

Scottish Government

15-24 Learner Journey Review

Project 5: Funding

This document provides a summary of the meetings held as part of the 15-24 learner journey review to discuss the funding of the education and skills system.

April 2018

15-24 Learner Journey Review: Project 5: Funding Project Summary Report

i) What did the evidence tell us?

- Average costs vary significantly between different forms of post compulsory education. Approx. £7,000 for one year in S5/S6 or University on average to around £2,900 for an MA.
- A fuller breakdown of the system is covered in Annex A below.
- The consequences of some changes to the system are difficult to cost due to the current funding mechanisms.
- We don't have consistent data across the different parts of the system, nor is all the data that might be needed currently collected.

ii) The approach taken

We considered:

- Core principles and values which should underpin the review. We considered the relationship between the value to the learner and the value to the education and skills system and set out a framework for prioritising our options. This is set out in the papers attached to this cover sheet.
- The importance of defining our expectations of the system in order to determine its effectiveness and then to consider the efficiency of the system in achieving this.
- The implications of the SCQF in terms of funding strictly by SCQF level and identified the challenges in doing so.
- The costs associated with overlap between school and university and between college and university. We highlighted that potential solutions to reducing unnecessary overlap for learners, including only funding a level of credit once and noted the constraints created by how we currently incentivise learner decisions.
- The value for the learner of journeys through college and apprenticeships. This highlighted the importance for a re-clarification of the expectations of a modern college sector and how this might be used to better determine its effectiveness and from this an understanding of the efficiency of the journeys taken within it.
- The risks and benefits in certain instances of a learner approach to funding the system.

iii) Challenges and opportunities

We noted:

- The challenge of affordability of changes to funding for vulnerable young people in school against the cost of not investing in these young people and the equity of the offer to different groups of learners
- Greater collaboration – such as that made possible through DYW - blurs funding boundaries but only delivers better value if learner outcomes improve.
- Learners have now come to expect a joined up higher education system and so the work on college to university articulation needs to be completed and no longer seen as a technical system fix but a feature of the Scottish system, with articulation in all institutions delivered with the requisite joint curriculum planning, transition planning and senior institutional support
- We need to agree the priorities of a modern college sector and the types of learner journeys that should be taken within it, and how we assess and promote the success of the sector.
- Learner accounts have numerous risks which make their application limited. Perhaps the most significant is that a fixed pot is unlikely to be able to give sufficiently more money or overcome the issue that some learners will always need repeat study. Often sustaining repeat study is best achieved through the sharing out of the costs of the whole institution, otherwise there is a risk learner accounts run out and then what? At some point with the learner account approach the system will have to confront and address the responsibility of the learner's choice and commitment to their course.

Policy ideas/ proposals which were discussed

- **Incentivising positive outcomes/destinations** for early school leavers and other vulnerable groups via existing/planned mechanisms, for example attainment funding, new funding formula, outcome agreements; to use funding levers to better enable our most able learners to progress from S5 to year one of university and or from S6 to year two of university; to use funding levers to better incentivise greater articulation between colleges and universities where the curriculum is expected to align
- **Technical fixes** – There are options within current funding to ensure we minimise overlap in provision and funding, for example, MA/college funding and technical mechanisms that could be applied to improve value further.
- **Alternatives** such as learner accounts may incentivise provision and outcomes in aspects of the system and may work particularly well in supporting adults to return to training but are limited in wider application because of their implication for the stability of the sectors.
- **Post 15 learning strategy** – a framework is required to determine the effectiveness of tertiary education for learners in order to better determine value and funding decisions;
- **Better and more coordinated use of data to support learner journeys, and a more consistent approach to measuring performance to drive improvements** - currently we don't measure value the same across our system, making judgements about its effectiveness for learners difficult;

- **Governance** – we need to determine who takes the lead across the system to ensure the best outcomes for learners and determine what is good value, whilst being clear on the role of the Strategic Board, the Education Council, and regional governance arrangements, including the regional improvement collaboratives.

Minutes from each of the Project 4 discussions can be found in Annex B below.

ANNEX A

Education or training provision	Expenditure or Funding	Number of students undertaking this provision	Sources
Activity Agreement	Scottish Government Draft Budget shows a budget of £4.3 million for 2018/19 on 'Supporting Post 16 Transitions Towards Employment', otherwise known as Activity Agreements. This funding includes both the support provided as well as the provision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During 2016/17 there were 2,301 starts on the programme and 2,287 leavers during this period. Of the 2,287 young people who left 1,764 (77%) moved on to employment, training or further learning, an increase from 74% in 2015/16. 31% of AA leavers moved on to further training (Stage 2 and above); 25% to further education; 19% gained employment (including Modern Apprenticeships and Community Jobs Scotland places); 2% to volunteering. 	<p>Scottish Government (2017) <i>Scottish Budget: Draft Budget 2018-19</i>. Available at - http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0052/00529171.pdf</p> <p>YouthLink Scotland (2017) <i>Activity Agreements data summary for 2016/17</i>. Available at - https://www.youthlinkscotland.org/media/2461/2016-17-end-year-la.docx</p>
Secondary School	The total spending on secondary school education in 2016/17 was £1.98 billion which is the equivalent of £7,050 per pupil.	In 2017 there were 281,993 Secondary School Pupils in Scotland.	<p>Scottish Government (2017) <i>Local Finance Returns</i>. Available at: http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Local-Government-Finance/ReturnLFR</p> <p>Scottish Government (2017) <i>Summary statistics for schools in Scotland. No.8: 2017 Edition</i>. Available at http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0052/00528868.pdf</p>
Modern Apprenticeships	SDS accounts highlight that £76.7 million was spent on MA operating costs in 2016/17.	In 2016/17 there were 26,262 MA starts and 13 Graduate Level Apprenticeship starts.	SDS (2017) <i>Annual Report & Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2016</i> . Available at - https://www.skillsdevelopment.scotland.co.uk/media/42859/annual-report-and-financial-

