



NATIONAL SCHOOLS LIAISON ACTIVITIES

**Report by
University for Children &
Communities
for the
North Forum**

Patrick D Edward
Project Officer
December, 2004



FOREWORD

The North Forum for Widening Participation in Higher Education is one of four Regional Forums for Wider Access in Scotland, which are funded by the Scottish Funding Councils for Further and Higher Education. It was set up in late 1999.

The Forum is a partnership of all of the FECs and HEIs in the North of Scotland (Grampian, Moray and Highlands and Islands) and other organisations that are interested and involved in lifelong learning, including local authorities. A full membership list is set out at the back of this report.

The Forum's mission statement is:

“To work in partnership to increase the number of people from under-represented groups in the North of Scotland who progress on to higher education and to work together to reduce barriers to progression between education sectors.”

The overarching aim of the Forum is to develop a strategy to increase the number of people in the North of Scotland from under-represented groups who participate in higher education (i.e. advanced courses and above) and to implement this strategy through a defined work programme. This work programme is made up of projects that are either commissioned by the Executive Group or are the result of bids from partner institutions or organisations.

The Forum commissioned the Schools Liaison Activities report from the University for Children and Communities. Its purpose was to document all of the widening participation initiatives funded by the four regional forums that relate to schools. The report describes the initiatives and includes information about their evaluation, where available. It also makes some recommendations about other work that could usefully be done, e.g. learning from schools with high progression rates.

The report is a very valuable tool to tackle low progression rates from school into higher education (in FE colleges and/or HE institutions) and the Forum will be using it for this purpose in its future work with schools and local authorities.

Prof. John Harper
Chair, North Forum
May 2005

© The Scottish Funding Councils for Further and Higher Education 2005. The North Forum has produced this report for Widening Participation in Higher Education on behalf of the Scottish Funding Councils for Further and Higher Education. The use, reproduction or adaptation of this material is permitted for non-commercial use only.

This report has been produced by the author for the North Forum for Widening Participation in Higher Education. The views expressed are those of the author and are not necessarily those of the North Forum.

This report can be read at or downloaded from www.scotland-northforum.ac.uk.

Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| 1. Executive Summary | 1 |
| 2. Background | 3 |
| 3. The Forums | 5 |
| 4. Methodology | 8 |
| 5. Results | 9 |
| 6. Other Relevant Programmes | 18 |
| 7. Limitations of Research | 19 |
| 8. Evaluation | 20 |
| 9. Tracking | 24 |
| 10. The National Perspective | 25 |
| 11. The European Perspective | 27 |
| 12. Conclusions | 28 |
| 13. Low Progression Rate Schools in North Forum Area | 31 |
| 14. Considerations in making recommendations | 34 |
| 15. Recommendations | 35 |
| 16. Bibliography | 38 |
| 17. Membership list of North Forum | 39 |

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the following for their co-operation, help and encouragement in the preparation of this report:

Kay Diack, Project Manager for UCC

Hilary Lonsdale, Community Link Worker, UCC

Anne Knight, Secretary, UCC

Kerry Musselbrook , SESWARF

Wilma Clark, FTWAF

Bernadette Sanderson, GOALS Programme

James Lamb, LEAPS Programme

Eleanor Wilson, Glasgow Caledonian University

1. Executive Summary

The aim of the project was to describe operational school liaison programmes, examine their efficacy and make recommendations for the implementation of appropriate and feasible schemes to increase progression rates to FE/HE in the North of Scotland.

Using a combination of desk based research, discussions and private communications the schools liaison activities currently being offered by the 4 Regional Forums in Scotland were assembled and collated. Evaluation information was noted.

The results show that in this area there is a large body of activity involving children in early primary years through to those in S5 and S6. In most cases the programmes are delivered by partnerships between the relevant Forum, FE and HE Institutions and the schools. Not only this, successful activities in both primary and secondary schools depend heavily on the involvement of trained link students or ambassadors. Whether the activity involves S5/S6 visits to Universities, Summer Academy, ACE Days or students working with children in primary schools the continuity of contact between pupils and institutions is vitally important to maintain interest and motivation.

It is quite clear that parental involvement through institutional attendance at and participation in, school events such as Careers Evenings, UCAS Counselling Events, Options Nights and social events has an important influence on pupil choices. In addition, parental visits to FE and HE institutions can be a powerful driver to increasing participation rates from under represented groups.

If relevant parts of the programmes are to be rolled out in the North of Scotland in schools with low participation rates, it is recommended that early discussions are instigated with Local Authorities, Directors of Education, School Heads, Teachers and with all North Forum members. As partnerships have been demonstrated as being key to successful delivery then this first step is vital.

The Grampian Student Tutoring Scheme should be expanded to cover the Moray and Highland areas and link students recruited from UHI partner institutions.

Liaison activity should commence as early as possible in the primary school, and this activity, geared specifically to the age of the pupils, should be maintained and

enhanced through the child's school career. The Primary Links Programme, UCC and Children's University programmes could be used. In conjunction with this, institutional attendance at school events should become the norm. Institutions should be encouraged to offer curriculum enhancing activities in their institutions for primary children to aid familiarisation and to break down barriers.

In the secondary school, a programme of activities, using the GOALS, LEAPS and UCC programmes as models, should be devised. Continuity of engagement is very important and the use of Link Students is vital. A range of activities such as ACE Days, Institutional Visits, Student Shadowing etc should be put in place. Running alongside these programmes should be specific activities to engage with parents. These should include FE/HE staff attendance at school events and parent visits to Institutions.

As there is a wide variation in participation rates in schools in the North of Scotland, it is recommended that a study be carried out to determine the reasons why certain schools show high rates. It may be possible to embed their good practice in programmes in low participation rate schools.

2. Background

Government is committed to widening access and increasing participation rates in HE through Life Long Learning Programmes and by various strategies targeted at under represented groups.

TABLE 1.

