

**ENTERPRISE AND LIFELONG LEARNING COMMITTEE: FINAL REPORT ON
LIFELONG LEARNING**

RESPONSE FROM THE EXECUTIVE

Laid before the Scottish Parliament by Scottish Ministers on 12 February 2003

SE No SE/2003/64

ENTERPRISE AND LIFELONG LEARNING COMMITTEE: FINAL REPORT ON LIFELONG LEARNING

RESPONSE FROM THE EXECUTIVE

1. Introduction

1.1 The Scottish Executive has welcomed the report of the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee into lifelong learning and congratulates the Committee for conducting such an in-depth, thorough and considered inquiry. Lifelong learning is, as the Committee said, a policy area that is crucially important, not only to Scotland's future economic success but also for Scottish society and for the lives of individual Scots. We further welcome the measured approach the Committee has taken to some of their more far-reaching proposals for change. We note that they called for gradual, rather than step, changes, with the use of pilots to trial new ideas before consideration is given to national rollouts.

1.2 The Executive made an interim response to the Committee's report at the time of the debate in Parliament on the report on 27 November. The Executive is publishing *Life Through Learning; Learning Through Life*, its strategy for lifelong learning in Scotland, in conjunction with this final response. The Committee's Inquiry has been an important influence on the strategy which takes account of, and indeed draws on, the Committee's findings. This document sets out the Executive's views on each of the Committee's recommendations, in the context of the strategy.

1.3 The Executive shares the Committee's high ambitions for this crucially important aspect of our wider vision for Scotland. We appreciate that it can only be attained through the collective and diverse actions of many bodies and many people. We acknowledge and welcome the contribution of all those who have taken the time and effort to be involved in the inquiry. We will build on this momentum as we implement the strategy by establishing a Lifelong Learning Forum, chaired at Ministerial level.

General conclusions and themes

1.4 The Committee set out a rationale for why high quality lifelong learning is important for Scotland, in terms of:

- ◆ the economy;
- ◆ social justice; and
- ◆ citizenship.

The Executive agrees and shares this rationale as the basis for its new strategy. The Executive is also clear that the social justice, citizenship and economic rationales for lifelong learning are inextricably linked in learners' lives. The strategy reflects these linkages.

1.5 The Committee suggested that there is a lack of coherence between the various sectors of lifelong learning - Higher Education, Further Education, vocational education and training, community and voluntary provision - and calls for more cohesion and "a more responsive system, characterised by ease of movement and equality of treatment". The Executive shares these aspirations and is seeking to achieve more coherence in the system

through its new strategy. The Executive recognises that the learning market is necessarily characterised by considerable complexity, borne of the need for provision (by a wide variety of bodies and interests), to be tailored to the demands of people with diverse backgrounds and needs. We believe a dynamic and innovative system will be characterised by variety and diversity. In its strategy, the Executive has tried to strike the right balance between the desire for simplicity, equity and transparency on the one hand, and dynamic, innovative, diverse and tailored provision on the other.

1.6 The Committee sought provision that is more learner-centred. Again the Scottish Executive shares that aspiration, and believes that learning provision should be characterised by high-quality delivery focused on customer needs. To that end, the new strategy is based around 5 people-centred goals for lifelong learning in the 21st Century:

- ◆ A Scotland where people have the confidence, enterprise, knowledge, creativity and skills they need to participate in social, civic and economic life
- ◆ A Scotland where people demand and providers deliver a high quality learning experience
- ◆ A Scotland where people's knowledge and skills are recognised, used and developed to best effect in their workplace
- ◆ A Scotland where people are given the information, guidance and support they need to make effective learning decisions and transitions
- ◆ A Scotland where people have the chance to learn, irrespective of their background or current personal circumstances.

1.7 The Committee is concerned about the identifiable tail of low attainment. The Executive shares the belief that widening access to lifelong learning for disadvantaged groups is of paramount importance. The Executive has set out the actions it will take to drive improvements in this area in the new strategy, in particular, under the first and last goals above.

1.8 The Executive has identified 12 key themes in the Committee's report and grouped the recommendations according to these themes for the purpose of our response.

- ◆ Strategic development
- ◆ Entitlement
- ◆ Funding for Learners
- ◆ Transitions from school
- ◆ Credit and articulation
- ◆ Extending access; breaking down barriers
- ◆ Funding for providers
- ◆ Use of capital and other resources
- ◆ Work and learning
- ◆ E-learning
- ◆ Quality
- ◆ Performance management and review

2. Strategic Development

Paragraph 59 Recommendation: We recommend that the Executive lead the development of a comprehensive National Lifelong Learning Strategy, in partnership with the full range of stakeholders, including learners, employers, employee representatives and learning providers.

Paragraph 61 Recommendation: We consider it essential that stakeholders be fully involved in developing and measuring the success of the National Lifelong Learning Strategy, and we recommend that specific actions to build in stakeholder views form part of the Strategy.

Paragraph 319 Recommendation: We recommend the creation, with statutory backing if necessary, of a National Lifelong Learning Advisory Council, reporting to the Minister. The Council should have representation from the full range of stakeholders (but must not be provider-dominated) and should be charged with responsibility for implementing the National Lifelong Learning Strategy. Its first task should be the clear identification of the roles and responsibilities of each of the national agencies and local partners for delivering lifelong learning.

Our Response

2.1 The Executive agrees with the Committee that the Executive should lead the next strategic phase of the development of Lifelong Learning policy in Scotland - and in doing so should draw on the extensive consultation of the Committee. The Executive has started this process by producing a strategy for lifelong learning in Scotland: *Life Through Learning; Learning Through Life*. The Executive has drawn on the results of the extensive consultation conducted by the Committee and its comprehensive set of recommendations in developing this strategy document. It has also drawn on other reviews, consultations and analytical work.

2.2 The Executive attaches importance to maintaining the active involvement of stakeholders in taking forward the overall strategy, and its various components. We agree that stakeholder views will be an important measure of success. The strategy proposes the establishment of a Lifelong Learning Forum, chaired at Ministerial level, to bring together all the key players to discuss issues of mutual interest with smaller Lifelong Learning Panels, addressing particular themes and topics of interest. We will announce the membership and remit of the Forum and panels in due course.

3. Entitlement

Paragraph 89 Recommendation: We recommend that existing entitlements to lifelong learning should be more clearly articulated and extended.

Paragraph 95 Recommendation: We recommend that those people who have left school with qualifications below level 6 in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework should be entitled to learning provision to bring them to that level.

Paragraph 100 Recommendation: We recommend that the current entitlement to learning should be made more flexible, so that more than one qualification at the same level can be undertaken. Careers Scotland should be tasked with ensuring that this kind of learning opportunity adds value for individuals, society and the economy.

