



**MCMC Young People & Colleges
Peer Research**

Monday 8th February 2010



Scottish Funding Council
Promoting further and higher education



Welcome

Richard Scothorne
Rocket Science



Scottish Funding Council
Promoting further and higher education




Context for the research

Audrey Cumberford
Board Member, Scottish Funding Council




Scottish Funding Council
Promoting further and higher education



Introduction to the research

David McNeill
Rocket Science



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Background



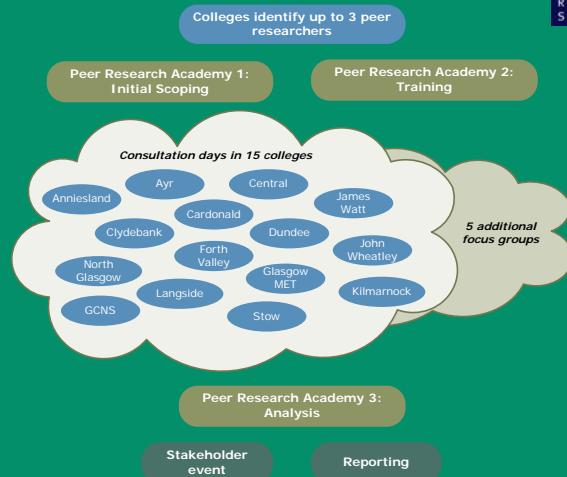
- Formal research and evaluation of college provision for MCMC young people underway
- Supplement this with an exercise led by young people to answer two key questions...
 - » What *attracts MCMC* young people to college?
 - » What *encourages* their retention?
- A focus on the 15 'hotspot' colleges... but not on the practice of individual colleges
- Exploring what *colleges* and the *SFC* can do in the future

What do we mean by MCMC?



- Young people who do not, or are at risk of, not progressing to a positive destination or face particular barriers
- May be in one or more of the following groups:
 - » Care leavers
 - » Carers
 - » Young parents
 - » Young people with a history of offending
 - » Young people with low attainment at entry
 - » Persistent truants
 - » Young people with physical and/or mental health problems
 - » Young people with drugs and/or alcohol problems.

The process



Some facts and figures



- 35 peer researchers
- 45 focus group sessions
- Wide range of groups and programmes: pre-vocational, winter leavers, EVIP, YouthStart, Princes Trust, school link, Special Programmes, NC, NO...
- Over 400 young people involved

Some facts and figures

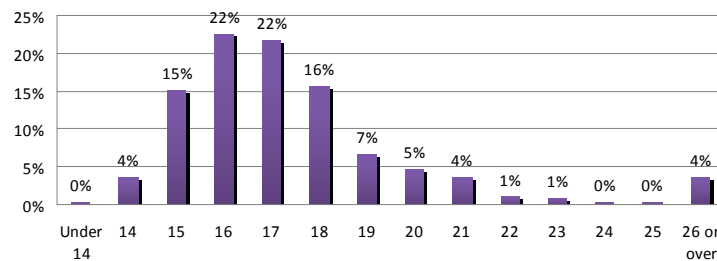


- Left school with few qualifications (36%)
- Did not attend school regularly (28%)
- Have had problems with drugs or alcohol (8%)
- Have children (7%)
- Have a disability or mental health problem (6%)
- Offending (6%)
- Been in care (4%)
- Young carers (4%)

Some facts and figures



Age of participants



Today...



- Sharing the findings with you
- Opportunity to discuss the key issues related to attracting, recruiting and retaining MCMC young people in college
- Discuss potential solutions with the peer researchers
- Obtaining your feedback for the report
 - » What are the practical actions?

The headlines...



- The vast majority of young people think college is great
- Contrast from school experience:
 - » Better teaching, support and atmosphere
 - » Better personal behaviour, motivation and interest
- College is a mystery for many until they walk through the door
- Relationships are critical to retention
 - » With classmates
 - » With lecturers and support workers
- Funding is an frustration and a barrier... but it is not simply about getting more
- Validates the aspiration of 16+ Learning Choices

Key themes for today



1. Attraction

- The reasons young people choose to go to college
- Getting information and advice about going college
- The attraction of the college experience

2. Recruitment

- Routes and transitions into college
- Key barriers to participation
- Making choices and being offered alternatives
- The interview and induction process

3. Retention

- The importance of relationships with the lecturers
- The importance of relationships between students
- Keeping MCMC young people engaged in learning
- What support young people value
- Financial support

The caveats...



- Young people's views and perceptions only
- Mostly the views of young people currently at college
- Covers the common issues that apply across colleges...
- ... some apply to all learners, some more specifically to MCMC young people.



