

Performance and Resources Committee Meeting

Date of Meeting	Thursday 7 June 2018
Paper Title	Student Support Funding
Agenda Item	9 (d)
Paper Number	PRC5-H
Responsible Officer	Jim Godfrey, Finance & Resources Director
Recommended Status	Disclosable
Action	For Noting

1. Report Purpose

- 1.1. To update the Committee on the recent review of Student Support Funding.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. The Committee is asked to **note** the review of Student Support Funding and the recommended next steps.

3. Report

- 3.1. Gillian Plunkett is the Regional Lead Student Experience and has fulfilled this role for the last year. Part of Gillian's work programme was to review Student Support Funding and this report is now presented to the Committee. Gillian will attend the Committee meeting to present the findings and be available to answer questions on this review (a copy of which is attached as an annex to this report).

4. Risk Analysis

- 4.1. The provision of student funding enables students to participate at college and achieve successful outcomes. Therefore this review contributes to a reduction in GCRB's risk number 7; 'Fewer learners achieving positive outcomes'.

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1. There are no legal implications associated with this report.

6. Resource Implications

- 6.1. There are financial implications associated with the provision of student funding and the total expenditure is outlined in the report. There are also resource implications, in terms of staff time, to undertake the review and progress the recommended next steps.

7. Strategic Plan Implications

- 7.1. There is a clear link between the regional strategic ambition of being 'ambitious for learners' and the provision of student support funding. This report makes a positive contribution to this ambition.

Glasgow Regional Colleges – Student Funding

1. Background

The strategic ambition within the Glasgow Region Strategic Plan for College Education 2017 – 2022, is to offer students ***inclusive support services, learning facilities and resources consistently across the Glasgow Region***. The purpose of this report is to provide a high level review of support fund expenditure and how this meets the needs of the College's student communities.

Student support funds are governed by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and the Students Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS) Policy and Guidance. The Policy and Guidance identifies student eligibility for funds, assessment processes, use of funds, management and audit requirements. Links to the Policy and Guidance documents are provided below.

[2017 -18: National policy for further education bursaries](#)

[2017-18 National policy: further education discretionary fund](#)

[2017-18 National policy: childcare funds for further and higher education students in Scotland's colleges](#)

[Higher Education Discretionary Funds Guidance Academic Year 2017-2018](#)

Support Funds for Further Education programmes (SCQF Level 6 and below) are allocated by SFC via the Glasgow Regional Board. Discretionary Funds for Higher Education programmes (SCQF Level 7 and above) are distributed directly to Colleges by SAAS.

All support funds have common elements such as living costs; travel expenses; course materials; additional support needs funding; childcare; and access to emergency funds or Hardship Funds.

Bursary and Educational Maintenance Awards (EMA) are based on specified assessment processes linked to household income and personal circumstances such as age and relationship. This ensures a high level of consistency in the assessment and award of these Funds. However, the diversity of backgrounds and personal circumstances across the student populations means that there is also a need for flexibility at a local College level in order to meet specific needs and provide a responsive service to students.

1. Glasgow Region Student Support Fund Expenditure 2016/17

The figures in Table 1 show the total Glasgow Region Student Support Fund Expenditure in 2016/17 which was just over £24 million. £20 million was spent on the core elements of living and travel costs representing a significant contribution to the local Glasgow economy, with childcare spend of approximately £3 million going to both private childcare providers and/or local council childcare/nurseries.

Table 1– Glasgow Region Student Support Funds Expenditure 2016/17

	Glasgow Clyde College		Glasgow Kelvin College		City of Glasgow College	
	Exp 2016/17	Student Nos	Exp 2016/17	Student Nos	Exp 2016/17	Student Nos
Bursary	£6,926,636	3,228	£3,013,010	1,208	£6,203,600	2,475
EMA	£396,690	514	£219,870	271	£352,290	505
FE Childcare	£1,125,116	341	£973,572	232	£544,791	162
HE Childcare	£379,064	116	£259,392	71	£465,725	119
FE Discretionary	£792,326	1,453	£321,123	455	£849,835	1,109
HE Discretionary	£273,604	282	£216,164	187	£713,288	3,968
Total	£9,893,436	5,934	£5,003,131	2,424	£9,129,529	8,338

Table 2 below provides further analysis of College level spend as a percentage of total College spend which can be compared to Regional expenditure. For example Regional spend on Bursary is 67% with Glasgow Clyde College, Glasgow Kelvin College and City of Glasgow College at 70%, 60% and 68% respectively.

