Summary

Over this quarter we formulated our strategy, launched a Further Education campaign and maintained momentum on our research agenda.

Strategy

Following the publication of its first “State of the Nation” report in April 2019, the Commission spent the summer defining its priorities, aims and ambitions for its term. Our strategy was published in October 2019. It describes our values, strategic objectives, core themes and sets Commissioner portfolios. In particular, it reaffirms our commitment to supporting the Further Education sector as well as to highlighting issues of place as they relate to social mobility. Crucially the strategy recognises that there are many organisations outside of government trying to alleviate social immobility and its impact - the Commission is committed to working closely with them in partnership.

Research agenda

Extra curricular activities report (July 2019)

The Commission published an Unequal Playing Field which highlighted the disparities in extra-curricular provision and participation faced by those from different backgrounds. The Commission made a series of recommendations, the most prominent of which was to introduce an extra-curricular bursary scheme to those from low-income households to support them in overcoming some of the financial barriers to participation.

Forthcoming research publications

The 2019 social mobility barometer is being finalised. The barometer highlights attitudes to social mobility, from awareness of what social mobility is to whether social mobility has improved in recent years; and how a respondent considers their opportunities compare to their parents. This report will be published in quarter 4.

The Commission intends to publish a review of ‘what works’ activity in the Further Education (FE) and Adult Skills sector in December. This ‘Evidence Gap Map’ will show what research exists and where the evidence gaps are. A technical paper will be produced alongside a policy briefing, laying out the steps government should take to create a What Works Centre for FE and Adult Skills.
New research projects

Two behavioural insights projects were awarded. The first looks at how to improve disadvantaged students’ engagement with digital careers advice. The second will develop behavioural ‘nudges’ that will incentivise employers to provide in-work training and careers conversations to their low-skilled workforce.

The Commission will procure its final research projects of this fiscal year in October-November. Projects include: an intergenerational income mobility analysis that will provide granular, local authority-level outcomes; establishing a 30-year framework for measuring social mobility; and assessing barriers to progression within a large employer by socio-economic background.

Advocacy

Chair’s engagements

A list of the Chair’s engagements is included at Annex A.

Dame Martina Milburn wrote to prospective party leaders in July, new Ministers in August and Permanent Secretaries in September. She also wrote to cross-party parliamentarians in July to gather support for the introduction of a student premium for disadvantaged pupils aged 16-19.

Secretariat activity

Speeches were given by members of the secretariat at two events:

- Sasha Morgan spoke at Widening Access to HE conference in Manchester in July;
- Ali Jaffer spoke at the National Pupil Premium Conference in London in July

Media and campaigning

To support the launch of our Unequal Playing Field report Dame Martina visited a volleyball after-school club in East London run by the charity Greenhouse Sports. The visit was filmed by a broadcast pool, including Sky, Channel Five and other outlets which covered the report the next day. The research was picked up by several newspapers and websites.

The SMC launched a campaign for extra resources for Further Education in mid-July. This included a recommendation to introduce a student premium for 16-19 year olds to help disadvantaged pupils, many of whom attend FE colleges.

We supported the sector to come together on the issue of additional resources. The Commission contacted MPs and peers and leading FE organisations including AoC and National Union of Students. Through a series of meetings, common positions were agreed to raise support for our campaign at Westminster and beyond. We also wrote to the Chancellor and the Education Secretary to press for extra resources in the one-year settlement announced in September. The campaign for a student premium and additional resources for the next three-year settlement will continue, in coordination with other FE stakeholders.

Social Media Highlights

- 17% increase in Twitter followers
• 416 retweets / shares on social media
• 625 likes on social media
• Over 40 mentions on Twitter
• 720 downloads of Unequal Playing Field

Governance

The Commission held one meeting during this period which focused on strategy. The attendance rate from Commissioners was 70%.
Annex A: Chair’s engagements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When</th>
<th>Who</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Why</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16 July</td>
<td>Nadhim Zahawi, DfE PUSS for Children and Families</td>
<td>Department for Education</td>
<td>Regular meeting</td>
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<td>17 July</td>
<td>SMC Secretariat</td>
<td>SMC</td>
<td>Strategy day</td>
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<tr>
<td>30 July</td>
<td>Indra Morris, DG, Social Mobility and Disadvantaged</td>
<td>Department for Education</td>
<td>Regular meeting</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Alex Burns (No 10)</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td>Regular meeting</td>
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<td>7 August</td>
<td>Bernadette Kelly, Permanent Secretary</td>
<td>Department for Transport (DfT) and Civil Service Social Mobility Champion</td>
<td>Discussion of social mobility proposal for the Civil Service and social mobility pilot for DfT</td>
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<td>3 September</td>
<td>Amanda Spielman, HM Chief Inspector of Education, Children’s Services and Skills</td>
<td>Ofsted</td>
<td>Introductory meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 September</td>
<td>Kemi Badenock, PUSS, Children and Families</td>
<td>Department for Education</td>
<td>Introductory meeting</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Justine Greening</td>
<td>Member of Parliament</td>
<td>State of the Nation recommendations and SMC’s FE campaign</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ian Ferguson</td>
<td>Department for Education</td>
<td>Introductory meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Gavin Williamson, Secretary of State</td>
<td>Department for Education</td>
<td>Introductory meeting scheduled for 3 September was postponed due to parliamentary business. It was rescheduled to 28 October but again postponed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Judith Cummins</td>
<td>Member of Parliament</td>
<td>Meeting to discuss FE funding, social mobility agenda and Opportunity Areas programme was scheduled to take place on 3 September and subsequently postponed due to parliamentary business.</td>
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