

# FINDING PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS TO COMPLEX NEEDS

CONSULTATION ON ARRANGEMENTS FOR SUPPORTED FURTHER  
EDUCATION PLACES AND FUNDING FOR STUDENTS WITH COMPLEX NEEDS



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

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## Ministerial Foreword

Since 1999 we have had a strong focus on promoting social justice and inclusion for those who are most disadvantaged. Our commitment to widening access to further education has been a key priority in recent years and we are proud of the achievements of the sector in opening its doors to a wide and diverse student population.

Despite this success, we are aware that a small but significant number of young people with complex additional support needs may be unable to access appropriate further education provision in Scotland. Many of these young people then apply to attend specialist further education provision outside Scotland and seek funding from their local authorities to do so.

We have listened to the concerns of young people with complex additional support needs, their parents, carers and the organisations that represent them that the current arrangements do not provide fair access to further education. This consultation paper provides an opportunity for everyone with an interest in this issue – further education colleges, local authorities, voluntary organisations and young people themselves – to say where the strengths and weaknesses are in the current system and how we can improve arrangements for the future.

The Executive is committed to ensuring that everyone has the chance to learn regardless of their background or personal circumstances. Through the views expressed in this consultation we will consider how best to make provision for those with the most complex needs. Your contribution to this exercise will help shape that provision. We look forward to receiving your views.



A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jim Wallace".

**Jim Wallace, MSP**



A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Andy Kerr".

**Andy Kerr, MSP**



A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Peter Peacock".

**Peter Peacock, MSP**



A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "T. McCabe".

**Tom McCabe, MSP**

## Introduction

1.1 This consultation paper invites comments about provision for, and funding arrangements, for students with complex additional support needs who choose to or believe they need to study outside Scotland.

1.2 Following the incorporation of most of Scotland's further education colleges in 1992, funding for students maintenance bursaries transferred from local authority budgets to further education colleges. At that time, local authorities retained a discretionary power to pay bursaries in terms of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980. The sum of £4.7 million was left in the local government finance settlement in recognition of the continuing responsibilities of both Orkney and Shetland Island Councils for FE Travel and Bursaries and all other local authorities' cross-border cases. A proportion of these students are those with complex additional support needs.

1.3 The Scottish Executive is committed to ensuring that everyone has the chance to learn regardless of their background or current personal circumstances<sup>1</sup>. We therefore wish to ensure that students with complex additional support needs have the same opportunities as their peers which may include access to appropriate further education opportunities outside of Scotland if required.

1.4 Inclusiveness and social justice are at the heart of the Scottish Executive's policies. Following the recommendations in the report of the Beattie Committee *Implementing Inclusiveness: Realising Potential* (1999), the Executive endorsed the principle that inclusiveness should underpin all post-school education. Inclusiveness is about providing learning opportunities that give the best match to the needs of the individual. We recognise that the further education sector has made considerable progress in ensuring that young people can access a learning environment that matches their needs, abilities and aspirations. This consultation provides an opportunity to build on progress to date and further develop further education provision for young people with the most complex needs.

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<sup>1</sup> Life Through Learning: Learning Through Life, Scottish Executive February 2003

1.5 The transition to post school education is a key stage in a young person's life. As pupils approach school leaving age, schools focus on the support that individuals need to move from school to the placement best suited to them. For many young people, this might be into further or higher education, training or employment. However, for a significant number of young people, there may be a need for education provision not currently available in Scotland's post-16 sector. This results in these young people applying to attend one of a number of residential specialist colleges in England and seeking funding from their local authority to meet the cost of provision.

## **2. Background and Aims**

2.1 Over the last few years, it has become clear that Local Authorities operate different policies in relation to funding students to attend colleges outwith Scotland. Some have taken a decision not to fund cross border students, others only students with additional support needs, while others will fund as demand requires using a capped fund. In the case of students with complex additional support needs, lack of available funding may be a significant barrier to accessing any further education provision.

2.2 There also appears to be varying knowledge amongst young people and their parents and carers about the provision currently available in Scotland.

2.3 In this consultation, we wish to find out about the current practices of local authorities in relation to providing funding for students with complex additional support needs. However, we also wish to look more broadly at the issue of supporting students with complex needs and to consider options for the future support and funding arrangements. The aims of this consultation are therefore:

- To investigate the current policies and practices of local authorities in relation to the provision of bursaries to students with complex additional support needs attending further education provision outside Scotland.
- To seek the views of local authorities on their role in relation to the provision of bursaries to students, particularly those with complex additional support needs, who choose, or need, to study outside Scotland.
- To gather information about the needs of young people that could not be supported through current provision in Scotland
- To gather information from young people and their parents or carers about their experiences in relation to obtaining funding for study outside Scotland and the impact the availability of funding has on the young person's ability to access further education provision.
- To measure the likely demand for places at specialist provision that does not currently exist in Scotland over the next 10 years and estimate the cost of meeting that demand

- To explore options for funding the required provision

2.4 As part of this consultation, we have asked key stakeholders to set out their views on the arrangements for funding and supporting students with complex additional support needs. The views of 2 local authorities, 3 further education colleges, Skill Scotland and a parent of a young person with complex additional support needs are included as annexes to this paper.

### 3. Arrangements for Consultation

3.1 Consultation is an essential and important aspect of Scottish Executive working methods. Given the wide-ranging areas of work of the Scottish Executive, there are many and varying types of consultation. However, in general Scottish Executive consultation exercises aim to provide opportunities for all those who wish to express their opinions on a proposed area of work to do so in ways which will inform and enhance that work.

