Post -16 Education (Scotland) Bill

Skills Development Scotland: supplementary evidence

Follow up to evidence session on Post 16 Education (Scotland) Bill on 19 February

Please find a response to the Committee’s request for further information below.

SDS staffing
SDS has 5 staff (approx 3 FTE) in the Business Data Team to monitor and support the data hub, drawing on additional IT/IS support as required.

It may be helpful to further explain the key customer facing roles at SDS. All of our Operations staff in Career Management Skills (CMS) roles contribute to monitoring and supporting the young people identified as requiring support.

Careers Advisers can perform either Work Coach or Career Coach roles, or both, and in some areas SDS staff will be undertaking both work coaching and careers coaching depending on the specific needs of individuals and the demands of the local area (i.e. in rural areas where staff resource must be used more flexibly). Key workers at SDS also provide employability support to those individuals who need it most, in order to help them overcome barriers to employment. There are at present 464 Careers Advisers at SDS and 140 Key Workers at SDS.

Typical Case Load for Careers Advisers with a work coaching role
In schools, SDS offers a career coaching service and those identified as at risk of not going on to a positive destination after they leave school have continued SDS support through work coaching for at least the first six months after they leave school, or longer where required.

Careers Advisers in a work coaching role typically have a case load of 30 individuals over the course of a year. A young person benefitting from work coaching will typically have 8 interventions on average during the first six months after leaving school and it is important to note that the intensity of support will vary depending on the individual needs identified for the young person. Support may be weekly, or more than once a week if required (i.e. the young person may need more help if e.g. they have caring responsibilities or have been in custodial care). The Careers Adviser will regularly make contact with individual and support the employer or the young person’s learning provider, in order to ensure that the young person is able to sustain the opportunity.

Developmental Costs of the hub
The hub is neither a new IT system nor a new database. The starting point for data sharing between partners is SDS’s existing client management system¹. The hub acts as a conduit, through which agreed partner data is passed, matched with SDS records, and then held on SDS’s client management system. This enables up to date records (based on shared data) to be produced and shared with partners. The hub is therefore integrated into SDS’s normal business operations as part of our core service for young people.

¹ SDS’s system contains a comprehensive national record of school pupils in the senior phases (excluding those in private schools). As pupils move on from school, SDS records become less accurate, hence the role and value of the data hub in enabling up-to-date status information on the 16-24 year old cohort being brought together in one system.
Bearing this in mind, the costs of developing the hub have been part of SDS normal data management and CMS activity (this work having already been carried out). Further detail will be provided to the Committee in due course.

In terms of the additional allocation of £52,000 (as referenced in the Financial Memorandum) – this will be used to make small modifications to partners’ systems so that they can send reports to be uploaded into the hub. In financial year 2012/13 SDS have spent approximately £6k developing and refining technical solutions for sharing data with local authorities. SDS have reallocated remaining anticipated spend against financial years 2013/14 and 2014/15 to take in to account the timescales for incorporating partners within the data sharing community and legislation coming in to force. SDS remain satisfied that the overall figure of £52,000 is sufficient to deliver the limited software updates required to implement these modifications.

Data transfer between partners: how the hub works and problems the hub is looking to address

As described above, the hub is not a new or stand-alone system, but a mechanism for feeding agreed up-to-date information into SDS’s existing client management system, and reporting that combined updated information back out of the system to support service delivery.

Organisations who engage with and support young people record and hold different data on young people and their participation at various points in time, generally based on the specific business needs of each organisation. Existing information held by different bodies across Scotland on different systems are therefore not readily accessible outside the originating organisation. Multi-partner data sharing utilising the data hub is a solution which enables partners to share appropriate data with one another.

The data hub facilitates multi-partner data sharing by acting as a conduit that enables appropriate data to be shared between partners’ existing Customer Management (CM) Systems. All partners engage with young people as a core part of their purpose and consequently already maintain their own CM systems. Rather than setting up an additional system (or an additional data base) the hub is designed simply to be a conduit to allow data to move in a structured way between existing systems.

Diagram 1 shows the position regarding data flows for existing data-sharing partners. Agreed data from local authority education department systems, college student record systems, SAAS and DWP are uploaded into the data hub and then move through this conduit into SDS’ CM system. This system is the one in which SDS service delivery staff record their engagements with young people and so the SDS system becomes the repository for a combined data set. Combined data is passed back out through the hub to LAs and colleges.

