

## SPICe Briefing

# Widening Access to Higher Education: Policy in Scotland

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The decision to participate in higher education (HE) is generally considered to be one which is determined at an early age and which is influenced by a number of factors, including socio-economic background and prior educational attainment. The barriers faced by individuals wishing to participate in HE are wide ranging, are not mutually exclusive and, indeed, can act in concert to discourage participation. The cross-cutting nature of these barriers has encouraged the emergence of a wide range of public policies aimed at widening access to lifelong learning, including HE.

This paper summarises the key policies aimed at widening access to HE and provides an overview of the work currently being undertaken by relevant stakeholders in Scotland.



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The decision to participate in higher education (HE) can be influenced by a number of factors, such as socio-economic background, age, gender, income, family circumstances and geography. The value an individual places on higher education, in terms of their future employment and earnings prospects, is also an influencing factor.
- Barriers to participation in HE can generally be divided into 'first chance' and 'second chance' barriers. 'First chance' barriers can be summarised as those that affect young people's initial decision to enter HE whilst in compulsory education. 'Second chance' barriers refer to those faced by individuals who may wish to enter or return to higher education at a later date in life, or who wish to enter higher education via an alternative learning route.
- There is a variety of related public policies in Scotland aimed at increasing participation in lifelong learning, including HE. The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) works with various stakeholders to help implement these policies aimed at widening access to higher education.
- The SFC's strategy for widening participation is called '[Learning for All](#)'. This was first published in 2005 and set out priorities for widening access in both further education (FE) and HE for the following five years and beyond. It provided a framework for stakeholders to build and implement widening access action plans. The fourth update of 'Learning for All' is due to be published in March 2010.
- It is the responsibility of the SFC's [Access and Inclusion Committee](#) (AIC) to advise the Council on access and inclusion matters and on the implementation of *Learning for All*, including monitoring progress on the key themes of the strategy.
- To date, it has been difficult to demonstrate clearly a direct impact from public investment on widening access to FE and HE. The AIC has, therefore, spent the last twelve months establishing a new SFC approach to equality, access and inclusion.
- As a result, a new strategic outcome-based framework for access has been developed by the SFC. All related SFC programmes and funding associated with retention, articulation, schools/colleges programmes and communities programmes are currently being reviewed. This review process will be ongoing through the next academic year (2010/11).

# WIDENING ACCESS POLICY IN SCOTLAND

The decision to participate in higher education (HE) is generally considered to be one which is determined at an early age and which is influenced by a number of factors such as socio-economic background, age, gender, income, family circumstances and geography. These can all affect an individual's decision and, indeed, opportunities to participate in HE. The value an individual places on higher education, in terms of future employment and earnings prospects, is also an influencing factor. The barriers faced by individuals wishing to participate in higher education, therefore, are wide ranging, are not mutually exclusive and, indeed, can act in concert to discourage participation.

The barriers to participation in HE can be classified into 'first chance' and 'second chance' barriers. 'First chance' barriers are those that affect young people's initial decisions to enter higher education whilst in compulsory education. 'Second chance' barriers are those faced by individuals who may wish to enter or return to higher education at a later date in life, or enter higher education via an alternative learning route.

The issue of access to HE has a long and complex history. However, in the last decade stakeholders have made significant progress in this area, with the emergence of a number of related public policies which aim to widen access to lifelong learning, including access to higher education level study. Due to the cross-cutting nature of this topic, the information available is extensive. As a consequence, it would be impossible to cover, in a short briefing, all policies or actions related to widening access. Rather, this paper attempts to summarise the work currently being taken forward by the relevant stakeholders in Scotland.

## SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT POLICIES

### New Horizons

The Joint Futures Thinking Taskforce on Universities (the Taskforce) was established in November 2007, with the remit of reviewing future challenges facing the Scottish University sector, and determining how its contribution to the economy and society can be optimised over the next 20 years. The Taskforce is chaired jointly by the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning and the Convenor of Universities Scotland, with some individual Higher Education Institutions and the Scottish Funding Council also represented. For further background to the Taskforce and its reports, please see [SPICe Briefing SB09/10 - The Future of Scotland's Universities](#).

