

Board Meeting

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Date of Meeting | Monday 22 May 2017 |
| Paper Title | Glasgow City Council Commission on College sand Lifelong Learning Report |
| Agenda Item | 18 |
| Paper Number | BM6-M |
| Responsible Officer | Robin Ashton, GCRB Executive Director |
| Status | Disclosable |
| Action | For Information |

1. Report Purpose

- 1.1 To provide members with the final report of the Glasgow City Council Commission on College and Lifelong Learning.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Board is invited to:
- **note** the final report of the Glasgow City Council Commission on College and Lifelong Learning; and
 - **note** the recommendations for colleges made by the Commission, and the commitment made in this report to progress these through the regional collaborative management structure.

3. Background

- 3.1 In February 2016, Glasgow City Council established a College and Lifelong Learning Commission chaired by Councillor Judith Fisher. The final report of the Commission is attached as Annex A.
- 3.2 The City Council uses commissions to provide in depth analysis and recommend solutions to particular policy challenges and they frequently follow a Select Committee model, issuing calls for evidence and hearing from and questioning expert witnesses.
- 3.3 The Commission membership included participation from elected members and representatives from GCRB, the Glasgow Colleges (including Student Associations), Glasgow University, SFC, City Council Education Services, the Chamber of Commerce, STUC and Glasgow Life.

- 3.4** The Commission examined current funding levels, rates and types of participation in the college sector in Glasgow, and looked at barriers to participation in college learning to identify possible solutions to tackle these barriers.
- 3.5** The report highlighted the following barriers to learning:
- Funding barriers such as the disparity between Further Education and Higher Education funding, uncertainty around different types of benefits, and issues with the application processes for funding.
 - Access to transport barriers such as financial costs of travelling and the integration of ticketing across different transport modes.
 - Support for childcare barriers including availability of childcare placements and financial and logistical issues.
 - Information and support barriers such as difficulty in accessing appropriate information on courses, their entry requirements, pathways and progression, and related funding information.
- 3.6** The overall view of the Commission is that, all learning providers should *“...take the actions necessary to increase the number of Glasgow residents accessing learning and skills development, particularly the learners and communities that need them most.”*
- 3.7** The Commission makes a number of recommendations for specific agencies involved in delivering or supporting participation in learning.
- 3.8** The following college recommendations mainly relate to college student support and guidance arrangements:
- The levels of student funding support to be reviewed, and the gap between FE and HE to be reduced.
 - Colleges in Glasgow to seek to standardise their approach to student support funding across the region, and in particular focus on reducing the timescale between application and notification of decision.
 - Models for closer working between Colleges and the DWP should also be explored to see if transitions from benefits to student support could be improved.
 - Glasgow Colleges’ Regional Board to review the consistency and levels of childcare support offered by the Glasgow colleges.
 - Learning providers to ensure that promotional material encourages more diversity, including older learners, as well as publicising learner success stories more widely.
 - The option to build on existing good practice and develop a single, Glasgow access point for information and support about learning in Glasgow should be considered by college and lifelong learning partners.

3.9 The process to consider and progress these will be led by the Regional Lead for Student Experience (one of the roles within the agreed collaborative management structure for the region). It should also be noted that there is an overlap with these recommendations and commitments within the Widening Access section of the 2017-18 Glasgow Regional Outcome Agreement.

4. Risk Analysis

4.1 The report highlights a range of barriers to college learning which actions to reduce or remove these are not identified and implemented, then there may be a risk to GCRB aims to widen access for regional residents. To mitigate the risk, the GCRB and Glasgow colleges and will use the report findings to inform regional planning at both strategic and operational levels.

5. Legal Implications

5.1 No legal implications are identified.

6. Financial Implications

6.1 A significant focus of the report is on the availability and consistency of student support funding. Further analysis of this may lead to the identification of funding needs not currently being addressed within existing funding arrangements.

7. Regional Outcome Agreement Implications

7.1 The findings and recommendations of the City Council commission will be used to inform the delivery of the 2017/18 Regional Outcome Agreement.

COLLEGE AND LIFELONG LEARNING POLICY COMMISSION REPORT





I just think, you need to just get out and let people know, for people to go out. Like this college class, going out in to the public and talking to them and saying – well I’m X age – I can do it. And I’m not highly intelligent, I never learned much at school, but there’s always time. Always time for everybody. Regardless about what walk of life you come from, what you’ve done in your life, what you’ve been through. There’s always that light that – I can do this. I can mix with other people, and I can be somebody. And I think that’s what people have got to know.

**Yvonne,
56,
Rosemount Lifelong Learning Student**



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The College and Lifelong Learning Policy Commission met from May 2016 to February 2017, and involved city partners from the education, business, voluntary, and third sectors. The work included a literature review, Call for Evidence, and visits to community learning groups to speak with learners, and potential learners.

The purpose of the Commission was to examine the context for skills development in Glasgow, as well as funding levels in the college and lifelong learning sector. The Commission also looked at barriers to participation, as well as solutions to resolve them.

The Commission noted the vital role of Jobcentres in supporting the skills agenda in the city, and we would urge the Department for Work and Pensions to reconsider its proposal to close eight of Glasgow's 16 Job Centres.

The Commission found that many people would like to increase their skills and employability, but were put off starting a learning course, or found it difficult to continue a course, due to a number of factors. The barriers

identified, and our recommendations are summarised below:

Funding barriers

- Financial costs of learning, combined with other commitments such as family and work
- Uncertainty around different types of benefits and funding
- Rigorous, and sometimes prolonged, application processes for funding
- The disparity between Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE) funding

The Commission calls for:

- The levels of student funding support to be reviewed, and the gap between FE and HE to be reduced.

- Colleges in Glasgow to seek to standardise their approach to student support funding across the region, and in particular focus on reducing the timescale between application and notification of decision.
- Models for closer working between Colleges and the DWP should also be explored to see if transitions from benefits to student support could be improved.

Access to transport barriers

- Financial costs of travelling
- Connectivity around the city
- Integration of ticketing across different transport modes (bus/train/subway etc.)

The Commission calls for:

- Levels of public subsidy for transport to be reviewed to ensure a higher level of subsidy is applied to transport models used by the most disadvantaged communities i.e. the bus network.
- The National Bus Concessionary Fare scheme to be reviewed to provide some support for travel from home to College for particular groups.
- Employers, and training and skills providers to consider subsidised or free travel as part of a package of support to encourage learners to return to learning opportunities (for example subsidised or free Zonecards).

Support for childcare barriers

- Availability of childcare placements
- Financial costs
- Timing and logistics of dropping off and

picking up children, combined with other life commitments

The Commission calls for:

- Glasgow Colleges' Regional Board to review the consistency and levels of childcare support offered by the Glasgow colleges.
- The Council to ensure that there is sufficient flexibility in the allocation process for early years places to allow potential learners to access appropriate childcare provision.
- Partners should consider steps to improve access to quality, affordable, flexible afterschool care.

