Review of Extended Learning Support – Final Report

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Summary: This document sets out the findings from the Scottish Funding Council's (SFC) review of Extended Learning Support (ELS) into how colleges have used the SFC Extended Learning Support funding system to meet the needs of their learners.

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1. Executive summary

This document sets out the findings from the Scottish Funding Council's (SFC) review of Extended Learning Support (ELS). ELS involves specialised support for individual students with particular educational support needs who are studying on a mainstream programme. When SFC moved to a credit based system of funding for colleges from AY 2015-16 onwards the funds used to support ELS activity became separate to this funding model. This provided an opportunity to review the implementation, outcomes, and future prospects of ELS funds in relation to SFC's increasing ambitions for access and inclusion, particularly for individuals most disadvantaged and disengaged from college education.

The focus of this review is to ascertain the realised and potential benefits, impacts, and outcomes of this fund to meet the additional needs of students and to provide them with an inclusive college experience. This was taken forward by a review of the ELS data, focus groups with relevant college staff in each of the college regions, student focus groups, and a stakeholder engagement plan.

The intended outcome of this ELS review is to: better evidence the support to students; enable SFC and the sector to move to an outcome orientated approach to demonstrating this evidence; and implement enhanced guidance for the management of ELS funds. Recommendations from this review will be embedded into Outcome Agreement (OA) Guidance from AY 2017-18 onwards.

Based on the findings from this review, the following recommendations are suggested to enhance the administration and implementation of ELS provision:

- Rename ELS to the Access and Inclusion Fund. The purpose of this fund would be to supplement core funding to support an inclusive college environment.
- To support SFC's access ambitions and to capture the impact of this fund at a national and regional level, SFC recommends that the OA guidance from AY 2017-18 requires colleges to develop an Access and Inclusion Strategy demonstrating their inclusive practices, investment in their staff and college resources and outcomes for students.
- The implementation of this new approach would result in the removal of the ELS flag in Further Education Statistics (FES) system from AY 2017-18 onwards and the need to record students as ELS students. It would also result in the removal of the need for PLSPs for each ELS student and the audit requirements attached to them.
- SFC should allow the system to settle for a period of time and revisit funding allocations in the future to ensure that funds are in the right place for college regions to better support student outcomes.

- With any changes to the guidance, SFC should discuss parity and impact with Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) in relation to regulations, guidance, and threshold for documentation.
- Holding a gathering event to enhance sectoral communications and better support the additional needs of students and (if deemed appropriate) help to build a consistent approach in this area. This is being led by College Development Network (CDN) and an event has been scheduled in June 2016.
- Data sharing should be improved with local authorities, schools, colleges, and the Scottish Government to overcome transition and disclosure issues.
- As part of SFC's OA Guidance, SFC should work with the Scottish Government Support and Wellbeing Unit and SDS Post 16 data-hub to facilitate data sharing and assist the future proofing of additional needs within the sector.
- SFC should enhance their regional and national reporting of disability and mental health and their expectations of this reporting in the OA process.
- More should be done nationally to understand why certain subject areas attract certain types of students with similar backgrounds and needs. A pedagogic approach should be considered to better meet these needs.
- To address concerns raised by stakeholders and colleges regarding the needs of deaf students, SFC should work in partnership with the sector to develop a national approach for the deaf community alongside the expectations of the BSL (British Sign Language) Bill.
- SFC should finalise and publish an Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment. This will include protected characteristics, equality, diversity, human rights considerations, and wider issues impacting students' educational attainment.
- To create a more equitable system for UHI and SRUC, future guidance should ensure that funding streams work together to provide seamless support packages for both non-advanced and advanced students.
- SFC should have discussions with Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS) and the Scottish Government about the possibility of transferring Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) funds to the colleges. This establishes parity of funds for advanced and non-advanced students and moves towards a more holistic approach. If approved, this could be reported through the Access and Inclusion Strategy.
- This review uncovered areas relating to FE student support outwith the direct ELS review remit. It is recommended that work is done to consider the transfer of bursary funds currently used to support the additional study costs of students with additional educational needs into the Access and Inclusion fund and strategy approach. This would require future consultations with students and colleges including Student Support staff.
- The review also uncovered issues relating to the wider system, including a global rise in the number of students declaring mental health difficulties within universities and issues relating to approaches to best meet the needs

of students with profound and / or complex needs. The findings of the ELS review should be considered in relation to the future policy developments of this provision.

This review is organised in the following manner: section 1 is the executive summary, section 2 provides a background of ELS, section 3 lists the thematic questions which grounded this review, section 4 discusses the methodology, section 5 disseminates key findings, section 6 draws together the conclusions, section 7 provides recommendations for the future of ELS funds, and section 8 is the appendices.

2. Background

2.1 Current ELS guidance

Extended Learning Support (ELS) involves specialised support for individual students with particular educational support needs who are studying on a mainstream programme. The educational support needs are likely to be pervasive and continuous in all areas of the student's learning[1].

Colleges can claim ELS for a student if all of the following conditions are met:

- The student is eligible for ELS
- A support need is outlined by the act and links to age and language
- A support need must be educational
- There is a difference between learning and extended learning support
- Must have a PLSP
- College must incur an additional resource

An important principle of ELS funding and policy is that it was never intended to only support students with disabilities. After a full review of this funding in 2006[2], SFC identified that funding should be based on need regardless of a diagnosed disability. This is reflected in the updated SFC guidance document from 2009 and onwards.

2.2 The college landscape – ELS in context

Outcome Agreements were introduced in AY 2012-13. They set out what colleges and universities plan to deliver and their contribution towards meeting the Scottish Government's priorities in return for their funding from SFC. For colleges, each OA is set in the context of the needs for each particular region. Starting in 2014, agreements were generally signed for a three year period, with refreshed versions

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[1] http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/GUI_SFCGD102014_201415studentactivitydataguidanceforco/SFCGD102014_SUMs_Guidance_2014-15.pdf

[2] http://www.webarchive.org.uk/wayback/archive/20060711120000/http://www.sfc.ac.uk/library/06854fc203db2fbd000001099b4d03fa/sfc_01_06C.html

created during interim years. Reforms to the sector led to the mergers and the regionalisation of colleges, with the number of incorporated colleges decreasing from 37 in 2011-12 to 20 in 2014-15.

Simultaneously, SFC moved to a credit based system of funding for colleges from AY 2015-16 onwards. Colleges need to deliver a set amount of credits and these credits have a funding weight attached to them. A key change from SFC's previous system is that colleges can no longer apply an additional weighting of 1.5 (which was referred to as ELS) to students with additional educational needs who were undertaking a mainstream course[3]. The funds used to support ELS activity is now separate to the credit based funding model. This was based on the historical levels of ELS spend under the WSUMs (Weighted Student Unit of Measurement) model. In previous years, this fund accounted for roughly 10% of core funding, amounting to about £44 million. In AY 2015-16 and AY 2016-17 a small uplift for ELS provision was provided, allocating a total of about £50 million for the sector. In AY 2015-16, ELS funds accounted for about 10.5% of the sector average core funding and 9.6% in AY 2016-17[4]. In 2014-15, ELS funds supported 10,892 students.

This change provided an opportunity to review the implementation, outcomes, and future prospects of ELS funds in relation to SFC's increasing ambitions for access and inclusion, particularly for individuals most disadvantaged and disengaged from college education[5].

The focus of this review is to ascertain the realised and potential benefits, impacts, and outcomes of this fund to meet the additional needs of students and to provide them with an inclusive college experience. As outlined in the ELS review remit[6], this is being taken forward by a review of the ELS data, focus groups with relevant college staff in each of the college regions, student focus groups, and a stakeholder engagement plan.

The intended outcome of this ELS review is to: better support students, enable SFC to move to an outcome orientated approach, and implement enhanced guidance.

Recommendations from this review will be embedded into OA Guidance from AY 2017-18 onwards. Details of this ELS review, along with supplemental materials have been made publically available on SFC's website[7].

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[3] http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/GUI_SFCGD032015_CreditGuidance201516studentactivitydat/SFCGD032015_Credit_Guidance_2015-16.pdf
[4] http://www.sfc.ac.uk/funding/OutcomeAgreements/OutcomeAgreementsOverview.aspx
[5] This review did not include an evaluation of ELS funds. Eventually, the SFC will consider a funding allocation to ensure that funds are in the right place for college regions to better support student outcomes.
[6] http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/ExtendedLearningSupport/ELS_Review_Updated_Remit.pdf
[7] http://www.sfc.ac.uk/Priorities/Access/ExtendedLearningSupport.aspx

3. Thematic questions

Based on the current context of ELS, the following thematic questions grounded SFC's approach to this review:

- How is ELS implemented and administered in Scotland's colleges?
- What groups do ELS support and what groups should ELS support?
- How does ELS contribute to students' attainment, progression, and outcomes?
- How does ELS funding work alongside other college funding sources / initiatives to support students?
- To what extent do SFC guidance documents limit the colleges' ability to support students?
- What steps need to be taken to make a more inclusive college environment?
- Is the current ELS system fit for purpose?
- What impact would this review and its implementation (positive or negative) have on individuals with protected characteristics? – This question was included as part of the consultation process for the Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment.
- Moving forward, how do we want ELS funds to be used to support students? How can students be supported to achieve more?

4. Methodology

Due to the nature of this review, a range of qualitative and quantitative methods were utilised to gather and analyse data relating to ELS. As outlined in the project remit, at the start of this review, quantitative methods were used to analyse ELS data and to ascertain trends across the college sector. Upon the completion of the trend analysis, primary sourced qualitative methods were used to ascertain the views of college staff, stakeholders, and students. The interview protocols, along with the project remit and the findings from the trend analysis, were sent to college staff and stakeholders ahead of each in-person meeting. Primary sourced qualitative methods were used in this context, as it is believed to be more appropriate for gaining insight into participants' thoughts, feelings, and experiences[8, 9]. Qualitative research also allows for more open-ended questions, enabling a more exploratory approach, which can clarify perceptions and generate new ideas. This was deemed essential information to complete a comprehensive review of ELS and to develop recommendations to improve this type of service provision.

The following research methods were used throughout this review:

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[8] Krueger, R and Casey, M (2009) Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research, fourth edition, London: Sage Publications Ltd
[9] Spencer, L (2015) Conducting Focus groups (Qualitative data collection), Q2 Training

- A literature review of good practice on student support (completed in January 2016).
- A quantitative review of the ELS data – to analyse ELS data and to ascertain trends across the college sector (completed in May 2015; a refresh was completed in May 2016 to include 2014-15 figures).
- Primary sourced qualitative research gathered using a focus group / interview method of data collection. This included: in-person meetings with staff from all of Scotland's regional colleges (18 college visits), in-person individual meetings and group meetings with stakeholders such as Lead, SQA, and Who Cares? Scotland (17 organisations), advice and consultation from an ELS Steering Group[10], which is comprised of ELS college practitioners and college senior managers (three meetings), and college student focus groups (six focus groups; a total of 47 students). The majority of this work was conducted from September - December 2015. A limited number of remaining stakeholder meetings were completed in early 2016.

5. Key findings

This section includes key findings from a review of the ELS data (trend analysis), and consultations with relevant college staff in each of Scotland's college regions, stakeholders, and college students.

5.1 Review of the ELS data, trend analysis

5.1.1 Overview

As outlined in the ELS remit, a comprehensive quantitative review of the ELS data was completed and disseminated in May 2015[11] (a refresh was completed in May 2016 to include 2014-15 figures) to provide a statistical understanding of ELS provision over the past 10 years. In 2014-15 out of 224,058 enrolments, ELS was provided to 10,882 students, representing 4.9% of students. This is more than treble the 5,774 enrolments (1.5% of students) who received support in 2004-05. A total of 92,450 students (2.5%) received funded extended learning support over the period 2004-05 to 2014-15. The numbers for whom ELS has been claimed for has nearly doubled since 2004-05 whilst the total number of SUMs claimed has dropped by more than 160,000 over the same period. As a result the percentage for which support has been claimed for has more than trebled since 2004-05.

