

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILEDUCATION COMMITTEE3 February 2022Report by Director of EducationEDUCATION REFORM CONSULTATION**PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1. To update Education Committee on the Council's response to the Scottish Government Education Reform consultation.

**RECOMMENDATION**

2. Education Committee is asked to note and approve the East Renfrewshire response and agree that the response be homologated.

**BACKGROUND**

3. In response to the OECD reports [\*Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence: Into the Future\*](#) and [\*Upper-Secondary Education Student Assessment in Scotland: A Comparative Perspective\*](#) the national Education Reform consultation was published on 30 September and ran until 26 November 2021.

4. The Education Reform consultation, led by Professor Ken Muir, was designed to seek views of stakeholders and inform the recommendations relating to the future shape of Scotland's national education agencies, Education Scotland and the Scottish Qualification Agency (SQA). The process will conclude with an independent report by Professor Muir to the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills in early 2022.

**REPORT**

5. On 11 November 2021 Education Committee noted that the changes to Scotland's national education agencies is likely to have significant implications for education in East Renfrewshire. The Committee also noted the Education Department was holding a number of forums during the consultation period to seek the views of East Renfrewshire stakeholders including:

- Elected members and members of Education Committee;
- Community Learning and Development;
- Head Teachers;
- Staff groups including representation from the LNCT;
- Parent Council Chairs;
- Quality Improvement Officers; and,
- Head Boys and Girls.

6. Views from the meetings held were used to form the response by East Renfrewshire to the consultation.

7. As the next meeting of the Education Committee was not until after the consultation ended it was agreed to establish a short term working group to consider the responses from stakeholders, and to finalise and submit a response on behalf of the Council. It was also agreed that the final response would be submitted to the next meeting of the committee for homologation.

8. The working group consisted of the Convener (Councillor Lafferty) Leader of the Council (Councillor Buchanan) and Leader of the Conservative Group/Education Spokesperson (Councillor Wallace). The group met on 23 November 2021 to discuss the Council's draft response to the consultation.

9. The Council's response to the Education Reform consultation was submitted on 26 November 2021, a copy of which is attached as Appendix 1.

## CONSULTATION

10. As set out in paragraph 5 the response reflects the views of key stakeholders.

11. Professor Muir also engaged with and sought feedback from a wide group of stakeholders including ADES and COSLA.

## FINANCIAL AND EFFICIENCY IMPLICATIONS

12. There are no financial implications relating to this paper

## RECOMMENDATION

13. Education Committee is asked to note and approve the East Renfrewshire response and agree that the response be homologated.

Mark Ratter  
Director of Education  
3 February 2022

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### Background Papers

1. Education Scotland and the SQA: Consultation  
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/independent-review-education-scotland-scottish-qualification-authority-professor-kenneth-muir/documents/>
2. Education Committee Report: Education Reform Consultation, 11 November 2021

[https://eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk/media/7094/Education-Committee-item-03-11-November-2021/pdf/Education\\_Committee\\_item\\_03\\_-\\_11\\_November\\_2021.pdf?m=637716158088870000](https://eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk/media/7094/Education-Committee-item-03-11-November-2021/pdf/Education_Committee_item_03_-_11_November_2021.pdf?m=637716158088870000)

Appendices

East Renfrewshire Council Response to Education Reform Consultation

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## Education Reform

### Consultation on behalf of Professor Ken Muir, University of the West of Scotland and Independent Advisor to The Scottish Government

#### Respondent Information Form

**Please Note** this form **must** be completed and returned with your response. To find out how we handle your personal data, please see our privacy policy: <https://www.gov.scot/privacy/>

Are you responding as an individual, group or an organisation?

- Individual  
 Group  
 Organisation

If responding as an individual or group, which of the following best describes your role in the education system?

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parent / Carer                                | <input type="checkbox"/> Child / Young Person    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher / Lecturer / Practitioner             | <input type="checkbox"/> Support Staff           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> School / Centre Leader                        | <input type="checkbox"/> National Agency Officer |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Local Authority / Regional Officer | <input type="checkbox"/> Employer / Industry     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other, please state:                          |  |

If responding as an individual or group, which of the following best describes your sector?

- |                                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Early years | <input type="checkbox"/> Primary                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Secondary   | <input type="checkbox"/> Tertiary (Further / Higher Education) |

Full name or group name

East Renfrewshire Council

Organisation name  
(if applicable)

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The Scottish Government would like your permission to publish your consultation response.

Please indicate your publishing preference:

- Publish response with name
- Publish response only (without name)
- Do not publish response

**Information for organisations:**

The option 'Publish response only (without name)' is available for individual respondents only. If this option is selected, the organisation name will still be published.

