
REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF EDUCATION LEEDS

SCRUTINY BOARD: City & Regional Partnerships on 12th May 2009

SUBJECT: Response to the statement of Scrutiny Board on University Fees

Electoral Wards Affected:

Ward Members consulted
(referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

Equality & Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Eligible for Call-in

Not Eligible for Call-in

(Details contained in the Report)

1.0 PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

1.1 This report is an officer response to the statement of Scrutiny Board (City & Regional Partnership) on University Fees published in November 2008.

2.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2.1 This report provides a detailed response to the three recommendations contained in the statement on University Fees approved by Scrutiny Board at the meeting on 20 November 2008.

The report is based on detailed discussions and written submissions from a range of interested parties. The originators of the report would like to thank all those who contributed to the response.

3.0 RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Recommendation 1

That local MPs be asked to give their support to the view that there should be adequate funding of Higher Education without removing the cap on fees.

Recommendation 2

To complement recommendation 1 MPs and the Chief Executive of Education Leeds should be asked to support the introduction of a single national bursary system that is easy to understand and access through consistent and transparent process.

3.2 Response to Recommendations 1 and 2

These two recommendations were primarily addressed by Rosemary Archer, Director of Children's Services and Chris Edwards, Chief Executive of Education Leeds sending a joint letter to all local MPs outlining the issues and seeking their support. The content of the letter is included as Appendix 1.

3.3 Recommendation 3

That the Director of Children's Services and the Chief Executive of Education Leeds be asked to report back to this board in April 2009 on what initiatives they are developing to promote greater coordination and cooperation and flexibility between the universities and the Council to help improve the information, advice and guidance (IAG) provided for our young people, particularly in relation to university application processes and application for financial support.

3.4 Response to Recommendation 3

The detailed response to Recommendation 3 is given below This response is split into two main sections; current initiatives and services and future initiatives and developments.

3.5 Context

IAG is currently a national priority for DCSF and DIUS, who have identified that in recent years IAG has not met the needs of young people. The Education and Skills Act (2008) placed the duty to deliver information, advice and guidance for young people aged 13-19 (25 for learners with learning difficulties / disabilities) with local authorities. Learning providers are now required to deliver impartial information about all progression opportunities, and careers education becomes statutory for learners from year 7 to year 13. This includes progression to higher education and student financial support.

Prospects will take up the new contract for delivery of a universal Connexions service in Leeds from 1 April 2009. Prospects will undertake a full service review during the first 8 weeks of the contract. This review will provide the opportunity to evaluate the existing IAG available to 14-19 learners around higher education, progression and student finance. Partners will be consulted on recommendations through the IYSS Strategic Board and 14-19 Strategy Group. The outcomes of the service review will inform the IYSS Service Plan, 14-19 Education Plan and the Connexions delivery plan.

3.6 Current initiatives and services for IAG around higher education and student finance.

Excellent partnership activity between local and sub regional universities and Leeds 14-19 learning providers can be seen in activities delivered to learners and

parents. The scope of current activity is broad, including widening participation days, curriculum support and development, mentoring by volunteer undergraduates for Leeds schools, primary school activities, gifted and talented programmes, summer schools, speakers for schools and colleges. Many of these activities are organised through formal partnerships e.g. Aimhigher, HEARWY, Compact schemes, etc. All Leeds HEIs are involved in curriculum development through Diploma consortia and higher education is represented at key strategic partnerships.

Leeds HEIs invest heavily in work around raising the aspirations of young people across the city and region through a range of widening participation and Aimhigher activities. Much of this work is focused on providing advice, guidance, support and encouragement for young people who would not generally consider progression to HE as an option. The universities also provide innovative bursary schemes to ensure students from underrepresented groups are not deterred from University.

Schools and colleges make 14-19 learners aware of how information, advice and guidance about higher education and student finance can help them to make decisions about future learning and how to access the services they need through careers education, tutorial support, targeted information at key transition points and initiatives aimed at improving attainment and progression for identified groups (e.g. Aimhigher cohort). Aimhigher fund an Impact Theatre Company performance for all year 9 learners, and this includes HE and student finance. The Aimhigher Roadshow provides more in depth information to identified students.

All schools and colleges review and evaluate their careers education and information advice and guidance delivery as part of their annual self evaluation for OFTSED.

Information about higher education and student finance specifically is available universally to young people usually in 16-19 phase through

- i. school post 16 careers education / tutorial programmes
- ii. FE student support services
- iii. Connexions information booklets and careers libraries
- iv Connexions personal advisers

Information is available in a number of formats, including handbooks produced by schools or colleges, locally produced Unifaqs handbook for sixth form students, nationally produced Connexions resources, letters to parents and carers, visiting speakers, workshops and tutorials in schools and colleges, university visits, open days and targeted widening participation and Aimhigher activity locally and sub-regionally. An annual UCAS HE convention is hosted in Leeds by Leeds Careers.

A number of local websites currently contain information about progression to HE including Leeds City Council, Leeds Pathways, Wyzup (Leeds Careers), Aimhigher (local and sub regional) and universities' own websites. In addition, national websites including directgov, Aimhigher, UCAS and Student Finance England. Students are signposted to these by schools and colleges and in the publications listed above.

Not all young people in Leeds will consider higher education: targeted work is in place with some young people less likely to progress onto higher education, including looked after children, young people from some black and minority ethnic

groups and young people from some localities or from families with lower income levels. Aimhigher targets resources to widen participation in partnership with schools, colleges and VCFS organisations such as REEMAP. The kids@uni scheme works with primary school children and their parents in targeted schools to widen participation.

