

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL
EDUCATION, CULTURE AND SPORT SERVICE COMMITTEE
7 AUGUST 2008

Agenda Item	
Report No	

A CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE – 16+ LEARNING CHOICES

Report by Director of Education, Culture and Sport Service

Summary

This report advises members of a new development in relation to supporting young people in their transition from school to employment, education and training. This development builds on the work undertaken on the original Highland NEET Strategy now entitled More Choices More Chances. These developments will contribute to the Programme for Administration commitment to reduce the number of young people who do not progress to employment, education or training on leaving school.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Authority established a Working Group in 2006 to progress developments under the then NEET Strategy of the Scottish Executive.
- 1.2 Further developments within A Curriculum for Excellence have sought to ensure that all young people are given More Choices, More Chances to enable them to acquire Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work. The Authority has identified both **Achievement** and **Transitions** as key themes for the delivery of A Curriculum for Excellence. This specific development supports the transition of young people from school to post-school education provision either in employment, education or training.
- 1.3 The authority is participating in this development with effect from the start of school session 2008/09 as one of a number of local authorities across Scotland piloting this development. It is intended that all authorities will implement these new arrangements by 2010.

2. 16+ Learning Choices

- 2.1 **16+ Learning Choices** seeks to ensure that all young people, well in advance of reaching their statutory school leaving date are made an offer of appropriate post-16 learning. This development is central to the delivery of A Curriculum for Excellence in realising the Scottish Government's commitment to improving participation rates and learning post-16. It is a key strategy to ensure that we increase the proportion of school leavers in positive and sustained destinations on leaving school as stated in the single outcome agreement agreed with COSLA and also as stated in the Council's Programme for Administration

2.2 This development will be taken forward initially in the following Associated School Groups across Highland:

Wick High School	Invergordon Academy	Alness Academy
Dingwall Academy	St Clements School	Inverness High School
Inverness Royal Academy	Ullapool High School	Portree High School
Lochaber High School	Drummond School	

In addition pupils attending out of school mainstream provision such as the vocational training centres and the Black Isle Education Centre will be included in these initial developments. The above range of Associated School Groups has been chosen in order to ensure a representative cross section of all communities in Highland. This will ensure that the work done in the initial phases of this programme can be extended in due course to all Associated School Groups and all school leavers in Highland.

3. Implementation Strategy

3.1 In Highland approximately 2,700 pupils leave mainstream education on an annual basis, of whom approximately 300 are Christmas leavers. In Highland the majority of school leavers leave at the end of S5 or at the end of S6.

3.2 The Authority is now establishing a framework to ensure the foundations of a successful transition from school will be laid throughout a young person's secondary education through partnership working. This process will ensure appropriate advice and guidance is given to pupils in order to ensure that personal learning planning increasingly focuses on career planning as the learner progresses towards their chosen leaving date in S4, S5 or S6. Schools will be required to introduce new tracking arrangements in relation to positive destinations for all pupils from the start of S3. More specific targeted action to deliver **16+ Learning Choice** will take place during the last year of compulsory education and in the first year of post-compulsory education through the monitoring of destinations of young people on leaving school. Schools therefore will introduce a new tracking process from the beginning of S3 in which they will identify those pupils who are likely to have either a negative or unsure destination on leaving school.

3.3 The Authority has now established a wider partnership building on the work done under the NEET Strategy to include representatives from appropriate services across the Council, Skills Development Scotland, including Careers Scotland, Job Centre Plus, and representatives from colleges of further education in Highland and the voluntary sector. This partnership group has overall responsibility for the delivery of the 16+ Learning Choice Strategy. In moving these developments forward it will be necessary to ensure that the information systems developed in schools around pupil attainment, achievement and proposed destinations is shared with Careers Scotland Client Information and that appropriate systems are put in place to track young people through the latter stages of their school education into employment, education and training, and into future careers. Presently Careers Scotland undertake school leaver destination and data analysis within six months of

pupils leaving school. It will be necessary to review these arrangements in order to track young people's progress into employment over a longer timeframe.

