

**Tuesday 6 March 2018**

**Comment on the Ministerial Statement on Widening Access**

Commenting on today's statement made by the Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science, Shirley-Anne Somerville MSP, Shona Struthers, Chief Executive of Colleges Scotland, said:

"We are really pleased that Shirley-Anne Somerville, the Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science, recognises the important and successful role that colleges are undertaking in providing higher education to students from the most deprived backgrounds.

"Colleges are the linchpin upon which the Scottish Government's ambitions for widening access to education will be realised. College is still the primary source of post-16 education for those from deprived backgrounds – 27% for full-time higher education and 34% for full-time further education for 2015/16 are from the 20% most deprived postcodes. Enrolling at college improves life chances for people and helps those furthest away from the labour market.

"Colleges have always supported and facilitated alternative pathways to university, helping individuals overcome disadvantage and ensuring fair and equal access to education. Since 2006, 90% of all growth in entry into universities by the most disadvantaged students has been through colleges. The college sector will continue to work with universities to deliver effective routes into university and ensure that learners, regardless of age, background or gender have equal access to education and training."

**ENDS**

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**Notes:**

- 27% for full-time higher education and 34% for full-time further education are from the 20% most deprived postcodes – this figure is for 2015/16 (source: Scottish Funding Council's Triennial Review of Widening Access <http://www.sfc.ac.uk/publications-statistics/corporate-publications/corporate-publications-2017/SFCCP032017.aspx>)
- Since 2006, 90% of all growth in entry into universities by the most disadvantaged students has been through colleges. (source: The Sutton Trust's Access in Education Report at [http://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Access-in-Scotland\\_May2016.pdf](http://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Access-in-Scotland_May2016.pdf))