
WIDENING ACCESS

5 April 2006

Ref: W06/08HE

To: Heads of higher education institutions in Wales

Summary: This circular announces an additional allocation to support widening access priorities in 2005/06 and 2006/07

Response by: Friday 21 July 2006

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INTRODUCTION

1. This circular provides guidance to the sector on an additional 'one off' funding allocation of £750k for institutions' widening access provision, including promoting alignment with RW partnership activities, from April 2006.

BACKGROUND

2. The Council has agreed to provide £750k from Reaching Higher Reaching Wider (RHRW) funding to support the development of specific widening access priorities, and also to further address the gap between the costs of widening access and existing funding, as estimated in the JM Consulting report (September 2005).

PURPOSE OF THE FUNDING

3. This funding will enable institutions to increase their support of widening access priorities as outlined below.

FUNDING PRIORITIES

ALIGNMENT WITH REACHING WIDER PARTNERSHIPS

4. Council's 2005-06 remit letter from the Assembly encouraged us to:
'work closely with the [Reaching Wider] partnerships to improve the coordination of widening access initiatives across Wales and to ensure clear alignment between institutional widening access strategies and the partnerships' strategies to bring added value.'
5. Since the start of the Reaching Wider initiative, we have discussed with the Partnerships the need for alignment of Partnership and institutional provision. Partnerships have confirmed that they have shared partner widening access strategies and completed a critical audit of regional provision, with a second audit to be submitted in June 2006. As you will know, from August 2006, the Reaching Wider Partnerships will receive two year funding and this should enable them to plan their provision more strategically. Additional funding is now being made available to enable institutions to align more effectively with their respective Partnerships.
6. We, therefore, expect the first priority for this additional allocation to be the development of a Reaching Wider articulation strategy, to 2010, for agreed work with your regional Partnership. The articulation strategy should be submitted to us by **Friday 21 July 2006**. Associated guidance is attached as **Annex A**.

ADDITIONAL PRIORITIES

TARGETS

7. In addition to developing the articulation agreement, you may also wish to support the development of one or more of the following priorities:
 - a) **Race and other Equalities Duties:** Circular W06/03HE (January 2006) noted the Council's intention to undertake a race equality impact assessment. Circular W06/05HE (February 2006) invited institutional responses on race and other equalities issues to inform the impact assessment. Feedback from this consultation will inform the new widening access strategy guidance (2006/07 to 2008/09) which we will issue in April 2006. In anticipation of this development, you may wish to focus part of your additional funding on further developing race and other equalities policies and targeted actions in relation to widening access.
 - b) **'Looked After' Young People and Care Leavers Strategies:** Guidance given by the Assembly to HEFCW in the 2006-07 remit letter encourages work with 'looked after' young people and care leavers. You may wish to identify funding from the additional allocation to develop strategies and provision for raising the aspirations and skills of this group, as well as ensuring their support and retention through higher education. You might find it useful to refer to the recommendations of the

Going to University from Care report (www.ioe.ac.uk/publications, ISBN 0 85473 715 4), published by the Institute of Education and attached as **Annex B**.

c) **Work with Reaching Higher Widening Access Target Groups:** To ensure greater progress towards the Reaching Higher targets, you may also wish to allocate part of the funding for targeted widening access work with people of *all ages* from Community First areas, from black and other ethnic minority communities, as well as with people with disabilities, or those wishing to study through the medium of Welsh. We would particularly welcome activity that would support HE progression by, or before, 2010.

8. We expect you to use the majority of the additional funding to develop the areas of work defined above. You may, however, also use it to support development of your 2006/07 to 2008/09 widening access strategy.

DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDING

9. Funding will be allocated pro rata to 2005/06 widening access funding allocations, with a minimum allocation of £15k funding. The allocations are attached as **Annex C**. They will be paid at the end of **March 2006**.

10. Please submit your articulation agreement and also your targets for utilizing the remaining allocation by **Friday 21 July 2006**. We will expect you to use the funding by the **end of July 2007** and report your targets and outcomes, and confirm expenditure, in **November 2007**. Guidance on reporting will be provided in April 2006 as part of the new Widening Access Strategy guidance. There will be a lighter touch to reporting using the Annual Monitoring Statement (AMS) format already used for other institutional reports.