The report of the Taskforce, '[New Horizons](#)' (Scottish Government, 2008) set out its vision for the future of the Scottish Higher Education (HE) sector. Due to the changing demographics of the student population, 'New Horizons' recognised that HEIs need to increase their flexibility in education provision; and be able to respond to both learners' and employers' needs, in order to maximise their contribution to Scotland's economy and society. 'New Horizons', therefore, established a new strategic approach to HE funding and a new relationship between the Scottish Funding Council and individual Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

This new HE funding model has involved the creation of two main funding streams, the General Fund for Universities (GFU) and the 'Horizon Fund for Universities' (HFU). These new funding streams are being implemented by the Scottish Funding Council from the academic year 09/10.

The GFU will continue to fund HEIs mainstream activities (such as teaching) through a formula-based allocation process to provide financial certainty to HEIs. However, these formulae will be

simplified and there will be less restriction on how HEIs spend their funding allocations. Some subjects may still remain 'protected'.

The HFU is an incentivised funding stream, with the delivery of this fund being directed by the Scottish Government, based on their key strategies and priorities. It will be used to fund specific performance or specialism-related projects with individual HEIs (or groups of HEIs), for example, supporting a project with industry collaboration, or to help widen access (Mullen, 2009).

To date, it has been difficult to demonstrate clearly the direct impact that the level of public investment has had on equality, access and inclusion within HE. It is intended that Government funded HE activity supported through the HFU will be able to demonstrate more clearly how it has responded to the needs of students and the economy.

All equality, access and inclusion programmes for HEIs are now allocated via the newly created [HFU](#) (£18.7 million of HFU allocated for 'access and progression' in 2009-10). As a result, programme activity and funding related to widening access to HE is currently being reviewed by the SFC and relevant stakeholders.

## **More Choices, More Chances**

['More Choices, More Chances'](#) is the Scottish Government's Strategy for reducing the number of young people who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (Scottish Government, 2006). It was published in June 2006 and contains a 39-point action plan to be delivered by central and local government and other key stakeholders, such as colleges and universities. The Strategy is intended to target school age pupils in need of support, to stop them becoming disengaged and leaving education or training after compulsory education. The Strategy also targets 16-19 year olds, to provide routes for these young people to get back into education, employment or training. The SFC works with the various stakeholders to help implement the 'More Choices, More Chances' Strategy.

## **16+ Learning Choices**

[16+ Learning Choices](#) is the Scottish Government's model for supporting positive and sustained progressions, post-16, to encourage all young people to enter post-compulsory learning, in order to ensure their long term employability and social contribution. The Scottish Government is working with local authorities and other relevant stakeholders to ensure that every young person has an appropriate, relevant and attractive offer of learning made to them before they leave compulsory education. A policy and practice framework for this programme is due to be published in April 2010.

## **THE SCOTTISH FUNDING COUNCIL**

The Scottish Funding Council's main strategies and outcomes are set out in its [Corporate Plan 2009-12](#). This document outlines seven broad outcomes that the SFC plans to achieve in partnership with colleges, universities and other relevant stakeholders. Outcome 2 is '**access, inclusion and progression**'. Under this outcome, the SFC states that:

"This priority is about access to learning in colleges and universities and progression through the system of learning. Improving access to learning is important because it is fundamental to creating a fairer and more prosperous society, but it also has the capacity

to improve individual well-being, confidence, health and the lifetime earnings of individuals.

Working with Scotland's colleges, universities, and other partners we will seek - within the wider learning environment in Scotland, including the context of Curriculum for Excellence - a continuum of learning provision into, within and between colleges and universities which:

- has multiple entry and exit points - fully mapped on to the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework - and which provides access to and progression through learning opportunities in ways, times and places that meet individuals' needs, including the particular needs of people seeking work in the economic downturn;
- allows individuals over time to develop their skills and capacities for learning without the need for unnecessary repeated study;
- is underpinned by a system of financial support for students that targets support where it is most needed, so that, as far as practicable, opportunities to learn are determined solely by a person's capacities and ambition; and
- continues to address uneven patterns of participation in education and promotes equality and diversity.

