

GETTING PERSONAL: CONCEPTUALISING AND UNDERSTANDING PERSONAL TUTORING

Thursday 21 June 2018

The Society for Research into Higher Education
London



Introduction

THANK YOU FOR JOINING US

RARA is dedicated to enhancing personal tutoring to ensure all students achieve their potential. The OfS funded project – which stands for Raising Awareness, Raising Aspiration – is committed to addressing barriers to student success through access to high quality academic support. RARA will pilot improved policy, practices and tools to tackle attainment gaps within higher education, especially among students from BME groups and lower socio-economic backgrounds. This personal tutoring pilot project is taking place at the University of Sheffield, King's College London and the University of Portsmouth. The goals are to: support change in the partner institutions to address the attainment gaps; and to provide case studies and tools that can be used on a national scale, and start a conversation around the role of personal tutoring in tackling attainment gaps.



Raising Awareness of attainment gaps, their causes and the power of personal tutoring to tackle barriers to success



Raising Aspiration in the HE sector and amongst academics to recognise, value and improve personal tutoring

The Issue

Increasing access to higher education is important but this does not resolve attainment gaps on its own. Data suggests there is little or no relationship between the size of attainment gaps in UK higher education and the diversity of the student body.

Unexplained gaps remain for certain groups, who are less likely to achieve a 1st or 2:1 degree classification than their peers, despite controlling for prior attainment and other variables. These gaps emerge when students arrive at university.

The quality of pedagogical relationships between students and staff is one area, potentially impacting on attainment, which requires further conversation and study. Tutors are central to addressing gaps in attainment, alongside fostering a student's feelings of belonging in higher education. Research shows some students display a lack of awareness or sense of entitlement to additional support that can help them progress and achieve their full potential.

RARA represents a coalition of universities being open and honest about our attainment gaps and committed to tackling this issue.

The Aim

RARA aims to strategically improve the quality of personal tutoring to provide a more consistent, effective and inclusive approach. A series of activities will address both institutional and national policy and practice on personal tutoring, with close monitoring of the impact on attainment gaps over two years.

Each partner institution within RARA will trial improved Personal and Academic Tutorial Sessions (PATS) and initiatives within a pilot department: Engineering (Sheffield), Dentistry (King's) and Creative and Cultural Industries (Portsmouth). This involves and will develop:

- Policies, lessons, techniques and strategies that can be employed in the partner institutions and across the sector, to narrow attainment gaps on a local and national scale.
- A package of staff Continuing Professional Development (CPD) initiatives, based on project findings, which can be rolled out as toolkits for the wider sector.
- An online system and student interface for the management and administration of personal tutoring, to identify students who need additional support.
- A National Best Practice Support Menu of 'courses' institutions can use to improve personal tutoring.
- Practice-informed insight on closing attainment gaps through personal tutoring, with data and evaluation used to share insight with the wider sector.

LET'S CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION...

After today we will have a range of resources and tools being launched and developed over the next year.

Follow us on twitter for more updates:
[@rara_tutor](#) [#raratutor](#)

Or visit our website, to sign up for our mailing list, read our blog, and access our resources:
www.rarator.ac.uk

The slides from today's presentations are available in our resource library.

Agenda

10:00	Introduction and welcome (Samuel Dent)
10:15-12:00	Session 1 Getting personal: Exploring the potential of personal tutoring to remedy attainment gaps – Samuel Dent, Dr Emma Broglia – University of Sheffield Learning gain metrics and personal tutoring: Opportunities and ethics – Dr Camille Kandiko Howson – King's College London Uncertainty and trust-building in the personal tutoring role: developing academic repertoires – Dr Kay Guccione – University of Sheffield
12:00	Lunch
13:00-14:00	Session 2 Slaying dragons: Myths as barriers for addressing inequalities in HE – Dr Jessica Gagnon, Arif Mahmud – University of Portsmouth Fostering student mental health and wellbeing in the context of being a personal tutor – Dr Emma Broglia – University of Sheffield
14:15	Coffee
14:35-16:00	Session 3 Re-conceptualising personal tutoring: Bringing pedagogy to principles and practice – Dr Alison Stenton, University of Oxford Creating a sense of place: The role of personal tutoring and social networks – Dr Ciaran Burke – University of Derby Final Reflections & Questions – Hugh Mannerings, Academic Lead for Retention and Attainment Advance HE
16:00	Close