			<p>statements-2015-16-searchable-version.pdf</p> <p>SDS (2017) <i>Modern Apprenticeship Statistics: Full Year Report 2016/17</i>. Available at - https://www.skillsdevelopment.scotland.co.uk/media/43282/modern-apprenticeship-statistics-quarter-4-2016-17.pdf</p>
College provision (Includes both HE and FE courses provided in colleges)	Total funding for teaching for academic year 2017/18 was £415.4 million	In 2016/17 colleges delivered 117,502 Full-time Equivalent (FTE) SFC funded student places.	<p>SFC (2017) <i>Outcome Agreement Funding for Colleges – Final Allocations for AY 2017-18</i>. Available at - http://www.sfc.ac.uk/publications-statistics/announcements-2017/SFCAN082017.aspx</p> <p>SFC (2017) <i>College Performance Indicators 2016-17</i> http://www.sfc.ac.uk/publications-statistics/statistical-publications/statistical-publications-2018/SFCST022018.aspx</p>
Higher Education Institution provision	Overall teaching funding was £649.45m for academic year 2017/18. This included a Main Teaching Grant of £622.1m.	Teaching funding was used to provide over 127,000 funded places in academic year 2017/18.	<p>SFC (2017) <i>Outcome Agreement Funding for Universities – Final Allocations for AY 2017-18</i>. Available at - http://www.sfc.ac.uk/publications-statistics/announcements-2017/SFCAN092017.aspx</p>
Student Support	In 2017/18 the budget for student support for the College sector, including bursaries, childcare and discretionary funds, was £107.8 million.	The Scottish Funding Council advise that in 2016-17, 43,111 students were provided with student support for their further education course.	<p>SFC (2017) <i>Outcome Agreement Funding for Universities – Final Allocations for AY 2017-18</i>. Available at - http://www.sfc.ac.uk/publications-statistics/announcements/announcements-2017/SFCAN092017.aspx</p>

	<p>For those undertaking Higher Education courses, the total amount paid in bursaries and grants, fees or authorised in loans for 2016/17 session was £834.8 million.</p>	<p>The number of students provided with student support for their higher education course was 143,110 in 2016-17.</p>	<p>ouncements- 2017/SFCAN082017.aspx SFC (2017) <i>Higher Education Student Support in Scotland 2016-17</i>. Available at - http://www.saas.gov.uk/forms/statistics_1617.pdf</p>
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In terms of the value arising from investment in the education and skills system, including both short term outputs, in terms for example of completion rates, through to considerations of social and economic contributions to inclusive economic growth, it was established that:

<p>Starting position</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From an initial literature review carried out on wage returns of different qualifications, we know that, generally, wage returns increase as higher levels of education are attained. • Returns also dependant on subject of study, gender, and institution • There are several gaps in Scotland-specific evidence base and more information is required on effectiveness of different types of learning – economic <u>and</u> social returns
<p>Higher Education:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A person with an undergraduate degree is expected to earn 27.4% more, on average, over their lifetime compared to if their highest level attainment were two or more GCE 'A' Levels. (London Economics, 2011). • The highest wage returns are estimated for graduates of medicine and dentistry, mathematical and computer science, and law. • The only estimated negative wage return is for male creative art graduates (-1%). The wage return for female graduates of this subject is estimated to be positive (11.7%). • Females are estimated to have higher wage returns to undergraduate degrees than males. However, the opposite is true for the net graduate premium with this being higher for males than females. [The reason why women achieve a lower graduate premium in absolute monetary terms compared to men despite

	<p>posting higher earnings returns than men is due to the fact that the earnings achieved by women in the counterfactual group are relatively low. The large percentage increases in earnings returns are calculated off a low base and result in lower monetary estimates of net graduate premiums compared to men. In addition, women tend to spend a larger amount of time out of the labour market compared to men that also impacts on lifetime earnings]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graduates from Russell Group universities are estimated to earn £3.63 more per hour than graduates from non-Russell Group universities.
Further Education/Vocational Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The evidence base is very limited but suggests there are positive wage benefits to be gained through the attainment of Further Education and vocational qualifications. • All types of qualification that were considered are estimated to realise positive wage returns. Positive, albeit small, returns are even estimated for basic qualifications such as English and maths (3.5%) and for qualifications below Level 2 (2%).

15-24 Learner Journey Programme

Project 5: Funding**Meeting 1: May 2017**

Papers for the meeting are attached at annex (a)

Attendance

Name	Organisation
Elaine Drennan	Scottish Government
Rebecca Caradice	Scottish Government
Danielle Hennessy	Scottish Government
Jon Gray	Scottish Government
Charlie Jeffrey	University of Edinburgh
John Murray	SDS
Paul Lowe	SAAS
Alan Scott	SAAS
Ken Rutherford	SFC
Pamela Sinclair	QAA
Katie Hutton	SDS
Sheila Dunn	SCQF
Tony Jakimciw	Colleges Scotland
Robert Nicol	COSLA
Alastair Sim	Universities Scotland
Abigail Kinsella	Glasgow City Council

Remit, Values and Approach

The group agreed the remit, values and approach. In so doing acknowledged:

- Not a closed system; international and RUK.
- Single system from learner perspective; but from institutional perspective it is an ecosystem, i.e. different contributions from different actors and different outcomes for different learners. Prefer language of eco system, which was noted; and will be reflected in some way in future discussion.
- Right route to the right 'career' not job.
- What about effectiveness system - What is its purpose, what is it for? This needs to be considered as part of the recommendations of the review, especially the quality of the student experience.
- Strong leadership is needed around policy and partnership. Partnership and co-creation, co-production is the key to a more joined up system.

- The review itself needs to be joined up with existing policy ambition and with the review on student support funding.
- Do CfE capacities represent the outcomes that can be shared across the system?
- Is the Review framed as being about pursuing inclusive growth?

Importantly, it was noted that, the system has already demonstrated its commitment to better align itself, which establishes the basis for further adaptation and improvement.

SCQF Discussion

A presentation by Sheila Dunn from the SCQF Partnership considered what the SCQF revealed about the efficiency of the system.

The discussion noted that:

- At times the system goes out of its way to adapt, but perhaps, it wouldn't need to if it better aligned itself in the first place, particularly in relation to journeys made by particular groups of learners.
- Need an element of system being able to differentiate based on individual need, not just about looking at an SCQF level.
- The funding of provision should be at the level of what it costs (efficiently), shouldn't pay the same price for different things.
- Variability / inconsistency in the system is inevitable in some regards, for example, universities are entitled to determine their entry requirements and these will vary in response to patterns of demand. However, there should be transparency and consistent application of criteria to meet the expectation of learners and parents.
- Have to be able to sign post people to where transitions are possible.
- Are people willing to be mobile at the HN to university transitions.
- Often explanation of why a college student isn't accepted can be really helpful in informing future design and practice.
- The extremes of the discussion were encapsulated in the analogy of a model of currency exchange – do we aspire for – a bureau de change or a single currency Euro model?
- Achieving consistency is difficult given the different values adopted by different parts of the system. For example, exams vs other forms of assessment. Very different currency and values, as reflected in the challenge of RPL.
- No financial incentive to work in partnership; funding is given in silos. Way we fund drives behaviours. If we want a system collaborating and co-creating in response to local and national economic needs, how do we incentivise the partnerships needed to achieve this? And what more do we need to do to adapt current practice. For example, regional skills assessments should also capture supply side: what is on offer, how does it perform, how does it match patterns of demand.