Information and support barriers

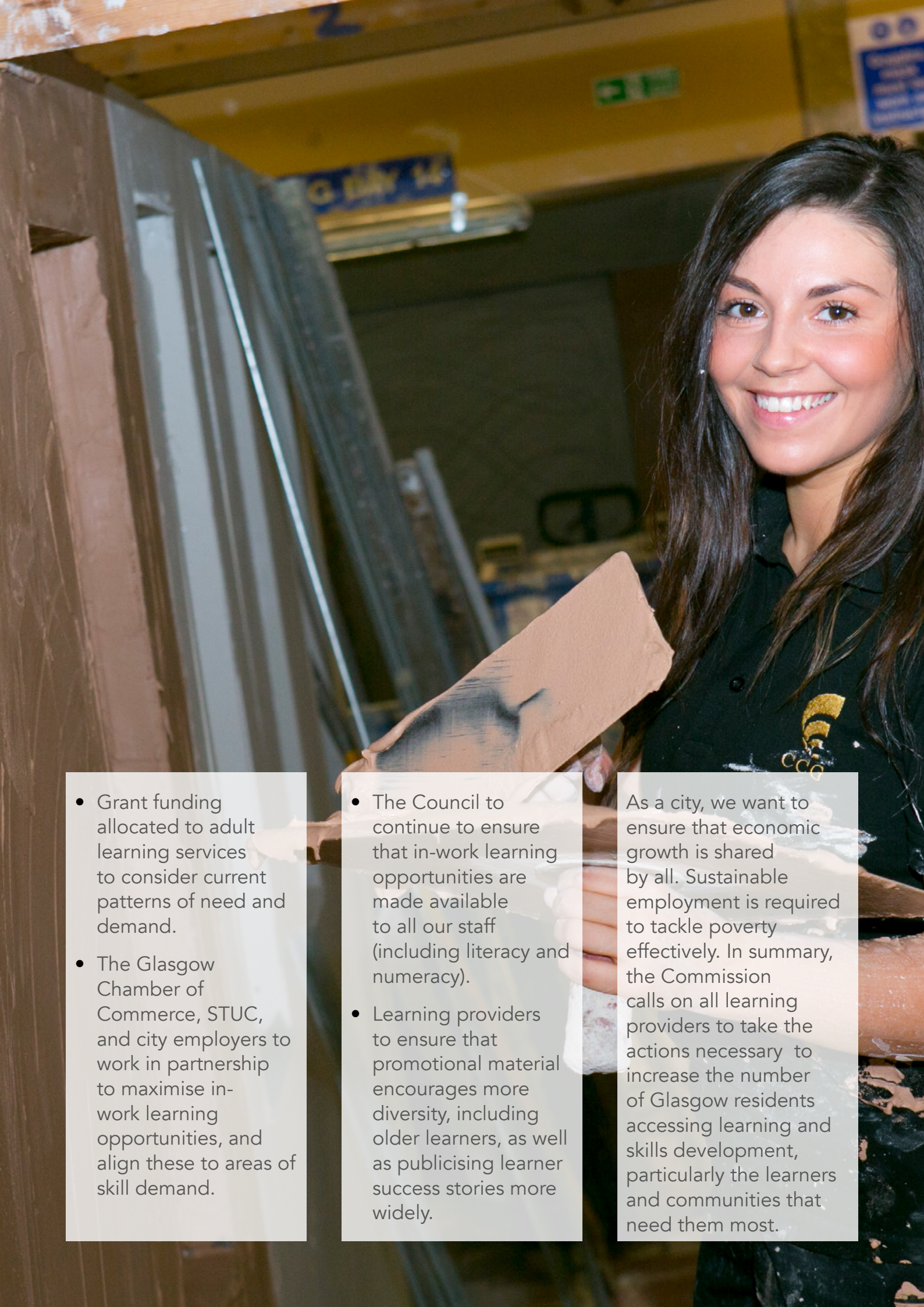
- Difficult to find clear, concise, easy to understand, and easily accessible information
- Difficult to find information around courses available, entry requirements, pathways and progression, as well

as funding information and the impact on benefits

- Some groups need particular support and guidance when considering courses, such as adult learners who have been out of employment or a learning environment for a period of time, and those with poor literacy skills and/or poor IT skills
- Some, often older, potential learners felt as if they are 'too old' to start a course and learn new skills.

The Commission calls for:

- Partners to consider the development of more tailored support for particular groups of learners, such as lone parents.
- The option to build on existing good practice and develop a single, Glasgow access point for information and support about learning in Glasgow should be considered by college and lifelong learning partners.



- Grant funding allocated to adult learning services to consider current patterns of need and demand.
- The Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, STUC, and city employers to work in partnership to maximise in-work learning opportunities, and align these to areas of skill demand.

- The Council to continue to ensure that in-work learning opportunities are made available to all our staff (including literacy and numeracy).
- Learning providers to ensure that promotional material encourages more diversity, including older learners, as well as publicising learner success stories more widely.

As a city, we want to ensure that economic growth is shared by all. Sustainable employment is required to tackle poverty effectively. In summary, the Commission calls on all learning providers to take the actions necessary to increase the number of Glasgow residents accessing learning and skills development, particularly the learners and communities that need them most.

WHY DID WE HAVE A COLLEGE AND LIFELONG LEARNING POLICY COMMISSION

Background and Context

Glasgow is Scotland's largest and most diverse city with a population of around 600,000, and a strong higher and further education sector. As well as Glaswegians, many from outwith the city choose to study here. Alongside this, Glasgow has a well-developed community learning infrastructure which offers a wide range of recreational and skills-based learning across the city. For many, this can be part of a path back to more formal learning, improved skills, and entry to, or progression within, the labour market.

Glasgow has the fastest growing city economy in the UK. However, the city continues to face significant challenges in tackling inequality. Parts of the city still suffer from unacceptable levels of poverty, and particular groups, for example disabled people, women and lone parents, are more likely to experience poverty. The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2016 (SIMD), shows that Glasgow still remains the most deprived city and local authority area in Scotland, with almost half (47%) of residents living in the 20% most deprived areas of Scotland.

It is a tale of two cities, nearly half of the workforce is educated to degree level yet a high number of residents have no qualifications. A higher percentage of the working age population claim out of work benefits than the Scottish average, and we know that many struggle with literacy and numeracy.

Our Economic Strategy (2016 to 2023) sets out how we plan to maximise economic growth and ensure all Glaswegians benefit. Developing skills to secure sustainable employment is required to tackle poverty effectively. Our Economic Strategy therefore includes a target to reduce by 50% the number of adults with no skills, which will allow them to enter the labour market and progress.