3.2 While details of particular circumstances described in a response to a consultation exercise may usefully inform the policy process, consultation exercises cannot address individual concerns and comments, which should be directed to the relevant public body. Consultation exercises may involve seeking views in a number of different ways, such as public meetings, focus groups or questionnaire exercises.

3.3 Typically, Scottish Executive consultations involve a written paper inviting answers to specific questions or more general views about the material presented. Written papers are distributed to organisations and individuals with an interest in the area of consultation, and they are also placed on the Scottish Executive website enabling a wider audience to access the paper and submit their responses<sup>1</sup>. Copies of all the responses received to consultation exercises (except those where the individual or organisation requested confidentiality) are placed in the Scottish Executive library at Saughton House, Edinburgh (K Spur, Saughton House, Broomhouse Drive, Edinburgh, EH11 3XD, telephone 0131 244 4552).

3.4 The views and suggestions detailed in consultation responses are analysed and used as part of the decision making process. Depending on the nature of the consultation exercise the responses received may:

- indicate the need for policy development or review
- inform the development of a particular policy
- help decisions to be made between alternative policy proposals
- be used to finalise legislation before it is implemented

3.5 The Scottish Executive now has an email alert system for SE consultations (SEconsult). This system allows stakeholder

individuals and organisations to register and receive a weekly email containing details of all new SE consultations (including web links). SEconsult complements, but in no way replaces SE distribution lists, and is designed to allow stakeholders to keep up to date with all SE consultations activity, and therefore be alerted at the earliest opportunity to those of most interest. We would encourage you to register.

3.6 If you have any comment about how this consultation exercise has been conducted, please send them to Claire Keggie at the address shown below.

3.7 This consultation paper is being issued widely in Scotland: to all local authorities, to all further education colleges, and others who have an interest in this issue, for example parents and carers of students with complex needs. This paper is being distributed widely to encourage discussion among interested parties. A full distribution list is shown at Annex A. Additional copies of the paper can be obtained from Frances MacMillan by telephoning 0141 242 0108 or by writing to the address below.

**3.8 Responses to this consultation paper are requested by 31 October 2005 **Please send your response to:****

Claire Keggie  
Scottish Executive Enterprise Transport and Lifelong Learning  
Department  
Higher Education and Science Division  
Europa Building  
450 Argyle Street  
Glasgow  
G2 8LG

or

[Claire.keggie@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Claire.keggie@scotland.gsi.gov.uk)

3.9 We would be grateful if you could clearly indicate in your response which questions or parts of the consultation paper you are responding to as this will aid our analysis of the responses received.

## Alternative Formats

3.10 The text of this paper will be made available, on request, in alternative formats. Anyone who requires the document in an alternative format should contact Claire Keggie at the address given.

## Publication of Responses

3.11 We will make all responses available to the public in the Scottish Executive Library by 28 November 2005, unless confidentiality is requested. We would be grateful if you could complete and return the **Respondee Information Form** found at **Annex D**, indicating whether or not you agree to your response being made available to the public.

3.12 All responses not marked confidential will be checked for any potentially defamatory material before being logged in the library or placed on the website.

## **4. Policies and Practices of Local Authorities**

4.1 The purpose of this section is to investigate the current policies and practices of local authorities in relation to the provision of bursaries to students with complex additional support needs attending further education provision outside Scotland.

4.2 Following the incorporation of most of Scotland's further education colleges in 1992, a sum of £4.7 million was left with local authorities as part of the local government finance settlement. This sum was retained to allow Orkney and Shetland Island Councils' to continue to fund their FE Travel and Bursaries responsibilities and all other local authorities to manage their discretionary power to pay bursaries to students studying at non-incorporated colleges including cross-border cases.

4.3 The £4.7 million Grant Aided Expenditure (GAE) provision was distributed to local authorities in proportion to their actual expenditure.

4.4 The GAE which has now increased to £5.4 million in 2005-06, is available to local authorities annually as part of local government finance settlement. However, it has become clear in recent years that not all local authorities use the available funding to support students who wish to study at non-incorporated colleges.

4.5 A small survey of local authorities, carried out in January 2002, provided some information about the policies and practices on bursary provision to students who wished to study outside Scotland. At that time, just under half of the authorities who responded stated that they had a general policy of not funding any further education students. From the information provided by authorities it was not always possible to establish whether funding had been provided for students with complex additional support needs or whether a different policy was applied in relation to these students. The level of demand from students with complex additional support needs was also unclear.

4.6 The purpose of this section is to update our baseline information and to establish a clear picture of local authorities' current policies relating to the provision of bursaries to students

who wish to study outside Scotland. This section provides local authorities with the opportunity to explain their current policies and to provide information on their rationale.

**Local authorities are therefore invited to answer the following questions:**

Q1. How many applications have you had for funding in each of the last three years?

Q2. How many of these were from students with complex additional support needs?

Q3. Does your local authority have a policy in relation to the provision of bursaries to students, particularly those with complex additional support needs attending further education establishments outside Scotland? Please provide details.

Q4. Does your policy apply equally to students with complex additional support needs as well as those who wish to participate in other FE course, for example, music courses?

Q5. If your policy is not to fund students, particularly those with complex additional support needs, why was that decision taken?

Q6. If available, please could you provide copies of any relevant policy documents used by your local authority.