Filming will be taking place throughout the day as part of the production of our online CPD deliverables which will be launched at the end of the project. As such we please ask that:

- If you do not wish to be captured on any filming as an audience member, that you speak to a member of the film crew. They will be happy to recommend seating which avoids camera angles, or mark-up footage which includes you so that it will not be used.
- You remain seated during talks, or if you leave your seat during recording, please try and avoid walking in front of the camera or making loud noises.
- You leave all questions to the end of the talk, questions will be filmed and our events team will provide you with a roving mike. A member of our production team will then provide you with a consent form for us to use your question in our resources. If you don't want footage to be used, please don't let this stop you asking questions!

The Society for Research into Higher Education (SRHE) is an independent and financially self-supporting international learned Society.

It is concerned to advance understanding of higher education, especially through the insights, perspectives and knowledge offered by systematic research and scholarship.

The Society's primary role is to improve the quality of higher education through facilitating knowledge exchange, discourse and publication of research. SRHE members come from across the world and from a variety of academic disciplines but share an interest in higher education research issues.

The Society has a wide set of aims and objectives. Amongst its many activities the Society:

- is a specialist publisher of higher education research, journals and books, amongst them Studies in Higher Education, Higher Education Quarterly, Research into Higher Education Abstracts and a long running book series.
- operates a regular programme of network events/seminars and professional development workshops throughout the year for researchers and practitioners working in higher education from every discipline.
- runs the largest annual UK- based higher education research conference and parallel conference for postgraduate and newer

researchers. This is attended by researchers from over 35 countries and showcases current research across every aspect of higher education.

- Funds a series of dedicated research awards to members, non-members, and newer researchers, in order to encourage and support new research into higher education.

SRHE membership benefits include:

- Free attendance at SRHE network and professional development events
- Reduced rate journal subscriptions and books from a range of publisher catalogues
- Discounted rates for the SRHE conference
- Free subscription to Research into HE Abstracts & SRHE News
- The opportunity to apply for member research awards
- On-line access to the latest issues of a suite of higher education journals

To find out more visit www.srhe.ac.uk and click on 'Join us'

SRHE

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GETTING PERSONAL: EXPLORING THE POTENTIAL OF PERSONAL TUTORING TO REMEDY ATTAINMENT GAPS

Samuel Dent, Dr Emma Broglia – University of Sheffield

Abstract

Attainment gaps for some students, such as those from BME or lower socio-economic backgrounds (LSEB) have been acknowledged in UK higher education for quite some time (Broecke & Nicholls, 2006; ECU, 2016). As these gaps exist despite controlling for prior attainment, we know that they emerge once students enter Higher Education. Existing research highlights how these gaps can be influenced by a lack of 'mattering' and 'belonging', which can lead to a sense of 'othering' and, in turn, impact on students' sense of entitlement to seek support. Such research also recommends that attainment gaps could be reduced by acknowledging the importance of power sharing between staff and students, and the way staff can act as 'agents of change' (Mountford-Zimdars et al, 2015; Stevenson, 2012).

Building on these recommendations, the Raising Awareness, Raising Aspiration (RARA) project aims to develop an approach to improving the quality of personal tutoring for all students, with a particular view to narrowing attainment gaps for BME students and students from LSEBs. This presentation presents interim findings from students and staff reflecting on personal tutoring and we suggest that their experiences highlight the way in which one-to-one pedagogical relationships can be vital to support students to realise their potential. We also suggest that these relationships carry complex messages of institutionalised values, which may contribute to tackling social inequalities in Higher Education, such as reducing gaps in attainment.

About

Samuel Dent is the Project Manager for RARA and is based in the University Secretary's Office at the University of Sheffield. He has led on a number of HEFCE funded strategic projects and partnerships. Samuel is due to submit his PhD on Higher Education in early 2018, which focuses on the recognition of under-represented groups in HE, such as students who care for children while studying. Samuel's work has focused on issues of equity and diversity in higher education, and in 2016 was named the Forum for Access and Continuing Education's (FACE) Emerging Researcher. He is one of the Newer Researcher advocates for the Society for Research into Higher Education (SRHE). Samuel also holds a BA (Hons) in Politics, and a Masters of Arts Research (MAR) in Governance and Politics, both from the University of Leeds.