Table 2 – College/Region Student Support Expenditure for 2016/17 as a percentage of total College/Region student support expenditure

	Glasgow Region	Glasgow Clyde College	Glasgow Kelvin College	City of Glasgow College
Bursary	67%	70%	60%	68%
FE Childcare	11%	11%	19%	6%
FE Discretionary	8%	8%	6%	9%
HE Childcare	5%	4%	5%	5%
HE Discretionary	5%	3%	4%	8%
EMA	4%	4%	4%	4%

Variations by College can be attributed to local need in relation to student characteristics, background, household income, curriculum, location and college strategies both historical and current. For example:-

- A higher HE Discretionary Fund and HE Childcare Fund spend at City of Glasgow College signifies a higher number of HE students.
- A Higher Bursary Fund spend at Glasgow Clyde College and City of Glasgow College may result in part from the European Social Fund (ESF) provision delivered by these Colleges.
- A higher proportion of under 18s enrolled at Glasgow Kelvin College relative to size, may account for their higher EMA spend.

Table 3 provides the percentage distribution of spend by support element. Being needs led this will vary annually which makes accurate forecasting of spend a challenge.

Table 3 - Expenditure by Support Elements as a % of Total College Support Fund Expenditure 2016/17

Support Element	Glasgow Clyde College	Glasgow Kelvin College	City of Glasgow College
% spend on course materials	7%	7%	9%
% spend on ASN	4%	1%	3%
% spend on travel	15%	17%	20%
% spend on living costs	75%	76%	68%

In 2018/19 the Glasgow Region will lose around £2.5 million in Bursary Funding as a result of the termination of European Social Funding (ESF). This reduction will have a significant impact on the amount of funding available for distribution within the Region in 2018/19 and could impact on FE course provision across the Region and on the achievement of ROA objectives.

3. Glasgow Region Student Support Funds Spend 2016/17 – Access and Inclusion (Only City of Glasgow Figs)

A key ambition for Glasgow Region is to widen access to underrepresented groups. and the following tables provide information on Regional and College expenditure related to priority groups to ensure that support funds are being targeted at those most in need.

Chart 1 shows that across the region 54% of Bursary expenditure goes to those who reside in the 20% most deprived postcode areas. This result is in keeping with the

Glasgow Region ambition to widen access to life changing learning. The corresponding figures for the Colleges are; Glasgow Clyde College 55%; Glasgow Kelvin College 65% and; City of Glasgow College 47%.