- If leadership is central then we need to connect to the reviews of school governance and reviews of enterprise and skills to create single joined-up strategy rather than compartmentalised project approach at the local level.
- How do we incentivise progression?
- We need to look in more detail at Level 7 – where there is the greatest overlap and greatest area of choice for learners - and the extent to which this best meets Scotland's ambitions for Inclusive economic growth.
- Role of industry – what do they need at level 7 and how involved in it are they?
- Measurement of partner contribution.
- How do we benchmark the learner journey over time.
- Remember we are an open system, that needs to consider how it provides opportunities for people who may not stay in Scotland.

What next?

When they fully emerge, we will want to give consideration to the questions coming out of project 4 on coherence and transitions, including those about learner funding.

Specifically, the next meeting will consider:

- the lessons emerging from the research with young people
- the evidence base: building on our starting point

Next meeting to be held before the end of June 2017.

J Gray
May 2017

Remit, Approach & Priorities

Remit

- **This project group exists to provide advice to the Scottish Government's 15-24 learner journey review.**
1. The 15-24 learner journey review builds on a set of core values, to support a learning and skills system that:
 - ***Puts the learner at the centre***
 - ***Prioritises access and works for all learners, so that non-linear and part-time journeys are supported and joined up***
 - ***Is straightforward, connected and designed for the learner and flexible for change***

Terms of reference

2. This project group is established and led by the Scottish Government.
3. It is a short-life group to provide advice to the Scottish Government on the Scottish Government's review of the 15-24 learner journey.
4. The 15-24 Learner Journey Review is a programme of work, led by the Scottish Government, in partnership with others, to review the effectiveness and efficiency of the learner journey for all 15 to 24 year olds. **It will consider the learner journey from the senior phase (S4-S6) leading to employment, including the stages of further and higher education in college, higher education in university, vocational training and apprenticeships.** The programme's vision is to ensure all learners are on the right route to the right job, through the right course via the right information.
5. Members of the group are senior level representatives drawn from public bodies, agencies and organisations identified by the Scottish Government for their expertise, engagement and experience of the learning system for young people aged 15-24 years.
6. The list of invited members is provided overleaf. Please note that this list will be updated and recirculated once membership has been confirmed.
7. The group will meet at least three times between May and August 2017.
8. Members of the group will be asked their views on the challenges experienced within the learning system and the options for resolving them.
9. The group is not required to make decisions on policy or financial matters, however in its advisory capacity, the Group's views will be relayed as part of advice to Ministers.

Approach

- We have attached the original Project Initiation Document (PID) for this project
- We will undertake to collect more information on cost and impact as part of the underpinning analytical work which will enable an improved understanding in relation to costs.
- Building on but not duplicating this, the approach we propose to take in this group is to focus on the value that different parts of the system - and where and how they collaborate – deliver for the learner and employer.
- This approach, in part, reflects the limits of a discussion solely about cost. In particular, that when discussing parts of the system we are not comparing like with like and that currently there are not a consistent set of measures of impact across the system as a whole.
- We acknowledge at the outset, therefore, the need for a single approach to data collection and measurement, and will continue to progress this work as part of the second phase of the Scottish Government's Enterprise and Skills review.
- Specifically through this group, therefore, we will explore what is invested and why, the relative value it delivers for learner and others, and explore how funding can be used as a lever to drive more efficient and effective learner journeys.
- In considering value, we keep at the forefront of our minds the SG's ambition of inclusive growth, with the need for equity of opportunity provided and ensuring a high value learning experience for different groups of learners.

Focus

- We can't look at everything, at every level of detail.
- It is proposed, therefore, that we focus on those areas where we might make the biggest improvement against the review's drivers of improving the quality and effectiveness of the experience for young people; and improving overall system efficiency.
- In that regard we expect the work of this group to align with that of Project 4 (Provision, Transitions and Progression).
- At our first meeting, we will agree our areas of focus.

Values

10. **The Scottish Government's ambition is for a world class education system.** A system that delivers the best value to the learner, whereby all learners are on the right route to the right career, through the right course via the right information.
11. To help toward this ambition, the review will prioritise recommendations that can better enable learners to move as quickly as possible through the 15-24 learning system with the same or less effort and with the same or less cost to the learner and the state, whilst maintaining or improving both quality and access.
12. In taking forward the 15-24 learner journey review the Scottish Government is committed to safeguarding learner choice and delivering greater system efficiency.
13. To underpin this approach, the review has established a set of values which have been developed in discussion with partners. In particular, to support a learning and skills system that:
 - ***Puts the learner at the centre***

It is important our learning and skills system delivers the full range of learning learners need at the right level and the right quality
 - ***Prioritises access and works for all learners, so that non-linear and part-time journeys are supported and joined up***

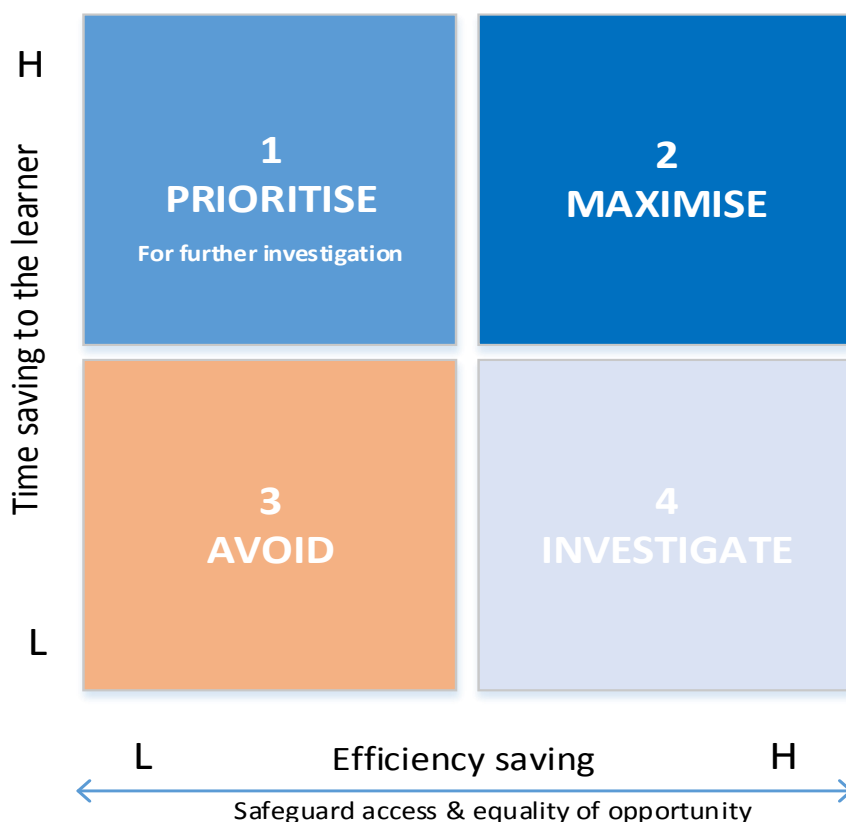
It is important – not least to provide for the stepping stones for those that need them - that the journeys remain flexible to best support learner needs and preferences.

