

+++Skill Scotland E-News May 2008

Skill Scotland E-News aims to keep disabled students across Scotland in touch with news and events around disability and post-school learning and employment.

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+01: Changes to higher education student funding

There have been a number of changes recently to student funding in the higher education sector. This affects students who are taking higher education courses in both colleges and universities. The main changes, include the following:

- as a result of the Graduate Endowment Abolition Bill, all current and future students, as well as those who graduated on or after 1st April 2007, will not be required to pay the Graduate Endowment fee;
- from academic year 2008-09, postgraduate dental students will not have to pay tuition fees. In addition, dental students are also eligible for a £4,000 per year bursary if they agree to work in the National Health Service for a period of time after graduation;
- a number of changes have been made to the way in which student income is assessed for funding purposes. The revised means-test arrangements will come into effect from 2008-09, and will apply to new and existing students. The main change will be that a student's partner's income will now be taken into account in the same way as a spouse's/civil partner's income. This will benefit students who wish to claim the Dependent's Grant for their partner, and those whose partners are on a low income or receiving benefits.

For further information about any of these changes, please contact the Skill Scotland Information service (tel: 0800 328 5050, e-mail: admin@skillscotland.org.uk) or the Student Awards Agency for Scotland (tel: 0845 111 1711, web: <http://www.saas.gov.uk>).

+02: Free telephone counselling service for disabled people

The Lothian Centre for Integrated Living (LCIL) has recently launched a free telephone counselling service for disabled people. 'Your Call' is available to any disabled person in Scotland (aged 18 or over) and their immediate family, and is the first service of its kind in the UK. The 'Your Call' counsellors are all disabled people themselves, and have an understanding of what it means to live as a disabled person in Scotland today.

To make an appointment, please call freephone 08088 801 03 62 between 11.00am and 3.00pm on Mondays and Tuesdays, and between 11.00am and 1.00pm on Wednesdays. Calls are free from landlines and most mobile networks. The number is withheld so it will not appear on your phonebill.

+03: Scottish Parliament Disability Inquiry: review of progress

The Scottish Parliament's Equal Opportunities Committee has recently begun work on monitoring the Scottish Government's implementation of the recommendations of the Disability Inquiry. The Committee has taken evidence from the three Cabinet Secretaries for Education and Lifelong Learning, Communities and Sport, and Finance and Sustainable Growth, and has written to relevant organisations asking how they intend to implement the recommendations which apply to them.

The key issues raised in relation to further and higher education included:

- the review of DSA
- provision for students with complex needs, including residential colleges and training providers
- school-college links
- improving provision for young disabled people who fall into the NEET category (not in education, employment or training)
- extending 'Partnership Matters' to the higher education sector
- careers advice for young disabled people.

A summary of the evidence collected to be date can be accessed at <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/committees/equal/inquiries/DisabilityInquiry-ReviewofProgress.htm>.

+04: Educational psychology services to be extended

The Scottish Government recently announced that educational psychology services will be extended to cover post-school education in all local authority areas. At present, the majority of educational psychology services are focused towards children under the age of 16, with only a few local authority areas providing support for those over 16. It is hoped that this extension of services will provide better support for young people during the transition from

school, with improved partnerships with colleges, Careers Scotland and training providers.

The extension of services is likely to be particularly useful for students who require dyslexia assessments as evidence of their disability for Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) applications.

+05: Articulation between college and university

In January this year, the Scottish Funding Council consulted on its proposals to further develop articulation routes between colleges and universities. Articulation refers to entry into year 2 or 3 of a degree course using an HNC/D as an entry qualification.

Skill Scotland responded to this consultation in January, making the following key points:

- articulation is likely to be a particularly attractive route for disabled learners. Given the low number of disabled people holding higher education qualifications, the Funding Council should ensure that articulation routes are expanded and should specifically consider the needs of disabled learners.
- articulation routes should include provision for pre-entry support to ensure that students who choose this route do not 'lag behind' students who have entered university in year 1. This should include funding for disability-specific costs, as well as childcare and living costs.
- the geographical range of articulation should be expanded. This is particularly important for disabled learners who may have transport and personal care support needs, making it difficult for them to attend a university in a different area.

Following the outcomes of the consultation, the Council announced that it will be allocating a further £3 million towards developing articulation, giving priority to those areas in which articulation activities are most active. In particular, institutions in the Glasgow area will be asked to use articulation funding to develop courses to better meet the skills needs of the health sector.