Q7. If your local authority did provide bursary support for students with complex needs, what was the maximum and minimum payment made?

Q8. What proportion of students supported with complex needs was jointly funded through social work services, education and/or NHS?

Given the specific provisions for Orkney and Shetland Island Councils these local authorities will be invited to answer further questions on their specific use of the bursary/FE travel funding. A separate letter has been sent to both Councils

## **5. Role of Local Authorities**

5.1 Local authorities have a discretionary power to provide funding to students studying outside Scotland. As stated above, we are aware that the practices of local authorities vary across the country. This may mean that students across Scotland are treated differently when applying for funding to study outside Scotland.

5.2 The purpose of this section is to seek the views of local authorities and other interested parties on what their role should be in relation to the provision of bursaries to students with complex additional support needs who require to study outside Scotland.

5.3 We are aware that some local authorities fund young people over the age of 16 to attend specialist provision in England. We also know that a few local authorities provide funding for young people with complex additional support needs to attend some kind of specialist provision in Scotland. Where provision is available, it appears to be an extension of the school curriculum tailored to the particular needs of the client group. Tailoring provision to meet client needs is good practice and such provision is very welcome. However, there are many areas of the country where there is no such local authority provision. Indeed, for a small but significant group of young people in Scotland, the most appropriate further education provision appears to be at one of a number of specialist colleges in England.

5.4 In view of this, and our commitment to ensuring that everyone has the chance to learn regardless of their background or current personal circumstances, we must find a way of supporting these students. We are therefore seeking views from local authorities, colleges, young people, their parents and carers on the role of local authorities in relation to provision of this support.

### **All respondees are invited to answer the following questions**

Q9. Do you consider that local authorities have a role to play in supporting students, particularly those with complex additional support needs, who have needs that cannot be supported by provision currently available in Scotland?

Q10. If so, what should that role be?

Q11. If you consider that local authorities do not have a role in supporting students with complex needs that cannot be supported by provision currently available in Scotland, who could more appropriately provide the support?

## 6. Further Education Colleges in Scotland

6.1 Further education colleges in Scotland play a vital role in providing wide ranging learning opportunities for a diverse student population. They have a long tradition of supporting students who have additional needs and of promoting equality of opportunity and inclusion.

6.2 In recent years the FE sector in Scotland has made considerable investment to ensure that the requirements of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 are met. It has also implemented the recommendations from the report of the Beattie Committee: *Implementing Inclusiveness, Realising Potential*. Colleges have taken positive steps to ensure that they are flexible and work with a wide range of students to meet their support needs.

6.3 It is recognised that colleges alone cannot always provide the range of support needed by students. In some cases, a package of support, involving local authorities, the NHS and other agencies is often necessary. Partnership Matters<sup>2</sup>, outlines the roles and responsibilities of colleges, local authorities, NHS Boards and other agencies in supporting students with additional needs. It focuses on the need for a partnership approach to providing support for students. By adopting a partnership approach, the Executive believes that the needs of the vast majority of students can be met within Scotland's further education colleges.

6.4 We realise however, that for a small number of young people, further education colleges may currently be unable to provide the high level of specialised support needed to facilitate the learning opportunity. When there is no suitable further education provision in Scotland, young people may choose to attend more suitable, specialist provision, usually in England. When a place at a specialist college is unavailable, the young person may attend provision in Scotland which is either not sufficient in quantity or does not fully meet their needs.

6.5 We are therefore seeking the views of further education colleges on whether opportunities within Scotland for students with the most complex needs can be improved. We also want to gather

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<sup>2</sup> Scottish Executive January 2005

information on what educational opportunities FE colleges currently offer to students who are at the more complex end of the spectrum of needs. We would like to know what colleges believe assists or prevents them offering suitable provision. This information will assist us to make considered decisions about future provision in Scotland for students with complex additional support needs.

**Further education colleges are invited to answer the following questions.**

Q12. How and to what extent does your college currently offer educational opportunities to students with significant additional support needs, particularly those who are at the more complex end of the spectrum?

Q13. Can you identify at what point, along the continuum of complex needs, the college would find difficulty in making provision? It may be helpful to illustrate your response with brief examples.

Q14. Does your college currently specialise in providing support for a particular need e.g autism or communication impairment?

Q15. Does demand for places by those with more complex needs exceed supply? If so, to what extent.

Q16. What changes would allow you to better meet the needs of more students with complex needs?

**All respondees are invited to answer the following questions**

Q17. Each year, around 10-15 young people from Scotland, with very complex needs, travel to England to residential centres to undertake further education there. There may be a greater number who cannot currently access provision in either Scotland or England due to current funding arrangements. Do you have any observations on the value or advisability of providing a national residential centre or centres for students with the most complex needs in Scotland?

Q18. Do you have any observations on the value of a small number of further education colleges across Scotland extending their provision for students with complex needs?

Q19. Please take the opportunity of flagging up to us any relevant matters that would help our understanding of the issues relating to students with complex needs.

## **7. Views of Young People and their Parents and Carers**

7.1 For most young people, making the transition from school to further or higher education is a challenging time. For those young people with complex additional support needs, the transition process is usually more difficult. This is particularly true if the young person is experiencing problems in finding suitable provision to meet their needs. We therefore wish to seek the views of young people and their carers on the current provision and funding arrangements in Scotland and how they can be improved for the future.

7.2 The 2002 survey of local authorities included a survey of students who had received funding from their local authority to attend further education provision. A small number of students, around 10% of whom had additional support needs, provided information to us.