It is important that we give learners the time they need as part of a commitment to life-long learning
 - ***Is straightforward, connected and designed for the learner and flexible for change***

It is important that learners should easily be able to identify the best journey for them and avoid unnecessary duplication of effort and cost as they travel within the learning and skills system.

Guiding Principles

14. In conducting this review we are not simply collecting perspectives from stakeholders. Rather, we are shaping options to inform decisions about changes to the 15-24 learner system. These options are likely to involve complex trade-offs. The programme team has, therefore, established a set of key principles to use to guide the development of any recommendations the review might make.



15. Applying this matrix and the values established above, the programme team propose that the review should:

Prioritise for further investigation actions which save time for the learner even though they may have little or no immediate efficiency saving:

- If we want the 15-24 learning system to work most effectively for the learner the review should prioritise for further investigation actions which enable faster journeys even if they make little or no immediate efficiency saving in the short term. For example, increasing the amount of the college curriculum delivered in the senior phase can enable a learner to achieve at a faster pace – learners don't have to wait until they leave school to start and investment is maximised to ensure continuity of support to ensure greater likelihood of success.
- The review should also prioritise for further consideration those proposals which enable faster learner journeys but which might require short term additional investment. For example, an expansion in University led Advanced Higher Hubs, could help to maximise attainment at SCQF (Scottish Credit & Qualifications Framework) level 7 in S6 at school to enable an increase in the number of young people progressing to year two of a degree.

Maximise the potential of actions which save time for the learner and present the opportunity of a significant efficiency saving

- If we want the 15-24 learning system to be better streamlined for the learner the review should maximise actions which enable faster journeys and in so doing which remove unnecessary duplication. For example, achieving better alignment of courses through the application of the Scottish Qualification and Credit Framework (SCQF). To achieve this the review would need to consider how well the curriculum is aligned to support seamless progression – for example, we would need to consider the alignment of the HN and degree provision in certain subjects – note the exceptions where curriculum does not match and the implications of such a decision on student support funding, learner choice, access and equality of opportunity.

Avoid actions which do little to save time for the learner and which have little or no efficiency saving

- The review should investigate the full value of proposals from the perspective of the learner, noting that the benefit to the learner will not always be obvious and good ideas may incur ‘hidden’ costs and consequences. For example, new qualifications and new courses might widen choice but simply increase journey complexity. Such courses might be aligned in terms of their credit value but still incur ‘wasted’ time within fixed academic years, if progression is not built into each unit of the course.

Investigate actions which may not save time for the learner but present an opportunity of a significant efficiency saving

- The review should investigate further, proposals with the potential of efficiency savings arising from the greater alignment of parts of the system, even if these do not contribute to time savings for the learner. The review, though, should be mindful of the impact on the value and quality of the 15-24 system.
- The review should also investigate, proposals which enable easier transitions and faster progression (by faster, meaning they reduce the waiting time of the learner) - but which require an additional investment of effort from learners, such as an expansion in University summer school activity, which enable learners to ‘catch-up’ and, thereby, speed up their progression.

Summary

16. In summary, when considering its evidence, the programme team’s approach will be to ensure the review contributes to the greatest efficiency improvements whilst safeguarding quality, access and equality of opportunity.

15-24 Learner Journey Programme

Project 5: Funding

Meeting 2: June 2017

Attendance

Name	Organisation
Elaine Drennan	Scottish Government
Murray McVicar	Scottish Government
Sean Murchie	Scottish Government
Jon Gray	Scottish Government
Neville Prentice	SDS
John Murray	SDS
Derek Brown	Fife Council
Alan Scott	SAAS
Ken Rutherford	SFC
Pamela Sinclair	QAA
Fiona Stewart	SDS
Stephen White	Scottish Government
Nicola Sykes	Scottish Government
Paul Fagan	Scottish Government
Ian MacMillan	Colleges Scotland
Alastair Sim	Universities Scotland
Abigail Kinsella	Glasgow City Council

Presentation



The meeting considered

- the lessons emerging from the research with young people
- the evidence base in relation to senior phase to university progression and college to university progression
- alignment with project 4

The discussion noted that:

- Senior phase does not promote routes and choices equally.
- It was noted that if we consider the journey from S4 to S6 plus a four year Scottish degree and compare it to England's two year A level and three year degree, Scotland effectively takes 6 years to achieve what England does in 5 and yet, despite having longer, young people still feel like they need more time to make better choices. The question was raised as to what this says about the reality of choice within the system and the extent to which routes and choices are properly purposed and understood?
- It was highlighted that a significant cohort in S6 experience credit overlap with year one of university.
- Learner maturity plays some role in why this happens, particularly in relation to progression rates from S5. This raises questions about the way in which the system aligns to support transitions.
- One of the strengths of the four year degree in Scotland is its multi-entry points. However, the evidence suggests we are not making the most effective use of them. For example, 99% of S6 leavers enter year one of university / less than half of all HNC and HND students articulate; articulation is limited to particular institutions and the proportion of learners articulating has not significantly changed over the last six years.
- Advanced Higher Hubs were noted as one example of deeper collaboration to deliver progression. However much more needs to be understood about their scale, purpose and cost

Action: SG will work with SFC to establish the scale of advanced higher provision, its cost and impact, its potential for expansion

What is the type of collaboration that is needed?

- One option that was highlighted was regional- hub collaboration to create the right conditions for progression built on a joint approach to curriculum development, delivery and transition planning. Hubs create the conditions to incentivise progression, building on national standards and responding to local bottom-up conditions. Real collaboration, which includes joint delivery and joint ownership of transitions has the potential to overcome learner maturity issues especially for the S6 cohort entering year two.

What structural factors might impact upon this?

- For example, what role does the provision of an unconditional offer make in better enabling the system? How does the timing of the offer incentivise behaviour and progression?

Action: SG to ask Project 4 to consider the implications of this

What is the curriculum we need?

- We discussed the need for more shorter pathways to employment that take into consideration the time it takes to become professionally qualified.
- This requires greater employer involvement in the curriculum and alternative approaches to the achievement of higher level skills. This introduced a discussion on the graduate apprenticeship and the plans and options to deliver these in the future and models of three year delivery.
- To assist an expansion of more employer focussed provision it was noted that we need a clearer rationale and vision for the system including for the breadth of learning we want the senior phase to deliver (for example, does the attainment of 5 Highers demonstrate breadth of learning?)
- We highlighted the need to reflect again on the alignment between the capacities of curriculum for excellence and graduate attributes and the extent to which the senior phase has become a '*dash to qualification attainment*'. If the senior phase is seen as a dash to qualifications in its later years, when Scotland effectively has longer to attain qualifications what does this say about how well purposed the secondary school system is as a whole?
- In concluding this discussion we returned again to the issue of effectiveness and reminded ourselves of the need to be clear on what it is we want the system to deliver for different cohorts of learners as well as being clear on how well we expect it to do it.