In order to achieve the outcomes above, the following actions, relating to 'Access, Inclusion and Progression' in HEIs, are being undertaken by the SFC :

- To support the Scottish Government's **More Choices, More Chances strategy** – aimed at reducing the number of young people not in, or at risk of becoming disengaged from, education, training or employment. **Particular attention will be given to current and former care leavers**
- To work with colleges, universities and Skills Development Scotland **to improve data-sharing on young people who withdraw from learning early;**
- To work with all relevant stakeholders **to ensure that appropriate programmes of study are provided to students with severe and complex needs;**
- **To work with the Wider Access Regional Forums in Scotland (see box 1)** to ensure that a co-ordinated and effective national programme that provides greater equality of access to learning for those who are under-represented;
- To work with local **authorities to develop existing schools-colleges programmes**—ensuring that these are properly accredited and link with programmes available in post-compulsory education;
- Using the SFC Horizon Fund for Universities (HFU), the SFC will **incentivise the development of articulation** – which will allow students to move seamlessly from colleges into universities – particularly, though not exclusively, around regional hubs.
- **To support initiatives in colleges and universities aimed at improving the retention of students** and their progression to further learning opportunities;
- To work with Skills Development Scotland to ensure appropriate access to skills training, opportunities for re-skilling and continuing professional development for people adversely affected by the economic downturn in all sections of society;

- To **encourage the development of opportunities for part-time study** and will work with other organisations to address barriers to undertaking such study
- To continue to **support the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework** and will support and assist colleges and universities to develop courses that have flexible entry and exit points;
- To continue to **promote internationally the transferability and recognition of Scottish qualifications**, student mobility and further and higher education more generally, by engaging in the Bologna and the Bruges-Copenhagen processes

## “Learning for All” – the SFC’s Widening Participation Strategy

Underpinning the ‘Access, inclusion and progression’ outcomes in the SFC’s Corporate Plan is the Scottish Funding Council’s Strategy for widening participation, called '[Learning For All](#)'. This was first published in 2005 by the Widening Participation Review Group of the previous Scottish Further Education Funding Council (SFEFC) and Scottish Higher Education Funding Council (SHEFC). The strategy set out priorities for widening, or ‘optimising’, access in both FE and HE for the following five years and beyond, to provide a framework for stakeholders to use to develop and implement widening access action plans.

The strategy document called for a new integrated national campaign, with co-operation from all relevant stakeholders. It pointed out the need to monitor changing patterns of FE and HE participation over time, in order to react quickly with appropriate policy interventions. A ‘basket of measures’ was established to monitor performance.

There have been three strategy update reports on these measures. These examine the progress made in widening access to FE and HE. The most recent update was in March 2009. For further detail, please see the links below:

[Learning For All: First Update Report - February 2007](#)

[Learning for All: Second Update Report - March 2008](#)

[Learning for All: Third Update Report - March 2009](#)

*Learning for All: the fourth update report on measures of success* is due to be published in March 2010. This will be presented at the joint national conference of the SFC and NUS, on progress in widening access to FE and HE '[Learning for All 2010: Shaping Future Wider Access Policy](#)'. The conference intends to provide an opportunity to stakeholders to influence the SFC’s future ‘equalities, access and inclusion’ policies. The event is being held on Tuesday 23 March 2010 from 10am - 4.30pm, at the Glasgow City Chambers.

## SFC Access and Inclusion Committee

It is the responsibility of the SFC’s [Access and Inclusion Committee](#) to advise the Council on access and inclusion matters and to advise the Council on the implementation of *Learning for All*, including monitoring progress on the key themes from the strategy. These key themes are listed below (SFC, 2009):

- deprived areas;
- men;
- articulation;

- retention and achievement;
- recruitment and selection;
- equalities and diversity;
- information advice and guidance;
- data and evidence;
- dialogue with key stakeholders and schools; and
- help stimulate and align actions by the other partners in national action to widen participation.

The Access and Inclusion Committee has met seven times since its establishment. Papers from the Committee can be accessed [here](#).