+06: Improvements to Blue Badge map service

The online Blue Badge map service, which makes it much easier for disabled people to find places to park across the UK, has now been significantly improved. The map on the Directgov website was first launched in 2006, originally covering 64 cities and large towns. A further 55 have now been added, including a number of locations in Scotland such as Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dundee, Inverness, Perth, Ayr and Aberdeen.

As well as information on parking bays and time restrictions, the new version also includes:

- extra information on shared use bays and residents' parking bays
- more information on train station and airport accessibility, shopmobility sites, and accessible beaches
- improved map graphics and better search facilities

The Blue Badge Map, showing the latest changes, can be viewed at http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/MotoringAndTransport/DG_10038295.

+07: New Scottish skills and careers body established

On 1st April Scotland's new unified skills body, Skills Development Scotland, was formally established. The new body brings together four partner organisations, including Careers Scotland, the Scottish University for Industry (incorporating Learndirect Scotland, ILA Scotland and the Big Plus), and key elements of Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise.

The aim of the new body is to deliver comprehensive information, advice and guidance for careers and learning as well as support for skills development, for both individuals and employers. Careers Scotland will continue to operate under its current brand name, delivering individualised careers services for people of all ages across Scotland.

Skills Development Scotland's website can be accessed at <http://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk>

+08: Provision for students with complex needs in colleges

The BRITE Initiative (Beattie Resources for Inclusiveness in Technology and Education) has been commissioned by the Scottish Government to undertake a mapping study of current provision of further education in Scotland for students with complex needs. The study will be informed by an online survey and interviews in all colleges.

The study was commissioned in response to the findings of the (then) Scottish Executive's consultation on funding arrangements for students with complex needs wishing to study in England. Once the mapping study has been completed, it is anticipated that a directory of college provision for potential applicants will be produced, which will help inform local authorities, schools, careers services, and young people and their families, about provision for students with complex needs across Scotland.

+09: Winning Wheels tennis club

Winning wheels, a wheelchair tennis club based in Edinburgh, are looking for more members. The tennis centre at Craiglockhart (where Andy Murray trained), provides high quality courts and coaching and sessions run at 7.00pm on Sunday evenings. Each 90 minute session comprises a quick warm-up, followed by a sequence of skills development routines, and usually finishing off with a shortened game of doubles. No fees will be charged for the first three sessions and then a nominal fee is charged per session to cover the costs of coaching. The club also has funding for new tennis wheelchairs and have ordered five new RGK chairs.

For more information, please e-mail Ian Hards at ianhards@hotmail.com.

+10: Changes to Incapacity Benefit

From 27 October 2008, Incapacity Benefit will be replaced by the new Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) for all new claimants. This new allowance will also replace Income Support for people who are claiming Income Support on the grounds of incapacity. People who already receive Incapacity Benefit will continue to receive this benefit, however the intention is to transfer everyone over to the new system over time.

The focus of ESA is to consider what you are capable of, rather what you cannot do, and what help you need to return to work in the future. In order to assess this, some claimants will be asked to undertake a test called the 'Work Capability Assessment' which assesses your capability for work and work-related activities. Disabled students who receive Disability Living Allowance do not need to undertake this assessment in order to claim ESA. This can result in three possible outcomes:

- you are assessed as being able to take part in at least some type of "work-related activity", and you will receive the work-related activity component of ESA as well as the basic allowance; or
- you are assessed as having "limited capability for work-related activity", and you will receive the support component of ESA as well as the basic allowance; or
- you are assessed as being capable of work, and can instead apply for Jobseeker's Allowance to help you get back into work. Most students will not fall into this category, as taking a course of study is likely to be seen as engaging in work-related activity.

The rules regarding ESA and studying are complex, and what you might get depends on your individual circumstances. For further information on how these changes might affect you, contact your local Jobcentre Plus or the Skill Scotland Information Service.

+11: Improved resources for autistic and visually impaired young people

From August this year, young people with visual impairments (and other print disabilities), in Scotland will have access to improved learning materials in schools. Pupils will be able to use the *Scottish Books for All* database to access learning materials. The database is powered by SCRAN, one of the largest educational online services in the UK. The database will contain a list of adapted materials which teachers can access to ensure that all pupils with additional support needs receive curriculum materials at the same time as their classmates in a format that meets their needs. From April this year, the Copyright Licensing Agency agreed to extend schools' copyright license to include materials for all pupils with a disability, which means that the database can be accessed by a much wider range of pupils.