Percentage of full-time first degree entrants from low participation areas

| Country | 97/98 | 98/99 | 99/00 | 00/01 | 01/02 | % Improvement |
|------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|---------------|
| UK | 12.1 | 12.3 | 12.4 | 12.5 | 13.1 | 7.6 |
| England | 11.4 | 11.6 | 11.7 | 11.8 | 12.4 | 8.0 |
| Scotland | 16.2 | 16.9 | 17.6 | 17.8 | 18.3 | 11.4 |
| Wales | 14.6 | 15.4 | 14.6 | 15.0 | 15.0 | 2.6 |
| N. Ireland | 9.3 | 9.4 | 9.1 | 9.2 | 9.3 | 0.0 |

(Extracted from Higher Education Performance Indicators 2000/2001 and 2001/2002. Issued by Statistical Directorate.)

As can be seen in Table 1, student numbers in HE from low participation neighbourhoods have increased only slightly since 1997. In Scotland and England the improvement has been better than in other parts of the UK. To achieve a 50% participation rate in HE across the country by 2010 then a much greater increase in numbers progressing to HE from under represented groups will be required.

To address this issue over the past 4 to 5 years, dedicated funding from the FE and HE Funding Councils has been targeted at low participation rate schools through 4 Regional Forums. The result has been that a great deal of activity has taken place in both primary and secondary schools in target areas to inform, guide, support, demystify and break down misconceptions about HE and show pupils and their parents that HE is accessible and achievable.

With funding from the North Forum, a Project Officer was appointed to identify and describe current schools liaison activities being undertaken by the 4 Regional Forums in Scotland.

The project officer was tasked to consider and assess each activity and its suitability for implementation in the Highlands and Islands and in the areas of North East Scotland that are not currently part of the University for Children and Communities programme. A set of recommendations would be drawn up.

3. The Forums

Four Forums for Widening Participation in Higher Education were established in 1999/2000 with funding from The Scottish Funding Councils for Higher and Further Education. Their brief was to work in partnership with FE and HE institutions to increase the number of people from under-represented groups in their respective geographic areas who progress to Higher Education and to work together to reduce barriers to progression between the education sectors.

There are 4 Forums:

- (1) Fife and Tayside Forum
- (2) North Forum
- (3) SE Scotland Forum
- (4) West Forum

The GOALS Project

The Greater Opportunities for Access to Learning with Schools or GOALS Project was spawned from the West Forum and commenced operations in early 2000.

GOALS is a collaborative project between the HE Institutions in the West of Scotland, Secondary Schools and their feeder Primary Schools: schools where there is a low rate of participation in HE or where there is a high percentage of pupils from ethnic minorities and where progression rates to particular courses in HE are low.

The main aims of the GOALS programme are to improve awareness of HE among pupils in GOALS schools, to encourage those pupils to aspire to HE and through this to stimulate pupils to greater achievement in school and to increase participation rates in HE from GOALS schools.

The LEAPS Project.

The Lothians Equal Access Programme for Schools (LEAPS) project emerged in the early development of the SE Scotland Forum.

LEAPS is a collaborative venture between the Local Councils, HE institutions and Careers Scotland in Edinburgh and the Lothians. Its stated objectives are to:

- (1) provide young people and their parents with advice, information and encouragement to consider HE, accessed directly or through FE, as an attractive and attainable option
- (2) provide impartial information and advice about courses and routes to HE
- (3) raise awareness of widening participation issues and the need to challenge traditional assumptions about admissions criteria within HE institutions and school
- (4) enhance prospects of young people, fulfilling academic potential by promoting positive attitudes to learning and acquisition of learning skills to ensure effective transition to and success in HE
- (5) monitor and evaluate progression into, through and beyond HE

The University for Children and Communities Project (UCC)

The UCC was set up in 2000 to support children, young people and their parents, as well as adult learning at all levels, in the catchment areas of the target schools. In addition, working closely with Education partners, to increase progression rates to FE and HE from target schools. In consultation with the Local Authorities 5 secondary schools were targeted as their participation rates were very low in comparison to the national average.

The UCC is a major project of the North Forum and works in partnership with the University of Aberdeen, the Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen College, SAC, Banff and Buchan College, Careers Scotland, Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council to raise awareness of HE and FE and promote positive attitudes towards FE/HE.

The objectives of the UCC are:

- (1) to work with target secondary schools on ACE Days, FE Experience Days, HE Experience Days, P7 Transition Summer Schools and from time to time, arrange bespoke activities as requested.

- (2) to work with target primary schools on facilitation of a pilot Children's University.
- (3) to work with families and communities to promote breaking down of barriers to learning via involvement at grass roots level, e.g. Community Learning Awards.
- (5) to roll out Children's University to all target primary schools
- (6) to contribute to a tracking project, starting at local level, to measure progress over time.
- (7) to recognise the importance of FE routes into HE and to carry out research into course choice in FE institutions and how this links to progression to HE.
- (8) to create positive and demonstrable links with other Forum projects to deliver the aims and objectives of UCC and the North Forum.

4. Methodology

The following research techniques and processes were used:

1. Regional Forum reports and other paper and web-based documents were consulted.
2. Discussions were held with Regional Forum representatives.
3. National school progression statistics were consulted.
4. The World Wide Web was used to identify similar national and international projects.
5. Relevant general information on barriers to progression to FE/HE and methods used to stimulate progression rates was collected.

The Regional Forum project data was summarised. Evaluation information in particular, but also the current state of the project and any other relevant issues were noted.

From this data it was possible to select those projects which were most successful in promoting progression of pupils from low progression schools.

This allowed a list of recommendations of possible projects for implementation in the North of Scotland to be drawn up.

5. Results

A brief description of each of the projects follows. Evaluation information is included if available.

(Some minor differences in terminology, operation and delivery of activities exist between the Forums but for clarity of presentation they have been grouped together under the series of headings below.)

5.1 Student Tutoring

Students, after training, are placed in local primary and secondary schools to work with pupils under the supervision of the class teacher. Not only do these students provide pupils with help, advice and encouragement in a particular academic subject, but they act as role models and examples of those who have progressed to Higher Education. Working closely with pupils gives the students opportunities to raise awareness and provide information about student and university life.

