

Disabled Students Stakeholder Group (DSSG) - 21 May 2009

Support for Further Education Students with Complex Needs

Introduction

1. The purpose of this paper is to provide members with an overview of the issues facing further education students and potential students with complex needs and an update on the work which is being taken forward to improve further education (FE) provision in Scotland for these students.

Background

2. Following the incorporation of most of Scotland's FE colleges in 1992, funding for student maintenance bursaries transferred from local authorities to colleges. However, Local Authorities retained the discretionary responsibility for provision of FE opportunities for young people wishing to study outwith Scotland. .
3. In 2005, the Scottish Executive carried out a [consultation exercise](#) on the arrangements for supported further education places and funding for students with complex needs who wish to study FE in England.
4. The consultation highlighted that for a significant number of young people, there may be a need for education provision not currently available in Scotland's post-16 sector (for example, there are no residential specialist colleges in Scotland). Currently, Local Authorities operate different policies in relation to funding students outwith Scotland. The consultation suggested that 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.
5. The clear message from the consultation was that the current arrangements, particularly for those wishing to study in England, do not provide fair and consistent access to further education for this group of people. However, there was no clear consensus on how this issue should be addressed. In addition it was apparent that there was also a lack of common knowledge around what provision existed in Scotland's Colleges for this group of students.
6. In order to address the concerns raised, officials from the Lifelong Learning and Schools Directorates held discussions with COSLA, the Association of Directors of Education (ADES), the Association of Directors of Social Work (ADSW), Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and the college sector. It was agreed that a mapping study was undertaken to establish what current FE provision is available to students with complex needs within Scotland's colleges.
7. The [mapping study report](#), carried out by the BRITE Initiative, has now been published. At the November 2008 DSSG meeting Alison Cox provided an initial presentation of this study.
8. For the purposes of the work being taken forward a student may be deemed to have severe and complex needs if they typically have:

a) Severe learning difficulties in combination with

b) One or more of the following:

- Profound sensory loss, physical disability and/or disruptive behaviour
- Significant health care needs
- Use of alternative or augmentative method of communication
- A need to use adaptive technology/specialised software
- A need for a high level of specialised multi agency support
- A need for significant adaptation to the curriculum, requiring regular contact with outside agencies
- A need for modification to the physical environment
- A need for a high level of specialised resources

Definition of Severe Learning Difficulties:

Students working towards:

- SQA Access 1 Supported level accreditation
- Access 1 Independent level accreditation
- College accreditation equivalent to the above levels or below
- Other accredited programmes at the above levels or lower, eg: ASDAN

9. The main parts of this definition are that the person requires support from a range of partners and is working towards an Access 1 course.

10. In terms of FE provision for students with complex needs, the report found that:

- There is a greater range of provision in 2008 than there was in 1998 in a greater number of colleges
- This curricular level is still only patchily understood and is significantly under-resourced in colleges
- The choice of provision for this group of students is not uniform across the country, this is more pronounced for full-time options compared to part-time
- Many colleges indicated that staff development was needed in managing assessment, curricular and support issues at this level
- Funding was highlighted as a critical issue in colleges' ability to offer provision for this group of students, which is labour intensive to support and educate.
- For this group transition into college is challenging for all concerned and difficult for colleges to adequately resource. The transitions process out of college is equally under resourced.
- Currently there is no college in Scotland where all the equivalent support and therapy services on site as are available in some residential colleges in England.
- The lack of clarity about which agency should fund what aspect of provision is a source of major concern, especially when failure to reach agreement leads to the student not being supported to move into college.
- It would be useful to develop a directory of provision and accompanying guidance.

11. As members will be aware there is also currently a petition regarding a young man in Dumfries and Galloway who is seeking to attend a FE specialist college in England going through the Scottish Parliament. Further details about this petition and the DSSG and Scottish Government's (SG) responses to the petition are available on the Scottish Parliament website at <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/petitions/docs/PE1180.htm>

Actions Being Undertaken

12. The SG published their response to the mapping study in February 2009. A copy of this response was distributed to the DSSG and is available on the DSSG website at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Education/Funding-Support-Grants/FFL/responsecomplexneeds>

13. Within the response the SG outlined several actions points. The table below outlines these action points and their current status