- 3.4 It will be necessary for schools, through extended School Liaison Group activity, to work more closely with a wider range of services and agencies including Careers Scotland staff, Youth Development staff and Psychological Service in relation to pupils with additional support needs.
- 3.5 Programmes of study are increasingly being diversified in secondary schools to ensure a broader balance between academic and vocational education. This has built on the collaboration with colleges of education established under Vocational Pathways some years ago, to the introduction of a much wider range of vocational and other courses in schools. This includes Skills for Work courses, extended work experience and opportunities for cross disciplinary working such as the Food and Drink Challenge. Pupils progress will therefore be reviewed through S3 and S4 on a regular basis to ensure that their progress moves them towards a positive destination. All young people will have access to the appropriate advice and guidance in order to make choices about their future pathways and to secure their intended post-16 destination.
- 3.6 It will be necessary to expand the range of learning provision currently available linked to programmes such as **Get Ready for Work** and other options and to take account of, not only young people's intended destinations, but the labour market needs in relation to the availability of employment. It will be a requirement that schools, colleges and training providers work in collaboration with Careers Scotland on the offers of provision to young people and to ensure continued tracking of those who will require support through the transition arrangements. Careers Scotland will therefore have a key role in co-ordinating these arrangements and in ensuring the appropriate career information and advice is available to all school leavers throughout their transition from school.
- 3.7 Responsibility for ensuring there is sufficient formal and informal learning provision to deliver 16+ Learning Choices lies with a number of agencies:
 - Local Authorities, including schools
 - Community Learning and Development including Youth Development Services
 - Colleges
 - Skills Development Scotland (including Careers Scotland)
 - Training Providers
 - The Voluntary Sector

A guidance framework has been established which sets out the key responsibilities for the local authority in leading on this development and which also clarifies the responsibilities of schools, Careers Scotland, Skills Development Scotland, colleges and the work of the Youth Service as well as independent training providers and the voluntary sector.

The local partnership mapping of provision which was undertaken as part of More Choices, More Chances developments will be further progressed in order to ensure that there are appropriate pathways for all school leavers. To date the Authority

has identified that there is a significant gap for certain client groups between school provision and programmes such as Get Ready for Work, Skill Seekers and Modern Apprenticeships. The Authority is currently in discussion with a number of voluntary agencies with a view to establishing additional provision to close this gap to ensure effective transitions are available to all young people.

- 3.8 The Local Authority, as leader of the strategic partnership, will work with Careers Scotland to actively monitor the progress of all school leavers. In progressing these developments the Scottish Government is seeking to ensure that for school year 2008/09 that young people leaving learning early are brought to the attention of Careers Scotland by learning providers. Careers Scotland will be expected to contact young people leaving learning as soon as possible to offer appropriate support to re-engage. Additionally, the Scottish Government will be working in collaboration with Skills Development Scotland and FE colleges to make enrolment arrangements more flexible for academic years 2008/09 and 09/10 so that opportunities will be available for young people to re-engage in learning. This will be particularly important in relation to ensuring young people completing social and personal development programmes provided through the voluntary sector and other providers are able to access appropriate programmes such as Get Ready for Work and to progress on into other opportunities in education, employment and training.

4. Next Steps

- 4.1 It is important to ensure that these developments are incorporated within the Council's overall strategy for implementation of the Fairer Scotland Fund which seeks to ensure that other developments such as the regeneration outcome agreements and working with families developments are part of an integrated approach to developing and sustaining employability in communities across Highland.

5. Resource Issues

- 5.1 This development will require additional collaborative working both for the schools and the authority with key partners. This will include much more detailed data sharing between the authority and Careers Scotland. It will also be necessary to commission additional new services or courses to ensure accessible pathways are available to all young people in communities across Highland. The resources to deliver these developments will be funded through the Fairer Scotland Fund.

6. Equality of Access

- 6.1 We require to deliver the strategy with equality of access to all young people whatever their learning needs and wherever they live in Highland. This is a formidable challenge given the availability of services in some rural communities and the access for young people to college provision and training providers in rural and remote communities.

Recommendation

Members are asked to note and comment on the development of 16+ Learning Choices and to:

- Confirm the arrangements for a secure partnership of key services and agencies
- Commission appropriate additional provision for young people through Fairer Scotland Funding

Signature:

Designation: Head of Education Services

Date: 11 July 2008

Author: Donnie MacDonald

Ref: DMD/PA

Background Papers:

Report to ECS Committee:

NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) Strategy dated 21 September 2006

Report to ECS Committee:

NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) Interim Strategy dated 8 March 2007