Emma Broglia is a postdoctoral research associate and is based in the University Secretary's Office at the University of Sheffield. Her primary role is to lead the evaluation strategy of the RARA project and to assist the project manager. Emma recently submitted her PhD funded by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP), which explored the effectiveness of student counselling services in Higher Education and implemented a feasibility trial in a student counselling service. Prior to her PhD, Emma worked as a clinical trial coordinator and project manager at the University of Birmingham. Her research interests include student mental health and wellbeing, service evaluation, and implementing research to inform policy. Emma holds a Master of Research (MRes) in Cognitive Neuroscience and a BSc (hon) in Psychology, both from the University of Birmingham.

LEARNING GAIN METRICS AND PERSONAL TUTORING: OPPORTUNITIES AND ETHICS

Dr Camille Kandiko Howson – King's College London

Abstract

Learning gain metrics are rapidly developing in UK higher education. Data points link student inputs, progress and outcomes, providing opportunities for strategic decision making, pedagogical enhancement and student engagement. However, evaluation of learning gain metrics highlights the complexity of the learning process, and the higher education sector, indicating there is no 'silver bullet' metric or activity that captures student success. While learning gain data can provide useful insights at national and institutional levels, it needs to be embedded locally within a student's course – through engagement with the curriculum and personal engagement with their teachers – to impact on students' learning. And although learning gain data offers huge potential to understand what happens inside the 'black box' of higher education and for evidence-enhanced personal tutoring, there are serious ethical issues to consider around how data is used and presented. This talk will cover: opportunities of learning gain and attainment data; practical recommendations for what staff and students find useful in practice; and ethical considerations for using attainment data in institutional and personal tutoring contexts.

About

Camille B. Kandiko Howson joined King's College London in 2008. In a cross-institutional capacity she is working on student engagement and experience enhancement initiatives at KCL. She provides leadership in terms of engaging students and staff with areas of educational development policy and student engagement with educational enhancement including feedback, surveys and student voice.

She is involved in national higher education policy research on students and the student experience, working on evaluating Learning Gains research; student surveys; and student engagement and student expectations.

Camille's current research focuses on international and comparative higher education, with areas of interest in the student experience, measuring learning gain; student engagement and the curriculum; interdisciplinarity and creativity; academic motivation, prestige and gender; and developing the use of concept mapping in higher education and intersectionality in research design.

UNCERTAINTY AND TRUST-BUILDING IN THE PERSONAL TUTORING ROLE – DEVELOPING ACADEMIC REPERTOIRES

Dr Kay Guccione – University of Sheffield

Abstract

Competent interpersonal leadership, as well as technical and intellectual mentorship is required of academic staff who wish to positively impact on higher education learning at both the graduate (Jairam & Kahl, 2012) and undergraduate levels (Cousin & Coureton, 2012). So how do we support academic staff to develop relationship building practices? This workshop draws on insight resulting from a study of staff-student relationship building, using a framework of trust. It is likely that trust in tutoring relationships (as in supervision relationships) impacts on student transitions, empowerment, confidence, and the development of independence. The workshop will explore how this may be the case, posing some ideas and questions for the development of academic repertoires, making the point that our time-pressured academic staff can be best supported by developing them in a set of core skills that enhances all their learning relationships. Participants will make use of interview and blog data from doctoral students, undergraduate tutees, and academic staff in UK universities to illustrate how trust is built and maintained. Participants will have the opportunity to identify synergies with their own work, and understand more about how 1:1 learning relationships at all levels can be built on a sharing of power/responsibility (Stevenson, 2012).

About

Kay Guccione specialises in evidence-led design of mentoring and coaching for higher education learning & development. Her research investigates different aspects of the HE experience for doctoral, post-doctoral, and academic researchers, and she uses the findings to build user-centred programmes and systems. Kay teaches people how to build trust and alliance in educational relationships, and works to develop a coaching skill-set as part of the academic repertoire.

