



Lead Times

October 2014

Keeping you up to date with the latest developments
in learning & disability



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News from Lead

Disabled learner sought to take part in BBC Scotland news programme

Lead Scotland will be taking part in a BBC Scotland news programme (Good Morning Scotland) to discuss some of the issues disabled learners experience in modern Scotland. If you're interested in taking part in either a TV or radio programme on any of the following topics, please get in touch with us:

- lack of support to meet your disability-related needs
- negative attitudes or limited understanding from teaching staff regarding your disability and the impact on studying
- if you feel you have been discriminated against or victimised in relation to your rights as a disabled learner

This will be a short contribution to either a TV or radio programme along with Lead's Senior Policy & Information Officer. There will also be a separate contribution from college/university staff member to allow them to suggest how improvements can be made (although you would not be appearing at the same time as the college/university staff member). If you are interested in taking part, please get in touch with [Lesley Carcary](#) by Monday **3rd November**.

LEADing the way on transitions

We recently facilitated a programme of focus groups across Scotland to discuss issues around transitions for learners with additional support needs. The groups

took place in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen and Inverness, and included representation from colleges, universities, schools, social services, the voluntary sector and careers. The aims of the sessions were to collect evidence around where transitions are working well, and generating actions and recommendations to deliver real improvements for learners in areas where transitions are not working well. You can read the [notes of the discussion groups and a summary of the main issues on our website](#).

We'll shortly be publishing our final report with a summary of the recommendations. You can also find lots of useful information around transitions on the [new pages on our website](#).

Lead Scotland's Board develops and grows

We recently held our Annual General Meeting (AGM) in Perth, where 5 new members were elected to our Board. Alan Goodman continues as Chair, and we now have a varied mix of members from different backgrounds, including individual disabled members, staff from universities and the voluntary sector, a parent of a disabled learner, and members from a financial background. Thanks to all those who attended the AGM and continue to support our work. You can read our [Annual Review](#) here.

Disabled college students needed for research project

Lead are looking for disabled students in colleges to take part in research into progression through learning stages in further education. The Equality Challenge Unit's recent report ([see below](#)) found that disabled learners in colleges are not progressing through learning stages as well as non-disabled learners, and have therefore asked Lead to carry out research to find why this might be happening.

We'd like to hear from disabled learners who are currently enrolled at college, and can tell us about:

- any barriers you experienced moving between learning levels at college
- your experience getting reasonable adjustments to meet your needs as a disabled learner
- the way in which college staff have helped you to overcome any difficulties in learning

We'll be sending out the survey in the next few weeks, but [please get in touch](#) if you would like to be added to the distribution list or if you can help us to promote the survey to learners.

Thinking Digitally: build confidence & develop digital skills

Lead Scotland are delighted to be offering 7 North Alliance members the opportunity to participate in our SCQF level 6 [Thinking Digitally](#) module (12 credits), thanks to funding from the North Alliance. The course will be delivered/assessed by Emma Whitelock and Gail Phillips from Lead. It offers CLD practitioners the opportunity to develop their digital skills and confidence; learn how to use freely available digital tools and platforms, and explore new ways of engaging, communicating and working with communities. Check out our [website](#) for details about this course, and get in touch if you know of others who could benefit from this learning opportunity.

Learning with Lead: Achieving success

Lead's person-centred approach towards supporting learners offers a flexible and supportive approach towards helping learners achieve success. Every newsletter highlights learners' experiences, and this edition focuses on an inspirational young learner who has overcome a number of difficulties to achieve learning and personal success.



[You can read Amy's story here.](#)

You can also keep up to date with Lead's work with learners and the impact we make on their lives on our new [YouTube channel](#).