In addition, a new toolkit will be made available for schools and education authorities to offer guidance for staff in identifying and supporting children and young people with autism. The toolkit, which was commissioned by the Scottish Government and produced by the National Centre for Autism Studies and the University of Strathclyde, will be launched in June this year. This

resource has been developed to support the recommendations of the HMIE report 'Education for Pupils with Autism Spectrum Disorders' and a report from the National Autistic Society. The aim of the toolkit will be to draw on a range of practice experience, literature and research to offer guidance for schools providing for children and young people with autism spectrum disorders.

+12: My experience, by Andrew Campbell

Andrew Campbell is studying Counselling and Health Studies at West Lothian College in Edinburgh. He has recently been elected as a member of the Skill Scotland Branch Committee, and has a varied employment background in homelessness, mental health, welfare rights, and counselling.

"As a student with a disability, I find studying both a joy and a bit of an endurance race. I left school with no formal qualifications, being led to believe I was inadequate. The fact of the matter is that I have dyspraxia and dyslexia and since this has been diagnosed accurately, I have enjoyed studying.

One of the biggest struggles I have as a student is that my conditions are hidden disabilities and therefore I find it hard to access adjustments. The other large difficulty I have is funding. I have been forced into studying part-time to gain a basic education as government funding is not sufficient to live on. I find it difficult to understand the policies the government set regarding student funding. While encouraging people to undertake lifelong learning, there seems to be barriers to successfully equipping yourself for a good career. On the one hand, the Westminster Government and the Scottish Government are making moves to get people off benefits and back into work, while on the other hand, the funding available to students does not allow everyone to improve their chances of getting into work by retraining. There seems to be an unrealistic expectation on mature students to retrain to enter the workforce.

I would rather receive funding from the government to study for a few years than to remain on benefits, as I can then contribute back to the economy in a graduate job. I am surprised at the short-sightedness in the recent policy changes to funding that does not allow fair access to disabled students to retrain. In the case of able-bodied students, they are expected to work part-time to supplement their income or have financial support from their parents. Many mature disabled students, because of health issues and family commitments, do not have the option of working part-time. This seems to only widen the gap between opportunity and poverty.

In an ideal world, we would have opportunities for every member of society to learn and retrain and be active. The reason for education is not just to gain a degree but to increase a person's understanding and allow our economic environment to flourish with current skilled members of society contributing at an appropriate level for the individual where they are challenged, can contribute and reach their potential. The fact of the matter is this is only a dream. In our current political climate we seem to ignore the "have nots" in

preference of the "have lots", leaving the country short of skilled, willing, able and diverse workforce.

Being dyslexic and dyspraxic, gives me a unique view of my environment and has allowed me to be successful previously in business. However, at this time I have had to opt out of completing a degree to choose one year of poverty instead of four. I have spoken this year to many students and teaching staff from various educational establishments and found my viewpoint is not unique. These issues affect a lot of people and stop our nation being all it can be. As I have said – the solution seems like a dream, but I remember hearing on the radio a speech by Martin Luther King which started "I have a dream..." – and his dream became a reality.

I hope the political will causes this dream to become a reality."

+13: Volunteers sought for newsletter article

Skill Scotland is looking for disabled students to write an article for the next edition of our E-news in January. As well as being an excellent way to share your experiences with other disabled students, writing an article will also give you a good opportunity to develop your CV and written communication skills. To get an idea of the kind of articles usually included in the newsletters, please check out previous editions on our website at <http://www.skill.org.uk/page.aspx?c=70&p=114>.

Most articles are around 500 words long, and the deadline for the January edition is 7th January 2008. If you are interested please contact us at tel. 0131 475 2348 or e-mail lesley@skillscotland.org.uk. You might want to share your best or worst experiences, talk about the support you received, or how you found staff or other students' attitudes towards disability. We would love to hear from you!

++Staff section

+14: * Skill Scotland employment conference - one week left to book *****

From Learning to Earning: A conference for staff working with disabled students moving on from education to employment

Wednesday 11 June 2008, Glasgow Caledonian University, 9.30am - 4.00pm

This conference will focus on issues relating to disabled students' transition from college or university to employment. It will be relevant for all staff working with disabled students in colleges, universities and careers services, as well as employers and training providers. The conference is also likely to be of interest to voluntary sector organisations involved in education or employment and disability issues.

Presentations will include:

- Careers Scotland - an overview of the way in which Careers Scotland supports disabled students, job-seekers, trainees and employees. This session will also include an update on the operation of Careers Scotland within the new unified skills and careers body, Skills Development Scotland.
- A disabled learner's perspective - a talk from a disabled employee who has made the transition from education to employment, providing practical tips on the most effective ways to support disabled students during the transition to work.
- An employer's perspective - examining how the employer has demonstrated good practice regarding recruiting, selecting and supporting disabled job-seekers and employees.
- Remploy - highlighting the way in which Remploy provides practical support to disabled job-seekers, and Remploy's strategy to get more disabled people into long-term sustainable employment.

