

## **15-24 Learner Journey Review Engagement with DYW Regional Groups – December 2017**

1. The 15-24 Learner Journey Review is a programme of work, being led by the Scottish Government in partnership with others, to review the effectiveness and efficiency of the 15-24 Learner Journey for all 15 to 24 year olds. There are two drivers for the review: learner personalisation and choice, and system efficiency. The review is considering the 15-24 Learner Journey from the senior phase (S4-S6) leading to employment, including the stages of further and higher education in college, higher education in university, vocational training and apprenticeships.
2. Stage 1 of the 15-24 Learner Journey Review is underway. It commenced in September 2016 and will report by the end of 2017. The purpose of this stage is to gather evidence and ideas from across the system. From this, policy ideas and proposals will be developed and will be published. We will then move into a stage of further engagement and implementation, as appropriate.
3. The review has 5 themes (careers, access, provision, transitions and funding). Each of the themes are underpinned horizontally by ambitions around improved efficiency and effectiveness, reduced duplication, and better outcomes.
4. Project teams, led by the Scottish Government, have been established to examine the evidence base and make recommendations for improvements on each of these themes. Each project group has membership from across policy interests from within the Scottish Government and from key external stakeholders and partners.
5. As part of this evidence gathering, Scottish Government officials attended DYW Employer Group meetings in Ayr, Dundee and Edinburgh, to discuss the Review and employers' experience of the education system in Scotland. These sessions were held in Summer 2017.

### **Review of current system**

6. The groups discussed the current education system, acknowledging the many positives of the system we have in Scotland and the number of young people who are achieving successful outcomes from school, college and university. The expansion of the offer, such as Foundation, Modern and Graduate Level Apprenticeships has led to greater school-employer collaboration, however there remains work to be done.
7. The discussions noted the nature of the Review and the importance of the senior phase for young people in determining their subject choices as they seek to define their career path. As the system coalesces and expands the offer for young people, the Review must consider the information available to influencers of these decisions.

## Findings

### Parity of esteem

8. The group noted the importance of the senior phase, as a defining moment for young people determining potential career paths. Despite this, and the expansion of the senior phase offer, parity of esteem continues to inhibit progress of vocational qualifications, leading to poorer uptake of subject areas employers would find useful.

### Influencers

9. Teachers and parents play a significant role in determining and supporting young people, with many pupils feeding back that they see progressing to Higher Education as the only option when leaving school. While significant investment had been made in expanding alternative pathways, such as apprenticeships, the group felt there was still work to be done to promote these destinations. The group felt this could be alleviated by the introduction of employers/businesses into schools earlier, perhaps in first or second year, to raise awareness with both pupils and parents.

### Work experience

10. The discussion noted the various pathways now offered to young people, and the evolving pattern of participation. Despite this, the group felt the need for schools to move away from teaching pupils to pass exams and focus more on readiness for employment. A number of employers felt young people lacked essential skills, such as interview techniques, researching employers/industry for key developments and that more emphasis has to be placed on this within schools.
11. Young people, despite displaying significant academic achievement, were often not reflecting their skills or behaviours well in job applications. In addition, at interview it was felt a number of candidates did not display the maturity expected of prospective employees or indeed, someone ready to commence a successful career.
12. In relation to the above, the group discussed S6 and the purpose of this for young people. From their personal experiences, the group felt a number of young people could utilise this year to develop vocational skills, or perhaps undertake work experience. There appears to be a number of young people who remain at school for S6, but have the necessary qualifications to progress to college or university.
13. Whilst apprehensive to label these as employability skills, the group felt schools should begin to develop such skills with young people as they commence secondary education, indeed a number of years before they enter the senior phase. The group noted Education Scotland's review of Personal and Social Education (PSE) and felt this presents a potential solution to this issue— through integration of the provision of careers advice and guidance at an earlier stage. The lack of careers advice and guidance presented a clear barrier for young people starting their journey, from subject choice to considering potential jobs or careers once leaving the education system.
14. Further work is needed to support young people to prepare them for the world of work. The group emphasised the need for schools, colleges and universities to focus on fundamental elements of the recruitment process and build these into the curriculum. Employers expressed their surprise at many candidates' inability to articulate their skills and what they could bring to their organisation. There is a need for greater employer engagement within education, with an improved balance of school and work-based learning.