11. Funding may be withheld from any future widening access allocation if targets and/or outcomes are not sufficiently aspirational, do not make a significant contribution to the Reaching Higher targets, or if there is a funding underspend.

12. The table below summarizes the funding and monitoring schedule:

Date	Action
April 2006	HEFCW to allocate funding to support widening access priority areas
July 2006	HEIs to submit articulation strategies demonstrating alignment with their RW regional partnership, including targets for utilizing the remaining allocation by July 2007
November 2007	Institutions to report progress against targets and expenditure through the Annual Monitoring Statement (AMS)

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FORMAT OF THE ARTICULATION STRATEGY BETWEEN INSTITUTIONAL WIDENING ACCESS PROVISION AND THE REACHING WIDER PARTNERSHIP TO 2010

We anticipate that the main body of the articulation strategy will be no more than six pages. Additional information may be included in annexes.

The articulation strategy should:

1. Identify how the institution's widening access strategy could add further value to Partnership provision and demonstrate institutional commitment to embedding RW activity, subject to continued funding;
2. Identify the regionally specific barriers to progression, gaps in provision, duplication;
3. Demonstrate the extent of connectivity between institutional widening access provision and Partnership activities to 2010, with targets for integration;
4. Develop joint activities between individual institutions and RW Partnerships;
5. Contribute to an audit of activities in the Partnership area;
6. Develop activities involving shared partners, including Careers Wales and the Voluntary Sector;
7. Include a risk analysis for alignment of your institution's widening access strategy with your Partnership's Reaching Wider provision to 2010.

THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GOING TO UNIVERSITY FROM CARE REPORT

**Recommendations of Going to University from Care
Report by the Frank Buttle Trust**

Central Government

Recommendation
1. The Guidance to the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 should be revised to make it clear that financial support from local authorities should not be at a minimum level but should be designed to meet the needs of each individual student.
2. The Government should consider ring-fencing funds so that support for care leavers in higher education does not have to compete with ordinary placement costs for under-18s.
3. More flexibility should be built into the system to allow young people who are not ready to go to university at 18 to return to higher education with financial support at a later stage.
4. Incentives should be offered to local authorities related to the proportion of formerly looked after children who continue into higher education.
5. Local authorities should be funded to support the education of unaccompanied minors seeking asylum so that all costs do not fall on a few authorities.
6. Teacher training courses should include a specific module on looked after children.

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7. The application form should have a box to tick for applicants who are or have been in care, with a note to say that this information will be confidential but will help the HEI to provide any extra resources or information that may be needed.
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Schools

8. Schools should be aware of the educational support needs of looked after children but also of the risk of underestimating their ability and potential
9. Before the GCSE the Designated Teacher and Year Tutor should have a full discussion with the young person and carer about post-16 plans including the option of going to university.
10. The pros and cons of remaining at school in Years 12 and 13 as opposed to moving to a further education college should be fully discussed and decisions recorded in the Personal Education Plan and Pathway Plan.
11. The Designated Teacher or Year Head should discuss with the student the advisability of revealing his or her care status when applying for university or college entrance.
12. Schools should recruit university students or graduates willing to act as mentors to disadvantaged young people, and particularly those in care.

Local Authorities

Recommendation
13. Children in care should be given the chance to attend schools where a high proportion of pupils go on to higher education
14. Local authorities should plan and budget for increasing numbers of care leavers requiring support through higher education.
15. It should be made clear that being or having been in care is no obstacle to going to university.
16. All young people planning to continue into higher education should be provided with a personal computer or laptop and Internet connection while studying for A levels
17. Prospective students should be given a copy of the local authority higher education protocol and there should be a written contract detailing the financial and other support on offer based on a full discussion of the student's needs and signed by both parties.
18. Financial support should be sufficient to pay for accommodation and meet basic living costs