The College sector in Glasgow has been through a significant period of reform. In 2005, the city had ten colleges, there are now three. In the same timeframe the Scottish Government put in place the "Developing the Young Workforce Strategy" to improve the employment prospects of 16 to 24 year olds. The impact of this Strategy on youth unemployment rates has been very positive. However, a recent Audit Scotland report (2016) showed a reduction in women and over 25s participating in college learning in Scotland, as well as a reduction in part-time learners, raising concerns about the opportunities available for those seeking to improve skills later in life.

The College and Lifelong Learning Commission brought together partners across the city from the college sector, business and student bodies to look at the issues affecting access to college and lifelong learning.

Specifically the Commission:

- examined the context for skills development in Glasgow and in particular current funding levels and rates and types of participation in college based and lifelong learning

- looked at barriers to participation
- identified possible solutions to tackle these barriers, to enable more people to access skills and learning and support economic growth in Glasgow



WHO WAS ON THE COLLEGE AND LIFELONG LEARNING POLICY COMMISSION

The Commission was chaired by Councillor Judith Fisher with members including:

Bailie Dr. Nina Baker

Bailie Eve Bolander

Councillor Malcolm Cunning

Councillor Feargal Dalton

Councillor Pauline McKeever

Councillor Martin Neill

Robin Ashton, Margaret Cook
Glasgow Colleges' Regional Board

Professor Frank Coton
University Of Glasgow

Helen Martin
Scottish Trades Unions Congress

Alan Sherry, Andrew Aitken
Glasgow Kelvin College

Susan Walsh
Glasgow Clyde College

Leona Seaton
Glasgow Chamber of Commerce

The Commission met between May 2016 and February 2017. The work of the Commission was supported by staff from Glasgow City Council Chief Executive Department, Education Services and Glasgow Life along with contributions from colleagues in the further education sector and voluntary and third sector.

WHAT DID THE COMMISSION DO

In its initial meetings the Commission focused on gaining an understanding of the structures for learning in the city and priorities for individual partners. It also considered evidence of practice from elsewhere and good practice examples from Glasgow.

Call for Evidence

The Commission agreed a Call for Evidence in order to gather not only personal views and experiences, but also any wider research relevant to the work of the Commission. Participants were invited to submit information via two online questionnaires (one to gather personal experiences, one to gather general reflections on barriers/solutions etc.), as well as a dedicated email address.

The Call for Evidence took place from 22nd August – 30th September 2016, with 43 responses to the general survey,

19 responses to the personal experience survey, and 8 emails. As well as individuals, 8 organisations provided responses.

Participants were asked to highlight barriers to participation in accessing learning and also to identify possible solutions.

Visits and group discussions

The call for evidence highlighted that particular groups experience additional barriers in accessing and sustaining learning, including lone parents and disabled people. The Commission noted that four areas were

frequently mentioned in the call for evidence:

- funding to support learning
- access to transport
- support for childcare
- information and support

In order to better understand how these factors impact on access to learning, the Commission organised a series of visits to a number of organisations that provide, or support, learning. Members of the Commission met with groups of learners, and potential learners, to discuss access to learning more fully. These visits took place during November and December 2016.

WHAT DID THE COMMISSION FIND

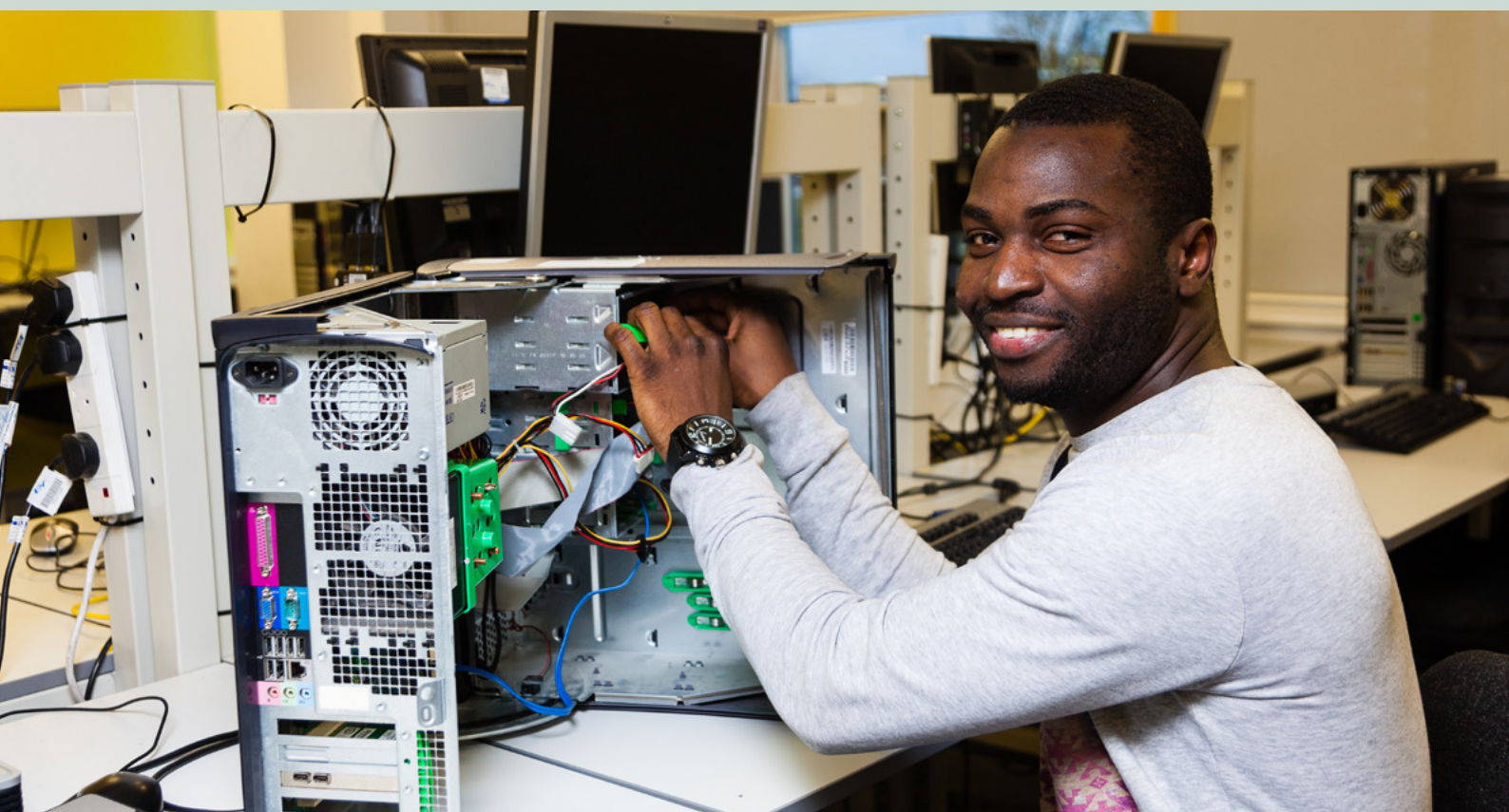
Approximately 50,000 students study annually at Glasgow's colleges, and of these around 58% come from the Glasgow City area. Overall, approximately 25% of all teaching delivery is provided to learners from Glasgow City's 10% most deprived areas. Colleges make an important contribution to the economy of Glasgow, for example the three Glasgow colleges employ over 2,500 staff and they also have a critical role to play in supporting economic growth by developing the skills required and ensuring that opportunities to learn are accessible.