College to university progression

- Articulation works best where there is co-design of the curriculum and yet the models and best practice is still limited to a number of initiatives. HNs could be compromised by trying to provide routes both for learners into work, and for learners into university – yet at the same time the system values their flexibility to meet changing choices.
- The model used in the Strathclyde Engineering Academy was highlighted as something that can work.
- When considering the value of initiatives we need to understand the full cost of articulation and its sustainability.

Action: SG will work with SFC to review the costs of delivering articulation, including by the different models of delivery, considering their value and impact.

Action: SG will work with US and SFC to understand the progress with the work to better scope the extent of curriculum match. As part of this work we will want to consider the extent of the college curriculum where

we might need to consider adaptation to the HN. This would build on work already underway and include consideration of the timeframe and consequences of doing this, giving attention to the need for and viability of alternative sub-degree qualifications

What next?

We agreed that at the next meeting we would focus on the design and delivery of the senior phase and look at the implications of achieving greater collaboration and the types of experiences this might enable.

To do this we will:

- discuss progress of the sub-project being led by Mary Byrne and bring the relevant issues and challenges into our next discussion

Action: JG

- provide further updates to our evidence base

Action: ED

Next meeting to be held before the end of July 2017.

J Gray
June 2017

15-24 Learner Journey Programme

Project 5: Funding**Meeting 3: July 2017****Attendance**

Name	Organisation
Ken Rutherford	SFC
Martin Smith	SFC
Alastair Sim	Universities Scotland
Derek Brown	Fife Council
Fiona Stewart	SDS
Andy Witty	Colleges Scotland
Vonnie Sandlan	Colleges Scotland
Susan Anton	Scottish Government
Elaine Drennan	Scottish Government
Sheila Dunn	SCQF
Charlie Jeffery	Edinburgh University
Pamela Sinclair	QAA
Ann Floyd	Scottish Government
Danielle Hennessy	Scottish Government
Paul Fagan	Scottish Government
Jonathan Gray	Scottish Government

Background**The meeting considered the overlap in the education and skills system and the cost implications associated with this**

It was noted, that the system has begun to coalesce and better align itself, which establishes the basis for further adaptation and improvement. To achieve greater alignment we need to understand how the system is incentivised and the implications of any changes to this.

Currently we know the system overlaps and that we dual fund aspects of a learner's journey. We also know that we currently require additional investment to ensure the system works together in the best interest of the learner. For example, we have invested additional strategic university funding to support college and university articulation so that the learner doesn't have to repeat levels of SCQF credit. This example reminds us that, whilst the system has acted to improve progression and journey times for the learner, and save cost from not funding repeat level of SCQF study, we also offset some of the saving by the need to invest to incentivise this activity to happen.

In the future, arguably, an efficient system would be well aligned with a clear purpose and would maximise learner progression without the need for incentives or additional investment.

This meeting looked at how we have invested to align the system to date and the implications of this.

School and University

We note at the outset the different categories of learners with different reasons for continuing to study in S6. There are some who need S6 to get a full complement of Highers. There are others who need it to complete a Foundation Apprenticeship, an HN or elements of SCQF level 5/6 provision to progress to college.

This discussion was concerned primarily with those who could progress to university at the end of S5 and considers the efficiency of their S6 year.

In terms of the size of this cohort, we have identified that there is a significant proportion (**57.7%**) of young people with unconditional offers who are 18 years of age **by the February of that academic year**.

The discussion noted or raised the following questions:

- How do we incentivise progression?
- Do we need to look in more detail at Level 7 – where there is the greatest overlap and greatest area of choice for learners - and the extent to which this best meets Scotland's ambitions for Inclusive economic growth.
- What is the role of industry – what does industry need at level 7 and how involved in its creation are they?
- The Scottish education system provides lots of choice for the learner, but there are consequences of this both for the learner and the system. Do we really promote and understand choice or do we simply act on a default that more is more?

Attainment

- It was noted a comparison in pass rates of higher and Advanced Higher may provide useful insight into how motivation is incentivised within the system.
- Numbers staying on to S6 have grown significantly – often those passing Higher are presented with Advanced Highers in S6.
- A question was asked if the group could explore data for those who entered prior to this but dropped off/didn't translate into actual presentations. Numbers around unconditional offers could be explored further? Review number of entrants vs completed entrants.
- Having considered attainment and motivation there were concerns around the efficiency of the system and the value added by S6 for particular cohorts of learners. It was noted that some high performing students are using S6 to supplement rather than maximise qualifications for progression.

Advanced Higher

- If we wanted to maximise progression to year two of university from S6 we would need to make much greater use of the Advanced Higher.
- There is variability on the availability of an Advanced Higher curriculum for students, with further exploration of this data set needed to establish what the offer is – there are also students who are studying Advanced Highers at school whilst attending college.
- Different offers in different areas – how do we overcome this variability? Or are we content with regional, sometimes pilot, activity?
- Some of this pilot activity at level 7 between schools and universities involves more than just an Advanced Higher curriculum. And there are clear merits in all these programmes. However, more often than not these pilots represent attempts to fix parts of the system. What do all these fixes say about the efficiency of the system.
- Looking at insight data may allow us to identify Advanced Higher supply and take up, if not we may wish to explore other ways. *It was noted that colleges sometimes do not offer the Advanced Higher as this runs into direct competition with the school / university.*

Advanced Higher Hubs.

- One option to expand Advanced Higher availability through Advanced Higher hubs. Again, these cost additional resource to what is already invested in the system. Is this sustainable?
- Different approach countrywide – widening access. Range of schools, colleges and universities collaborating to delivering this – need to evaluate what is working best, however this may not work for everybody/everywhere.
- Are there better ways of encouraging alignment of different parts of the system?
- One suggestion was that we need to add in deeper skillset by this stage. Pre-level 7. What types of partnerships would be necessary to achieve this?

Why support AH delivery in place of year 1 of university?