### **Box 1: Wider Access Regional Forums (WARFs)**

In 1999/2000, four Wider Access Regional Forums (WARFs) were established and funded by the SFC, as part of the SFC's response to the Dearing Report (1997) and the Garrick Report (1998). These reports highlighted that the socio-economic make-up of entrants to universities had not changed, despite the widening access measures in place (North Forum Strategic Plan, 2008/09-2012/13)

The WARFs were established with an original remit of widening access to HE. In 2006, following the publication of the 'Learning for All' Strategy, their remit was revised to include both FE and HE, and to deliver on the priorities identified in 'Learning for All'. Since being set up, the forums have supported activities involving raising awareness of FE and HE in schools; community engagement; and transitions.

The forums are partnerships of universities, colleges, local authorities, Skills Development Scotland and other relevant stakeholders working together to widen access to and increase participation in post compulsory education. They are based in the South East, Fife and Tayside, the West of Scotland and the North of Scotland. They are administered through host institutions; Napier University, Abertay University, University of the West of Scotland and Aberdeen University respectively.

The forums are funded annually by the SFC at a cost of approximately £3 million per annum. Certain WARF projects may also receive contributions from the stakeholders involved, such as colleges or HEIs. After over ten years in operation, the activities of the WARFs and their role in widening access is currently being reviewed by the SFC, as part of a general review of areas of access and inclusion policy and delivery.

**For further information on each of the WARFs and their various projects, please see Annex 1.**

## **Other Related SFC 'Access and Inclusion' Funded Activities**

### *Regional Articulation Hubs*

In addition to the four WARFs, the SFC funds work around five 'regional articulation hubs' and the Open University to improve articulation arrangements so that people can move more seamlessly from college to university. These hubs are currently funded until 2011. The 'hubs' are regional partnerships led by new universities to build improve college/university articulation from HNC/D to years 2 and 3 of degree programmes.

### *Part-time fee waiver scheme*

This SFC scheme helps to widen access to higher education by waiving the fees of part-time undergraduate students from groups under-represented in higher education, such as those from low-income groups and those on disabilities allowance.

### *Widening Access Premiums*

Institutions also receive a variety of premiums (such as the Widening Access Retention Premium and the Disabled Student Premium) through the SFC's funding methodologies, which are designed to provide incentives to HEIs to widen participation at their institutions.

## **A NEW STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR EQUALITY, ACCESS AND INCLUSION**

The Access and Inclusion Committee (AIC) has spent the last year establishing a new SFC vision for equality, access and inclusion. The AIC has acknowledged that, to date, it has been difficult to demonstrate clearly the direct impact of public investment on the areas of equality, access and inclusion.

In addition, all equality, access and inclusion programmes for HEIs are now allocated via the newly created [Horizon Fund for Universities](#) (HFU) (£18.7 million of HFU allocated for 'access and progression' in 2009-10). It is for these reasons that programme activity and funding is being re-visited.

At its last meeting on 10 December 2009, the AIC was presented with proposals for a new strategic outcome-based approach to Access and Inclusion. The AIC's proposed strategic framework document summarises the national, regional and local actions being taken forward for the 'widening access' agenda. This framework document is shown below (SFC, December 2010).

As part of this new outcome-based approach to access and inclusion, all related SFC programmes and funding associated with retention, articulation, schools/colleges programmes and communities programmes are currently being reviewed. This review process will be ongoing through the next academic year (2010/11).

In addition, the SFC and the Scottish Government's Lifelong Learning Statistics office are jointly undertaking a review into how participation by Scotland's population in higher education is measured. This will involve a four week consultation at the end of January with stakeholders on the criteria that matter most to them in the measurement and assessment of participation in HE.

# Framework for equality, access and inclusion

An integrated strategic framework based on a combination of national, regional and local actions. An approach underpinned by a commitment to equality and diversity.

