

Fife and Tayside Wider Access Forum Business Plan 2006/07

1. DEVELOPMENT OF FORUM

1.1 Background

Institutions in Fife and Tayside have a long history of supporting widening participation, with a significant amount of institutional led activity. The Forum strategy is to enhance, complement and fill gaps in provision and to develop activities that will be sustainable in the long term. Significant progress has been made in this respect over the past year with a particular achievement being the development of LIFT-Off and Transitions themes as the structures within which school and post school activities respectively will be delivered. Further details of progress and achievements are contained in the annual report.

1.2 Priorities 06/07

The overall objectives of the Forum remain as set out in the strategy document 2004-08 and the priorities for next year are set out below:

- To respond to recommendations within Learning for All
- To agree how Forum should look post 2008, including representation, status, structure and operation.
- To develop themes of LIFT-Off and Transition, including formalisation of management groups and reporting within new Forum structure. This will include ensuring that all existing projects and/or activities are integrated within one or other theme.
- To move from project funding to an agreed programme of activities for each theme by 2008
- Continue to explore opportunities for joint development and working with partners including:
 - Opportunities for the Forum and Careers Scotland to work together in areas of common interest
 - Continue to work alongside other initiatives/strategies including DtS, School college links, Curriculum for Excellence
 - Contribute to NEET strategy through membership of working group – Dundee
 - Further develop engagement with local authorities, particularly through involvement in Community Learning and Development.
 - Work with other Forums to share good practice and co-operate on national projects where appropriate
- Support staff development across the sectors with particular emphasis on developing confident learners
- Encourage innovation
- Explore additional sources of funding for Forum activities

1.3 Consolidation of activities and development of themes

Integration of existing projects into themes

Much of the activity in the period 2004-06 has been developmental in nature, To encourage partners to engage with the Forum and support innovation, a deliberate strategy of making project funding available was employed. This allowed new ideas to come forward and these are now being incorporated into the two themes. This development work will continue during the period 2006-08 with the intention of consolidating all projects and developments into a programme of activities that will be delivered year on year. No further project funds will be available for the remainder of this funding round. Existing projects will be completed and integrated into the programme of activities and this will form the ongoing programme beyond 2008.

1.4 Structure and Representation

As the Forum becomes established and starts to fulfil its role in developing a regional widening participation strategy, it will be necessary to ensure that the views of all with an interest in/contribution to widening participation are represented at some level within the structure.

1.5 Proposed structure

The Forum will hold an annual meeting to which all stakeholders will be invited. This meeting will set the strategic direction for the Forum and will elect members of the Executive Group who will be responsible for the implementation of the Forum strategy. (Eligibility for membership of Executive Group to be established)

Forum activities will come under one of two themes, LIFT-off and Transitions. LIFT-Off will cover all school activities while Transitions will deal with all post school activity.

A management group, responsible for the operation of the activities within each theme, will report to the Executive Group through the Forum manager and will also advise the full Forum on the strategic direction of the theme.

1.6 Staffing

Staffing is quite complicated at present with staff employed by a number of partners. Despite this, staff work as a team with regular communication between the themes and regular team meetings to ensure that everyone is aware of the activities across the themes.

In addition to team meetings planning meetings are held with staff plus the chairs of the management groups to ensure that Forum activities maintain coherence and identify opportunities for cross theme activities.

As current staff contracts come to an end, wherever possible employment will be moved to the lead institution hosting the Forum. The funding council is currently consulting on the future of the Forums and it is understood that this includes working on guidance for host institutions that will assist Forums as they move forward.

1.7 Staff development

Although employed by a variety of different organisations a staff development plan is being developed to ensure that staff have access to professional development reviews and CPD opportunities.

1.8 Communications Strategy

To date, the Forum has engaged mainly with staff concerned with widening participation. A priority in 06/07 will be to engage with other staff in institutions and also ensure that staff at all levels, from senior management to practitioners are aware of the work of the Forum and developments within it. This will be achieved through the following:

- Team meetings (6 weekly)
- Planning meetings (twice yearly)
- Presentations to partners' senior management teams (annual)
- Executive Group meetings (quarterly)
- Management Group meetings (LIFT-Off and Transitions)
- Annual conference
- Annual report
- Quarterly reports
- Newsletters (twice yearly)
- Website development
- Dissemination events (as necessary)

1.9 Promotional and publicity materials

During 05/06 the Forum has been re-branded and new logos developed to reflect the new image and the refocusing under the two themes of LIFT-Off and Transitions. A range of publicity and promotional materials will support the communications strategy. In the main, these are being developed as part of the plan for each of the themes but a corporate image is portrayed through the logos which use the same image in contrasting colours.

1.10 Cross forum staff development

The Forum Executive has identified developing confidence in learners as a key factor in improving participation, retention and success. This links with the four key purposes of a Curriculum for Excellence, to enable young people to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors.