7.3 The information received indicated that young people's experiences in applying for and receiving funding from their local authority varied, depending on the region in which they lived, the course they chose and if they required additional support. This gave a very broad idea of their experiences at that time. However, we want to have a better understanding of experiences from a wide range of people. We want to know about both positive and negative experiences of applying for funding.

7.4 The purpose of this section is to gather information from young people, their parents and carers on their experiences of the funding process and how it has affected access to further education provision. We are interested to know if you were successful in obtaining funding or not and whether the amount offered met the cost of provision. We also seek information about the reasons local authorities gave for not providing funding.

**Young people, their parents and carers are invited to answer the following questions**

Q20. Can you tell us what kind of specialist provision and/or support you needed

Q21. What information sources did you use to find out about available provision in Scotland?

Q22. What information sources did you use to find out about provision outwith Scotland?

Q23. Did your local authority provide you with funding?

Q24. Did the funding offered meet the cost of provision?

Q25. If not, what was the shortfall and were you able to find alternative funding to make up the shortfall?

Q26. What was the source of alternative funding?

Q27. Was your choice of college or course taken influenced by the availability of funding?

Q28. If you attended a specialist college, please indicate which one.

Q29. If no funding was offered, has appropriate alternative further education provision been found in Scotland or elsewhere?

Q30. What reasons did your local authority give for not providing funding?

## **8. Provision for the Future**

8.1 Planning for the future is essential. We currently have little indication of the likely future demand for places at specialist provision. However, we wish to be able to estimate demand for specialist provision and the associated costs of these places over the next 10 years. We know that around 700 young people leave special schools in Scotland each year. Many of these people successfully move on to further or higher education, employment or training, however between 3% and 7% each year do not move on to further education, training or employment.

8.2 We want to anticipate the future support needs of students in Scotland with complex additional support needs. This will help us to consider if there is a demand for specialist provision in Scotland or whether the provision currently available in England more appropriately meets the needs of young people with complex additional support needs.

### **Young People, their parents and carers are invited to provide the following information**

Q31. Are you or the person you care for likely to require access to specialist further education provision in the future?

Q32. What stage in the education system are you or the person you care for at? e.g. P7, S3

Q33. What level of support do you or the person you care for require? e.g. 24 hour one to one care, assistance with intimate personal care and medication, physiotherapy or hydrotherapy, etc.

Q34. Have you had any discussions with FE colleges or other education providers in Scotland?

## **9. Options for future funding arrangements**

9.1 GAE of £5.4 million is currently available annually to local authorities for their remaining FE Travel and Bursaries responsibilities. However, a number of young people are unable to access appropriate further education provision due to lack of available funding.

9.2 The information gathered from this consultation exercise will help us make informed judgements about future provision. This will include decisions on the funding of such provision. At this stage, we consider that the options are:

- Status quo – local authorities continue to have provision in their annual local government finance settlements and the discretionary power to offer bursaries
- All or part of the current £5.4 million is clawed back from local authorities and allocated to another body to manage on a national basis. Potential organisations are The Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS), a single local authority or the Scottish Executive.
- The £5.4 million is split into 2 funds. One to be used for cross-border study, the other to allow a number of Scottish FE colleges to improve their facilities to meet the needs of more students with complex needs in Scotland.

Your views on these potential options are sought.

## 10. Next Steps

10.1 Following the consultation exercise, we will consider fully all responses and will develop plans to implement new arrangements for young people with complex needs accessing further education. We will consult on these plans as appropriate.



## STAKEHOLDER PLATFORMS

### A) Skill Scotland: National Bureau for Students with Disabilities

Lifelong learning should be open to all, regardless of needs or circumstance, as set out in the Lifelong Learning Strategy for Scotland. However, Skill Scotland has regular contact from learners with additional needs who cannot access further education in Scotland, and yet they cannot get funding to access appropriate further education elsewhere. These people are in effect excluded from further education because of their needs.

One important step towards ending this exclusion is to change the current funding arrangements for places in specialist colleges. It no longer makes sense for this funding to come from Local Authorities, who have no similar role in Further Education in Scotland. The discretionary nature of this Local Authority funding also leads to a funding postcode lottery. Instead, there should be national funding with consistent application across Scotland. Young people should be assured that the resources will be available to access appropriate further education, no matter where they live.

Recent developments have encouraged the Further Education sector in Scotland to develop inclusive learning provision. The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), which gives rights to individual disabled learners, directs colleges to anticipate the future adjustments that may be needed by disabled learners so that disabled people will increasingly experience no disadvantage in learning. The Beattie Committee report advocates an inclusiveness approach that envisages provision that fits the learner, and not vice versa. These developments present a particular challenge when considering provision for people with complex needs - how can Scotland provide further education that is inclusive of all, regardless of need?

Skill Scotland highlights key principles that must drive forward the goal of lifelong learning for all:

- All learners, regardless of their level of needs, should have an equal right to choose learning that fits with their aspirations and life choices

- All learners, regardless of their level of needs, should have an equal right to attend a local further education college
- All learners, regardless of their level of needs, should be at the centre of decisions taken about their own learning and life
- All learners, regardless of their level of needs, should have an equal right to engage in lifelong learning that has value for them and enriches their life.

Much of the expertise, facilities and resource already exists to make fully inclusive education a reality but this will only be achieved through a widespread commitment to partnership working, reinforced by the resources to make such provision sustainable and viable.