Chart 1 – Bursary Spend by SIMD

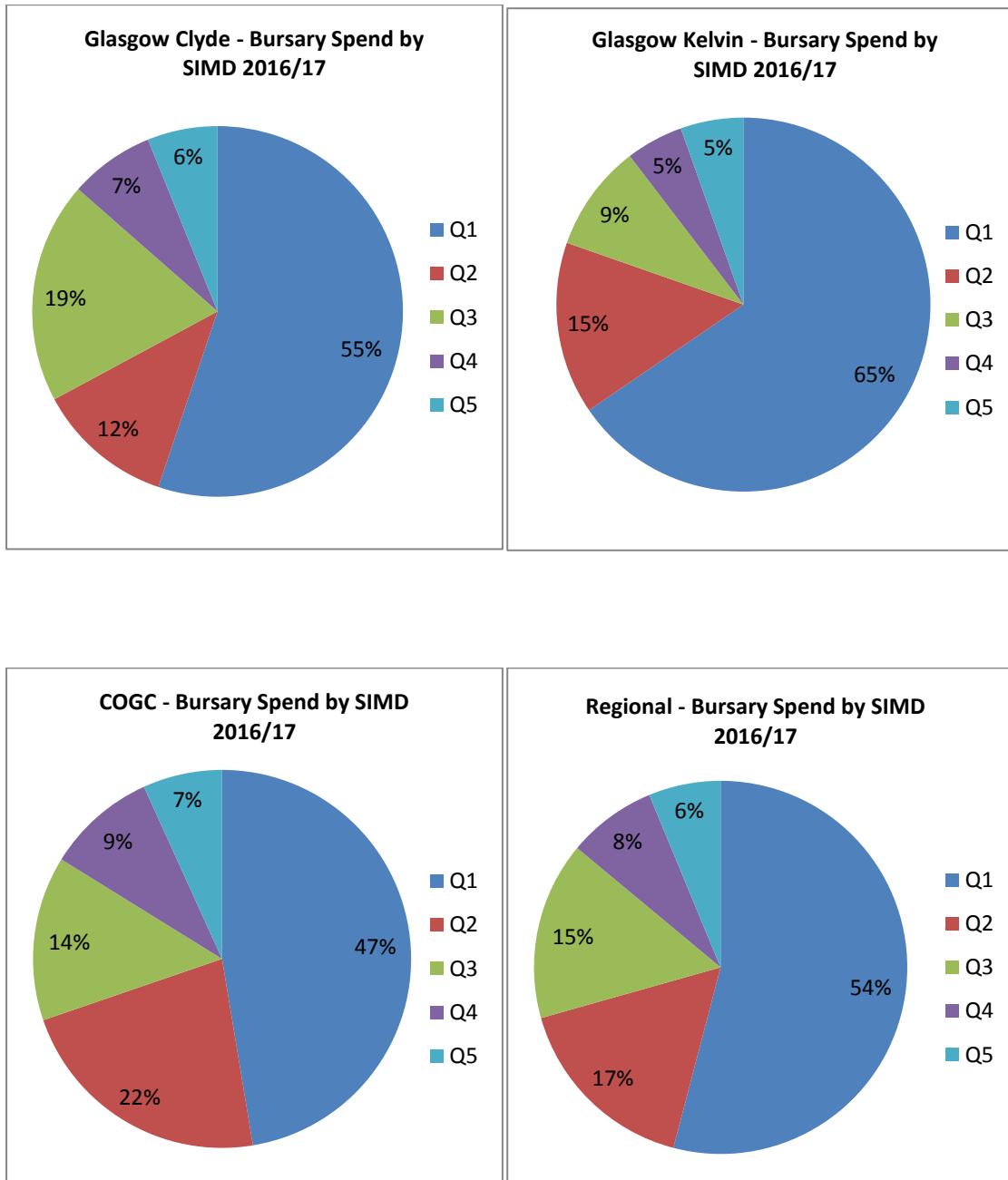


Chart 2 – Bursary Spend by Sex/Gender

Chart 2 shows the percentage spend by student sex/gender which is representative of the total enrolments for the Region. There are a small number of students (less than 1%) under the Other category which will include students with non-binary gender identities. PNTS represents those who prefer not to say.