Paragraph 116 Recommendation: We recommend that the learning entitlement should be articulated using the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework. This could be based on a basic entitlement of 720 credits, to be used at any level, where 240 of these credits notionally equal fifth and sixth year at school. Such a basic entitlement would be open to enhancement by the Executive for particular circumstances and to address specific needs.

Our Response

3.1 The Committee placed the concept of entitlement at the heart of its report. The Committee recognised the difficulties inherent in this concept and appreciated that the extent to which entitlement can be fully realised depends to a considerable degree on how it can be resourced.

3.2 The Executive takes the concept of entitlement to mean the right of any learner to receive support from the public purse to enable them to access lifelong learning. The Committee expressed their recommendations on entitlement very much in terms of support for individuals. As the learning would have to be provided by a FE college, HEI or other learning provider, entitlement would have implications both for the funding of the provision of learning and the funding of learners themselves. The Executive's views on the detail of the Committee's recommendations for the funding of learners and providers are described in later sections.

3.3 The Executive appreciates that the Committee considered the practical implications of the introduction of entitlement carefully. The Committee suggested it should be limited to 720 credits on the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework (SCQF) scale. The Executive is fully committed to the further development and implementation of the SCQF. Both the Executive and implementation partners believe that the framework is not developed enough to be deployed in the way the Committee has suggested.

3.4 The Committee suggested that a first step should be to ensure that all school leavers with qualifications below Level 6 on the SCQF scale should be supported to bring them up to that level. The Executive shares this aspiration and has reflected it in one of the key indicators of success for the new strategy – a reduction in the proportion of 18-29 year olds who have qualifications below SCQF Level 6. In the main, the opportunities are there for all young people to achieve qualifications up to and beyond level 6 post-school.

3.5 The fact that 34% of people in the 18-29 age group in 2001 did not hold qualifications at this level demonstrates that the provision of learning opportunities and financial support to learn cannot, in themselves, raise levels of attainment. As we outline in the strategy, non-financial support – advice, guidance and support - is just as important in increasing participation in learning as the provision of financial support to learners and the provision of high quality, relevant learning opportunities. In this context, our creation last year of Careers Scotland – the UK’s first national, all-age careers guidance service - is of central importance. These issues are explored further under the section on barriers to access below.

3.6 In its strategy, the Executive has stated that there will be a review of the funding of learners during the course of 2003, in close consultation with all relevant stakeholders and drawing on all the available evidence. The review will consider the scope and practicalities for extending the existing entitlements to funding for learners.

3.7 In the meantime, we will look to improve access to lifelong learning for particular groups of people whose formal education has been disrupted or cut short. We will begin by developing an entitlement programme for those leaving care, as part of our work on improving throughcare and aftercare services for these young people. This programme will concentrate on young people leaving care whose schooling has been interrupted.

3.8 Finally, the Committee suggested that Careers Scotland should be tasked with ensuring that there is rigour and strategic direction in the way that entitlements are used to make lateral as well as vertical movements through the lifelong learning system. We believe this role would be at odds with Careers Scotland’s fundamental responsibility to provide impartial, confidential and, above all, client-centred advice.

4. Funding for Learners

Paragraph 103 Recommendation: We recommend that part-time learners should be entitled to the same (or pro-rata) fee arrangements as full-time learners. The same arrangements for repayment, where appropriate, should also apply.

Paragraph 341 Recommendation: We recommend that the Executive seek to remove the current inequalities in entitlement between learners in further and higher education.

Paragraph 344 Recommendation: We recommend the streamlining of support for learners in further education to make it (a) fairer and (b) more efficient. A single agency must take responsibility for providing a central bank of information and administering the funds.

Paragraph 348 Recommendation: We recommend that the rules and criteria for funding for unemployed learners be standardised to secure equality of eligibility.

Paragraph 387 Recommendation: We recommend that the Executive promote the development of one-stop shop to provide a single gateway for the learner or potential learner.

Paragraph 442 Recommendation: We recommend that the Executive liaise with Employment Service Scotland on countrywide arrangements to support learners on benefit, and with the Department for Work and Pensions on current eligibility criteria for learning support. We further recommend that the Executive liaise with Employment Service Scotland about the creation of one-stop advice, benefits, careers and employment 'shops', linking with local learning providers, employers, local enterprise companies, Careers Scotland and such other agencies as are deemed appropriate.

Our Response

4.1 In the new strategy, the Executive makes a commitment to take action to create a Scotland where people get a chance to learn, irrespective of their background or current personal circumstances. Funding for learners is an important part of realising this goal. In the strategy, the Executive sets out the key principles underpinning the funding of individual learners:

- ◆ the support available to learners from public resources can be justified in terms of the wider economic and social gains that result from that learning, over and above the private gains to individuals. However, where there are significant private returns to be had from a learning experience, individuals (and organisations) have a responsibility for contributing to the costs of learning.
- ◆ the Executive's spend in this area should be targeted on closing the opportunity gap by providing courses and support to those who have traditionally not taken them up and who are most likely to benefit from the opportunities made available; and
- ◆ the arrangements that are in place to provide financial support for learners should reflect the diversity both of learners' individual needs and of the learning opportunities available to them.

4.2 The Executive accepts that a variety of different forms of public support to individuals has evolved, and believes that there should be a greater consistency and closer alignment in

what is offered. In the strategy, the Executive makes a commitment to conduct a review of the funding of learners in Scotland during 2003 in order to further clarify the principles of learner support, and to identify and address gaps and anomalies in existing provision.

4.3 The Committee said there are particular inequalities in the funding available to learners both between and within the Further Education and Higher Education sectors. The Committee asked whether the present system of discretionary funding for FE students should be made mandatory. Equality of treatment for part-time and full-time students was another important issue. The Committee also called for support for FE students to be streamlined and put in the hands of a single agency.

4.4 We have taken steps to align student support between the two sectors and will examine what further can be done in the review referred to above.

4.5 The Executive recognises that the differences in student support arrangements, whilst reflecting the diversity of learner needs in the two sectors, can lead to confusion around the availability of and eligibility of funding. This can be a barrier to access. The Executive agrees with the Committee that clearer and better co-ordinated advice for learners is key to tackling this problem.

4.6 The Executive agrees that the availability of publicly-funded support should be clearly articulated, and that information about learning opportunities and the support available to people who wish to take them up, should be easily accessible to them. The prime responsibility for this rests with Careers Scotland and *learndirect scotland*. The Students Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS) has a role in the provision of advice on funding for HE students. In the strategy the Executive calls on them to work together to ensure a seamless advice service for learners on learning opportunities, funding sources and other means of support for learners. *learndirect scotland* and Careers Scotland have signed a joint Memorandum of Understanding to ensure this joint working takes place.