Action Point	Lead	Status
1. Take a more strategic view of the provision of courses available to students with complex needs.	Scottish Government (SG) & Scottish Funding Council (SFC)	Ongoing
2. The development of a directory of FE provision for students with complex in Colleges in Scotland and an accompanying guidance document.	SG	Ongoing. Progress report below
3. A feasibility study into the establishment of regional hubs of expertise – to also include estates and staff training needs.	SFC will take forward in consultation with the sector	Ongoing.
4. A new National Development Officer post for Additional Support for Learning/More Choices More Chances, who will be based in Learning Teaching Scotland.	SG	Completed – Alan Haughey is now in post
5. Update Partnership Matters to include specific case studies.	SG	Completed however can be updated as and when required
6. Invite ADSW and ADES to join the DSSG	SG	Completed. Agreed to be members
7. New development of a PDA	SG & the Professional Development Forum	Ongoing. Progress report below.
8. Improvements to augmentative and alternative communication	SG - Augmentative and Alternative	Ongoing

	Communication Working Group	
9. An HMle Aspect Report into provision for FE students with complex need	HMle	Due to be completed in July 2009. Progress report below.

Directory of Provision & Guidelines – Progress Report

14. In discussion with the authors of the Mapping Study it was suggested that the directory should take the form of a toolkit or guidance document for students and parents/carers, schools, care managers and social work on things that need to be considered when arranging the transition processes for pupils with complex needs. For example it could include:

- a list of the types of questions which need to be raised prior to transition discussions about what support arrangements need to be in place for the student to be able to undertake a FE course;
- a list of the types of questions that should be raised during the transition discussions;
- a timeline for considering when decisions need to be made;
- a directory of the courses available for students and the entry requirements for those courses – it was envisaged that the directory would be more comprehensive than a menu of courses or a yellow pages directory ie it would describe the whole package of support available from social care or health care support, such as speech therapy, to the types of courses on offer in a variety of different venues, as well as describing detailed entry requirements for the student.
- an explanation of the role of all staff involved with the young person;
- blueprint case studies illustrating the transition of the pupil from S3 through college and into supported employment;
- guidance on particular situations, for example, when it would be appropriate to have double staffing, eg toileting etc; and
- useful templates to help standardise the transition processes.

15. It was also suggested that such a guidance document would help to manage parental expectations about the transition options available to the pupil ie not just about further education but to consider other options and explain that full time FE is not the same as full time schooling. The document should be more focused and provide much more detail than currently in Partnership Matters, be web based and locally edited. It was also recognised that the production of such a document would require a partnership approach from local authorities, education and social work departments, NHS, and colleges. This document should accompany a directory of provision.

16. Scotland's Colleges, SFC, COSLA, ADES and ADSW have indicated their willingness to support these developments and have also suggested that it should include courses which are available to students with complex needs which are delivered in other non college locations in addition to those in college.

17.A Research Advisory Group (RAG) has been established to ensure that the directory and the guidance meets its purpose and is something that will be of use to its intended audience. The RAG has so far met on one occasion and its members include:

Victoria Beattie - Higher Education & Learner Support, SG
Laura Worku - Higher Education & Learner Support, SG
Sandra Manning - Additional Support, Schools, SG
Ron Crichton - More Choices More Chances (MCMC), SG
Andrew Brawley, HMle
Jill Hale - Stevenson College
Ruth Hendrey - Jewel and Esk College
Gerry McNamara/ Lesley Baird - Skills Development Scotland (SDS)
John Leavey, Learning Connections, SG
(Other members will be invited for example COSLA, ADES, ADSW and Health).

18. The draft specification for the development of a guidance document has been sent to our colleagues in procurement who will undertake the tendering process. We hope to have this process completed mid June with the contract starting at the end of June. The provisional date for completion is December 2009.

19. There are also currently discussions ongoing within the SG and Skills Development Scotland about the development of a comprehensive, local e-prospectus for all students, particularly those within the MCMC group. This prospectus would be accessed through a national site and could be used in conjunction with careers professionals to enable young people, supported by their parents and carers, to make informed choices about where and how they would like to undertake their learning. Additionally, it would be a key engagement tool for a broader range of agencies working with 'harder to reach' young people. The e-prospectus could support young people's progression and would provide a database that describes the full range of learning provision which makes up the local learning offer. The timescale for the development of this prospectus has still to be determined but it is hoped that something will be available by 2010.

20. We had originally envisaged commissioning a separate directory of provision for students with complex needs and then transferring this data into the e-prospectus. However, initial discussions with providers and MCMC leads has indicated that this would be a duplication of work and it would be more efficient for the provision for students with complex needs to be incorporated directly into the e-prospectus.