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[10] Information on the ELS Review Steering Group is available online at:
http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/ExtendedLearningSupport/ELS_Review_Group_Membership.pdf
[11] The full trend analysis report is available online at:
http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/ExtendedLearningSupport/ELS_Trend_Analysis.pdf

The following variables were prominent in this trend analysis: disability, gender, mode of study, and deprivation. The percentages shown for all tables are derived by dividing the numbers receiving ELS by those for whom WSUMs have been claimed.

5.1.2 Disability

Over half of students who received ELS over the 2004-05 to 2014-15 periods had a disclosed disability. This ranged from 52% in 2004-05 to 57% in 2013-14. In 2014-15, there was a slight decrease in the percentage of ELS students with a declared disability. However, there has been an increase in the overall number of students declaring ELS. This suggests students are presenting with needs beyond the more traditional medicalised classifications. Table 1 summarises ELS support by disability.

Table 1: Summary of ELS support by disability, 2004-05 to 2014-15

Disability type	All SUMable (exc group 18) enrolments	All ELS enrolments	% ELS											
No known disability	2,924,517	42,726	1.5%	0.9%	1.0%	1.0%	1.1%	1.2%	1.4%	1.7%	2.1%	2.1%	2.0%	2.7%
Dyslexia	93,804	23,526	25.1%	25.0%	23.7%	21.4%	20.7%	21.0%	23.0%	24.5%	28.9%	30.6%	28.2%	27.4%
Blind/are partially sighted	8,478	1,193	14.1%	14.0%	15.4%	12.4%	12.0%	11.7%	12.5%	16.2%	18.1%	17.2%	17.1%	14.4%
Deaf/have a hearing impairment	19,045	1,850	9.7%	10.6%	8.9%	7.1%	7.6%	8.4%	8.5%	9.5%	11.1%	13.8%	14.1%	15.9%
Wheelchair user/have mobility difficulties	15,554	1,899	12.2%	10.5%	10.8%	10.2%	9.7%	10.4%	12.2%	12.4%	17.7%	17.8%	14.3%	18.7%
Personal care support	1,902	247	13.0%	12.6%	9.7%	6.4%	7.3%	5.5%	11.2%	6.3%	11.0%	16.8%	N/A	21.6%
Mental health difficulties	29,530	3,724	12.6%	8.6%	8.2%	9.0%	9.6%	9.5%	10.0%	14.3%	16.9%	18.1%	18.2%	13.4%
An unseen disability not listed above	72,804	4,806	6.6%	4.2%	4.8%	5.3%	5.4%	4.9%	5.3%	6.6%	8.4%	9.1%	11.6%	8.8%
Multiple disabilities	3,185,162	3,721	0.1%	12.4%	13.7%	12.8%	13.3%	11.6%	13.8%	15.7%	22.4%	27.7%	28.7%	28.5%
A disability not listed above	49,399	7,247	14.7%	10.8%	13.4%	10.5%	10.9%	12.9%	15.3%	16.7%	19.1%	21.3%	18.5%	15.6%
% of ELS students with a disclosed disability				52%	53%	51%	51%	51%	52%	51%	54%	57%	57%	51%

Through the analysis of the data on ELS support by disability, the following trends were identified:

- 29% of ELS students in 2014-15 have multiple disabilities. Colleges discussed this trend as well, noting that students often present with multiple and complex needs and that there is a need to recognise and support students through a range of services. It is likely that this trend will continue to increase with more colleges seeking to mainstream their learners. "Whenever possible, we want to provide as much ELS as possible to mainstream students. This is part of the philosophy of the College." (College staff).
- 27% of ELS students in 2014-15 have dyslexia. This is one of the highest stated and growing disabilities. The percentage of these students who have received ELS has not increased as notably but the actual number of students with dyslexia who receive ELS support has more than doubled from 1,252 in 2004-05 to 2,595 in 2014-15.

- 13% of ELS students in 2014-15 have mental health difficulties. With the exception of the latest 2014-15 figures, there has been a notable year-on-year increase. The actual numbers of students with mental health difficulties has increased from 1,961 in 2004-05 to 4004 in 2014-15. Students receiving ELS increased from 169 to 536 over the same period.
- Both stakeholders and colleges confirmed increases in the prevalence of dyslexia and mental health difficulties. They attributed this to changes in society and more inclusive environments created by colleges. As a result, more students feel comfortable declaring their needs and requesting support.
- Literature in this area also supports these increases. For example, after an analysis of higher education (HE) data, Weedon (2015) discusses how more students with dyslexia and mental health difficulties are ready to declare their needs, due to increased incentives attributed to declaration[12].

5.1.3 Gender

ELS students are now more likely to be female and this trend is increasing. In 2014-15, 6,103 females received ELS support compared to 4,779 males. This occurred while the overall numbers of female college students dropped. Table 2 shows a breakdown of ELS by gender.

Table 2: Summary of ELS support by gender, 2004-05 to 2014-15

	ELS Claimed			Total SUMable enrolments			% receiving ELS support		
	Male	**Female**	**total**	**Male**	**Female**	**total**	**Male**	**Female**	**total**
2004-05	2,817	2,957	5,774	160,570	224,859	385,429	1.8%	1.3%	1.5%
2005-06	3,057	3,534	6,591	163,067	228,619	391,686	1.9%	1.5%	1.7%
2006-07	3,195	3,969	7,164	175,197	241,382	416,579	1.8%	1.6%	1.7%
2007-08	3,566	4,596	8,162	189,764	246,442	436,206	1.9%	1.9%	1.9%
2008-09	3,710	4,525	8,235	185,259	233,995	419,254	2.0%	1.9%	2.0%
2009-10	3,926	4,533	8,459	167,859	203,751	371,610	2.3%	2.2%	2.3%
2010-11	4,330	4,858	9,188	149,082	176,311	325,393	2.9%	2.8%	2.8%
2011-12	4,371	5,141	9,512	121,031	138,072	259,103	3.6%	3.7%	3.7%
2012-13	4,114	5,075	9,189	111,480	125,117	236,597	3.7%	4.1%	3.9%
2013-14	3,988	5,306	9,294	112,895	126,107	239,002	3.5%	4.2%	3.9%
2014-15	4,779	6,103	10,882	106,984	117,074	224,058	4.5%	5.2%	4.9%
all years	41,853	50,597	92,450	1,643,188	2,061,729	3,704,917	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%

The literature supports this finding and suggests that females are more likely to seek help[13, 14]. For example, Leathwood discusses in her study how there is a higher prevalence of males to exhibit fear or reluctance to ask for help. "Dependence is

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[12] http://www.docs.hss.ed.ac.uk/education/creid/NewsEvents/57_vi_WA_PPT_Weedon.pdf
[13] Matheson F, Smith K, Fazli G, Moineddin R, Dunn J, Glazier R (2014) Physical health and gender as risk factors for usage of services for mental illness: J Epidemiol Community Health, Vol.68(10), pp.971-978
[14] Leathwood, C (2006) Gender, Equity and the Discourse of the Independent Learner in Higher Education, The International Journal of Higher Education and Educational Planning, Vol.52(4), pp. 611-633

feminised and at odds with the always able to cope constructions of masculinity. Students who are 'too' dependent are also infantilised (as women so often are) within this discourse" (2006, p. 628). SFC's consultation with colleges and stakeholders suggested that there is an under diagnosis of males in the college sector and a stigmatisation built up in more male dominated course environments e.g. construction. Colleges discussed strategies they have implemented to address this gender imbalance, however, most colleges recognised that this is an area of improvement. For example, to address fear and stigmatization among male students, New College Lanarkshire discussed how they implemented more discreet supports (e.g., audio files of the students' coursework) to encourage more students to seek support. West College Scotland discussed the workshops they organised with younger male staff to engage young male students at the college and to encourage them to seek support. Colleges also talked about structural efforts they have implemented to move past this stigma surrounding support. This includes: rebranding the ELS service, moving all student service departments to one centralised area, and providing an overview of ELS services as part of the induction process for new staff members and students.

In the focus groups with stakeholders who represent people with a disability/ies they pointed to examples where schools have not addressed the mental health and learning needs of some female pupils because these needs often present themselves in a different way to that of male pupils. They report that male needs are often first identified because of disruptive class behaviours. The group suggested that the higher female claims may simply be due to their needs being identified for the first time which creates a higher need for support.

5.1.4 Mode of study

ELS students are significantly more likely to be studying full time. In 2014-15 only 1.5% of part time students received ELS in comparison to 11.5% of full time students. Over the 10 year period, full time students were more than 10 times more likely to receive ELS provision as compared to part time students. Table 3 (next page) shows the breakdown of ELS by mode of study. The table also shows that full time numbers have increased over the period whilst part time numbers have more than halved. Colleges spoke about their efforts to support all learners, including part time learners. For example, South Lanarkshire College holds twilight workshops and has a designated tutor for ELS support in the evening so that students who are on part time courses or taking evening classes can access support at later times.

Colleges attributed the decline of part time students in receipt of ELS due to the fear of not being able to produce an auditable PLSP for part time students or the belief that the support provided by the college to part time students would not come under the umbrella of fundable ELS provision.

Table 3: Summary of ELS support by mode of study, 2004-05 to 2014-15

	ELS Claimed			Total SUMable enrolments			% receiving ELS support		
	Full time	Part time	total	Full time	Part time	total	Full time	Part time	total
2004-05	4,110	1,664	5,774	69,091	316,338	385,429	5.9%	0.5%	1%
2005-06	4,669	1,922	6,591	67,257	324,429	391,686	6.9%	0.6%	2%
2006-07	5,117	2,047	7,164	69,295	347,284	416,579	7.4%	0.6%	2%
2007-08	5,659	2,503	8,162	69,212	366,994	436,206	8.2%	0.7%	2%
2008-09	6,213	2,022	8,235	72,012	347,242	419,254	8.6%	0.6%	2%
2009-10	6,388	2,071	8,459	77,623	293,987	371,610	8.2%	0.7%	2%
2010-11	7,040	2,148	9,188	80,168	245,225	325,393	8.8%	0.9%	3%
2011-12	7,249	2,263	9,512	81,358	177,745	259,103	8.9%	1.3%	4%
2012-13	7,144	2,045	9,189	76,814	159,783	236,597	9.3%	1.3%	4%
2013-14	7,302	1,992	9,294	79,320	159,682	239,002	9.2%	1.2%	4%
2014-15	8,707	2,185	10,892	75,751	148,396	224,147	11.5%	1.5%	5%
all years	69,598	22,862	92,460	817,901	2,887,105	3,705,006	8.5%	0.8%	2%

5.1.5 Deprived areas

The data shows that there is not a strong link between ELS provision and deprivation (quantified by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation, SIMD). In recent years the proportion of students who receive ELS from the least deprived areas is greater than the proportion from the most deprived areas. However, there has been a greater increase in numbers receiving ELS support from the most deprived areas in comparison with the more affluent neighbourhoods.

There has been a greater increase in numbers of students receiving ELS support from the most deprived areas in comparison with the more affluent neighbourhoods. Although the proportion from the least deprived areas is greater the actual numbers from the most deprived areas is much higher. This reflects the overall cohort of students in colleges. Full time students in receipt of ELS from the most deprived decile have increased from 9,981 in 2004-05 to 12,665 in 2014-15. Full time students in receipt of ELS from the least deprived decile have fallen from 4,152 to 3,834 over the same period. Table 4 provides a breakdown for ELS students by SIMD.