SLAYING DRAGONS: MYTHS AS BARRIERS FOR ADDRESSING INEQUALITIES IN HE

Dr Jessica Gagnon, Arif Mahmud – University of Portsmouth

Abstract

This presentation will explore some of the myths that are often called upon to rationalise or excuse systemic inequalities in student access, experiences and outcomes in higher education. For example, the myth that the choice of degree subjects amongst applicants can account for the underrepresentation of Black Minority Ethnic (BME) students at higher status universities (Boliver, 2016). Similarly, the myth that previous educational outcomes can explain access and attainment gaps faced by working class students and/or BME students (Boliver, 2016; Mountford-Zimdars et al, 2015). Many of these myths persist even in the face of evidence to the contrary and often perpetuate discourses that suggest it is the student, rather than the system, that is in deficit (Burke, 2012). Through an exploration of existing research and of initial findings from the Office for Students funded Changing Mindsets project, we will dispel some of the myths and discuss ways to challenge them as barriers for addressing inequalities within our universities.

About

Jessica Gagnon is a Senior Research Fellow at the University of Portsmouth. Her research is focused on higher education, especially the student experience. She is an educational sociologist and she completed her PhD in February 2016 at the University of Sussex, earning an unconditional pass/no corrections. She earned an MSc in Social Research Methods from the University of Sussex and an MA in Higher Education Administration from Santa Clara University, both with distinction. She completed her BA in English and journalism with honours at Framingham State University. Jessica is a first-generation student from an American working-class, single mother family. She has worked in higher education in the US and UK for more than 15 years. In addition to her research, Jessica has taught at the undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral levels.

Arif Mahmud is a Senior Research Associate in the Department of Psychology at the University of Portsmouth (UoP) and is the Project Officer at UoP for the OfS Changing Mindsets Project. He is currently near completion of his PhD from Middlesex University, whereby his thesis focuses on the role of emotional intelligence in the development of adolescents' social and emotional abilities and academic performance. Arif's thesis has now been submitted and is awaiting viva. Arif has worked in Higher Education in the UK and around the world for more than 5 years and has taught across undergraduate and postgraduate levels in Education and Psychology Departments. Arif is also a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy.

FOSTERING STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING IN THE CONTEXT OF BEING A PERSONAL TUTOR

Dr Emma Broglio – University of Sheffield

Abstract

Despite education previously acting as a buffer against poor psychological health, today, students are more likely to drop-out of HE due to poor mental health than ever before (Levine, 2017). Even students who graduate, do so with lower levels of psychological health that do not return to pre-entry levels (Bewick, Koutsopoulou, Miles, Slaa, & Barkham, 2010). The changing trends of HE have also created a more diverse student population, but this has not necessarily been reflected in the types of support students can access. This, in turn, impacts on students' ability to feel socially connected and on their willingness to seek help. Personal tutors help students to feel that they have someone on their course who knows them, is looking out for them, and is a friendly face that students can approach. However, increasing demands on academics and student support services, influence whether students seek (and receive) professional help. Addressing these challenges require a 'whole university approach', for which personal tutors have an integral role that needs to be recognised and better supported. This presentation discusses student mental health in the context of being a personal tutor and aims to alleviate some of the concerns about the severity of student mental ill-health. Attendees will be encouraged to reflect on their experiences of handling difficult conversations, identify methods to empower students to monitor their well-being, and to have early conversations about mental health.

About

Emma Broglio is a postdoctoral research associate and is based in the University Secretary's Office at the University of Sheffield. Her primary role is to lead the evaluation strategy of the RARA project and to assist the project manager. Emma recently submitted her PhD funded by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP), which explored the effectiveness of student counselling services in higher education and implemented a feasibility trial in a student counselling service. Prior to her PhD, Emma worked as a clinical trial coordinator and project manager at the University of Birmingham. Her research interests include student mental health and well-being, service evaluation, and implementing research to inform policy. Emma holds a Master of Research (Mres) in Cognitive Neuroscience and a BSc (hon) in Psychology, both from the University of Birmingham.

RE-CONCEPTUALISING PERSONAL TUTORING: BRINGING PEDAGOGY TO PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE

Dr Alison Stenton – University of Oxford

Abstract

In most UK Higher Education Institutions, personal tutoring is a mainstream academic and pastoral support provision for taught students, imposed at course level and delivered by most teaching-active academic staff. Despite this, it is often seen as additional or 'other' to teaching, with academics required to learn how to be a good personal tutor separate to their core classroom and disciplinary training. This approach can reinforce the idea that personal tutoring is supplementary to the usual university teachers' skillset, and it may lead to frustration among tutors who feel they are not equipped to fulfil what is perceived to be a non-academic duty, and among students who find themselves randomly allocated to staff across all points on the good to bad tutor spectrum.

