

PRESS RELEASE

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Colleges Scotland launches Blueprint for Improved Post-16 Learning Framework

- **Learner centric model will deliver much needed efficiencies**
- **Collaborative, consistent approach will address current complexities**

Colleges Scotland has today published a Think Piece, setting out its vision for a new coherent and equitable learning framework for learners aged 16 and over. The body, which represents Scotland's college sector, is advocating a review of the 'learner journey' that would involve a more co-ordinated approach across schools, colleges, universities and employers that puts learners at the heart of the process.

Shona Struthers, Chief Executive, Colleges Scotland, said: "Currently the landscape for learners over the age of 16 is complex and confusing with a plethora of potential routes and providers which can be unclear and unhelpful. It is essential that we address these challenges by making the learner journey as efficient and effective as possible.

"We want to see a collaborative leadership model developed to support the learning and skills journey where all who support and provide education for those over 16 adopt a common approach. This will not only benefit learners but also play to the ongoing focus on delivering efficient processes and increased productivity across the public sector."

The Think Piece identifies specific areas where savings could be made to the public purse while still delivering benefits for learners. The new learning framework will benefit post-16 learners by providing a personalised learner journey towards their preferred career choice and work, regardless of whether that journey is linear or non-linear. It will offer seamless routes with clear smooth transitions between institutions i.e. schools, colleges, universities and employers.

The business community will also benefit from this new learning framework as it will produce the appropriately skilled, work-ready workforce required which ultimately benefits Scotland's wider economic ambitions.

Colleges Scotland proposes a co-ordinated learning and skills framework that follows four basic principles:

1) Learners must be given full recognition for their prior attainment as they progress between institutions without unnecessary repetition of any Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Level unless it is in the interest of the learner.

For example, a learner with a Higher National Diploma (HND) might choose not to enter the third year of a degree course because they do not have the confidence to do so. A student with Highers in the Arts would not be advised to enter the second year of an HND in Engineering as they lack the specialist knowledge to succeed.

2) Learners should be able to progress flexibly and not be inhibited by systemic or institutional factors.

In many cases, different institutions give different recognition for the same qualification when applying to the same or similar courses at the same SCQF Level. In other instances, for reasons

of institutional sustainability, learners are not encouraged to pursue a route with a different provider.

Programmes should also be designed to be followed in a non-linear way particularly by those combining work with study, or those seeking re-training or up-skilling as they look to return to the workforce.

2) All learners should have equal access to a consistent and coherent post-16 learning framework available nationally.

The implementation plan for *Developing the Young Workforce* presents the details of how *Curriculum for Excellence*, a regionalised college system, a significantly expanded MA programme and purposeful employer engagement will be brought together to drive the creation of a world class vocational offer aligned to widening access to higher education opportunities. However, as a result of the factors identified above and the very different approaches adopted by school-college partnerships in supporting *Developing the Young Workforce* in different regions, the opportunities available to learners differ widely.

4) Learner choices should be informed by comprehensive, objective and transparent advice and guidance.

Despite the best efforts of Skills Development Scotland (SDS), the current complexity and lack of coherence in existing post-16 provision means that there is no one comprehensive source of information available which learners can use to explore all the potential routes to employment, through the learner journey. The situation is exacerbated by existing regional variations and advice from careers staff in schools which can be restricted by their immediate context.

The Think Piece sets out a vision and examples of how elements of a new framework could operate to ensure that quality of provision is maintained. We look forward to working with key stakeholders to shape a new educational landscape.

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NOTES:

The 'Think Piece' document entitled *The Learning and Skills Journey* is available to view on the Colleges Scotland website at www.collegesscotland.ac.uk/thinkpieces.

In summary, the vision would deliver:

- personalised journeys for learners
- an appropriately skilled workforce which meets the needs of industry and communities
- equality, access and fairness
- positive destinations
- economic growth and prosperity for Scotland.