If you choose the option 'Do not publish response', your organisation name may still be listed as having responded to the consultation in, for example, in the analysis report.

We may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

- Yes
- No

## Consultation Questions

### SECTION 1 – VISION

**As an introduction to the questions which follow in this consultation, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?**

**1.1 The vision for Curriculum for Excellence reflects what matters for the education of children and young people in Scotland.**

- Strongly Agree**  
 **Agree**  
 **Neither Agree/Disagree**  
 **Disagree**  
 **Strongly Disagree**

**1.2 What do you think should be retained and/or changed?**

East Renfrewshire recognises the significance of engaging with this consultation and as such we have sought views from a range of stakeholders including: pupils, staff, parents and elected members to enable us to submit this response. Through this engagement there was a continued commitment by all stakeholders to the vision for Curriculum for Excellence (CfE).

East Renfrewshire schools are clear that their curricular framework and structure must deliver the six national entitlements. In order to deliver these entitlements our education establishments have worked together as a community to establish their vision, values and aims which are underpinned by the department's vision statement of Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving through Excellent Experiences. Within the authority there is evidence from internal and external quality assurance activities of many strong features in both the leadership of CfE and in the impact of CfE on learners' experiences, attainment and achievement.

However although our stakeholders believe that the vision is still very much relevant, evidence suggests it was never fully understood or effectively implemented across the wider system. The space and flexibility to implement CfE was quickly filled by competing agendas and policies, therefore the clear intent and policy agenda for the curriculum became diluted. At that time the educational landscape was not conducive to empowerment or teacher agency and capacity and confidence of staff to deliver was not fully supported. This climate led to the vision not entirely being realised and as a direct consequence learners' did not receive their full entitlements, especially as children and young people progressed from the Broad General Education (BGE) to the Senior Phase (SP).

Although in East Renfrewshire our schools develop Senior Phase curriculum frameworks that provide a range of learning pathways designed to meet the needs of all learners, whether aspiring to achievements at SCQF level 1 or SCQF level 7, young people highlighted that once the choice of learning pathway was decided, the actual curriculum and pedagogical approaches are driven entirely by course specifications determined by awarding bodies rather than be provided by the continuation of the rich, pupil-centred experiences within the BGE. Our staff also commented on their fulfilment when teaching the BGE versus the restrictions within the SP.

Almost all our stakeholders highlighted the missed opportunities and the forgotten agenda of the vision, including the holistic objective of developing the four capacities in our children and young people. They believe these were never fully explored, became superficial and not properly explained or embedded in the curriculum. Our young people also commented that the capacities were more explicit in the primary sector but were almost forgotten by the time they moved to secondary school and the senior phase. All our stakeholders as part of this engagement believed the capacities were still very much relevant, even within the arena of the global pandemic, however they emphasised the real opportunity to revisit these along with a refreshed, decluttered and non-convoluted narrative, to enable an empowered system to progress within a clear, coherent and understood policy environment. A refresh would provide an opportunity to link with other current policy changes such as UNCRC and the recent Additional Support Needs (Morgan) Review.

All our stakeholders were resolute in their views that there is no need for whole system change, more a need for a refreshed narrative that would take into consideration the last 10 – 15 years, and to align this with consideration of where we are now, nationally and globally. Specifically, there is value in exploring Mental Health and Wellbeing. Our Community Learning and Development colleagues also highlighted the need to focus on critical thinking and judgement, especially in the context of social media. Again, in engagement our stakeholders emphasised the need to be trusted and involved in decision making around the curriculum, with Head Teachers feeling empowered at a local level to deliver this vision and a curriculum in the Broad General Education (BGE) and varied learner pathways in Senior Phase (SP) based on the needs of their individual communities, however they didn't feel the autonomy was there beyond the local authority as they highlighted the continually changing national agenda, with many (and at time conflicting) national policies and plans that are not necessarily aligned to the CfE. For example the Pupil Equity Funding, Scottish Attainment Challenge and National Improvement Framework. A feeling that CfE was being forgotten was expressed.

Within the actual curriculum, key areas to explore would include coherence and pedagogical approaches of 3 to 18, the role of knowledge, application of skills, progression pathways and how we consistently assess progress at each stage. Our stakeholders again emphasised the need to include all within the system to ensure understanding, trust, autonomy and accountability. A concern around the pace of change was also expressed, with a plea that any proposed changes would be within a timescale that did not impact negatively on system capacity and would allow any proposed change to be adequately embedded and assimilated.

