

SG POLICY UPDATE

The purpose of this paper is to provide the Access Delivery Group with regular updates on related policy developments within the Scottish Government. ADG members should notify SG officials of any additional policy areas that they would like to see covered within the update going forward.

INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF STUDENT SUPPORT

The independent Review of Student Support, 'A New Social Contract for Students' published on 20th November 2017: <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/11/3884>

The remit for the review was to 'assess the effectiveness of the system of support for all students engaged in further and higher education in Scotland, and make recommendations for beneficial change'. The remit also asked that the review group acknowledge the constraints on public funding and make connections with relevant policy development in other areas (e.g. the expansion of child-care provision).

The main recommendations were:

- A New Social Contract for Students;
- Minimum Student Income entitlement in both further and higher education;
- Minimum Student Income of £8,100;
- Increased means-tested bursaries; and discretionary funds protected;
- Student loans enhanced, including an increased loan repayment threshold;
- Student loans available in further education;
- Debt write-off for students transitioning from further to higher education;
- A new approach for students on benefits.

Scottish Government Response

- The Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science thanked the independent Chair Jayne-Anne Gadhia and the Review Board for their work in producing the final recommendations.
- Further to that, the Minister said that a number of the recommendations would fundamentally change the way students in Scotland are supported financially.
- Ministers committed to considering the recommendations in detail and to set out next steps in due course.
- As part of the draft 2018/19 budget, an additional £5 million was announced for initial implementation of the findings of the independent review.

DEVELOPING THE YOUNG WORKFORCE

Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) is Scotland's youth employment strategy and through DYW, the Scottish Government (SG) aim to reduce youth unemployment levels by 40% by 2021. The strategy aims to create an excellent, work relevant education offer to young people in Scotland. This includes creating new vocational learning options; enabling young people to learn in a range of settings in their senior phase of school; embedding employer engagement in education; offering careers advice at an earlier point in school; and introducing new standards for careers guidance and work experience.

The third DYW annual report published in January 2018 set out progress over the first three years of the programme. The report showed positive progress with the introduction of new vocational learning options, embedding employer engagement in education and introducing new standards for careers guidance and work experience, SG have improved the options for all young people as they progress through their education.

The progress of the DYW programme was discussed in Parliament on Thursday 11 January 2018. In closing the debate, the DFM reiterated his priorities for the next phase of the programme, including:

- The importance of maintaining momentum, especially in relation to school and employer engagement
- A reiteration of the three education policy commitments and their complementarity in addressing the needs of every child
- The need to do more on gender, including in relation to women & enterprise
- Tackling the issue of parity of esteem and communicating the value of vocational qualifications and pathways
- Addressing the needs of all young people. In which context, DFM referenced MCR pathways, stating the value and the strengths of this approach and how we might build on it.
- The importance of our partnership with Local Government and the continued role of LAs in delivering our DYW ambitions.

15-24 LERARNER JOURNEY REVIEW

The Scottish Government's ambition is for a world class education and skills system. A system that delivers the best value to the learner, whereby all learners are on the right route to the right job, through the right course via the right information. Recognising this, the Scottish Government committed to improving the experience of 15-24 years olds within the education system through the Learner Journey Review

The Review has created a shared evidence base on young people's experience of and outcomes from their learner journeys; and we are now using this evidence to develop policy propositions, which we intend to announce in the new year.

Approach

As part of the Review, we commissioned research into young people's experience of the education and training system in Scotland. The findings of this work was published on the Scottish Government website on 28 September 2017.

We have engaged with stakeholders and users extensively around the Learner Journey Review including representatives drawn from public bodies and agencies, the third sector and private organisations with expertise of the learning system, as well as organisations representing the interests of parents, young people and employers.

In addition, we have run a series of engagement events with colleges and their partners across Scotland to gather perspectives at a regional level. The detail of this engagement will be published as part of the final report

Next steps

All project activity is now complete as is the first phase of the review. Propositions have been produced and they are now subject to Ministerial consideration. The evidence base and some of the research outputs from the review have published and these are available on SG website.

We expect to announce the propositions in the coming weeks, along with recommendations for how they can be taken forward. As we develop our response, working with partners and wider stakeholders, we will continue to actively engage young people to ensure that policy decisions relating to the learner journey continue to be informed by young people.

SCOTTISH ATTAINMENT CHALLENGE

The £750 million Scottish Attainment Challenge is about achieving equity in educational outcomes by focussing on closing the poverty-related attainment gap.

The Scottish Government is allocating £59 million in 2018-19 (an increase of £9 million from last year) to provide targeted support to specific Scottish Attainment Challenge Authorities, children and young people living in communities affected by high levels of deprivation as well as a range of national programmes, including staffing supply and capacity, professional learning and school leadership.

Challenge Authorities have until 28th February to submit their proposals for 2018/19 and the deadline for the Schools Programme is 9th March. The Scottish Government and Education Scotland have worked closely with local authorities to streamline reporting and monitoring.

Pupil Equity Fund

Now in its second year, Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) allocations for 2018/19 were published at the end of January on the Scottish Government website. We have allocated £120 million of PEF directly to schools, to be spent at the discretion of headteachers and school leaders to use for additional staffing or resources that they consider will help raise attainment. Publicly funded primary, secondary and special schools will receive £1,200 for each child in Primary 1 to S3, or equivalent, who is eligible and registered for free school meals

A second round of Pupil Equity Funding Headteacher practice sharing events are taking place in February/March 2018. We are working with Regional Improvement Collaboratives to develop content which meets local needs. These events provide an opportunity to share learning and promote further collaboration on the use of Pupil Equity Funding.

The National Operational guidance on the use of Pupil Equity Funding has been updated for 2018/19. These changes include being clear that funding will continue to the end of the parliament, how to manage unspent funds and highlighting the Education Endowment Foundation Toolkit. The revised Operational Guidance and the Pupil Equity Fund allocations for 2018/19 are both available on the Scottish Government website.

National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan

The 2018 National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan sets out the measures and milestones we will use to assess whether we are making progress towards closing the attainment gap. Following consultation it was decided to include 11 key measures, including 3 measures of children and young people's health and wellbeing. The first annual report of progress against these measures will be produced at the end of the year.

We have also launched a new resource which support schools in working more closely with Third Sector partners to improve outcomes for young people. It is an example of collaborative working, having been developed jointly by a range of third sector partners led by the Robertson Trust, COSLA, SOLACE, and ADES. This can be accessed from Education Scotland's National Improvement Hub and sets out how schools can identify shared agendas and create purposeful partnerships with appropriate third sector organisations.