

The Open University in Scotland
Diverse Routes to Higher Education
www.diverseroutes.co.uk

Questionnaire feedback on the Diverse Routes pack and website
January 2008

1. Background:

In order to assess the usefulness of the Diverse Routes pack and website in relation to its intended audience, a number of different types of evaluation (questionnaires, feedback from events etc) were sought regarding the first edition of the pack and website. Based on these results an interim evaluation report was drafted in February 2007. It was agreed that a similar evaluation exercise should follow the 2nd edition of the pack and website after the launch (June 2007) once the majority of the packs had been disseminated and after all of the Forum launch events had passed (late autumn 2007).

Notably, as the majority funder for the Diverse Routes project and in order to measure key performance indicators, the West Forum also needed to gauge the effectiveness of the pack / website in relation to its target audience and how these resources might be variously used by practitioners and key workers operating across differing sectors.

Based on discussions with Ian Gillan, the West Forum evaluator, we devised a new questionnaire (see Appendix 2) incorporating key questions related to both our needs. These modifications mean that the 2007 questionnaire, whilst retaining the original core information, is different to the one sent previously in 2006.

In early December 2007, a total of 820 people were sent the questionnaire (481 by letter and 339 by email) with a deadline of 18 January 2008 for responses.

2. Key figures and results:

2.1. General findings

- We received a disappointingly low 58 replies giving an overall 7% response rate. However, the majority of these (50) were returned by post as opposed to email (8)
- In terms of regional responses, 45% came from the West Forum, 28% from Fife & Tayside, 24% from the South Forum and 3% were from the North Forum.
- Reassuringly, 93% of respondents confirmed they had received the pack
- 60% of all respondents said they had used the pack and 40% of all respondents said they found it useful
- 29% of all responses cited using the website said they found this a useful resource
- With 90% of people using both kinds of resource, 69% said they found them useful with the remaining 31% declining to comment
- 31% of all respondents stated they didn't use the pack and 60% said they didn't use the website

2.2. Reasons for using the pack / website & types of use:

Both:

- They're used to update myself and colleagues with information in this area
- They're used in interviews with students in the college and prospective students
- They offer a good overview of provision and parts of it are very useful

Pack:

- It's an interesting resource with good potential
- It's used to give direct information to overseas students
- It's used as reference resource when providing information and advice to enquirers
- It's used to access contact details to inform clients

Website

- We find the web based materials easier and quicker to use
- We're able to use the website to signpost information to clients
- We prefer the website as the main access point to this information
- The website is helpful as our workers are spread throughout the country

2.3. Reasons for not using the pack / website were given as:

Both:

- We have careers advisers who give guidance to students on progression
- There have been no opportunities to use them as yet
- They're not directly related to what I do
- The materials are in English and our service users are unable to read English
- The materials were not sufficiently publicised
- Lack of time to sit down and look through it

Pack:

- Only needed it as a reference resource
- We've had no specific requests related to pack use
- The packs take up shelf space which is at a premium

Website

- I have the pack so I've had no reason to use the website yet
- There is no access to website through Council
- We've been unaware of the website until now
- The website is less relevant to our mode of use

In terms of capacity and the types of practitioners and agencies who responded to the questionnaire these generally came from: migrant worker projects; careers and student guidance workers, ESOL providers, local authorities, HEIs and outreach programmes. (See Appendix 1 for the complete list of organisations who gave their name)

2.4. Client involvement

We specifically asked organisations about the extent of their involvement with 5 client categories. Due to the variations in peoples' responses, particularly with regards to actual client numbers (in a few cases absolute figures were not provided), average client numbers were then estimated. Therefore, please note that the results given here are close approximations rather absolute evidence.

The results offered up some interesting insights with the majority of client involvement centred on migrant workers and EU citizens rather than asylum seekers and refugees.

Asylum Seekers:

38% of all respondents were involved with this type of client.

Regionally, the West Forum deals with the largest number (543) which appears as 92% of all clients in this category.

Refugees:

34% of all respondents were involved with this type of client.

Involvement with this type of client yielded the lowest results (115 overall) although, in terms of regional distribution, 77% of all clients were handled by West Forum agencies and practitioners.

Migrant Workers:

40% of all respondents were involved with this type of client.

Both the West Forum and Fife & Tayside dealt with the largest numbers here (424 and 329 respectively) and between them look after 91% of clients in this category.

EU citizens from new accession states:

52% of all respondents were involved with this type of client.

This category had the largest amount of clients overall (1,094) with Fife & Tayside and North Forums having the greatest involvement with these clients (33% and 25% respectively).

Other EU nationals:

48% of all respondents were involved with this type of client.

Fife and Tayside had the greatest involvement having dealt with 51% of these kind of clients and with the West Forum having dealt with 43%.

Overall, the total regional level of involvement across all of the client categories is:

WF	=	48%
F&T	=	32%
SE	=	10%
NF	=	10%

2.5. Organisation dissemination & advice

9% of all respondents said they had passed on a total of 20 Diverse Routes packs directly to clients and 14% said they had sent out 51 packs out to their clients. Notably, 22% of respondents said their advice to clients was based on the information given in the Diverse Routes materials.

