



10 DOWNING STREET
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THE PRIME MINISTER

24 December 2010

Dear Simon

Maximising the participation of the most disadvantaged children in the education system is the key to achieving the Coalition's number one social policy goal of increasing social mobility.

That is why the Government has protected schools budgets, made available additional resources for early years education and introduced a pupil premium to provide extra support for the most disadvantaged children in the school system. In addition to this focus, we are also particularly concerned to ensure that over the coming years we are successful in our objective of increasing the number of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds going on to higher education.

In the heat of recent debate, some of the elements of the package have been obscured and there is a material risk that young people – particularly those from disadvantaged groups – may be deterred from applying to university (or continuing their studies to gain university-entrance qualifications) as a result of being misled about the financial impacts of the package. This particularly applies to those aged 15-16 who will make decisions in the coming months on whether or not to stay on for A-levels. For them to be deterred from entering university as a result of misinformation would be a tragedy for them.

We would therefore like to invite you to become the Government's Advocate for Access to Education reporting to us both and with a close engagement with the Social Mobility Inter-Ministerial Group. We would like you to take forward an urgent piece of work with young people in secondary education to engage them in how to deliver the government's objective of increasing educational participation particularly for those from the most disadvantaged backgrounds. The terms of reference for this role are attached.

The role will be unpaid. Standard rules of confidentiality with regard to access to Government material will apply. If you accept this appointment, please would you make contact with Sue Gray, Director of Propriety and Ethics in the Cabinet Office, to discuss the role, including to make a statement of any interests you may have.

Yours sincerely



**RT HON DAVID CAMERON MP
PRIME MINISTER**



**RT HON NICK CLEGG MP
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER**

Mr Simon Hughes MP

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Advocate for Access to Education

The Advocate for Access to Education will work with the Government to ensure that its policy goal of increasing participation in higher education by those from the most disadvantaged backgrounds is met.

For this purpose the Advocate will take forward an engagement project to understand young people's concerns about access to higher education and to design with young people an effective communications strategy to ensure that there is a clear understanding of the new system of student financing so young people are not deterred from going on to higher education.

By engaging with young people in this way, the Government will aim to break down some of the barriers to constructive and rational debate about further and higher education.

The Advocate will be asked to start immediately with the following responsibilities:

- Engage with young people, their parents and those who work with them, to better understand issues relating to access to post-16 and higher education.
- Develop, in conjunction with young people and the Government, particularly DfE and BIS, a communications strategy to ensure that information on the new student finance arrangements reaches all secondary school students and particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds to encourage them to access higher education.
- Report to the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister by the end of January with proposals to engage secondary school students to ensure they understand and have access to comprehensive information about support available for them into higher education; and then on a regular basis with recommendations for maximising access to post-16 and higher education.
- Develop with the Government, particularly DfE and BIS, an engagement strategy which will allow young people to input into policy development on access to education.
- Contribute the views of young people and input to the policy development work by DfE, BIS and the Sutton Trust are leading to ensure that the replacement for EMA works effectively to encourage students to stay on for post-16 education.
- Contribute the views of young people and input to the policy development work by BIS on the design of the National Scholarship Programme to ensure it is effective in driving up participation in higher education and promoting access.
- Act as a champion for access to education to ensure that arrangements to support students are understood.
- Report to the PM and DPM on how to deliver measures to promote access to Higher Education, including the Government's approach to the Office for Fair Access and in relation to universities which apply to charge fees above £6,000.
- Assist the Government in establishing a panel of advocates to act as sponsors of access to post 16 and higher education and engage with young people to dispel myths about college and university attendance

The Advocate will focus on the effective communication and delivery of the Government's policy programme, within the current budgetary parameters.

The Advocate will be supported by officials within BIS and DfE, and report to the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister with close engagement with the Social Mobility Ministerial Group. The appointment is for a six month period. The Advocate will provide regular advice to the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister.