

**REPORT TO:** POLICY AND RESOURCES - 19 DECEMBER 2011

**REPORT ON:** PUTTING LEARNERS AT THE CENTRE - DELIVERING OUR AMBITIONS FOR POST 16 EDUCATION

**REPORT BY:** DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

**REPORT NO.:** 559-2011

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 This report presents a consultation response to *Putting Learners at the Centre – Delivering our Ambitions for Post-16 Education*. This was published by the Scottish Government in September 2011. The response (Appendix 1) is a joint response from Community Learning and Development and the Education Department.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Policy and Resources Committee:
- i. notes the contents of this report;
  - ii. agrees the consultation response; and
  - iii. instructs the Director of Education to submit the consultation response.

## **3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

## **4.0 MAIN TEXT**

- 4.1 Putting Learners at the Centre – Delivering our Ambitions for Post-16 Education (the paper) was published by the Scottish Government in September 2011. The paper set out proposals for wide-ranging reform of the full range of Government funded post-16 education in higher education, further education and skills. It also made direct reference to community learning & development which is delivered by local authorities and the Third Sector. The programme of reform did not extend to schools, since Curriculum for Excellence reforms were well underway and schools were the responsibility of local government. Neither did it extend to employment support funded by the Department of Work and Pensions. In the paper, the Government made clear its aim to refocus provision to make it more sharply aligned with employer needs. It also placed a greater emphasis on meeting the needs of learners through the appropriate provision of relevant courses.
- 4.2 The paper set out the proposals for fundamental change in the accountability arrangements for college funding. The central aims of the paper set out a different approach to college structures and funding where:
- there would be a much sharper focus on outcomes;
  - planning, funding and delivery would focus on a regional approach, responding to the economic needs of that region; and
  - funding would be simpler and needs-based.

A core proposal was that colleges would become directly accountable for how well, collectively, they serve the needs of their region, on the basis of negotiated outcome agreements with the colleges in each region. A further consultation paper was jointly issued by the Scottish Government and the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) in November 2011. It set out the next step in the Government's plans to reform post-16 learning in Scotland. It proposed that that investment in the further education sector should be focused on the needs of a region as defined by the region's socio-economic characteristics. As part of the major shift in emphasis, the expectation was that colleges in a region would work together rather than independently to meet that need and that the SFC would negotiate an outcome agreement with the colleges in a region. The actual funding allocation for Dundee College will not be clear until the ongoing review is completed and agreement is reached in relation to the outcome of the rationalisation process.

- 4.3 A set of options have been presented on how colleges might organise themselves to meet the needs of their region. There is recognition that it will take time for new structures to develop and that interim arrangements may be required, particularly in the first year. Four broad options were presented on the understanding that a number of variants may be appropriate in different areas and that the model chosen in a particular region might evolve over time. The options were:

- **A merged college.** Where colleges intend to merge, there is a well established route to moving from funding the individual colleges to funding the new 'college'.
- **A federation of colleges.** Colleges in a region could federate and form a joint board to receive and be held accountable for the funding from SFC.
- **A lead college.** The colleges in an area may wish to agree that one college becomes the fundable body that is accountable to the SFC for the needs of the area.
- **A collaboration between a group of colleges.** In this arrangement, the SFC would continue to fund each college in an area directly but would require that the colleges agree to a firm collaboration to address the needs of the whole region.

- 4.4 The proposals are based on the view that regional planning and funding of college provision makes sense for most of the country and that, in future, SFC's funding for colleges should be based on the demographic and economical needs of each region using the following indicators:

- the number of the S3-S6 age group in school education;
- the numbers of 16-19 year olds not in school or university education and not participating in a national training programme;
- the numbers of 20-24 year olds who are unemployed;
- the numbers of people of all ages with low qualifications in a region; and
- travel to study/travel to work data – though this is more relevant for some regions than for others.

The indicators are intended to ensure that regions where there is greater need for further education because of low school staying-on rates, fewer people going to university or a legacy of low skills will get additional places compared with those areas with, for example, higher levels of school educational attainment.

- 4.5 The view is that the creation of regional groupings of colleges would enable the groupings to act more strategically to improve skills in their areas and across Scotland by identifying the needs of learners and employers, planning provision with a range of partners and allocating resources at regional level to deliver high quality

learning. The regional groupings would be responsible for ensuring the delivery of a range of provision locally to all communities across their region.

The view would be that this new approach, if agreed, would improve the current system by:

- creating college groupings of scale, able to plan regionally and deliver locally across Scotland;
- helping every community of a reasonable size - and every young person - to access appropriate college education;
- enhancing the capability to plan and deliver part-time learning, particularly for adults in employment;
- providing a stronger basis to develop further provision for employers;
- improving the existing provision for communities that are not currently well served;
- creating opportunities for colleges in many regions to work more cost-efficiently (for example, through the sharing of services, mergers or collaboration);
- freeing resources to redirect towards learners;
- strengthening the role and contribution of colleges as important partners within regional networks of agencies and services; and
- providing a framework for joint working between the school, college and university sectors.

4.6 If approved, the creation of regions will lead to a significant reduction in the number of individual colleges. There is recognition of the need to strike a balance between creating regions that:

- are large enough to be efficient;
- recognise existing geographical, administrative and planning boundaries;
- reflect how far students are able to travel; and
- take advantage of the natural, existing relationships between colleges and an identifiable geography.

4.7 There is a stated expectation that the reforms would increase the focus on the delivery of courses to provide students with the skills they need to get a job, keep a job or get a better job and develop a career. From 2012-13, colleges will be expected to concentrate further on courses leading to recognised qualifications, including vocational non-advanced and advanced programmes; and on support for the Senior Phase of the Curriculum for Excellence. There is a recognition that some Non-Recognised Qualifications have value in meeting some learners' additional support needs.

4.8 A further core proposal is a review of the current funding system for further education. The proposal is to simplify the current funding system by basing the unit of measurement on full-time equivalent students places (FTEs). In addition, there has been a reduction within the main teaching grant on the specific provision for schools-college activity. The view is that colleges will continue to agree and fund provision in partnership with their local authorities as an integral part of implementing the senior phase of the Curriculum for Excellence. This is the current situation within Dundee where the partnership arrangements with Dundee College are very strong

4.9 Meeting learners' needs and improving employment prospects are highlighted as an essential part of the post 16 reform. Improving retention rates in colleges is a central part of that theme since drop out levels are considered to be unacceptably high. There is a proposal to improve the evidence on the reasons for drop out and the next

steps taken by students who drop out to identify the factors that colleges can most strongly influence and help direct efforts to improve retention.

## **5.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 This report has been screened for any policy implications in respect of sustainability, strategic environment assessment, anti-poverty, equality impact assessment and risk management. There are no major issues. An Equality Impact Assessment has not been carried out.

## **6.0 CONSULTATION**

- 6.1 The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Support Services) and the Director of Finance have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

## **7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 7.1 Appendix 1 - Joint Consultation Response

MICHAEL WOOD  
Director of Education

16 December 2011

MW/PC/MM

**DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DEPARTMENT and COMMUNITY, LEARNING and DEVELOPMENT**

**RESPONSE TO SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION  
PUTTING LEARNERS AT THE CENTRE: DELIVERING OUR AMBITIONS OF POST-16  
EDUCATION**

**EFFICIENT, FLEXIBLE LEARNER JOURNEYS**

**Q. How can we ensure delivery of an appropriate place in post-16 learning for all 16-19 year olds? What are the priority actions?**

In order to ensure that young people embrace the ethos of post 16 education, the foundation must be established pre 16. The current model of 16+ Learning Choices, as it operates locally, involves a partnership between schools, Skills Development Scotland and the 16+ Leisure and Communities team. This joint approach ensures that every young person receives an offer of a destination and, where this proves difficult, a key worker is assigned and an activity agreement is reached with the young person. There is early evidence to show that the work being done in this area is having an impact on the School Leaver Destination Returns at a local level. In order to maintain the momentum that is gathering in this area, it would be appropriate that any legislation takes this into account. Key points:

- Dundee City Council has co-operated closely with its FE college, Dundee College, in the development of provision for the 16-19 age group.
- An appropriate place in post-16 learning requires good guidance and clear understanding on the expectations of students entering FE, as distinct from HE or remaining in secondary school.
- In Dundee the pathway from school to FE is well developed and provides an important opportunity for young people who need additional support in order to be able to compete in the job market.
- Given the financial pressure on the FE sector and government, it is essential that a place in FE is used effectively, that the young person is supported to remain engaged and that the opportunity is valued. An important point is that the term 'post 16' should be looked at in its broadest context. It is not simply 16-19 or 16-24 but should be based firmly on the lifelong learning model associated with cradle to grave. The concern would be that to focus solely on a narrow age group would reduce or remove opportunities for learners of all ages.

**Q. In considering the proposed package of measures for improving the learner journey, where should the focus be to improve pathways for all learners? What actions are required to make progression more coherent for learners?**

Curriculum for Excellence provides the opportunity to raise aspirations and expectations from early years to S6 through skills based approaches. The Scottish Government, through Education Scotland, should continue to promote this at every opportunity to schools, universities and colleges. Though Curriculum for Excellence teaching methodologies in schools will change, learners will not experience their education in the same way and, therefore, the experiences of the young people moving from school to Further Education or Higher Education will be different. Colleges, but in particular universities, must look to their own methodologies and ensure that they articulate with the learners' previous experiences. Key points:

- The most important aspect of an improved learner journey is a clear pathway for progression. This is best achieved by the provision of effective guidance, particularly for those who are returning after a break in education.
- At the community planning level, there needs to be clearly integrated structures between school, college and university to ensure that there is a supported pathway and learner journey.
- Participation in HE and FE is most effective when the learner perceives the opportunity as relevant and has prepared for and is ready to make best use of the opportunity. Addressing these issues requires mechanisms of support such as independent adult guidance.
- Greater flexibility in the availability of funding for those who wish to study part time might ensure that learning opportunities are more sensitive to individual circumstances.
- Learning happens in a variety of different settings. Greater use could be made of partnerships between education providers to ensure that learning is appropriately recorded and given appropriate credit within the SQA framework.

**Q. How effective is the SCQF in promoting flexible learning journeys? Are there any barriers and, if so, how could they be overcome? How could SCQF be used more effectively to deliver our aims?**

Further sustained promotion of the SCQF to young people, parents, teachers and employers would help to support the ambition of a much more coherent and progressive route through the various education and training options. There would have to be a universal backing of this by university admissions officers. Whilst there would still have to be some acknowledgement of coherence and relevance when learners choose particular programmes of study in the senior school or in college, the use of the SCQF for admission into Higher Education should become the norm. The current selection process, from a school perspective, lacks transparency. How much weighting, for example, is given to the personal statement in recognition of wider achievement or is selection based solely on the results of specific subjects? In some specialised courses there will be a specific requirement to demonstrate attainment in a particular subject, however, in more generic courses, are certain qualifications looked on more favourably than others, or is the SCQF framework the discriminator? Having a more transparent system will place teachers and careers staff in a better position to advise young people. Key points:

- There is scope to further develop understanding of the SCQF framework by both employers and HE/FE providers.
- Many feel that the SCQF framework is not sufficiently user friendly or accessible enough for employers and businesses.
- It is suggested that other frameworks, including, the JNC used in England are more easily understood and communicated than the current Scottish model.

**Q. What more can the Government and its partners do to encourage more articulation between colleges and universities?**

Key points:

- Closer collaboration between the FE and HE sectors is essential if there is to be seamless progression for those moving through FE into HE. In the case of some students, progression from FE to HE is the best opportunity and should be encouraged.
- As it stands there are insufficient incentives to promote articulation between sectors and to identify where progression between programmes and institutions is not being fully exploited/supported.

**Q. What scope is there to make the transition from school to university more effective for learners, while reducing unnecessary duplication?**

The transition from school to university could be more effective and efficient if the SCQF was used to more widely indicate that young people could enter directly into second year depending on the number of points that they hold. This currently happens on an 'ad hoc' basis but legislation could ensure that this practice becomes more consistent across all universities. This principle is more commonly applied if young people pursue HN courses at college but there will be many variations of this across the country. Legislation would ensure that this approach was more consistent and transparent. Key points:

- Significant strides have been made by the City Council's Education Department and its Community Learning and Development service to facilitate Curriculum for Excellence.
- It is still relatively early days for this approach but the prospects of it providing much more effective support to the learner is recognised across the sector.
- One of the challenges for young people is making the progression from school to tertiary education related to their maturity and ability to cope, not just academically but socially, with the expectations held of them in tertiary education programmes. Preparation for that level of self directed learning is essential if the transition from school to university is to be effective.

## **WIDENING ACCESS**

**Q. What do we need to do to ensure the Government's commitment, through Opportunities for All, to post-16 education and training for all 16-19 year olds is delivered to more vulnerable young people? What are the priority actions?**

Key points:

- More vulnerable young people require more support. Early identification of those with support needs is essential if they are not to become 'lost'.
- The partnership approach between Skills Development Scotland, Community Learning and Development, schools and colleges is essential if vulnerable young people are to be supported during their last years at school and in their transition to learning as adults.
- Dundee City Council and Dundee College have developed a number of modes including pupils accessing college or employment (PACE) which are designed to meet the needs of this group and which are good examples of existing partnership working to support this target group.

**Q. What more could the Government and its delivery partners do to improve retention and progression, building on Opportunities for All?**

Whilst the support from schools, Skills Development Scotland and 16+ Learning Choices teams may be having an impact on SLDR, it should also be noted that there are a number of young people who subsequently drop out of Further Education and Higher Education within the first few months. Prior to, and to inform any future legislation, it would be important to commission some research into the reasons for this in order to plan intervention strategies to prevent or minimise these occurrences. Key points:

- The current FE funding mechanism is focused on teaching input and achievement of qualifications. This focus can be to the detriment of wider aspects of learning for life and the experience and support young people need to remain involved and progress in learning.
- More integrated sharing of information between schools, careers, the FE sector and community learning would assist in the tracking of individual learners and the offering of support/intervention. To achieve this, the Scottish Government could take a lead in developing an information sharing protocol.
- The most important aspect of Opportunities for All for young people is to allow for a good mix of personal development, skills development and vocational skills.

**Q. How can we maximise the contribution of Community Learning and Development to widening access? What examples of good practice can we build on?**

Key points:

- Dundee City Council established partnership with HE and FE training providers in 1996 (the Discover Learning Partnership). This has provided a model of best practice recognised by HMIE and others. The partnership was based on the FE sector delivering subject specific tuition in community settings with the local authority through its CLD team, forming groups, promoting classes and delivering adult guidance. The financial sustainability of such approaches has come under increasing pressure as the FE funding model has reverted much more to college based tuition models and larger teacher/learner ratios.
- The success of this approach was based on recognition of the distinctive role of different partners and the willingness of partners to innovate to meet learners' needs.
- One of the key contributions brought by the CLD input is its ability to engage with target groups, to help articulate their learning needs and to motivate them to engage in learning activity.

**Q. What do we need to do to help more people from the most deprived backgrounds get a place at university? How can we frame this in legislation?**

Key points:

- Progression to university is most effective when the learner sees this as the best route and it is not simply a response to the shortage of other employment or training opportunities.
- The current focus on 16-19 year olds may move resources away from support needed for more mature students. Often students from deprived backgrounds

return to learning and study when their own children are at school. The opportunity to be supported to go through a university education should be there for those who have not had that opportunity, regardless of their age.

- The greatest barrier for those who come from deprived backgrounds is anxiety about the financial circumstances that they might face and particularly the resistance to developing debt through a period of study which discourages young people and adults from achieving their full potential.

## **ALIGNING NON-ADVANCED LEARNING AND SKILLS WITH JOB GROWTH**

### **Q. What are the advantages and disadvantages of prioritising investment in learning and skills which support jobs in key and high participation sectors?**

Investment in learning and skills to promote jobs in all sectors would be welcomed, however, the investment would be required to be industry and regionally specific. A one size fits all approach would not be welcomed and employers would have to be part of the solution. Resources should be targeted to areas where there is more potential for economic growth. Investment and incentives should be provided to major employers and SMEs to mitigate the risk of employing young people. Opportunities need to exist to avoid the catch 22 situation of not being able to gain employment without experience but not able to gain experience because there is no employment. The opportunities for work experience or internships during college or university courses should become much more widespread. Employers should be encouraged and supported to develop such opportunities. The Government should elicit a commitment from larger employers to free their employees to visit schools, colleges and universities to assist in schemes to promote post-16 education and training.

- Targeting of investment on specific skill/employment sectors has always risked people being trained in too narrow a set of skills and being left vulnerable to shifts in workforce requirements.
- Priority should be given to the development of transferable generic skills and behaviours which are likely to enable young people to become effective learners and efficient workers.

### **Q. How do we best target our resources in support of jobs, growth and life chances? For example, should we focus on levels of qualification, age groups or labour market status?**

To achieve this, the interaction between schools, colleges, universities, training providers and employers must have a built in flexibility which allows learners to achieve their potential. Perceived barriers and long established protocols, particularly in the Higher Education sector, will require to be revisited in light of Curriculum for Excellence and the new national qualifications. Whilst education, on one hand, can be seen as an opportunity to exercise the intellect, on the other hand it can also be regarded as a training ground to ensure that young people are prepared to play a full and active role as members of a rapidly changing society. Building the Curriculum 4: Skills for Life, Learning and Work would suggest that the two points of view are not mutually exclusive and that the skills agenda is equally pertinent to all young people. Providers of post - 16 education or training have a duty to ensure that the transition from school is a continuum where learners experience progression in knowledge and skills which will enable them to move seamlessly into a future working environment. Key points:

- Resources should not be targeted at particular age groups. Post-school, a mix of different age groups enriches the learning experience and learners should be supported to enter and leave educational programmes on the basis of their motivation and effective independent adult guidance.
- As resources are set to become scarcer, education providers will need to focus more on maximising their efficiency as well as their effectiveness.
- Priority should be given to making available literacy, numeracy, IT and personal effectiveness skills to ensure that those seeking to enter the workforce are best prepared for such challenges.
- While colleges play a key role in this regard, there are other settings within which first level qualifications can effectively be delivered.

**Q. Do we have the right systems and structures in place for articulating employer needs (locally, regionally and nationally) and those of the wider economy?**

Local employer or sectoral steering groups should be encouraged and supported to promote opportunities to young people and help inform the training and skills requirements. Economic Development departments, Skills Development Scotland, Jobcentre Plus, Further Education, Higher Education, education departments and employers should be working in partnership to analyse local labour market information and therefore ensure that young people in schools are provided with the correct advice on employment and training opportunities to allow them to make informed choices. There should also be a requirement on employers, particularly those at the high end and employer institutions, to keep themselves updated within an evolving educational landscape - something which currently is sadly lacking in many organisations

Key points:

- There are good collaborative structures in place for liaison between colleges and employers.
- While these can always be improved upon, this would not be a priority for new or further investment.

**Q. Which of the existing structures are effective and could be applied more widely; which are ineffective and can be improved?**

Key points:

- In a number of areas, Dundee City Council has witnessed employment opportunities created locally for which there are not work ready candidates.
- The difficulty of predicting such employment opportunities is recognised but it is suggested that further labour market analysis and collaboration between key stakeholders might assist in the alignment of employment opportunities to work ready workforce.
- Dundee City Council is committed to the development of modern apprenticeships and believes that, in the current context of high youth unemployment, the modern apprenticeship supported by appropriate public sector funding is essential to maintain workforce skills and future employment opportunities for young people entering the labour market.

**Q. How can we maximise the contribution of Community Learning and Development to improving people's prospects? What examples of good practice can we build on?**

Locally MCMC teams, DCC Community Learning and Development, SDS, and other partner agencies work together to ensure that opportunities are provided and aspirations are raised for the most vulnerable young people in the city. Such examples are; S-Word at the Shore - which is a hospitality and catering programme aimed at school leavers. The young people who attend this project develop both employability and practical skills to assist progression either into further education or employment. The 'Blast-Off' Project is a pre-employment training opportunity for young people in the 16+ group. This group receive specific employability skills including; interview techniques, team working and communication, CV building etc. in preparation for sustained destination, in either further education or employment. These programmes will undoubtedly be replicated in some way in all local authorities, however, there is no specific forum to share any innovative practice. Key points:

- Dundee, in common with other local authorities, has been the main deliverer of community based adult learning and post-school literacy initiatives.
- In a city with high levels of deprivation, adult literacy is a major barrier to future employment opportunities.
- Dundee has a unique network of community based adult learning centres. These are often located within neighbourhoods where there are concentrations of both young and older unemployed people. The main contribution which can be made through this network is to maintain the engagement of those who are unemployed through a variety of learning, health and fitness activity. There exists a plethora of examples of how this can re-engage and motivate adult learners through job clubs, craft workshops, basic skills groups, music initiative, use of free internet access in public libraries, wider library services, etc.
- The object of this is to support the continuous engagement of the learner and to provide them with routes for continuing education and future employment.

**MAINTAINING SCOTLAND AS A GLOBAL LEADER IN UNIVERSITY RESEARCH**

No comment.

**FAIR AND AFFORDABLE STUDENT SUPPORT**

The availability of financial support, particularly for young people from more deprived backgrounds, is essential if they are to feel at the risk of progressing in education is justified.

- There are attractions in the system of educational support which offers students a set number of years of assistance with the opportunity to drop in/drop out without penalty.

**EFFECTIVE AND SUSTAINABLE DELIVERY**

**Q. What are the pros and cons of our proposals for the regionalisation of colleges? Are there other criteria we should consider in determining the optimal regional structure?**

Key points:

- The argument in favour of better regional planning for the delivery of FE is that it could make better use of limited resources and expertise. It might also reduce the level of expenditure in management and non-delivery costs.
- Offset against this, the main con in a more regional approach would be a loss of local ownership and buy in and a more complex management structure. As with any other structural change, there might be significant costs and wastage associated with the transition to any new model.
- As a city, Dundee is well placed to support its hinterland with good transport connectivity. It is well placed to act as a regional centre for the delivery of FE but it would also recognise the importance of local access if the government is to achieve its objectives of putting learners at the centre.

**Q. What more could the Government and its delivery partners do to improve collaboration between post-16 learning, including CLD and employment support services?**

Key points:

- Efficient delivery comes through effective partnerships. Whether under one management regime or through partnership working, clear role differentiation is essential if the needs of post-16 learners are to be met.
- In Scotland, there is wide recognition of the complementary but distinctly different roles played by CLD, colleges and other training providers. It would be the responsibility of those involved through Community Planning in Partnership to ensure that resources are targeted effectively and duplication is avoided.

**Q. What are the pros and cons of the new leadership and support role envisaged for SFC? What lessons can we learn from successful change management elsewhere?**

No comment.

## **SIMPLIFYING FUNDING AND INCREASING INCOME GENERATION**

**Q. What are the pros and cons of the proposed needs-based regional commissioning model for colleges?**

Key points:

- It is more appropriate for the college sector to express their views on this question.
- From a local authority perspective, we would hope that a needs-based commissioning model would recognise the disparity between different regions in Scotland and, in the case of a city like Dundee with a disproportionate share of Scotland's poor, we would hope that the funding model would recognise different levels of need and provide appropriate levels of resource to meet these needs.

## **PERFORMANCE, GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

**Q. Given the proposed changes to post-16 provision (non-advanced learning and skills) and delivery set out in the consultation document, what are the key**

## **considerations for governance?**

Key points:

- Local community planning partnerships should have a clearer commissioning role in relation to the delivery of post-16 provision. Whether the delivery is through FE, HE or other providers, the most robust view on needs and priorities is likely to be held within the community planning partnership framework.
- In the years since colleges moved out of local authority control and were incorporated, there have been many positive developments. However, in the same period, the link between governance and local priority setting has been weakened and there may be advantages in looking afresh at these linkages. The proposed move to regional structures of governance would potentially further remove the influence of local Community Planning Partnerships of local authorities on the priorities set for the delivery of post-school provision.

### **Q. What measures should form the basis of our performance management framework for colleges and training providers in order to improve outcomes for all learners?**

- It is essential that the measures used to judge performance for post-16 provision reflect the distance travelled by learners as well as the number of qualifications or award secured.

### **Q. How do we ensure a strong focus on improving outcomes for those furthest from the labour market? What are stakeholders' experiences of this?**

Key points:

- Within Dundee there are a significant number of citizens who fall into the category of 'being furthest from the labour market'. Those recovering from drug and alcohol misuse, those who are in debt, those who face family pressures or whose general mental wellbeing is poor. Unless basic needs and security issues are addressed, they will not progress effectively as learners into the labour market.
- A network of engagement, confidence building and personal/social development initiatives are required to complement vocational training and skills development. A narrowing of the focus on skills development would be hugely disadvantageous to population groups such as those furthest from the labour market. There is a significant body of experience gained through the delivery of programmes in Dundee but there is also a recognition that much of the best work has depended on temporary external funding from Europe and other government programmes and in the current financial climate that these funding sources and programmes are highly vulnerable.

### **Q. What are the advantages and disadvantages of an enriched role for Education Scotland in supporting continuous improvements in the college and skills sectors?**

Key points:

- Education Scotland (HMIE) have a key role to play in ensuring that public funds devoted to post-16 education are used effectively and that CLD and colleges deliver value for the public funding they receive.
- In discharging this role, there needs to be emphasis placed on self evaluation and self governance. The role of Education Scotland (HMIE) should be to ensure that

local delivery agencies who have the capacity to self evaluate are doing so rigorously and that the application of standards is consistent across Scotland. To go beyond this would be to return to a situation of excessive inspection and is likely to result in negative expenditure which doesn't ultimately increase delivery or improve quality.

- Education Scotland should adopt a progressive, supportive, mentoring role challenging where necessary, but more concerned with developing and building upon the excellent practice which exists.