4.7 The Executive understands the case for supporting re-skilling, and accepts that lifelong learning is not simply a matter of progression upward through the hierarchy of qualifications. We equally understand that there is no simple difference between full-time and part-time learning. We accept that, in certain circumstances, support for part-time learners is appropriate – and a number of arrangements are in place to provide special support to part-time students such as fee waivers and special loans. However, in targeting limited public resources, we believe the priority should be to support our wider policies and initiatives on closing the gap: to assist those without any significant source of personal income to attain their initial learning goals; and to use any additional resources to incentivise and support non-traditional learners.

4.8 The Executive cannot amend the rules and criteria of UK-wide programmes for unemployed learners as employment policy is reserved to the UK Government. Jobcentre Plus has responsibility to provide all working-age people with assistance to help them into employment and support to make sure they receive the benefits they are entitled to. Training providers, employers and Careers Scotland already make use of the facilities available in Jobcentre Plus to improve the advice they give to learners. We recognise that this service could usefully be brought closer to the advice streams on learning provided by *learndirect scotland* and Careers Scotland. These agencies (amongst others) already work together

successfully under the auspices of the PACE framework. This initiative provides a strategic framework for partnership working across key public sector agencies in response to potential/actual large-scale redundancy situations.

5. Transitions from School

Paragraph 242 Recommendation: We recommend that the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee considers in the future inviting the Education, Culture and Sport Committee to undertake a joint inquiry into transitions from school for young people.

Paragraph 249 Recommendation: We will submit the evidence we have received on Higher Still and the work/school/further study interfaces to the Education, Culture and Sport Committee, for consideration as part of that Committee's ongoing inquiry into the purposes of Education.

Our Response

5.1 The Executive recognises that the experiences children and young people have at school have a crucial influence on participation in post-school learning. The Executive believes it is important that good progression routes and partnerships continue to be developed between schools, the FE and HE sectors and employers. This was one of the key issues considered as part of the Review of Enterprise in Education. The need to assist young people to make more effective transitions from school to post-school life and learning is also one of the themes which has emerged from the National Debate on Education. 'Educating for Excellence' commits us to developing a joint schools/further education strategy aimed at easing young people's transitions out of school into further learning or employment. The strategy will foster better links between schools, education authorities, Careers Scotland, the Enterprise Networks, further and higher education institutions and employers in the local context. The National Qualifications framework enables students to build up academic and vocational qualifications flexibly over time and promotes collaboration between schools and other centres of learning. We welcome the fact that the Committee has been positive about the framework.

5.2 The Committee has found that employers feel standards of literacy and numeracy among young people leaving school are lacking. Recent surveys indicate that this is not as pressing a concern for the business community as other skills-related issues. For example, a CBI Scotland/Business Strategies survey carried out in 2001 asked companies what skills in their workforce needed improving to meet business need. 4% indicated literacy and numeracy (well below the proportions looking to improve skills like customer care (25%) or team working (17%)).

5.3 That being said, work is in hand to improve the ways that schools ensure the attainment of acceptable numeracy and literacy standards in pupils. For instance, the National Priorities in School Education includes the commitment "to raise standards of educational attainment for all in schools, especially in the core skills of literacy and numeracy, and to achieve better levels in national measures of achievement including examination results". Literacy and numeracy skills are embedded in school qualifications through, for example, Core Skills in both Standard Grades and new National Qualifications introduced through the Higher Still reforms. Core Skills include communication (written and oral) and numeracy (processing, interpreting and communicating number and graphical information).

5.4 The Executive's response to the National Debate also emphasised the importance of improving literacy and numeracy, which will be at the heart of the revised curriculum. 'Educating for Excellence' contains plans to reduce class sizes at crucial stages so that literacy and numeracy get the attention they deserve and to ensure that new teachers have the training they need to raise standards in literacy and numeracy.

6. Credit and articulation

Paragraph 122 Recommendation: We welcome the work done on the SCQF to date. We recommend that the Executive provide additional resources to the SCQF to develop the framework and to increase public understanding and awareness of it.

Paragraph 124 Recommendation: We recommend that the Executive seek to expedite the inclusion of industry qualifications within the SCQF.

Paragraph 126 Recommendation: We recommend the creation of a lifelong learning 'log' for everyone in Scotland, linked to the SQA individual candidate number. Over time, we envisage the development of a learning 'smartcard' which would record both credits used and the learning achievements.

Paragraph 391 Recommendation: We recommend that higher education institutions and further education colleges develop wider articulation agreements. These might include joint summer schools to bridge subject content gaps or introduce different study methods. Public funding for higher and further education should be conditional on demonstrable progress in this area, for example development of "2+2" courses where two years are undertaken at college followed by two years at university.

Paragraph 393 Recommendation: We recommend that the Executive should put a single agency in the lead on the development of better Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning.

Our Response

6.1 The Committee sees a key role for the emerging Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework. The Executive agrees, and has put in hand both investment (£0.5m each year up to year 2005-06, starting in 2003-04) and structures to assist the delivery of the SCQF through its development partners, including communication of its value to the wider public. The Executive recognises the detailed and complex challenges inherent in this approach, and welcomes support for taking them forward.

6.2 One of the main aims of the SCQF is to help people to understand and compare the range of qualifications in Scotland. The SCQF Joint Advisory Council acknowledges that those qualifications which are not currently in the SCQF, such as industry qualifications, are very important to the future development of the Framework. Establishing the feasibility of incorporating industry qualifications into the framework has a high priority as a first step to extending the framework.

6.3 One of the goals of the Executive's strategy for lifelong learning is that Scotland should be a place where people are given the information, guidance and support they need to make effective learning decisions and transitions. The continuation and extension of the collaboration and articulation arrangements (formal and informal) which already exist between FE colleges and HEIs will have an important role to play in meeting this aim. We will encourage their further development through our strategic guidance to the Funding Councils. The Funding Councils are working with the Scottish Advisory Committee on Credit and Articulation to map current articulation arrangements. This will provide a

baseline of good practice and highlight anomalies where further development might be desirable.

6.4 The Executive accepts the need for further development in relation to the recognition and accreditation of prior experiential learning. This has been discussed at the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Implementation Group. It was agreed that a sub-group of interested and relevant parties be convened to discuss the issues and recommend further action.

6.5 The Executive supports the concept that everyone could benefit from holding a 'lifelong learning log' - which could record their learning achievements, and the level of personal, employer and public investment in their learning. There have been previous attempts to do this - through a National Record of Achievement, 'Profile' and other means. The Executive is currently committed to providing all school children with Personal Learning Plans (PLPs) by 2003, to act as a single comprehensive record of progress and achievement. In the strategy, the Executive makes a commitment to pilot a Personal Lifelong Learning Plan with school leavers in 2004. The Plan would link with current developments on Personal Learning Plans for all schoolchildren and also provide signposts to, for example, *learndirect scotland* and Careers Scotland, to help individuals identify what learning they need and where they can do it.

