

## Placements in Rural and Island Locations – Pilot Project 2017-18

### Background

Teacher shortages are apparent across Scotland, and seem to be particularly acute in rural and island areas. As a pilot project, we have worked in partnership with various local authorities, arranging student placements in rural and island areas in 2017-2018 and would like to consolidate the work in 2018-2019.

The aim is to increase the chances of a teacher working in these areas later in their career or, if the timing is appropriate, to influence the TIS preferences of the students so that they choose to name the local authority high on their list, increasing the chances of the student being allocated there and possibly entering full employment after probation.

### Placement Models

Two models for arranging rural and island placements are proposed:

- (1) inviting **individual students** with **home, family or friend addresses** in such areas to volunteer for a placement there;
- (2) inviting **groups of students** to volunteer to stay in such a location for the duration of the placement, irrespective of home address.

**In the home / family / friend address model**, no accommodation costs are expected as students will stay at home, or with a family member, or with a friend. Any travel expenses in excess of the student's usual travel to university costs are reimbursed, so there may be additional travel costs.

**In the group model**, the university will invite groups of at least 4 students to come forward in Primary, in Secondary or with a mix of both. The university has secured a modest amount of funding from the Scottish Government to meet expenses for volunteer students. Local authorities are asked if they are able to fund accommodation, preferably with the students together in self-catering or hostel accommodation.

### Strathclyde Pilot

At Strathclyde, only PGDE students will be eligible for the pilot scheme. Students on the BA course have serial days which are impractical in a rural / island context. Potentially, placement blocks can be 2 weeks in length (for Primary students' Early level placement in December), or 5 weeks (Primary in Nov-Dec), 7 weeks (Secondary for 2 weeks in October plus 5 weeks in Nov-Dec in same school), or 10 weeks (Primary and Secondary, 5 weeks in Feb-Mar, and 5 weeks in Apr-May in the same school). Although some students may prefer to do all of their placements in a rural / island setting, especially if it is close

to home, we have decided that usually only one placement block (1+2 or 3+4) should be allowed in such a setting in the pilot phase. Careful consideration needs to be given to which placements are most suitable for the scheme. It may be risky to use placements 1 and 2 when students have their very first experience of being a student teacher on placement. On the other hand, placements 3 and 4 may be too late to influence the TIS choices of the students, although the experience may still lead to them seeking a job in a rural or island setting later in their career.

2017-2018, £10 000 SG funding has gone towards:  
student travel to and from Lewis and Arran; student accommodation on Arran.

## Local Authority Partnership

Local authorities wishing to engage in the project are asked to make the following commitments as their partnership contribution in return for the university securing student volunteers for placements:

- to provide “in kind” support by way of school lunches, lifts to schools, and so on wherever possible
- to provide accommodation for students in the group model
- to identify appropriate staff who can undertake support and assessment visits to the students; they should be teachers in Primary or in the specific Secondary subject; the university will provide support and training for local authority staff who undertake visits on our behalf to quality assure the process; local staff may benefit from the experience as it is valuable professional learning for them, and it may be relevant in particular for those on leadership or similar programmes with project to carry out; it may be possible to develop a programme which leads to Professional Recognition with GTC Scotland.

## University Commitment

The university is committed to finance the Director of Partnership’s time and travel expenses to travel to locations in the country. The purpose of such visits is to provide free professional learning to teachers on ways in which students will demonstrate the Standard for Provisional Registration. This has a two-fold pay off; it ensures that students have informed support on placement and it is an opportunity for school staff to revisit the suite of GTCS standards and have discussions around their exemplification.

## Evaluation

The pilot will be evaluated by formal and informal means and a report prepared by the summer of 2018. The report will be for internal use only and for sharing with the Scottish Government on request.

## Expansion of Pilot and Possible National Rollout

There are significant issues to be addressed in expanding the pilot or moving towards a national rollout. A national rollout would involve authorities coming into partnership with more than one ITE provider which can lead to complications. School experience should not be dislocated from theory and the goal for teacher education is that there should be a strong link from theory to practice. Anyone assessing students on placement needs to be familiar with the theory within their ITE courses. Courses can vary widely across ITE providers in their sequence of learning and nature of evidence required. This can be difficult for teachers to manage in schools and challenging for local authority assessors to manage. Staff in local authorities need the opportunity to consolidate the approach taken by one ITE provider, initially, and only the University of Strathclyde have been involved in the pilot to date. In addition, there is a commitment required from the ITE provider which should not be underestimated; the time and expense

to travel the country to establish partnerships is considerable and exchanging paperwork is no substitute for a personal connection.

Although we will not have the evaluation report until the summer of 2018, we would like to extend the pilot project for 2018-19 and already have Western Isles, Scottish Borders, Dumfries and Galloway, Highland, North Ayrshire, Orkney and Argyll and Bute keen to work in Partnership. A single pilot always runs the risk of specific local factors affecting the outcomes and another year would give a more robust picture on which to base any further work. If the conclusion is that this is an initiative with a positive impact, in terms of student placements, teacher learning and teacher numbers then exploring a proposal for an expanded rollout with SCDE would be the next step.

In conclusion, the University of Strathclyde are very grateful for the financial support of the Scottish Government this past year and would respectfully ask for funding for a further year to be considered.

Catherine Whitley 2018