A series of joint staff development events is planned for staff from across the sectors. Subject to Executive Group approval, workshops will be developed by SFEU and will draw on the work of Alan Mclean and Martin Seligman (both of whom have contributed to the work of the Centre for Confidence) and will be delivered under the theme of Confident Learners, Motivation and Transition. This staff development programme will be launched at a conference in September at which Alan Mclean will be keynote speaker.

1.11 Budget

The indicative budget for 2006 – 2008 is attached.

2. DEVELOPMENT OF THEMES LIFT OFF

2.1 Background

LIFT OFF is the programme that brings together all projects funded by the Forum under the “schools” theme. It works with 13 schools across all four of the Forum’s Local Authority areas. The schools were selected to participate by their Local Authorities. So far, levels of engagement have been encouraging.

| |
|--|
| Angus |
| Arbroath Academy |
| Brechin High School |
| Dundee City |
| Baldrigon |
| Braeview |
| Craigie High School |
| Menzieshill High School |
| St Saviour’s RC High School |
| Fife |
| Beath |
| Woodmill High School (replacing Buckhaven 2006) |
| Kirkland |
| Lochgelly |
| Viewforth |
| Perth & Kinross |
| Blairgowrie High School |

Table 1 - Current target schools of LIFT OFF as nominated by the Local Authorities.

2.2 Aims and Objectives of Theme

LIFT OFF aims to raise aspiration and increase awareness of opportunities in post-school education amongst pupils from its target schools who have the potential to do well in these areas but who may not, for a variety of socio-economic reasons have considered them.

It aims to to this by:

- Devising and delivering a range of progressive activities to demystify post-school learning.
- Using students as role-models to work with young people both in and out of school.
- Delivering activities with pupils to increase self-confidence, motivation and attainment.

- Working with teachers and parents to address issues regarding further and higher education.
- Providing a strong structure in which all stakeholders are represented.
- Integrating existing school projects into the overall programme to create a coherent continuum of activities

2.3 Staffing

The LIFT OFF team currently comprises:

- Development Officer
- Development Worker
- Support Officer

The work of LIFT OFF is overseen by a Management Group which has representation from each of the partners. The Development Officer and Development Worker are also in attendance at these meetings, which occur three times a year in January, May and October.

| Colleges | Universities | Local Authorities | Other |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| Adam Smith College, Fife | University of Abertay, Dundee | Angus | F&T Wider Access Forum |
| Angus College | University of Dundee | Dundee City | Careers Scotland |
| Elmwood College | University of Edinburgh | Fife | STEM Partnership |
| Dundee College | Heriot-Watt University | Perth & Kinross | |
| Lauder College | Napier University | | |
| Perth College | Queen Margaret University College | | |
| | University of St Andrews | | |

Table 2 – Partners of LIFT OFF

There is also a Steering Group which meets on an ad hoc basis that oversees the more day-to-day activities of LIFT OFF. Members of the Steering Group are largely drawn from the Management Group. The following are represented on the Steering Group:

- Each of the four Local Authorities
- One member from a college
- One member from a university
- LIFT OFF Development Officer
- LIFT OFF Development Worker
- One university student who has come through an “access” route.

(Although we have not been successful so far, we are keen to add a college student studying an access course to the Steering Group)

The structure appears to be working well at present, although it will be subject to review by the Management Group on an annual basis.

There are a number of internal and external influences that will have an impact on delivery of the LIFT OFF theme and some of these have been identified as follows:

- Local Authority strategy for raising awareness and widening access
- Partner institutional activity
- Work of other Forums / agencies
- Influence of LIFT OFF projects
- "Learning for All" report
- Scottish Executive policies

2.4 Target Groups

Towards the end of 2005, the four Local Authorities were contacted and asked to put forward schools within their regions as target schools for the project. The resulting list of 13 schools was drawn up. During 2006 this was reviewed and one change made in Fife.

In addition other groups were identified as target groups and activities developed to meet specific needs. These include work with traveller children and young mothers. A linked transitions project will develop information and guidance for those working with young people leaving care.

It is recognised, however, that even in those schools where indicators such as progression data appear to show a strong trend towards pupils participating in post-school education, there will almost certainly be pupils who meet the basic "access" criteria.

As the project progresses, the identification of target groups will be reviewed. A conference for Head Teachers and Widening Participation staff in partner institutions is planned for September 2006 and this will be an item for discussion.

A further priority for 2006/07 will be to explore initiatives that focus on NEET avoidance and the Forum has been invited to join the NEET strategy group for Dundee.



2.5 Plans for 2006 / 2007

The main focus of LIFT OFF is a residential summer programme, "LIFT OFF to Success". This will run in August each year and is designed to give the pupils a taste of both college and university style learning from as wide a variety of our partners as possible.

