



Report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development

Scrutiny Board (City & Regional Partnerships)

Date: 20th November 2008

Subject: Draft Statement University Fees

Electoral Wards Affected: All

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 At its meeting on 23rd October 2008 Members received the attached note (see appendix 1 in the draft Statement) of the Scrutiny Board's University Fees Working Group which was established to look at the request for scrutiny from representatives of Leeds University Unions concerning University fees.
- 1.2 The Working Group consisted of Councillors Bentley, Kendall, J Lewis, Atha and Yeadon and made a number of recommendations.
- 1.3 The Board agreed that a draft Statement be prepared based on this note for consideration at today's meeting.

2.0 Draft Statement

- 2.1 A copy of the draft Statement is attached for Members consideration.

3.0 Comments on the Draft Statement

- 3.1 The following comments have been received from the Director of Children's Services with regard to recommendation 3 of the draft Statement

"A distinction should be made between the services provided by Connexions and those provided by the Universities. Connexions PAs work with students prior to entry to University. Once at University, they become the responsibility of that institution and are referred to them for advice on fees, finance, accommodation, welfare, careers.

This recommendation does not make it wholly clear which students this post holder would be working with, although point 11 on page 5 of the report would seem to imply that it is only to work with the students at the Leeds Universities. This being the case, these students do not fall within the current guidance requirements for Connexions services, and are wholly the responsibility of the Universities, who are funded separately to provide this sort of service.

Information on finances and fees for higher education is provided by DCFS, by UCAS and by the Student Loans Company. This information is distributed to PAs working in local schools and colleges to assist them in the guidance they provide to individuals.

Major changes are currently being made to support services for HE candidates. Those applying to HE for a 2009 start will be able to access IAG on student finance from a central unit known as Student Finance England. The main vehicle for this will be online, but there will also be a centralised telephone and e-mail service. There will be regional partnerships linked to partner organisations and there will be a Practitioners' Helpline and website. From 2009 most applications for student finance will be online and there will be earlier processing of applications. Candidates will be able to apply for finance at the same time as they make their UCAS application and the system will be detailed enough to provide information on fees charged at each University and on bursaries / grants available for different income levels. Student Finance England believe their website will be straightforward and easy to follow and will supply all the information needed by a young person to make sensible choices."

4.0 Recommendations

- 4.1 Members are asked to consider the attached statement having regard to the comments received.

Background Papers

None used