The RARA project has provided an opportunity to re-consider how students and staff engage with personal tutoring, including how it relates to the support provided by course and senior tutors, and the extent to which pastoral support is embedded in core teaching and learning, as well as provided via personal tutor systems. This talk will propose that there are benefits to applying a pedagogic lens to personal tutoring, suggesting that personal tutoring is dialogic learning, and that all dialogic learning – whether delivered by personal or other course tutors – has a personal and pastoral aspect to it. With this approach, we can more confidently reconceptualise personal tutoring as academic practice, thereby ensuring that all university teachers are equipped to deliver its core principles. This talk will cover: the practical benefits of seeing personal tutoring as academic practice; the key role that a senior tutor plays in personalising academic support; the role of professional services in supporting a pedagogic approach to personal tutoring.

About

Alison Stenton has recently been appointed as Senior Tutor at Green Templeton College, University of Oxford; in this role, she is the College's lead officer for all academic-related provision, support and activity. Previously, Alison was the university Senior Tutor at King's College London, where she led a review of personal tutoring, introducing new resources, training and support for personal tutors. Before this, Alison was Director of the Extended Medical Degree Programme at King's – the UK's flagship widening participation medical degree. Throughout all of these roles, she has taught English Literature and Medical Humanities to a wide range of students across different disciplines.

With RARA, Alison is interested in understanding more about the impact that personal tutoring and academic support can have on student engagement and success, particularly for non-traditional or fragile learners. Equally, as an experienced personal and senior tutor, she is keen to explore how we can best conceptualise and operationalise personal tutoring to support and reward effective academic practice for university teachers.

CREATING A SENSE OF PLACE: THE ROLE OF PERSONAL TUTORS AND SOCIAL NETWORKS

Dr Ciaran Burke – University of Derby

Abstract

Higher Education is an opportunity for many to become socially mobile. By design, higher education, when accessed through widening participation, is a foreign institution, a place which people are often trying to make sense of and confirm a sense of belonging. As such, the role of personal tutors provides key support and guidance for non-traditional students to successfully make the initial and sustained transition to higher education. This paper is based on an empirical research project examining the effectiveness of personal tutors in the context of a student's wider social network. The research focus and analysis are driven by three competing but complementary theoretical contributions:

- Hot Knowledge
- Communicative Reflexivity
- Collective Habitus

The paper will provide a theoretically-informed account of the role of personal tutors and a critique of widening participation interventions which do not consider the relational impact of actors outside of an intervention.

About

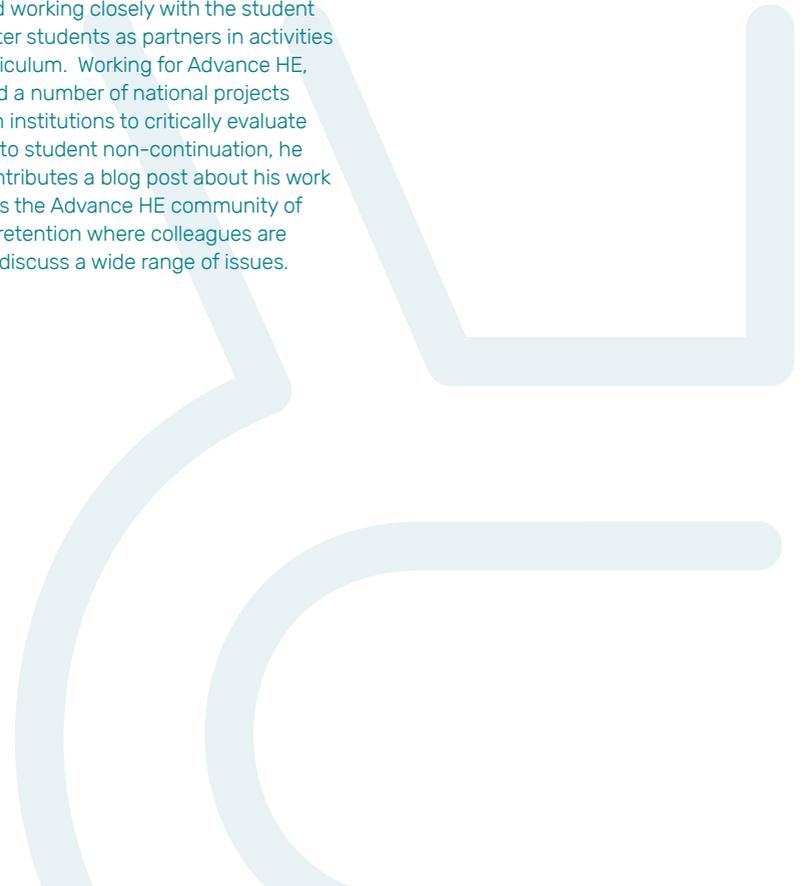
Ciaran Burke holds the role of Critical Friend for RARA and is based in the International Centre for Guidance Studies at the University of Derby. A native of Belfast, he holds a BA (Hons) and PhD in Sociology from Queen's University Belfast. Accompanied by a strong social justice focus, his work has examined issues concerning widening participation, student experience and graduate employment pathways, in particular, how these issues can be read as classed. He is currently working on projects funded by HECSU and SRHE broadly examining the concept of graduate resilience. Ciaran has written and edited a number of books focusing on issues including graduate employment trajectories and educational aspirations. Ciaran will be working with the team to provide critical reflections and support as the project progresses.