Table 4: Summary of ELS support by SIMD decile, 2004-05 to 2014-15

	All FT students	All ELS students	% receiving ELS											
10% most deprived	121,082	10,177	8.4%	5.1%	6.7%	7.8%	8.1%	9.1%	8.6%	9.0%	8.8%	8.8%	9.0%	10.3%
2	107,432	9,391	8.7%	5.7%	7.0%	7.4%	8.5%	9.1%	8.2%	8.9%	9.6%	9.6%	9.4%	11.4%
3	96,599	8,451	8.7%	5.9%	7.3%	7.7%	8.4%	9.4%	8.3%	9.1%	9.1%	9.5%	9.5%	11.1%
4	86,005	7,317	8.5%	6.1%	7.4%	7.5%	8.6%	8.9%	8.2%	8.4%	8.9%	9.1%	9.2%	10.7%
5	76,711	6,602	8.6%	5.9%	7.7%	7.5%	9.2%	8.5%	8.3%	8.8%	9.2%	9.0%	9.3%	10.6%
6	69,780	6,272	9.0%	6.6%	7.4%	7.9%	9.3%	9.1%	8.6%	9.2%	8.7%	10.2%	9.6%	11.7%
7	63,361	5,692	9.0%	7.0%	7.9%	8.1%	8.1%	8.6%	8.6%	9.5%	10.2%	9.9%	9.3%	11.4%
8	60,083	5,168	8.6%	6.5%	7.4%	7.8%	8.6%	8.3%	7.8%	9.1%	8.8%	9.3%	9.4%	11.5%
9	57,523	4,486	7.8%	5.9%	6.4%	6.6%	7.9%	8.3%	7.8%	8.0%	7.3%	8.0%	8.3%	11.0%
10% least deprived	45,053	3,869	8.6%	6.0%	7.0%	7.0%	7.5%	8.2%	8.4%	7.9%	8.9%	9.4%	9.5%	12.2%

Colleges discussed the link they saw between ELS and deprivation. Students who enter college from deprived backgrounds often bring with them a range of complex social, emotional, and learning needs. They see ELS as a necessary tool to support the attainment and achievement of these students. For example, staff from Glasgow Clyde College discussed how a considerable number of students enter their college with diagnosed anxiety and depression and that this links to deprivation. This is supported by Riddell and Weedon who discuss how "one in five Scottish children lives in poverty and there is a strong and enduring association between low household income and low educational attainment" (2004, p. 366)[15]. This is further supported by the Scottish Government's approach through The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland)[16] and Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)[17] which links social exclusion and poverty with educational difficulties.

A number of colleges also discussed the link between ELS and parental involvement. Often it is families from less deprived backgrounds who highly value education and know how to "work the system." These students also have a greater degree of parental involvement who advocate on behalf of their child to obtain necessary educational supports. Research into student disability in the HE sector also supports this finding. Tinklin *et al.* (2004[18]) discuss how disabled students are more likely to come from more advantaged backgrounds. Fordyce *et al.* (2013[19]) discuss social capital and the ability of the parents to effectively advocate for their child and how this is linked to socio-economic status. They also discuss how this significantly shapes their child's experience of both school and post-16 education. This suggests that some students from disadvantaged backgrounds might not be accessing ELS support. To address this, ELS funds could be used to provide a more inclusive environment, rather than targeting individual students. This provides a more supportive learning environment for all students, including students who lack social capital, who might not have a family advocate, and might not have been referred for ELS support.

5.2 College engagement

As outlined in the ELS remit, the ELS review included a visit to relevant staff in all of the college regions and an offer to meet with the Principal (or all of the Principals in a multi-college region) to seek their views and to ascertain the strategic implications of moving to an outcome orientated approach. SFC staff met with all of the college regions, completing 18 college visits[20] from September - November 2015.

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[15] Riddell, S and Weedon, E (2014) Changing legislation and its effects on inclusive and special education: Scotland. British Journal of Special Education, 41: pp. 363-381. doi: 10.1111/1467-8578.12080

[16] http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/resources/e/publication_tcm4646838.asp

[17] http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/Young-People/gettingitright/what-is-girfec

[18] Tinklin, T, Riddell, S, and Wilson, A (2004) Disabled Students in Higher Education, CES Briefing No.32, Edinburgh: CES, University of Edinburgh

[19] Fordyce, M, Riddell, S, O'Neill, R, and Weedon E (2003) Post-school transitions of People who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing, Edinburgh: Centre for Research in Education, Inclusion and Diversity, University of Edinburgh

[20] Meetings occurred with all regional colleges, UHI met as a regional board

Guided by the thematic questions and the ELS project remit, three key themes emerged from the data: approaches to meeting need, impact of ELS funds, and claiming behaviours.

5.2.1 Approaches to meeting need

Meeting student need is a recurrent theme identified following the analysis of the focus group interviews with college staff. SFC staff recognised the professionalism and dedication of college staff to identify need and to support students. This is exemplified through increased partnership working, comprehensive referral systems used within the colleges to identify students for ELS provision, and the range of supports offered to students to promote student outcomes and create an inclusive learning environment.

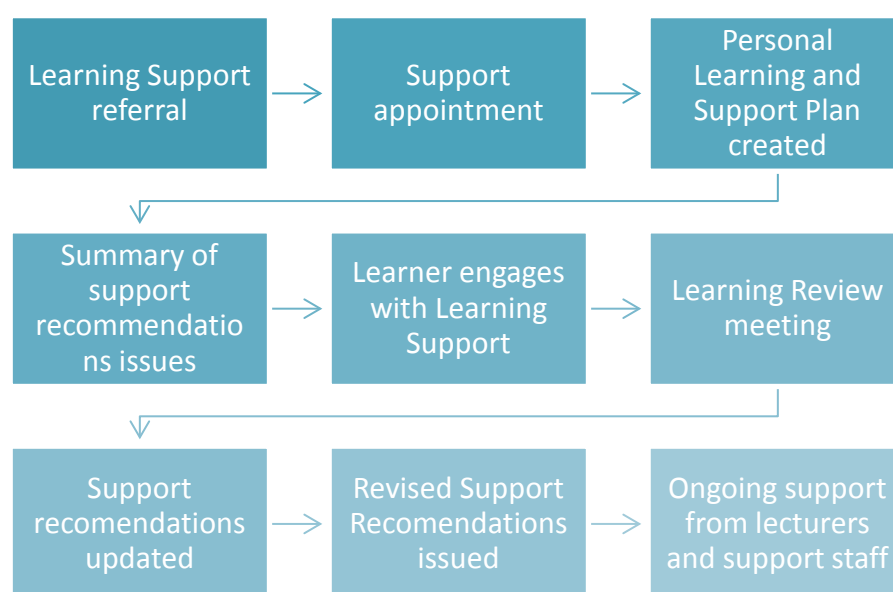### 5.2.1.1 Increased partnership working

Colleges discussed increased partnership workings and connections to community outcomes and objectives. A few examples include: NHS, Lead Scotland, local authorities, transition forums, housing associations, Dyslexia Scotland, National Autistic Society, and Who Cares? Scotland. Colleges identified significant benefits of forming these partnerships including: facilitating early identification of potential ELS students and supports the transition process, delivering expert training/advice to staff to better support students, and providing external specialised support which the college is not able to provide internally. For example, some colleges specifically mentioned specialised training provided by organisations such as JISC to train staff and students on how to use assistive technology resources to better support students and maximise inclusion. All colleges discussed working in partnership to some degree with external agencies. However, some colleges reported difficulties working with schools and local authorities, particularly, around data sharing.

5.2.1.2 Referral systems

Colleges discussed their systematic referral systems used to identify students for ELS provision. Students can self-refer or be referred to ELS through multiple avenues including: school / college transition meetings, pre-application, post-application, enrolment, induction, and beyond; encompassing the entirety of the college student experience. Some colleges identified systems where they combined their Performance Indicators (PIs) with ELS use to help them determine areas with low ELS claims and low PIs. This helps to question if the reason for the low PIs is a lack of support or at least eradicate that possibility. Staff are then encouraged and supported to identify and refer students for ELS. Some colleges use notional ELS targets by departments to encourage academics to identify support needs in their student cohorts.