7. Extending Access; Breaking down Barriers

Paragraph 137 Recommendation: We recommend that the Executive review future funding for all learning providers to include weighting to reflect the additional costs associated with attracting and supporting learners from non-traditional backgrounds. Account should be taken in developing future incentive funding of the work currently being done on allocating funding to better meet the needs of individual learners.

Paragraph 138 Recommendation: We invite the Executive in the short term to increase the wider access premium for higher education institutions to 25%.

Paragraph 148 Recommendation: We recommend that Scottish Ministers should consider protecting a percentage of the budget each year for informal, community and voluntary learning. This could include monitoring of spend at local authority level. First steps towards this should include a review of the current levels of funding across Ministerial departments, and also an assessment of the levels of need.

Paragraph 151 Recommendation: We recommend that SFEFC and SHEFC continue to promote and support the Regional Widening Access Fora to deliver benefits for learners on a regional basis. Progress measures should include feedback from learners about the real improvements provided by the Fora.

Paragraph 154 Recommendation: We recommend the significant expansion of ‘return to learn’ schemes, building on the good practice built up by trade unions and the voluntary sector.

Paragraph 157 Recommendation: We recommend that the Executive ensures that their strategies and policies promote learning among older people as well as younger, and that the value of learning for older people is fully recognised in all sectors.

Paragraph 161 Recommendation: We recommend that the Enterprise Networks ensure that adequate funding, and if necessary new funding, is made available for Modern Apprenticeships in the over 25 age group, and that funding, and terms and conditions are consistent across the country, whilst allowing for local management flexibility in operation.

Paragraph 163 Recommendation: We recommend that the Executive review the terms and conditions of the different sets of allowances for learners with dependants, with a view to addressing any anomalies and improving eligibility for support.

Paragraph 166 Recommendation: We recommend that the Executive review the arrangements for supporting learners with disabilities in light of the evidence received during this inquiry.

Paragraph 167 Recommendation: We recommend the collection of more detailed statistics on the participation of disabled people in lifelong learning, and in particular that *learndirect scotland* and all other institutions, including Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise, should register participants with disabilities where and when they are willing to do so, with a view to setting baselines from which targets for participation may be developed.

As a first step towards this, learndirect scotland should be required to ask callers whether they wish to disclose a disability, to ascertain levels of demand.

Paragraph 169 Recommendation: We recommend that Careers Scotland, as well as all publicly-funded learning providers, have clear guidelines to assist in early identification and referral for a range of special needs including dyslexia, dyspraxia and autistic spectrum disorders. Dissemination of the guidelines should be accompanied by training as well as awareness raising for people working in careers guidance and lifelong learning provision.

Paragraph 174 Recommendation: We recommend that the Executive oversee the creation of guidelines on good practice in supporting gender equality in lifelong learning.

Paragraph 175 Recommendation: We recommend that the Executive continue its efforts to recruit more women onto Modern Apprenticeships in general, and to encourage both men and women to participate in the full range of opportunities. We consider that the removal of the age limit for recruits may well provide an opportunity to challenge perceptions in this area.

Paragraph 178 Recommendation: We recommend that the actions contained in the Race Equality Advisory Forum's document on lifelong learning are incorporated and published in the national Lifelong Learning Strategy.

Paragraph 180 Recommendation: We recommend that the development of a future funding system for learning providers includes weighting to adequately reflect the costs of provision in remote and island areas.

Our Response

7.1 A number of the Committee's recommendations addressed issues of barriers to access: socio-economic, age, ethnic background, gender, disability, a care responsibility, geography and remoteness. The Committee made a number of specific and general proposals to ensure equality of opportunity for people, whatever their background and circumstances. The Executive shares the Committee's agenda for extending access to lifelong learning in encouraging and supporting 'life-wide' as well as 'lifelong' learning. This helps to close the opportunity gap.

7.2 Therefore, one of the aims of the Executive's lifelong learning strategy is to create a Scotland where people have the confidence, enterprise, knowledge, creativity and skills they need to participate in economic, social, and civic life. The Executive is committed to increasing participation in learning and to closing the gaps in learning attainment of young people, ensuring more participation in learning in the adult population in the future. The strategy document lists the actions we will be taking to meet this goal.

7.3 We believe that it is for the Funding Councils and Enterprise Networks to decide how best to recognise factors such as attracting and supporting learners from non-traditional backgrounds within their funding arrangements, within the general framework of our aspirations for greater participation in learning set out in the strategy.

7.4 As the Committee notes, at present, both the Scottish Further Education Funding Council (SFEFC) and the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council (SHEFC) have

schemes to support widening access. SFEFC pays a social inclusion premium to all colleges with students from the 20% most deprived postcode areas and, in 2000-01, this was around a quarter of all FE students. The premium is designed to support the extra costs colleges bear when engaging with socially excluded groups and also to support the retention and achievement of those students. SFEFC has targeted around £5 million on supporting the retention and achievement of students from socially excluded groups this academic year.

7.5 SHEFC provides a widening access premium based on the proportion of students in an institution from low participation neighbourhoods. The purpose of the scheme is to support HEIs to improve retention rates for students from disadvantaged backgrounds by recognising the additional costs they may bear in providing additional educational or welfare support to them. The scheme amounted to some £4million this academic year. It is one of a package of measures put in place by SHEFC to widen access to and participation in HE, including outreach work. In addition to the premium, SHEFC also supports the part-time fee waiver scheme for low-income students; and, in allocating additional places in recent years has given particular priority to growth likely to improve access (including increasing the opportunities for part-time and rural students). SHEFC also provides the Widening Access Development Grant, worth £2.25 million a year, which has supported a range of successful widening access collaborative initiatives within the sector.

7.6 The level of both premium schemes is a matter for SHEFC and SFEFC. They undoubtedly play a valuable role in encouraging institutions to focus on retention and the support that some students from disadvantaged backgrounds need to fulfil their potential. However, the Executive believes that increasing the premium for students based on family background would imply that all such students require significant additional support. The Executive believes that there may be more effective ways of focussing resources for this purpose. We expect to see the proper education and welfare support of all students embedded in institutional practice across the board; and we accept that the Councils should work together to achieve greater harmonisation between the two schemes.

7.7 The Executive has commended the Councils in successive guidance letters for their role in supporting Wider Access Regional Forums. The good links already in existence between colleges, HEIs and the Forums are welcomed. It is right for support for those initiatives to be reviewed from time to time, and this should include feedback from learners.

7.8 We believe informal and community-based learning plays a crucial role in supporting people to engage in, or to return to, learning and can often be a first step back into more formal learning. *Community Learning and Development: The Way Forward* (published June 2002) outlined our intentions to assess more effectively the contribution of community learning and development to achieving core Executive outcomes, and the need to establish a baseline in terms of financial and human resources. This process is currently underway. The Executive is currently working with the relevant local partners to develop a new management information system to track spend on community learning and development. In January 2003 the Executive published Guidance to all Community Planning Partnerships on community learning and development. This sets national priorities relating to closing the gap and widening access for disadvantaged adults.