Response/Challenge	Equality and diversity	Awareness raising, building attainment	Widening access	Informed access, transitions and admissions	Progression	Retention	
<b>Aim or challenge</b>	To ensure more even patterns of participation in further and higher education across different groups in society.	To raise awareness within schools, and improve attainment by providing entitlements as part of the senior phase of Curriculum for Excellence (CFE) within a national schools programme.	To increase participation in further and higher education of people from deprived postcodes or from thematic communities. To ensure more even demand for learning across all groups in society.	To achieve sustainable progression from schools and communities into further and higher education	To achieve sustainable progression from college to university. To increase proportion of students from deprived postcodes in universities.	To ensure all learners achieve a good learning experience that enhances life chances.	
<b>Activity in response to the challenges</b>	<p><b>Four stage approach</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Information</li> <li>2. Capacity building</li> <li>3. Action research</li> <li>4. Leadership</li> </ol> <p>Underpinning our entire approach is a commitment to sector leadership in equality and diversity. To achieve this we will create a leadership framework embedded in SFC to coordinate activity. This integrates inward and outward activity and will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct SFC internal governance</li> <li>• Coordinate with partners to lead strategic change</li> <li>• Fund a series of composite responses and coordinate impacts</li> <li>• Acts on those impacts across: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Governance</li> <li>- Learning and teaching</li> <li>- Staff and student experience</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Equality and diversity challenge</b> Use funding to challenge occupational segregation</p>	<p><b>School/college</b></p> <p>To align the purpose of this funding to deliver the senior phase entitlements of CFE. A programme that builds awareness of further education and supports transition planning to prevent young people who are not in employment, education or training. To support joint CPD to assist joint curricular planning.</p> <p><b>coordinated with</b></p> <p><b>National schools awareness programme – schools for higher education</b></p> <p>To deliver entitlements of senior phase of CFE. Targeted at S3-S6 based on national approach to support progression from schools to higher education (in college and university). Programme of information, access and guidance (IAG) at S2 to challenge occupational segregation – aligned with SDS.</p> <p><b>links with</b></p> <p><b>Access to Professions</b></p> <p>IAG/Access to Professions programme of targeted IAG with universities working across regional groups of schools – targeted at S4.</p> <p><b>Aligned with SDS</b></p>	<p><b>Relates directly to MCMC prevention. Alignment on transition planning/curriculum planning.</b></p> <p><b>Application of SCQF</b></p> <p>SCQF Pilot at John Wheatley</p> <p><b>Regional community programme</b></p> <p>To facilitate partnerships that increase participation in further and higher education from deprived communities or thematic communities matched to Government priorities.</p> <p><b>Linked to regional compact agreements on admissions from Forum summer schools and national agreements on contextualised admissions in high demand professions.</b></p> <p><b>Equality and diversity challenge</b> Targeting of boys and men within activity</p>	<p><b>More choices more chance (MCMC) group</b></p> <p>Funding until 2012 to embed good practice within all colleges to identify best practice in work with particular hard to reach groups. Care leavers programme. Best practice funding to develop a quality mark for care leavers in further education.</p> <p><b>Links directly and supported by</b></p> <p><b>Students with profound and complex needs</b></p> <p>Regional network supporting access to further education for students with profound and complex needs.</p>	<p><b>Supporting further education community transitions</b></p> <p>National infrastructure to coordinate joint CPD between community based further education and schools to assist awareness on transition planning to build parity of esteem. Includes development of community of practice that links to networks created in forum partnerships.</p> <p><b>Informed access</b></p> <p>National agreement between targeted universities on contextualised admissions as part of an informed access strategy in high demand professions.</p> <p><b>links with</b></p> <p><b>Funding for supporting professionalism in admissions (SPA)</b></p> <p>Best practice support nationwide to support professionalism in admissions.</p>	<p><b>Articulation hubs</b></p> <p>Regional partnerships led by new universities to build college/university capacity to deliver articulation from HNC/D to year 2 and year 3 of degree programmes. Funding is to develop and embed processes to assist the development of regional progression planning, joint curriculum initiatives, and student support structures.</p> <p><b>Hubs tasked with a specific support to transitions (study skills/monitoring strategies) linked to measurement</b></p>	<p><b>Retention funding</b></p> <p>Targeted funding to support those institutions facing the biggest retention challenge. Focus is on developing sustainable structures – from recruitment through to completion – which deliver demonstrable improvements in retention.</p> <p><b>Aligned by</b></p> <p><b>BRITE</b></p> <p>Resource and capacity building to support retention of students with physical support needs in further and higher education.</p>
<b>Scottish Government national performance objectives</b>	<b>Wealthier and Fairer</b>	<b>Wealthier and Fairer</b> <b>Smarter</b>	<b>Wealthier and Fairer</b> <b>Safer and Stronger</b>	<b>Wealthier and Fairer</b>	<b>Smarter</b>	<b>Smarter</b>	
<b>Success is?</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in staying on rates in schools</li> <li>• Increase in school leavers achieving positive destinations</li> <li>• Increase in pupils progressing to higher education from schools in the lowest quintile</li> <li>• Contribution to tackling occupational segregation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduction in the proportion of young people in the MCMC group</li> <li>• Increase in the proportion of students in further and higher education from deprived areas</li> <li>• More even patterns of participation in further and higher education by gender, ethnicity, disability</li> <li>• Patterns of aspiration and application of school leavers to go to university</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More even patterns of participation in further and higher education</li> <li>• More even retention rates in further and higher education</li> <li>• More even participation in high demand professions within universities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in the proportion of students entering university from college with advanced standing</li> <li>• Measure of numbers completing and numbers progressing to years 2 and 3 of degree programme</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More even retention and achievement rates in further and higher education for students from different backgrounds</li> <li>• National improvement in retention levels at universities</li> </ul>	
<b>At a cost of?</b>	Funding is allocated based on £250,000 per year from further education funds and £250,000 from higher education funds.	School/college funding represents 8.3 per cent of college SUM allocation. Wider Access Regional Forums (WARF) – approximately £1.5 million per year. Funding on access to the professions is still to be determined.	MCMC – £3 million a year to 15 hotspot colleges until AY 2011-12. WARF – approximately £1.5 million per year. Funding for work to better support students with profound and complex needs is still to be determined.	Funding on community transitions is still to be determined. Funding on access to the professions is still to be determined.	The regional articulation hubs – £3 million a year.	£10 million a year is allocated across 19 institutions.	