Parents and carers receive information about how information, advice and guidance services can help their children at key transition points and how to access services. Resources are produced locally for parents and carers by Connexions and by schools and colleges. Parents / carers are signposted to national websites and publications. Parents / carers receive information about the UCAS HE convention in Leeds. Innovative activities are taking place with carers of looked after children as part of the Stepping Stones project to increase progression for this group of young people.

3.7 **Future initiatives and developments in the context of local change and national reform and policy drivers**

- A strategy for careers education and IAG is to be developed as part of the Children and Young People's Plan (details in the 14-19 Education Plan and IYSS Strategic Plan) to support service planning, curriculum development and CE/ IAG delivery. HE partners, including undergraduate students, parents / carers and other stakeholders will be included in the development of the strategy.
- An IAG Curriculum Group is to be convened with representation from all 14-19 stakeholders to support careers education and IAG development across the city, including raising awareness among learning providers of their statutory duty to deliver impartial IAG (Education and Skills Act, 2008).
- A network of IAG will be developed across the city, impacting on 14+ Confederations within the Children Leeds Wedge Partnership arrangements and the 14-19 Curriculum Framework Group and the Diploma delivery consortia will have named IAG leads to ensure comprehensive communication frameworks are in place.
- An IAG development co-ordinator post will be created by Prospects to work across Connexions, 14-19, learning providers and other partners to raise standards and support changes brought about by 14-19 reforms.
- Schools and colleges will be supported to review and evaluate their IAG regarding higher education progression, with an emphasis on student finance within the context of the national quality standards for IAG. There is a target of 75% of providers to meet national quality standards by March 2010 (reference 14-19 Education Plan). All schools and colleges will be required to review their careers education programmes against the national framework for careers education (year 7 – 13) and the learning outcomes for economic wellbeing and financial capability.
- Connexions Leeds will undertake a full review of information resources in all formats to ensure clarity, accuracy and coherence of information regarding higher education progression, university fees and student finance. Connexions Leeds will be responsible for ensuring this information is fully disseminated to Leeds schools and colleges, accessible by learners and parents / carers and understood by the teachers and advisers supporting learner choice and progression. Further information is available through Aimhigher publications and local websites.
- CPD focusing on HE progression and student finance to be prioritised for all Connexions PAs and professionals working with targeted groups, in line with

the requirements of the Connexions contract from April 2009. This will include teachers, tutors, PSCHE curriculum planners, Aimhigher organisers, youth workers, parent support assistants, training and apprenticeship providers, etc. Aimhigher will co-ordinate input from Student Finance England. Information has already been circulated to all schools, colleges and personal advisers.

- CPD around IAG, progression and university finance has been identified as a key activity in CYPP for 2009 – 10 for parent partnership workers, STEPS facilitators and other key professionals working with parents and communities. (STEPS is a personal effectiveness programme aimed at raising aspiration and expectations)
- Reforms to the secondary curriculum, including the introduction of Diplomas, are expected to improve outcomes for level 3 learners, with 60% of learners expected to achieve a level 3 qualification by 2015, having a positive impact on future progression to higher education.
- Focus groups with learners during year 12 (decision making), year 13 (application process) and with first year undergraduates (home students) will identify key issues during the guidance process. Focus groups with parents will ask how relevant the information received was to individual circumstance and how this could be improved. Learner focus groups and parent / community based events will be delivered as part of the new Connexions contract. The outcomes of focus groups will be presented to 14-19 Strategy Group and IYSS Board to inform IAG strategy development and curriculum and Connexions service planning.
- The changes to student financial arrangements and the possibility that the government will remove the ceiling on university fees will have an unknown impact on progression to higher education and undergraduate retention. It is possible that a 'HE champion' working across post 16 learning providers in Leeds may be able to counter the potential adverse impact of these changes by working to up-skill teachers, tutors and advisers in and build capacity in delivering IAG and financial information, including the role of bursaries in student financial support, within their organisations. Education Leeds in partnership with Connexions Leeds will discuss with local HEIs the possibility of them investing any underspend from their bursary schemes (see para. 8 Comments and recommendations of Scrutiny Report) in jointly funding a fixed term post. Education Leeds could host the post in the 14-19 team and provide the management function for the postholder. Integrating the role with 14-19 and Connexions activity as part of the 14-19 Education Plan would give immediate outcomes in terms of embedding relevant skills and knowledge in schools, colleges and parent / community interventions. Activity could be offered as a universal offer across the city supported by targeted intervention to meet the widening participation agenda.

4.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 Scrutiny Board are asked to note the content of the report.

Appendix 1

Letter to local MPs

University Fees

Leeds City Council's Scrutiny Board (City and Regional Partnerships) considered a request from the University of Leeds Student Union concerning their University fees campaign and the impact students have on the Leeds economy. I attach a copy of a Statement and recommendations made by the Scrutiny Board which I hope you agree makes interesting reading.

As part of the Comments and Recommendations they recommended that the Director of Children's Services and the Chief Executive of Education Leeds write to all Leeds Members of Parliament seeking their support that there should be adequate funding of Higher Education without removing the cap on fees. To avoid you getting two letters I have agreed with the Director of Children's Services that I would produce the letter but it goes above Rosemary's signature also.

In the evidence received by the Scrutiny Board, both University Pro Vice Chancellors acknowledged the complexity and difficulty of the bursary schemes. We would, also therefore, ask that you support the introduction of a single national bursary system that is easy to understand and access through consistent and transparent processes.

Please let me know if you require any further information on this matter.

Yours sincerely

Rosemary Archer
Director of Children's Services

Chris Edwards
Chief Executive Education Leeds

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