OUR DISCUSSANT

Hugh Mannerings – Academic Lead for Retention and Attainment at Advance HE

Intro

Hugh Mannerings is the Academic lead for Retention at Advance HE, having previously worked as a senior lecturer for over 20 years within the discipline of sport and leisure. His experience of leading, designing and delivering undergraduate programmes has always been about enhancing the student experience and outcomes for students. He has worked cross-institutional on a number of initiatives, including transforming student induction, personal tutoring, and working closely with the student union to foster students as partners in activities and the curriculum. Working for Advance HE, Hugh has led a number of national projects working with institutions to critically evaluate approaches to student non-continuation, he regularly contributes a blog post about his work and oversees the Advance HE community of practice for retention where colleagues are welcome to discuss a wide range of issues.



Speakers

» Dr Emma Broglia
University of Sheffield

Getting Personal: Exploring the potential of Personal tutoring to remedy attainment gaps

Fostering student mental health and well-being in the context of being a personal tutor



^ Dr Kay Guccione
University of Sheffield

Uncertainty and trust-building in the personal tutoring role – developing academic repertoires



^ Dr Camille Kandiko Howson
King's College London

Learning gain metrics and personal tutoring: Opportunities and ethics



v Samuel Dent
University of Sheffield

Getting Personal: Exploring the potential of Personal tutoring to remedy attainment gaps



v Arif Mahmud
University of Portsmouth

Slaying dragons: Myths as barriers for addressing inequalities in HE



« Hugh Mannerings
Academic Lead for Retention and Attainment at Advance HE
Our Discussant

^ Dr Ciaran Burke
University of Derby

Creating a sense of place: The role of personal tutoring and social networks



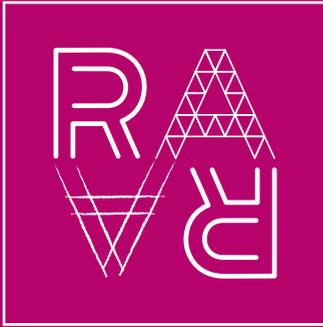
« Dr Jessica Gagnon
The University of Portsmouth

Slaying dragons: Myths as barriers for addressing inequalities in HE

» Dr Alison Stenton
University of Oxford

Re-conceptualising Personal Tutoring: Bringing Pedagogy to Principles and Practice





Take our RARA pledge, and wear the badge in your delegate pack with pride.

By wearing this badge, I recognise:

Attainment gaps are everyone's responsibility

The only acceptable attainment gap is 0%

Good personal tutoring can help create a culture which supports reducing attainment gaps

Take the pledge online by going to:

www.raratutor.ac.uk/pledge

Where you can, add a twibbon to your social media profiles, and share the pledge with others, to help promote the RARA message and share our ethos and resources with the HE sector.