Community-based adult learning provides literacy, language and digital skills in community projects, libraries, learning centres, colleges, nurseries and the workplace. Learning providers also target specific groups and communities, for example prisoners and dyslexic learners. In 2015 to 2016, around 12,000 adults were supported with literacies, 1,800 with digital skills

and 1,500 attended ESOL classes in community-based provision. Through the Integrated Grant Fund (IGF), the Council currently provides financial support of around £3.1million a year to organisations that support community learning.

More widely, the systems for supporting skills development in Glasgow involve a range of

partner agencies. The arrangements to support partners working together are well developed and involve and include the Council, Glasgow Life, Glasgow Colleges' Regional Board, Skills Development Scotland, employers, Trade Unions, and the Department of Work and Pensions.



FUNDING TO SUPPORT LEARNING

Students attending college independently generally do not pay fees and may receive help with the cost of studying, including living and travel costs, as well as help with course material and childcare.

The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) is responsible for providing funding for Further Education (FE) support to the Glasgow College Region. Glasgow's colleges spend around £20m in student support annually. Most aspects of the funding, for childcare and for the discretionary hardship fund, are cash-limited so any overspend would need to be covered by College core budgets.

The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) administers a range of working age, disability and ill-health benefits at a UK level. The services are delivered locally by Job Centres which help people move from benefits to work, and also deal with benefits for people who are unemployed or unable to work because of a health condition or disability. There are currently 16 Job Centres

in Glasgow, however, the UK government recently announced the intention to close Job Centres across Scotland, including 8 in the Glasgow area. These closures could impact on service users having to travel further to make appointments, or pay more for transport.

The rules relating to students and benefits are complicated. Levels and types of support from the benefit system will vary depending on circumstances and caring responsibilities. Generally, full-time students cannot access benefits, and are expected to fund themselves through students funding i.e. loans and grants.

What learners told us

The financial cost of attending college was mentioned often both by individuals who

responded to the survey, and by learners that the Commission met on visits to organisations. For many learners, the challenge of balancing learning costs with costs from other commitments such as family and work either put people off starting a course, or led to some people dropping out. Some people spoke of the difficulties in balancing different types of benefits and funding, with application processes viewed as being difficult or intrusive. One learner told us:

"If you are over 26 years of age and you are on benefits, and are claiming housing benefits, it is not possible to go to college because if you exchange your job seekers allowance for a bursary, you lose your housing benefit thus rendering you in danger of eviction for non-payment of rent."

The only solution to this currently is if the student applies for a payment from the college hardship fund to try to cover the costs of the rent. This is too precarious a position to put yourself in as you are not always guaranteed a payment from the hardship fund from a college. The college bursary application process is very rigorous, with a lot of evidence required to fit the criteria for receiving a bursary; this can be very off-putting for those on benefits or those who have been working in low-paid jobs. The process is too intrusive and can cause individuals

to give up the process of application, even if they have been successful at interview."

One lecturer commented:

"People should be supported out of poverty (and that often means educating first, rather than simply badgering them and bullying them to "get a job"). If they do enroll in college, they must try to survive on either the college bursary (which is a pittance) or benefits, or by working part-time, which often doesn't cover expenses. And the college doesn't supply money for housing, etc. People in

this situation are trapped. They can't afford to quit their jobs or come off benefits in order to devote the necessary time to studying. The stress of returning to education is only exacerbated by the additional stress of not having enough money to make ends meet. When the pinch comes, as it often does around Christmas time, students drop out".

The Commission also heard that many students struggle with the timescales of funding, with long waiting periods of financial uncertainty.



“Delays in the benefit system etc. mean that students often wait up till eight weeks for money, causing them to leave in the first block”.

Hardship and Discretionary funds are available through colleges, but students can only apply for them when they are experiencing hardship, rather than before. The pressure of learning, financial hardship, and the rigorous application processes can be too much for some students, and can lead to some dropping out. Providing more financial certainty, and shortening funding wait-times could provide more stability for learners, and reduce this barrier.

Some groups of learners face additional challenges:

Lone parents are more likely to be on benefits or in lower-paid employment. In Glasgow, around 40% of all families with dependent children are lone parent households, and more likely to be unemployed or in low-

skilled work. Their financial position is often more precarious than two-adult households, they are often the sole provider for their family and therefore there is significantly more risk in moving from one source of financial support, such as benefits or working, to another such as student support. The Commission found that for lone parents who were not currently employed, the vast majority would want to take up paid work when the time was right for them and their family. One Parent Families Scotland told us of the particular difficulties faced by single parents attempting to access further education or learning while on benefits, for example, feeling as if the DWP’s ‘work-first’ approach does not support longer-term aspirations of more fulfilling and better-paid work.

The Commission was particularly interested in the difference between access to funding support for FE students and Higher Education (HE) students. FE levels of support are much lower,

and the discretionary nature of FE funding can create an additional barrier for potential learners, particularly those on lower incomes and whose financial situations are more precarious

FE bursaries are calculated on a sliding scale until the maximum income is reached, and the bursary/ Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) is reduced to £0. This is opposed to the levels of funding support HE students have access to via a combination of Student Loan and non-repayable grants. The minimum loan of £4,750 is not means tested so every student can get this amount regardless of parental income. In broad terms, the rate of support available for HE can be nearly double that available for FE (Appendix 1).

Some examples are given below which show both the differences between levels of support available for FE and HE, and also the complexities involved in trying to move from benefits to learning.

James is 17 years old and lives within two miles of College. Students on FE courses are not paid travel expenses if they live within a 2 mile radius of the College (exceptions would be students with a mobility issue and lone parents escorting children to nursery/ crèche). James is parentally supported with household income of £23,002. James will receive £30 per week from an EMA, but no travel expenses as he lives within a 2 mile radius of the College and only receives his EMA during term time which means that he will receive no money over the October Week, Winter and Spring Break. In addition, EMA attendance rules have strict requirements, and if James is absent for example, for ½ day he could lose his full £30 weekly payment.

