

26 September 2008

To Heads of HEFCE-funded higher education institutions
Heads of HEFCE-funded further education colleges

**For further information contact Kevin Whitston, tel 0117 931 7013,
e-mail k.whitston@hefce.ac.uk**

Dear Vice-Chancellor or Principal

The enclosed research report looks into the use and potential benefits of a range of schemes, sometimes called compact schemes, run by individual higher education institutions (HEIs). The purpose of the report is to share information about compact schemes and raise awareness of them across the sector; we hope it will provide you and your staff with a source of ideas and information to support your own planning in this area.

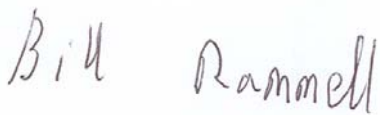
The research report recognises that compact schemes offer one of many routes for building strong, formal relationships with schools and colleges. They engage learners in thinking about higher education (HE) and encourage learners to set goals in relation to their ambition to progress to higher education. The report recognises that staff in schools, colleges and HEIs who are involved in these schemes feel they improve pupils' motivation and achievement prior to HE application.

The strength of such schemes is often in the variety of design and approach – tailoring a scheme to meet specific aims and circumstances. There are, however, emerging themes that those involved in the design and operation of schemes will want to consider. The key recommendations emerging from this work are:

- the importance of establishing a clear target group and purpose for the scheme
- collecting better data and seeking the appropriate permissions to share data for research and evaluation
- monitoring performance to evaluate the success of the scheme, and
- providing clear information on eligibility and main benefits of the scheme.

The report does indicate that there may be a need for greater transparency in some compact arrangements. You will know that openness and transparency are the key principles underpinning admissions policies and practices in general.

The report shows that compacts and other schemes of this sort can be a useful tool in increasing and widening participation and can be an effective part of an institution's outreach activity. They are certainly not the only route for HEIs to engage effectively with schools and colleges to help identify and nurture the talent of the future, but they can offer benefits when used as part of an integrated outreach strategy. They will not suit all institutions or all circumstances but we hope this report can help share experiences across the sector and support you as you develop your broader widening participation strategies.



Bill Rammell
Minister of State, Lifelong Learning,
Further and Higher Education



Professor David Eastwood
Chief Executive
HEFCE