Case study: Forth Valley College referral process

Learners who identify with an additional support need will self-refer (or be referred by a member of staff) by completing a referral form. The following diagram summarises the process from that point onwards. The Summary of Support Recommendations is forwarded to the specific member of teaching staff who is responsible for ensuring that support recommendations are implemented within the teaching department.

```
Learning Support     →    Support          →    Personal
referral                  appointment           Learning and
                                                Support Plan
                                                created
                                                   ↓
Summary of           →    Learner engages  →    Learning Review
support                   with Learning         meeting
recommendatio             Support
ns issues
                                                   ↓
Support              →    Revised Support  →    Ongoing support
recomendations            Recomendations        from lecturers
updated                   issued                and support staff
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5.2.1.3 Activities supported by ELS

Colleges discussed a range of supports provided to students such as bespoke one-to-one supports provided to them by a member of staff such as a BSL signer or a note taker; group workshops; assistive technology such as Read & Write Gold and MyStudyBar; loaner equipment such as laptops, live scribe pens, and voice recorders; trainings in assistive technology; and alternative assessment arrangements such as extra time and separate accommodation. Colleges also discussed how they complete needs assessments for students and how ELS funds are used to pay for educational psychological assessments to provide students with a diagnosis. Colleges recognised that their approach to meeting need differed to schools as the college role was to support an independent learner, and to build the confidence and skill sets of students to enable them to successfully progress into employment or further education. Check-in meetings (some colleges reported 4-5 meetings each year) between the students and staff enable students to provide feedback on the range of supports offered to them and to reassess the appropriateness of certain supports.

For example, most colleges mentioned that rather than limiting assistive software to only students with a disability, they have made assistive software available for all students, including both on campus access and portable remote access. This is advantageous because:

- It is a positive approach to normalise and overcome the stigma of accessing support.
- Students who do not feel comfortable declaring that they have an additional need benefits from these supports.
- Accessible software could benefit both disabled and non-disabled students.
- The literature suggests that accessible software could "act as an equaliser – raising the performance of both students, but dyslexic students to a greater degree, thus closing the gap[21]."

Some colleges discussed providing MyStudyBar, a tool consisting of open source and freeware applications, designed to support study skills, organisational, and literacy skills for all staff and students.

Case study: MyStudyBar
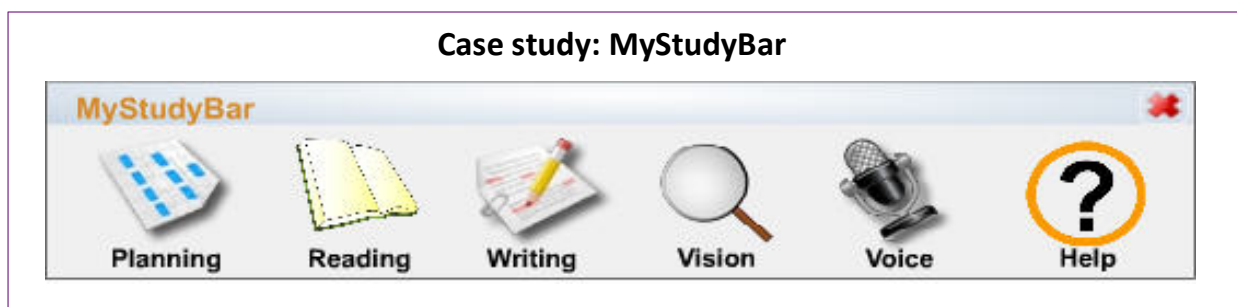
Colleges also discussed the importance of having ELS as a needs-led service within an inclusive environment. This includes both bespoke one-to-one support and group activities. Colleges stressed the importance of flexibility to enable ELS practitioners to utilise the appropriate method(s) of support.

For example, bespoke one-to-one support through the use of a signer should be used to support a deaf student. However, colleges discussed that access to interpreters is limited, particularly in rural and remote areas. This resonates with some stakeholders who also discussed concerns regarding the provision of support for deaf students. Therefore, a more national approach for the deaf community would help to direct and pool resources.

Some colleges discussed their desire to offer less one-to-one support opting to identify a common need and deliver more group workshops. For example, a staff member from the City of Glasgow College discussed how they "put together a series

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[21] Dixon, M (2004) Disability as a vehicle for identifying hidden aspects of human activity: inclusive design and dyslexia in educational software development in: User-centered interaction paradigms for universal paradigms for universal access in the information society, Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer, pp. 254-261.

of workshops based on a common need. Through workshops, we are reaching more students and having a greater impact." Providing group provision is another mechanism to target and support students with similar circumstances who are attracted to certain subjects. Colleges outlined care, beauty therapy, and performing arts as subject areas that attract greater proportions of ELS students. This differs to SQA's perspective whereas they identify need as a subject specific issue. It was suggested that more could be done nationally to understand this and to recommend a consistent pedagogic approach to meet these needs.

Some colleges discussed their interest to offer more workshops, particularly in increasingly high need areas such as literacy and numeracy, but they feel that they cannot claim ELS funds for these types of initiatives because it would not get through an audit process.

5.2.2   The impact of ELS funds

Colleges discussed how they believe ELS removes educational barriers and has a positive impact on retention and attainment. However, colleges found it challenging to report on the quantifiable impact of ELS provision. A common response from the college staff was "take ELS away and you could see the difference it makes." Colleges discussed that they have analysed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), comparing their students in receipt of ELS to their general student population. Students supported through ELS typically do just as well or better than their general student population. However, it is difficult to know exactly how the students would have done without the support. As discussed in section 5.2.1.1, the work of ELS is not done in silo. ELS staff work in partnership, both internally and externally, as part of a package of support to assist students. It is difficult to unpick the exact benefits of ELS. To quantify the impact of ELS, a control group is needed and it is not ethical for colleges to withdraw support from students in order to quantify the impact of ELS.

PLSPs could be used as a means to evaluate the impact of ELS. Each PLSP outlines the needs of the learner, measures implemented support provided to the learner, and provides a review of the student's learning experience. Although PLSPs provides more qualitative descriptions with regards to how ELS supports are perceived, similar to the point above, it is difficult to quantify what the students could have achieved without the supports.

Although college staff affirmed the benefits and advantages of using PLSP, the formal requirement which mandates the creation of a PLSP to trigger ELS funds could dissuade students from seeking support and is administratively taxing on ELS staff. College staff suggested that without the requirement of needing to complete a PLSP for each student in receipt of ELS provision, this could attract more students, particularly from hard to reach populations, to come forward for support and it could

free up staff time to provide more ELS provision. College staff also suggested that PLSPs should only be used if it benefits the learner and the situation warrants the use of this tool.

Some college staff members also discussed surveys they have conducted with students to measure the impact of ELS. These colleges discussed positive responses from the students. For example, West College Scotland conducted a survey of their students in receipt of ELS. 92% of students surveyed reported that their PLSP helped them to participate successfully in their course. At City of Glasgow College, 91% of students reported that the additional support provided to them met their needs.

College staff also provided anecdotal evidence where ELS has significantly contributed to the success of their students. The impact of ELS is more prominent through qualitative means of data collection, specifically, through student focus groups and student case studies. Section 5.4 discusses the impact of ELS funds from the students' perspective.

College staff discussed areas of good practice and areas where they feel ELS has had the greatest impact. Examples of this includes the award winning Forth Valley College's approach on dyslexia, City of Glasgow's "My time" work with students with autism, and Moray College's Study Bar.

Case study: Award winning Forth Valley College Approach

Forth Valley College received the JISC Regional Support Centre (RSC) Scotland Itec Award for their innovative Moodle learning platform. This Moodle is the college's virtual on-line campus and allows students to access numerous resources and free assistive technologies. A student with specific learning needs was invited to participate in the college's e-Inclusion working group and to evaluate each product. This student also supported and inspired fellow classmates in the use of Moodle.

However, colleges discussed that there is a gap. Missing from these impact measures is information on the students who were supported through ELS, but for whom the college did not claim ELS funding. This could include students for whom the college feels the student's PLSP would not pass an audit and other non-ELS students who benefited from the inclusive approach taken to support all learners. This includes: ad-hoc in-class support, drop-in workshops, and access to assistive technology. These types of supports and efforts also need to be included with any measure used to ascertain the impact of ELS. To address this gap, colleges discussed how they supported a move away from how the funds are being used towards one that supports the outcomes and the impacts of what they have achieved. This provides colleges with more flexibility in how they support students and could provide a better way to articulate the impact of ELS.

5.2.3 Claiming behaviours

As part of this review, colleges were asked about the intersection of DSA, bursary, and ELS funding mechanisms. Through discussions with college staff, it is apparent that all colleges are operating within SFC's guidance and there is no indication of any duplication of funding. However, some colleges reported that having different funding streams can cause tension and that some NC students do not get the same level of support as many HNC/D students. This is because DSA is ring-fenced for the individual, whereas other funding streams can be used to support the service. This was also discussed at a stakeholder meeting with SAAS. To address this concern, a suggestion was made to transfer DSA funds to the college. The college would be responsible for the management of these funds and could use their professional judgement to best meet the needs of students.

Colleges reported that they are needs-led and strive to meet the needs of all students, whether or not the student qualified for DSA or if the college feels that they can make a claim for ELS. Students might not qualify for ELS because they do not stay on past the 25% threshold, the student might not be willing to sign a PLSP, or the college does not feel that they have enough evidence to produce an auditable PLSP. College staff described how ELS claims are done at the end of the year when they assess which students fit SFC guidance and will pass an audit. All colleges identified that ELS claims do not reflect how they meet the needs of students. Rather, it shows who the college can process through the ELS claims system.

As a way of balancing the system, many colleges spoke of supporting students who they do not claim ELS for and claiming ELS for students where the resource was quite minimal. This also resonates with many of the stakeholders who were consulted as part of this review. Stakeholders who attended the focus group discussed how the college claiming behaviour is not consistent with the way in which colleges are meeting their learners' needs and that this is likely to impact the ability of colleges to support the needs of all learners. This group also agreed that the current claiming system needs to change to better support students.

This was creating a situation where some colleges are openly risk adverse about their claims due to a difficult audit, resulting in identified under-claiming behaviour. For example, West Lothian College discussed how they were asked to put on workshops for NC Engineering and HN level Engineers and to address issues with maths and numeracy. Staff at West Lothian College felt that the students needed this type of support, but they felt that they could not claim ELS for this activity because they believed they would not get it through the audit. The College had to meet this need through alternative means. One staff member discussed how "we want to provide support for an educational need and not just for a tick box of a diagnosis." This was a common sentiment expressed by many colleges.

SFC agrees with this position. Starting in 2008, SFC guidance stated that ELS funding should be based on need regardless of a diagnosed disability. However, in practice, this does not always occur, with some colleges reverting to a more medicalised approach. SFC interviews with colleges suggest that this is more connected with the interpretation of auditors than an issue with SFC guidance. With future guidance, SFC is keen to have colleges move away from the medicalised approach entirely and link ELS provision to an outcome orientated access and inclusion strategy. This is supported by Wray (2012)[22] when discussing transition barriers and success enablers. Wray discusses adopting a social model, instead of a medical model of disability, which shifts the emphasis from the individual to the environmental factors and promotes social inclusion. Kirby *et al.* (2008)[23] discusses how it makes "more sense to ascertain what the individual student needs, according to their profile and the course they want to study and regardless of the diagnostic label" (p.167).

Discussions with UHI and SRUC suggested a funding model inequality in relation to ELS since these institutions can only use funds for non-advanced students. Both institutions receive about 10%[24] of their college allocation for ELS so SFC does not feel they are underfunded but agree that the current system could be seen as unfair from a student perspective. With future guidance, this should be amended.

Since there is little connection to ELS claims and how colleges meet their students' needs, it was recommended that ELS claims cannot and should not be used to assess future need or to judge the effectiveness of a college in this area.

Case study: The FLO system at Dundee and Angus College

Dundee and Angus College created the FLO system, an integrated record management system, to identifying need. The College's Student Services and the ICT department worked closely to develop the FLO system. This system pulls in information and records every interaction with students. The FLO system ensures that records are done properly, meets their audit needs, and supports the individual needs of students. The use of the FLO system explains the College's high ELS figures, but that they are doing so within the terms of SFC guidance. This approach was developed and identified at a Rapid Improvement Event post-merger. Rapid Improvement Events were used during the merger process to design and identify the best approaches for the implementation of the new College.

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[22] Wray, M (2013) Comparing disabled students' entry to higher education with their non-disabled peers — barriers and enablers to success, Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning, 1/1/2013, Vol.14(3), pp.87-101

[23] Kirby, A, Sugden D, Beveridge S, Edwards L, Edwards R (2007) Dyslexia and developmental co-ordination disorder in further and higher education-similarities and differences. Does the 'label' influence the support given? Dyslexia, Vol. 14(3), pp. 197-213. doi: 10.1002/dys.367.

[24] In AY 2015-16 ELS represented 10.9% of UHI's college allocation and 9.9% of SRUC's allocation. This is close to the sector average of 10.5%. This is based on non-advanced provision only for UHI and SRUC whereas the sector average is based on non-advanced and advanced provision. This will be considered in phase 2 of the review.

5.3 Stakeholder engagement

