them in their life choices and social mobility.

The Festival aimed to:

1. Develop opportunities foryoung women through more diverse experiences i.e,sport, the environment, STEM, social welfare, entrepreneurship and volunteering etc.
2. Offer work experience and opportunities from a more diverse business and community sector
3. Offer a link to young women to reduce social isolation and support mental health issues which included: volunteering, peer mentoring, engaging in participation activities, and developing youth led groups.

Weknow that Schools across the Fylde Coast are developing provision to support the achievement of the ***8 Gatsby’s Benchmarks of Good Career Guidance***. The Festivalwas able to build on the careers education information and guidance already delivered in schools and to support these benchmarks. We were able to do this through our partnerships with the Careers and Enterprise Company, Business in the Community, Inspira, Fylde coast businesses and organisations.. There is a reawakening of approaches to targeted girls only workand the Washington group aimed to readdress the social discourse and media representation through the Festival activities and partnership working. Here on the Fylde Coast, we are now able to lead on this best practice and become a centre of excellence for gender parity,encompassing a common, joined up approach.

The Festival was able to demonstrate how as a group of communities, schools, colleges and businesses we canproduce events and activities that demonstrate our commitment to balancing the power agenda, through campaigns including, body image, wider career opportunities, political engagement, education, employment and training.

The Festival was an asset based approach to working alongside young women. Historically approaches to working ‘with’ young women, in particularly addressing physical and emotional mental health and well-being focus on anxieties and trouble fixing, seeing sometimes the young women as victims. This festival engaged young women in focusing on empowerment, and explore gender equity, and heteronormative gender discourses within our communities.

**Themes of the festival**

There were 6 themed areas, all with activity based workshops:Innovation, Sustainability, This Girl Will, Hall of Fame Happiness and Bea-U-tiful.

The workshops provided a holistic approach to learning and developing knowledge and experiences. For example, a Make Up Artist (MUA)demonstrating special effect make up and exploring self-employment, to STEM Ambassadors supporting young women to create eco-friendly bath bombs and develop greater understanding of robotics, as well as learning how to lazershoot from Team GB Athletes and workshops exploring careers in the Police, Armed forces and creating progressive and realistic target setting aspiration plans.

**Stakeholders**

**Schools**

1. 20 schools from across the Fylde Coast including schools for children with disabilities plus a pilot group from Westminster Primary School.

**Main sponsors**

The event was sponsored by private businesses, apart from a small amount of public sector funding from Fylde and Wyre Councils and the Police and Crime Commissioner

1. 9 main sponsors: Fylde Council, Active Lancashire, United Utilities, Police and Crime Commissioner, Regenda, Inenco, Lido Guide, Wyre Council and Blackpool 6th Form College.

**School Sponsors**

1. 25 small employers sponsored the schools to attend the event including lunch, educational mission boxes and welcome pack and the activities provided .

**Volunteers**

1. 40 activity workshops were available during the day and provided free activities
2. 60 volunteers from industry and 40 volunteers from Blackpool sixth came on the day
3. 35 female role models from across Fylde supported and visited the schools enabling the school to develop research skills and create Living Libraries of positive role models from the Fylde Coast to display at the event.

**Evaluation- University of Cumbria**

An independent evaluation of the festival conducted by the University of Cumbria concluded:

***“This Festival saw a bigger impact on young women’s lives than just careers advice, it’s impact will result in Young Women having a more positive and informed attitude when making key choices in their academic, learning, career and personal life choices.”*** (University of Cumbria, 2019)

A mixed methodological approach of quantitative and qualitative evidence from the event was used to inform the evaluation. In addition, the event addressed some of the Gatsby Benchmarks, a framework of eight guidelines that define the best careers provision in schools and colleges. More specifically, under Benchmark 3, it states the need to address the needs of each pupil because “profound inequalities exist across different courses and job sectors…’ ‘...the gender pay gap is further evidence of a need to ensure our careers and enterprise provision tackles underlying inequalities.” (Gatsby, 2013)

There is a 9.81% difference in earnings in hourly rate for genders in 2018, which demonstrates a bias in men and women’s  salaries that does not reflect the GCSE attainment of young women in Blackpool. (Office for National Statistics 2018)

As the festival is the first of its kind,The Washington Group employed a longitudinal study within the research design. This is so that the progress of the participants can be tracked over time, as the young women develop. These young women will have access to become alumni of the next festival and peer-leaders within their schools and communities.

The International Womens Day Festival supported the development of female social mobility, enabling young women to have relaxed narratives with role models across the sector and engaging in small intimate workshops. These workshops stretched their learning and personal development, resulting in more positive and informed attitudes when making key choices in their academic, learning, career and personal life choices.

Emergent themes from the evaluation of participants concluded as a direct result of the event they: ***experienced increased confidence and aspirations, they learnt new skills, had the opportunity to try new activities out of their comfort zone and had the opportunity to network***

**Next Steps**

1. Bring together a committee of key stakeholders & investors for IWDFestival 2020 (7th March)
2. Identify & secure public and private investment and commit to Call for Action
3. Secure school participation and increase in offer to include more young women
4. Identify & secure new female role models
5. Develop workshops for IWD2020 Festival
6. Secure commitment from businesses and community for Volunteer Team

**One example**

**Looking to the future – Pupil action**

As a result of the event some of our Pupil Leadership Groups have been thinking about how they can help promote gender balance. Our Pupil Council members have asked for more PE enrichment clubs for girls and our Head teacher has committed to exploring the staffing capacity so as to allow this to happen.  Since the event the Academy has already established a HLA This Girl Can Club, which aims to support girls with low self-esteem through sport. We are delighted to report that this group in recognition of the importance gender balance has now also invited some boys to join their club!

During the summer term our Academy will begin our Prefect recruitment process – some of us will be meeting with members of staff to see what we can do to encourage boys to sign up for leadership roles as in the past more girls have.   If boys are engaged in leadership, they will take on more responsibility for maintaining a gender balanced community and so this will make us girls happier!

Our Anti Bullying Ambassadors are going to be looking at a piece of work on Social Media and staying safe online.  We think this is important as UK statistics show many girls are posting comments and images that put them at risk and cause them to be dominated and exploited.

Finally, our Pupil Council is working with Senior Leaders to improve the quality of the girl’s toilet facilities and they have been making staff aware of how issues like this can affect girls and their attitude to school.