

Informed Scotland

Learning and Skills Digest

Special Issue 5 | 11 December 2014

HIGHER ATTAINMENT
WIDER ACCESS
SPECIAL



- ▶ relevant highlights from recent months
- ▶ raising aspirations
- ▶ business responsibility
- ▶ closing gaps
- ▶ social mobility
- ▶ innovation

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Business

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

■ **Aberdeen Guarantees** was launched by **Aberdeen City Council** and partners including **Skills Development Scotland (SDS)**, **North East Scotland College**, **Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce** and **Scottish Council for Development & Industry**. They make a commitment to provide all 14–25 year-olds with learning, training and job opportunities.

Similar schemes include [The Edinburgh Guarantee](#). (24)

■ **RNIB Scotland** was awarded £516k **Big Lottery** Investing in Communities funding for [Looking to the Future](#), a three-year project to help blind and partially sighted 15–25 year-olds move into work or further education. (25)

■ **University of Stirling** researchers published [Childhood psychological distress and youth unemployment](#). Findings suggest that 'children who experience emotional problems are at high risk of unemployment in early adulthood', particularly during times of recession. Children rated 'highly distressed' were 40% more likely to experience youth unemployment. (26)

SKILLS & THE WORKFORCE

■ **UK Commission for Employment & Skills (UKCES)** launched a '[progression and pathways in retail and hospitality](#)' competition, the third in its [UK Futures Programme](#) for employers. Proposals are sought for a share of £2m to pilot innovative ways of improving earnings and progression of low paid workers. (25)

■ **Institution of Engineering & Technology** published [Engineering & Technology Skills & Demand in Industry 2014](#), a survey of 400 employers across the UK. Findings include:

- Only 6% of engineers, and 3% of engineering technicians are women.
- 23% of employers said they do nothing at all to improve workforce diversity. (26)

■ **Scottish Informatics & Computer Science Alliance** launched a 12-month focus on [Supporting & Recruiting Women in Computing](#). It aims to address the shortage of female applicants to computer science programmes in universities, the often 'poor ratio' of female to male academics, and shortage of women in promoted posts. (26)

■ **Youth Scotland**, **Stirling Council** and **MXP Training Centre** are piloting a four-day health and fitness employability and leadership skills programme for young men not in education, employment or training. (25)

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

■ **Scottish Business in the Community (SBC)** published [The Responsible Business Journey for Scotland](#), setting out a 'vision for an inclusive future'. It calls for business to take a clearer role in addressing issues, including:

- tackling poverty and addressing inequality
- improving education and employability for young people and disadvantaged groups.

A timely reminder of the role and importance of business contributing to its community, with mutual, tangible and broad benefits. (24)

Government & Wider Society

SOCIAL EXCLUSION & MOBILITY

- The UK **Social Mobility & Child Poverty Commission** published [State of the Nation 2014 Report](#). It calls for:
- government to commit to ending long-term youth unemployment by 2020
 - half of all larger workplaces to offer quality apprenticeships
 - the attainment gap between disadvantaged and better off children to be closed
 - teachers to be offered greater financial incentives to teach in deprived areas
 - universities and employers to ensure they recruit from a broader range of talent
 - unpaid internships to be made illegal
 - 5,000 more pupils from a free school meals background to be going to university by 2020.

In a [speech in Edinburgh](#), [Alan Milburn](#), [Chair of the Commission](#), explored the role of education in 'unlocking more social mobility in Scotland'. (25)

■ **Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF)** published [Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion 2014](#) across the UK. The number of people unemployed, or unemployed for over a year, or working part-time but wanting a full-time job, were all lower than in 2013. However, household incomes and wages have fallen across the board. (26)

In May 2014 JRF published the research report [Closing the attainment gap in Scottish Education](#).

LITERACY

■ A UK-wide [Read On. Get On.](#) campaign was launched in Scotland by a coalition led by **Save the Children Scotland**. A [report](#) sets out the 'mission' to ensure all children are reading well by the time they start secondary school. The ultimate aim is to 'help children escape poverty'. (26)

Further & Higher Education

STUDENTS

■ **Equality Challenge Unit** published *Equality in colleges in Scotland: Statistical report 2014*. Findings include:

- There were 297,585 students in 2012/13, down from 489,610 in 2007/8; under 16s, 35–39s and 40+ age groups more than halved.
- 14.2% declared a disability (up from 13.7% in 2011/12); 40.4% at SCQF Level 3, 14.4% at Level 4 and 8.6% at Level 7.
- 88.7% of UK students were 'UK white', 6.3% 'other white', 2.7% Asian, 1.3% black.
- 52.4% of students were female, 67.1% on non-vocational courses with no recognised qualification.
- 65.1% of students at SVQ Level 3 were male. (24)

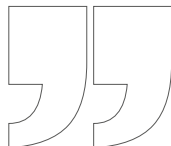
■ **Scottish Funding Council (SFC)** published *Measures of Success: Learning for All; for 2012–13*, a report on their strategy for widening participation. Progress is 'incremental', with universities 'some way from achieving patterns of participation' that match the wider population.

- 29.0% of university entrants were from the 40% most deprived areas (up from 28.6% in 2011–12).
- 3,469 students articulated from college to university (up from 3,019).
- Proportions of entrants with a disability or from an ethnic minority background increased.
- The gender gap remained broadly static, and very prevalent in some subjects.
- The proportion of young entrants rose while the proportion of mature entrants fell.
- Retention rates improved for all students.

