



ENGAGING AND MOTIVATING LEARNERS FOR GCSE SUCCESS

WELCOME!

3rd July 2024



Introductions and Background

- Who are we? - introductions and roles.
- Recently completed an EEF-funded 'Practice Review' about GCSE Resits.
- Clear that there is real interest in this area, from post-16 teachers and leaders, policymakers, families, sector organisations. Also, more research needed!
- Connecting with other research and interests e.g. evidence-informed practice; education and social policy; collaboration and research *with* practitioners.

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Aims of the session

- Connecting research and practice on GCSE resits
- The wider GCSE Resit Hub work:
<https://gcseresits.education/>
- Partnerships and collaboration between Post-16 sector and HE
- Being part of a conversation – learning from other settings/people, contributing your perspectives and experiences.
- A springboard to further work and dialogue in this area (practice, policy and research).



Running order

- Introductions and welcome (2.30-2.40pm)
- What do we know about engaging and motivating resit learners from the research? (2.40 -2.50pm)
- Guest speakers:
 - **Ray** - Motivation is the oxygen of learning (2.50-3.00pm)
 - **Ellie** – Writing in Maths?! Free writing in English AND Maths GCSE resit classes (3.05-3.15pm)
 - **Rachel** – Engaging GCSE resit learners through empowerment, empathy & role reversal (3.20 - 3.30pm)
 - Q&A, what's next, feedback (3.35-3.45pm)



GCSE Resit Spotlight Sessions

Engaging and motivating learners for GCSE success

July 3rd
2.30 - 3.45pm
Online - MS Teams



SPEAKERS

 Dr Ellie Willard Leeds Beckett University	 Rachel Arnold Solihull College and University Centre	 Ray Truby City of Wolverhampton College
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What do we learn from the research?

The EEF Practice Review (2023)



The Centre
for Education
& Youth



Education
Endowment
Foundation

Post-16 GCSE Resit Practice Review

Bart Crisp, Joe Hallgarten, Vanessa Joshua, Rebecca Morris, Thomas Perry,
Lindsey Wardle

July 2023

Motivation and Engagement in Post-16 Resits

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- Student motivation and engagement found to be a *really* significant issue (in the research and in practice).
- For many, it is the most substantial barrier/challenge for resit delivery and outcomes.
- Five main analysis themes:

- Curriculum and pedagogy
- Resources and technology
- Leadership and organisation
- Learner needs, backgrounds and experiences
- Teacher needs, supply and development

Motivation and engagement permeated through each of these core analysis themes in the review.




Motivation and engagement are complex...

- Connected with a wide range of other issues.
- Directions of influence are not always clear or straightforward.
 - Attendance
 - Perceived ability/prior attainment
 - Relationships with teachers
 - Enjoyment
 - Wider curriculum
 - Aspirations and plans for the future
 - Confidence and self-efficacy
 - Peers/family influence
 - College/school culture



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- To what extent are motivation and engagement 'fixed' for students?
- Can we change/shift it?
- Could this impact on attainment?



“It’s embarrassing to see other people pass, and we’re just left behind.”

Young person

“I think most of the kids are just disengaged; they’re being forced to do the qualification they don’t want to do. One thing I’ve tried to change this year at college is how maths is framed to seem. Because most colleges position maths as an add-on... I was trying to try my hardest to try and frame maths as if it’s like it’s part of the BTEC course.” *Senior leader*



“They try and make sure that everyone has peace of mind where they can do it without stressing, and that’s what I kind of prefer to have, really, because when I was in secondary school, there wasn’t really much communication, it was more, ‘Oh, are you all right?’ ‘Oh, yeah.’ ‘Okay, good. We’ll just send you on your way.’ But here it’s, you come for a talk about it.”

Young person

“Teaching here is better than at my old school. At school, English teaching didn’t work for me, I didn’t understand what the teacher was telling me. My college teacher takes their time and makes sure we understand. I want to succeed because then I feel proud, like I’ve achieved something.”

Young person

Supporting motivation and engagement...

