

Press release

Date: 25 October 2006

Title: Minister launches first Care Leavers Quality Mark for Wales

Universities are marking the Welsh launch of a new Care Leavers Quality Mark in higher education with a conference on 22 November 2006 at the Wales Millennium Centre in Cardiff.

The Frank Buttle Trust, which provides grants and support to enable young people to take courses at universities and other higher education institutions, has created a Quality Mark that recognises institutions which go that extra mile to provide support to students who have been in public care.

The Mark will be launched by the Welsh Assembly Government Minister for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills at the Looked After Children and Care Leavers conference next month.

Jane Davidson, Minister for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, said:

“We know that the challenges that young people in care face can be considerably different to those faced by most students. Without the support - both emotional and financial - that is normally provided by families, care leavers may consider higher education qualifications unattainable. This Quality Mark recognises our higher education institutions’ efforts to ensure that extra support is available for young people from care to help them face these challenges.”

Professor Phil Gummett, Chief Executive of the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, said:

“The Welsh launch of the Quality Mark at the Looked After Children and Care Leavers conference is significant not only in raising the profile of looked after children in Welsh higher education, but also in promoting collaboration to combat the disadvantages they face. The conference will highlight the work already undertaken in Wales both by higher education institutions and the Reaching Wider Partnerships, and provide further information on the Quality Mark.”

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The Frank Buttle Trust has worked in partnership with Universities UK, the Standing Conference Of Principals, the Association of Colleges and the Association of Managers of Student Services in Higher Education, to develop a Commitment to Care Leavers in Higher Education. This commitment provides a charter through which higher education providers can demonstrate their commitment to supporting care leavers. The Commitment came about as a result of a five-year action research study *‘By Degrees: From Care to University’* commissioned by the Trust to evaluate the experience of those who had moved to university from care. The final research report “Going to university from care” demonstrated that those who succeeded did so against considerable odds, both in terms of pre-entry support and that within their higher education institution.

<http://www.buttletrust.org/> - “Founded in 1937 and operational since 1953, the Frank Buttle Trust is the largest UK charity providing grant aid to individual children and young people in desperate need. For over half a century, the Trust has helped many thousands of vulnerable children, young people and families throughout the United Kingdom.”

Reaching Wider, which is managed by HEFCW, is a long-term widening access initiative. It aims to improve learning skills and educational aspirations to enable more school-aged pupils and adults to study at university or college. Reaching Wider offers an extensive range of innovative programmes to help them learn new skills and study with

confidence. Hundreds of events are take place all year round throughout Wales, in schools, colleges, universities and local communities.

The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) is an Assembly Sponsored Public Body, established in May 1992, which assumed responsibility for funding higher education in Wales on 1 April 1993.

Under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, the Council is responsible for the administration of funds made available by the Assembly in support of the provision of education, the undertaking of research by higher education institutions, and the provision of prescribed courses of higher education at further education institutions.

Under the Education Act 1994, the Council is responsible for accrediting providers of initial teaching training for school teachers and commissioning research to improve the standards of teachers and teacher training.

In addition to its funding responsibilities, the Council provides advice to the Welsh Assembly Government on the funding needs, aspirations and concerns of the higher education sector in Wales.