2.6. Usefulness of Diverse materials to organisations to assist client learning

(This also incorporates responses from the 'yes / no' + 'any other comments' sections)

Positive feedback:

- The materials provide good background information and are a valuable resource
- Useful resource for contact details and progression routes
- Helpful when used alongside other information resources
- Excellent case studies
- Helps some organisations to advise on teaching / learning matters as pre-entry guidance
- Staff value various resources in supporting clients from the Diverse Routes target groups

Less positive feedback:

- A number of respondents were unable to comment on the usefulness of Diverse materials as they had not yet used them or the materials were not relevant to their work
- There were several comments that there was too much text at too high a level for the target audience.
- A request was made for a smaller pocket size version using the introductory and signposting information and, importantly, using basic language

- In most cases, careers advisers and HEI admissions staff (for example) are already aware of progression routes, legislation for asylum seekers etc., so there is an element of duplication of effort here for some agencies / organisations

2.7. Client progression for Diverse target groups and obstacles to learning

In terms of progression, 24% of all respondents said that 178 of their clients who were members of the Diverse Routes target groups had pursued routes into learning since August 2006.

In terms of difficulties with studying, 53% respondents identified the main obstacles to learning as:

- Financial constraints and difficulties and lack of financial support
- Accessing affordable housing
- Lack of childcare provision
- Poor English language skills and abilities
- Inability to understand large quantities of text
- Low basic education
- Lack of rights – particularly for asylum seekers
- Work patterns – these can create barriers to part time or full time study
- Disability issues - particularly around lack of support mechanisms
- Drug dependency
- Mental health issues
- Most comments also cited a lack of confidence and poor self-esteem

3. Translated inserts:

Although the questionnaire does not ask about the translated inserts, we made direct enquires with key workers at agencies and higher educational institutions to find out people's feedback about their purpose and usefulness. So far, the feedback has been largely negative and, overall, it seems that whilst people hold onto the inserts for reference purposes they are not considered particularly useful for various reasons:

- Whilst a good idea, the usefulness / purpose is unclear since the summaries are in 16 languages but the materials themselves are in English only, resulting in a mismatch
- Many responses were that the inserts are misleading to potential students on several levels and were, therefore, not much practical use. The key concerns in using the inserts are:
 - potential students need to have a certain level of English language skills in order to begin or complete courses at higher education level. Indirectly, the inserts imply that their English language skills are sufficient enough to study at HE level whereas the reality is markedly different - so this is misleading to clients.
 - it seems there have been no real requests for the inserts as potential students usually have a reasonable or high level of English language skills to begin with. Any potential students who demonstrated difficulties in this area were then referred onto the appropriate ESOL contacts.
 - for ESOL students, the aim is to try and improve their existing English language skills so the inserts seem to be an 'unnecessary crutch' in this respect

REPORT ENDS

(Ebony Quinn, January 2008)

Appendices:

Appendix 1

Organisations who responded & gave their name

BEMIS
Cardonald College
Careers Scotland
Clackmannanshire Council
Communities Scotland
Community Learning & Development (North Area), City of Edinburgh Council
Dundee City Council
Dundee College
East Dunbartonshire Council
East Lothian Council
East Renfrewshire Council
Elmwood College
Falkirk Council Education Services
Fife Council (ESOL)
Glasgow Metropolitan University
Lead Scotland
Lochaber Citizens Advice Bureau
Queen Margaret University
Royal Scottish Academy of Music & Drama
Scotland China Association
Scottish Agricultural College
Scottish Enterprise
Scottish Funding Council
SCVO
University of Stirling



Appendix 2: Questionnaire

Evaluation of Diverse Routes into Higher Education

Name:

Organisation:

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| | Yes | No |
| 1. Have you received a copy (copies) of the Diverse Routes pack? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Have you have used the Diverse Routes pack? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Have you have used the Diverse Routes website www.diverseroutes.co.uk ? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Have you found Diverse Routes useful | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Pack: | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Website: | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

5. If you answered **NO** to **Questions 2 - 4** (that you haven't yet used it or don't find it useful), please can you comment on why?

6. If you answered **YES** to **Questions 2 - 4**, we're interested to hear how you've used Routes with your particular clients/learners. Please comment here, for example, on whether you generally use the pack or the website or both?

6.1. We would be grateful if you could advise us on the extent of your organisation's involvement with the following Diverse Routes target groups:

Group	Involved? (yes/ no)	Approx how many clients?	Involved in what capacity?
Asylum seekers			
Refugees			
Migrant workers (non-EU)			
Citizens of new EU accession states			
Other EU nationals			

6.2. How has your organisation disseminated Diverse Routes material to clients?

Facilitators delivered material to clients directly How many? _____

Facilitator's advice to clients was informed by Diverse Routes material

Diverse Routes packs distributed to clients How many? _____

Other methods:

6.3. In what ways (if any) does your organisation support educational routes for:

Group	Means of support	Not applicable
Asylum seekers		
Refugees		
Migrant workers		
Citizens of new EU accession states		
Other EU nationals		

6.4. How (if at all) has the pack or website assisted your organisation to support Diverse Routes' target groups into learning?

6.5. Are you aware of any members of Diverse Routes target groups among your clients who have pursued routes into learning since August 2006?

No Yes How many? _____

6.6. What are the main obstacles to learning faced by your client group?

7. Is there a contact within your organisation who would be willing to discuss the impact of the Diverse Routes pack and website in more detail with the West Forum evaluator, Ian Gillan? (ian.gillan@paisley.ac.uk 0141 848 3525) If so, we would be grateful if you could provide contact details:

8. Are there any other comments you wish to make?