Compare this to the same student on an HE course at the same College who would receive £171 per week.

| Student Income | FE Funding | HE Funding |
|------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| EMA | £1,050 (£30 p/w) | |
| FE Bursary travel | £0 | |
| FE Bursary maintenance | £0 | |
| SAAS Bursary | | £1,125 (£28 p/w) |
| SAAS Student Loan | | £5,750 (£143 p/w) |
| Total funding | £1,050 (£30 p/w) | £6,875 (171 p/w) |

Mya is 37 years old and lives more than two miles from the College. She receives Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) of £2,924 (£73 p/w) and Personal Independence Payment which includes lower rate mobility. Her ESA (which is considered as income) reduces her Bursary to £0 and her PIP which is disregarded as income negates any travel expenses because she is entitled to a bus pass with PIP. She will therefore receive no FE student support.

| Student Income | FE Funding | HE Funding |
|------------------------|------------|-------------------------|
| EMA | £0 | |
| FE Bursary travel | £0 | |
| FE Bursary maintenance | £0 | |
| SAAS Bursary | | £875 (£21 p/w) |
| SAAS Student Loan | | £6,750 (£168 p/w) |
| Total funding | £0 | £7,675 (189 p/w) |

Saskia is 23 and lives within two miles of College. She is a lone parent with a child under 5 years of age. She can stay on Income Support for her FE course but not her HE course. She is eligible for childcare support and travel if related to travelling with her child to a nursery. When her child reaches 5 years she must come off Income Support and apply for a Bursary in year. This transition could leave Saskia and her child vulnerable and without money.

| Student Income | FE Funding | HE Funding |
|------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| EMA | £0 | |
| FE Bursary travel | £0 | |
| FE Bursary maintenance | £0 | |
| SAAS Bursary | | £875 (£21 p/w) |
| SAAS Student Loan | | £6,750 (£168 p/w) |
| SAAS Lone Parent Grant | | £1,305 (£32 p/w) |
| Income Support | £2,316 (£57 p/w) | |
| Total funding | £2,316 (£57 p/w) | £8,930 (£223 p/w) |

The Commission is aware that the Scottish Government have established a national review of Student Support which will consider the most effective support for the poorest and most vulnerable students, the balance of support available to those in further and higher education, and the current repayment threshold and period for student loan debt. The Commission calls on this group to look at improving levels of funding support for FE, particularly given that FE is a key step in the pathway from benefits or low income to more sustainable employment.



ACCESS TO TRANSPORT

Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT) is the Regional Transport Partnership for the west of Scotland. SPT helps to coordinate public transport across the Strathclyde area and has a number of responsibilities, including supporting bus services, operating bus stations including Buchanan Bus Station, and providing the 'MyBus' Demand Responsive Transport service. SPT also operates the Subway in Glasgow, which provides a high frequency service running on an inner and outer circle, with fifteen stations, eight stations to the North of the River Clyde and seven to the South.

Glasgow is at the heart of the region's transport network. The suburban rail network is the largest outside London, and is managed by ScotRail on behalf of Transport Scotland with 60 rail stations, including Glasgow's two main rail stations at Glasgow Central Station and Queen Street Station, which provide services across the west of Scotland and beyond.


Most public transport trips in Glasgow are undertaken by bus. Bus services in Great Britain, outside London, were deregulated in the 1980s, with commercial bus operators setting their own fares, service levels and frequencies. The main commercial bus service providers

in Glasgow are: First Glasgow; McGill's Buses; Stagecoach Glasgow, and; Glasgow Citybus. Prior to deregulation, some local authorities were able to have more control in specifying routes, timetabling, and fares. They were also able to subsidise less popular routes to ensure communities were connected. SPT continues to provide support for socially necessary bus services across the west of Scotland, and around one third of all bus mileage is provided by public subsidy.

Bus services are operated on a commercial basis in a deregulated market, with bus operators intended to actively compete with one another. Bus and rail also compete for passengers,

under the theory that competition drives efficiency and consumer choice. Unfortunately this often conflicts with the goal of an integrated transport network. SPT promotes integrated public transport solutions and has introduced smartcard on the Subway as the forerunner for smartcard across all public transport modes. They also work closely with bus operators and ScotRail to maximise integration of services. However, they do not currently have powers to compel a smartcard solution, or any powers to set bus fares, timetables or routes.

Public subsidy is provided to both rail and bus transport, the levels of subsidy to rail being significantly

A close-up photograph of a middle-aged man with short, light-colored hair, smiling warmly. He is wearing a white lab coat over a dark blue polo shirt. He is looking through the eyepiece of a white and black microscope. The background is a blurred laboratory setting with various pieces of equipment and shelves.

higher per passenger journey. The Council is currently arguing strongly for reregulation or franchising of buses to ensure provision matches need, and making public transport a reliable and affordable option.

There are various concessionary travel schemes to help certain groups with the financial costs of travel. The National Entitlement Card enables people with disabilities, as well as over 60s, to travel for free, or at a concessionary rate, across Scotland. SPT administers the Strathclyde Concessionary Travel Scheme that provides discounted travel on rail and Subway for people over 60 and people who have a disability. Bus operators also offer discounted student rates for travel around the city, through schemes such as Unirider, and Student GoZone tickets. In some cases with First Glasgow, students are

able to travel for £1.10, compared to a standard fare of £4.50 for an all-day ticket.

First Glasgow offer discounted tickets for Glasgow jobseekers, working in partnership with Job Centre Plus, to offer up to a 55% reduction in ticket prices.

WHAT LEARNERS TOLD US

There is a perception that the merger of colleges in Glasgow means that more students have to travel further to pursue learning. However, the number of campuses has only reduced by one, as the colleges have combined in to multi-campus institutions. Views were expressed that some groups were less likely to take up learning opportunities if these could not be accessed locally.

The Commission found that many learners, and potential learners, found the financial costs of travelling around the city prohibitive, and experienced problems with the connectivity of routes across the city to colleges or learning centres. Some learners spoke of the financial costs of buses being late, or cancelled, and subsequently having no other option but to buy a ticket for a different bus company. As the transport and transport ticketing system in Glasgow is not yet fully integrated (Zonocard offers rail, Subway and bus interchange in one ticket), the timings of

buses and trains might not join up to allow a learner to reach college in time. When other life factors such as requirements to drop children at school or nursery were added in, this compounded the problem and could cause a great deal of stress and ultimately cause a learner to leave a course.

“They stopped the 18 going to Partick and the 6 takes two hours to get to Anniesland College once you travel to the middle of town to catch it”.

“For a disabled person it is difficult to have safe, reliable transport and the confidence to join a training course”

The views expressed to the Commission are consistent with views gathered for the Council as part of the Community Bus Consultation. This reported in August 2016 and noted that *“many people felt their ability to access employment, education, social and other activities is impeded by the existing level of bus provision in Glasgow”*.

