



Welcome



Welcome to our second ASPIRE07 newsletter and the end of a great first year of programme delivery. It has been

an eventful six months since the January update and as well as stepping up the delivery of activities in schools the project has now carried out a full internal evaluation of its progress to date. The comments received from stakeholders were really constructive and very much appreciated, and showed a very strong level of support for ASPIRENorth's work. On the basis of this I am pleased to report that the North Forum Executive has included an application for continuation funding for ASPIRENorth in its post-July 2008 strategic plan. The plan has now been submitted to the Scottish Funding Council for final approval.

To give you an idea of the level of delivery the team has achieved this year I'd like to highlight a few statistics. To date 85 activity events have been delivered across 25 schools, and during these the team has interacted overall with 5782 pupils and 234 parents. With the kind support of 7 partner colleges and universities, the team has hosted on-campus events for a total of 511 S2 pupils. Overall, the team's deliveries have far exceeded our initial targets and expectations.

I would like to thank everyone involved in making this first year of ASPIRENorth such a huge success, and encourage all partners to become even more involved next year so that we can build on our substantial achievements.

Janet Rougvie, Director

F.A.M.E and fortune: S1 pupils look to the future

F.A.M.E (Further Action for My Education), the ASPIRENorth activity for S1 pupils, has now been rolled out to 19 schools and more than 2000 pupils. The drama-based workshop tackles topics such as decision making, peer pressure, Standard Grade subject choices and the options available to pupils once they leave school.

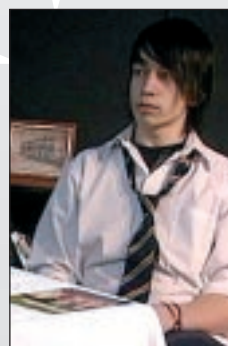
Drama students and staff at Aberdeen College have been invaluable to this activity as they offered their time, resources and skills to plan, design and create a number of short dramatisations which are shown to

the pupils as DVD clips. In these scenes the school pupils meet a number of characters, each facing a different dilemma which the pupils themselves could also face at some stage in their school career. ASPIRENorth staff and Student

Volunteers then work with the pupils to analyse and discuss the problems faced by the characters and help the pupils decide what they should do next.

The main aim of this activity is to get pupils thinking about the important choices they will face during their time at school. This will empower pupils to make appropriate decisions about their future education.

Following feedback from the pupils themselves, the team are working to develop a web-based follow-up activity for school pupils which will complement the main ASPIRENorth workshop. The team will also review and update the activity materials to ensure they continue to tackle relevant issues for the year group in an effective manner.



Some of the fictional pupils from the S1 activity

Putting learning to work

Lisa Clarke, a third year BA(Hons) Corporate Communication student at Robert Gordon University, recently joined the ASPIRENorth team on a six week placement. Here Lisa talks about her path into post-school education and her experience of working with the team.

I always knew I wanted to go to university after school, but as the time drew nearer to leaving, I found myself unsure of exactly what it was that I wanted to do. I had always seen myself going to art school, but a stint of work experience in graphic design and doing Higher Art and Design at school helped me realise that a career in that area was not right for me. So then I asked myself the question - what do I want to do? When you have had little experience of what particular occupations really involve, deciding on the vocation out there that suits you can be a monumental task. The other area I had an interest in was journalism and I thought I would like to write for a magazine, but I was still unsure. I began to search for university courses and came across Corporate Communication at The Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen. I felt this course suited me as it covered journalism, but also a number of other communication professions, giving me a chance to sample them all and providing me with skills that I could apply to numerous vocations. I applied and got a



conditional offer. Thankfully I made the grades and accepted my place on the course.

During my placement with ASPIRENorth I was allocated a number of tasks to work on. These included developing an activity for S1 pupils, which allowed me to get creative and think of something fun, yet educational that S1 pupils would enjoy. I was also given the job of devising a plan for the development of the ASPIRENorth website, in particular the pupils' pages. Other tasks involved designing a questionnaire to evaluate the S1 activity and developing Powerpoint presentations to inform parents about ASPIRENorth.