7.9 The Executive supports efforts by the Trade Unions to encourage both employees and employers to engage with the lifelong learning agenda in order to improve the skills levels in

the workforce. The Scottish Union Learning Fund has been set up to provide Trade Unions with grant funding for projects which promote lifelong learning in the workplace. As a condition of funding, Trade Unions are encouraged to build partnerships with a range of stakeholders, including employers and the voluntary sector. Trade Unions are also encouraged to seek financial contributions from employers and other partners. We would therefore support an expansion of 'return to learn' schemes, such as those developed by the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) in partnership with UNISON, within the scope of the Scottish Union Learning Fund.

7.10 The Executive recognises that lifelong learning has a key role to play in enriching the lives and promoting the wellbeing of older people and that it makes a significant contribution to active and healthy ageing. The Executive will continue to support the efforts across all sectors of lifelong learning to promote the access of older people to lifelong learning and will collect data on the participation of learners by age as a part of its work on monitoring and evaluating the success of the strategy.

7.11 The Executive will consider support for learners with disabilities as part of the planned review of funding for learners in 2003. Compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 as amended requires all sectors to ensure that people with disabilities have the same opportunities as non-disabled people to benefit from education. This means they must encourage disclosure of a disability in order to ensure the appropriate provision. FE colleges and HEIs collect information on disability and we shall request community learning and development providers to do so. *learndirect scotland* asks learners who contact their helpline or visit their branded learning centres if they have a disability. Careers Scotland's management information system is also capable of identifying disabled clients. However, the declaration of a disability can only ever be voluntary and so it is not possible to ensure that these statistics are comprehensive.

7.12 Careers Scotland is one of a number of organisations with a key role in identifying the learning and support needs of young people, including dyslexia, dyspraxia and autistic spectrum disorder. It is currently consulting on a draft needs assessment framework for use by its staff. The framework is designed to promote a consistent approach across the organisation and provide a process that can be shared with other agencies; it highlights the need for a staff training and development strategy - shared jointly with other agencies where appropriate - to underpin the assessment framework. Although the framework and implementation plan have still to be finalised, we support, in principle, the strengthening of Careers Scotland staff training in this area, including the development of guidance on specific conditions such as dyslexia, dyspraxia and autistic spectrum disorders. We also aim to improve transitions from school for pupils with on-going additional support needs for learning. The draft Education (Additional Support for Learning)(Scotland) Bill provides for the early involvement of agencies, such as Careers Scotland, in planning and preparing young people with additional support needs for life after school. The FE and HE sectors have an important role to play here too and students entering the FE system are already assessed for any special needs they may have. The development of specific guidance on supporting students with special needs in the sector is properly a matter for the SFEFC, SHEFC and the sectors themselves. The Executive would support that and the strengthening of staff training in this area.

7.13 The Executive has allocated additional resources to increase the number of Modern Apprenticeships. We aim to increase the numbers of women training as Modern Apprentices, to agree with the Enterprise Networks common criteria for funding Modern Apprentices aged over 24, and to continue to target business sectors which could benefit from Modern Apprenticeships, but which do not have a well established tradition of apprenticeships.

7.14 The Executive is committed to celebrating and raising awareness of the ethnic and cultural diversity of Scotland. We accept the broad challenge contained in the Race Equality Advisory Forum (REAF) Report. That report proposes a number of actions that relate to the reserved powers of the UK Government, such as employment and race equality legislation. UK race equality legislation requires FE Colleges and HEIs to produce race equality policies and we shall request community learning and development providers to monitor work in this area. The Funding Councils and the Enterprise Networks are, like the Executive, required to prepare and publish race equality schemes. These schemes should further strengthen measures to ensure race equality in lifelong learning institutions.

7.15 The Executive recognises the particular challenges inherent in the provision of lifelong learning in remote and island areas, both in relation to the funding needed by providers and the support that students require. The Funding Councils seek to recognise this in their funding allocations.

8. Funding for providers

Paragraph 333 Recommendation: We recommend the creation of a single funding system for all formal learning provision, including vocational, further and higher education. Such a system should continue to recognise the relative cost of provision of different subjects and modes of learning.

Paragraph 336 Recommendation: We recommend that the Executive consider investing in any future additional funding which may become available on levelling up (as distinct from converging) funding across the range of lifelong learning opportunities.

Paragraph 358 Recommendation: We recommend the development and introduction of a single funding system for all learning providers. In the first instance, the Scottish Further Education Funding Council and the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council should undertake a review of funding across both sectors with the aim of clearly identifying the current differentials, to provide a baseline from which to work.

Paragraph 374 Recommendation: We recommend that the Executive build incentives for collaboration into the development of a new single funding system.

Paragraph 377 Recommendation: We recommend that the Executive work on the basis that the Funding Councils for Further and Higher Education should be merged in around 5 years.

Our Response

8.1 Given the sheer diversity of lifelong learning provision, by public and private and voluntary bodies, the Executive is not persuaded that all of this desirable range and diversity can be supported by a single funding system.

8.2 However, the Executive accepts that the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council and the Scottish Further Education Funding Council should be merged. We believe this will lead to greater transparency and consistency in the funding of higher and further education. It will be necessary to introduce legislation to achieve this, but the form and timing of this will be a matter for the next administration.

8.3 The Executive agrees that funding systems and funding allocations should operate in a way which encourages, and does not constrain, local articulation and collaboration, but the Executive has reservations about making this a mandatory condition of funding.

8.4 Of course, any analysis of funding available for lifelong learning should also refer to the use of the European Social Fund, available in Scotland through the Objective 3 and Highlands and Islands Programmes, to support human resource development. The Scottish Executive is committed to the use of these funds to complement and add value to domestic policy priorities.

9. Use of capital and other resources

Paragraph 419 Recommendation: We recommend that a condition of grant for capital funding must be the provision of access to publicly-funded facilities for those who can benefit from them. We are further minded to recommend that similar conditions of grant should be applied to existing publicly-funded facilities.

Paragraph 422 Recommendation: We recommend, in conjunction with the SFEFC's mapping exercise, the establishment of a cross-sectoral National Estates Review, covering further and higher education. There is also the potential for schools to share equipment and/or other resources with local institutions, and it may be that such a Review should include the school perspective.

Our Response

9.1 The Executive agrees that, for better service delivery and value for money, every effort should be made by funding bodies and institutions to encourage and maximise the use of scarce resources - particularly capital resources, which are often under utilised - through the sharing, loan or provision of facilities to other bodies: public, private, voluntary and community.