To book a place:

Please complete the attached booking form which should be returned by **Thursday 5 June**.

Workshop:

Workshops will include the following key areas:

- work placements and work experience
- funding support in education and employment
- employment legislation
- experiences of transition
- employers' experience of disability issues in the workplace
- support services for disabled job-seekers

For further information, please contact Lesley Berry on 0131 475 2348 or e-mail lesley@skillscotland.org.uk. Please also pass this e-mail on to any colleagues who may be interested in this event.

+15: Disability disclosure amongst college and university staff

Equality Forward has recently published a report of a research project exploring the experiences and perceptions of staff in colleges and universities in Scotland about disability disclosure. The research was carried out in 2007, and some of the key emerging themes included:

- the ways in which social stigma about disability/impairment is reflected or challenged in colleges and universities;
- the uncertainty or clarity of the processes that individual staff in colleges and universities need to go through to disclose;
- the institutional cultures of colleges and universities which can either support or act against disclosure.

The full report can be accessed at

http://www.equalityforwardscotland.ac.uk/resources/research/disability_disclosure

+16: CPAG benefits for students training course

The Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) provides advice, information and training to frontline workers/advisers on social security benefits and tax credits that students may be eligible for. CPAG Scotland has recently developed a new half-day course, 'Benefits for Disabled Students', which explains the benefits that can be claimed by students with a disability or long-term illness, and includes information on the new Employment and Support Allowance which will be introduced in October this year. This new course will be run at CPAG's offices in Glasgow on Tuesday 8 July, from 1.00pm until 4.00pm.

Places are limited so please book as soon as possible. Go to www.cpag.org.uk/scotland for more information and a booking form. You can also find information about other courses offered by CPAG on benefits for students. This course can also be booked in-house. For more information about this option, go to www.cpag.org.uk/scotland/studentbenefitsproject.

+17: Effective personal coaching training course

Course title: Effective Personal Coaching - An introduction to goal setting (one day introductory/refresher course)

Date: 12 June, 9.30am - 3.30pm

Location: Edinburgh

Price: £100

This course is facilitated by professionally trained practicing coaches, Kate Chambers (K C Associates) and Pat Paige (New Paige Coaching).

- Are you clear about what you want but don't know how to get it?
- Do you want something different but don't know what?
- Do you need space and time to reflect on your personal and/or work life and sort out where it is going?

The one day course assist you to set personal and/or professional goals to encourage you to make change happen and take part in life in a way that is meaningful to you. The coaches take you through interactive exercises which will cover:

- how coaching and the goal setting process works
- how to personally apply this goal setting process to you – identifying where you are now, clarifying your goals and devising an action plan to achieve significant change
- techniques to review progress on your goals and to set new actions.

You will take away up to 3 goals to work on in your own time. One-to-one coaching is also available by private arrangement at a fee of £60 per session.

Clients Kate and Pat have coached have identified and achieved goals in areas ranging from defining new careers, reducing stress at work, revitalizing relationships, losing weight, achieving work/life balance, managing finances and returning to learn.

For further information and a booking form, please e-mail info@kchambersassociates.co.uk. Closing date for booking forms is 5 June.

++Skill Scotland E-news details

Skill Scotland: National Bureau for Students with Disabilities exists to promote equality for people with all kinds of disabilities in post-16 education, training and employment.

For further information about any part of the Skill Scotland E-news, contact the Skill Information Service at Freephone/Text: 0800 328 5050 (landlines only)

Monday-Thursday 1.30-4.30pm; or 0131 475 2348 (mobiles phones or landlines)

Mail to: admin@skillscotland.org.uk <mailto:admin@skillscotland.org.uk>

Website: <<<http://www.skill.org.uk/scotland>>>

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<<<http://www.skill.org.uk/scotland/enews.asp>>>

This E-newsletter conforms to the accessible Text Email Newsletter (TEN) Standards. For details see:

<http://www.headstar.com/ten>

If you have comments on how Skill Scotland E-news can be made more accessible, do let us know!

The opinions expressed within the Skill Scotland E-news are the opinions of the contributor and do not necessarily constitute those of Skill Scotland.

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Lesley Berry

Senior Policy and Information Officer

Skill Scotland: National Bureau for Students with Disabilities