

Access Delivery Group

Thursday 5 December 2019, 10:00 – 11:30

The minutes of the eighth meeting of the Access Delivery Group, held at Scottish Government, St Andrews House, Edinburgh.

Present

Aileen McKechnie, Director of Advanced Learning & Science, Scottish Government (Chair)
Professor Sir Peter Scott, Commissioner for Fair Access
Susan Stewart, Open University in Scotland
Professor Sally Mapstone, University of St Andrews
Kirsty Conlon, Universities Scotland (*attending for Alastair Sim*)
Kenny MacInnes, Forth Valley College (*attending for Ken Thomson*)
Murdo Mathison, University and College Union Scotland
Greg Dempster, Association of Head Teachers and Deputies in Scotland
Jim Thewiss, School Leaders Scotland
Stephanie McKendry, University of Strathclyde
Neil Croll, University of Glasgow
Alistair Gaw, Edinburgh City Council
Linda O'Neill, CELCIS
Elizabeth McGuire, Education Scotland (*attending for Alan Armstrong*)
David Robb, Student Awards Agency Scotland
Lauren McNamara, Student Awards Agency Scotland
Lynn MacMillan, Scottish Government
Karen Frew, Scottish Government
Lynn Brown, Scottish Government
Roddy MacDonald, Scottish Government
Christine Johnstone, Scottish Government (*attending for Julie Anderson*)
Elaine Drennan, Scottish Government (*attending for Mick Wilson*)
Fiona Burns, Scottish Funding Council
Pamela Forbes, Scottish Funding Council

Apologies

Richard Lochhead, Minister for Further Education, Higher Education & Science
Frank Coton, University of Glasgow
Alastair Sim, Universities Scotland
Ken Thomson, Forth Valley College
Linda Somerville, National Union of Students Scotland
Liam McCabe, National Union of Students Scotland
Alan Armstrong, Education Scotland
Shona Struthers, Colleges Scotland
Vikki Boliver, Durham University
Russell Gunson, IPPR
Mick Wilson, Scottish Government
Julie Anderson, Scottish Government

1. Welcome and Introductions

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and conveyed apologies for those unable to attend. She also welcomed Pamela Forbes, David Robb and Lauren McNamara, who attended the meeting on behalf of SFC and SAAS. The Chair also stated that Laura Duffy has now moved to another role within Scottish Government and noted her thanks for all Laura's work to support the Access Delivery Group.

2. Minute of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising

The minute of the previous meeting was agreed, with no matters arising.

The Chair invited updates on the three actions arising from the previous meeting:

- Lynn MacMillan stated that access and attainment officials have agreed to meet regularly to coordinate activity into the next iteration of attainment work. Lynn is considering how to implement recommendation 16 through existing schools activity rather than develop new programmes.
- Elaine Drennan confirmed that discussions have been taking place regarding Free School Meals (FSM), with different sources of data being considered. UCAS is considering asking applicants to self-declare FSM at the application stage and officials are looking into how to validate this and at what level. HMRC tax and benefit information is also being considered, however this is unlikely to be taken forward. DWP and Local Authority data is also being explored and an options paper is being developed. It was acknowledged that FSM focuses on school leavers, that there is stigma attached to self-declaration, and that there is a gap between FSM eligibility and uptake which widens in secondary school. In primary school, however, there is a blurring of FSM eligibility due to universal entitlement for Primary 1-3 pupils. Restrictions around data and personal protection were noted, as well as issues in relation to older learners.
- Lynn MacMillan agreed to give an update on the authorising framework as part of agenda item 5.

3. Update on Bridging Programmes Advisory Group (BPAG) and Access Programmes Steering Group (APSG)

Pamela Forbes provided an update on the work of BPAG and APSG on behalf of SFC, with reference to background paper 8/2. This was followed by a discussion which included the following points:

- The groups have made good progress. It will be crucial to link the work in to Commission on Widening Access measures.
- Current funding for SFC funded schools programmes is due to expire in July 2020; if it were to discontinue there would be risks associated with delivery of our ambitions.
- The Chair noted the importance of avoiding duplication, driving efficiency and effectiveness and addressing geographic inequity. She also noted that almost £3 billion of public funds go into the tertiary education system and there is a need for all to consider how best to use it.

4. CELCIS Research

Linda O'Neill delivered a presentation on the recent CELCIS report *Being a Student with Care Experience is Very Daunting*. She also offered to circulate her presentation to members and invited members to get in touch if they wished to discuss the research further. The discussion included the following points:

- CELCIS is working closely with SAAS and SFC on the report's individual recommendations.
- SAAS has introduced bespoke literature regarding the Care Experienced Bursary and the accommodation grant. A new SAAS website will also be launched in March, with dedicated pages for care experienced students. The new SAAS portal will also include a budget calculator.
- SFC will publish its National Ambition for Care Experienced Students on 13 January. SFC met with CELCIS and SAAS to discuss the findings of the research and an action plan has been developed which is to be taken to the Care Experienced Governance Group for sign off.
- Further rich data on outcomes is required in order to increase representation of, for example, young male care experienced students on particular programmes. The survey revealed clusters of courses by gender and males struggling more with the transition, particularly if they progressed from college to university, rather than from school straight to university.

- Universities are committed to supporting care experienced students and can make simple differences for improvement, for example by providing accommodation all year round. Further thought will be given to supporting care experienced learners with a disability. Care experience is very high on the agenda, with the Care Review report awaited.
- Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) includes a lead professional, usually a social worker, for care experienced learners. However, the survey respondents said they received very little Through Care and After Care and had to fight for support. As more older students are expected to enter the system next year when the Care Experienced Bursary age cap is removed, it will be important to collaborate across the system to support them.
- The Chair recapped on the importance of all-age support, financial management, sharing positive stories, and supporting care experienced learners into, during and after university.

Action 1: Linda O'Neill to circulate presentation.

5. Commission on Widening Access Delivery and Future Access Delivery Group Focus

Lynn MacMillan led the agenda item and provided an update on monitoring for the reporting period January to June 2019. The overall RAG rating of the programme as at June 2019 was amber. Of the 45 recommendations and sub-recommendations: 2 were unreported on; 7 were complete; 17 were on track for delivery on schedule; and 1 was rated 'risk to delivery' (but progress had been made subsequent to the reporting period).

Some plans for delivery of recommendations had been revised or updated where a different approach was considered sensible.

In respect of the authorising framework, the group agreed that Lead Delivery Partners will bring any unresolvable 'red' recommendations to the group for discussion.

The subsequent discussion included the following points:

- Delays to data recommendations around data sharing are due to the need to explore the legalities of how data can be shared across institutions & sectors. SAAS is currently looking at ways to look at data more innovatively and could offer help and advice in this respect.
- Delayed Scottish Government and SFC recommendations are moving in the right direction; for example, although the articulation recommendations are not being progressed as originally intended, the National Articulation Forum is considered the correct approach to this work. Its final report is due out early in 2020 and it will be important to consider its findings and recommendations against the original Commission on Widening Access asks.

The Chair led a discussion on the group's work to date, future priorities and frequency of meetings. Members agreed that although many of the Commission on Widening Access recommendations have been delivered or are underway, the group remains very useful and important, and that it should continue to meet. It was agreed that bi-annual meetings would be a sensible approach going forward. Members would like the agenda to continue to include key discussion topics, alongside the regular monitoring updates. Members were encouraged to offer suggestions for future discussion topics.

6. AOB and Date of Next Meeting

The Chair confirmed that potential dates of future meetings would be circulated. She thanked members for their contributions over the period in the pursuit of this important agenda and closed the meeting.