## SECTION 2 - CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT

**To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?**

**2.1 Curriculum for Excellence provides a coherent progression in the journey of learners (3-18 and beyond) that gives them the best possible educational experience and enables them to realise their ambitions.**

- Strongly Agree*  
 *Agree*  
 *Neither Agree/Disagree*  
 *Disagree*  
 *Strongly Disagree*

**2.2 Please share what you believe currently contributes to a coherent progression.**

In engagement, our head teachers highlighted the disconnect between the Broad General Education (BGE) and Senior Phase (SP) and how that impacts on coherent progression from 3 to 18, however they felt strongly that it would be wrong to focus only on the challenges from 15 to 18 as there is much to be proud of in East Renfrewshire within the BGE.

Our head teachers highlighted how our schools in East Renfrewshire collaborate within clusters (associated early years, primary, secondary and special schools), planning together to design a curriculum which provides a coherent and progressive pathway through the experiences and outcomes (Es & Os). A success of this approach is how it supports transition at key points and across sectors and ensures attainment, achievement and experiences are progressive and continuous. However our pupils, staff, parents and elected members asked the question around how progress across the four capacities is valued, assessed and recognised, with a few stakeholders describing how the four capacities are the ideal vehicle to bring about that holistic development of the whole child from 3 – 18, maintaining a focus on *who you are going to be, rather than what you are going to be*. Stakeholders admitted that although the capacities were around for some time prior to the framework, they were almost forgotten as people focused on content. The reason provided by most staff for this was the sense of responsibility and the fact the measures of success were not aligned to the four capacities, but focussed on the more traditional attainment measures. That said, our stakeholders, in particular our parents expressed a concern that future measures of success would have to be well thought out, reliable, valid and comparable, and that the *'baby was not thrown out with the bathwater.'*

Our head teachers also raised that CfE was badged as an opportunity for teachers to declutter an already crowded curriculum, make meaningful links across curricular areas and provide real and relevant learning experiences. They highlighted the success of this approach in East Renfrewshire, and how they were provide with the autonomy (and accountability) within a local authority structure. They were therefore confident that this can work, however they stated the amount of Es & Os and the lack of preparation and implementation time at a national level meant that teachers did not have this agency for long, before additional layers and guidance were produced, making it very difficult for teachers to navigate and apply the intended flexibility and autonomy to their curriculum. Our stakeholders also described how high quality interdisciplinary learning, where learners have the opportunity to apply their learning in a real and meaningful way and indeed be able to truly develop the outcomes as described within the four capacities and the skills for learning, life and work has become diminished as other factors have crowded the arena.

Overall our stakeholders were supportive of the rationale of staggering of levels across sectors (ELC and primary) believing they enabled the continuous learning agenda, however a few of our head teachers felt this opportunity was lost between other sectors (primary and secondary) where for the typical pupil the end of second level and the beginning of third coincides with the end of P7 and beginning of S1. They felt that this could lead to a glass ceiling for more capable students with a summative assessment approach to determining children's progress/capability at transition point as well as possible duplication of learning for some pupils. Similarly the transition from fourth level to SP has many unintended consequences including the danger that the S3 experience does not truly reflect the philosophy or the pedagogy of the BGE. Our secondary head teachers also felt strongly about the distortion between children's experiences of the fourth level within the BGE and the beginning of national qualifications at SCQFL5, where for many subjects the pathway is not aligned or progressive. Indeed in many cases fourth level within the BGE is regarded as being more challenging than SCQFL5 courses of study.

### 2.3 Please share ideas you may have to improve learner progression across stages and sectors.

As described in 2.2 above, in the main it has worked well for the Broad General Education (BGE) in East Renfrewshire, with the collaborative approach between clusters of schools serving the same community. However there remains challenge between the BGE and Senior Phase (SP), in particular the detrimental impact on the continuity of learners' experiences. A review of key transition stages in the context of the design principles and the delivery, assessment and recognition of young people's achievements across the four capacities, should be undertaken to ensure true alignment between these phases and the knowledge and skill content of the 3 – 18 curriculum.

The Scottish Government's proposal to increase non class contact time for teachers could provide a platform for collaboration and continued professional dialogue across the system, thereby enabling staff to improve learner progression and consistency of experiences for pupils however it must also be highlighted that the reduction in class contact time should not be to the detriment of learners in its implementation.

### 3.1 In practice, learning communities are empowered and use the autonomy provided by Curriculum for Excellence to design a curriculum that meets the needs of their learners.

- Strongly Agree*  
 *Agree*  
 *Neither Agree/Disagree*  
 *Disagree*  
 *Strongly Disagree*

### 3.2 Please share ideas you may have on what is needed to enhance this in future.

The empowerment agenda is powerful, and the need to strengthen the middle welcomed, however as recognised by the OECD report, the middle has been swamped by the continuous and changing national priorities and strategies. Therefore there has been too much change in the system, leaving an uncertainty and a lack of clarity. This doesn't create the correct culture and conditions for empowerment at any level.