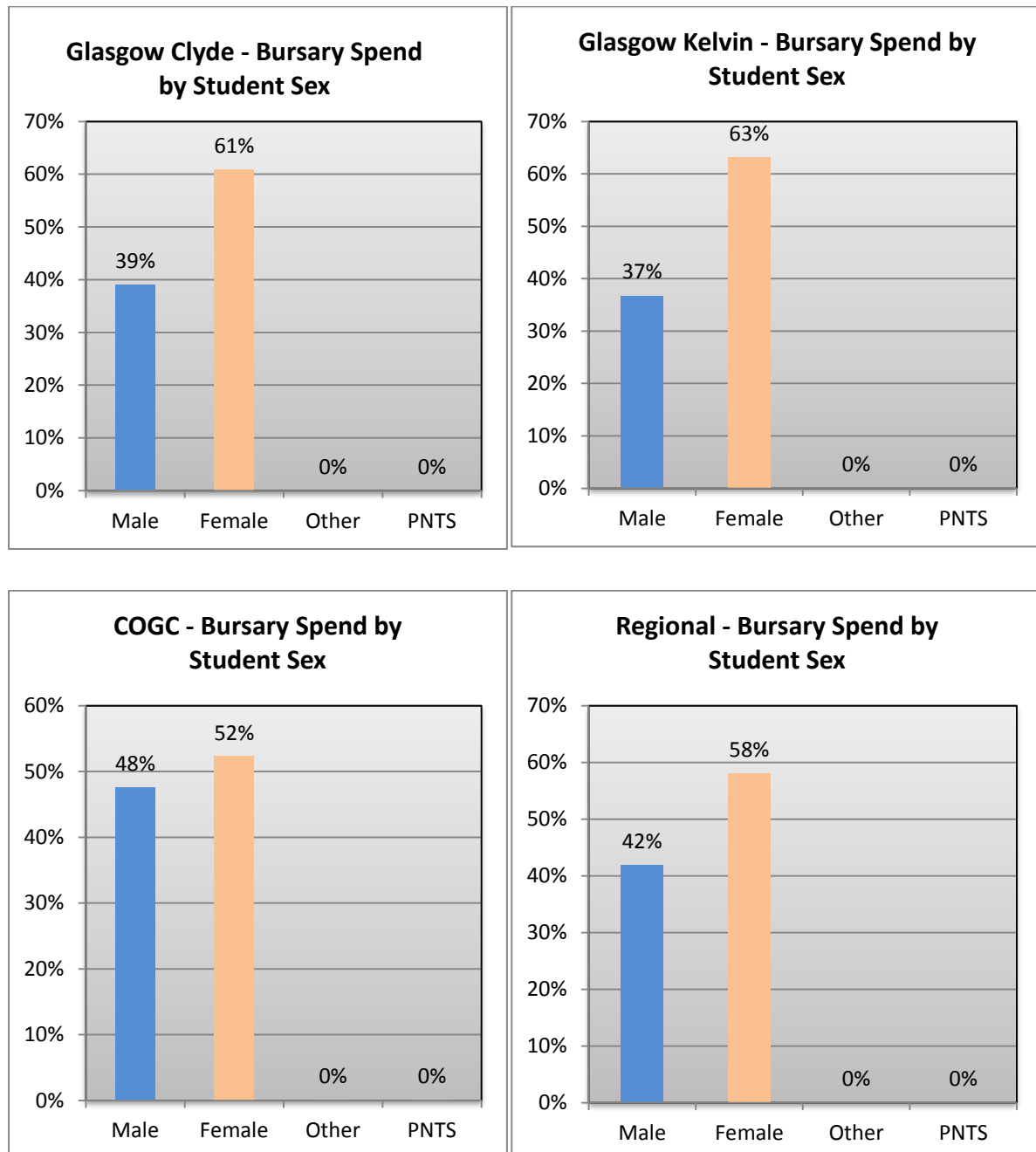


Chart 3 – Bursary Spend by Age

Chart 3 shows the percentage spend by student by age for Bursary. It should be noted that a Bursary for a 16-18 year old includes travel and course materials only. Further information on 16-18 year old receiving an EMA provided in Table 1.

The 2 main age priority groups within the Regional Outcome Agreement i.e. 16-19 year olds and 20-24 year olds account for 63% of spend at regional level. At a College level this figure is; 60% at Glasgow Clyde College; 53% at Glasgow Kelvin College and; 73% at City of Glasgow College. Students under 16 represent less than 1% of students receiving support and will receive support with travel and course materials.