- The discussion raised the question of what the Advanced Higher was for? It was noted that it was primarily a qualification for progression to university. It was also noted that they rarely, if at all, promote entry to year two of a degree and indeed the system is not incentivised to do this. The question was asked, however, whether we would be better enabling young people to start university year one at the end of S5, rather than create qualifications that try to replicate it? For example, it was stated that some universities consider Advanced Highers simply because learners come with them.
- The fit of AH with university curriculum will vary dramatically by university. Some may have smoother transition from Higher, some less smooth. Especially, for example, where Advanced mathematics is concerned. Varies by subject and availability, varies by university.
- 20-30 years – stay on rates have been increasing. It was stated that, we need to question the guidance offered in the system that “it’s a good thing to stay on for S6” Broaden etc. This has become a cultural issue now – but can we incentivise change in the system?
- At the same time, within schools, the “gold standard” for students appears to be for them to stay on until 6th year – and for students not to leave unless they

have a destination. Every individual's 6th year will have a different route – equally valuable. S6 can provide 'rich learning' alongside the academic route.

- It was noted, if the group of learners we are concerned with are staying on to S6 and the credit they are attaining in S6 is not maximising their further progression then this asks us to question what this 'rich learning' is. If this is focused primarily on the personal development of the learner and this was properly costed, would we continue to think staying on in S6 was the most effective way of delivering this? Wouldn't other agencies be better equipped to deliver this type of developmental / experiential activity, so why not empower the learner to choose where they invest the state's investment in them – why do they need to be in school to achieve this for example?
- We know some young people value the 6th year experience, so we are left with this question around the value added by that year? What progression is delivered in each part of the system, should this be our starting point for determining added value?

Learner Maturity

- One of the reasons we are concerned about increasing S5 progression to year one of university is learner maturity.
- In relation to this, it was noted that learner support within university has changed. Universities have developed sophisticated retention strategies as they have had to become better at retaining international students. Universities have made significant investment in student support and the campus experience has changed dramatically, reflecting its international and multi-cultural nature.
- The question was asked, why is it acceptable for some groups of learners to leave for work, college and an apprenticeship but somehow we think that some of our most able learners lack the maturity to go to university. Is this based on outdated preconceptions about a drinking culture on a university campus? What specifically is the maturity challenge?
- It was noted there are genuine emotional challenges for learners going to university particularly for those who leave home. What proportion of Scottish learners do move home and how much of an issue is this? Ultimately, how confident could we be of university support structures to ensure those able to enter year one at the end of S5 should be encouraged to do so?

College and University

HN and articulation

- This discussion considered the extent of overlap within HE and asked how well colleges and universities deliver a coherent higher education system in Scotland and the costs associated with this.
- How much of an expectation should there be for articulation to be everywhere? How can it be if curricula and pedagogy does not always match?
- The SFC currently funds Associate Student models of articulation where the degree begins in college through the HN and full planned articulation is built into programme design. For example – NE Scotland College supports 75 students through this model at additional cost to the state. Around 470 articulate on an annual basis to RGU at no extra cost to the state.

- A question was asked regarding the success rate of articulation for students moving from HNC/HND to degree? We need to be clear on the value of this investment to the learner, particularly where it involves additional expenditure.
- Will further expansion in articulation require additional funding? Not necessarily – since curriculum matching work has been well progressed to date. However this is not the case everywhere or in every institution.

Further development of articulation should be modelled

- It was noted that articulation requires one single systemic approach – identifying, in areas of learner demand, where there is a disconnect in subject areas between HN to degrees – then working to re-engineer these to better prepare students for university. This would establish an accepted threshold for articulation. This work needs done on an HN by HN basis to remedy the disconnect in the system.
- We need to test out the limitations of the current system. For example, there is the HNC credit gap which requires bridging options. There is some scope to do this. These problems have been solved, to date, by the sectors working together, but should an efficient system require lots of these bridging programmes.
- A question was asked whether there was a need for a new sub-degree qualification which is not a HN qualification to progress to university? Something co-designed would be useful, with universities and colleges, as HN articulation is not straightforward for young people at present. But would this add to learner confusion or make routes clearer and easier to choose between?
- Content of the HN programme is heavily dictated by SQA – if looking to extend the system beyond the current subject matching work, then we need to look at how the qualifications are designed.
- At the moment we operate on an assumption that HNs are dual purpose – vocational and academic. However, how vocational are they? What are the job outcomes from HNs for those not progressing to university? What proportion of employer involvement is there within these HNs / what proportion of work placement is provided?

Summary

- Learner progression from school and college to university is to some extent constrained by the limits of the AH and the HN. Also, it is influenced by a range of incentives which have emerged over time and have become norms in the system.
- The system has worked well to date to overcome the constraints within it, particularly in relation to college to university articulation.
- However, we can see that more can be done and note that whilst one of the strengths of Scotland's four year degree is its multi-entry points, it is clear that we are not making maximum use of these.
- In part, to do so we need to determine what S6 is for and what the HN is for?

- There are trade-offs related to this:
 - Should we/can we ensure that learners are suitably prepared, supported & well received and incentivised to leave at S5 and enter year one of university?
And/or
 - Should we/can we ensure there is a universal Advanced Higher curriculum in S6 that enables incentivised progression to year two of university?
And/or
 - Should we accept that S6 is about learner development as much as academic attainment, and if so, how do we ensure this experience is most effectively delivered and funded and adds real value to the learner and the system?
And
 - Can we ensure greater and sustainable articulation without bridging and additional funding? What action do we need to achieve this?

Next steps

We will look at the learner benefits and cost implications emerging from our discussion to date and set these out in our final meeting (5).

In advance of that at our next meeting (4) we will focus on college and apprenticeships.

15-24 Learner Journey Programme

Project 5: Funding**Meeting 4: September 2017****Attendance**

Name	Organisation
Ian Diamond	Aberdeen University/Universities Scotland – via dial in
Alastair Sim	Universities Scotland – via dial in
Fiona Stewart	SDS
Andy Witty	Colleges Scotland
Vonnie Sandlan	Colleges Scotland
Pamela Sinclair	QAA
Neville Prentice	SDS
Katie Hutton	SDS
Jim Gallagher	GCU
Jodie Waite	NUS Scotland
Pete Smith	Borders College/Colleges Scotland
Tracey Slaven	Edinburgh University
Alan Scott	SAAS
Karen Corbett	Education Scotland
Elaine Drennan	Scottish Government
Jon Gray	Scottish Government
Julie Anderson	Scottish Government
Susan Anton	Scottish Government
Paul Fagan	Scottish Government

Introduction

The meeting focussed on colleges and apprenticeships.

The group discussed the significant contribution colleges make to the education and skills system.

The discussion noted the various pathways colleges offer young people, and how over time these have evolved. Clear college functions or priorities have emerged, in part, influenced by Government policy, economic conditions and changing patterns of participation. Broadly speaking, colleges have increasingly become a key provider of higher education and in particular enabling the route to degree level study in university. According to the data, colleges have become less about providing a vocational learning experience leading directly to a specific job.

The need for more detailed data was raised at the outset of the discussion and the limits this places on what we know about the effectiveness of college learner journeys. For example, what level of young people might we expect to see leaving college and going directly into work? How effective are colleges in delivering

outcomes for different categories of learner? What benchmarks exist for the sector and how do individual regions compare?