As part of the ELS review process, undertaking a stakeholder engagement plan was a recommendation taken forward from an ELS Steering Group meeting. The purpose for meeting with stakeholders is to ascertain the views and input of other organisations with an interest in ELS provision.

Individual meetings were held with the following organisations: Education Scotland, NUS, Lead, SQA, JISC, SAAS, the Chair of Scotland's Disabled Children, Who Cares? Scotland, and the Scottish Government's Support and Wellbeing Unit. A group meeting was held with: CDN, ADES, Enable, Sense Scotland, Dyslexia Scotland, Scottish Sensory Centre, and Scottish Council on Deafness. Institutions were selected in discussion with the ELS Steering Group based on their remit and connection to supporting current or potential college students with additional learning needs.

Although an interview protocol was used with the stakeholder visits, a more exploratory approach was taken to learn from the expertise across a range of agencies and specialists. Three key themes emerged from the data: what works well, concerns about current arrangements, and suggestions for improvement.

5.3.1 What works well?

All stakeholders recognised that colleges are doing a lot of things well. Examples of good practice discussed by stakeholders includes: supporting a wide range of learners often having varied and complex needs, the use of specialised and innovative technology to support students, and colleges are open to collaboration with stakeholders and exploring new ideas. Stakeholders identified that once a college had identified a need that the support put in place was usually exemplary. It was also outlined and accepted that the college helps the student transition from individual support in the school to independent learner in the college.

5.3.2 Concerns about current arrangements

Stakeholders had the following concerns about current arrangements. Broad categories of concerns include: financial pressures, transitions, and the over-focus on the medical model. Some were also critical about when the student was referred for support. It was suggested that this can be at crisis point e.g., when exam pressures mount up and by this point putting interventions in to reverse the situation is almost impossible requiring the student to leave to re-sit. This was also recognised by many of the colleges consulted and college staff expressed frustration at these situations. The reasons behind it are multiple and complex. They include:

- The student wanting to move away from the stigma of support at school and start afresh at college
- The student not recognising their need as needing additional support e.g., that support is for disabled students and the student does not identify themselves as having a disability; students with mental health needs or learning difficulties such as dyslexia fell into this group
- Data sharing issues between the school and the college and referral issues relying on a cry for help.

5.3.2.1 Financial pressures

Some stakeholders discussed the financial pressures and the role of regionalisation on colleges. They felt that this is limiting the types of services and supports that colleges are able to provide to students, some stakeholders perceived that colleges are not in the same position to provide the personalised services they once could, and that there might be future reductions on support services. However, when probed, SFC was not provided with specific examples to back up this statement. This suggests that this may be a perception problem as it was not identified by the ELS Steering Group or by the college visits which were predominately attended by college staff rather than management.

5.3.2.2 Transitions

Stakeholders discussed concerns about the learner's transitions into college. Lead's 2015 report, *Improving Disabled Learner's Progression through learning in colleges[25],* supports many of these findings and recommendations outlined in this section.

Stakeholders felt that colleges could better support students during the application and pre-entry period to disclose on their application their additional learning needs and to meet with support services to put into place appropriate accommodations before the student begins their course. Olney and Brockelman (2003) support this sentiment. They discuss how "regardless of disability label or level of support needed, people with disabilities regularly confront doubts, judgements, and stereotypes. Daily, they engage in a decision making process about the relative advantages and drawbacks of telling others about the disability; they often need to choose between the risk of being stereotyped and the risk of failing to procure appropriate accommodations" (p. 49). Stakeholders discussed how more needs to be done to shift the process from crisis management to self-management, where students feel supported and empower to declare their needs as early as possible.

Stakeholders also felt that colleges could do more to support transitional arrangements. Colleges also reported challenges with transitions and that transition

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[25] Improving Disabled Learner's Progression through learning in colleges (Feb 2015)

arrangements varied from school to school and depended on personal relationships rather than a formalised process. All colleges reported that transitional arrangements could be improved. This aligns with the recommendations from an Education Scotland report on supporting college learners to succeed[26]. Some stakeholders commented that colleges are not sending qualified senior staff to transition meetings and that effective planning in pre-16 education needs to occur to better support the transition process. However, some colleges reported that they are not being invited to transition meetings or experienced challenges with regards to accessing and the sharing of data. Stakeholders discussed the importance of parental involvement with the transition process, particularly relating to identifying the learner's support package. Stakeholders identified challenges experienced by carers with the transition from a school context where there had been one point of contact, to the college setting where services are not always centralised and parents have to deal with multiple professionals.

Stakeholders discussed how certain vulnerable groups fall out of the ELS system and that more needs to be done to support these students. This includes: young offenders and young people with an incarcerated parent; people with convictions; travelling communities; carers and those with a care experienced background. Who Cares? Scotland, specifically mentioned how the struggle of transitions are different when a student comes from a care experience background and that this difference should be recognised. Who Cares? Scotland also discussed that for transitions to be successful, it is the responsibility of Corporate Parents to seek out information on behalf of the student or potential student.

5.3.2.3 Over-focus on the medical model

Stakeholders, specifically ones not representing a disability, felt that there was still an over-focus on a medical model and that the needs of other students with significant learning needs who fall outwith this classification are disadvantaged. This includes the needs of care experienced students, young offenders, travelling communities, mature students, carers, students experiencing multiple challenges, and poverty.

Some stakeholders discussed the word "disability" and stated that it is outdated and that some individuals feel stigmatised by the use of this terminology or do not recognise it in relation to their needs; this is often the case with mental health and learning difficulties. Rather than a deficit model, stakeholders supported a shift in the colleges to offer a learning environment which is more inclusive and addresses accessibility of disabling barriers.

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[26] http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/Supportinglearnerstosucceed_tcm4-843313.pdf

The IMS Global Learning Consortium (2004) discusses how "the term disability has been re-defined as a mismatch between the needs of the learner and the education offered. It is therefore not a persona; trait but an artefact of the relationship between the learner and the learning environment or education delivery. Accessibility, given this re-definition, is the ability of the learning environment to adjust to the needs of all learners. Accessibility is determined by the flexibility of the education environment (with respect to presentation, control methods) and the availability of adequate alternative-but-equivalent content and activities[27]." This suggests that disability is not a reflection of the individual. Rather, it reflects the ability of the environment to support the individual, and thereby, creating an accessible environment or disabling the individual.

Some stakeholders also felt that the demographic of need has shifted, from a need to support physical impairments and providing technical support to providing more emotional and mental health support. Colleges agreed with this sentiment and this is reflected in the trend analysis. Stakeholders discussed how there needs to be a wider knowledge of mental health considerations and greater flexibility in the system to accommodate and support students experiencing mental health difficulties. It was outlined that this should be as inclusive as possible as it can affect all students at some point in their educational journey and that more can always be done to nurture positive mental health and overall well-being.

5.3.3 Suggestions for improvement

Stakeholders discussed a range of recommendations to improve supports for students, from pre-application through to on course provision at college.

During the pre-application phase, stakeholders discussed how there needs to be a genuine joined up localised partnership working at key transitional points with the learner being put at the centre of all process and decisions affecting their educational experience. Contextualised factors need to be recognised and the necessary individuals need to be consulted including: family circumstances, disability, health, social, and emotional factors. This aligns with the recommendations from an Education Scotland report on supporting college learners to succeed[28] and recommendations of the Doran Review[29]. Partnership Matters was discussed as a forum for joined up partnership working. However, some stakeholders discussed how it is not fit for purpose and lacks the authority to implement real change. Stakeholders also spoke about the need for colleges to enhance how they articulate information on the college student experience and expectations of the course. This could reduce anxiety for students and enable young people and families to make

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[27] http://www.imsglobal.org/accessibility/accmdv1p0/imsaccmd_oviewv1p0.html
[28] http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/Supportinglearnerstosucceed_tcm4-843313.pdf
[29] http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2012/11/7084

more informed choices. Stakeholders felt that colleges should work more with schools, including special schools, on data management. Information recorded in the schools on the learners' additional needs and adaptations should be provided to colleges. Stakeholders also discussed how any learner with an individualised educational programme (IEP), Co-ordinated Support Plan or Child Plan at school should automatically be considered for support. Support should also be given to learners with an additional support need or a declared disability. Stakeholders discussed how early identification and sharing of information would enhance supports and reduce crisis situations experienced by students.

Stakeholders discussed the benefits of exploiting technology to support students. They discussed how the effective use of technology has the ability to enable and empower students to participate in their educational experience more independently and create a more inclusive learning environment. Additionally, many technology supports are free or low costs to colleges. Although colleges have introduced many technological advances, some stakeholders discussed how technology is a fast moving and dynamic area and that often ELS staff struggle to keep up to date with the changes and developments in technology. To address this concern, stakeholders recommended that colleges implement robust training to ensure that staff can effectively use this technology so that these staff members have the ability to teach students how to benefit from the technology. Stakeholders also recommended that the use of technology should be further mainstreamed to support all learners.

In addition to improved training in the effective use of technology, stakeholders would like to see colleges invest in training for staff to create more inclusive environments. This includes providing staff with a better understanding about how to deliver more dyslexic or autistic friendly approaches. Stakeholders also stressed that the staff in a position to identify a need must be appropriately trained, qualified, and paid.

As noted in the previous section, stakeholders discussed how the term "disability" is outdated. It was suggested that ELS funding should move in the same direction as schools (as documented in the Doran Review) away from the number of children supported and the categories of disability towards the impact of support. This opens up support offered to include students who fall outwith traditional classification of need and strengthens the commitment of better supports for students such as students from deprived communities, students from a care experience background, and mature students.

Stakeholders also discussed how ELS funding should shift from being about meeting a deficit to helping the system be more proactive. This includes: assisting students to adapt to independent living, financial management and study planning. With a more

proactive system, it is thought that this could prevent crisis points. To address the change of demographics and increased mental health needs, stakeholders also discussed how there is a need for more counselling / stress management services.

5.4 Student engagement

5.4.1 Overview

As part of the ELS review process, speaking directly with students was a recommendation taken forward from an ELS Steering Group meeting. The purpose of meeting with students is to capture the authentic student voice and to find out directly from the service users the difference ELS has made to their educational experience. Focus groups were held at the following six colleges: City of Glasgow, Glasgow Clyde, Dumfries and Galloway, Glasgow Kelvin, Borders, Ayrshire. The following three colleges provided SFC with student case studies Glasgow Clyde, Ayrshire, and Forth Valley.

The student focus groups included a total of 47 students (31 female students and 16 male students). Both the focus groups and case studies included students who represented different needs such as dyslexia, autism, mobility difficulties, depression, anxiety, and hard of hearing / deaf. Students included in the focus groups studied a range of disciplines, from Applied Sciences to Fashion. Full time, part time, school leavers, and mature students were included with the student focus groups.

5.4.2 Findings

Focus groups with students confirmed findings from the college staff meetings. E.g., the types of supports offered and where to go if they need additional support.

Students knew where to go to get additional support and used their College's common terminology to describe that in the focus groups. Students spoke about the physical location of where to access support: "learning support has a large place at the College, everyone knows where to access it" or "you go to The Point." Students also referred to the Access and Inclusion staff by name as people who are there to support them. "XYZ from Learning Support is very supportive. I get panic attacks. He makes sure I get the help that I need."

Overall, students reported positive responses with regards to the ELS supports provided to them. Students spoke more about the personal interactions and relationships that they have with the support staff. "It puts you at ease knowing that the support is there." One student commented that they could see the marked difference of having a reader and a scribe and that these supports helped them to

advance to the next year of their course. "I would not have passed my assessments without the support. The first time I took the exam [without supports], I failed by 20 marks. With the reader and scribe I passed by 20 points." Students also talked about how the supports enabled them to participate in the college community, both academically and socially, and that this led to a feeling of social inclusion. One student discussed how "the supports freed me up to learn." Students also spoke about getting involved with their learner plan and effectively using their supports to become independent learners. "I used to have a scribe in the classroom, but then I got lazy, so I decided to just use a laptop and not the scribe."