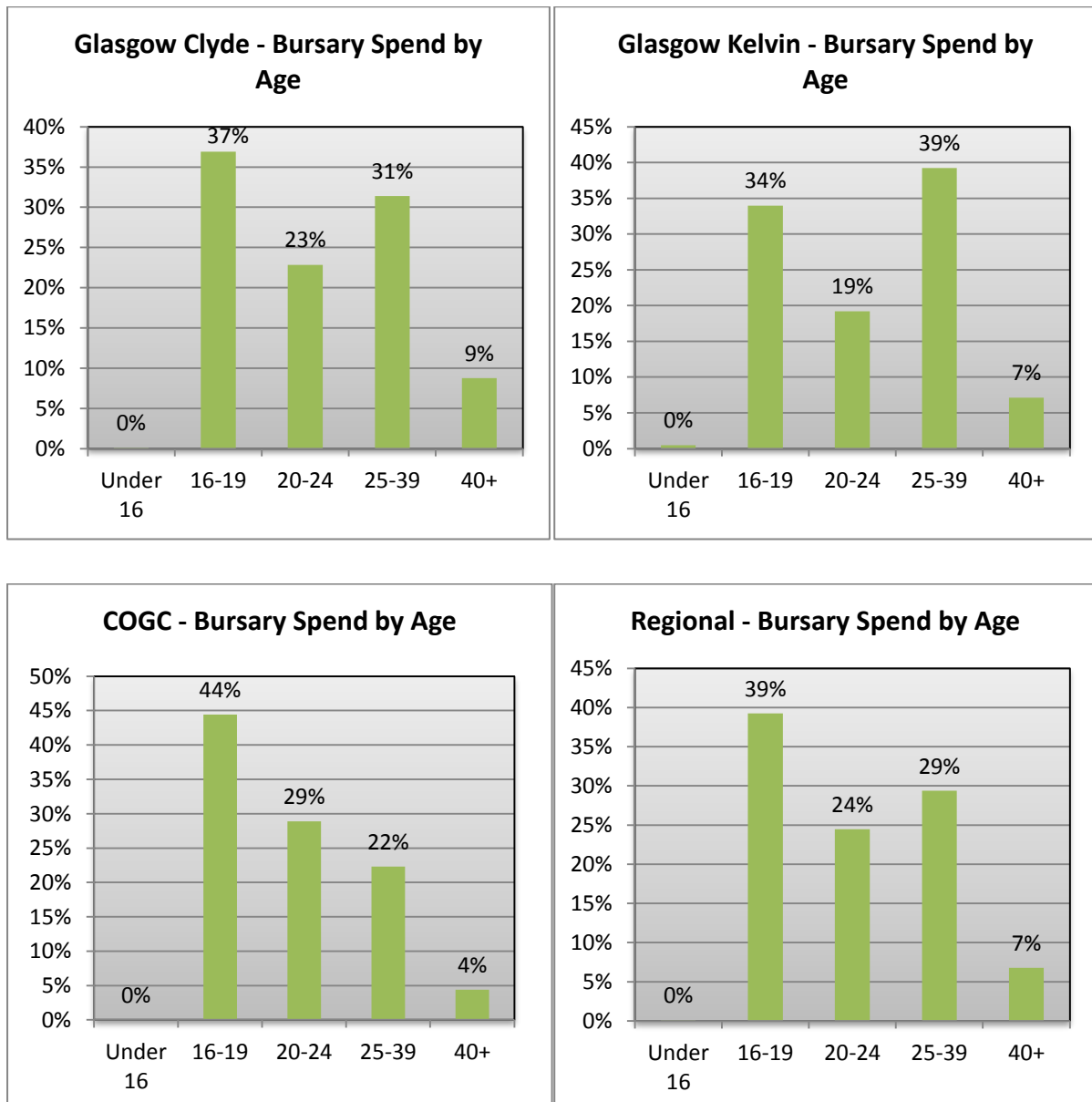
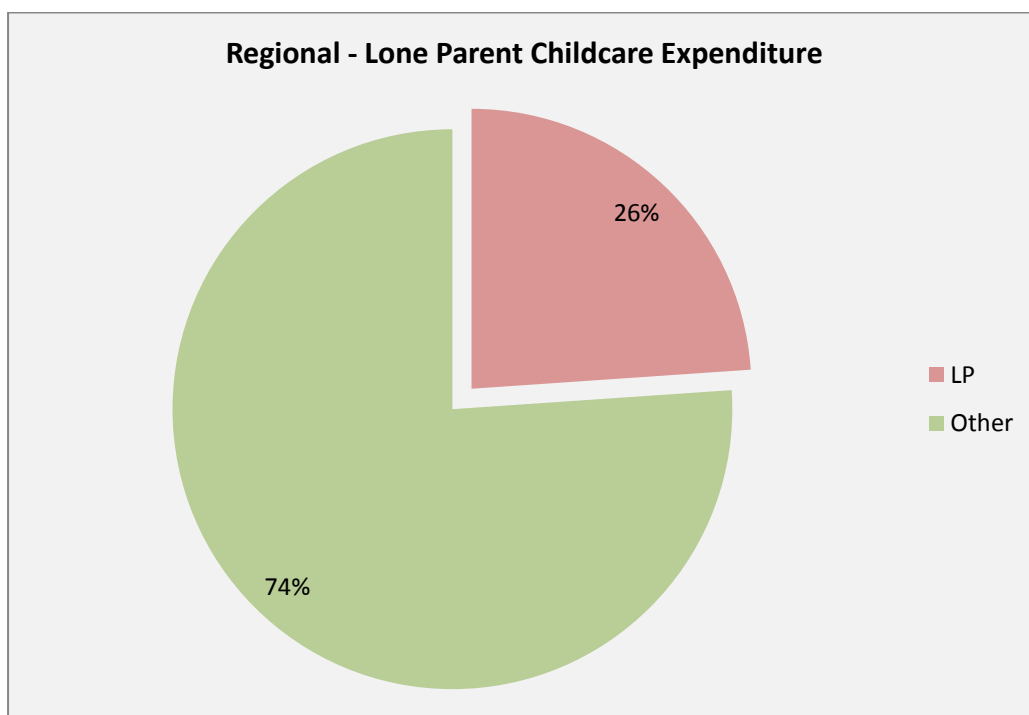


Chart 4 shows the percentage of childcare funds which support lone parents. Glasgow city has the highest rate of lone parents of all 32 Scottish local authorities with 4 in 10 lone parent families and wide neighbourhood differences across the city. The average age of lone parents is around 38 years old, they have fractionally fewer children than couples, 9 out of 10 lone parents are female, 33% of unemployed lone parents have a disability or longstanding illness, and 34% have a child with a disability.

