

## **Project 1 – Learner Choice and Applications: Improving Information, advice and application process.**

### **Aim**

To explore the need, benefits and costs of developing a learner choice and application service which brings together the current Careers Information Advice Guidance (CIAG) system on My World of Work with information on student support and the application system for UCAS, Apprenticeships online and potentially a new college application process. The project will produce an options appraisal paper for Scottish Ministers to consider.

### **Scope**

The project takes into scope the digital services made available to learners by Skills Development Scotland, colleges, universities and those providing student financial support advice.

The scope of the project does not include the delivery of an application service, changing the current delivery of career services in schools, changes that would impede the delivery of existing Developing the Young Workforce recommendations and changes to the existing functionality of My World of Work (MyWOW).

### **Our starting point**

The project team carried out desk research to gain an understanding of challenges previously highlighted and to identify examples of best practice. The research tells us there is a lot of information available to learners through digital platforms, services and tools about career choices, learning and training opportunities and financial support. Learners also build digital profiles utilising the information and tools available to help inform their decision making. Connectivity between the digital platforms, services and tools appeared to be limited. The desk research exercise did not identify examples of best practice.

### **The engagement to date**

The project team has conducted a series of bilateral meetings with key stakeholders to understand the issues relating to the scope of the project and identify areas where changes could be considered but also where good practice should be maintained. The bi-lateral consultation process concluded on 28<sup>th</sup> of June. The list of stakeholders who have been consulted include – Universities Scotland, Skills Development Scotland, Student Partnership in Quality Scotland, the National Parent Forum for Scotland, the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service, Scottish Local Authorities Economic Development representatives and Developing the Young Workforce Regional Employer Groups. A stakeholder workshop was held in July that developed the themes and challenges identified by both learners and stakeholders.

### **Next Steps**

In the process of developing policy options which will be put to Ministers for consideration within the Learner Journey Review Phase 1 report.

## **Project 2 – Review of the Delivery of Career Information Advice and Guidance in Colleges and Universities**

### **Aim**

To review the current delivery of career services for learners in colleges and universities including consideration of how the quality of career services within the college and university sector is determined. Through this project the Scottish Government will consider whether the existing career services available in college and university are meeting the needs of learners and make recommendations to ensure career services meet the needs of learners.

### **Scope**

This project takes in to scope the career services delivered in colleges, universities. The scope of this project does not include changing the delivery of existing career services in schools, changing Developing the Young Workforce recommendations that relate to career services and changing the Scottish Government's commitment to an all age career service delivered by Skills Development Scotland.

### **Our starting point**

The project team carried out desk research to gain an understanding of challenges previously highlighted and to identify examples of best practice. We based our research criteria on the 8 benchmarks for providing good career guidance set out in the 'Good Career Guidance' report by the Gatsby Foundation which was conducted by Sir John Holman. We used these benchmarks as they were the most recent comprehensive set of indicators of good career service performance available. We were unable to identify a country which had all 8 benchmarks in place and were able to conclude that Scotland has more of the benchmarks in place and in the process of being implemented than any other country considered. The project team concluded that without better examples of practice to refer to than those already in place in Scotland that close collaboration with delivery partners will be required to identify what may need to be changed to improve learner experience within the Scottish context.

### **The engagement to date**

The project team has conducted a series of bilateral meetings with key stakeholders to understand the issues relating to the scope of the project and identify areas where changes could be considered but also where good practice should be maintained. The bi-lateral consultation process concluded on 28<sup>th</sup> of June. The list of stakeholders who have been consulted include – Universities Scotland, Skills Development Scotland, Student Partnership in Quality Scotland, Young Scot, Education Scotland, Career Development Institute, the Quality Assurance Agency and the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services. A stakeholder workshop was held in July to develop the themes and challenges identified by both learners and stakeholders.

### **Next Steps**

In the process of developing policy options which will be put to Ministers for consideration within the Learner Journey Review Phase 1 report.

### **Project 3: Access and Application: Improving the ease and equity with which young people can apply to college**

#### **Aims and scope**

To Improve the ease and equity with which young people can apply to college.

Recognising the work already being taken forward as part of the Commission for Widening Access, this project will focus on cost benefit analysis of policy options to meet this aim of improving the ease and equity with which young people can apply to college.

The project brief for this study set out a hypothesis to be tested:

*This [project] is about the learner experience and colleges' ability to understand demand. A single system will provide clarity for college applicants by providing them with a single entry point to further education and similar to that provided for university applicants via UCAS. Understanding demand will allow colleges to further enhance how they plan their provision.*

In casting the scope in this way a link has been maintained between the issue of understanding the national demand for college courses and the development of a common college application process. However, at this point it is important to highlight that a common application process is only one of several options being considered to understand unmet demand.