A range of pre and post activities will be devised by the Development Worker and the Development Officer, in collaboration with partners, to support the summer programme. In addition a range of activities, currently being piloted by partners, is being integrated into the overall schools programme of activities.

At this early stage of LIFT-Off development, we propose a continuum of activities as set out below that will be fully developed over the next two years subject to funding being available to support this level of work.

2.6 Suggested continuum of Activities

| Continuum of activities | | Current status | Where offered | |
|---|---|--|--|--|
| P7 – S1 | Transitions summer school – science and drama | Proposal – no funding available at present | Target schools |  <p>Supported by marketing and information materials See page 8 for further details</p>  |
| P7 – S2 | Developing information literacy skills | Under development – pilot in Dundee | Target schools in Dundee | |
| S1 – S6 | Drama projects 'Am I Bothered?' | Under development – pilot in Angus | Target schools in Angus | |
| S1 – S6 | Joint activities with Careers Scotland using Career Box | Being incorporated into pre and post LIFT-OFF 2 Success workshops | Target schools | |
| S3 | Support for WHAN | Under development – project officers based in St Andrews and Dundee | Currently being identified | |
| S3 | Pre LIFT-OFF to success activities | Ongoing with target group and also with other groups in target schools | Intensive work with individuals targeted for LIFT-OFF to Success, group work with others in target schools | |
| S4 | LIFT-OFF to SUCCESS | Developed and ongoing | Target schools | |
| S4 – S6 | Post LIFT-OFF to Success activities | Ongoing with target group and also with other groups in target schools | Intensive work with individuals targeted for LIFT-OFF to Success, group work with others in target schools | |
| S4 – S6 | Student tutoring | Developed and ongoing | Selected pupils in Fife and Dundee | |
| Engaging with specific target groups | | | | |
| | Drama – engaging parents | Developed – CD roll out to all schools 06/07 | All schools in Forum area | |
| | Young mothers project | Fife only at present-programme currently being revised | Fife schools | |
| | Working with travellers | Start autumn 06 | Fife schools | |

Other areas currently being explored include collaboration with Out of School Hours Learning (OSHL) through the student mentoring programme, greater involvement with employers, linking awareness raising to careers in skill shortage areas. Some research will be carried out on this during 06/07.

2.7 Student mentoring

Using students as role models and mentors is seen to be a key factor in working with young people and a student mentoring programme will underpin all our schools activities. To support this, subject to available funding, we plan to develop a database of student mentors that can be accessed by all programmes and projects and develop certificated training and information packs for student mentors and ambassadors.

The roll out of the student ambassador programme being developed by Dundee College will be an important element in the ongoing development of this work.

2.8 Marketing and Promotion

A series of marketing and promotional materials will be developed to support the programme of activities. These include:

- Information – Access summer schools
Routes to F&HE
- Role models on DVD
- Stepping Higher
- Development of digital media game

These will be distributed to all schools and institutions in the Forum area.

2.9 Resources required to deliver theme

Staff

The staffing level of the theme is currently adequate, although this will be subject to review by the Management Group.

Premises

Currently the LIFT OFF team is based in a large office shared with Fife Council Education Service staff.

Sourcing office space solely dedicated to LIFT OFF would allow it to develop a stronger identity and would facilitate the development of the team. Locating core Forum staff from all themes in the same space would allow for better communication and sharing of good practice, and may present the Forum as having a more cohesive image to its stakeholders in the next round of funding.

2.10 Research

The Forum Executive has approved a research project that will carry out a detailed study of young men in Fife investigating the factors that lead to them becoming NEET and how the Forum might support activities to combat this.

As previously mentioned, some research will be carried out to identify skill shortage areas that will inform the development of a strategy that will include engaging with employers (perhaps drawing on the successful STEM model)

Other research activity will be identified by the LIFT-Off management group.

2.11 Marketing and Dissemination

The following activities that have been funded as pilot projects will be rolled out /disseminated during 2006/07 with the aim of fully integrating them into the LIFT-Off continuum of activities.

- Student Ambassador programme (developing a model)
- 'Am I bothered' (using drama to engage with young people in whole school activity)
- Surviving standard grade (drama project aimed at encouraging parents to engage with their children's learning and school)
- Choosing Science – research project that will provide information on why young people choose (or don't choose) to study science

Marketing and dissemination is under the remit of the Support Officer. Dissemination of all projects will be undertaken by the LIFT OFF office.

3. DEVELOPMENT OF THEMES TRANSITIONS

Transitions is the theme that encompasses all Forum funded projects concerned with post compulsory education and community learning. It brings together the Pre Access Communities Project, SWAP-east and a number of other Forum funded projects working in communities. It is also the umbrella under which the separately SFC funded Bridging Project sits.