Skill Scotland welcomes this important consultation and urges the Scottish Executive to set in place policies and practice which ensure two things: that funding for specialist college places outwith Scotland is **consistent and available**, and that **equal provision for learners with complex needs** is part of lifelong learning in Scotland.

## **B) City of Edinburgh Council**

The incorporation of Further Education Colleges in 1992 led to a separation of planning and development of local authority services and further education. Up until that time the local authority had the opportunity to align policy and provision for school education, Community Care, Further Education, Housing, Bursaries and Careers. Subsequently the combined effects of the disaggregation of local authorities into smaller units, the increasing shift towards housing stock transfer and the expansion of Further Education market in terms of numbers of students, the range of provision and the geographical catchments mean that a national framework is now required.

Over a ten-year period of expansion in Further Education and the significant extension of inclusive provision, the fragmentation of the planning framework at a local level has had a particular impact on students with complex additional support needs. Arguably, in the case of low incidence complex needs, the loss in local joint planning would be more than compensated by the capacity for planning on a regional and national basis. However, there remains a significant gap in provision, particularly for those students who require an integrated approach to

education, personal support, assistance with health care and additional needs in housing and accommodation.

The local authority's residual responsibility for Further Education bursaries is now out of step with the financial, planning and organisational structures for further education. The responsibility for the provision for complex needs requires to be embedded in the mainstream of planning and funding for further education in Scotland with strong links with Community Care, housing and health services.

Whilst there may be individual circumstances where residential provision in England continues to be appropriate, this needs to be set against the need to develop sustainable opportunities in Further Education in Scotland.

The development of new provision needs to take into account the reasons why young people are pursuing provision outwith Scotland. Key factors include:

1. The need for a full range of accessible learning opportunities.
2. The lack of a robust framework providing clear pathways and assured integration of learning, social and care needs.
3. The need for the opportunity for young people to have opportunities to experience independent living as part of their educational experience.
4. The need to link further education with employment and other life opportunities.

We need to raise our game in Scotland. Whilst there is nothing inherently wrong with students attending residential colleges in England, taken across the piece it reflects fundamental deficiencies in our own provision. Where, after a period in a residential college a young adult returns and takes up further courses in local colleges, we have to ask why that couldn't have been the case from the outset?

As long as the responsibilities for planning and decision making remain fragmented, we are unlikely to make progress. Decisions about funding and support to attend specialist residential provision in Scotland or elsewhere need to be located within a framework which assumes a student's entitlement, provides transparency and accountability and an impetus to improve provision and life opportunities within Scotland. It also needs a robust framework for planning and accountability between Further Education, Careers Scotland, Local Authorities and

Communities Scotland and Health Boards to ensure effective integration of services for additional support needs.

The low incidence and specialist nature of complex needs and the nature of the Further Education 'market' mean that this requires to be led nationally with strong lines of accountability across agencies. The prime aim must be to ensure that our further education provision is open to all young adults and provides them with high quality options to progress their education, training, employment and life opportunities.

### **C) Aberdeen College**

The predecessor colleges which were to form Aberdeen College introduced courses for students with additional learning needs in the mid 1980s. The provision was initially discrete, held in one room and involved very small numbers of students. The curriculum was a modification of the (then) school curriculum.

Services were progressively developed and extended to include vocational experiences in construction, office and retail, hospitality, environmental studies and information technology, the aim being to help students towards independence. Work experience, and personal and social development elements were introduced to courses to improve employability.

Over time, the numbers of students with additional learning needs attending the College has risen and in 2003-04 the numbers stood at 1,254 on dedicated (DPG18) programmes and 1,426 on mainstream programmes. About 120 employers work in partnership with the College and Careers Scotland, securing placements and supported employment opportunities.

The growth and success of the programmes since the 1980s have depended crucially on multi-agency collaboration, involving partnership with local authorities, Careers Scotland, the health services and voluntary agencies. The effectiveness of the partnerships is demonstrated by the progress students make in becoming full citizens who contribute to the work and lives of their communities.

In 1990 the College formalised arrangements for learning support for students studying courses throughout the College in recognition of the increasing numbers of students on mainstream courses requiring

individual support. Soon after, Aberdeen College achieved membership of the National Federation of ACCESS Centres, becoming 1 of 3 Centres in Scotland.

Providing a positive learning environment for students with additional learning needs requires an holistic approach which involves: the removal of physical and attitudinal barriers, the provision of extensive staff development, changes to the curriculum to ensure accessibility and extensive additional student support. This 'whole-College' approach is now well-established at the College where the learning environment is positive, inclusive, and designed to help all students reach their potential.

The College recognises that appropriate staff attitudes are essential for effective provision for students with additional needs. Staff development plays an important part in embedding appropriate attitudes, behaviours and competencies. For example, Disability Awareness training has been in place since the early 1990s and is mandatory for all staff. Specific staff development courses include: Making the Curriculum More Accessible, The Disability Discrimination Act, Supporting Students with Dyslexia, Teaching Students with Additional Learning Needs and Dealing with Challenging Behaviour.

The College maintains a Disability Working Group chaired by a Vice-Principal and a Disability Forum for students which is chaired by an Associate Principal. The Forum provides students with an opportunity to tell the College 'how it is' and to influence provision in a meaningful way. The Forum relays student feedback to the Disability Working Group which takes positive and practical actions to improve. Services and facilities.