To date students have gained much from this activity in terms of increased confidence, enhanced communication skills and improved job opportunities.

Teachers indicated that they valued the additional help and input and the stimulation and innovation provided by students was most welcome.

5.2 Student Shadowing

This activity is offered only as part of the LEAPS project. School pupils spend a half-day experiencing what it is like being a student in a particular subject and University of their choice. Pupils have discussions with students, experience typical teaching techniques and are guided round the campus by students before seeing the wide range of social activities available both on and off campus.

Clearly any activity which de-mystifies, reduces anxiety and informs prospective students about HE institutions and student life should lead to an increase in progression of those from under represented groups. However, unless a proper tracking system is in place it is not possible to determine the extent of any positive outcome to this activity. The issue of tracking will be considered in more depth later.

5.3 Parents Evenings in Schools

The presence of FE and HE staff at these important events to promote progression from school to FE and HE, to provide information and guidance and to reassure and encourage both pupils and parents that a College or University Education is accessible and achievable and that it has several clear benefits to pupils should stimulate additional numbers to take that step.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the success of this strategy in target schools is increased by attendance at Parents Evenings in Primary schools where a much greater impact can be made. UCC, University and College staff have attended such events and made contact with parents who have not only provided encouragement to their children, but a few have taken up study options. By the time pupils have reached the earlier stages of Secondary school many have made up their minds and it may be difficult to change the mind set at this later stage.

5.4 Parents visits to FE/HE Institutions.

Many parents, especially those in under represented groups, who have no family experience or track record of FE or HE, may have ill-informed perceptions of what these institutions are, what they do and what they can offer. As the influence of parents on whether a pupil progresses or not is strong, it is clear that anything that can be done to inform parents and show them that Colleges and Universities and their courses are accessible, and relevant to immediate and future needs will have positive outcomes. By showing they are not impersonal places but welcoming and flexible in their approach as well as keen to offer help, guidance and support in academic and personal matters, does have some positive outcome.

Parents from low progression schools in the North Forum area attended information evenings at Universities. The content of the events mirrored those offered to S5/S6 pupils.

Feedback suggests that the events were highly successful. A UCC project in 2004 indicated that parents left better informed and more able to discuss FE/HE progression with their children. Once again a suitable tracking mechanism is required to ensure that this activity is achieving positive results.

5.5 Options Nights

These are offered to S2 pupils and parents who are making their Standard Grade subject choices.

Staff from FE and HE institutions attend at the request of the school and provide information on qualifications, courses and routes to further study. This raises awareness in both pupils and parents and encourages pupils to consider FE/HE as a realistic and realisable option.

Both LEAPS and GOALS projects offer these as essential elements in their programmes and it has been offered by UCC when staffing allowed.

5.6 S5/S6 HE visits

Traditionally this has been a major strategy used by institutions to help ease the progression of senior school pupils from school to FE and HE. Not only do these events inform potential students about the work and ethos of FE/HE institutions and give illustrations of student life, but they offer institutions the opportunity to show their facilities and demonstrate their range of courses and qualifications.

It is often the case that a visit can confirm a pupil's intention to study at a particular institution or it may prove to others that they may not be ready for tertiary education or allow a realisation that FE/HE can be attained by anyone.

A visit may often be helpful to pupils in identifying a study or career option as the diversity of course provision in tertiary institutions is so much greater than in schools. It is critically important that visiting pupils engage in hands-on, experiential activities at these events as this may encourage and motivate pupils to take up study in subjects in which they have no experience or knowledge.

In the drive to improve progression rates of pupils from under-represented groups, visits have a further important role. Institutions have the opportunity to debunk and demystify the misconceptions that exist in some quarters about their functions, their staff, students and role in the community.

5.7 Aiming for a College Education (ACE Days)

The ACE day programme is a BP initiative dating back to 1995. The aim is to raise educational aspirations and attainments of young people and give a lasting boost to the numbers who continue their education and training after compulsory education.

In the NE of Scotland this is a collaborative project involving the partners of the UCC which aims to raise awareness and increase participation in FE and HE.

Using specially designed materials and experienced facilitators from the institutions S2 pupils are offered a variety of activities in school to assist them make subject choices, and to give them an overall view of the FE/HE courses available and the benefits of tertiary education.

Feedback from the 2004 events in the North Forum area in which 900 pupils participated, indicates that 88% benefited from the day; 77% said they would like to participate in FE/HE after the event compared to 64% before the event.

ACE day events took place in 5 low progression rate schools. Any activity which introduces the idea of tertiary education, outlines the benefits and dispels myths increases the progression rates in under-represented groups.

In order to be successful in recruiting pupils from these groups the ACE Days should form a part of ongoing activity to maintain their interest and motivation towards FE and HE participation.

Using the experience and feedback obtained from the ACE Days programmes over the past 4 years, the UCC has developed a revised and updated version and this will be offered in 2005.

5.8 Summer Academy

This is part of the GOALS project in Strathclyde and four 2 week events are run in July and August. The programme is designed to motivate and support S3 pupils and help them achieve their full educational potential and gain good results at Standard and Higher Grade.

Pupils are drawn from all areas of the West of Scotland including the Islands. Demand is high and applications far exceed the places available. 752 were enrolled in 2000 with 878 in 2001 and in 2002 some 1100.

The programme consists of a judicious mix of challenging academic components combined with tutorial support, recreational and social elements. Retention rates are high with 93% to 95% graduating.

Trained student mentors play a major role in the success of this programme by supporting, guiding, motivating and enthusing the pupils.

The success of the events is demonstrated by the annual increase in demand for places from more schools in all areas of the West of Scotland.

5.9 Top-up

Top-up is available to S5 and S6 pupils from GOALS schools who have applied through UCAS for study in HE.