The current school curriculum delivers for a significant proportion of young people, however for those not wishing to pursue the academic route, this could be improved and their offer enhanced.

15. Having considered this additional support, the group reflected the need for resourcing in teaching and schools, as teachers are under pressure to deliver exam passes in schools. It was noted, teachers currently provide a degree of psychological and additional support to pupils, and attempting to add to this could lead to negative outcomes for young people.

#### Careers advice

16. A common theme across all Employer Groups was the need for improvement in the provision of careers advice and guidance. Whilst there is some evidence of good practice, and support to those who have a career in mind, it was felt that for others, who were unsure of their options, they were not offered additional support. Whilst addressing this as part of the Review would be welcome, a number of participants felt the senior phase may indeed be too late a stage to engage with young people, as chosen subjects could not be tweaked or altered.
17. The group considered the current provision of careers advice and guidance, and felt more emphasis should be placed on this within schools. Whilst this is currently working for some young people, others who were uncertain of their career path often did not receive additional support or guidance. The group considered S3 as a potential year for young people to receive enhanced careers advice and perhaps additional work experience to sample various industries – potentially leading to young people having an increased understanding of the subjects they would need to focus on when entering the senior phase. A key question is how this could be achieved, and how much investment such an arrangement would require?

#### Collaboration

18. The group emphasised the need for improved collaboration between the system and employers. An enhanced provision of work experience, could augment and better prepare young people for employment, as they gain valuable work-based learning and skills. The group discussed the difficulty of engaging with schools in this area, as often there is insufficient resource within schools to discuss and arrange such placements. Timetabling was also found to be a barrier to successful employer integration, as pupils would often have to travel to their place of work – potentially missing subjects at school or needing to travel home late at night.
19. Timetabling was considered an inhibitor to creating a joined-up, effective senior phase for young people. In particular, the lack of flexibility it affords the learner and the employer in terms of subject choice and having consistent periods of time for work-experience. The group were mindful of the considerable resource school-employer partnerships could occupy, however this collaborative approach would lead to a consistent offer for young people. It was noted the development of Regional Improvement Collaboratives could assist in this process.
20. The groups discussed successful school-employer partnerships, and the support gained from the local authority in establishing these. It was noted these initiatives were subsidised and very costly, inclusive of travel costs between establishments. The group emphasised the need for appropriate investment in this area, and the need for government and local authorities to remove cost as a barrier to success.

21. In closing, the groups reflected on the many reviews the Scottish Government are undertaking and the confusion this sometimes caused. This had led to some employers disengaging, who would otherwise have participated in such initiatives. The movement to regional governance arrangements was highlighted as a potential concern, as there would likely be regional disparity in the offer to young people, potentially leading to inequity in the system.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

22. Through employer engagement events, a number of consistent messages were identified, relating to employers' experience of the education system. A number of recommendations for improvement were drawn from these findings:
- Enhanced provision of careers advice and guidance
  - Improved collaboration across schools, colleges and universities to enhance timetabling
  - Promotion of the many pathways young people can journey through
  - Work-based learning and experience expanded in schools/greater school-employer partnership.
  - Enhanced S6 provision, perhaps being utilised by schools, colleges and employers for work-orientated development.
  - Clearer pathways for young people.
  - Further work is needed in the provision of non-academic skills development at school, for those not wishing to pursue routes to HE/FE.

### Next steps

23. The Scottish Government will publish the findings from the first stage of our review of the learner journey for 15-24 year olds in the autumn, including research on the views and experiences of young people.
24. The first stage of the review will be set out by the end of 2017 and will further test and implement improvements to careers advice, applications processes and a better join-up between schools, colleges and universities

**Advanced Learning and Science Directorate**