9.2 Extending access to facilities in this way carries with it rights and responsibilities. Exercise of these rights and responsibilities must necessarily be negotiated at the local level. Where appropriate, the Executive will support the development of good practice in such arrangements (for example through guidance to the Funding Councils).

10. Work and Learning

Paragraph 200 Recommendation: We recommend that the economic development agencies' involvement in lifelong learning should focus on appropriate activities aimed at better supporting the nation's economic development strategy and specifically building employers' training capabilities, aiding workforce and business development, providing guidance for employers on lifelong learning opportunities, and identifying the skills needs of key industries.

Paragraph 203 Recommendation: We recommend that self-employed individuals and small business proprietors should form two of the groups to be targeted by pilots for learning entitlements and for Business Learning Accounts.

Paragraph 209 Recommendation: We recommend that the Executive work with UK and other devolved administrations to ensure that the Sector Skills Councils meet Scottish needs.

Paragraph 215 Recommendation: We recommend that the Enterprise Networks work with employer representatives and learning providers to create pilots aimed at developing the training capacity within Scotland's businesses.

Paragraph 220 Recommendation: We recommend that the public sector in Scotland should act as an exemplar by seeking to develop Employee Development Schemes for its employees. The Executive should designate a lead body to develop a series of pilots for use in local authorities and other public sector bodies. The promotion of voluntary work should be included in some of these pilots.

Paragraph 227 Recommendation: We recommend that the Executive continue to support the Trades Unions Learning Fund. In the medium term, the Executive should consider whether this kind of learning might be core-funded, as proposed for community and voluntary learning.

Paragraph 230 Recommendation: We recommend that the Executive examine closely the outcomes of the Jobrotation pilot in Lanarkshire, with a view to rolling out pilots in other areas of Scotland.

Paragraph 257 Recommendation: We recommend the abolition of the existing Skillseekers programme. We recommend instead the development of new routes into work-based learning for young people.

Paragraph 258 Recommendation: We recommend that whilst new work-based learning routes are being developed, young people should be funded for the full range of qualifications available under the SCQF, including where appropriate industry standard qualifications, rather than simply vocational qualifications.

Paragraph 261 Recommendation: We recommend that the Executive set a clear timetable for piloting and evaluation of new programmes, and that it take appropriate action to ensure that the timetable is met.

Paragraph 267 Recommendation: We recommend that, in designing new work-based learning programmes, consideration is given to the potential impact of funding mechanisms on the learning experience. In particular, care must be taken to avoid placing too much emphasis on outcome-based funding, which could compromise quality.

Paragraph 270 Recommendation: We recommend that, in designing new work-based learning programmes, the enterprise networks must work in partnership with employers, training providers, COSLA and local authorities, further education colleges, higher education institutions, the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Councils, SCOTTO and the Sector Skills Councils.

Paragraph 274 Recommendation: We recommend that, in designing new work-based learning programmes, the enterprise networks ensure that the full range of learning opportunities covered by the SCQF (and indeed potentially industry qualifications) are eligible for funding. The decision on which qualification is the right one must be made by the learner and employer, supported and guided where appropriate by Careers Scotland and the proposed Employer Learning Guidance service.

Paragraph 276 Recommendation: We recommend that, in designing new work-based learning programmes, the enterprise networks ensure that direct links with employers are promoted and fostered.

Paragraph 280 Recommendation: The needs of learners and employers should be of prime concern in designing new work-based learning programmes. The enterprise networks must ensure that all appropriate levels of training requirements are fully covered and supported.

Paragraph 287 Recommendation: We recommend that the Enterprise Networks liaise with employer representative organisations to identify sectoral areas which might benefit from the development of national qualifications. Where appropriate these should incorporate industry standard qualifications such as those developed by Cisco and Microsoft. Given the level of concern expressed in submissions about skills gaps, the engineering, construction and financial services industries would seem to be high priorities for this kind of action.

Paragraph 288 Recommendation: We recommend that publicly-funded lifelong learning opportunities must demonstrate consultation with employer groups. The Sector Skills Councils have a key role to play in liaising with business, industry and learning providers, to ensure that learning opportunities remain relevant for learners and potential employers.

Paragraph 289 Recommendation: We recommend that further and higher education institutions should develop more programmes, particularly at HNC, HND and first degree level, which use the workplace as part of the educational experience. In particular, technical/technician level courses based around HNC/D programmes, which link work experience with academic qualifications, should be developed.

Paragraph 354 Recommendation: We recommend the creation of an expert group, with representatives from business, industry, employee representative bodies, social partners and learning providers to report directly to the Minister on the development of a Business Learning Account model. The expert group should include representation of the major

geographical areas of Scotland. In the first instance, we would envisage that the focus of the group would be on SMEs.

Paragraph 385 Recommendation: We recommend that the Enterprise Networks work with Careers Scotland to fund opportunities for careers guidance professionals, and potentially school guidance teachers, to learn more about the full range of routes available to young people. Placements in industry for these groups, for example, might help to make them more aware of the benefits of vocational routes.

Our Response

10.1 The Committee placed considerable emphasis on the importance of workplace learning and vocational education. The Executive supports this emphasis. Workforce development is one of the areas we focus on in our lifelong learning strategy. One of the goals of the strategy is to create a Scotland where people's knowledge and skills are recognised, used and developed to best effect in the workplace.

10.2 The Executive agrees that it is important to raise awareness about the value of workplace development to business growth in order to reach this goal. We agree that the Enterprise Networks have a central role to play in this process, encouraging the development of employers' training capability, aiding workforce and business development, and supporting individuals in the acquisition of skills. We have placed learning and skills development at the centre of the strategic direction for the Enterprise Networks set out in 'a Smart, Successful Scotland', and have supported the establishment of Careers Scotland and of Futureskills Scotland within the Networks. *learnirect scotland* has a key role to promote and broker in-work learning and has established a dedicated service for this, '*learnirect scotland* for business'.

10.3 The Executive has made a commitment in its strategy to work with the Enterprise Networks to re-engineer Skillseekers and will take the Committee's findings into account in doing that. There is good experience from Skillseekers that should not be passed over. Significantly, Skillseekers has provided the funding framework that has successfully delivered well over 20,000 Modern Apprenticeships and rising levels of employment for young people in training – up to 75%. Above all, we will ensure that there is continuity for the 12,000 young people currently engaged on non-MA Skillseekers programmes. As part of the re-engineering, the Networks have introduced their "Get Ready to Work" programme to replace the special needs part of Skillseekers training from April 2002. This will provide more individual, client-focussed training and new progression routes from the programme into further learning and employment.

10.4 The Enterprise Networks are already committed to broadening the scope of their funding to include qualifications other than SVQs in their training programmes, if these are fit for purpose, for both individuals and employers. It is important that they do not simply duplicate funding which is already available for work-related qualifications, through the SQA, for example. The quality assurance of industry qualifications is particularly important, as not all of these are currently quality assured in Scotland.

