

**Wednesday 30 August 2017**

**Comment on the Triennial Review of Widening Access**

Commenting on the Scottish Funding Council's (SFC) Triennial Review of Widening Access, Shona Struthers, Chief Executive, Colleges Scotland said:

“The first triennial review of Widening Access shows that colleges are the key to delivering education and skills to those that reside in a deprived background. Sited within local communities, colleges provide a wide range of opportunities for over 227,000 learners annually helping to develop their confidence, self-esteem and sense of purpose whilst learning new skills, honing interests and earning valuable, industry-recognised qualifications.

“From access to education courses to apprenticeship programmes to degree level studies across a wide range of subject areas, colleges are committed to Scotland's ambitions for fair access and inclusive growth. The college sector provides 43% of all places for undergraduate entrants to higher education and colleges are becoming the route of choice for young people progressing on to university, with the Scottish Government's agenda on widening access to higher education increasingly being delivered by colleges, supporting over 90% of the growth in entry to university by disadvantaged students since 2006. Colleges are working closely with universities to develop effective articulation routes and are heavily involved in the Scottish Government's Review of the 15-24 Learner Journey, the Student Support Review and the Enterprise and Skills Review.

“The report rightly highlights areas where there is room for improvement around gender balance and retention and attainment, and the sector is actively engaged in work to make progress in these areas. For example, colleges are working with the SFC to implement its Gender Action Plan to increase the diversity on key courses through programmes, such as girls only energy courses and encouraging men into care subjects. In addition, work is underway on the Scottish Government's National Improvement Programme with five colleges participating in the pilot project looking at retention and attainment to find out what more colleges can do to ensure that learners successfully complete their courses and progress toward their career aspirations.”

**ENDS**

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**Notes:**

- The SFC Triennial Review is available to view at <http://www.sfc.ac.uk/communications/Corporatepublications/2017/SFCCP032017.aspx>