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## ANNEX 1 THE WIDENING ACCESS REGIONAL FORUMS

[The South East Forum](#) – Funds two main programmes of work aimed at young people and adults. The South East Forum received £649,000 from the SFC to deliver its programmes in 2009-10. For detailed information on the work of the Forum, please see the [South East Forum Strategic Plan 2008-13](#)

South East Forum Programmes aimed at young people:

['Routes 2 Success'](#) - Routes 2 Success aims to promote college as a possible destination for S2/3 pupils who require extra support in recognising their own capabilities and post-school opportunities. Routes 2 Success aims to work with pupils in target schools across the South East Forum's area, delivering workshops with Careers Advisors and Student Mentors from Colleges and also offering a taster day at the pupils local college.

Partners involved in this project are: Edinburgh's Telford College, Jewel and Esk College, Stevenson College Edinburgh, West Lothian College, Borders College, Forth Valley College, Oatridge College and Skills Development Scotland

[LEAPS](#) – LEAPS aims to support talented young people whose ability to choose higher education as a post school option may have been affected by economic, social or cultural factors in the Lothians and Borders. LEAPS provides additional information, support and encouragement at a range of levels to enable higher education to become an option.

Partners involved in this project are: Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh Napier University, Scottish Agricultural College, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh College of Art, City of Edinburgh Council, East Lothian Council, Midlothian Council, West Lothian Council, Scottish Borders Council, Skills Development Scotland, The South East Forum and Queen Margaret University.

South East Forum Programmes aimed at Adults:

[Access to Industry](#) – a programme that began in April 2000 to support people back into education and on to employment, targeting excluded and 'hard to reach' groups from deprived areas with low participation rates in further and higher education in the South East of Scotland. A key component of its work is helping people develop confidence and essential core skills such as communications and develop courses which are delivered in colleges with a strong focus on the creative industries and vocational courses to meet employer demands. Access to Industry workers also provide academic support and liaise with college tutors and other agencies to deal with issues quickly and retain learners. Access to Industry also delivers the 'Passport' and 'Transition' programmes aimed at those from particularly challenged backgrounds, such as care leavers or ex-offenders.