Other news

Disabled students' progression in colleges

A recent statistical report from the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) has highlighted that the proportion of disabled learners within each SCQF level decreases as the level of study increases. The report, which focuses on FE learners in Scottish colleges, found for example, that 40.4% of learners at SCQF level 3 declared a disability, 14.4% at level 4, and 8.6% at SCQF level 7. The report also found that the overall number of students who declared a disability in colleges increased from 13.7% in 2011/12 to 14.2% in 2012/13. [You can read the full report here.](#)

Equality Analysis of DSA changes in England

Earlier this year, the UK Government announced a number of significant changes to the Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) in England from September 2015. The main changes include no longer paying for standard specification computers or specialist accommodation, changing the way in which computer equipment and software is funded, and only providing DSA support for dyslexic students where their needs are more complex. You can read [more information on the changes here.](#)

On 17th October, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills published their '[Equality Analysis](#)' of the changes. Although the changes do not directly affect Scottish students, the Scottish Government are interested to hear your thoughts on how the changes may impact upon English students studying in Scottish universities, and the support structure for disabled students in general. Please send any comments to [Lead Scotland](#) and we can feed back to the Government.

Disabled students' experience on practice placements

Research from Dr Shirley Hill from the University of Dundee has found that disabled students on practice placements at the university are more likely to experience difficulties during their placement, and to rate their placement lower compared to non-disabled students. The research covered six professional disciplines, comparing the experiences of disabled and non-disabled students. Dr Hill has produced a series of recommendations for university staff for supporting all students on practice placements, with specific additional recommendations for disabled learners. You can read a [summary of the research here.](#)

Simplified approach to college funding

The Scottish Funding Council is currently working on developing a new simplified approach to funding colleges, including a separate funding stream for Extended Learning Support (ELS). The main changes include:

- replacing Student Units of Measurement (SUMs) with credit targets
- ELS will become a separate funding stream based on historic spending levels
- 'dominant programme group 18' courses will be replaced with 'price group 5', which will still award a higher price per credit for students taking courses specifically designed for learners with learning disabilities

The changes will be implemented in full in 2015-16, with 3 college regions running parallel systems over 2014-15. You can read the [full guidance here](#).

Events & learning opportunities

Disabled Students Advisory Group 'Knowledge Hub'

Do you support disabled learners in a college or university? Would you like to keep up to date with the latest policy developments affecting disabled learners and take part in online discussion forums with peers in other institutions? If so, then you might like to join the Disabled Students Advisory Group 'Knowledge Hub' which is facilitated by the Scottish Government. You can either put yourself forward to join the group which meets twice a year at the Scottish Government, or simply become a member of the Knowledge Hub electronic forum. To find out more, please contact [Mick Doherty](#).

Supporting learners and employees with dyslexia

As part of this year's National Dyslexia Awareness Week (3rd - 9th November), AbilityNet is running three free webinars for staff supporting learners with dyslexia:

- [Dealing with dyslexia in the workplace](#) (4th November)
- [Dealing with dyslexia in education](#) (6th November)
- [Dyslexia and digital design](#) (11th November)

A recording of these webinars will be available after the event to everyone who registers.

Scottish Wider Access Programme (SWAP) conference

SWAP is a partnership of the colleges and universities of Scotland. Its role is to promote access to higher education to adult learners with few or no formal qualifications returning to education after a break. The SWAP national conference will be taking place at Stirling University on Thursday 27th November from 10am until 1.15pm. The purpose of the event is to raise awareness of the importance of widening access for adults who remain under-represented in higher education, and to celebrate the achievements of 25 years of SWAP. If you would like to attend, please get in touch with [SWAP](#) by 1st November.

Supporting students' communications needs

CALL Scotland has launched a new [mini-site](#) dedicated to raising awareness and providing support for staff who are working with users of augmentative and alternative communication aids. It also provides a useful introduction for staff who are new to the challenges of supporting students' communication needs.

Expression Where it Counts: Transitions for young people with additional support needs

This is a collaborative event between the Scottish Transitions Forum, Children's Hospice Association Scotland, Arthritis Care, and Pamis. The event will be delivered by young people and their families (with support from the partner organisations), and aims to highlight the importance of transitions for children and young people with additional support needs in relation to the upcoming changes to policy and legislation. The event will take place on 28th November at Sense Scotland in Glasgow. You can get [more information and sign up for the event here](#).