

## ***SWARF Event – Learning for All in Communities***

### ***Synopsis of Learning For All Report***

Our vision is a Scotland in which all would genuinely have an equal opportunity to participate in lifelong learning that matches their hopes, talents, efforts and needs. And in which excellence in learning would be defined as adding maximum value for the learner.

If Scotland were like this then:

**Learners and potential learners would:** want to learn and value learning; be clear what they want out of their learning, and be self-directed as learners; understand their options; and have high aspirations and confidence.

**All communities would:** place high value on learning; demand access to it; and, as part of this, employers would encourage and support their staff to participate in learning.

**Society would:** place high value on learning, and give parity of esteem to different types of learning (such as vocational and academic education); and get learning that provides a good fit between the needs of learners and the economy.

**The lifelong learning system would:** deliver flexible, diverse and appropriate provision that meets the varied demands and needs of learners.

**Individual colleges and higher education institutions would:** focus and respond to the needs and potential of individual learners; and find ways to select the right learners for the right courses on the basis of potential to achieve.

### ***Learning For All recommended programme of action:***

**Develop a shared understanding and common vision** across all the agencies and stakeholders within Scotland on the contribution of learning to tackling inequality and a commitment to develop our systems founded on this vision. By this means we will align the programmes and get a greater degree of coherence in how the different players are thinking about and tackling this issue, and be better equipped to optimise the contribution of learning to the economy and society.

### **Build the demand for learning among disadvantaged groups**

Support, develop and put on a long-term footing regional multi-agency co-operative activities to raise aspirations and co-ordinate activities. Through these means we will raise aspirations for all disadvantaged groups to all types of learning. We will avoid prioritising one type of learning over others and will widen the remit of the wider access regional forums beyond higher education. We will minimise duplication and maximise impact through acting together. We will expect the best practices to become common across the whole of Scotland.

### **Provide High-quality learner-centred services**

Continue to expect all institutions to provide high-quality learner-centred services, founded on the idea that excellence = adding maximum value for learners. Continue to adapt and develop institutional and national quality improvement systems and our ability to evaluate our impact on learners. Experimenting with new courses and ways of teaching can connect better with learners from disadvantaged groups.

Continue to develop our capacity to identify and meet the support needs of students particularly at transition points. Imaginative and well-adapted support can contribute to leveling the playing field so that all learners have a fair chance of achieving the most they can. We think there could be scope for innovative partnerships amongst FE colleges and HEIs to provide such support. The wider access forums should continue to play a role in supporting these developments.

### **Strengthen the business case for institutions to contribute**

Refine our premia – values, measures, conditions – to better enable institutions to meet the additional costs of recruiting and enabling their learners to achieve. Our goal should be to avoid financial disincentives for institutions to recruit students with potential from disadvantaged groups. By this means we would help to level the playing field for learners.

Put on a sustainable basis summer schools and access courses where these contribute to the local regional agenda set by the regional access forum and demonstrably contribute to improving participation and success for learners from disadvantaged backgrounds by making such non-credit bearing provision in HEIs eligible for SHEFC funding. Support this through regional and national work on planning such provision and sharing good practice to best meet learners' needs.

Target additional numbers where the evidence is that volume of funded activity is a key barrier to participation and meeting needs in areas of low participation. Such interventions should be focused on the most severe problems, should be part of a package of measures and should be considered for both HE and FE sectors together. Through these means we will provide institutions with the capacity and business case to stimulate and respond to growing demand for learning.

**Monitor, evaluate and learn**

Given that we hope that demand for learning from disadvantaged groups will increase, continue to examine the evidence and consider whether there is a case for additional growth to widen access, taking into account the interaction between demand for learning, demographics and the economy.

Continue to develop both quantitative and qualitative evidence on the patterns of participation and achievement, causes and effects and evaluation of programmes. Use this information to improve our systems and practices.

Maintain capacity to identify and share good practice in improving participation. As part of the quality enhancement agenda, encourage educators to continue to adapt and adopt the best practices, and continue to review and streamline the structures supporting this.

***The Wider Access Regional Forum's have a major role to play in this agenda***

Many of the ways forward we suggest in the report rely on the wider access regional forums working effectively because some of the under-participation is concentrated in particular geographic areas and because many issues are best tackled by the HEIs, colleges and schools working together locally on aspiration raising, on transitions, on access courses. We need to broaden the forums ' missions to include all post-compulsory education, to put them on a firmer footing and to enable them to contribute to the national campaign we advocate in this report...we need to work to make sure they are [successful] and that the best practice is spread widely. We should also use regional collaboration to help us target resources better, building demand alongside any expansion of provision.