I also took part in activities in the schools themselves, in the form of parents' information evenings, Student Volunteer recruitment

sessions and assisting in the delivery of some pupil activities. The activity I took part in at Torry Academy and Northfield Academy was for S3 pupils. This activity was an interactive quiz about post-school education. As a Student Volunteer my role was to ensure the pupils were participating and understanding the activity as well as to answer any queries they had about post-school education. The pupils really liked the fact that they were able to take an active part, instead of just being given a talk, which they might have found boring.

The other activity I took part in required a trip to Inverness. This activity was for S2 pupils and involved visiting Inverness College to participate in 'taster sessions' in different subject areas such as science, beauty therapy and engineering. The pupils really seemed to enjoy this activity and were enthusiastic about asking questions to find out more. Giving them this opportunity to see what actually goes on in their local college will make them much more likely to consider college or university education.

I have enjoyed my placement with ASPIRENorth and feel I have learnt and developed many skills that are important in employment. I would like to thank them for giving me this opportunity and hope that they continue with their good work for a long time to come.

All change at **ASPIRE**North

As there have been one or two ASPIRENorth team changes within the last few months, this is a good opportunity to give everyone a quick update. Sadly for us - but no doubt delightedly for our partner Orkney College UHI - we are saying goodbye to **Kirsty Macdonald**, Development Worker (Highlands & Islands) who is leaving Inverness to take up a lecturing post in Kirkwall. We wish Kirsty every success in the

future and she's already promised to be a great contact for us at the college and to spread the ASPIRENorth word further amongst potential student volunteers in Orkney. Kirsty's replacement is yet to be appointed.

Penny Lockwood has also recently left the project due to ill health, but we were very fortunate in that **Anne Dempster** agreed to step up into the

acting post, and has now been formally appointed Regional Co-ordinator (Grampian). Following Anne's success **Laura Cunningham** has now been appointed Development Worker (Grampian) and this has enabled us to keep a lot of important continuity within the team. **Julie Anderson** will soon join the team to take over as Administrative Secretary in the Grampian office.

S2 pupils try it out

S2 pupils from Banff, Peterhead and Torry Academies, Grantown Grammar School and Buckie, Inverness and Lochaber High Schools got the chance to find out more about local education options during our recent 'Try it Out' days. These activities involved pupils from our target schools visiting their local college or university to take part in a number of taster sessions. The taster sessions showed pupils how school subjects relate to the study options available after school. The pupils found out about the variety of learning opportunities available in their local area, as well as having some hands-on fun.

The pupils benefited from taster sessions covering a diverse range of subjects including archaeology, hairdressing, joinery and outdoor education. By trying their hand at different practical exercises, including making a CD rack, baking scones, finding out about windfarms and building bridges, the pupils learned that post-school education can be a fun and rewarding experience.

ASPIRENorth would like to thank the institutions that participated in these events, including any current students who helped out on the day. The team are very keen to roll out this activity on a wider scale. To



achieve this we are reliant on the support of our partner universities and colleges. The team will be holding discussions in the near future to look at how we can build on the success of this year's activities.

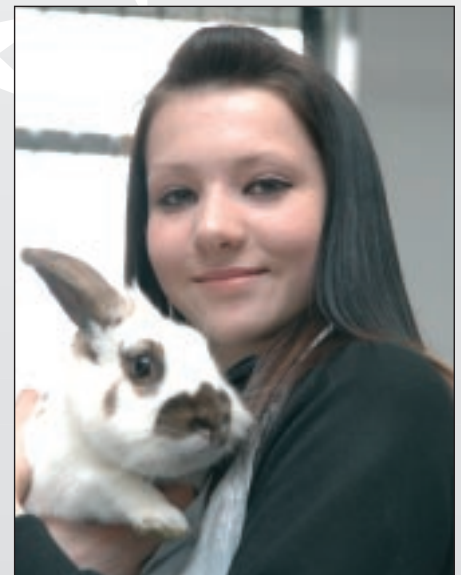
To see what the pupils got up to during their visit, please visit www.scotland-aspirenorth/news