The development of learning opportunities, provision, and support for people with additional learning needs at Aberdeen College rests on the principle and the practicalities of partnership. Progress is also based on a recognition of what the College can most usefully contribute to the network of services and support offered by partners. Knowing what the College should not provide is important if clients are to be best served. The College's Access Statement, established in concert with partners, clearly delineates the College's role locally, and helps it to focus on what it does best, empowering other agencies to do the same.

## **D) Motherwell College**

The principle of lifelong learning available to all is well established in policy. This paper explores how provision in the context of this policy can be made more systematic and effective for clients with complex needs.

The further education sector across Scotland already meets the learning needs of a great number of clients with complex needs. However, colleges offer different levels and types of support in terms of staff expertise, curriculum and 24/7 residential care.

In the ideal model, finding the correct solution for the client involves partnerships with local authorities, social work, health boards, schools, physiological services, local organisations, parents and carers. Stakeholders/partners and partnership working is essential to identifying and meeting the needs of the clients. Individual solutions are required for individual young adults and these young adults, and their requirements, are at the centre of the negotiations.

Even with the best model, not all clients' needs can be met in Scotland and the availability of places in specialist institutions elsewhere, is a keystone of the current system. The current situation, as described by Skill Scotland in their Stakeholder Platform, paragraph 1, is one well recognised by practitioners and is at best regrettable, at worst, a national scandal.

Motherwell College agrees that this situation is untenable. In amending the model, we should be mindful of the vast changes in further education since incorporation in 1992. Developments, such as the Brite Regional Assessment Centres and compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act, have enabled many more students with complex support needs to access further education in their local community. This should be the preferred model in the vast majority of cases.

However, there remain a number of clients with complex needs who require support in specialist centres. These could either be provided within Scotland, perhaps on a regional basis, or in some cases referred to centres elsewhere.

In essence, there would be three assessment based models.

1. For the majority, a service provided by a local college, supported by other partners in terms of care, health and transport may be appropriate
2. For students with more complex needs, or those from rural areas, a specially resourced provision/centre, geographically based and with a residential element may be appropriate
3. For a small number, a place at a specialist college may be more appropriate. This specialist college would have a central assessment, funding, referral and a quality assurance framework established to ensure progression for students and best value for all. Current NFAC and BRITE centres could have a role in this, as could other partners as described above in paragraph 2. An audit/assessment of current numbers, demographic trends and geographical distribution would have to be carried out, as well as the level of independent specialist provision.

When a programme has a residential element, the young adults' social and personal development needs have to be taken into consideration in the design of the service. A holistic approach must be taken.

## **E) South Lanarkshire Council**

For a number of years some parents of young people with learning disabilities who have complex needs have sought placements in specialist colleges in England as a possible progression from school. There may be a number of reasons for this, including the perception that there is a lack of facilities at a local level which can offer the same range of care and health supports, educational activities and opportunities. This Council, along with its partners in Further Education and Health, is committed to addressing these issues by developing existing services through local joint planning and partnership working, thus increasing the range of supports available and ultimately reducing the need to seek resources outwith Authority boundaries.

The Best Value Review regarding day services and residential support for adults with learning disabilities in 1999 laid the foundations for the modernisation agenda across the Council. The Review encouraged the integration and mainstreaming of services to allow engagement with the full range of Local Authority services and health partners. Further endorsed by the Scottish Executive National Review, "The Same As

You?” (2000), South Lanarkshire commenced its re-provisioning programme for all of its existing day centres, and a remodelling of the accommodation and support strategy. To date, two centres have been replaced by integrated facilities, and plans are underway to replace the remaining three by 2007. These purpose built facilities are integrated with other Council resources such as Leisure, Community and Library Services, and offer extensive opportunities for social integration for all, including those with complex health needs. The development of Community Support Teams has been an essential component to this strategy allowing for a movement away from traditional centre based activity, thus allowing for more person centred planning and the development of individualised programmes.

Supported by an analysis of health needs, existing effective links with Health services are being further developed, at a local level for primary care, with the backing of a range of dedicated specialist services. The introduction of a more person centred approach to college courses has been integral to this strategy with additional funding having been released to support college placements, and the proposal to form service level agreements between local colleges and the Council, adding clarity to roles and responsibilities.

The Additional Support for Learning (Scotland) Act 2004 offers a framework for the existing work that is ongoing to manage the transitions phase for those with complex needs. The Council now has a dedicated Transitions Worker which will allow for a more focussed approach in the planning process for those at this crucial stage in their life, and there is a recognised need to strengthen partnership working with Integrated Children’s Services, thus allowing for enhanced information sharing and improved individual planning

Tapping into resources such as Direct Payments options and the Independent Living Fund also allows for more scope for a variety of services to be accessed over seven days whilst retaining the young person within their local community. Developing links with independent providers has been an integral part of this, thus allowing for the joint implementation of more person centred support packages.

The Councils Community Learning Plan, launched in March 2005, also has a focus on learning disability, promoting the need to take forward a clear strategy on life-long learning. There is a clear view that services need to work closely with one another so that long-term outcomes are achieved for service users. Any learning plan thus needs to dovetail with

an employment strategy. The Council has begun this process with the introduction of Supported Employment Advisors, whose role is to develop proper employment opportunities, particularly for those who have made achievements educationally, and should have the same opportunity to demonstrate developed skills in a work environment.