10.5 The Executive agrees that developing the training capacity of small businesses is important. The Executive makes a commitment to piloting Business Learning Accounts as a

key driver for training in small businesses in the strategy. The Executive will develop, with the Enterprise Networks and *learndirect scotland*, the Business Learning Account model in consultation with organisations represented on the Small Business Consultative Group. We consider that the Group offers a ready-made stakeholder forum for this area of policy development.

10.6 The Executive agrees that there is a need for a clearer understanding of the skill needs of individual industrial sectors. Futureskills Scotland has initiated important analytical work in this area. The Executive, which has supported the work of the National Training Organisations and SCOTTO, is now working with DfES, the Sector Skills Development Agency and the Sector Skills Alliance Scotland (SSAScot) to ensure the new Sectors Skills Councils meet Scotland's distinctive needs.

10.7 The Executive accepts that in reviewing and modernising work-based learning programmes, a number of important principles and practices highlighted by the Committee, need to be recognised:

- ◆ the needs of learners and employers should be a prime concern;
- ◆ there needs to be consultation with a wide range of parties, including Funding Councils, provider bodies and regulatory organisations;
- ◆ particular regard should be given to consultation with employer groups, including Sector Skills Councils, to ensure the relevance of courses, curricula and qualifications to be funded;
- ◆ funding arrangements should support outcomes which are high quality, appropriate to learners' needs, relevant to their career opportunities; and
- ◆ attention should be given to prioritising areas where emerging demands and the need for modernisation are greatest.

10.8 The Executive recognises the importance of employee development schemes, including the benefits which accrue from employees having the opportunity to be seconded to the voluntary sector. In general terms, the public sector has a good track record of applying for Investors in People accreditation and introducing business excellence tools, such as the European Foundation of Quality Management model. This practice is not universal across the public sector. There is ongoing work to develop workplace learning in the public and voluntary sectors, e.g. *learndirect scotland's* work with the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations to develop and pilot a virtual learning network for the voluntary sector, and their work, in partnership with CoSLA, to develop public sector employees.

10.9 The Executive recognises the important role that Trade Unions can play in taking the lifelong learning agenda into the workplace. In particular, we recognise that the Trade Unions, through the recently established trade union learning representatives, have a key role to play in facilitating productive dialogue and shared goals between employers and employees on learning. In recognition of its early success and the unmet demand from Trade Unions, we recently announced a doubling of the Scottish Union Learning Fund to £800,000 a year from April 2003. Grants are awarded on the clear understanding that Trade Unions will build up their own internal capacity to support lifelong learning initiatives and forge partnerships with employers and other relevant stakeholders, to secure the longer-term sustainability of projects.

10.10 Jobrotation, first developed in Denmark, is designed to assist unemployed people, improve the employability of those who already have jobs and to engender a culture of lifelong learning. These chime with our own policy objectives and we accept that a form of job rotation could form part of our future vision for lifelong learning in Scotland. It would be necessary to make sure that any scheme was integrated with and consistent with the broader Welfare to Work policies. These are, of course, the responsibility of the UK Government. We therefore await with interest the results of the Lanarkshire pilot (funded by the European Social Fund (Objective 3), South Lanarkshire Council, North Lanarkshire Council, 3 local Social Inclusion Partnerships, Jobcentre Plus and Scottish Enterprise Lanarkshire).

10.11 The Executive agrees that bringing together the former, individual career service companies and other bodies to form Careers Scotland (based within SEN and HIE) allows much improved scope for a structured and coherent approach to continuing professional development for all careers staff. Careers Scotland has committed nearly £300,000 to its training programme, part of which will help careers staff increase their knowledge of the routes available to young people.

10.12 The Executive already provides an industry placement programme for teachers and school careers guidance professionals with the Excellence in Education through Business Links Programme (EEBL). This programme offers teachers and schools an opportunity to develop a significant understanding of a current area of the labour market, or business sector activity, through teacher placements into business.

10.13 The Executive is committed to working with the business and education communities to effect a step change in the way that schools prepare young people for the world of work by a comprehensive set of proposals to implement the recommendations in 'Determined to Succeed', the recent Report on Enterprise in Education. Our response to that report will set out how we plan to expand existing provision – including the development of the EEBL programme - to a position where the Executive alone will be committing £22m a year by 2006.

11. E-Learning

Paragraph 235 Recommendation: The Committee recommends that the Executive establish a Centre of Excellence in e-learning.

Paragraph 237 Recommendation: The Committee recommends that the Enterprise Networks report to the Minister on the current and potential markets for e-learning products and services.

Our Response

11.1 The Executive recognises that e-learning offers considerable potential benefits. The Executive will continue to encourage and support e-learning in all aspects of lifelong learning.

11.2 The Executive will continue to encourage the Funding Councils to support best practice in the use of new technologies in all aspects of the delivery of further and higher Education.. The establishment of the eLearning Alliance (a broad-based organisation with a membership drawn from business, learning providers, local government and beyond) should also help to promote e-learning in Scotland. Through the ‘Connecting Communities’ programme, the Executive has supported the development of e-learning through community learning and development.

11.3 Given the diversity of provision in lifelong learning, and the scope for innovation across a wide range of possible applications, we think it advisable to encourage diversity of development as at present – through initiatives such as the National Grid for Learning, and the work of the Learning and Teaching Council, *learndirect scotland*, the Enterprise Networks and learning providers etc. - rather than concentrate effort in a single centre of excellence. However, we recognise that there are benefits to be gained from greater co-ordination between publicly-funded initiatives. Therefore, the new lifelong learning strategy looks for those involved in such initiatives to take account of the complementary actions of others through the convening of an E-learning Public Sector Group.

11.4 We agree that the Enterprise Networks have a role in encouraging the wider commercial application of e-learning products and services. It has based its interventions in the area of e-learning on an analysis of e-learning markets. One of the eLearning Alliance’s roles is to provide information on e-learning developments and markets. We shall continue to look to the Enterprise Networks and to the eLearning Alliance for information on e-learning.

12. Quality

Paragraph 306 Recommendation: We recommend the creation of a single quality assessment system for vocational training and for further education. Provision in the private sector should also be assessed to a standard within this system. The system would be operated by a single quality assessment body, independent of funders and providers and reporting directly to Ministers. In the longer term, we would wish to see a single quality framework applying to all publicly-funded learning opportunities.

Paragraph 307 Recommendation: We recommend that in the short term, arrangements are made for all publicly-funded quality assessment to include learner representation. In the development of a longer-term single quality framework, such representation must be built-in.

Paragraph 312 Recommendation: We recommend that all publicly-funded learning should include a requirement for both public and private training providers regularly to demonstrate appropriate staff development provision, with particular regard to the new skills required by ICT.