- Lots of approaches designed to improve motivation and engagement (by practitioners, intervention developers, others).
- How do they 'work' in practice, and in post-16 settings? How do these approaches connect with/interact with attainment aims or outcomes?
- The value of improving motivation and engagement for its own sake?
- Some colleagues discussed 'high input' approaches which required a lot of time, resource, energy – but which had very limited outcomes for young people. How do we know what to invest in?
- Very mixed picture in terms of the GCSE resits



Ray Truby – City of Wolverhampton College

*Motivation is the
oxygen of learning*

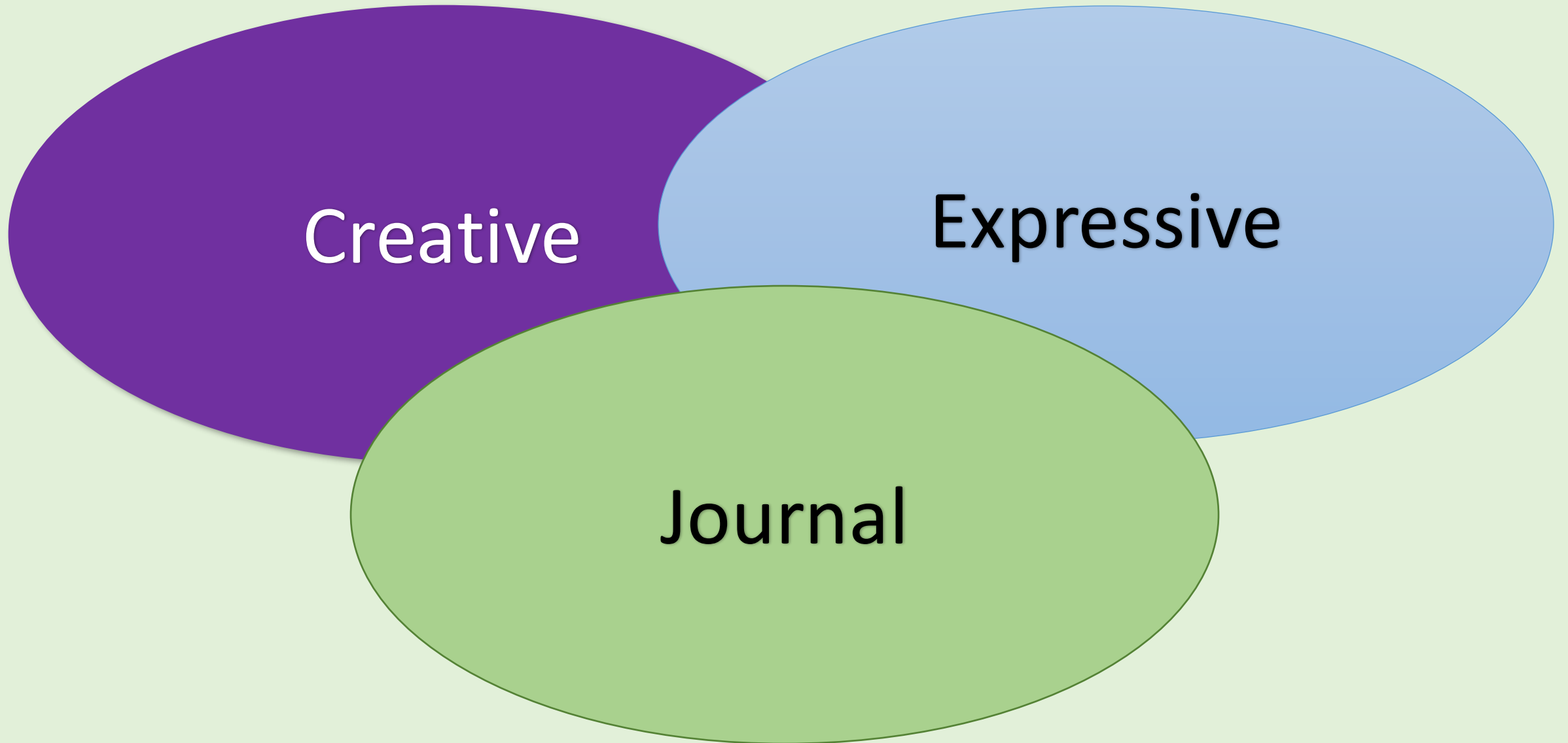
Writing in Maths?! Free writing in English ***AND*** Maths GCSE resit classes