Overwhelmingly, students reported that they would "fail" or "walk out" if they did not have the supports. "I wouldn't be able to do the course, I have two girls on my own, I get stressed out… the easy option would be to walk away." This suggests the intrinsic value of ELS supports and what the immediate impact would be if ELS supports were withdrawn.

When asked what they did not like about ELS, students talked about a lack of resources. They discussed how "the bank of technology loans is limited" or "there is not enough help [in-class], everyone has to fight for it." One student discussed how "we had extra maths workshop sessions, but they have been stopped. These were critical sessions. Please bring them back." When the students were asked what could be improved, they spoke about improved communication, delays, and scheduling conflicts. "Communication between lecturers and support staff could be better." Students spoke about lecturers forgetting about certain accommodations such as printing the lecture on a different coloured paper or emailing the lecture materials to the student ahead of time. One student discussed how "I asked for support at the beginning of the year and I've only now [in mid-November] just been seen." Another student discussed how "last year, I saw XYZ in the first few weeks of college. I didn't know that I was dyslexic. I had to wait nine months to see an educational psychologist." Although there has been a delay in getting to see an educational psychologist, this student confirmed that support for students is needs based, rather than a classification of ELS. "I'm still treated in the same way before I had the diagnosis." Other students spoke about the difficulty of scheduling support around childcare or other commitments.

Case study: Glasgow Clyde student newspaper article on ELS

Richard Lilley

My injury was a handicap - but student support have given me a leg-up

A few months ago I noticed a twinge in my wrists.

It gradually got worse and worse, developing into chronic pain and weakness.

I was assured it was a repetitive strain injury - I've heard all the jokes, by the way – and told it would clear up in a few weeks.

Six months later, I've been seen by physiotherapy, osteopaths and more. They still don't know what it is. I'm off to the neurologist next.

Not being able to use my hands has had a massive impact on my life, but it hasn't been all so bad.

One positive is the fantastic level of support I've received in college.

When I realised I couldn't write or type, I panicked. I thought I'd have to drop out of my course.

However, Student Support have been fantastic. They discussed a plan to support me, and I can always get my work done just as well as anyone else.

Now I've got a team of scribes who help me take notes and get my work done - not all at once, that'd be overkill.

I've been awed at the level of professionalism displayed by them too (shout out to Hugh!).

It can't be an easy job - lecturers tend to rocket through a Powerpoint while adding to what they've got on-screen.

I've never been a fast writer anyway - so they take much better notes than me.

It's strange to feel singled out and excluded when I have to make different arrangements for assessments and classwork than everyone else.

> "Dictation software gives me an excuse to practise my newsreader voice, or 'knee shredder vice', as it thought I wanted to say there"

everyone else, but I'm helped to do so with dignity, respect and professionalism.

Dictation software, provided by the college, is quite annoying to say the least, although it gives me an excuse to practise my newsreader voice, or 'knee shredder vice', as it thought I wanted to say there.

I've come to the conclusion that it simply hates Glaswegians.

Elsewhere, dealing with my wrists has been unpleasant, to say the least. Not being able to help change the kids, open jars or do housework isn't great (the housework part isn't so bad if I'm honest). Talking on the phone's a no-no without a hands-free kit.

Chronic pain is humbling. Everything is at least twice as hard and you're in constant pain.

You feel like a nuisance asking people for help all the time.

I've more or less given up taking painkillers to ease the pain, too.

They do help, but it's not nice to be doped up all the time.

Having such limited capacity for the past half a year has been challenging, humbling and eye opening.

I've stopped a lot of things that are hard to do with my hands, and picked up ones that are easier, or I've developed workarounds to do most tasks.

I've figured out new ways of making things work and had the pleasure of working with a team of accommodating professionals.

They took every step to make sure I'm not at a disadvantage alongside my peers.

If anything, I feel like I've got an advantage with their support, and it's something I'll miss when I'm better.

Student scran - page 13

CREDIT GLASGOW CLYDE COLLEGE

AID: Richard is always grateful for the support that college can offer

6. Conclusions

The information collected by SFC staff and discussed throughout this report provides insight on the implementation, outcomes, and future prospects of ELS funds in relation to SFC's increasing ambitions for access and inclusion. The trend analysis and the consultation with college staff, stakeholders, and students provided insight on the realised and potential benefits, impacts, and outcomes of ELS funds to meet the additional needs of students and to provide them with an inclusive college experience.

Based on the information analysed and disseminated in this review, it is clear that the current ELS claims system does not reflect the needs of students or the level of support provided by colleges. A new strategy is needed for the ELS funds which:

- Supports an outcome orientated approach and moves away from a deficit model to an inclusive model

- Puts the learner at the centre and recognises contextual factors
- Inclusive practices should be embedded and mainstreamed across all colleges
- All members of college staff should be responsible for supporting students and promoting inclusive practices.

This enables colleges to freely support students based on need, rather than an artificial line of funding based on qualified claims.

7. Recommendations

Based on the findings from this review, the following recommendations are suggested to enhance the administration and implementation of ELS provision:

- Rename ELS to the Access and Inclusion Fund. The purpose of this fund would be to supplement core funding to support an inclusive college environment.
- To support the SFC's access ambitions and to capture the impact of this fund at a national and regional level, SFC recommends that the OA guidance from AY 2017-18 requires colleges to develop an Access and Inclusion Strategy demonstrating their inclusive practices, investment in their staff and college resources and outcomes for students. This seeks to advance equality of opportunity and fosters good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it. This strategy would be in line with the Widening Access and Retention Fund (WARF)[30,31] allocated to Post 92 universities, which are based on high level principles set by SFC. The intention is not to outline support for individual learners, rather, to outline services that the colleges can and cannot provide.
- The implementation of this new approach would result in the removal of the ELS flag in FES from AY 2017-18 onwards and the need to record students as ELS students. It would also result in the removal of the need for PLSPs for each ELS student and the audit requirements attached to them. This seeks to remove or minimise disadvantage.
- Although SFC is recommending the removal of the requirement for colleges to complete a PLSP for each student in receipt of support, this review uncovered that SFC's PLSP guidance was highly valued by college staff. It is therefore, recommended that PLSPs only be used if it benefits the learner and the situation warrants the use of this tool. For example when a student requires a personalised support package.

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[30] http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/GUI_SFCGD162015_UniversityOutcomeAgreementGuidanceforAY/HE_Outcome_Agreement_Guidance_2016-17.pdf
[31] http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/CMP_AccessandInclusionCommittee21May2015_21052015/AIC15_21_Review_of_regional_coherence_funding.pdf

- SFC should allow the system to settle and revisit funding allocations in the future to ensure that funds are in the right place for college regions to better support student outcomes. This will not be based on current ELS claims.
- With any changes to the guidance, SFC should discuss parity and impact with SQA in relation to regulations, guidance, and threshold for documentation.
- Holding a gathering event to enhance sectoral communications and better support the additional needs of students and (if deemed appropriate) help to build a consistent approach in this area. This is being led by SFC and CDN and an event has been scheduled in June 2016. This could include discussions of best practice, differences in approaches and staff structures, and job titles.
- Data sharing should be improved with local authorities, schools, colleges, and the Scottish Government to overcome transition and disclosure issues.
- As part of SFC's OA Guidance, SFC should work with the Scottish Government Support and Wellbeing Unit and SDS Post 16 data-hub to facilitate data sharing and to assist the future proofing of additional needs within the sector. For example, the rise in autism and ADHD in the school sector.
- SFC should improve reporting of disability and mental health and expectations of this reporting in the OA process. This could link in with the wellbeing of children and young people approach under GIRFEC indicators.
- More should be done nationally to understand why certain subject areas attract certain types of students with similar backgrounds and needs. A pedagogic approach should be considered to meet these needs.
- To address concerns raised by stakeholders and colleges regarding the needs of deaf students, SFC should work in partnership with the sector to develop a national approach for the deaf community alongside the expectations of the BSL Bill.
- SFC should develop, maintain, and publish an Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment. This will include protected characteristics, equality, diversity, human rights considerations, and wider issues impacting students' educational attainment.
- To create a more equitable system for UHI and SRUC, future guidance should ensure that funding streams work together to provide seamless support packages for both non-advanced and advanced students.
- SFC should have discussions with SAAS and the Scottish Government about the possibility of transferring DSA funds to the colleges. This establishes parity of funds for advanced and non-advanced students and moves towards a more holistic approach. If approved, this could be reported through the Access and Inclusion Strategy.
- This review uncovered areas relating to FE student support outwith the direct ELS review remit. It is recommended that work is done to consider the transfer of bursary funds currently used to support the additional study costs of students with additional educational needs into the Access and Inclusion

fund and strategy approach. This would require future consultation with students and colleges including Student Support staff.

- The review also uncovered issues relating to the wider system, including a global rise in the number of students declaring mental health difficulties within universities and issues relating to approaches to best meet the needs of students with profound and / or complex needs. The findings of the ELS review should be considered in relation to the future policy developments of this provision.

8. Appendices List

Appendix A: Glossary of terms

ADES	Association of Directors of Education in Scotland
BSL	British Sign Language
CDN	College Development Network
CPD	Continuing professional development
DPG 18	Dominant Programme Group
DSA	Disabled Students' Allowance
ELS	Extended learning support
FE	Further Education
FES	Further Education Statistics
GIRFEC	Getting it Right for Every Child
HE	Higher Education
HNC	Higher National Certificate
HND	Higher National Diploma
ICT	Information communications technology
IEP	Individualised educational programme
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
LOIP	Local Outcomes Improvement Plan
NHS	National Health Service
NUS	National Union of Students
OA	Outcome Agreement
PI	Performance Indicators
PLSP	Personal Learning Support Plan
SAAS	Student Awards Agency Scotland
SFC	Scottish Funding Council
SIMD	Scottish Index of Multi-Deprivation
SQA	Scottish Qualifications Authority
SRUC	Scotland's Rural College
SQA	Scottish Qualifications Authority
SUM	Student Unit of Measurement
UHI	University of the Highlands and Islands
WSUM	Weighted Student Unit of Measurement
WARF	Widening Access and Retention Fund

Appendix B: Further dissemination of the Access and Inclusion Strategy

B.1   Defining the Access and Inclusion Strategy

It is recommended that the Access and Inclusion Strategy is devised in the following manner:

Service provision

- To capture the impact of this fund at a national and regional level, SFC proposes that the OA guidance from AY 2017-18 requires colleges to develop an Access and Inclusion Strategy demonstrating their inclusive practices, investment in their staff and college resources and outcomes for students.
- This new strategy supports an outcome orientated approach and moves away from a deficit model to an inclusive model, it puts the learner at the centre of the process, advances equality of opportunity, fosters good relations, recognises contextual factors impacting the individual's learning experience, and embeds and mainstreams inclusive practices across all colleges.
- The Access and Inclusion Strategy should outline the partnership approach adopted by the college and seek evidence of the college's commitment to the wider region and their commitment as a recognised statutory partner to the new Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP). Partnership working was a key theme from this review and it is clear that this is now a significant and increasing part in how colleges meet their students' needs. It is suggested that the proposed approach would complement that and would enable the college to demonstrate their contribution within the region.
- Colleges were keen to outline that they can only make a contribution towards the wider social issues within their region and as such it is important to outline what provision and support the college can and cannot provide with the resources allocated to them. It is suggested that an Access and Inclusion Strategy approach would support that. It is also suggested that this is where wider issues such as the provision for those with profound and / or complex needs can be considered. The strategy would also encompass SFC's existing access ambitions and would be reviewed as part of the OA cycle. This approach would enable the Access and Inclusion Strategy to align and interconnect with the self-evaluation expectations of the new Quality Assurance arrangements currently being piloted in the college sector.
- Based on the finding that "people help people", the college's commitment to continuing professional development (CPD) and ongoing training should be outlined and supported by the ELS funding especially in relation to academic staff. Where possible, this should be a localised community based approach that includes neighbouring schools. Colleges should also outline their

investment in information communications technology (ICT) to support an inclusive approach for students.

Guidance

- Renaming ELS to the Access and Inclusion Fund. The purpose of this fund would be to supplement core funding to support an inclusive college environment.
- From a student perspective, SFC would no longer differentiate between learning support and extended learning support. Colleges would be responsible for deciding how best to use these funds. For example, this fund could be used to support additional literacy and numeracy provision.
- SFC recognises that a variety of needs impacts the educational attainment of students. This extends beyond needs which are typically classified as an additional educational need. Moving forward, colleges would no longer be required to evidence an additional educational need to receive funding and can use these funds to support a variety of needs experienced by students. For example, using these funds for food vouchers or counselling.
