Education and Culture Committee

Post-16 Education (Scotland) Bill

Young Scot

Introduction and background

Young Scot is the national youth information and citizenship agency for Scotland. We provide young people, aged 11-26, with a mixture of information, ideas, training and opportunities to help them become confident, informed and active citizens.

As a universal service, we do this in a variety of formats so young people can access information in a way they are comfortable with. Through the delivery of our six strategic impacts, Young Scot strives to ensure that young people will be able to:

- Make informed decisions and choices
- Turn ideas into action
- Take advantage of the opportunities available to them
- Have the confidence, skills and knowledge to take their place as active citizens in their communities – locally, nationally and globally

We pay particular attention to reaching both young people “in-school” and those aged 16+, supporting them through key transitions with information and opportunities relevant to their needs and life stage.

Young Scot welcomes the opportunity to provide evidence to the Scottish Parliament’s Education and Culture Committee on the Post-16 Education (Scotland) Bill. We believe that the Young Scot National Entitlement Card (NEC) can enhance the learner journey and should be considered as part of the implementation of measures associated with post-16 education reform. While perhaps not requiring a legislative underpinning as part of the Bill, the time would be right to consider how the Card can be further used to support learners in further and higher education as systems and processes change as a result of college regionalisation and new data sharing protocols.

About the Young Scot National Entitlement Card

Although Young Scot provides a wide range of services, we are perhaps best known for the Young Scot card. There has been a Young Scot card in existence for almost 30 years, offering young people access to discounts at shops and services. But over the last 10 years the card has developed significantly.

Through the Dialogue Youth programme, established in 2002 as part of the wider Modernising Government Programme, local authority services began to be added on to
the card, such as cashless catering in schools. We also added the Proof of Age Standards Scheme (PASS) hologram – to make it a recognised form of proof of age – something which has been of significant value to both young people and businesses.

Since 2006, the Young Scot card has been integrated with the National EntitlementCard programme – a partnership between Young Scot, the Scottish Government, Transport Scotland, the Improvement Service and all 32 local authorities. This partnership has been crucial to its success and its reach continues to grow, with over 465,000 young people in Scotland now carrying the card. Young people commonly first receive the card as part of the Primary 7 to Secondary transition.

The National Entitlement Card is a great example of joining services up for citizens. The Card is maximising the opportunities to deliver shared services for young people, with the Young Scot NEC now carrying:

- Young Scot services (PASS, Discounts and Rewards, connecting people with information and opportunities)
- Local authority services (such as cashless catering, leisure and libraries)
- National transport services (concessions for 16-19 year olds and disabled concessions)
- Other services (including e-Voting and payments)

**Potential use of the Card in Post-16 Education Reform**

The development of the Card for use in further and higher education was stimulated with financial support from the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) as part of the project “Shared services for lifelong learners through the National Entitlement Card”. Through a partnership between Dundee City Council, the University of Abertay and Young Scot, the Further and Higher Education NEC Matriculation Card was launched in October 2008. The Card contained University of Abertay student card branding on one side and the familiar NEC branding on the other. Students who enrolled in October 2008 were issued the new Card and used it to access university services such as secure access to university properties, university library services and photocopying. Additionally, students could access all the other benefits associated with the Card noted above. As part of the project, it was agreed that some Dundee secondary pupils can use their cards to access the university’s facilities, supporting the concept of a “City Campus”.

The evaluation of the project demonstrated:

- “Effective enrolment… that **eases their use** of a range of learning services, and also a wide range of ‘citizen’ services”
- A “**strong belief… that this project will advance the cause of the shared services agenda in Scotland**”
That the use of the card resulted in some measurable efficiencies, but that the key measure of success had been its **effectiveness** for learners

A belief the NEC can **add considerable value to learning provision**

The University of Abertay has continued to use the Card and Dundee College became the first Further Education institute to roll-out the card to their students in August 2011. Several new institutions are now also considering replacing their own matriculation card with a combined card.

At a time of significant structural change in the further and higher education landscape, we believe that there is an opportunity to fully embed the Card as part of the reform of post-16 education. This would potentially bring a wide range of benefits, including:

- Giving students access to a wider range of benefits than currently available through their standalone student cards;
- Connecting students with information and opportunities provided by Young Scot related to health, well-being and citizenship;
- Facilitating shared use of facilities by schools, colleges and universities, supporting transitions from school to further or higher education;
- Reducing costs through the use of a national service; and
- Providing a consistent tool across a young person’s learning journey which can potentially be used to store and share qualifications and achievements.