Paragraph 316 Recommendation: We recommend that the Executive review its funding for the various lifelong learning research and good practice schemes and institutions with a view to ensuring co-ordinated funding which promotes collaboration and excellence.

Paragraph 410 Recommendation: We recommend that the Executive undertake a review of current arrangements to enable learners to participate effectively in the planning, delivery and evaluation of lifelong learning opportunities.

Our Response

12.1 The Committee has emphasised the importance of quality in the delivery of all aspects of lifelong learning and the need for quality assurance to be achieved in the least burdensome way. The Executive agrees and is committed to driving changes in the way that lifelong learning is quality assured to support quality improvement. One of the strategy's goals is to create a Scotland where people expect and learning providers deliver a high quality learning experience.

12.2 The Executive considers that there are benefits to be had from reducing the audit burden; establishing consistency in philosophy and practice; and developing systems of mutual recognition in the quality assurance (QA) of lifelong learning. A new quality regime has recently been put in place in the higher education sector and, in the strategy, the Executive has said its priority now is to make improvements to the QA arrangements that are in place across the rest of the lifelong learning landscape in Scotland. We wish to see a move to a QA approach more focused on outcomes, where those outcomes are measured improvements for learners and other stakeholders. To further these aims, the Executive has made a commitment in the strategy to commission an independent study of QA in lifelong learning in Scotland focussing on vocational education and training, Further Education and community learning and development, including distance and e-learning. This study will take account of the Committee's findings, the consultation on quality assurance arrangements for FE being undertaken by SFEFC (due to be concluded by summer 2003) and the outcomes of the policy review of training and development for FE lecturers.

12.3 The Executive agrees that any measure of quality should include customer views and that quality assessment and assurance systems should therefore take account of learners' views and the student experience. Any new methodologies that are developed as a result of our intended study will place emphasis on this. SFEFC is currently working with the FE sector to progress the recommendations contained in the recent review of demand, supply, efficiency, and the extent of collaboration in the sector, as well as colleges' financial health. The aim is to further improve effectiveness and efficiency in the sector and increase responsiveness to students' needs.

12.4 The Executive agrees that continuing professional development for teaching staff is a very important aspect of quality development. Since it was established in 1997, the Professional Development Forum for teaching staff in Scottish colleges of further education has made considerable progress in improving and expanding provision for the initial teacher training and continuing professional development of FE lecturers. Staff development already forms part of the audit to FE colleges carried out for SFEFC by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) and under the Scottish Quality Management System (SQMS) from the Enterprise Networks. The Executive announced its policy on the future of professional training for those working in the community learning and development sector on Monday 10 February 2003.

12.5 The Executive agrees that there is much that providers engaged in delivering lifelong learning can learn from one another by sharing best practice. We review our own research portfolio and priorities every year and we already make efforts to ensure that the results of the research we fund are taken up by end users. It would not be appropriate for the Executive to seek to ensure co-ordinated funding for all research in this field, the initiative for which rests, quite properly, with a range of institutions and providers.

13. Performance Management and Review

Paragraph 329 Recommendation: We recommend that the Executive take into account the wider costs of ‘not learning’ to individuals, families, communities, society and the economy, as well as the direct costs of learning, in taking forward the National Lifelong Learning Strategy.

Paragraph 401 Recommendation: We recommend that, following the development of a lifelong learning strategy, the Executive should develop mechanisms to audit all learning funders against it, to measure how well they are delivering.

Paragraph 402 Recommendation: We recommend that our committee successor return to accountability and governance in the next session of the Parliament, to investigate progress and consider future options, including the recommendation above.

Paragraph 405 Recommendation: We recommend that the balance between local flexibility and national coherence is reviewed, particularly among adjoining LECs. We further recommend that immediate action be taken to standardise and reduce bureaucracy and paperwork for learning providers.

Paragraph 415 Recommendation: We recommend that the Executive should publish annually reports from the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council on progress towards embedding good practice towards contract research staff. Once the required data is available, the Executive should set targets for improvement in this area.

Paragraph 425 Recommendation: We recommend the development of a wider set of targets linked to the key elements of the National Lifelong Learning Strategy. We propose that the objectives for the National Lifelong Learning Strategy must form the basis of any measurement of success.

Paragraph 427 Recommendation: We recommend that the Executive ensure that arrangements for setting targets for and monitoring progress on the National Lifelong Learning Strategy should include appropriate stakeholder representation.

Paragraph 429 Recommendation: The Executive should map its current investment in research into lifelong learning, with a view to ensuring that high quality information is being produced on the full range of elements that make up the National Lifelong Learning Strategy.

Paragraph 431 Recommendation: We recommend that international benchmarks against which Scotland’s lifelong learning performance can be measured should be developed and published as part of the National Lifelong Learning Strategy.

Paragraph 435 Recommendation: We recommend that the Executive ensure that all sources of data about lifelong learning feed into a central analysis body, to assist the Lifelong Learning Advisory Council in establishing baselines against which to measure performance.

Paragraph 437 Recommendation: We recommend that the development of the National Lifelong Learning Strategy should be fully informed by the range of research and good practice UK-wide and beyond.

Our Response

13.1 The Executive has based the aims and objectives of its strategy for lifelong learning on the best evidence it has available. This has been derived from the analysis of data collected on performance, independent and commissioned research, and international benchmarking. It includes data and research on the societal and economic benefits of learning.

13.2 The Executive has made a commitment to continuing to build a better evidence base for lifelong learning policies in the lifelong learning strategy. The Executive has set up a Research Network on Lifelong Learning to facilitate dialogue within and between the policy and research communities in order to deepen and widen the use of evidence from research in policy making on lifelong learning in Scotland.

13.3 The Executive has set out a number of key performance indicators by which the success of the lifelong learning strategy can be measured. These performance indicators contribute to, and are consistent with, the Executive's overall targets and objectives for its expenditure programmes and Departmental Business Plans.

13.4 We believe it will continue to be appropriate for the Executive itself, Funding Councils, the Enterprise Networks, and other lifelong learning bodies to continue to collect, analyse and present data and information appropriate to their needs. The Executive does accept that greater effort will be needed to improve collaboration in the collection and interpretation of data. The new Analytical Services Division in the Scottish Executive Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Department is a positive step in this direction and confirms the Executive's commitment to develop and encourage the integration and close collaboration of statistics, economics and social research in the analysis of data. In the lifelong learning strategy, the Executive has made a commitment to improving data collection and analysis.

13.5 The Executive accepts that the objectives and performance indicators embedded in the lifelong learning strategy should be subject to monitoring and review; that stakeholder bodies should be involved in the process; and that the process should include an assessment of learning and the views of learners. The Executive accepts that the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee (or any successor body in the new Parliament) can be expected to maintain a close interest in the implementation and evolution in the strategy and welcomes that continued interest and involvement.

Scottish Executive
February 2003