21. The guidance document will be used alongside the e-prospectus.

Action – Members are asking for their views on the proposed guidance document and the e-prospectus.

22. Highland Council in association with the Highland Children's forum have been undertaking some similar work. They have recently produced a guide for parents, professionals and partner services who support young people who are

going through transition. A copy of this guidance can be accessed at http://www.highland.gov.uk/FJ_CMS/Templates/Standard.aspx?NRMODE=Public&NRNODEGUID=%7bF7F7D8A2-3F60-4598-AFE4-40997B64F36A%7d&NRORIGINALURL=%2flearninghere%2fpsychologicalservice%2fprojects%2fTransition%2ehtm&NRCACHEHINT=Guest#transition

Action – Members are asking for their views on this guidance document, and whether it would offer a useful template to base our work on.

HMIe Aspect Report – Progress Report

23. For the past few months HMIe have been undertaking an aspect report into FE provision for students with complex needs. The aim is to produce a toolkit for colleges to utilise to support effective planning and delivery of this provision by:

- reviewing the existing curriculum content, provision and attendance patterns for learners;
- identifying where estates planning and design has resulted in improved accessibility and effective learner experiences.
- identifying the essential planning processes and timelines which need to be agreed with relevant external agencies to ensure that “non-educational” support needs are effectively supported; and
- identifying appropriate staff development which will enable college teams to effectively meet the learning and support needs of these learners.

24. HMIe had initially identified ten colleges for field visits, however this has now been reduced to nine consisting of North Highland, Elmwood, Edinburgh’s Telford, Stevenson, Cardonald, Clydebank, Motherwell, South Lanarkshire and Barony.

25. To date (9th May) 5 visits have been completed with 4 more scheduled to be completed by the end of May. Some emerging issues include:

- High quality learning and teaching
- Supportive learning environment
- Enthusiastic staff who are highly committed and work well together
- Good range of programmes
- Effective guidance and support
- Effective quality assurance arrangements

26. Initial areas for improvement include:

- Accreditation
- Target setting for improvement and associated recording
- Agency staffing
- Transport issues particularly where there are multi-authority arrangements
- Transition arrangements from schools to college programmes for some learners
- Communication arrangements with key stakeholders
- Work experience and sheltered/supported employment opportunities
- Unequal distribution of provision

ACTION – Members to note update and any comments will be forwarded to HMle

Professional Development Award (PDA) – Progress Report

27. The mapping study posed the question of whether Scottish Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) be encouraged to develop a core module within the TQFE on complex needs or would such training be more appropriately offered as a PDA?

28. There are currently three relevant PDAs:

- Managing an Inclusive Learning Environment;
- Promoting Learning and Equality for People with Disabilities; and
- Inclusiveness: Facilitating Strategies to Support Learners with Additional Needs

29. While these PDAs are effective development for staff we do realise that there may be a need to develop other types of training courses particularly in relation to students with the most complex needs. The next Professional Development Forum meeting will be taking place on 24th July 2009.

30. The SFC will also be considering staff development issues as part of their wider consideration of the regional hubs proposal. Once we have a clearer picture about the provision and the longer term options for improving provision then we will be in a better position to consider any additional training needs in discussions with others including Scotland's Colleges and BRITE.

ACTION - In the meantime members are asked to consider:

- a) **whether they think that there is a case and need for developing a specific PDA for staff who are working with students with complex needs?**
- b) **if there is a case for developing a PDA do we know potential level of demand for the course, a question which the Professional Development Forum (PDF) will ask?**
- c) **who could develop the PDA – costs and timings etc.**

National Transitions Coordinator- Progress Report

31. This will be provided as a verbal discussion by Alan Haughey

Conclusion

32. For discussion today members are asked to consider:

- **Directory and Guidance**
 - Members are asking for their views on the proposed guidance document and the e-prospectus.
 - Members are asking for their views on Highland Transitions guidance document, and whether it would offer a useful template to base our work on.

- **Aspect Report**
 - Members to note update and any comments will be forwarded to HMle
- **PDA**
 - whether they think that there is a case and need for developing a specific PDA for staff who are working with students with complex needs?
 - if there is a case for developing a PDA do we know potential level of demand for the course, a question which the Professional Development Forum (PDF) will ask?
 - who could develop the PDA – costs and timings etc.