



Welcome

A very warm welcome to ASPIRE07 - the newsletter of ASPIRENorth. This first period of intensive project development has provided a wonderful opportunity for us to meet up personally with key

colleagues across the FE and HE sectors, local authorities, and target schools in the north of Scotland, as well as other Widening Participation Forums and related projects. As ASPIRENorth picks up speed we now want to keep all our partners and friends up to date with our main news and developments.

The support we've received from everyone so far has been truly heart warming and I hope we will be able to fuel this strong initial interest by providing you with regular highlights

of the project's work, in a quick, appealing, and easily accessible way. In a nutshell, that's exactly what ASPIRE07 aims to do.

Our plan is to produce regular newsletters to keep you in touch, but if you would like more detailed information about the project, please visit our website at www.scotland-aspirenorth.ac.uk

We hope you enjoy ASPIRE07.
Janet Rougvie,
Director, ASPIRENorth.

Deputy First Minister launches **ASPIRE**North

The ASPIRENorth project was formally launched by Deputy First Minister Nicol Stephen on Monday 11th September 2006 at Aberdeen College.

At the launch event the Deputy First Minister said: "It is vital that young people are aware of all the opportunities available to them when they finish school. Around half are now choosing to go into higher education, but this figure varies dramatically from school to school.

"This project will help ensure that Higher Education is seen as a real option for many school pupils across the north of Scotland whatever their location or background. I look forward to seeing its impact."

The 26 schools who will participate in the project were selected on the basis of Scottish Executive pupil progression statistics which showed the number of pupils progressing to Higher Education in many schools in the north of Scotland fell below the national average. Once



Deputy First Minister Nicol Stephen MSP and ASPIRENorth Director Janet Rougvie at the project launch event

operating at full capacity, the project team will engage with around 16,000 pupils across a geographic area stretching from Aberdeen to Shetland. Janet Rougvie, the project Director said: "ASPIRENorth aims to introduce the idea of post-school education in ways which promote greater credibility and higher desirability in the minds of young people. Through empowering and motivating young people to properly consider what college or university might really mean

for them we can create a sense of realistic possibility where, for many reasons, limited or negative perceptions may have been likely to develop. It's all about helping youngsters value and understand their own future educational potential."

The project is an initiative by the North Forum for Widening Participation. The Forum is a partnership of educational institutions, local authorities, Careers Scotland and other relevant bodies.

The overall aim of the Forum is to increase the proportion of people from under-represented groups in society in Higher Education and to promote a culture of lifelong learning in the north of Scotland.

The Deputy First Minister Nicol Stephen joined senior representatives from the colleges, universities and local authorities who will be involved in the project. The event was also attended by staff from the project's target schools along with representatives from Careers Scotland.

Meet the team

The ASPIRENorth team has brought together staff with a wide range of backgrounds and experience. By drawing on the key skills of each staff member, ASPIRENorth will develop a programme of activities which will help inspire, motivate and inform young people across the North of Scotland.



Janet Rougvie

Director of ASPIRENorth
Janet has been responsible for the strategic development of the project from its inception on 1st January 2006. Her ongoing role is to work across both the Grampian and

Highlands & Islands offices to ensure the successful delivery of the ASPIRENorth programme across the north of Scotland.

Having accumulated almost twenty years of experience in different aspects of widening participation and social inclusion, Janet has worked in the Lothians, Fife and Tayside prior to taking up her current post. Her track record to date has included teaching and curriculum development in the Further Education sector, responsibilities as Access Course Tutor for SWAP (Scottish Wider Access Programme) students and management of the Wider Access Unit at Heriot-Watt University.

Janet is committed to doing everything possible to make ASPIRENorth a success and to help motivate the young people who participate in the programme to discover their own post-school educational potential.



Penny Lockwood

Regional Co-ordinator (Grampian)

Penny graduated with First Class Honours in Business Computing from Hull University in 2000 and took up a lecturing position at Doncaster College

(South Yorkshire). She taught on a mixture of Further and Higher Education courses, but specialised in the 14-16 age group attending college on vocational courses.

Her interest in this area grew and she moved to Wakefield College in 2002 to become the 14-19 Project Co-ordinator with responsibility for AimHigher and Increased Flexibility initiatives.

Penny has responsibility for the management and delivery of the project to selected schools in Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray.