I would like to do it again – S2 Peterhead Pupil (about Aberdeen College visit)

I don't think that there was a worst part of the day. For me it was all good. In fact it was EXCELLENT! – S2 Dyce Academy Pupil (about SAC visit)

The feedback from the staff who went to Moray College was VERY positive – James Vance, Depute Rector, Banff Academy

I thought it was a really positive day for the pupils, I had three very good sessions with all pupils participating in the sessions and my general feeling was that they all took away with them a good experience – Sofie Runge, Careers Scotland Adviser, Grantown Grammar School (commenting on S2 visit to Moray College, Elgin)



ASPIRENorth are grateful for the support of the following institutions in delivering this activity: Aberdeen College, Inverness College, Lochaber College, Moray College, The Robert Gordon University, Scottish Agricultural College, University of Aberdeen

Student Volunteers – why do they do it?

The ASPIRENorth student volunteering programme is in full swing and to date we've had 9 keen volunteers out with us to assist at 17 events across the Grampian and Highlands & Islands regions. Our volunteers study a range of courses (both FE and HE) in a variety of institutions, and volunteer with us for many different reasons. Here's why two of them chose to help ASPIRENorth:

Lisa Clarke, BA (Hons) Corporate Communication, The Robert Gordon University: "Taking part in the S2 activity was great fun. Letting the pupils see their local college and answering any questions they have about it is very fulfilling. I volunteered because I feel that the work that ASPIRENorth are doing is extremely valuable to school pupils. I didn't receive a lot of information about post-school education when I was at school and think that a programme like this would've helped to prepare me for university."

Liz Barron, PhD student, Inverness College UHI: "I think many school pupils don't go on to further education as they either don't think they can, or don't know what is



Kirsty Macdonald mans a stand to recruit student volunteers

available. I hope that by working with ASPIRENorth I can help address this and enable students in the Highlands to take advantage of the great opportunities that are available."

We're always looking for more volunteers to assist with our ever expanding programme of activities and we'll be running a number of recruitment drives at partner institutions across the north of Scotland at the beginning of the new academic year. Come along and see us, or get in touch to find out how you can get involved.

For further information on student/recent graduate volunteering, please contact:

Grampian Region
Laura Cunningham
Development Worker (Grampian)
T: 01224 274696
E: l.cunningham@abdn.ac.uk

Highlands & Islands Region
Tom Allardyce
Regional Co-ordinator (Highlands & Islands)
T: 01463 258819
E: t.allardyce@abdn.ac.uk

* You can also find further information and application forms on our website at www.scotland-aspirenorth.ac.uk *

P7 pupils go to big school and beyond

The transition from primary to secondary school can be a difficult one for many pupils. ASPIRENorth has developed an activity for P7 pupils which aims to make this key transition as smooth as possible. The 'Big School and Beyond' activity has now been delivered to 497 pupils in 18 primary schools across the north of Scotland.

In the first part of the activity pupils participate in the 'Big School Game', a

lifesize game where pupils are asked questions about their new secondary school. The game improves the pupils' knowledge of their new school and gives them a better idea of what to expect when they get there. The giant foam dice used in this part of the activity have proven particularly popular with the P7 pupils!

The second part of the activity takes the form of a Q&A session with senior pupils from the secondary school

answering questions from the P7s. Where it has not been possible for senior pupils to attend, the team have created an alternative activity which further develops the P7 pupils' confidence and knowledge.

Initial feedback on this activity from both teachers and pupils has been very positive. The P7 pupils will now progress to secondary school where ASPIRENorth will continue to support them through our activities in S1-S4.