SUPPORT FOR CHILDCARE

In Scotland all children aged 3 or 4 years old, and some 2 year olds, are entitled to a part-time funded nursery place in either a Council nursery or nursery/playgroup which has a partnership contract with the Council. Funded places are for up to 600 hours per year which equates to around 16 hours per week term-time. There is a Scottish Government commitment to increase this allocation to 1,140 hours per year for each child by 2020. In Glasgow there are around 14,000 nursery places provided through a mix of Council and private/voluntary sector nurseries. Council nurseries charge £2.51 per additional hour, over and above the entitlement, as well as additional charges for snacks and meals. Prices for private nurseries can be considerably more, sometimes up to double.

When in education or employment, extended childcare hours are likely to be required, as travelling to and from work or education will take up significant time. Childcare is generally available from 8am to 6pm, and therefore those who have non 9 to 5 work patterns or are trying to combine work and study would need family or friend support for drop-offs or pick-ups.

For school-age children, breakfast clubs are available in every primary school in the city for £2 a day or free for children on free school meals, starting from 8am. This would be necessary for anyone needing to attend work/learning for 9am. Afterschool care can be expensive, and parents can often pay 52 weeks, whether or not it is required. Much of the afterschool offer is through charities, though

the provision varies. Not all offer part-time places so sometimes parents can pay for five days, whether they use them or not.

Glasgow colleges also provide childcare, and around £3 million per year is spent on this. Each College has its own policies to prioritise and allocate childcare.

WHAT LEARNERS TOLD US

The Commission found that some learners, and potential learners, experience difficulties with finding childcare placements matched to their course times, the financial costs, as well as the timing and logistics of dropping off and picking up children combined with other life commitments.

Affordability and availability of suitable childcare placements impacts on parents, in particular single parent households, and may prevent some from participating in learning programmes. People spoke of struggling to access suitable placements for their child which would allow for them to consider enrolling in community adult learning or college courses. Affordability of paying additional childcare charges or child-minder fees can also be a barrier.

The distance to access suitable and available childcare settings from learning venues was cited as a potential barrier, along with availability of suitable days and timings. There is a perception expressed by some that parents can only apply for a number of nurseries in

a specific area, therefore limiting their flexibility in applying for a place that actually suits. Parents who were keen to enrol in college courses to gain qualifications to improve their chances in the labour market gave examples of the difficulties they experienced. The Commission heard examples of nursery placement timings not matching up to when courses were scheduled, with the reduction in part-time college courses also impacting on this problem. Changes at short notice to college course timings can also affect childcare arrangements. Single parent families are the people most likely to be affected by childcare issues when considering lifelong learning opportunities.

The Commission heard from parents that the time it took to access a nursery place could impact on lifelong learning opportunities, with parents not willing to enrol on a course before they have childcare arrangements in place. Parents also spoke of problems when their child reaches school age, with a lack of affordable and easily accessible childcare setting or afterschool care available.

A member of One Parent Families Scotland spoke of the difficulties of travelling to a college far from her home, but was helped by the availability of a breakfast club in her child's primary school which allowed her to get the 8.20 am train. Although she reported feeling guilty at having to do this.

INFORMATION AND SUPPORT


Support and advice for learners and potential learners in Glasgow is available directly from learning providers, and from a number of agencies across the city, including the Glasgow Learning Partnership (GLP), Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and JobCentre Plus.

The GLP is led by Glasgow Life, and is a longstanding partnership involving all the key learning providers in the city. This strategic group guides the city's community learning and development, including raising awareness of Adult Literacy and Numeracy (ALN) need, and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision throughout the city. Glasgow's Learning promotes adult learning services through the GLP, as well as providing advice, guidance and information to all types of learners. They also provide a learning helpline that supports learners into literacies, ESOL, digital learning and volunteering opportunities. In 2015/16 the helpline dealt with 658 enquiries relating to adult learning, from all areas across the city.

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) is the national skills body supporting the people and businesses of Scotland to develop and apply their skills. SDS provide careers information, advice and guidance on training and learning. In Glasgow there are seven local careers centres spread across the city that provide people with relevant information. SDS also has a dedicated online resource (MY World of Work) to complement and support the work being done in their centres. The online resource allows both learners and potential learners to explore what opportunities are available to them, and provides them with information to make the right choices for them personally. For the first six months of

2016/17, SDS delivered Career Information, Advice and Guidance engagements to 15,832 people, through a mix of group and one to one sessions. During this time 7,388 people registered for the online resource.

JobCentre Plus can also provide advice for both learners and potential learners. Across the city there are Job Coaches based within each of the 16 Job Centres. Job Coaches can provide individuals with help and advice with moving from benefits to work, advice on skills, training and learning and also highlight volunteering opportunities.



In terms of support for college learners, Extended Learning Support Funding, of approximately £10 million annually, is used to provide learner-centred support to aid, develop and encourage all learners to fulfil their academic and personal potential, whilst benefitting from college life. This includes access to independent advice and guidance to ensure that learners are encouraged to disclose any disabilities, difficulties, or barriers as early as possible at the application and enrolment stages. Colleges also provide support to help develop numeracy and literacy skills, provide a range of flexible learning programmes, and additional support for students who have experienced interrupted attendance for any reason. College

guidance services support students to make informed decisions about their career, and encourage career planning and goal setting.

Learning in the workplace can give people the opportunity and time to access learning that they may not have the time or resources to otherwise access. The Commission heard examples of in-work support for learning, such as Trade Unions playing an important role in supporting workplace learning in the Royal Mail Centre in the North of Glasgow. It has an onsite Learning Centre which is accessible 24 hours a day, with union learning representatives playing a key role in supporting learning in the workplace. Training offered includes digital skills and literacy.

The wider review of evidence carried out for the Commission highlighted the impact of the Working for Families Programme (WFF). Glasgow participated in this programme which was funded by the Scottish Government between 2004 and 2008. The programme focused on supporting the employability of disadvantaged parents facing multiple barriers, particularly childcare barriers, to participating in the labour market. The programme was considered to be effective in supporting significant improvements in the employment and employability of disadvantaged parents. The Key Worker role was viewed as essential, a proactive role providing personalised support and a central point of contact and continuity with a client.

WHAT LEARNERS TOLD US

The Commission heard that potential learners sometimes found it difficult to find clear, concise, easy to understand, and easily accessible information. They felt there was not one, single access point to find all the information required to make decisions about learning courses, such as entry requirements, potential career paths, the effect on benefits, potential funding available to personal circumstances etc. The information is hosted on different websites by different agencies and organisations, and some people have difficulty in finding information relevant to their circumstances easily. Learners felt it was not ideal to be passed from person to person for information that should be easily and readily available.

