Education and Culture Committee

Post-16 Education (Scotland) Bill

West Dunbartonshire Council

Background

The comments recorded within this report reflect the views of a wide range of staff working within West Dunbartonshire Council’s Educational Services and Community Learning and Development; Skill Development Scotland (SDS); and Clydebank College.

General comments

The name of the Bill should be changed to: ‘Post-School Education’ as the Bill does not include any clauses on the provision of school education.

The Bill asks for comments on several aims many of which appear to have been enacted already, such as the regionalisation of the colleges. This raises the question as to the purpose of the evidence-gathering exercise at this time.

University Governance

The merging of colleges has encouraged the new organisations to be more receptive to the demands of the labour market and the needs of consumers. Within the sphere of higher education the use of funding to impose an expectation on universities that they will improve their level of engagement with Community Planning Partnerships (CPP) is welcomed.

Widening Access

Local authorities, through their CPPs, should be more actively engaged with universities thereby informing decisions on how to widen access for more disadvantaged young people. The group welcomed initiatives or approaches which made accessing university easier for young people living within areas of deprivation such as West Dunbartonshire Council.

College Regionalisation

The merging of colleges into single larger establishments threatens to impact negatively on the ability to sustain existing strong relationships between staff and stakeholders. Increasingly it will become more difficult to build new relationships with staff working across three colleges. There is a challenge in maintaining localised community based learning centred around Clydebank College which is recognised as good practice. However, the benefit of being able to share resources from three colleges will lead to improved progression pathways and a wider range of additional courses.
Data Sharing

Currently there is no way of effectively tracking students who attend college or university for only a short time as the information is not shared with SDS. The importance of colleges and universities sharing information on young people’s progress is paramount to ensure that the various agencies are able to deploy early interventions to support a person back to the world of work or education. The sharing of data would help post-16 education to become more focused on positive outcomes. The ability to track the learners’ journey, widen provision and involve partners is improved with the availability of data. The collation and sharing of information will encourage a self-evaluative culture and more evidence based framework for the delivery of services.