and educational expenses without forcing the student to take out bank overdrafts or take paid work in term time.
19. Care leavers should go to university should be guaranteed a full after-care service, not contingent on staying within their local authority area. The named Personal Advisor should keep in regular contact throughout their course.
20. The local authority should pay the deposit and hall fees for the first year and rent for a shared house or flat for subsequent years. Students should be strongly advised to live in university accommodation for the first year to reduce travel time and costs and be close to study facilities and social activity.
21. In cases where a young person has been living independently their eligibility for a council tenancy should be guaranteed so that their choice of course and university is not constrained by the fear of homelessness.
22. Local authorities should offer holiday grants for long vacations and emphasise the importance of students taking a break before the following academic year.
23. Young people should be formally notified when they are discharged from care, not left to find out by chance.
24. Local authorities should ensure that asylum-seekers who have been in care receive skilled support and advice on status problems and high quality legal representation to enable them to remain in the UK until they have completed their education.

Foster Care

25. Foster care is a key resource for increasing participation of care leavers in higher education. Training for foster carers should be mandatory and include supporting and promoting educational achievement.
26. Some foster carers could be recruited, and paid appropriately, with a specific remit to steer young people through examinations and support them during their time at university.
27. Foster placements should not be ended on the young person's eighteenth birthday. The period between the end of examinations and start of university should be fully funded. Any change of status or placement should be related to the young person's wishes and the educational timetable not chronological age.
28. Young people should have the option of remaining in their foster homes (or returning to them in vacations) until completion of higher education.
29. Policies on same-race placement should not take precedence over cultural factors, the need for stability or the quality of the relationship between young people and carers.

Residential Care

30. Local authorities should make much greater use of boarding schools combined with weekend or holiday foster placement as an option for young people in care
31. Well-motivated young people should never be placed in residential units where the majority of residents are disaffected.
32. All residential homes should provide quiet rooms with study carrels and have an up-to-date reference library. A policy of regular time for homework when no noise is allowed should be enforced. There is a case for providing some residential units for older teenagers with a clear purpose of offering the best possible study conditions for those preparing for examinations.
33. Residents in children's homes should have access to personal computers that are not reserved for staff or locked up after working hours.
34. All children's homes should have a visiting education adviser and arrangements for help with homework if this cannot be provided by existing staff.
35. Young people should be given the option of staying in their home until they have completed post-16 education or training at 18 or 19 and welcomed back in vacations if they go on to higher education. They should not be required to leave until they feel ready for independence.

HEIs

Recommendation
36. All institutions should develop a comprehensive policy relating to young people in or leaving care
37. All initiatives and publicity aimed at applicants or students from disadvantaged groups should specifically refer to care leavers.
38. More institutions should develop compact arrangements with local authorities to increase participation of care leavers. Universities and colleges running open days and summer schools should ensure that young people in care are specifically invited.
39. Admissions tutors need to understand that it is an exceptional achievement for care leavers to get to the point of applying to university from care and that examination grades may not reflect the young person's potential.
40. Widening participation officers should attend after care workshops and training events on the care system and the needs of care leavers.
41. Care leavers should be given priority for on-campus accommodation and for hardship funds.
42. Student Welfare/Support Services should contact new students known to have been in care and be proactive in offering any necessary help with financial, study or personal problems. They should be alerted to danger signals such as falling behind with assignments.
43. HEIs should ensure that successful applicants who have been in care know before they arrive about any additional grants or bursaries that might be available to them so that they can apply in good time.

REACHING WIDER ALIGNMENT ALLOCATIONS 2005/06

Institution	Total Allocation from Widening Access Fund (£)	Reaching Wider Allocations based upon £750k, with a £15k minimum allocation (£)
University of Glamorgan	387,775	168,421
University of Wales, Aberystwyth	101,049	43,888
University of Wales, Bangor	92,535	40,190
Cardiff University	196,222	85,224
University of Wales, Lampeter	76,259	33,121
University of Wales Swansea	191,063	82,984
University of Wales Institute, Cardiff	152,688	66,316
University of Wales, Newport	223,957	97,270
North East Wales Institute of Higher Education	105,815	45,958
Swansea Institute of Higher Education	113,600	49,339
Trinity College, Carmarthen	51,313	22,287
Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama	15,563	15,000
Total	1,707,839	749,998