Anne Dempster

Development Worker (Grampian)

Anne is based in the Grampian office as Development Worker and works alongside Penny Lockwood to plan, deliver and evaluate the

programme of activities within the target schools and related communities. Anne is also responsible for the recruitment and training of student volunteers to help facilitate project activity.

Being born and educated in Aberdeen, Anne has wide knowledge of the local area as well as alternative routes into higher education having entered university through access school before gaining her undergraduate and Doctorate degrees in Immunology.

Anne hopes that ASPIRENorth can put a sparkle in the eyes of the children in the North of Scotland as they strive to achieve their full potential.



Laura Cunningham

Administrative Secretary (Grampian)

Originally from Ayrshire, Laura moved to Aberdeen in 2000 to commence her studies at the University of Aberdeen and after four great years she

graduated with a Joint Honours degree in English Linguistics and English Literature.

Two weeks after graduation she left Scotland and began her career working with children as an Assistant Language Teacher in rural south-west Japan. Laura joined the ASPIRENorth team as the Grampian office Administrative Secretary in July 2006. With a background in customer service and a penchant for organisation, Laura aims to effectively contribute to the behind-the-scenes smooth running of the project and to support her colleagues in their various tasks.

Coming from a family of teachers, Laura is thrilled to be a part of such an inspirational venture and looks forward to making her contribution towards the positive future of youngsters across Grampian.



Tom Allardyce

Regional Co-ordinator (Highlands & Islands)

Tom's previous experience lies mainly in educational marketing, having worked as Glasgow Caledonian University's Schools & Colleges Liaison Officer for over four years.

Throughout his adult life Tom has worked with young people in a voluntary capacity. Whilst at college he worked with the Yipworld youth work project in Ayrshire. He also served as a member of the East Ayrshire Children's Panel, a role which he has now

transferred to the Highlands area.

In his position as Regional Co-ordinator for the Highlands & Islands, Tom hopes to apply his experience of working with young people to an exciting and challenging new field.



Kirsty Macdonald

Development Worker (Highlands & Islands)

Based in the Inverness office, Kirsty travels far and wide across the north of Scotland, raising awareness of post-school education

options among school pupils, delivering school-based activities and recruiting student volunteers.

She is a passionate advocate of Higher Education and the experiences and opportunities it brings. Originally from Oban with family connections in the Western Isles, Kirsty moved south to study at university, and loved it so much she stayed for nine years. Firstly, she took an undergraduate MA in literature at the University of Glasgow, then studied Gothic Literature at the University of Stirling as an M.Phil student, and finally returned to the University of Glasgow to work on a PhD on Scottish Literature.

Having completed her doctoral thesis in 2005, Kirsty has been working in a variety of roles with students and young people, and looking for an opportunity to return to the Highlands.

Kirsty is looking forward to recruiting and training a flood of new student volunteers to help facilitate this exciting and important project.



Mary Windle

Administrative Secretary (Highlands & Islands)

Mary was born in Lanark and spent her childhood in the Isle of Man.

Always with a desire to travel, Mary has worked in Aviemore, Cambridge,

Somalia, Egypt, Lymm, Kilmacolm and Bearsden. She has now settled in the Highlands and joined the team in November 2006.

Mary has embraced the concept of lifelong learning and is presently participating in an Equestrian Skills course through the North Highland College, leading to a lifelong drain on her finances if her dream of owning a horse comes true.

Mary is delighted to support the vibrant and enthusiastic team in Inverness and to help them encourage everyone to grasp the opportunity of life enhancing higher and further education.

Students hit the big screen: ASPIRENorth Video Project

ASPIRENorth has recently embarked on a new video project which will enhance the team's core programme of activities. The North Forum has committed funding to a series of short marketing films to encourage higher levels of progression into further and higher education.

These short films will give an insight into life as a student at college or university. Current students will discuss their personal experiences and highlight the opportunities which post-school study has given them.

As well as providing school pupils with a range of information on courses, guidance and funding, the films will also provide a general overview of what a further/higher education institution looks like from a student perspective.

The films, which are aimed at 14 and 15 year olds, are unique in that they are targeted on a geographical



They are unique in that they are targeted on a geographical basis

basis. Each of the six DVD's are aimed at a particular area throughout the North of Scotland. The areas targeted are:

1. North-east coast – Banff, Fraserburgh, Peterhead
2. Aberdeen city and surrounding area
3. Central Aberdeenshire and Moray
4. South Highlands and Inverness
5. North and West Highlands
6. Western and Northern Islands

The DVDs will be used in conjunction with the current workshops run by ASPIRENorth, but

will also have a much wider range of potential uses and will be made available to schools careers staff, college and university partners and Careers Scotland. It is also planned that the videos will be streamed on various websites to ensure that the films have the opportunity to grasp a wider audience.