It was noted that these and many other questions need further exploration if we are to fully understand the college contribution and make judgements about its efficiency.

College Discussion

The group reviewed data in relation to college provision for 16-24 year olds. The discussion highlighted the significant proportion of young people reporting positive destinations, whilst noting the majority of these (73.3%) were continuing to FE or HE. Only around 11% moved into employment or training.

A copy of the presentation on colleges was circulated.

The discussion highlighted the following:

- The many reasons for positive withdrawal from college courses, which are not always captured in the data and indeed, can reflect poorly on colleges. Data needs to be consistent and benchmarked. At the same time, the question was asked about the efficiency of courses that don't require completion in order to secure an employment outcome.

Related to this, the extent of partial success in the sector was noted – those individuals who have passed modules, but not achieved a full qualification – and what this says about efficiency. Is it acceptable that a significant number of young people don't continue or complete all their studies – is this a consequence of unfocussed pathways or good flexibility in the system, noting that some learners may need to / want to change track because they are underprepared / need more choice? Whilst we might accept that some learners may not achieve all the units in a course, the question was asked as to what the levels of partial success say about the design of courses. For example, are there implications for the balance of full-time provision vs shorter programmes of study, in terms of routes to employment rather than to continued study?

- The group discussed data on repeat level of study at SCQF levels 4 and 5, noting that the level of repeat study – around 20% - seems to suggest an inefficiency in the system. This raised the issue of the extent to which we know who is repeating and the expectations we have of the success and progression of different cohorts of learners.

In this context, the group discussed widening access and noted that colleges play an important role in providing an educational and developmental opportunity for people with additional support needs to achieve qualifications, often in a non-linear way, and over time support progress to work. This raised the point of the need to show success by cohorts and to disaggregate the data to show impact relative to a learner's starting point in order to demonstrate the value added and to make sense of different cohort journeys. For example, it was stated that it is entirely reasonable that learners with

profound and complex needs have multiple journeys within college, but that each of those journeys should involve learning and developmental progression. It was noted that outcome agreements have started to benchmark student success rates, including, for example, for care leavers. This work is being done at a regional level and it was noted that further work is needed to pull this together at a national level as the basis for sector wide benchmarks.

- The group noted the significant number of students who progress from FE to HE. In particular, the change in patterns of participation from part-time work based HNCs toward full time HNDs leading to further study. Again, this raised the question of the balance and nature of the higher education vocational offer, how much of it might we expect to be a route to a degree and how much of it we should expect to bridge the technical skills gaps. It was noted, since the economic downturn, young people have been staying in education longer. Is the current balance of provision, therefore, a good fit with these economic conditions, in which case, might we expect it to change during other times?
- It was noted the ultimate measure of success will be employment, and employment appropriate to the level of training / learning provided? For example, the question was asked whether for a college a good outcome is a learner achieving an entry level job? Colleges have a significant role to play here as it was noted that there is evidence that there aren't enough graduate jobs - 22-24% in Scotland are underemployed graduates. Are colleges making a significant enough contribution to this economic challenge and producing the people with the right level of technical skills the economy needs – how would we know?
- It was noted that the college leaver survey measured destinations at 6 months following exit from institutions and that this does not extend to capture the full effectiveness of the college contribution. However, the group asked whether it was reasonable to do so and how would we measure or discern the value added by colleges over the longer term. It was noted a project to link college data with HMRC tax records is being taken forward with output likely to follow in December, and that this will improve the ease and accuracy of destination reporting. In the first instance we should be able to discern which learners progress to the next level of academic credit and which move into an appropriate level of job relative to their prior learning and their college level of study.

Related to the above, and as part of the wider work needed on benchmarks, it was noted that it would be helpful to know what level of credit school pupils enter with in order to better understand what constitutes repeating, second choices, or progression.

- In terms of employer outcomes, some positive results, in terms of employer perceptions of college learners' preparedness for employment, were evident in the 2016 UK Employer Perspectives survey. However, it was noted this may not be sufficiently representative, as the sample size is unclear* (***explanatory note added below***). It was further noted that this data has not changed over time.

** - The UK Employer Perspectives Survey is the principal source for the employer's view on recruitment of young people, on work experience, on people development and on apprenticeships. The survey runs across the UK and is managed and funded by the Department for Education (DfE). The Survey included 4,009 interviews with establishments in Scotland. The survey, conducted between May and August 2016, is published every two years*

- The discussion highlighted DYW and the issue of dual investment in the system to meet the ambition of enabling more young people to undertake a richer curriculum choice whilst in school. It was noted that DYW personifies the learner journey ambition – that is, that young people can learn by stage not age, and so don't have to wait to leave for college to access a blended vocational / work based learning experience. DYW should also slowly begin to overcome some of the issues related to repeat level study in college, since young people are supported to make better choices. Equally, however, if these outcomes don't improve, DYW also runs the risk of making the system more inefficient – for example, the discussion noted the relatively poorer outcomes for students who participate in college activity at school, with pass rates lower than those who complete similar activity within college.

Apprenticeships

The group considered the success of Modern, Foundation and Graduate Level Apprenticeships in meeting learner and employer needs. The group highlighted the need to maintain momentum in promoting these, but was also mindful of sustainability, affordability and the need for an established baseline to help in measuring their impact.

The group noted the following:

- The high level of positive destinations achieved, but the need to be clear on our expectations for apprenticeships sustaining employment beyond their apprenticeship with their original employer.
- The need to measure dropout rates consistently across the system. At present there is no “cooling off” period for MAs, whereas there is for college and university courses. (Among the reasons for drop-off - could be not right for the person or employer). If we are seeking to measure the success of these various options, we need to ensure the data is comparable.
- The group discussed Graduate Level Apprenticeships. At present, costs are consistent across the system, however they will vary from institution – depending on the configuration of the course. This leads to questions around sustainability as the expansion and uptake of apprenticeships increases.
- It was noted, GLAs have a target of around 10,000 per annum, and over time, we expect around 60-70% of these opportunities to be taken up by young people. A question was raised as to what extent we are planning provision in

partnership across the system and mindful of the available demand and the totality and complementarity of the places available?

- It was noted that we have an emerging sophisticated apprenticeship offer in Scotland, and one that the Scottish Government is committed to see expand further. FAs and GLAs maximise their impact – and the role all partners play in realising this – and ensure we don't create a high cost education and skills system that is not sustainable in the longer term?
- Further analysis is required looking at college delivery of MAs, in terms of pattern of provision and comparable outcomes.