The aim is to offer a 12 week HE experience in essential skills to aid progression to HE and to raise achievement levels on their respective courses. In addition the programme aims to raise confidence and motivation. Post graduate students are used to facilitate the programme of lectures, seminars, essay writing, study skills, note taking etc.

On successful completion a pupil is awarded a student profile which may be used to assist entry to a particular institution.

Table 2

Participation in Top Up:

| | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 |
|----------------|------|------|------|
| No. of schools | 39 | 42 | NA |
| No.of pupils | 450 | 1015 | 1162 |
| No. completing | 369 | 676 | NA |

| | | | |
|--------------|----|----|----|
| % completing | 82 | 67 | NA |
|--------------|----|----|----|

(Extracted from "Evaluation of the GOALS Project: July 1999 – December 2002" by B. Sanderson)

This programme is considered to be highly successful in terms of positive pupil experience and is highly acclaimed by mentors and teachers.

The Summer Schools programmes offered by a number of Universities are included in this section. In some cases, these have been running successfully for several years and are designed to ease and smooth the entry to HE of adult returnees or those with non-standard entry qualifications.

5.10 Primary LINKS Programme

The aim of this programme, offered to all P6 and P7 pupils in GOALS schools, is to raise awareness of HE and introduce the concept that HE is accessible and realisable for them and that it could have a profound influence on their future careers.

Schools may participate in one of 4 elements:

- (1) A Campus Day programme coupled with 3 x 2 hour sessions with a LINKS student covering awareness issues relating to HE.
- (2) An Art project negotiated between the school and Glasgow School of Art.
- (3) The Web Page Project where pupils design their own web page.
- (4) The LINKS project where a link student works with a group of pupils on a project negotiated with the school.

As well as dealing with the specific subject matter of the elements HE awareness is an integral part of each exercise.

Feedback from pupils and teachers is positive and encouraging and indicates the success of the programme. Participation rates in GOALS schools are high – in 2001/2002, 6479 of all P6 pupils and 5669 of P7 pupils took part. This represents 82% and 73% respectively of the total pupils who were eligible.

5.11 Secondary LINKS Programme

This is offered to all S1 to S6 pupils in GOALS secondary schools and is designed to raise aspirations in pupils and increase their motivation to achieve and progress to tertiary education.

LINKS students facilitate workshops especially designed for each year group in a school. The subject matter may cover various areas from mind-mapping and study skills to note taking skills.

As it targets whole cohorts of pupils this is a highly successful strategy and the workshops were commented on very favourably by both pupils and their teachers.

The use of current students in this activity was especially mentioned as being particularly beneficial.

5.12 Pre-UCAS Counselling

Staff from HE institutions are available to attend all GOALS schools to offer help, guidance and support to pupils in the completion of their UCAS forms.

There is a high demand for this service and feedback indicates that this is a useful and valued activity.

A similar service is offered through the LEAPS programme.

5.13 Motiv8 programme

Fife and Tayside Forum organised motivational conferences for S4 pupils. The aim is to enthuse, inspire and stimulate pupils who would not normally attend Careers Conventions. 1000 pupils, 25 from each secondary school, whom teachers considered would benefit from the event, attended.

The programme was delivered by an external organisation.

5.14 University for Children & Communities (UCC)

As well as organising University Induction Days for S5 and S6 pupils, Aiming for a College Education Days for S2 pupils, primary pupils from the target areas have been involved in several activities designed to introduce them to the idea that FE and HE are accessible and realisable. Several Pupils attended workshops organised by the Aberdeen City Music School, others spent a day in the Robert Gordon University Language Laboratories and several groups visited the Marischal Museum at Aberdeen University in connection with projects on Egypt, the Victorians and other historical topics.

Over the period UCC has engaged with 4000 primary and secondary pupils in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire. The success of this project has led to the development of a Children's University (See section 7.14) which is currently being piloted in a low progression area of the City.

UCC has been increasingly active in the target areas in engaging parents through attendance at Parents Nights, Open Days and PTA Meetings in both primary and secondary schools. In addition through the work with school children there is spin off contact with their parents.

Posters of young people who have entered HE from the target area schools have been produced. These were distributed widely in the relevant areas and have proved a successful method of engaging parents and ultimately their children. A similar project using video footage of the experiences of 4 learners has been produced for general distribution and use in the target areas.

Dream Catcher I and more recently Dream Catcher II, which depicts profiles and testimonials of individuals from under represented groups who have progressed through the FE and HE systems, is a very useful illustrative tool in encouraging pupils to consider FE/HE as a viable option.

5.15 The Children's University

Children's University, which is a pilot project organised and run by Aberdeen City Council and UCC, is a concept that is new to Scotland. It fully supports the National Priorities in Education Scotland as well as addressing the agenda on "Closing the Gap" in terms of improving progression rates into FE/HE from low participation postcode areas.

It has run successfully in England and Wales since the early 1990s and has produced demonstrable results including improved attainment and greater achievement, improved behaviour at school and improved motivation to learn.

Children's University is about children exploring different ways of learning and gaining accreditation. It aims to develop a culture of achievement and lifelong learning from an early age, and primarily focuses on the transition stage between primary and secondary school.

Initially, a pilot project involving P6 and P7 children from the three feeder primaries to Torry Academy will be involved in various after school activities such as Expressive Arts, Chess and Young Investigators Club. The culmination of this is a Graduation Ceremony where the achievements of the children will be formally recognised and celebrated.

6. Other Relevant Programmes.

6.1 Girls get Set

To address the fact that women are under-represented in Science, Engineering and Technology courses, Heriot Watt University, Queen Margaret University College, Napier University and University of Edinburgh have run this programme over the past 4 years for S3 girls studying Physics, Chemistry or Technical Studies. It is important to target S2 before pupils make subject choices.

The programme is delivered to 100 S3 girls in an annual 5 day residential course which aims to encourage the participants to continue their science subjects in school and into HE and beyond. Pupils are drawn from 20 schools mainly in the Central Belt but some pupils have attended from the Highlands.

The course aims to raise awareness of the range of opportunities within Science, Engineering and Technology; raise aspirations and improve progression rates into relevant courses.