The project is currently going through the tendering process with filming set to commence in February/March 2007. We are looking for students who will be available during this time and would like to contribute to the videos. For further information please contact Gillian McLaren on **01224 274740** or via e-mail at g.mclaren@abdn.ac.uk

Students go back to school

The ASPIRENorth team have been on the look out for enthusiastic, friendly and motivated students and recent graduates to come and share their experiences of student life with school pupils. A variety of recruitment methods have been used to capture the interest of potential volunteers, including Freshers' Fayre stands, lecture presentations and posters.

To date twenty eight students have applied to be ASPIRENorth volunteers. Once trained, the volunteers will support project staff in the delivery of activities with pupils. Before starting, volunteers

have been undergoing training which has included effective listening exercises and tips on how to engage with school pupils.

The volunteers will act as positive role models and will be encouraged to establish a good working relationship with pupils. In recruiting these students we hope to break down barriers and allow pupils to be more open about asking questions and engaging in discussion about their future hopes and aspirations.

We are looking forward to introducing our volunteers to the school pupils following their

Disclosure checks in this new academic term.

We are always keen to hear from potential volunteers. For further information on volunteering please contact:

Grampian:
Anne Dempster
01224 274695
a.dempster@abdn.ac.uk

Highlands & Islands:
Kirsty Macdonald
01463 258818
k.macdonald@abdn.ac.uk

North Forum and **ASPIRE**North – What's the relationship?



The Scottish Funding Council currently funds four Regional Forums in Scotland all of which share common widening participation aims. The North Forum for Widening Participation in Higher Education was set up in 1999. It initially involved only FE and HE institutions and other associated organisations in the north-east of Scotland. The

geographical area covered by the Forum was extended in early 2001 to include the Highlands & Islands. The Forum now comprises FE, HE and local authority partners across the whole of the north of Scotland.

The North Forum's mission is: **"To work in partnership to increase the number of people from under-represented groups in the North of Scotland who progress on to higher education and to work together to reduce barriers to progression between education sectors."**

The Forum does this by commissioning and managing a range of relevant projects through its partners across three main areas of focus: schools, the FE/HE interface

and the community. ASPIRENorth is the flagship schools outreach project of the North Forum, created in 2006 in response to the Forum's recognition that a new, all-encompassing and clearly targeted schools-linked project was required. This firstly had to address the needs of the P7 to S4 age-groups within schools with lower progression to HE rates, and secondly, had to address the varying needs of the Forum's different geographical areas.

Currently funded by the Forum until July 2008, ASPIRENorth is now delivering a programme of activities developed to reflect these strategic aims, and ASPIRENorth's progress and achievements will be reviewed and evaluated by the North Forum as the project develops.

Pupils get University Challenged

The ASPIRENorth team have now started to roll-out delivery of their first pupil activity, University Challenge. This activity is aimed at S3 pupils and uses a 'who wants to be a millionaire' format to address a variety of issues relating to post-school education.

During the activity pupils are posed questions that encourage them to explore their individual thoughts about post-school education. Issues covered during the activity include college and university qualifications, local education options, student life and career routes available through further study.

The pupils are divided into small

|| The interactive element of the presentation was enjoyable, fun and very informative

Ken Davidson
*PT Guidance,
Dyce Academy*

groups, asked to discuss each question and vote on what they think is the correct answer. The pupils'

votes are cast using PRS handheld electronic voting systems. The PRS software links into a laptop and allows ASPIRENorth staff to show the pupils how everyone voted. The pupils' voting behaviour quickly shows up any misconceptions they may have about post-school education. These misconceptions are then tackled by ASPIRENorth staff through further explanatory discussion with the pupils.

The main objective of this activity is to subtly introduce the concept of post-school education to S3 pupils and try and give an accurate picture of the opportunities available to them. Ultimately this will form part of a continuum of activities working with pupils from P7-S4.

ASPIRENorth goes online

The recently launched ASPIRENorth website provides parents, teachers, volunteers and pupils with up-to-date information on the project and its operations. There are also links to other useful websites and relevant external organisations.

Log on to www.scotland-aspirenorth.ac.uk to find out more.