Many learners told us that they had experienced particular difficulties when trying to move from benefits to learning. Some felt that many people are put-off from even considering pursuing learning from fear of how their benefits would be affected, for example as someone told us:

"I work with many individuals who have been on benefits for most of their lives & although they would love to be able to learn & gain qualifications, the fear of coming off their benefits can be too much of a risk for individuals. My role requires me to support individuals to achieve their desired goals i.e. work training, learning or volunteering, which at

times can be challenging. I have managed to support them to have the courage to apply to college & get them through interview stage, but unfortunately when it comes to enrolling, the fear of coming off benefits is too much for some and they simply won't take the risk".

The Commission heard that some felt welfare-to-work policies and practice discourage unemployed people from pursuing further education. Government funded courses for jobseekers predominantly focus on addressing basic skills gaps and jobsearch techniques, with a view to moving claimants into work as quickly as possible. One

Parent Families Scotland felt that this restriction of opportunity to attain further qualifications meant that some job seekers, particularly lone parents, would be more likely to be limited to lower-paid work.

Some groups need particular support and guidance when considering, or engaging in lifelong learning and college courses, including adult learners who have been out of employment or a learning environment for a period of time, and those with poor literacy skills and/or poor IT skills, which would impact on their ability to use the internet. When applying for courses, or trying to obtain information, it was felt that there was an



over-reliance on online information. Some felt that allowing potential learners to apply for courses by completing paper based applications, or providing support to complete them online would help.

Some, often older, potential learners felt as if they are 'too old' to start a course, and would feel self-conscious and unprepared in a formal learning setting. Issues of confidence were brought up frequently, both in terms of considering starting a course, and also for support to continue learning.

“(People think) Are there courses out there? Or have I got to a certain age where – there’s nothing for me? A lot of people do think that, a lot of people I know think that. That courses are for young people, not for me. College – young people go to college. ... a lot of people have still got a lot of barriers in the way that they think. That they’re too old to start over again”.

Some older learners noted that they felt more welcomed at community-based learning organisations, as tutors were approachable, and smaller groups helped to make it feel less intimidating than a formal, large college setting.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Through the short life of the Commission we were very quickly made aware of the range and depth of partnership working across the city to support the development of the skills agenda. The focus of our work, in highlighting and examining the particular experiences of individual learners we believe complements and supports this. Our recommendations, in the main, are focused on addressing the barriers that learners flagged to us.

There are, however, some structural issues that we feel are relevant.

We noted in our report the vital role of Job Centres in supporting people to develop skills and move from benefits to work. The DWP currently proposes to close eight of 16 Job Centres currently in the City. The Commission heard evidence of the barriers to learning created by lack of accessible transport and the cost of transport. We believe that Job Centres need to be located in the communities that need them most. There is an increasing body of evidence suggesting that the loss of these eight offices would create a significant burden to those trying to access the service, due to the distances that people would have to travel.

The Commission would therefore add its voice to the many in the city urging the DWP to revisit this proposal, and to work with city partners to ensure the continued accessibility of services.

The Commission noted that a range of different organisations across the city provide support for learning and skills development, including colleges, Job Centres, Skills Development Scotland, Glasgow Life and the voluntary sector. In the report we highlight just a few of the very many examples of positive practice designed to support learners and potential learners from all different background. In particular, in-work learning approaches supported by employers remove many of the constraints of time,

cost and accessibility that can prevent learners acquiring and developing skills.

The Commission would call on all Glasgow learning providers to continue to build on these strong and effective partnerships and increase the number of Glasgow City residents accessing college or community-based learning opportunities, supporting more in the City to develop their employment and personal skills.

At the beginning of this report we set out the ambitious skills target in the new Economic Strategy. However, if we want to achieve this and ensure that Glaswegians are able to take up the current and emerging roles in the labour market, we need to pay attention



to the very real barriers that learners told us stop or may stop them being able to take up learning opportunities. Accessing learning in Glasgow currently involves negotiation with a range of agencies in the city and the complexity, time that this takes, and uncertainty that this can cause, may inhibit many potential learners from progressing. The Commission therefore believes that learning and funding systems need to be simplified, and greater security and support provided to learners where possible.

There is an opportunity to review the provision of, and location of, services for potential learners to ensure that these can be accessed by the learners and communities that need them most. We would ask these partners to consider the opportunities to do this, build on existing good practice and work together to develop effective models of colocation and support for learners.

The remaining recommendations are structured around the barriers to learning identified by the Commission.

Funding Support for learning

The levels of financial support for students in FE should be reviewed, with the aim of closing the significant gap between FE and HE levels of support. The Commission calls on the national review of Student Support to look at improving levels of funding support for FE, particularly given that FE is a key step in the pathway from benefits or low income to more sustainable employment.

In addition to the national initiative, colleges in Glasgow should seek to standardise their approach to student support

funding across the region. Models for closer working between Colleges and the DWP should also be explored to see if transitions from benefits to student support could be improved. Particular attention should be paid to reducing the timescale from application to notification of decision.

Transport

We welcome the work by SPT to progress integrated ticketing across the City region to date and we are aware of the challenges, given the current nature of bus services operating in a commercial, deregulated market. We would ask the options to improve integration across the bus network continue to be progressed as a matter of priority.

The cost of transport is a significant barrier to accessing learning opportunities. A fairer transport model should be developed and there are a number of approaches that we would recommend:

- Levels of public subsidy for transport should be reviewed to ensure a higher level of subsidy is applied to transport models used by the most disadvantaged communities i.e. the bus network
- The National Bus Concessionary Fare scheme should be reviewed to provide some support for travel from home to College for particular groups
- Employers and training and skills providers should consider subsidised or free travel as part of a package of support or “offer” to encourage learners to return to learning opportunities (for example subsidised or free Zonecards)