Universities Scotland noted the 'vast attainment gap between the richest and poorest pupils' for Highers and Advanced Highers, and called for 'a life-cycle approach' from early years upwards. (26)

In an **Informed Scotland** guest blog, Helen Thorne, Director of Policy & Research at **UCAS**, comments on the 'persistent' gender gap. (25)

This needs to be more than a conference, it needs to be a step towards substantive progress in changing outcomes for young people born into poverty. We've talked long enough.



DAVID CAMERON, EDUCATION CONSULTANT
CHAIR, POVERTY & ATTAINMENT CONFERENCE

COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES

■ **Equality Challenge Unit** published *The rationale for equality and diversity: How vice-chancellors and principals are leading change*, based on interviews with 12 UK university principals including **Abertay**. It provides an insight into personal motivations and institutional drivers and benefits of championing this agenda. (25)

■ **University of the Highlands & Islands** launched a crowd funded *Scholarship Fund*, the first in Scotland. Companies and individuals are being asked for donations to support students who need financial help. (24)

■ Articulation agreements, with the aim of widening access to higher education, were signed between:

- **North East Scotland College** and **University of Aberdeen**; college students on 12 HND courses will be able to gain advanced entry to degree programmes.
- **Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU)** and **Glasgow Kelvin College**, building on existing collaboration. GCU also has an agreement with **City of Glasgow College** and plans another with **Glasgow Clyde**. (26)

■ **University of the West of Scotland (UWS)** is to create the Ayr Campus Volunteering Academy with £50k **Moffat Charitable Trust** funding, led by UWS *School of Business & Enterprise*. The Academy aims to improve employability of UWS students and unemployed Ayrshire residents. (26)

UWS launched a Volunteering Academy in Hamilton in May.

Community & Adult Learning

SKILLS & TRAINING

■ The EU **Learning for Work and Life! One Step Up Project** published a new *Learning to Learn* toolkit to support training providers working with 'marginalised and disadvantaged' groups. The learning approaches can be used to develop a range of skills including adult literacy, ICT, problem solving and working with others. (26)

■ **Bauer Academy** launched 'Be Somebody', fully funded media skills training for 15–25 year-olds across Scotland. Supported by £63k **Creative Scotland** Cashback for Creativity funding, 50% of places will be given to **YouthLink Scotland** to involve young people who do not traditionally access media training or the arts. The project will deliver industry skills and encourage participants to get involved with community groups. (26)

Schools

EDUCATION & SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

■ **Association of Directors of Education Scotland** published *A 2020 Vision for Education*. It suggests that Scotland 'lacks true integration of local and national improvement agencies', and calls for a 'more agile' model to 'improve attainment and close the inequality gap'. (26)

■ **Robert Owen Centre for Educational Change** published *The School Improvement Partnership Programme: Final evaluation*, commissioned by **Education Scotland**. The programme was set up to tackle 'educational inequality' through collaborative working in different, innovative ways. Findings from the first phase in 2013-14 suggest good progress is being made. (26)

PARENTS & FAMILIES

■ **The National Parent Forum Scotland** published *Learning Pathways in the Senior Phase and Beyond*, the latest in their *Nutshell* series. It aims to help parents understand the options available to pupils from S4. (25)

■ The Scottish Government launched a new **Engaging with Families** website providing access to research and evidence of effective strategies. It is mainly focused on vulnerable and deprived families with the aim of raising educational attainment and achievement. (24)

■ **SDS** launched a new *My World of Work* for parents website. It provides information on courses, jobs and careers to help parents support their children. (24)

MENTORING & RAISING ASPIRATIONS

■ **Fife Council** and **University of St Andrews** set up a new mentoring programme to help 'looked after' young people progress to further or higher education. University students will mentor 20 S4 and S5 pupils either in or coming out of care. (25)

■ **Children's University (CU) Scotland** is launching a new **Dundee CU**, with funding from **Abertay** and **Dundee Universities** and support from **Dundee & Angus College**. It aims to help 5-14 year-olds raise their aspirations and boost achievement.

*Two other CUs were launched with **Strathclyde** and **Queen Margaret Universities** in 2013.* (26)

SUPPORT FOR VULNERABLE LEARNERS

■ **Education Scotland** published *Supporting Learners: Children & Young People from Service Families*. These pupils 'may face barriers to their learning including interrupted education and social and emotional needs'. (24)

■ **University of Edinburgh** research, funded by the **Nuffield Foundation**, looked at the educational achievement of 540 pupils in Scotland aged 16 with a degree of hearing loss. Pupils with any level of deafness were below the average academic score for the general population. Academic achievement of pupils with only mild hearing loss was no better than profoundly deaf children, suggesting the former 'are being overlooked in schools'. (26)

Informed Scotland

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SOME USEFUL ORGANISATIONS & LINKS

- [Access to Education Fund](#)
- [Adult Literacies](#)
- [CALL Scotland](#)
- [CELSIS](#)
- [CERES](#)
- [College Development Network](#)
- [Cost of the School Day](#)
- [Disability Confident](#)
- [Employability in Scotland](#)
- [Enquire](#)
- [Equality Challenge Unit](#)
- [Getting it right for every child](#)
- [Growing Up in Scotland](#)
- [HEA Scotland](#)
- [Lead Scotland](#)
- [Learning Link Scotland](#)
- [Our Skillsforce](#)
- [Raising Attainment](#)
- [Raising Attainment for All](#)
- [Robert Owen Centre](#)
- [School Improvement Partnership Programme](#)
- [SCCYP](#)
- [Scotland's Learning Partnership](#)
- [SCEL](#)
- [SCVO Digital Participation](#)
- [SCQF Partnership](#)
- [SERA Poverty & Education Network](#)
- [SFC Access & Inclusion](#)
- [Scottish Union Learning](#)
- [SQA Adult Literacies](#)
- [Young Scot](#)