Dr Eleanor Willard

School Of Humanities and Social Sciences, Leeds Beckett University



Writing types



The inspiration..... and the research

Pennebaker (With Evans, 2014)

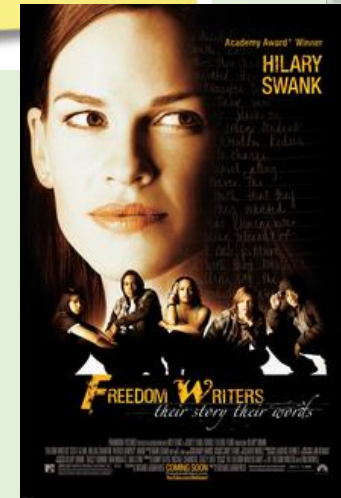
Psychological benefits of expressive writing

‘Words that Heal’

Beilock and Ramirez (2011)

**Using short term writing intervention to
reduce mathematics anxiety**

Film: Freedom Writers



Study 1: English resit students

FE college plus two other centres....

Three research methodologies...

- 1) Questionnaire on self efficacy for writing (n=350) (two centres)
- 2) Interviews asking for how writing makes them feel (n=24) (Exeter)
- 3) Content analysis (n=15) (Exeter)

With Andrew Otty



Interview results: key themes

Reticence from negative previous experiences

“ I could never get my words on paper. ...I didn't understand what to write, I was awful...I thought it (the intervention) was a ridiculous idea, I thought how's that got to do with anything...a lot of us were thinking that's a stupid idea, it's a waste of time and then we got given them, and we were doing them and it actually helps, it definitely has, yeah.”

Increase in confidence

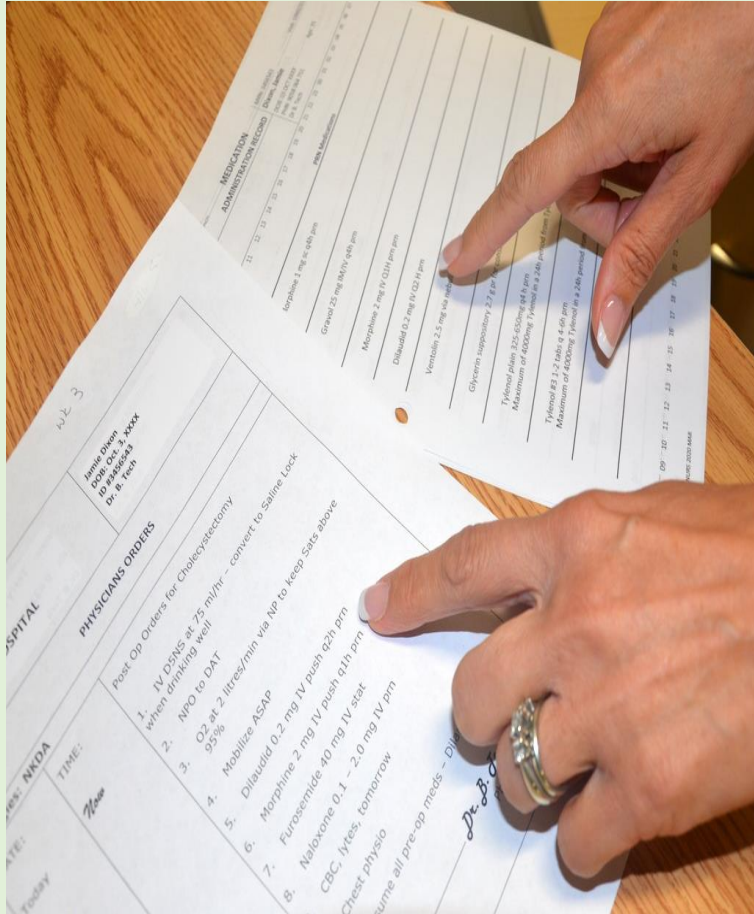
“I think it has helped me; it's definitely helped me with getting my ideas in my head to the paper. Kind of made me enjoy writing a little bit more because I have that time to write about whatever I want to write about.”