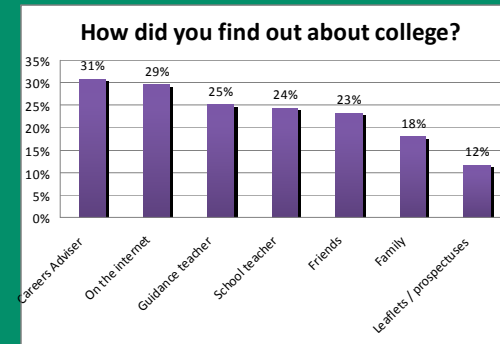
Attraction to college

The attraction of the college experience



- 95% of young people would recommend college to friends
- 83% of young people said that college was better than they expected. This was mainly because:
 - » It is not like being at school: it's less strict and you can have a laugh
 - » Lecturers treat you more like an adult
 - » You can make new friends
 - » You get to do something you want to do
- The contrast with the school experience is a key selling point
- Many young people felt abandoned and ignored at school

Getting information and advice about going college



- Routes into college and degree of choice varied significantly

Getting information and advice about going college



- Few people complementary about the generic information and advice available through schools, Careers and colleges
- What was useful was a personal contact helping them to understand their options: a key worker, social worker, guidance teacher, Careers Adviser etc.
- For those that have it, family were seen as the people that give you the best information, advice and support to encourage them to go to college

Promoting college



- 45% of young people said they didn't know a lot about college before they started
- 82% of young people said that young people should be told more about college when they are at school. Most people wanted to know:
 - » What courses are available
 - » What you would do on the courses
 - » Where you could study
 - » What financial support you could get
 - » What the experience was like
- A lot of people said that schools focused on university rather than college

The reasons young people choose to go to college



- The main reasons young people said they chose to go to college were:
 - » To help get a job / the career they wanted (24%)
 - » To get a qualification (17%)
 - » Nothing else to do / for something to do (9%)
 - » Because they were interested in the course (9%)
 - » To further their education (8%)
 - » Didn't like school (7%)

Young people's ideas for improving attraction



- Promoting college in school, earlier
 - » Promote the college experience
 - » Be explicit about the differences from school
 - » Use students
 - » Get to meet inspiring lecturers
- More opportunities for college placements / tasters in school
 - » Including a range of subjects
- Being more explicit about course content, format and timetable
- Push young people to do something
 - » "If they want us to go, they should come to us"
- Self-assessment questionnaires to help narrow down options before meeting a Careers Adviser

Young people's ideas for improving attraction



- Simple, step-by-step guides about the application process
- A "college week" in schools – similar to university applications week
- Single portal to search and apply for college courses – like UCAS
- Target "at-risk" young people in schools
- A 'make something of your life' campaign
 - » Linking college to improved job and earning prospects
 - » Be explicit about the difference between a college graduate and life 'on the brew'
 - » Go to where the unemployed are: JobCentre, Pubs, Supermarkets

Discussion questions



- *How do the findings compare with your own experience of attracting young people to college?*
- *What has worked well in the past to promote college to:*
 - » *Young people at school (MCMC prevention)?*
 - » *Young people who have left school (MCMC reduction)?*
- *What else can we do to promote college more effectively to:*
 - » *Young people at school?*
 - » *Young people who have left school?*



Recruitment to college

Routes and transitions into college

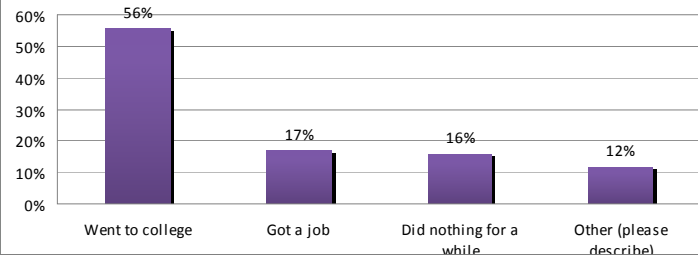


- Young people could...
 - » Be offered a choice to go to college full time instead of school
 - » Be offered a choice to go to college for one or two days per week
 - » Be encouraged to apply for college once they leave school by someone else
 - » Seek out information about college and apply themselves

Recruitment to college



What did you first do when you left school?