To date some 550 girls have attended and feedback from pupils, parents and teachers suggests that the programme had a significant impact on pupils' perceptions of Science, Engineering and Technology and on HE in general. If funding can be secured the programme could be rolled out to other areas of the country.

6.2 Independent activities

Some Universities and Colleges operate their own school liaison programmes. The areas covered are broadly similar to those offered under the banner of the Forums. Each Institution may offer a selection of activities from a range covering Student Tutoring, Student Shadowing, Taster Days, Summer Schools, Access Schools and Discovering Degree Days.

7. Limitations of Research.

Each Forum has been set up and is run slightly differently. LEAPS, GOALS and UCC have a dedicated role to provide a range of liaison activities for school pupils with the aim of increasing participation rates of under represented groups in tertiary education. The situation in Fife/ Tayside is slightly different as there is no free standing entity charged with this responsibility. Liaison activities are offered as part of the Forum's general role.

This report has been compiled from Reports, web documents, private communications and discussions with key players in each of the Forums.

Very little of the information and data has been analysed statistically and the conclusions drawn in the reports are often based on raw data, anecdotal evidence, observation and interpretation. This means that some caution is required in simply extrapolating the data.

Some of the projects have been running for 4 years now, but this is not long enough to be able to gather the relevant data and allow analysis of progression statistics. This will be dealt with in more detail later. However, if increases in numbers of pupils from under represented groups progressing to FE or HE could be established with some certainty then this would go some way to substantiating the observations made during the running of the various projects.

8. Evaluation

From the Results Section it is quite clear that since the inception of Forums activities, a wealth of exciting, innovative and valuable work has been done. In addition there can be little doubt that these pupil/school liaison activities have given much enjoyment and pleasure to very many pupils as well as providing information, advice and guidance. Feedback from participants has been positive and highly complimentary.

A spin off benefit of these activities in schools has been that student mentors, ambassadors or buddies have developed personal and practical skills which may be helpful in their career decision making and in gaining future employment.

It seems fair to assume that the FE and HE institutions have benefited also. By opening their doors, welcoming pupils from a wider range of backgrounds, offering activities and demonstrating what they are, what they do and that tertiary education is accessible and realisable. In addition imagined barriers of misunderstanding and misconception may have been broken down. In the longer run this should lead to higher participation rates in general but possibly even more so in under-represented groups.

Finally, the Forums have been instrumental in bringing together the tertiary level institutions to work together to offer the various programmes and activities for schools. The benefits to institutions of networking, exchanging ideas and cooperating, though difficult to measure, must surely be substantial.

It is obviously very difficult to quantify the benefits to the various participants of these activities. There is little numerical evaluation data available to date to allow a considered judgement to be made. This makes it more difficult to assess the value of the various activities and to make recommendations for implementation in other geographical areas.

It has to be supposed, however, that as many FE/HE institutions in a national context are offering prospective students some form of day or residential experience, student shadowing or student tutoring activities there must be some positive benefit for all parties.

It seems reasonable to assume that in the Scottish context numbers progressing to FE and HE are increasing as a result of these activities. (See Table 1)

Some destination statistics are available, however:

Table 3

LEAPS Programme

| | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 |
|-----------------------|------|------|------|
| Students Interviewed | 834 | 736 | 913 |
| % entering HE | 61 | 68 | 65 |
| % entering FE | 14 | 13 | 16 |
| % entering employment | 21 | 15 | 13 |
| % unemployed | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| % still at school | 2 | 3 | 2 |

(Extracted from LEAPS Annual Report for 2002/2003 and “An evaluation of the progression of LEAPS students through their first year of HE”)

From the data, the following information has been extracted:

- (a) Students from families where a sibling or other relative has attended an HE institution are nearly three times more likely to complete year one than those who are first generation.
- (b) Those who attend Summer School are nearly twice as likely to progress compared to those who had not attended
- (c) Those studying Maths and Computing are least likely to complete year one in HE.

GOALS Programme

1. Some 48,000 pupils in 290 schools in 13 Local Authority areas engaged with the GOALS project in 2003.
2. Between 1999/2000 and 2001/2002 numbers of pupils from GOALS schools progressing to FE and HE have increased by 5.9% and 4.9% respectively. The increase in both categories over all schools was 1% over the same period.
3. The project is highly effective in raising awareness of HE in participating schools.
4. All elements of the programme are considered successful and meet their aims.
5. Pre-UCAS Counselling, S2 Options Nights and Parents' Nights have been particularly successful.
6. The project is successful in dissemination of information and guidance on HE in participating schools.

(Extracted from "Evaluation of GOALS Project July 1999 to December 2003)

UCC Programme

Participation in UCC Activities in target schools and their feeder primaries.

| | 2000/2001 | 2001/2002 | 2002/2003 | 2003/2004 |
|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Northfield | 716 | 1026 | 391 | 375 |
| Torry | | 475 | 430 | 197 |
| Kincorth | | 425 | 874 | 652 |

| | | | | |
|-----------|------|------|------|------|
| St Machar | | 151 | 323 | 497 |
| Peterhead | | 440 | 320 | 722 |
| Totals | 716* | 2517 | 2338 | 2443 |

* does not include 946 for Gordon Schools.

9. Tracking

As has been discussed earlier there does not appear to be any robust system in place to track pupils from the point of first contact, through the various stages and subsequent contacts, to graduation. This is understandable as there may be at least 4 information systems involved – primary school, secondary school, FE and lastly HE. As the different systems may be incompatible then the problem of extracting relevant information becomes compounded.

At present relevant basic information on specific cohorts is not recorded and this means that they cannot be tracked. As well as this, extraction of information and data input, often is cumbersome and difficult and may be avoided leading to incomplete data sets.

There is little agreement between institutions and even within institutions as to what should be recorded and how this should be done.

Quite clearly this area needs to be addressed urgently. Institutions need to agree what is required, how it will be recorded, who will be responsible and who will have access. As well as this a common standardised system across all institutions would go some way to reducing confusion, lack of essential data and errors.