- The implementation of the Access and Inclusion Strategy would be in line with WARFs allocated to Post 92 universities, which is based on high level principles set by SFC. Institutions are expected to continue to demonstrate and maintain a significant commitment to the support, retention and successful outcomes of students, with a particular focus on students from the most deprived areas.
- The implementation of this new approach would result in the removal of the ELS flag in FES from AY 2017-18 onwards and the need to record students as ELS students. It would also result in the removal of the need for PLSPs for each ELS student and the audit requirements attached to them. This seeks to remove or minimise disadvantage.
- Although SFC is recommending the removal of the requirement for colleges to complete a PLSP for each student in receipt of support, this review uncovered that SFC's PLSP guidance was highly valued by college staff. It is therefore, recommended that PLSPs only be used if it benefits the learner and the situation warrants the use of this tool. For example when a student requires a personalised support package. OA Managers may request to see anonymised versions of these plans to help discussions on what can and cannot be met by an inclusive approach. However, these plans should not be used for audit purposes.
- SFC will outline the governance process for this strategy but will expect the colleges to ensure it is part of their own governance arrangements and OA process.

- The ELS funds would remain as a separate entity at this stage. It is recognised that with a move towards an inclusive approach, there is merit in adding these funds to a college's core resource.
- The principles outlined in the Access and Inclusion Strategy will be revised as part of the OA process.

Communication

- As part of this review, SFC noted greater inter-college collaboration as an area of improvement. Therefore, SFC recommends holding a gathering event to enhance sectoral communications and better support the additional needs of students and (if deemed appropriate) help to build a consistent approach in this area. This is being led by SFC and CDN and an event has been scheduled in June 2016.
- Transitions and communications between local authorities, Scottish Government, stakeholders, schools, and colleges is another area of improvement. The process of sharing data and communicating information can be enhanced to support the learner journey, overcome transitions and discourse issues. It is recommended that this communication should be cyclical. In addition to schools and stakeholders informing colleges of the additional learning needs of prospective students, colleges should report back to the local authorities the cases of undiagnosed need from the school system. This provides local authorities with an opportunity to improve services and to rectify any gaps. Transitions and enhanced communication will be a key theme of the Access and Inclusion Strategy.
- Colleges should outline how student associations and the authentic student voice are engaged in this strategy.

Demonstrating impact

- To support the SFC's access ambitions and to capture the impact of this fund at a national and regional level, SFC recommends that the OA guidance from AY 2017-18 requires colleges to develop an Access and Inclusion Strategy demonstrating their inclusive practices, investment in their staff and college resources and outcomes for students. This includes demonstrating their inclusive practices and outcomes for students relating to intake, successful completions and destinations for priority groups. This should include:
-
    o Defining the transitions plan (including pre- and post-college) and a transitions pedagogy strategy including the assessment processes and options. Colleges will be responsible for reporting any under diagnosis to local authorities
    o Advancing equality of opportunity

- o Encouraging participation by underrepresented groups
- o Defining the support provided for the deaf community
- o Evidencing a mental health strategy
- o Fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it

- SFC expects training to be provided for college staff to create a more inclusive college environment, promotes equalities, removes victimization and discrimination, and enables staff to support a diverse range of students. Colleges would also need to evidence the impact of investment in their staff and align training to advancing the outcomes of students.
- OA Managers will be responsible for considering resources allocated (including under resource) to the colleges and the college's commitment to their Access and Inclusion Strategy.

B.2 Outlining the differences of the Access and Inclusion Strategy

- The implementation of this new approach would result in the removal of the ELS flag in FES from AY 2017-18 onwards and the need to record students as ELS students. It would also result in the removal of the need for PLSPs for each ELS student and the audit requirements attached to them. This seeks to remove or minimise disadvantage.
- SFC would no longer differentiate between learning support and extended learning support. Colleges would be responsible for deciding how best to use these funds.
- Moving forward, colleges would no longer be required to evidence an additional educational need to receive funding and can use these funds to support a variety of needs experienced by students.
- Support will continue to be needs-led with college staff using their professional judgement to support students utilising the most appropriate method. Staff will no longer need to justify this on a case by case basis as SFC is encouraging an inclusive approach. This is a move away from a deficit model to an inclusive social model of support.
- To create a more equitable system for UHI and SRUC, future guidance should ensure that funding streams work together to provide seamless support packages for both non-advanced and advanced students.

B.3 Intended outcomes of the Access and Inclusion Strategy

- This strategy facilitates SFC to outline areas of strategic importance and to direct funds to address these priorities.
- A negotiation with Senior Management to ensure these funds achieves outcomes and evidences a contribution to the community.

- Seeks to contribute towards a positive college experience for students through the removal of barriers preventing students to access supports, mainstreams supports, reduces the stigma attached to accessing support, and encourages a diverse range of students (particularly hard to reach students and students with a protected characteristic) to seek support.
- Supports successful admission, transitions, retention, and progression in the college sector for a diverse range of students, thereby, enabling students to benefit from a college learning experience, improving life chances, and seeking to create a more equal society.
- Seeks to advance equality of opportunity and fosters good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
- Creates an empowered college workforce who can use the funds to best meet the needs of students.
- Improved communication, capacity building, and partnership workings.
- Builds an inclusive approach whilst still protecting one-to-one bespoke services where required.
- Promotes a student centred approach where the needs of the students are prioritised (from pre-application to post-college) rather than a definition of an educational need.
- Improved PIs and enhanced access outcomes.

Appendix C: ELS project remit and timeline

C.1 Project Remit

Purpose

1. To evidence and promote the outcomes achieved from SFC funds used to support students with additional education needs. To achieve this we need to:

   - Undertake a full review of ELS funds and seek to ascertain:

     ➢ What benefits they have and could have for students

     ➢ What outcomes they currently support and could support for students.

     This review should also seek to better understand how these funds currently work alongside how colleges support students with additional educational needs through specialised provision (commonly referred to as DPG 18) and study allowances for students with additional educational needs through the bursary fund. It is vital that we understand how these currently work as an overall package of support to ensure that we understand any unintended impact of changing future allocations or seeking certain access outcomes from the ELS funds.

   - Taking both of the above areas into account and an analysis from the AY 2015-16 OAs, we need to assess the need for these funds in each region and what outcomes we want these funds to achieve for students.

   - We need to then assess if the current allocations are correct. If the evidence shows that the allocations need adjustment over time we need to devise a new allocation method and a transitional plan - even if they don't need reallocating we will need a means of checking the allocation in future years, as we cannot simply freeze these funds, they need to be allocated on the basis of regional need.

   - We need to take the time to do all of this correctly and in the meantime stability in the funding for these needs is important to colleges and their students.

   - At all stages of this process it will be important to equality assess the impact of any changes in guidance or allocation of funding both regionally and nationally.

2. This project is to help take forward the first bullet. The process for consulting and working with the sector is outlined below:

- We intend on undertaking this review and developing an implementation plan though a Sectoral College Group which will be chaired by SFC and will include Principal representation and we are working with Colleges Scotland to develop this.

- This will be a short life working group which will consist primarily of college practitioners and the group will meet up to four times. We are also keen to utilise the CDN's Access and Inclusion Network and to seek advice from SFC's Further Education Student Support Advisory Group and SAAS.

- The review will include a visit to relevant staff in all of the college regions and this will include an offer to meet with the Principal (or all of the Principals in a multi-college region) to seek their views and to ascertain the strategic implications of moving to an outcome orientated approach.

3. The findings of this review and recommendations for its implementation will be presented to the Colleges Funding Sub Group.

4. The outcome of the review will be implemented through our Outcome Agreement Guidance for AY 2017-18 onwards. Other outcomes of the review will also be to:

- To identify good practice on using ELS funds to promote an inclusive and supportive college experience to enable us to promote and share these examples

- To give SFC a better understanding of how ELS support is being used to inform our credit and audit guidance processes

5. We would intend on developing this guidance and implementing it for at least a couple of years before considering any future re-allocation of these funds.

Key Outcomes

6. The key outcomes from the project are:

- To update our outcome agreement guidance to evidence and promote the use of extended learning support funds.

- A report on what is currently being achieved with extended learning support funding and advice on how we could best support colleges in further assisting their students' achievements.

- To update our SFC Credit guidance and audit guidance in line with the outcome orientated approach.

Background

7. Scotland's colleges delivered ELS support to 9,294 people[32] in 2013-14. Of these students 7,302 were full-time. The amount of activity claimed as ELS activity has almost doubled since 2002-03. SFC believes that this is due to a significant increase in activity to support social inclusion strategies, an increase in the number of students coming to colleges with diagnosed mental health issues and / or social, emotional and behavioural issues and an increase in additional educational need relating to significant numeracy and literacy issues. We also suspect that there are differing practices across the sector in relation to when and why a college might chose to have claimed ELS for a student. This will change further as legacy colleges involved in a merger seek to align their practices to develop the approach of a new college.

8. SFC is moving towards a credit based system of funding from AY 2015-16 onwards. This means that colleges need to deliver a set amount of credits and these credits will have a funding weight attached to them. A key change from our previous system is that colleges can no longer apply an additional weighting (which was referred to as Extended Learning Support) for activity due to an additional educational need of the student. These funds will now be allocated separately. This provides an excellent opportunity to review what is currently being achieved with these funds and to seek to evidence these achievements at a regional and national level.

9. The funds that were used to support this activity will now be separate to the credit based funding model. This separate fund is likely to be in the region of £44-50 million based on the current level of spend on extended learning support (the weighting applied to activity when a student was identified to have an additional educational need which required college resource).

10. The first step towards understanding the outcomes being achieved by the current ELS system is in the OA guidance for AY 2015-16 onwards which asks each region to discuss with their OA manager how they intend to use the fund to support students with additional educational needs in their region. It also states that the intended outcomes for these funds should be clearly stated in the OA. However, this is really only a first step towards a more outcome based approach to these funds and we need to move towards collecting more quantitative and qualitative evidence on how these funds are being used and the impact they have in the sector and in each region.

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[32] These students accounted for 365,429 WSUMs of which 148,247 relates to the mainstream teaching element and 217,182 towards the ELS premium.

Rationale

11. An important principle of ELS funding and policy is that it was never intended to only support students with disabilities. After a full review of this funding in 2005, we identified that in many cases students with a disability do not require additional support and as such the funding should be based on need regardless of a diagnosed disability. In our experience a significant element of these funds are used to support students with difficult and often complex circumstances and backgrounds including mental health and / or learning difficulties who may or not have a formal diagnosis and / or disability.

12. It is therefore our view that the change to how this is funded provides an opportunity to consider the funding in relation to our increasing ambitions for access and inclusion particularly for those most disadvantaged and disengaged from college education as well as ensuring the fund provides an inclusive and supportive learning environment for students with a disability.

13. Looking at the student records for AY 2013-14, we can tell that, although ELS activity is not only for those with a disability, 57% of students for whom ELS has been claimed have a disclosed disability. There appears to be different practices across the sector with some colleges only claiming ELS for students who have a disclosed disability whilst in other colleges 75% of ELS claims are for students who do not have a disability.

14. The aim of this review should be to understand individual college practices in relation to the criteria they have used to claim this funding in the past. This should also include an assessment of the other benefits of this fund including students that this fund has indirectly assisted such as part time students[33] who may not have been part of individual student Personal Learning Support Plans[34.] It is our hypothesis that a greater proportion of students received extended learning support but the college took the decision not to claim ELS status for audit or practical reasons.

15. The review of current practices will enable us to protect good practice and develop future guidance that maximises how these funds can support and drive forward our access and inclusion ambitions for the sector.

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[33] There are 11,826 full-time students with a disclosed disability and 4,093 (35%) of these students required ELS. However, in contrast, 26,189 part-time students had a disclosed disability but colleges only claimed ELS for 1,469 (5.6%).

[34] Colleges are expected to provide Personal Learning Support Plans for each student that they attribute ELS too.

