

WRITTEN MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR UNIVERSITIES AND SCIENCE (THE RT HON DAVID WILLETTS)

STUDENT SUPPORT

28 NOVEMBER 2013

In the Spending Review this summer, we announced our intention to end the undergraduate National Scholarship Programme (NSP) after 2014/15. That decision was based on evaluation which has shown that there are more valuable ways of widening access and enlarging the choices students make about higher education through the negotiated access agreements of universities. In the last three years the funding of access has greatly increased and we are now able to deploy these resources to greater effect. By bringing forward from 2015/16 the planned reduction of £100 million in funding for the NSP we are able to redirect £25 million to establish a new network to support collaborative outreach.

Universities, colleges and schools will benefit from an investment of £25 million in 2014 to help them work together more effectively as they reach out to encourage more people from disadvantaged backgrounds to apply to university.

The funds will be used to create a locally-based network and crucially will provide a single point of contact for schools seeking information on how to be part of outreach activity. A single point of contact will be simpler for schools enabling them to make contact with all their local universities and colleges.

Well thought-out outreach activities can raise aspirations and attainment, enabling bright young people from low income or other underrepresented backgrounds to see that university really can be an option for them. We know that outreach is most effective when delivered as a sustained programme of activity over time. Outreach therefore needs to be directed towards young people at different stages of their educational lives and begin early at primary level. These new arrangements will help to do this in a more targeted and sustained way. They will also help more mature learners through links with Further Education colleges, employers and local communities.

The National Scholarship Programme will remain in place for 2014/15, targeting £50 million from Government towards students in most need of help. Universities will also continue to support NSP awards in the final year of the scheme, in addition to offering other bursaries and scholarships to their students.

To make the programme more flexible for students in this transition year, we have removed the £1,000 limit on the amount of the award that can be given in the form of cash. We have also reduced the minimum level of award for full

time students to £2,000, which means that 100,000 students could still receive an award, in line with our original estimate.

The Government has also announced previously that £50 million from the NSP would be refocused in 2015/16 to support students from less advantaged backgrounds to access postgraduate education, and in areas that support the Government's ambitions for growth.

Our reforms have ensured that universities invest significantly in widening access. The Director of Fair Access has reported that institutions plan to spend over £700 million a year by 2017/18 on such measures - greatly increased from £444 million in 2011/12. Evidence shows students are not being deterred. Latest available data from UCAS show that for the 2013/14 entry cycle more students than ever before are getting their first choice at University; the entry rate for 18 year olds in England is the highest ever; and the proportion of 18 year olds from the most disadvantaged backgrounds applying to university has increased to the highest level recorded.

WRITTEN MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

THE PARLIAMENTARY UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE FOR BUSINESS, INNOVATION AND SKILLS (VISCOUNT YOUNGER OF LECKIE)

STUDENT SUPPORT

28 NOVEMBER 2013

My Rt. Hon Friend Minister of State for Universities and Science (The Rt. Hon David Willetts) has made the following statement.

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