Whilst it is the Council's view that all of the above can be developed and delivered at a local level, some services would require to be driven by a national agenda, for example the minority of students requiring specialist communication support systems, .e.g. Braille combined with a learning disability. Such services realistically could not be supported at a local level, and would maybe require more regional and national planning.

## **F) Elmwood College**

Over the last 16 years Elmwood College has developed a range of opportunities and services for students with complex needs.

The Student Development team offers students with additional and complex needs an individual programme or a place in one of its discrete groups of approximately 8 -12 students. The students can have a wide range of different disabilities which can be physical, social/emotional and/or complex learning needs. Programmes are built round SQA units at access1, 2 and 3 and intermediate 1 along with ASDAN and locally devised units tailored for each group. The focus of all courses is on the development of the students as individuals, so there is a strong emphasis on expanding life skills and social skills in every programme. The department has students on both full and part time courses and has good links with SEN units at local secondary schools. Class room assistants are provided by the college to give additional help if required within a group setting.

Several years ago the college invested in an Inclusiveness Coordinator to implement some of the recommendations of the Beatie Report and to help the college work towards compliance with SENDA. The remit of this post has grown over the last 5 years and it is now a middle management post with a team of support workers who work with both mainstream and Student Development students with complex needs on a one-to-one basis. Through good working relationships with social services, the college has gained funding to secure support for these students, many of whom are on the autistic spectrum, enabling them to access the mainstream curriculum on a full-time or part-time basis. This one-to-one

support is provided at appropriate levels and allows students to undertake NC and when appropriate HN level courses.

Demand for this service has grown and the Inclusiveness Manager has now worked with Social Services department from several regions. Its popularity has lead the college to develop a Supported Accommodation option for students who live outwith the daily travelling distance of the college but who are interested in either studying in the Student Development department or on a mainstream course. Students with complex needs often do not have the independent life skills required to live in the Student Residence so individual houses and flats, both on and off campus have been acquired and staffed to ensure correct levels of support.

The success that Elmwood has experienced is not arbitrary and there are several factors that make it ideal for this type of provision. The location and size of the college makes it an ideal environment for those with complex needs. The college is situated on the outskirts of Cupar, with a population of approximately 8,500 and has approximately 850 full time students. The size and layout of the campus quickly allows students to become confident at finding their way around. It also has the advantage of being set in its own large grounds with a residence and 3 houses which are used for Supported accommodation.

Because of the well established Student Development department, all staff have been used to having students with complex needs in college. This has resulted in staff who work in the refectory or janitorial team, also having experience in communicating and accommodating students who have disabilities. Good working relationships between Student Development, the support teams and curriculum teams aids transition for students into mainstream classes.

Staff development on Inclusion has been driven by a senior manager in the college with a great deal of support from the Principal and there has been a change in even some “die hard” staff on inclusion issues. The early investment in an Inclusiveness Manager has meant that the college has been innovative in our approach to partnerships and funding. We have been equipped to meet demands and to respond quickly to further demands.

Although this approach has worked well at Elmwood we do not advocate that it could work in every college but there will be other colleges that may also have similar benefits of scale and culture that could be identified and developed to bring a similar service into other regions.

## **G) Parent of a Young Person with Complex Additional Support Needs**

I am the parent of an 18 year old daughter with complex learning needs. As she has no speech, my greatest concern for her future is that she will be unable to communicate her needs and feelings in a way recognised by carers, friends and those who will be and are involved in her well-being. My aim was, therefore, to continue her post school education in a way which offered a high level of provision in communication and self-help skills.

I started to look at the provision in Scotland 3 years before she would leave school in 2004. It was extremely difficult to access information regarding availability of a course reflecting a good input in this field although some colleges would appear, on paper, to have some provision. I was unable to find a course which had the teaching of communication skills as the base for all other skills on offer and as the key subject but integrated throughout the college day.

I did find one such course at a highly regarded specialist college in England. It offers a high level of expertise in this field. It was not my wish for my daughter to spend several years so far from home but the opportunity to acquire important skills was of greater importance for her future in general. She was offered a place despite a high demand for places and a large waiting list.

I applied on her behalf for funding from our local council. They were initially unaware of the GAE provision from the Scottish Executive. We waited almost 5 months for a decision regarding the application and during this time lost the college place due the demand from already funded students. The council felt that the local provision was adequate. During this time I wrote and spoke to councillors, an MSP, the Scottish Executive and many advice and funding agencies. I was aware that there was a need for improvement in how such applications were addressed.

My daughter has now had 1 year of local provision. She accesses an elaborated school curriculum at college which is not entirely suited to her level of needs and lacks the expertise required in the area of teaching communication skills to make an impact on her level of ability. She requires immersion in a communication related environment and access to aids and technology. I have been aware of an eagerness of staff to provide a good service but do feel that there is a great need for

specialist knowledge to be delivered at the right level. Had she been a young person without a disability then her post school choices would have been varied and appropriate to her needs and wishes.

I feel that having centres of excellence in Scotland would be the optimum situation but, failing this, a central funding body which provided a funding decision in a fair and consistent way would be the best solution. It is admirable to advocate lifelong learning for all but surely this should be a 'meaningful' learning for all.

## Summary of Consultation questions

We would welcome responses to all questions posed in the paper. However, some may be appropriate only to certain organisations or students.