And then....

Intervention as a therapeutic tool

- “If I’ve got stuff going on in my head, I’m writing it out so then it’s gone from my head so I’m not thinking about it. The diary is like somewhere I can store it”
- “If you are struggling with stress or whatever, you can write your, like,,stress problems down on the sheet and it might just create a bit less stress because you’ve got it, let it out somehow.”
- “..sometimes I’ve written stuff like about what’s happened over the weekend, there was something bad or something, I’ve written it and then I’ve come to realise things”
- It (the intervention) just let me write, calms me down, again, lets me write more.”
- “I think it’s helped me to project my feelings better because now I have somewhere to place them...”
- “Its relaxing”

Study 2 (Maths): University of Bradford student nurses



Short term expressive writing intervention to be administered before a safe medication mock exam
Based on Ramirez and Beilock procedure....

Maths anxiety level data from questionnaire completed one week before the *mock* exam.

Two groups: 1) anxiety specific writing 2) general journal writing

Questionnaire completed after exam

No difference between the types of writing

With Dr Trish Holch and Dr Louise Wem

Research Design

Nursing students attend
mock safe medication exam
N=86

Intervention
Expressive writing
task
N=42

Writing Control
Neutral writing task
N=44

Mock prescribing
exam

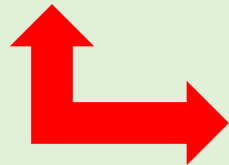
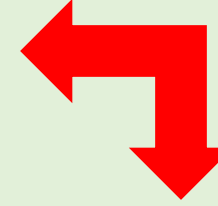
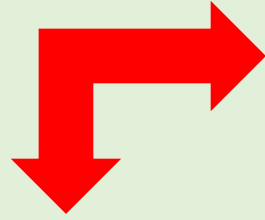
Outcomes

Summative
assessment
(Prescribing exam
result)

Demographics

Post assessment measure:
MAS-R

Written
content (for
qualitative
analysis)



Quantitative results

1) Non-significant findings in the following analyses:

ANOVA (Bonferroni adjusted) comparing means in both groups with the following DVs:

Conceptual competencies (CC)

Calculation competency (CaC)

Technical Measurement (TechM)

Overall Test score (TotalTest)

Maths anxiety score

2) Correlations show no significant relationship between competencies/overall score with the students' maths anxiety score

Qualitative analysis: Themes Initial Findings



**Heightened
emotion**



**Medication
specific anxiety**



**Looking
back**

Theme 1: Heightened emotion

snappy
and
frustrated

PANIC

- Students expressed a lot of pre test heightened emotion in the intervention group. There was a lot of issues evident, that even though it was 'only' a mock exam, students were in a state of emotional arousal. There were very few calm responses...

on the way to the exam i
have felt queasy and warm
because of my nerves and
at some points felt like
turning the car round and
going home

In previous maths
exams such as my
GCSES ...i was very
nervous as i found
the content really
difficult and did not
know what questions
to expect.

my hands begin to
sweats (sic). my hearts
starts to race and my
mind goes blank

...the whole
maths thing just
makes me feel
sick

Theme 2: Medication specific anxiety

On the ward with simple drugs rounds I freeze when asked a question regarding (giving) medicine. It not that I don't know it, I just have anxiety about my ability

i know how important getting the correct dosage is for my future career

I am now at the point of my nursing career where I will have to start learning drug calculations and performing them 100% accurately so that I can give the best quality of care.

On safe medicate the IVs are complex and we do not get to practice these in practice. The implications of these errors are terrifying so I feel that there should be much more time focused on these. They could be optional for people that are confident

I enjoy this course so much already and I look forward to the future, however, it is the maths exams and the thought of having to use maths almost everyday when qualified which scares me

Theme 3: Looking back

I enjoy math and I am able to solve math's problem without problem. I think that I am able to do math exam and pass it with a good grade. I really enjoyed math during my time at school and always get good mark. I find math easy then others subject.

