

**To: Heads of higher education  
institutions in Wales**

Reference: W04/74HE  
Date: 19 November 2004  
Response By: No response required  
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**REACHING HIGHER "COMMUNITIES FIRST" TARGET**

You may have been aware that we have been discussing with Welsh Assembly Government officials clarification of the Communities First target for *Reaching Higher*. A slight amendment has now been agreed to the target to remove the ambiguity which was felt to exist in the previous wording.

The target has been rephrased as follows:

*"To increase the number of all undergraduate new entrants to HE courses at UK HEIs and FEIs who are domiciled in the Welsh Communities First area. This will be measured by monitoring the proportion of undergraduate new entrants to courses who are domiciled in the Communities First areas equivalent to the 100 Most Deprived Electoral Divisions, which is targeted to rise from 8.9% to 11.4% by 2010."*

This amendment is intended to ensure that all Communities First areas are seen to be treated equally, whilst at the same time there is a process of measurement which will provide the evidence that initiatives are working towards achieving the Assembly Government's objectives for widening access.

Community First areas should be a key focus both for institutional widening access activities and for the Reaching Wider partnerships.

However, whilst working with Community First areas, especially the core wards, must continue to be a priority for the Reaching Wider partnerships, there is scope and flexibility for them to address the other targets or areas for action which the Council has identified as pertinent to the remit of the partnerships: participation by disabled students and minority ethnic groups and Welsh medium provision.

Institutional widening access strategies should also aim to adopt a flexible, responsive and balanced approach which ensures that they are making a significant contribution to the achievement of the Communities First target, as well as acknowledging the broader dimensions of widened participation in higher education. Thus, the importance of work in Communities First areas does not exclude widening access activities with other groups or communities which are under-represented in higher education.

Assembly statisticians are in the process of recalculating the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation. The 2005 Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation, which is due to be produced by the summer of 2005, will be based on Super Output Areas rather than wards. Changes to the geography and to the indicators used may result in changes to the distribution of the most deprived areas. Whether those changes will lead to additions to the existing Communities First areas will be a matter for decision by the Assembly at the time. Institutions and Reaching Wider partnerships should for the immediate future continue to plan their activities on the basis of the current Communities First Areas.

Yours sincerely

**PHILIP GUMMETT**