Partners involved in this project are: City of Edinburgh Council Throughcare and Aftercare Department, NHS Lothian – LEAP, Scottish Prison Service - HMYOI Polmont, Cortonvale, HMP Edinburgh, Job Centre Plus, Scottish Business in the Community, Jewel & Esk College, Edinburgh's Telford College, Newbattle Abbey College, Stevenson College, Oatridge Agricultural College, Carnegie College, Borders College, Edinburgh College of Art, Edinburgh Napier University, Queen Margaret University and the University of Edinburgh.

[SWAP East](#) - SWAP-East, along with SWAP West and SWAP North is a regional consortium of colleges and universities. They promote access to Higher Education for mature students throughout Scotland, by working in partnership to provide a route into Higher Education for adults with few or no qualifications or out of date qualifications.

Successful completion of a SWAP Access Programme can lead to a guaranteed place on an HN or degree course at college or university. The programme is designed to provide support to students during the access course with materials, workshops and campus visits designed to ease transition and prepare them for university. They also support practitioners and the colleges that deliver the SWAP access courses. SWAP-East is funded jointly by the South East and Fife & Tayside Forums.

Partners involved in this project are: Adam Smith College, Angus College, Borders College, Carnegie College, Dundee College, Edinburgh Napier University, Edinburgh's Telford College, Elmwood College, Forth Valley College, Jewel & Esk College, Newbattle Abbey College, Oatridge Agricultural College, Perth College, Stevenson College Edinburgh, West Lothian College, University of Abertay, University of Dundee, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh College of Art, Heriot-Watt University, Queen Margaret University, Scottish Agricultural College, University of St Andrews, University of Stirling

[SWAP East - Tracking and Retention Report 2008](#) – reports on the factors impacting on the success of three cohorts of learners and their post-SWAP lifelong learning paths.

Relevant Forthcoming Events: 10 March 2010, Edinburgh Corn Exchange. [South East Forum Conference](#): “The Changing Landscape- Joint challenges in the context of Curriculum for Excellence & 16+ Learner Choices” - The South East Forum (SEF) are holding a conference to communicate with the South East Forum's key stakeholders in local authorities, Schools with low higher education progression rates in the South East, college partners, university partners, SEF members and staff who engage in this work.

[Fife & Tayside Wider Access Forum](#) – The Forum is a partnership of universities, colleges, local authorities and Careers Scotland working in Fife and Tayside to raise awareness of, widen access to and increase participation in post compulsory education through collaborative working. The Forum targets it work through 2 key programmes:

[Lift-Off](#) - This project delivers workshops to target schools, aimed to encourage young people to consider entering higher education, either at college or university. The programme is aimed at pupils from s3 to s6. As part of this programme, there is also 'Lift Off 2 Success' – a one week residential programme, designed to give pupils a taste of student life. 'Lift-Off' also has a student forum to provide an opportunity for young people to engage with its work.

[Transitions](#) - The Transitions theme of the Fife and Tayside Wider Access Forum covers post-compulsory education activities and supports several projects (such as the TAP project - Transitions Access Project and the pre-access in Communities project) aimed at addressing under-representation in Higher Education by promoting fair access and enhancing subsequent achievement for adult learners returning to education from the social and business communities or following college routes to higher education.

Members of the Fife and Tayside WARF include: Adam Smith College, Angus College, Dundee College, Elmwood College, Carnegie College, Perth College, University of Abertay Dundee, University of Dundee, St Andrews University, the OU in Scotland, Angus Council, Dundee City Council, Fife Council, Perth and Kinross Council, Scottish Funding Council, Careers Scotland

[The West Forum](#) - Membership of the West Forum comprises 21 colleges, 8 HEIs, 13 local authorities, SWAP West and Skills Development Scotland. A full list of the stakeholders involved can be accessed [here](#). The West Forum has five main programmes of activity, all of which are outlined below. For further information on any of the programmes, please use the weblinks provided.