Making choices and being offered alternatives



- Few people make well informed choices
- Understanding of college is limited before engagement
- Increased understanding at the point of engagement with a college (e.g. interview)
- Lots of young people said they applied for college late and therefore missed out on the course they wanted to do which was full
- Good to be offered alternatives where they are not considered to be ready for a particular course

Key barriers to participation



- Main things that might stop people going to college:
 - » Being lazy / can't be bothered - 56%
 - » Money problems - 48%
 - » Distance to travel to college - 33%
 - » Not confident enough - 31%
 - » Looking after children - 25%

Motivation



- Recognising some young people just don't want to engage
- Negative influences: friends, games, TV
- Maturity may come over time: boredom, parents, friends, children
- *"It's something to do... better than sitting about in the house."*
- Contradiction between wanting to do something and finding the motivation to engage

Money



- The amount of money was not necessarily an issue. Barriers included:
 - » Not knowing what financial support you were entitled to or how to apply for it
 - » Administrative problems (losing forms, asking for the same information twice)
 - » Complicated forms with few people to help
 - » Delays in payments meaning people can't get to college
 - » People being paid different amounts on the same course
 - » A feeling that you would be better off on benefits

Other barriers



- Distance – both time and cost of travel to college
- Confidence – something they worry about *before* engaging
- Children – 7% of participants have children, 25% see it as a barrier
 - » Availability, location, flexibility and cost of childcare

The interview and induction process



- Interviews a useful way to find out about the course
- Identifying potential barriers to participation at the outset is important

Young people's ideas for improving recruitment



- Ensure people know the options available to them
- Hand holding throughout the application process
- Ensure transport is not a barrier at the start (e.g. paying for taxis for the first few weeks)
 - » Websites could include a system to help you understand how to get to the college from your own house
- Use personal interviews to help young people really understand the course
- Group interviews / induction
 - » Meeting lecturers
 - » Meeting classmates
 - » Go through the practicalities of the course

Discussion questions



- *How clear is the college 'offer' for MCMC young?*
- *What works well in terms of supporting transitions for MCMC young people?*
- *How could we improve transitions for MCMC young people into college?*
- *How could we reduce the barriers to participation?*

Retention



Dropping out



- 40% of young people have considered dropping out of college
 - » Bored: no work to do, too easy, too repetitive
 - » Did not enjoy the subject
 - » Format did not meet their expectations
 - » Financial difficulties
 - » Personal problems
 - » Not making friends
- Reasons for staying:
 - » Nothing else to do
 - » Peer support
 - » Want to get something out of it
 - » Parental pressure
 - » Support from staff
- Formal support was considered to be good – but most comments related to their own personal motivation

The importance of relationships with the lecturers



- Having good lecturers was really important in motivating young people and encouraging them to stay at college.
- Good lecturers were described as those who:
 - » Were enthusiastic and passionate
 - » Friendly / fun
 - » Could explain things in different ways
 - » Good at listening
 - » Don't talk down to students
 - » Obviously love their job (Inspiring)
- Bad lecturers were those who:
 - » Gave you the answers
 - » Made you work through things on your own a lot
 - » Talked too much
 - » Were obviously not interested in teaching

The importance of relationships between students



- Meeting new people and making friends was an important benefit of being at college
- A lot of people liked getting away from the 'cliquey' groups at school
- Having friends to help you and have fun with was a reason a lot of people said they stayed in college. Not making friends (or making enemies) was a reason many people said they dropped out of other courses / colleges
- Classes seemed to enjoy college the most when they all got on with each other

Keeping MCMC young people engaged in learning



- What works:
 - » Subjects you are interested in
 - » Practical work
 - » Banter – with friends and lecturer
 - » Lecturers that are good at teaching
 - » Variety of different things (group work, individual work, practical, theory)
- What doesn't work
 - » Lecturers that give you the answers
 - » Things that are too easy
 - » Sitting about not doing anything / gaps in timetables
 - » Listening to long lectures
 - » Repetition
- Not everyone enjoyed going on 'fun' trips (e.g. football, skiing)

What support young people value



- 93% know where to go for help. Only 3% rate support with college work as poor
- Lots of people talked about having someone they could go to if they needed help, either with their college work or with personal problems. This could be a course leader, a lecturer or a support worker
- It was important that they were approachable, easy-to-talk to and friendly. They were able to 'sort things out'
- Some people used 'student support services' or 'learning services' – but the best support came from someone who the students had a relationship with

Financial support



- Information about funding earlier
- Support before you get to college
- Simpler process
- Timely payments
- Equity in funding
- Lower incentive to be 'on the brew'

Young people's ideas for improving retention



- Initial assessment questionnaire to identify any barriers – and putting support in place
- Clearer information about the funding arrangements
- Help with funding *before* they come to college
- Young people involved in the recruitment of lecturers
- Peer support / peer mentoring
- Review meetings – particularly at the start
- Being asked if everything is OK
- Someone they can confide in

Discussion questions



- *How can we ensure that staff working with MCMC young people have the right skills and experience to keep them engaged in learning?*
- *What can we do to enhance the relationships between students?*
- *How can we ensure that MCMC young people can get the right support, from the right person, at the right time?*
- *What role can colleges play in ensuring money is not a barrier to participation?*

