



Meet our Board:

Carol Castle and Cathy Sinclair, Co-Directors of Student Recruitment and Admissions at Sheffield Hallam University

Carol and Cathy job share the post of Director of Student Recruitment and Admissions at Sheffield Hallam University, leading the Student Recruitment and Widening Participation/ Outreach function and the Student Recruitment Strategy.

Both Carol and Cathy have detailed and extensive experience of engaging with all stages of young people's journey towards entry into higher education. They are also Leads for Aspiration for the South Yorkshire Futures social mobility programme.

What does your role entail?

The role of Director of Student Recruitment and Admissions is responsible for the University's Widening Participation and student recruitment strategies for both home and overseas markets – essentially all that happens pre-entry, from the first contact with a prospective student and their family to the point where a student becomes a student.

Do you have a substantial number of students from the local region?

Around 40% of our undergraduate students come from the local region. I think there are a number of factors influencing this, not least the impact of the work that both Hepp and the two universities have been doing in the region raising aspirations and working with schools and colleges. This is particularly significant given the demographic dip in the number of 18-year-olds in South Yorkshire - a national trend, but it's particularly the case in Yorkshire and the Humber.



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Why do we still need Hepp?

You only have to look at a lot of our regional data to understand why Hepp is still needed. In parts of our region, progression to higher level skills, higher education and highly skilled employment is lower than other parts of the country, and we have less schools that are good or outstanding compared to other parts of the country. We need partners to come together in a focused way to support the aspiration and the progression of our young people and adults for the future benefit of the region, and that's what Hepp does. This is a long-term job, it's not a quick fix, which is why there's a long-term commitment to Hepp from the two universities.

What do you think is the main strength of Hepp?

I think its impartiality. Hepp is about the provision of accurate, up-to-date advice and information to support and inspire young people, their families and those considering a return to learning about their progression choices, enabling people, whatever their backgrounds, to be the best they can be.

How is Hepp improving?

Targeting activity is a big priority. It's really complex to be able to target activity with limited resources and a big geographical region to cover, with lots of different user needs to take into account. You've got to have a strategy, and it's an area where Hepp has made a lot of inroads. Hepp now works in a consistent manner across the whole region, with different levels of engagement in the offer for different target groups, including a growing library of online resources available through the website. It's part of the Board's remit to check that those resources are being used and developed in line with the targeting strategy. We are also working hard to ensure that the remit of Hepp fits with changing regional and political priorities, ensuring we work collaboratively with a wide range of partners to ensure coverage and impact of our collaborative efforts, avoiding duplication and maximising reach.

Should we be encouraging more young people towards apprenticeships not just traditional university education? How is Hepp responding to that challenge?

Hepp's core role is providing information and inspiration, not to say that university is for everyone. It's about making sure that people can make informed choices about their future and understand the breadth of different pathways that are open to them. I think that Hepp has a key role to play in terms of myth busting around apprenticeships, particularly with parents and influencers. One of the key pieces of feedback we get from teachers and careers advisers is that knowledge is quickly out of date and is often based on personal experience, so it's vital for Hepp to give teachers and advisers access to up-to-date information and reflect how the situation is changing, especially where young people are making choices about jobs that may not even exist right now.

You and Cathy are joint 'Aspiration Strand Lead' for South Yorkshire Futures, how does that relate to your Hepp role?

South Yorkshire Futures is led by Sheffield Hallam University and is really about the University using its convening power to bring together partners across the region to help raise the educational health of the region. The programme is broadly structured into three strands of activity across the student lifecycle – early years/ preparation, school years/performance, and aspiration, which Cathy and I lead. This is focused very much around the work of Hepp and the National Collaborative Outreach Programme, HeppSY, together with the widening participation and outreach teams at the University and partners across the region. The focus is how we all come together not only to support raising aspiration across the region, but also to realise those aspirations. South Yorkshire Futures provides a strategic framework – making work more than the sum of its parts, identifying gaps, and sharing best practice. As Aspiration Strand Leads, we co-ordinate a range of initiatives that bring different partners together to meet those ambitions. Hepp is very much part of this, because it has a one-stop shop for outreach activity with coverage across the region, which makes it a really strong foundation from which to build specific projects.



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