Until a robust method of tracking pupils and students is in place it will be difficult to monitor and assess the impact of the various strategies being used to address the issue of low participation rates of under-represented groups.

(See: "Monitoring and Tracking Students through Higher Education and beyond". Kerry Musselbrook, SESWARF 2003.)

10. The National Perspective

It is evident from what has been detailed above much activity is taking place in Scotland to dispel the misconceptions about FE and HE, demystify the institutions and their work and to promote progression to FE and HE especially in under-represented groups.

Similar programmes are offered in England & Wales and in Ireland. The web addresses below are given for information.

- (a) Aim Higher National programme

www.dfes.gov.uk/aimhigherprog

- (b) Aim Higher North West

www.edgehill.ac.uk/aimhigher

- c. Aim Higher North East

www.p4p.northeast.ac.uk

- d. Aim Higher North Yorkshire

www.yorks.ac.uk/aimhigher/aimhigherny

- e. Aim Higher Cumbria

www.ifonlyi.cumbria.ac.uk

- f. Aim Higher London

www.Londonp4p.ac.uk

- g. Aim Higher South East

www.hese.ac.uk/aimhigher

h. Aim Higher East of England

www.apu.ac.uk/regional/p4p/index

The following websites give more generalised information:

www.actiononaccess.org/projects

www.f-a-c-e.org.uk

www.glam.ac.uk

www.learning.wales.gov.uk

www.lamp.ac.uk/

www.niace.org.uk

11. The European Perspective.

The level of activity in Europe appears to be less than in the UK.

Useful detail and contacts are available on:

www.ean.edu.org.

www.wmin.ac.uk/ean

www.fe.up.pt/eucen

12. Conclusions

12.1 General

Although there is only limited evaluation data showing the real impact of Forums activities on progression of pupils from under-represented schools, it is clear that the projects described in the results section have met their objectives and have been successful from the pupils', parents', teacher's and institutions' viewpoints.

Over the period of 4 years since the inception of most of the projects, there has been refinement, adjustment and reselection of programmes and materials so that they are now operating very effectively.

(a) Activities in Primary Schools

The Links programme using trained University students in delivery, visits to Colleges and Universities as part of specific learning exercises, meeting and working with students, and meeting FE/HE staff on a regular basis at Open Nights, Parents Nights and participation in the Children's University Programmes are all helpful in overcoming barriers to progression. Once the seed is sown, the germinated plant must be nurtured to maturity by regular input and contact from institutions.

(b) Activities in Secondary Schools

Relationships, impressions or ideas generated in primary school require to be further developed and matured in Secondary school. Links activities, student shadowing, ACE Days, campus visits, summer school, top up, induction days, UCAS Counselling, and attendance at Open Nights, Careers events and Parents nights all have a role to play in consolidating ideas in the minds of pupils.

(c) Activities with parents.

Meeting parents at events in both primary and secondary school may be more influential in determining whether a pupil progresses to HE than dealing with the pupil direct.

Inviting parents from target schools to Colleges and Universities to view facilities and to receive accurate information is equally important.

12.2 Key issues for success

a. Institutions

It is vital that all FE and HE institutions in a particular area come together to agree programmes, allocate responsibilities and share resources. Not only does this spread the load but it demonstrates a unified and co-operative approach.

b. Local Authorities

Local Authorities form a major and vital link in the process. They must be involved at all stages of planning and delivery so that the activities in schools can be sanctioned and legitimised.

c. Schools

Schools, both primary and secondary, are the major players and key links in the staging of events and ultimately in the success of programmes. School heads and teachers play a fundamental role in providing time, resources and above all, they have a major function in encouraging, motivating, reassuring and guiding pupils. Without the wholehearted support of the schools the programmes could not operate.

d. Parents

Parents have a direct and substantial influence on the decision making processes in their children. It is crucial that parents are informed and involved through Parents' Nights, Careers' Nights etc as well as by visits to institutions so that they can encourage, motivate and direct their children to greater participation.

e. Mentors/Link Students/Ambassadors

The success of several of the elements in the programmes depends heavily on trained mentors or links students. As has been indicated earlier, pupils may be able to identify more closely and be able to build better working relationships with students who are nearer to them in age. If students can be used from the same communities as the pupils then the outcomes can be even more successful.

In some of the programmes, students are paid for their work. This consolidates commitment. The generation of a much larger pool of possible candidates gives more choice and a better chance of selecting the better students.

f. Relationship building

From all the work in this area it is evident that success depends on close working relationships between all the players. This means that good communication at all levels between and within institutions, between the Local Authorities and schools and between schools and institutions as well as between all those involved and the Forum agency is fundamental. The managing agency is clearly very important in this role.

g. Administration

The planning, setting up, organising and running of many of these events is expensive in terms of time, resources and manpower. It is essential, however, that this input is made since in some cases very large numbers of pupils, staff, transport and outside contributors are involved. Events must run smoothly and to timetable and this is obviously a function of the level of care and attention to detail made by those responsible for the administration.

h. Finance

Adequate funding for the programmes is essential on a longer term basis to allow the projects to continue, to expand and to deliver the objectives that have been set. The indications are that numbers of students from under-represented groups progressing to FE and HE are increasing, but a national approach coupled with a robust tracking system will be needed to increase the trickle to a flow.

13. Low Progression rate Schools in North Forum Area.

The objective of this research exercise is to recommend best practice gathered from the projects currently operated by all Forums in Scotland. Clearly the projects that can be adopted will depend on a variety of factors including location of schools, availability of resources, proximity of co-operating institutions etc.

TABLE 4

Schools with HE Progression Rates of < 20%**

| | 2001/02 | 2002/03 | 2003/2004 | Feeder Schools |
|------------------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Alness Academy* | 16 | 14 | 17 | 5 |
| Elgin High School* | 16 | 21 | 16 | 3 |
| Inverness High School* | 9 | 7 | N/A | 6 |
| Kincorth Academy | 7 | 7 | 15 | 5 |
| Northfield Academy | 5 | 8 | 11 | 8 |
| St Machar Academy | 9 | 19 | 18 | 11 |
| Torry Academy | 7 | 18 | 10 | 3 |

* No UCC work has been done in these schools to date..