In terms of how this works in practice, the system is designed to place a low IT requirement on partners. Partners export a file of the relevant data from their existing CM system and then upload this into the data hub by logging into a secure website. SDS then manage the moving of the data through the hub into the existing SDS CM system. When partners wish to access a combined data set, they log into the same secure website and access the data files.
The data shared between partners is not a complete set of everything on partners’ CM systems, as that would be inappropriate from considerations of a young person’s privacy. Instead a defined set of data is shared which has been agreed by partners as representing a sensible and proportionate level of information in order that the benefits of data sharing are achieved. The exact set of data to be shared is set out in each data sharing agreement between SDS and a partner. The shared dataset includes three main types of field. An outline of the data fields are outlined below, with examples of categories within each field:

1. Individual identifier fields (e.g. name, Scottish Candidate Number, school name)
2. Offer fields (e.g. current status, start date of status)
3. Flagging data fields (e.g. looked after status, young carer status)

The data sharing agreements are a key element in the governance and legal framework within which the multi-partner data sharing is undertaken.

A combined data set is used by staff who work with young people to help identify those who are not in positive destination and those who may be at risk of moving into this position. With a view to re-engaging them and ensuring that young people benefit from a more personalised service. The end objective is to support more young people along a positive path into employment. Having access to a robust accurate up-to-date data set supports staff in making professional judgements and engagement with a young person, by providing a more complete set of information, but in no way replaces the application of those skills and activities.

Diagram 2 shows the data flow from the perspective of a local authority education department.

As described above, multi-partner data sharing using the data hub is designed to achieve the benefits of more effective and efficient working for front line staff and improved service delivery for young people.

**Definition of individual who “is at risk of disengaging with learning or training”**
This is an individual between the ages of 16-24 who is either in school, college or training and may drop out of their current destination and fall into the “not in education, employment or training” category. Staff will be able to draw on the critical dataset including the flagging indicators to inform professional judgement on the best way forward and most appropriate service provision for the individual. Also, any person who has already disengaged will be more readily identifiable through multi-partner data sharing, facilitating engagement with the young person.

**Purpose of the hub - is SDS support proactive or reactive**
SDS support is both proactive and reactive depending on our current engagement with the young person. The hub is a source of information as part of SDS’s wider engagement programme with partners in the area of skills and training.

As an example, colleges regularly provide SDS with a list of those individuals who have dropped out of their learning choice. This information will be received into the data hub and so provided to the local SDS centre so that Careers Adviser can proactively contact the young person concerned in order to work with them on their options.
SDS keeps abreast of developments regarding cases of individuals who are already in college but are considered at risk from dropping out. Those at risk of disengaging will already have the continued support of a work coach for at least the first six months of learning (and longer where required). The work coach will regularly make contact with the individual and the college on how they are progressing and as such the coach would generally know, before the list comes into the hub or the centre, that the individual has dropped out and would be able to proactively contact them to discuss their options. The hub will allow this information to be more readily shared with other partners so that they can also assist the individual as appropriate.

**Clarification of whether support is to be provided by SDS or other partners**

Local partners meet regularly to discuss who is best placed to provide support to a young person. This discussion takes place at Opportunity for All meetings in schools or post school with Community Planning Partnership (CPP) partners. The support requirements for each identified young person at risk of disengaging are considered and the most suitable partner is identified to follow up with the young person. This is dependent on the needs of the individual at that particular time.

**Private, web-based and non-Scottish Training Providers**

The purpose of the hub is to share information between public partners to ensure that the best public sector service provision is made available to young people that need it most. There is no data sharing between SDS and private training providers and no provision for this in the Bill. SDS does, however, hold information on individuals undertaking training within programmes that we fund (such as Modern Apprenticeships). We will, therefore, draw on this information in creating up-to-date shared records of young people’s destinations.

**Volume of records held on the hub**

SDS is currently working on analysing and validating information related to the totality of records held and will provide further information once that work is completed.

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Diagram 1

16+ Data Hub
Multi-partner Data Sharing
One-Way & Two-Way Data Flows

LA Ed. Dept. CM system
College CM system
SAAS CM system
DWP CM system

SDS CM system

Diagram 2

16+ Data Hub
How Local Authority Education Staff Would Use Data Sharing to Support Engagement with a Young Person

LA staff input data into LA Ed. Dept. CM system
interaction
data upload
SDS 16+ Data hub
combined information (in reports)

Young Person

LA Staff use combined information for service delivery

SDS staff input data into SDS CM system

SDS CM system

Framework
Legal
Governance
Technical