Project Objectives

16. The overall objective of the project is to investigate how extended learning support funds can be used most effectively across the sector. To achieve this objective, the project will:

- Set up a practitioner group.

- Undertake a review of current practice.

- Seek out academic perspectives on good practice and undertake a literature review.

- Undertake a stakeholder engagement plan to ascertain the views and input from Education Scotland, NUS and others.

- Utilise the authentic student voice and ensure students are represented in this review.

- Develop an implementation plan with recommendations for our AY 2016-17 Outcome Agreement Guidance, Credit Guidance and Audit Guidance.

- Report the outcomes of this review, stakeholder engagement plan and implementation plan to the Colleges Scotland Funding Sub-Group.

- Identify, share and promote good practice in relation to achieving outcomes with ELS funds.

- Undertake a full EIA assessment.

Project Outcome

The desired project outcomes are:

- A report identifying how ELS is being used, and the impact and effect on outcomes for students.

- An implementation plan with recommendations for our AY 2016-17 Outcome Agreement Guidance, Credit Guidance and Audit Guidance.

Project Organisation

The project is being set up to advise SFC's Senior Management. We will consult with the College Funding Sub Group prior to any implementation.

SFC executive

Fiona Burns (Scottish Funding Council)
Duncan Condie (Scottish Funding Council)
Alyssa Newman (Scottish Funding Council)

C.2 Timeline for project

Task	Dates	Progress
Consult with Education Scotland	Feb 2015	Completed
Consult with college funding group	Feb 2015	Completed
Draft Remit & Project Plan for ELS Review Group	Feb 2015	Completed
Finalise remit, plan and group participants	March 2015	Completed
Brief and consult with NUS	May 2015	Completed
Examine ELS data	March - May 2015	Completed
Draft Paper summarising current ELS Guidelines	March 2015	Completed
Finalise Agenda and Papers for first meeting of ELS group and send out	March 2015	Completed
First Review Group Meeting Agenda: Project plan and remit, data findings and discussion on college consultation	March 2015	Completed
Briefing for OA managers	April 2015	Completed
Meet with SAAS	May 2015 and Jan 2016	Completed
Meet with colleges	Sept - Nov 2015	Completed – meetings were held with all colleges (we met with UHI as a regional board)

Undertake stakeholder visits	Sept 2015 - Feb 2016	Completed – we met individually with: Education Scotland, NUS, Jisc, Lead, Who Cares? Scotland, Willie Rutherglen (the Chair of Scotland's Disabled Children), SQA, SG Support and Wellbeing Unit, Dyslexia Scotland, National Autistic Society, ARC Transitions Forum and SAAS. We held a group meeting with: College Development Network, Aberdeenshire Council, Enable, Sense Scotland, Dyslexia Scotland, Scottish Sensory Centre, and Scottish Council on Deafness.
Conduct student focus groups	Oct - Nov 2015	Complete – we conducted focus groups with 6 Colleges (City of Glasgow, Glasgow Clyde, Dumfries and Galloway, Borders, Glasgow Kelvin, and Ayrshire)
Consult FESSAG	May 2015	Completed
Update College Funding Group	May 2015- Jan 2016	Completed
Finalise Agenda and Papers for second meeting of ELS group and send out	Sept 2015	Completed
Second Review Group Meeting Agenda: Discussion on college consultations and specialist agency / partner input	Sept 2015	Completed
Update College Principals Group	Oct 2015	Completed
Finalise Agenda & Papers for third meeting of ELS group and send out	Dec 2015	Completed
Third Review Group Meeting Agenda: Share the	Dec 2015	Completed

preliminary report and discuss what we found		
Circulate a draft report to the ELS Review Group	Jan 2016	Completed
Update College Funding Group	Jan 2016	Completed
Access and Inclusion Network Meeting	Feb 2016	Completed
Access and Inclusion Committee	Feb 2016	Completed
Update Principals Group	March 2016	Completed – we provided an update on the findings of the ELS review report
Finalise the ELS review report & the Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment	May 2016	We are working towards a completion date of the end of mid / late May
Update Principals Group	May 2016	We will provide an update on the implementation of the review
Gathering event	June 2016	SFC arranged an event to discuss the outcomes of the review with college managers. This is being led by CDN and is scheduled for late June.
Council Board meeting – Remit in relation to AY 2017-18 OA Guidance	June 2016	
Announce changes, produce guidance and implementation plan	July 2016	

Appendix D: Consultation list: colleges, stakeholders, and students

D.1 The following colleges were consulted as part of the review of ELS:

College	Meeting date
Ayrshire College	November 2015
Borders College	November 2015
City of Glasgow College	October 2015
Edinburgh College	October 2015
Dumfries and Galloway College	November 2015
Dundee and Angus College	October 2015
Fife College	October 2015
Forth Valley College	October 2015
Glasgow Clyde College	October 2015
Glasgow Kelvin College	November 2015
New College Lanarkshire	October 2015
North East Scotland College	October 2015
South Lanarkshire College	September 2015
SRUC	September 2015
UHI (Regional Board)	October 2015
West College Scotland	September 2015
West Lothian College	October 2015
North East Scotland College	October 2015

Note: We do not intend to hold ELS review meetings with Newbattle Abbey College and Sabhal Mòr Ostaig.

D.2 The following stakeholders were consulted as part of the review of ELS:

Stakeholder (individual meetings)	Meeting date
ARC Transition Forum	January 2016
Chair of Scotland's Disabled Children	October 2015
Dyslexia Scotland	January 2016
Education Scotland	January 2015
JISC	September 2015
Lead Scotland	October 2015
National Autistic Society	February 2016
NUS	May 2015
SG Support and Wellbeing Unit	February 2015
SQA	October 2015
Who Cares? Scotland	November 2015
SAAS	January 2016

Stakeholders (group meeting): CND ADES Enable Sense Scotland Dyslexia Scotland Scottish Sensory Centre Scottish Council on Deafness	**November 2015**

D.3 Students from the following colleges were consulted and took part in a focus group as part of the review of ELS:

College	Meeting date
Ayrshire College	November 2015
Borders College	November 2015
City of Glasgow College	October 2015
Dumfries and Galloway College	November 2015
Glasgow Clyde College	October 2015
Glasgow Kelvin College	November 2015

Student case studies were provided by: Ayrshire College, Forth Valley College, and Glasgow Clyde College.

Appendix E: Interview / focus group protocols

E.1 College protocol

- What activities does ELS currently support?

- How does ELS contribute to your student's attainment, progression, and outcomes? How do you know?

- Can you outline some areas of good practice and areas where it has had the greatest impact?

- What students and groups of students do you support? Have you noticed any trends?

- Do you feel there would be a better way to support these students, what would that look like?

- Do our guidance documents limit your response to students in any way? What would you like changed? What would you like reinforced?

- Do you feel there is a consistent approach to using ELS across the sector? What standard additional support should students expect from colleges?

- Do your students access the Additional Support for Learning Fund or the SAAS DSA and if so, how does that impact on your use of ELS funding?
  Are they used for different things?

- Can you outline areas of good practice in the college to meet the additional needs of students which are not supported by ELS e.g. drop in services etc? Please note the students do not need to have declared a disability.

- What process does the college currently use to allocate ELS (if appropriate), record ELS use and monitor its outcomes? Do all staff use the same process? Are you planning to change this due to the changes to the funding model?

- What referral systems are used within the college are there different approaches by different staff i.e. those who are not front line advisors, lecturers etc.

- What transitional systems are in place for school pupils on vocational programmes as part of their school curriculum? How does ELS support that?

How could you use ELS to support that? What would need to change?

- What transitional systems are in place for school leavers? How does ELS support that? How could you use ELS to support that? What would need to change?

- How could you use ELS to make the biggest impact on student outcomes and success?

- How ELS is staffed? (providing an organisational chart of ELS staff at the college)

- Who are the local partners that ELS staff work with? Has this changed overtime?

- Are there any areas of need that the college cannot meet?

- Today's session is part of our consultation with you in relation to our Equality Impact Assessment for this piece of work. Do you think this review and its implementation will have an impact (positive or negative) on any of the protected characteristic groups? Please note SFC considers those with care experience to be a protected group.

- Have you any concerns over this review?

E.2 Stakeholder protocol: rather than using a protocol, a more exploratory approach was used to frame these conversations. The following themes were discussed:

- What groups of students do you represent? Are their additional educational needs being met? How so?

- Do these students face barriers in fully taking part in their college learning and the college experience? How so?

- How could these students be supported to achieve more?

- What do colleges do well? Do you have an example of this?

- What steps should colleges take to provide a more inclusive environment?

- Today's session is part of our consultation with you in relation to our Equality Impact Assessment for this piece of work. Do you think this review and its implementation will have an impact (positive or negative) on any of the protected characteristic groups? Please note SFC considers those with care experience to be a protected group.

- Do you have any questions for us? Do you have anything else to add with regards to ELS funding and how SFC funds could be used to better support students with additional educational needs?

E.3 Student protocol

Interviewer prompt: thank the students for participating in this focus group, explain the purpose of this student focus group and the ELS review (note: students might not know what 'extended learning support' means. You might want to provide some examples of supports included with ELS) and reinforcing the confidential nature of this focus group (e.g., all responses will be ammonised and particular comments will not be associated with individual students). Then ask the students if they have any questions before beginning.

- Can you please introduce yourself and let us know what course you are studying.

- Part of this review is to examine Extended Learning Support and to improve supports provided to students who require certain accommodations to access their course here at college. This could include: access to a loaner laptop, a note taker, access to a quiet room, counselling services, or extended time on exams. Can you please let us know what additional supports you are provided or what additional support you are aware of?

- Where would you go in this college if you needed more support? Does everyone know that and use it?

- What are your thoughts about these supports? Have they helped you (or not) here at college? How so? Have they helped your friends and colleagues? What could be improved? Are there certain supports that you wish you had more or less of? How would that help you at college?

- How would you feel if you didn't have these supports at college? How would this impact your ability to access your college course?

- Do any of you have any additional needs that you would be happy to disclose to us?

- When did you let the college know about your additional needs? Did you do this when you were applying to college or when you were already here at college?

- If you didn't tell the college about an additional need why didn't you let the college know about your additional needs when you were applying to college?

- Can you describe the process of coming to college? Was it a smooth transition from school / employment or did you experience any difficulties getting the supports you need in place? How could the transition from school to college be improved?

- Would you describe this college as inclusive? Please explain. How could things be improved further?

- Do you have any questions for us? Is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix F: Personal learning and support plan – guidance

The following sections are excerpts from the following SFC guidance document:
2014-15 15 student activity data guidance for colleges: SUMs Guidance[35]

Colleges making claims for funding of additional support needs activity must provide evidence that they have assessed the individual support measures required to assist the students in overcoming barriers to learning, in accordance with the guidance, and have recorded these in a personal learning and support plan (PLSP) for each student.

The PLSP provides evidence of the educational need for ELS or a DPG18 programme. It must be available for inspection and audit. An adequate plan must show evidence:

- That each student was involved as a central figure in all decision-making relating to personal education and support planning (and, if the student wants or requires, they have had the opportunity to be supported in this process by parents, a friend or a professional or voluntary worker when appropriate). The date the meeting took place to discuss the student's educational support needs at college and who was present must be clearly recorded.
- Of each individual student's hopes and aspirations for their educational experience and how the college is aiming to meet these. For students attending DPG 18 programmes, it must be shown that alternatives were properly considered with the student, what these were and why a DPG 18 programme was considered to best meet the educational needs of the student including the student's views on this decision.
- That decisions made on choice of course and support measures required are based on the individual educational needs and strengths of each student.
- That each student has 'support needs' as defined by the Act, the nature of these educational needs, how they will impact on learning and where relevant include details of support provided by other agencies that are / have been involved with the student.
- That sufficient information has been gathered and / or generated and recorded to determine clear educational aims and goals and that these are reviewed on an ongoing basis.
- Of progress in achieving these educational aims and goals.
- That appropriate support measures to support each student's individual educational needs are put in place, what these measures are and, when claiming ELS for the activity of a student, the colleges must justify that the service provided to the student is additional to the service the college usually provides to students, that these additional services require material additional expenditure

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[35]

http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/GUI_SFCGD102014_201415studentactivitydataguidanceforco/SFCGD102014_SUMs_Guidance_2014-15.pdf

and / or resources by the college and that the services are directly related to the student's educational support needs.

- That a range of professional expertise has been brought to bear on the gathering and generation of information, the evaluation of the information and formulation of goals and support measures. This should include professional involvement from agencies other than the college where appropriate.
- That a clear record is kept of both this process and the outcomes of the process in the PLSP including clear allocation of responsibility and financial responsibility for the measures identified.
- That the plan is reviewed and revised when appropriate at frequent intervals and at any time at the request of the student or representative of the student and the dates and outcomes of these reviews must be recorded.
- That confidentiality is respected in this process.

The plan should be agreed between the college and the student, signed by a representative of the college and the student or their representative. The student should either be given access to the PLSPs electronically or within the college premises or, where appropriate, a copy in the appropriate format should be given to the student.

SFC reserves the right to see copies of a sample of PLSPs, even where they are being retained by the partner agency. Due to the sensitivities involved in allowing SFC staff access to such confidential information, student names and contact details may be deleted for this purpose.