Equally it is important to understand need/benefit of a common application process from prospective students' perspectives and not just in terms of providing nationally comparable data. Unlike previous work in this area this project seeks to work with prospective and existing students to understand the application process from an applicant's perspective and in so doing identify the need for a common college application process. We are developing and testing policy options with young people and stakeholders before producing a cost benefit analysis.

This will require work to:

- Set objectives for a common application process
- Identify options for a common application process, working with partners to consider the implications for the learner and for the system
- Give consideration for the journeys of different cohorts of learners

#### **Our starting point**

The idea of a common application process for colleges has been explored at several points in recent years but never implemented. There is currently a separate application process for each college. In 2010, when a college e-prospectus was introduced, the development of a common application process was also considered. The idea of a common college application system, similar to UCAS, was put forward as a way of allowing students to apply for courses at multiple colleges through a single system which captured application data. At that point, pre regionalisation, there were over 40 colleges and students had to apply to each college and in many cases each course, separately. It was felt that a single national system would simplify the process for prospective students. However, due to concern from colleges that moving to such a system would affect admission policies, it was agreed to prioritise the e-prospectus and defer work on a common application process until a later date.

It is important to highlight that the college sector has changed significantly since 2010. Between 2012 and 2014, the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and the Government approved ten mergers involving 26 colleges and 1 Higher Education Institution (HEI). Mergers were identified as being the

most effective and financially efficient way to achieve the desired outcomes of improving the delivery of education through coherent provision, with benefits for all stakeholders. The first mergers as part of the reform programme occurred in October 2012 (involving the creation of Edinburgh College and of SRUC); the last in April 2014 (the joining of Coatbridge College to New College Lanarkshire).

Nonetheless, the lack of a common application process for colleges has been linked to challenges in determining patterns of supply and demand across the country. In a survey published in October 2012, Colleges Scotland presented data suggesting that college waiting lists totalled over 21,000 for the 2012 Autumn intake. The then Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning subsequently announced an audit of the college application process, including an examination of Colleges Scotland's data and methodology. The audit covered seven colleges and involved college visits and an analysis of what are commonly referred to as college waiting lists.

The analysis of waiting lists confirmed that there was some duplication of applicants across waiting lists and just under half of those on a waiting list had in fact enrolled at a college, training or were in employment or were no longer available/able to take up a college place since applying. The remaining applicants (over 6,600) were contacted by colleges to ascertain their current situation. Only 500 applicants responded to say there were still interested in a college place, about 4 per cent of those on the original waiting list for the seven colleges.

The final report of College Waiting Lists in Scotland was submitted to Ministers in March 2013 and lodged with the Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe) and submitted to the Education, Culture and Sport Committee. During 2013, the development of a common application process was again considered, but work was put on hold due to the significant college mergers underway as part of college regionalisation.

In 2014 Education Scotland published *Meeting the needs of learners and employers through effective planning, application and admissions processes in Scotland's colleges* in which it was recommended that the Scottish Government work with colleges, SFC and SDS to support the establishment of effective learner application data-sharing arrangements.

Most recently, in 2015 a Colleges Scotland Data Sharing Network was established to look at the applications process. The group reported their recommendations to the Scottish Government in February 2016 and was in favour of progressing national data standards.

### **Engagement to date**

The project team has conducted a series of bilateral meetings with key stakeholders to understand the issues relating to a common application process for colleges. These meetings have helped to identify potential costs, benefits and risks and highlighted areas of good practice which should be maintained. The bi-lateral discussions were completed at the end of May. Those involved include – members of the Colleges Scotland data network, Skills Development Scotland, Scottish Funding Council and the NUS.

### **Learning and the challenges and opportunities revealed**

A number of engagement sessions with stakeholders have taken place to provide the evidence needed to understand current practice, determine need for a common application process and gauge stakeholder opinion.

The introduction of a standardised application process and applications timeline has been identified as having potential benefits for learners, in particular those coming directly from school.

Benefits/implications for other groups of learners needs to be explored further as many students enter college through other routes – for example from employment or unemployment.

Discussions with stakeholders to date reveal contention over the meaning of a common application process and disagreement as to the benefit/workability of a national IT supported college application system and the extent to which any such system would meet the needs of learners and provide a national picture of unmet demand.

Stakeholder views are quite polarised. SDS are in favour of some form of national common application process. The views of the college sector are split with some colleges advocating the development of a common process and others questioning the need. Colleges Scotland and Education Scotland are supportive of the introduction of national data standards for college applications.