- **Local authorities** are invited, in particular, to answer questions 1-11.
- **Further education colleges** are invited, in particular, to answer questions 12 - 19
- **Young people, their parents and carers** are invited, in particular, to answer questions 20 - 34

### RELATED TO LOCAL AUTHORITY POLICY

**Q1. How many applications have you had for funding in each of the last three years?**

**Q2. How many of these were from students with complex additional support needs?**

**Q3. Does your local authority have a policy in relation to the provision of bursaries to students, particularly those with complex additional support needs attending further education establishments outside Scotland? Please provide details.**

**Q4. Does your policy apply equally to students with complex additional support needs as well as those who wish to participate in other FE courses, for example, music courses?**

**Q5. If your policy is not to fund students, particularly those with complex additional support needs, why was that decision taken?**

**Q6. If available, please could you provide copies of any relevant policy documents used by your local authority?**

**Q7. If your local authority did provide bursary support for students with complex needs, what was the maximum and minimum payment made?**

**Q8. What proportion of students supported with complex needs was jointly funded through social work services, education and /or NHS?**

**Q9. Do you consider that local authorities have a role to play in providing bursaries to students, particularly those with complex additional support needs, who require to study outside Scotland?**

**Q10. If so, what should that role be?**

**Q11. If you consider that local authorities do not have a role in supporting students with complex needs that cannot be supported by provision currently available in Scotland, who could more appropriately provide the support?**

## **RELATED TO FURTHER EDUCATION COLLEGES**

**Q12. How and to what extent does your college currently offer educational opportunities to students with significant additional support needs, particularly those who are at the more complex end of the spectrum?**

**Q13. Can you identify at what point, along the continuum of complex needs, the college would find difficulty in making provision?**

**Q14. Does your college currently specialise in providing support for a particular need, for example, autism or communication impairment?**

**Q15. Does demand for places by those with more complex needs exceed supply? If so, to what extent.**

**Q16. What changes would allow you to better meet the needs of more students with complex needs?**

**Q17. Each year, between 10-15 young people from Scotland, with very complex needs, travel to England to residential centres to undertake further education there. There may be a greater number who cannot currently access provision in either Scotland or England due to current funding arrangements. Do you have any observations on the value or advisability of providing national residential centre or centres for students with the most complex needs in Scotland?**

**Q18. Do you have any observations on the value of a small number of further education colleges across Scotland extending their provision for students with complex needs?**

**Q19. Please take the opportunity of flagging up to us any relevant matters that would help our understanding of the issues relating to students with very complex needs.**

#### **RELATED TO STUDENTS AND THEIR PARENTS AND CARERS**

**Q20. Can you tell us what kind of specialist provision and/or support you needed?**

**Q21. What information sources did you use to find out about available provision in Scotland?**

**Q22. What information sources did you use to find out about provision outwith Scotland.**

**Q23. Did your local authority provide you with funding?**

**Q24. Did the funding offered meet the cost of provision?**

**Q25. If not, what was the shortfall and were you able to find alternative funding to make up the shortfall?**

**Q26. What was the source of alternative funding?**

**Q27. Was your choice of college or course taken influenced by availability of funding?**

**Q28. If you attended a specialist college, please indicate which one?**

**Q29. If no funding was offered, has appropriate alternative further education provision been found in Scotland or elsewhere?**

**Q30. What reasons did your local authority give for not providing funding?**

#### **RELATED TO FUTURE NEED FOR SPECIALIST PROVISION**

**Q31. Are you or the person you care for likely to require access to specialist further education provision in the future?**

**Q32. What stage in the education system are you or the person you care for at e.g. P7, S3**

**Q33. What level of support do you or the person you care for require? e.g 24 hour one to one care, assistance with intimate personal care and medication, physiotherapy or hydrotherapy, etc.?**

**Q34. Have you had any discussions with FE colleges or other education providers in Scotland?**

## LIST OF CONSULTEES

32 Scottish Local Authorities  
45 further education colleges in Scotland  
The Association of Scottish Colleges  
Universities Scotland  
EIS  
NUS  
Cosla  
Skill Scotland  
Lead Scotland  
Head Teachers of all special schools  
Head Teachers of all High Schools  
UNISON  
Scottish Further Education Unit  
Scottish Further Education Funding Council  
ENABLE  
Minority Ethnic Learning Disability Initiative  
Citizen's Advice Bureau  
BRITE Centre  
RNIB  
RNID  
Capability Scotland  
Scottish Association for Mental Health  
Inclusion Scotland  
Scottish Disability Equality Forum  
Equal Opportunities Commission  
Equality Network  
Learning and Teaching Scotland  
Scottish Quality Agency  
Learndirect Scotland  
Scottish Qualifications Agency  
Careers Scotland  
Scottish Consortium for Learning Disability  
Scottish Executive Education Department  
Scottish Executive Enterprise Transport and Lifelong Learning  
Department

Copies have also been passed to the clerks of Enterprise and Culture, Education and Equal Opportunities Committees of Scottish Parliament and SPICe.



## Scottish Executive Consultation Respondee Information Form

Please detach, complete and submit with your consultation response. This will help to ensure that we handle your response appropriately.

**Title of consultation:** **Finding Practical Solutions to Complex Needs:** Consultation on Arrangements for Supported Further Education Places and Funding for Students with Complex Needs

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Responding as:** an individual  on behalf of a group or organisation

**Name of group or organisation:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Do you agree to your response being made public in the Scottish Executive library and/ or on the Scottish Executive website?**

Yes  No

**Where confidentiality is not requested, we will publish your full response including your name (and address, where provided). If you do not wish for these personal details to be published, please tick this box:**

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