With lone parent figures in Scotland expected to rise over the next 25 years lone parents continue to be a priority group. ([Understanding Glasgow](#), Glasgow Indicators Project, 2017). Lone parents are also the guardians of the next generation, and the Scottish Government has recognised the importance of Childcare and Early Years Strategies in both providing quality childcare in Scotland and providing opportunities for lone parents to train and work in this area.

At a Regional level 24% of childcare funds support lone parents. Some further work will be required to develop this information at a College level.

Chart 4 – Lone Parent Childcare Expenditure



4. Student Funding Influences Retention and Success

Concerns about finance and money are high on the agenda of every student feedback questionnaire/survey. The NUS report '[Still in the Red](#)' 2010 continues to be the most relevant recent research for FE students. The report found that students can be put off coming to College because of money worries. For example 62% of those going into FE from School worried about money.

In addition, over a third of students interviewed knew someone who had dropped out of education due to financial issues and 36% of students reported having considered dropping out themselves due to funding.

Students, and their parents, continue to feel that there is a lack of clarity around how much support they will receive and this is directly related to the complexity of the means tested Bursary system. For example:-

- Core elements are awarded based on student age categories which are then means tested against available household income.
- Income elements to be taken into account i.e. salaries; savings, pension credit etc. are defined by SFC National Policy.
- Under the Family Law Act 1985 parents must support their children in education up to the age of 25; this involves obtaining the income details of those closest to the student and can include mothers, fathers, step parents, partners of parents, guardians, spouses and partners. Many students and parents are unaware that parental and other income must be revealed and counted as part of the means test, and with the demise of the nuclear or elementary family, this is a complex and often intrusive experience for students and their families.
- The means testing calculation (prescribed by SFC National Bursary Guidance) identifies income above a certain household threshold which is then reduced on a stepped ratio of award to income. For some students this calculation may reduce an award to £0.

All of these variables make the process of assessing and awarding a Bursary extremely challenging both to students and their parents in terms of understanding what they will receive, and to the College staff who try to explain what is essentially a

highly complex and personal process in a positive way that makes students feel supported.

Students also consider the attendance criteria of 100% required to sustain funding while on course impossible to achieve and while there is leeway to use 'authorised absence' this can vary in application not just between colleges but between curriculum areas. The NUS are currently campaigning across Scotland through their [FE Fairer Attendance](#) campaign to get students a better deal.

The recent [Independent Review of Student Financial Support in Scotland](#) highlighted all of the above issues and it would be in keeping with current thinking to consider how the Glasgow Colleges might lead on these developments to improve the student experience.

5. Recommended Next Steps

This report provides some high level evidence of a consistent approach in the distribution of student support funds across the Glasgow Region while recognising that the Funds are in the main governed by national policy and guidance.

However, there is scope to develop further consistent practice through the following future actions and it is recommended that next steps include:-

1. Convening a Regional Student Funding Forum, to include a student funding manager, admissions and student recruitment manager and Students' Association representative to review, for example;
 - Support and response times to applicants at pre entry and point of entry;
 - Funding information, advice and guidance on support funds to improve understanding and consistency around the common elements of living costs, travel and childcare. For example:-
 - A common layout for the funding applications forms.
 - Consistent assessment procedures.

2. How the 3 Colleges might share documentary evidence and information to support students progressing from one college to another.
3. Review of attendance policies to mitigate potential student hardship and to improve flexible attendance arrangements while continuing to meet audit requirements.

The Forum would be chaired by the Regional Lead Student Experience and would include the Glasgow Regional Board Finance and Resources Director in his role related to the analysis and distribution of student support funding across the Region. The Forum would meet 2-4 times per annum and findings would be reported to the Glasgow Colleges Group prior to going to the Performance and Resources Committee of the Regional Board.

Gillian Plunkett

April 2018

Regional Lead Student Experience