Through discussions with colleges and other stakeholders we are seeking to gain a clearer sense of how a common application process might be able to inform our understanding of the extent of unmet demand at colleges in Scotland and how it might improve the learner's experience of college application.

Outside this project other work is on-going to understand unmet demand. Colleges Scotland and SFC are currently taking forward work to understand demand. As part of this work, the SFC has developed a demographic model linked to patterns of provision in order to understand learner demand and patterns of travel to study across the country with the aim of aligning course provision to demand. This model is being used to begin to change the shape of regional provision and to bring it better in line with learner and regional need.

### **Scope for efficiencies & Options**

Scope for efficiencies and options are still being explored with stakeholders. At this stage, we have identified 3 high-level options to be assessed:

- Application of national data standards
- An application portal allowing better linkage between college, schools and local authorities
- A national college application system.

### **Next Steps**

1. Preliminary Cost Benefit Analysis of 3 policy options (June – August)
2. Final recommendations (End of 2017)

## Project 4: Provision, Transitions & Progression

### Aim

This project aims to:

- Improve the **design, alignment and coherence** of the 15-24 learning journey so that all learners are on the right route to the right career, through the right course via the right support and information
- Improve the **ease with which all young people move through their learning**, regardless of where they are studying

We will do this by:

- **Evaluating the 15-24 Learner Journey choices** in and across schools, colleges, community based/third sector, training and university
- **Identifying unnecessary duplication** to maximise progression, working with partners to consider the implications for the learner and for the system
- Giving consideration for the **journeys of different cohorts** of learners

At the end of Phase 1 we want to have a **clearer understanding of the effectiveness of particular journeys** and the **availability of support for specific groups of learners**. A written summary of key evidence will be produced, along with a set of recommendations to be progressed in Phase 2.

### Scope

Given the breadth of the learning system the project will not be able to look in sufficient detail at all journeys for all groups of learners. Therefore, project 4 will focus its efforts on those areas identified through engagement work as priorities for action.

The principles and entitlements of CfE and DYW, and the content of National Qualifications are not within scope for this work.

### Engagement to date

**Three critical friends** have been identified and are working with us in scoping and developing thinking on Project Four: Terry Lanagan (ADES), Professor Louise Hayward (Glasgow University) and Eileen Cummings (Head of Education & Youth Training, Kibble Education and Care Centre).

**A Project Group has also been established** to identify and take forward specific pieces of work. Membership includes, among others, schools, Education Heads of Service, SQA, Education Scotland, SFC, SDS, CDN, Universities Scotland, universities, colleges, local authorities, QAA, NUS, NPFS, SCQF, SCVO, and SG colleagues from related policy areas.

The Group has met for two half day sessions to date (24 April and 17 May). Both events were well-attended, with a real drive to move the agenda forward. Discussion papers have been drafted and shared with the Group in order to stimulate consideration of the issues.

Feedback from the young people involved in the SQW research and engagement event on 25 May has also been taken into account in the development of work on this project and we will actively seek further opportunities to engage with young people.

We have divided the project into five sub-projects, to enable us to explore and evidence key themes emerging from our engagement to date. Each sub-project is being led by a local or national partner and supported and facilitated by the Senior Phase Policy Unit, ensuring links across projects and alignment with other key national policies.

In taking forward this work, all sub-projects have been provided with a clear remit and are adhering to a common set of guiding principles:

- We want a system that is flexible to the needs of young people and works for all young people, not just the majority
- We want to support personalisation and choice and ensure that young people have access to the full range of qualifications and experiences that best meet their needs and future aspirations
- We want to support progression through learning and avoid any unnecessary duplication
- We want to promote a collaborative approach in everything we do
- We will build on the existing strengths of the system and examples of emerging practice across Scotland
- We will ensure this work supports key national education policies

The sub-projects identified are:

- Sub-project 1: Ensuring the learning offer enables all young people to progress in their learning, regardless of their abilities or intended destinations
- Sub-project 2: Ensuring that young people are fully supported in making key transitions in learning
- Sub-project 3: Improving knowledge, understanding and parity of existing pathways (qualifications & other experiences)
- Sub-project 4: Ensuring that the design & delivery of the senior phase curriculum increases opportunity and choice
- Sub-project 5: Use of data/ measuring success across sectors to improve learner journeys

### **Links and dependencies**

Given the breadth of this project, there are numerous links with other key education policies and developments, in particular the follow up to the report of the Commission on Widening Access, work on improving attainment, the National Improvement Framework, the STEM strategy, the Review of Education Governance and broader CfE policy, including Developing the Young Workforce. A key focus of our work is ensuring alignment across these agendas.