** HE refers to all courses at HNC, HND and Degree level.

Percentage Progression rates of school leavers entering full-time HE:

| | 01/02 | 02/03 | 03/04 |
|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Aberdeen City | 32 | 35 | 32 |
| Aberdeenshire | 41 | 43 | 38 |
| Highland | 32 | 31 | 28 |
| Moray | 31 | 30 | 27 |
| Scotland | 32 | 31 | 29 |

Schools with high Progression rates (%)

| | 01/02 | 02/03 | 03/04 |
|---------------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Scotland | 31.1 | 30.9 | 29 |
| Aberdeen City | | | |
| Aberdeen Grammar School | N/A | N/A | 61 |
| Bridge of Don Academy | N/A | N/A | 37 |
| Cults Academy | N/A | N/A | 60 |
| Harlaw Academy | N/A | N/A | 33 |
| Hazlehead Academy | N/A | N/A | 37 |
| Aberdeenshire: | | | |
| Aboyne Adacemy | 44.8 | 45.9 | 41 |
| Alford Academy | 56.5 | 43.5 | 39 |
| Banchory Academy | 60.7 | 65.1 | 52 |
| Ellon Academy | 32.4 | 58.1 | 50 |
| Fraserburgh Academy | 34.4 | 33.1 | N/A |
| Inverurie Academy | 41.9 | 42.5 | 38 |
| Kemnay Academy | 45.7 | 43.5 | 30 |
| Mackie Academy | 31.6 | 50.7 | 49 |
| Mearns Academy | N/A | 32.8 | 30 |
| Mintlaw Academy | N/A | 35.8 | 38 |
| Portlethen Academy | N/A | 39.6 | 40 |
| The Gordon Schools | 43.8 | 38.7 | N/A |
| Turriff Academy | 40.5 | 33.5 | 29 |
| Westhill Academy | 62 | 72.5 | 63 |
| Highland | | | |
| Gairloch High School | 53 | 45 | 50 |
| Glen Urquhart High School | 53 | 39 | 38 |
| Portree High School | 48 | 45 | 35 |
| The Nicolson Institute | 54 | N/A | 42 |

(Extracted from “Destinations of Leavers from Scottish Schools: 2001/02” at www.scotland.gov.uk/stats/bulletins) and www.scottishschoolsonline.gov.uk

As can be seen in Table 4, the three target schools are located reasonably close to Inverness, with one actually in Inverness City. This is helpful from a logistics and access standpoint. If, however, the cut off progression rate is raised to 20% then Grantown Grammar School with 4 feeder primaries would be included in the list.

14. Considerations in making recommendations.

To date UCC, with funding from the North Forum, has targeted schools within the City of Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire. This has been relatively straightforward in terms of distance, travel and access to resources, staff and facilities. When the net is spread more widely then a new set of factors has to be considered.

1. Locations of schools

The target schools are widely dispersed and this makes it more difficult in terms of travel, time commitment and visits for pupils and for tutoring staff. Travel costs will be high.

2. Location of HE Institutions

The nearest HE Institutions are in Aberdeen. This is a 2 to 3 hour journey by coach. The UHI is an HE organisation but it delivers courses through FE sector Colleges. This may not offer the same kind of experience to visiting pupils as a traditional University.

3. Different pupils

Pupils in Alness and Kingussie schools are drawn from more rural areas and are likely to have different attitudes and outlooks to those from Elgin and Inverness where the pupils attitudes may be similar to those from Aberdeen City schools.

4. Costs

Because of the more remote nature of the schools and distances involved, travel and accommodation costs will be high. There may, however, be strategies that could be used to mitigate these high costs.

15. Recommendations

If these additional schools are to be included in the programmes currently running with the schools in Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire then it is suggested that the following be adopted:

1. Discussions should be instigated with Moray and Highland Councils Education Directors to determine what is already being offered to pupils, to make them aware of the initiative and to enlist their support through the relevant Head Teachers for action in the target schools.
2. Discussions should be instigated with the UHI and with its partner FE Colleges to inform them of the initiative and to seek their support, involvement in planning, organising and delivery of the project. In addition, the HE and FE Institutions involved currently will require to be informed and updated on the possible increased commitment and workload and their continued support sought. A collective agreement between all institutions as to their particular responsibilities in terms of delivery should be made a priority.
3. Discussions should be instigated with School Heads and relevant school staff to make them aware of the project, enlist their approval, help, input and support.
4. As has been indicated earlier, employing current students as link students, ambassadors or mentors in both the primary and secondary sectors is a key factor in success. It is recommended that the Grampian Area Student Tutoring Scheme be extended to cover the Moray and Highland areas. It is further recommended that, if possible, students who have attended the target schools or their feeder primaries or have lived nearby or who come from the same socio economic groups should be recruited to work in these schools. Clearly it is unrealistic to expect students from Aberdeen to work in these distant schools. Recruitment of link students should be extended to include the UHI and its partners.
5. It has been demonstrated, by the reports on the projects to date, that early intervention in a pupil's primary school career is highly beneficial. Ideally, it would be advantageous to commence activities in P1. For reasons of cost, it

is recommended, however, that the GOALS and/or UCC model for P6 and P7 be used to design a programme to suit the needs of pupils in the feeder primaries to the target schools and which is capable of delivery by the institutions. The use of links students, ambassadors or mentors in the schools is important.