[Focus West](#) (Focus On College and University Study) – The aim of this programme is defined as “To deliver specific activity to targeted pupils from S3 - S6 in 29 secondary schools, with a focus on supporting pupils attaining as many national qualifications as possible and preparing them for the transition to further and higher education courses in colleges and universities; and providing impartial information and advice in order to raise awareness and increase knowledge of all positive destinations post compulsory schooling, especially progression to advanced courses in colleges and degree courses in HEIs, for targeted pupils, their parents/carers and teachers.”

[On Track](#) – This is a short pre-entry programme, delivered over two stages, designed to help students successfully make the transition from college to university. It also helps those students who are unsure about whether or not to take their studies further make an informed decision about whether degree-level study is right for them at this time.

[SWAP West](#) – This organisation is an associate member of the West Forum, and has been operating in the West of Scotland since 1988 (there are three regional SWAP offices: the North, East and West). It is a partnership of further and higher education institutions in the West of Scotland, which creates opportunities for mature students with no qualifications to access higher education (mainly through the provision of suitable access courses at local colleges).

[Call West](#) – This programme provides four Learning Development Officers (LDOs) in the areas of Greater Glasgow, Lanarkshire, Inverclyde and Ayrshire. The LDOs work with the other relevant stakeholders (colleges and universities) in targeted communities on pre-access programmes with adult learners. The main objective is to progress learners from informal learning in community settings to more formalised learning at college or university.

The aim of the workshops is to equip learners with awareness and knowledge about college and university study, build up confidence and self esteem for individuals, and assist with information and guidance about progression routes and opportunities.

[Family and Schools Partnership Officer](#) The Families and Schools Partnership Officer facilitates partnerships between school staff, pupils and their families during the decision-making process about transition to college or university. Evidence indicates that family members have an important influence on the decision-making of pupils when they are considering moving on to college or university. The FSPO will work with teachers, pupils and their families to provide support, information and guidance on opportunities for progression, possible destination institutions, general information about post-school study and moral support and guidance. The role of the FSPO is to raise awareness of learning and progression opportunities, encourage learning aspirations and motivation and provide practical support in the decision-making process (West Forum, 2009).

Relevant Forthcoming Events: 3 February 2010, Radisson SAS, Glasgow. [West Forum Annual Conference](#) *“Access and Inclusion: Optimising our Effectiveness in the West of Scotland”* (Free to attend)

To complement the annual SFC/NUS joint Learning for All Conference, and targeting West of Scotland stakeholders in particular, the West Forum Conference 2010 is aimed at senior and other managers and practitioners in school, college, higher education and community learning who have a professional interest in developments in access, inclusion and participation. The conference will provide an opportunity for West of Scotland stakeholders to be informed of Scottish Government current priorities in widening access to education and, with the development of the work of the SFC's Access and Inclusion Committee, how SFC is working with the West Forum to develop and sustain widening access activity to support learners.

**The North Forum** For Widening Participation in Further and Higher Education - The aim of the Forum is to increase the number of people in the North of Scotland (as defined by the SFC) from under-represented groups who participate in further and higher education. The North Forum's work is concentrated on schools, communities and transitions and has 2 key programmes of work, aimed at schools and communities:

**ASPIRENorth** - ASPIRENorth is the North Forum's major schools outreach project. It contributes to the **North Forum** mission by working in partnership to increase the number of young people from under-represented groups in the North of Scotland who progress onto post-school education.

The North Forum is also responsible for the co-ordination and delivery of SWAP North activities. For further detail on the specific objectives of the North Forum, please see the North Forum **Strategic Plan 2008/09 - 2012/13**

Membership of the North Forum comprises of 5 local councils, 10 local colleges, Skills Development Scotland, LEAD Scotland, the North Atlantic Fisheries College Marine Centre, 5 HEIs, the Open University; and the Scottish Funding Council. A comprehensive list of the organisations involved can be found **here**.

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## RELATED BRIEFINGS

[SB 10-07 Barriers to Widening Access to Higher Education \(419 KB pdf\)](#)

[SB 10-08 Participation in Higher Education: Statistics \(410 KB pdf\)](#)

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