15-24 Learner Journey Programme

Project 5 – Funding

Meeting 5: October 2017

Name	Organisation
Neville Prentice	SDS
John Murray	SDS
Pete Smith	Colleges Scotland/Borders College
Tony Jakimciw	Colleges Scotland
Tracey Slaven	Universities Scotland
Nigel Seaton	Abertay University
Sheila Dunn	SCQF Partnership
Robert Nicol	COSLA
Jodie Waite	NUS Scotland
Fergus Boden	NUS Scotland
Alan Scott	SAAS
Ken Rutherford	SFC
Rebecca Carradice	Scottish Government
Susan Anton	Scottish Government
Colin Robertson	Scottish Government
Jon Gray	Scottish Government
Danielle Hennessy	Scottish Government
Paul Fagan	Scottish Government

Introduction

As part of the learner journey review Project 5 has considered issues relating to the improvement of the existing system. This final discussion considered an alternative approach to incentivising the system by placing the learner / employer at the centre of decisions over its funding.

A learner account approach gives the learner / employer greater influence over the funding of education and skills, with the benefit that the system better orientates itself to respond to learner / employer need. At the same time it is argued that learner / employers will take greater responsibility for their learning choices which in turn will drive more informed learner choices, which will influence the supply of education and skills more toward the needs of end users.

Such approaches have been trialled in the past and a form of Individual Learner Accounts are currently being used as part of the recently announced, Scottish Government College Flexible Workforce Fund.

Whilst such an approach might empower learners and bring with it greater flexibility and responsiveness from both learners and the system, questions arise over the limits of its applicability.

A list of constraints were set out in a discussion paper. Noting these, the meeting was to consider the question:

Are there aspects of the education and skills system where a learner account approach might improve the experience and outcome for learners and employers?

Discussion

Operation within the system

A discussion focussed on what the core aim of Individual Learning Accounts would be seeking to manage or achieve, would this allow for a certain amount of time within the system (X number of years), or would this afford young people a diminishing balance from which subjects/course could be selected (a cost-based approach). If focussed on the latter, this could have implications for those wishing to pursue courses attracting a significant cost, such as medicine.

A question was posed on whether an account-based approach could lead to a joined-up, collaborative approach to curriculum building based on a solid data set? The group felt this approach could lead to instability within the education system, as institutions could no longer plan in the longer term, but rather respond to user need on an annual basis. It was noted there would be some benefit to this, as universities/colleges could adapt to demand – and prepare to offer a specific set of courses based on user need. However, this would result in large deviations in income from institution to institution – and the economy moving from being planned and regulated – an approach which appears contrary to SG policy at present.

It was noted, an account-based approach would empower learners to have control over their journey and progression through the system, and a potential benefit of this would be a system adjusting to user need, perhaps better aligning supply and demand within regions. However, informed by their past experience, the group noted the limits of this and expressed the worry that different groups of learners may not make maximum use of their account, limiting their progression potential and potentially perpetuating existing educational and societal inequality. Indeed, reflecting that the current system is not joined up and, young people do not always have the information or support to navigate through school-college-university and into employment, young people would likely be presented with a confusing landscape in which to make the best use of their account.

Moreover, there was a concern that such an account could inhibit choice for those who have progressed from school to FE and utilised some of their account before commencing HE. This could undermine one of the main strengths of the Scottish system, by introducing a limited pot and potentially only a certain number of attempts at participation.

As well as the wider principles noted above, the group also questioned the practical implications of implementation. Additional information would be required in terms of the operation of the scheme, before a substantive discussion could take place (e.g. are the accounts monetary, or vouchers – if so, what are the terms and conditions of use?). It was noted that there are particular challenges in relation to those looking to return to education, outwith the scope of the review. For example those seeking to up-skill, would they have to fund this themselves if their learner account had been

fully utilised? The group suggested fewer funding streams than those which exist already could potentially enhance the offer presented to young people, rather than the addition of a further one.

Young people

The group discussed the potential benefits and implications for young people. A clear benefit would be young people taking greater ownership of their learning, and perhaps giving greater consideration to careers, before embarking on further learning.

However, it was noted an account based approach could potentially lead to learners focussing on cost, rather than the skills and career potential of different courses. Furthermore, the group felt there was a danger for those who were more risk averse and that there could be wasted investment on “safer” options with the inevitable consequence of repeated study.

A fixed pot of funding is unlikely to yield sufficiently more money to overcome this and presents a risk of what happens to learners who require repeat study and use up their account.

A suggested benefit of the approach is that a more consumer-focussed approach to learning, would empower learners to challenge what is on offer and whether courses represent “value for money”. It was noted, at present, a significant number of young people appear unwilling to do this.

It was asked how would we come to assess value appropriately? It was noted that whilst learners might value different things, we should ensure all learners are easily able to determine the success rates of courses, the destinations of former students, and have an understanding of links to careers, employers and potential earnings. This is something that should happen consistently across colleges and universities.

A significant barrier which may present itself from this approach is the notion of cost and value within the system – potentially those from disadvantaged backgrounds would be less likely to benefit as they may not be comfortable in utilising their account. Those from privileged backgrounds may fail to appreciate the value of their account, whilst those from a disadvantaged background may be reluctant to implement or take forward such a resource. Additionally, the group highlighted additional support for learners is often cross-subsidised – this may not be the case if this approach introduces volatility within curriculum planning.

Perhaps the most significant limiting factor is that a fixed pot is unlikely to be able to give sufficiently more money or overcome the issue that some learners will always need repeat study. Often sustaining repeat study is best achieved through the sharing out of the costs of the whole institution, otherwise there is a risk learner accounts run out and then what?

Employers

A question was posed on the potential benefit for employers. Would individual learning accounts work better for employers and enable them to purchase the training they need for their employees?

It was noted that aligning particular college and university provision to employer and industry demand is already an activity carried out by SDS and SFC through their skills alignment work, through which demand is assessed and then planned through outcome agreements.

In part as a consequence of this, a significant amount of work-based learning is already undertaken within the education system. It was noted that some of this attracts a significant cost. Some is difficult to replicate in areas where the economy is formed of largely SMEs, who potentially would be unwilling to make such an investment. Moreover, there is a limit to the application of this approach given that employers are often unwilling to recognise the longer-term benefit to the learner of aspects of training – preferring a more focussed approach covering their specific needs. It was said, that we must be mindful of what we are encouraging, are we training one person for one job, or one person engaging in a life of learning?

Conclusion

The discussion made clear the limits of the application of a learner account approach. It was noted that whilst there is potential for such an initiative to benefit young people in the longer term, there are a number of issues within the current system which need to be addressed before such accounts would be practical, or indeed beneficial. At present we see a number of young people experiencing problematic learner journeys as a result of insufficient careers advice and guidance, unclear pathways and a perceived lack of focus on employability skills within the education system. As such, it was proposed that there is a need to better purpose and align the system before any further work is undertaken in this area.