Childcare

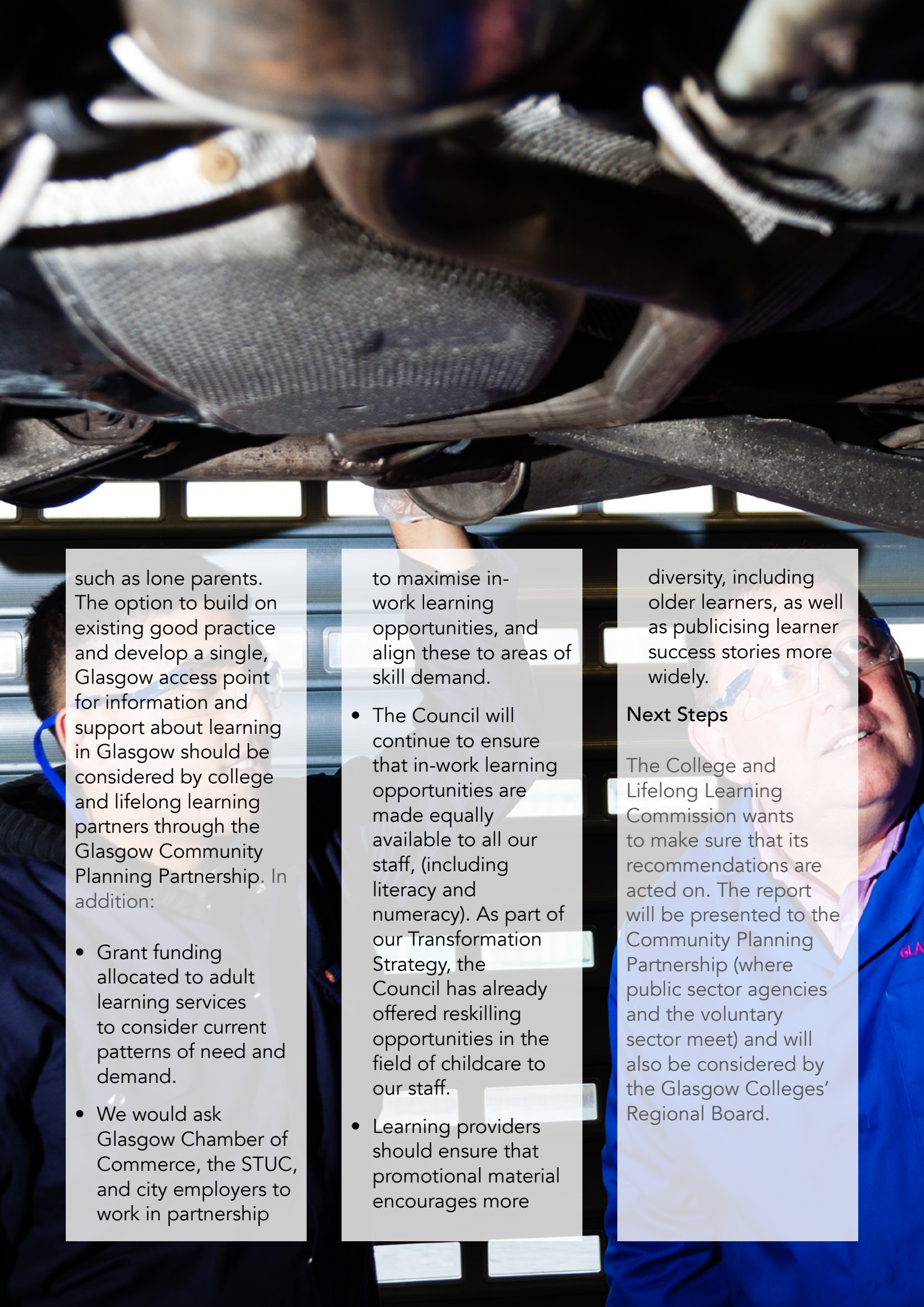
The Commission believes that learners would benefit significantly from more tailored and personalised support to access childcare and afterschool provision that supports their learning. A number of partners

have responsibilities for childcare/ afterschool provision or funding, including the Council, Colleges, voluntary sector and DWP.

- Glasgow Colleges’ Regional Board should review the consistency and levels of childcare support offered by the Glasgow colleges
- The Council should ensure that there is sufficient flexibility in the allocation process for early years places to allow potential learners to access appropriate childcare provision
- Partners should consider steps to improve access to quality, affordable, flexible afterschool care.

Information and Support

Evidence shows that access to personalised, proactive support can achieve the best outcomes. We would ask partners to consider the development of more tailored support for particular groups of potential learners,



such as lone parents. The option to build on existing good practice and develop a single, Glasgow access point for information and support about learning in Glasgow should be considered by college and lifelong learning partners through the Glasgow Community Planning Partnership. In addition:

- Grant funding allocated to adult learning services to consider current patterns of need and demand.
- We would ask Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, the STUC, and city employers to work in partnership

to maximise in-work learning opportunities, and align these to areas of skill demand.

- The Council will continue to ensure that in-work learning opportunities are made equally available to all our staff, (including literacy and numeracy). As part of our Transformation Strategy, the Council has already offered reskilling opportunities in the field of childcare to our staff.
- Learning providers should ensure that promotional material encourages more

diversity, including older learners, as well as publicising learner success stories more widely.

Next Steps

The College and Lifelong Learning Commission wants to make sure that its recommendations are acted on. The report will be presented to the Community Planning Partnership (where public sector agencies and the voluntary sector meet) and will also be considered by the Glasgow Colleges' Regional Board.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank the following organisations for contributing their time and expertise in supporting the work of the Commission:

Glasgow Colleges' Regional Board

Glasgow Council for the Voluntary Sector

Glasgow Kelvin College

Glasgow Clyde College

City of Glasgow College

University of Glasgow

Glasgow Life

Scottish Trade Unions Congress

One Parent Families Scotland

Rosemount Lifelong Learning

Glasgow Women's Library

Workers Educational Association

Ardenglen Housing Association

Glasgow Disability Alliance

Lead Scotland

Department of Work and Pensions

Strathclyde Partnership for Transport

APPENDIX 1

This demonstrates relative funding available depending on circumstances for students in further Education and Higher Education.

Further Education Funding Table

| FE Funding | 16-17 Years | | 18-24 Years | | 25+ Years | |
|--|-------------------|--------------|-------------------|----------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| | House hold Income | Total | House hold Income | Total | House hold Income | Total |
| EMA* (Living Costs) | £0 - £25,000 | £1,080 | | | | |
| EMA (Living Costs) | £25,000 + | £0 | | | | |
| Bursary (Travel & Course Materials Only) | Not Means Tested | £600 (£45pw) | | | | |
| Bursary/Travel/ Course Materials | | | £0 - £24,000 | £3,640 (£91pw) | £0 - £20,000 | £3,991 (£100pw) |
| Bursary/Travel/ Course Materials | | | £24,001 > £52,000 | £3,640 < £0 | £20,001 > £52,000 | £3,991 < £0 |

*Education Maintenance Allowance

Higher Education Funding Table

| HE Funding | | | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------------|--------|--------|----------|---|--------|--------|----------|
| Young Students 16-24 years living at home (Dependant Students) | | | | | Over 25 or under 25 living independently. | | | |
| Household Income | Bursary (Non Repayable) | Loan | Total | Per Week | Bursary (Non Repayable) | Loan | Total | Per Week |
| £0 - £18,999 | £1,875 | £5,750 | £7,625 | £191 | £875 | £6,750 | £7,625 | £191 |
| £19,000 - £23,999 | £1,125 | £5,570 | £6,875 | £172 | £0 | £6,750 | £6,750 | £169 |
| £24,000 - £33,999 | £500 | £5,570 | £6,250 | £156 | £0 | £6,250 | £6,250 | £156 |
| £34,000 and above | £0 | £4,750 | £4,750 | £119 | £0 | £4,750 | £4,750 | £119 |

From: College Student Funding Report Provided to Commission by Colleges