I feel like I've always struggled with maths. It makes me feel a little stupid, i always felt more confident in English, biology and other subjects and any subjects that entailed any maths such as physics or chemistry I would struggle with - i would understand everything else but it was the maths related questions in the physics and chemistry exam that I would lose marks on and struggle with...I feel as though my maths weakness has stemmed since childhood and hopefully i'll get better but I doubt it, but as long as I have a calculator i feel reassured. Saying that I'll probably fail this exam despite the fact there is a calculator.

In previous maths exams such as my GCSES ...i was very nervous as i found the content really difficult and did not know what questions to expect.

During high school (year 9), I was allocated a great maths teacher who was able to teach maths at her best ability. This gave me immense confidence although I was not the greatest at maths.

Bigger picture...

- Looking at subsequent research there is a need for greater number of research studies in this area (potentially RCTs and larger samples?)
- Importance of earlier mathematics experiences
- Anecdotal positivity about the writing
- Possible strategy for FE? I'm interested to hear your thoughts....

Questions? Thoughts?
e.willard@leedsbeckett.ac.uk



Engaging GCSE resit learners through empowerment, empathy and role reversal

Rachel Arnold





Journey



- English Lecturer
- Teaching & Learning Coach



- Masters- Education Leadership & Improvement
- PhD



Collaboration



Opportunity

Teach the Teacher

- Researching what happens when the teenagers become the experts and how this affects a fixed, failure mindset
- Initiative started in 2019, ongoing
- Role reversal- Maths & English teachers become the learners
- Collaboration with vocational areas



Empowerment

“I feel more confident now because I was able to teach somebody who didn't know what to do, and they did well. I also feel like my teacher understands me better as a learner. If I can help my teacher learn, then I can learn difficult things too in English.”



Feelings before intervention



Feelings after intervention



Empathy

Learners feel better connected to their teachers when the teachers show vulnerability and a willingness to be taught and not always be the expert

Learners feel better understood by their teachers when deliberate empathy is at the core of an activity



Role Reversal

Learners feel more confident and able when they are in a position of 'expertise'

This confidence translates to other aspects of their studies

Teachers are reminded of the value in being a learner again



Individual's
survey flow

How were you feeling
before activity?

Do you feel better
connected?

Do you feel empathy was
established?

How were you feeling after
activity?



Bricklaying

Nervous

Definitely
yes

Definitely
yes

Confident

Proud

Successful

Excited



MV

Nervous

Definitely
yes

Definitely
yes

Confident

Proud

Calm



MV

Anxious

Definitely
yes

Yes

Confident

Proud

Successful

Excited



Nervous



Connection



Empathy



Confidence



Recommendations

- Regular opportunities for learners to become teachers within sessions
- Find out learners' expertise and draw on it
- Which activities can you use to deliberately foster empathy?
- Learners want to be recognised for what they excel in- make space for this in the GCSE resit classroom

A vibrant image of the Aurora Borealis (Northern Lights) in shades of green and blue, set against a dark, starry night sky. The lights appear as flowing, ethereal curtains of light.

Thank You

Rachel.Arnold@solihull.ac.uk



Rachel Arnold



QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION

***What have you got from this event?
Will it inform your practice going forward?***

Please answer our very short survey (1-2mins).

Submissions are anonymous and no individual responses will be shared.

See link provided in the chat, or click link to survey:

https://warwick.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0P74TCz4c7TkFAq

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Stay with us for some final thoughts and information.

Coming up...

- Slides will be shared with everyone here. Videos of our speakers will be going up on our website soon too.
- Ongoing development of the GCSE Resits Hub website: <https://gcseresits.education/> - we will be in touch with everyone here about ideas/contributions you might like to make.
- Professional development workshops around practitioner research and GCSE resits (Autumn 2024)
- Policy dialogue – involving practitioners/leaders. To inform policymakers of current situation, challenges and needs around post-16 resits.
- A writing competition for English GCSE Resit learners.



THANK YOU!

- Keep in touch – if you'd like to learn more about the GCSE Resits Hub project and/or get involved, you can:
- Visit our website – <https://gcseresits.education/>
- Follow us on LinkedIn/Twitter - @GCSEResit_Hub
- Email us: rebecca.e.morris@warwick.ac.uk
- Sign-up for our mailing list via the QR Code

GCSE Resit Hub Mailing List

