



Care Leavers Programme & the development of a Quality Mark for care leavers in Scotland's Colleges

Purpose

- 1 This paper presents the Committee with an update on progress with the three pilot programmes to support care leavers in further education. It also details the progress made with the Frank Buttle Trust on the development of a Quality Mark for provision for care leavers in Scotland's Colleges.

Corporate Plan implications

- 2 This contributes to Corporate Plan Outcome 2 and relates directly to the action, '*within the Scottish Government's More Choices, More Chances strategy, we will give attention to those young people currently or formerly looked after and accommodated*'.

Background

- 3 The Council has committed £2 million to support three distinct pilot projects over the period 2008-09 to 2010-11, aimed at improving provision for looked after young people in Scotland's Colleges. Selection of the pilots gave consideration to the volumes of care leavers supported within specific local authorities and to the different types of educational transitions experienced in a city-wide, rural and individual community context.
- 4 In recognition of the Scottish government report, '*We can and Must do Better*' (2008) the Council aspired to identify ways in which colleges could improve their corporate parent contribution. In particular to provide:
 - better advice on course selection;
 - tailored programmes which support successful school transitions;

- work experience and measures which support learners to gain meaningful employment;
- mentoring and additional support; and
- improved partnerships with local authorities, housing and social work departments, particularly on ‘Pathway’ planning.

Progress

- 5 Funding has now been allocated to the following three college pilots:
 - John Wheatley College: piloting new provision in the context of a single community-based college in collaboration with the local authority and other partners in the east end of Glasgow;
 - Dumfries and Galloway College: piloting new approaches to learner engagement and support in the rural context of Dumfries and Galloway, in partnership with the local authority; and
 - Edinburgh Colleges: Three city colleges working with the local authority and other agencies to improve arrangements and provision across the city of Edinburgh.
- 6 The Glasgow project started in August 2008, with the other projects starting in summer 2009. The programme as a whole is due to complete in summer 2011.
- 7 While each provides a unique context within which to develop practice, all three share consistent themes, in particular:
 - the importance of joint work between colleges, local authorities and Careers Scotland;
 - an approach based on confidence building, relationship based guidance and support; and
 - person centred delivery.
- 8 It is the intention of the overall programme to draw together the core principles and practice emerging from each of the pilots within an evaluation framework.

Programme evaluation

- 9 To achieve this, an external formative evaluation of the programme will be undertaken by a team from the University of Strathclyde (the Scottish Institute of Residential Child Care). The evaluation will run from June 2009 – July 2011, and will involve interviews with project teams and agencies involved in the programme, surveys, focus groups and analysis of national and local data.
- 10 Data gathering will include information collected on:
 - participant and partner perspectives of the college programme;
 - care backgrounds of the participants;
 - prior educational attainment and engagement of the participants;
 - difficulties encountered and how these were addressed;
 - achievements of students, in terms of attendance, retention, course attainment and other ‘soft’ indicators;
 - how we define success;
 - consideration of college plans to sustain activity; and
 - implications and recommendations to Scottish colleges and the Frank Buttle Trust for the embedding of best practice.

The Frank Buttle Trust

Developing a Quality Mark for Scottish Colleges

- 11 Throughout this process a concerted effort has been made to engage the Frank Buttle Trust in the pilot programme activity in order to develop a Quality Mark for provision for care leavers within further education.
- 12 The Frank Buttle Trust currently award a Quality Mark, established in 2006, in recognition of universities who can demonstrate concerted effort to support students who have been in public care.
- 13 Children and Early Years Minister Adam Ingram launched The Frank Buttle Trust Quality Mark in Scotland in 2007, whereby it was awarded to the University of Abertay, University of Glasgow

and the University of Strathclyde. Additional universities have subsequently been awarded the Quality Mark, including, for example University of Edinburgh.

- 14 As a legacy of the £2 million pound investment, the SFC will now work with the Frank Buttle Trust to develop a Quality Mark for college provision for care leavers. This will be part of a UK-wide initiative, drawing on the experiences of the pilot programme and with any emerging guidance taking account of the Scottish policy context.
- 15 SFC will contribute £20,000, to support the UK-wide development of the Quality Mark which will take place over an 18 month period between September 2009 and March 2011. The development phase will assess the relevance to the FE sector of the existing criteria within the HE Quality Mark in order to create a new set of standards and guidelines.
- 16 The three pilot programmes will provide feedback on their experience and this will contribute to the development of the new Quality Mark. Consideration will be given to colleges' contribution to care leavers in terms of aspiration raising and achievement, admissions and recruitment, entry and ongoing support and monitoring and implementation of systems.
- 17 We understand that the development of the UK Quality Mark work will comprise the following elements:
 - guidelines development, initially, exploring the extent to which the existing (HE) criteria are appropriate to the college context;
 - database development;
 - publicity materials and guidelines;
 - report/s to funding bodies and other stakeholders; and
 - launch events

Programme management

- 18 The SFC will monitor the pilot projects through annual reports on progress against objectives, and through periodic reports from the evaluation team.

- 19 The SFC will also organise meetings (at least two per year) of a programme group, comprising project teams, evaluation team, the Frank Buttle Trust and various agencies working with the projects (e.g. Skills Development Scotland, Capital City Partnership, Scotland's Colleges). These meetings are to share experiences as the projects develop and to discuss generic issues of mutual interest across the programme.
- 20 Contact will also be made with the lead for MCMC within Scotland's Colleges to achieve support for the introduction of the Quality Mark.

Timescale

- 21 The SFC care leavers programme runs from August 2008 to July 2011. We expect that the work on the Quality Mark would take place from September 2009 and complete around summer 2011. It is expected that at least one (if not all) of the pilot projects will be awarded the Quality Mark at this time.

Financial Implications

- 22 A total of £2,032,403 has been identified for the programme. Of this, £1,912,903 has been allocated to the pilot programmes, £99,500 to the evaluation and £20,000 to the Frank Buttle Trust.

Recommendation

- 23 The Committee is invited to:
 - **note the content of this paper; and**
 - **agree that this paper be published on the Committee's website following approval by the Council.**

Further Information

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