3.1 Aims and Objectives

The transitions theme activities aim to enable individuals to progress from one part of the education system or community or work into more advanced study or employment.

It aims to do this by:

- Working alongside existing initiatives and developments, enhancing existing programmes and projects
- Supporting community learning and development plans
- Contributing to local economic development agendas
- Identifying gaps in provision and avoiding duplication across the region
- Providing a forum for sharing good practice across Fife and Tayside
- Working with institutions to ensure that progression routes exist
- Working with all involved with student support and guidance to ensure that relevant and appropriate support is available to learners at all transitions points

Transitions is overseen by a management group currently chaired by Keith Mackle, University of Dundee. In addition to the projects above, the Forum

contribution to the National Bridging Project also comes under the umbrella of the Transitions Management Group.

Individual projects have steering groups that feed into the Transitions Management Group.

3.2 Staffing

Currently the transitions team comprises:

- Transitions Development Officer (employed by University of Dundee)
- Access Development Officer (incorporating SWAP activity) (employed by University of Edinburgh)
- SCQF Development Officer (employed by Angus Council)

3.3 Target Groups

The target groups for the Transitions theme are:

- Adults living in SIMD DZ 5 (Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation, Zone 5)
- People living in local community plan areas
- Unemployed adults
- People with disabilities
- Black and ethnic minorities
- People excluded by location (specifically those affected by rural isolation)

These target groups will be reviewed on an annual basis by the management group, particularly to take account of associated initiatives such as Community Planning and regeneration plans.

3.4 Research

A scoping exercise of current pre access provision across the area will be completed and this will be used to more accurately identify gaps in provision and target activity more effectively.

The Forum has been invited to join a working group of the Dundee Partnership that is attempting to establish a model that will measure participation data and assist in tracking of learners through their learning journeys. There may be a role for the Forum in assisting with the analysis of the data on behalf of the partners.

Some research will be carried out to look at ways of re-engaging men in learning (it is notable that less than 10% of participants on pre access courses in 05/06 were men).

3.5 Activities

The following activities are proposed for continuation or development in 2006/07

- Pre Access provision
- SCQF project including development of personal development planning
- OU Diversity project
- Development of transitions summer schools
- College student mentoring

- TAP
- Guidance Plus
- Guidance for young people leaving care

3.6 SWAP –East

Since 2004, the core activities of Swap-East have been integrated within the Forum. These are:

Awareness raising
 Provision of information and guidance
 Monitoring of SWAP programme
 Support of SWAP programme
 Tracking of SWAP students

In addition, the Forum has funded a project post that has been successful in re-engaging institutions in Fife and Tayside with SWAP.

There is a development plan in place for the period 2004-08. During 2006/07, discussions will take place with SWAP-East to agree their contribution to the development of the Transitions theme post 2008.

3.7 National Bridging Project

Fife and Tayside has contributed to the national bridging project in the areas of Law and Business. The final reports are due to be released in autumn 2006 and further activity is planned to disseminate the findings regionally and nationally. These will contribute to the full report and findings which will be available by December 2006.

3.8 HN to Degree Transition

Two pieces of research have been carried out to help inform our thinking in this area.

- I. University of Abertay led a piece of research that looked at the preparedness of students in making the transition from HN to degree level programmes.
- II. A further piece of complementary research was carried out by University of Dundee that scoped transitions projects across Fife and Tayside and also looked at good practice nationally.

Two proposals have come forward from discussions following this work:

- To consider a staff development programme that will bring together lecturing staff from colleges and universities to highlight the issues facing students in transition. This should involve work shadowing and reciprocal placements.
- To raise awareness of Forum projects and other initiatives that address transition and highlight support available within and outwith institutions. It is proposed that an information pack is distributed to all academic staff in institutions in Fife and Tayside and a series of awareness raising seminars are held.

At present, no funding has been allocated to support these activities.

3.9 Marketing and Promotion

- Update of Dreamcatcher
Building on the work carried out through the previous Dreamcatcher project, work is underway to provide a new set of inspirational case studies from across the region, highlighting a range of barriers overcome by individuals on their learning journeys. The project will be renamed 'Inspired' with a strap line of, 'I was, you can be too'
- Twice yearly newsletters

Much of the proposed marketing and promotional activity is linked to the development of the transitions section of the Forum website and will include the following:

- Website development – progression routes in Fife
- Roll-out of learning journeys

3.10 Dissemination

It is a requirement of Forum funding that all project findings and good practice are disseminated across the region. During 2006/07 a dissemination plan, linked to the Forum's communications strategy will be drawn up.

3.11 Evaluation

Critical Thinking and Bishops' Consulting have been commissioned to assess the effectiveness of the Forum in meeting its strategic aims over the period of funding. A strategy map has been developed and from this an evaluation framework is being established. Their report on progress during 2005/06 will be produced early in 2007.