### **Next Steps**

The sub-projects will continue to explore and source evidence as per their remits, bringing this together in August with a view to making recommendations to Ministers for consideration within the Learner Journey Review Phase 1 report ( End of 2017).

## Project 5: **Funding, Structures, Legislation**

### ***Improving the learning system & removing unnecessary duplication***

#### **Aim**

To develop a system wide analysis of unit cost and rate of return across school, community, college, training (including employability programmes), and university. To use this to inform options for the balance and method of investment across 15-24 learning, in consideration of the future needs of learning and skills.

#### **Our starting point**

Our evidence base is still emerging.

#### **Engagement to date**

John Stewart, Director of HR, SSE and Board member of the Scottish Government's Developing Young Workforce Programme has agreed to act as a critical friend for this project.

Members of the Learner Journey Review Group have attended project meetings to help establish the key principles to underpin the review.

The group has also considered the Scottish Qualifications and Credit Framework as a means to understand the extent of credit overlap, both in terms of level and volume of credit, that occurs across the learning and skills system.

#### **Learning and challenges**

The project group agreed to focus on the value that different parts of the system deliver for the learner and employer. The group noted that, when discussing parts of the system we are not comparing like with like and that currently there are not a consistent set of measures of impact across the system as a whole. There is a need, therefore, for a single approach to data collection and measurement and it was noted that the Scottish Government will continue to progress this work as part of the second phase of the Scottish Government's Enterprise and Skills review.

In establishing the values and key principles for the review – which have been adopted by the programme and are set out in the beginning of this paper – the project group acknowledged that:

- The learning and skills system is not a closed system.
- Whilst a single system from learner perspective, from an institutional perspective it is an ecosystem, i.e. different contributions from different actors and different outcomes for different learners.
- We need to consider the effectiveness of the system as well as its efficiency - What is its purpose? The group noted that this needs to be considered as part of the recommendations of the review, especially, in terms of the quality of the student experience the learning and skills system provides.
- Strong leadership is needed around policy and partnership. Partnership and co-creation, co-production is the key to a more joined up system.
- The review itself needs to be joined up with existing policy ambition and with the review on student support funding.



- Do CfE capacities represent the outcomes that can be shared across the system?
- Is the review appropriately framed as being about pursuing inclusive growth?

Importantly, it was noted that, the system has already demonstrated its commitment to better align itself, which establishes the basis for further adaptation and improvement.

### **SCQF & efficiency**

The group also considered what the SCQF reveals about the efficiency of the system. This review established that:

- At times the system goes out of its way to adapt, but perhaps, it wouldn't need to if it better aligned itself in the first place, particularly in relation to journeys made by particular groups of learners.
- There is a need for an element of the system being able to differentiate based on individual need, not just about looking at an SCQF level.
- The funding of provision should be at the level of what it costs (efficiently), and we shouldn't pay the same price for different things.
- Variability / inconsistency in the system is inevitable in some regards, for example, universities are entitled to determine their entry requirements and these will vary in response to patterns of demand. However, there should be transparency and consistent application of criteria to meet the expectation of learners and parents.
- The extremes of the discussion were encapsulated in the analogy of a model of currency exchange – do we aspire for – a bureau de change or a single currency Euro model?
- Achieving consistency is difficult given the different values adopted by different parts of the system. For example, exams vs other forms of assessment. Very different currency and values, as reflected in the challenge of RPL.
- No financial incentive to work in partnership; funding is given in silos and yet the way we fund drives behaviours. If we want a system collaborating and co-creating in response to local and national economic needs, how do we incentivise the partnerships needed to achieve this? And what more do we need to do to adapt current practice. For example, regional skills assessments should also capture supply side responses: what is on offer, how does it perform, how does it match patterns of demand?
- If leadership is central then we need to connect to the reviews of school governance and reviews of enterprise and skills to create single joined-up strategy rather than compartmentalised project approach at the local level.
- How do we incentivise progression?
- We need to look in more detail at Level 7 – where there is the greatest overlap and greatest area of choice for learners - and the extent to which this best meets Scotland's ambitions for Inclusive economic growth. This includes considering the role of industry – what do they need at level 7 and how involved in determining the provision are they?
- How do we benchmark the learner journey over time?
- Remember we are an open system, that needs to consider how it provides opportunities for people who may not stay in Scotland.

### **Next Steps**

The project group will align its focus with the questions and issues coming out of project 4 on coherence and transitions, including those about learner funding.

At its next meeting the group will look at issues relating to costs and value in terms of:  
The journey from school to university; from college to university and in terms of the journey from school through apprenticeship and into work. In its final meeting the group will also consider alternative approaches to incentivising more efficient learner journeys as we build our evidence base and understanding of the data.