6. To maintain a presence, continue to break down barriers and to further enhance relationships between FE/HE providers and the feeder primary schools it is recommended that FE/HE staff attend parents' evenings, open nights, PTA meetings and any school social events.
7. Attendance at events in primary schools not only has a direct impact on pupils but there may be spin-off benefits in that parents are made more aware, they acquire accurate information and can exert a powerful influence on their offspring. It is recommended that parents are targeted as part of the schools visiting initiative.
8. FE and HE institutions, particularly in Moray and the Highlands should offer opportunities for primary school children to participate in activities on their campuses. Examples could include using language laboratories, using computer technology, music and science workshops or any activity which relates to the primary curriculum.
9. It is recommended that a programme of engagement with S1 to S6 pupils in the target schools should be devised using relevant elements from the GOALS, LEAPS and UCC projects as models. Links students, ambassadors or mentors would be heavily involved in the delivery. The activities should be designed to meet the objectives of the project but also the needs and aspirations of the pupils. This could be done in consultation with teachers and be based on some relevant part of the curriculum.
10. At S2 stage, it is recommended that the UCC project Aiming for a College Education (ACE) or some updated variant of this be offered in each target secondary school. Through the medium of specially designed materials, FE/HE facilitators have a unique opportunity to influence subject choice and future education and career intentions of pupils.

11. It is recommended that pupils in S3 be offered a full day's relevant, interactive and challenging activities at an HE and or FE institution. As well as being informative, this programme would help to motivate pupils and demonstrate that tertiary education is accessible. So that a full day's activity could be accommodated, an overnight stay in Halls would be necessary. This would add a further learning dimension to the experience. Links students should be involved in this activity.
12. At S5 and S6 visits to FE/ HE Institutions should be offered. These can be highly successful in helping pupils identify course and career options and confirming whether the HE route is right for them at this particular time. As well as an opportunity for institutions to provide information, advice and guidance it offers a further chance to make an impression and to encourage and motivate prospective students. The use of links students is to be recommended.
13. As part of the S5 and S6 visits to HE institutions or as a separate exercise, the parents of pupils from target schools should be invited to visit institutions. This can have a positive effect on whether their offspring progress or not.
14. As in the primary schools it is recommended that every opportunity should be taken to participate in relevant activities in the secondary schools. This might include attending Parents Nights, Options Nights, Careers Conventions and sessions to assist pupils to complete their UCAS applications.
15. It is recommended that a study of those schools such as The Nicolson Institute, and Portree High School which achieve high progression rates be carried out to determine the factors that contribute to these high rates. The results of this study could then be used to inform the work in schools with lower participation rates.

There are other successful features of the LEAPS, GOALS and UCC projects such as Top Up, Summer Academy, Summer School and Children's University which could be recommended for adoption in the North Forum area, but on the grounds of their complexity and cost it would be prudent to phase in these projects over a more extended time scale.

16. Bibliography

ACE Days 2002/2003/2004: UCC Reports for North Forum

Fit for School P7 Transition Summer School 2002/2003/2004 UCC Report for UCC

HE Experience Days 2002/2003/2004: UCC Reports for North Forum

Higher Education Performance Indicators 2000/2001 and 2001/2002. Statistical Directorate.

Kemmer, D (2003) Tracking Wider Access Students. West of Scotland Wider Access Forum.

Lothians Equal Access Programme for Schools. (2003) Annual Report 2002/2003.

Parents Evening Report 2004: UCC Report for North Forum

Sanderson, B (2003) Evaluation of the GOALS Project: July 1999 – December 2002. Interim Report.

Sinclair, H & McClements P (2001) An evaluation of the progression of LEAPS students through their first year of Higher Education. LEAPS

Toolbox for HE 2002: Edna Cameron (UHI) for North Forum

West of Scotland Wider Access Forum (2004) Annual Report: January – December 2003.

Widening Participation in Rural and Small Communities: A Survey of Good Practice: The Open University in Scotland for the North Forum.

17. Membership List

THE NORTH FORUM FOR WIDENING PARTICIPATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

MEMBERSHIP AS AT MAY 2005

In alphabetical order of institution

| INSTITUTION/ORGANISATION | REPRESENTATIVE |
|---|---|
| Aberdeen City Council | Pete Hamilton Community Learning and Development Manager |
| Aberdeen College | Rob Wallen (Vice Chair) Associate Principal |
| Aberdeenshire Council | Anne Simpson Community Learning Manager |
| Banff & Buchan College | Gordon Scott External Affairs Manager |
| Careers Scotland (Highlands and Islands Enterprise Area) and Highlands and Islands Enterprise | Liz Galashan Head of Services to Individuals |
| Careers Scotland (Grampian Enterprise Area) | Moira F. Whyte Functional Manager |
| Highland Theological College | Kevin Sinclair Learning Centre Development Manager |
| Inverness College | Frances Hunter Assistant Principal (Academic) |
| LEAD Scotland | Jennifer Third Regional Manager, North |
| Lews Castle College | Iain Macsween Section Manager, Gaelic, Communications, Arts and Languages |
| Moray College | Greg Cooper Director, Student and Client Services |
| North Atlantic Fisheries College | Peter Dryburgh Principal |
| North Forum* | Alison Watson Administrator |
| Orkney College | Bill Ross Principal |
| Sabhal Mor Ostaig | John Norman MacLeod Head of Studies |
| Scottish Agricultural College | Hannah Jones Student Recruitment Officer |
| Scottish Funding Councils* | Margaret Dundas National Co-ordinator for Widening Participation |
| Scottish Funding Councils* | Dr John Kemp Assistant Director |
| Shetland College | Prof. John McClatchey Director |
| The Highland Council | Graham Watson Culture and Sport Manager |
| The North Highland College | Rosemary Thompson Principal |
| The Open University in Scotland | Dr Lindsay Hewitt Widening Participation Co-ordinator |
| The Robert Gordon University | Prof. John Harper (Chair) Vice Principal, Faculty of Health & Social Care |

| | |
|---|---|
| UHI Millennium Institute | Stewart Duncan Head: SQA Strategic Development |
| University for Children and Communities | Maggie McGougan Convenor |
| University of Aberdeen | Julie McAndrews Director, Centre for Lifelong Learning |
| WEA | Alison Morrison Tutor Organiser |

* Observer status