Our head teachers as part of this engagement, highlighted the demand placed on schools in relation to Curriculum for Excellence (CfE), particularly around their arrangements for curriculum, planning, assessment and reporting in schools. They reported the lack of clear guidance at a national level and their disappointment at the refreshed narrative that was produced by Education Scotland. They did however state that at a local authority level, East Renfrewshire had been proactive in providing support and guidance that minimised workload demands for staff and tackled bureaucracy in their schools, and the provision of clear strategic direction in taking forward Curriculum for Excellence had resulted in a planned and coherent approach. They believed that there was a strong and mutual trust between the local authority and schools, built upon respectful relationships. They also highlighted the well-developed skills framework, the moderation arrangements and the high quality professional learning. Moving forward it is important that relationships between other agencies reflect the strength that exists within East Renfrewshire and adds value.

Our stakeholders also expressed that although there is definitely autonomy within the system, the balance with accountability and external influences deteriorates as children and young people progress through the system, consequently the scope to truly design a curriculum specific to your context and community diminishes.

#### 4.1 The creation of a Curriculum and Assessment Agency will help to address the misalignment of curriculum and assessment as outlined in the OECD report<sup>1</sup>.

- Strongly Agree*  
 *Agree*  
 *Neither Agree/Disagree*  
 *Disagree*  
 *Strongly Disagree*

#### 4.2 Please share your views of the potential advantages of establishing such an Agency.

It is challenging to comment on this question as the purpose of this agency has yet to be explored. If it is to simply replace the existing agency (SQA) then it is difficult to determine the advantages to this.

Any new agency should be independent, transparent, consultative and show strong leadership across the system to maintain a National Standard. It should focus on the curriculum aspect of its role not just assessment in isolation. If it truly looked at both then this would be a potential advantage.

#### 4.3 Please share your views of the potential disadvantages of establishing such an Agency.

<sup>1</sup> [Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence: Into the Future | en | OECD](#)

As identified earlier by our stakeholders, there is a real risk we throw the *'baby out with the bathwater'*, and don't retain the many strengths within the existing agency (SQA). All functions of this agency should be explored to ensure that good practice is not lost, or those currently successfully working in partnership receive a diminished service.

It is important that any new agency has a clear remit which includes the requirement to align the objectives of the Broad General Education with the curriculum and approaches to assessment in the Senior Phase.

It is difficult to further comment without having a full understanding of what the whole system looks like. If introduced this agency would need to talk to and collaborate with others within the system. Our secondary head teachers believe the agency should add value, continuity and consistency but they emphasised the need for trust and credibility.

### 5.1 The full breadth of existing SQA qualifications<sup>2</sup> play an important part of the curriculum offered by secondary schools.

- Strongly Agree  
 Agree  
 Neither Agree/Disagree  
 Disagree  
 Strongly Disagree

### 5.2 Please identify the main factors, if any, that support a broader range of SQA qualifications being included in the curriculum in secondary schools.

Learners' needs vary from school to school and as such it is important that the curriculum on offer is broad and inclusive to all. All our stakeholders emphasised their commitment to children and young people accessing the right pathway.

In East Renfrewshire, there is parity of esteem, with our schools' design of the curriculum providing flexible learning pathways which has resulted in improved outcomes for young people. These pathways support children and young people to build on prior learning and ensures appropriate progression for all learners. Schools offer a wide range of courses in the senior phase, they review these on a regular basis to ensure they support pupil needs and lead to improved outcomes. Our vocational programme takes account of the latest Labour Market Information and delivers a significant number of courses, ranging from SCQF level 1 to level 8, to a considerable number of students including those undertaking Foundation Apprenticeships across a range of frameworks. The courses are delivered in partnership with colleges, universities and employers, allowing pupils to develop skills in their chosen subject as well as valuable experience to help them in the world beyond school. This autonomy to work with key stakeholders to design a broad range of accredited courses, including academic and vocational qualifications is welcome by pupils, parents and staff alike. Our strong partnership with Skills Development Scotland complements our approaches. The Council's approaches to the delivery/support of vocational courses by external agencies ensures that no other academic studies delivered by schools are detrimentally impacted in anyway, allowing a genuine varied learner pathway, which values academic and vocational qualifications equally.

<sup>2</sup> [Explore our qualifications - SQA](#)

Although within East Renfrewshire a wide and varied learner pathway offering is in place, the skills for life, learning and work agenda has progressed at a faster pace and as such, the time is right to review the offer as part of the secondary curriculum. It is however important that these qualifications operate within the same currency and are truly intended to provide breadth and choice and not a two tier system. Insight and the LGBF play a role in this, potentially hindering schools and Local Authorities from introducing a broader range of qualifications. It will be important moving forward that we ensure that pupil achievements in the senior phase are appropriately recognised.

### 5.3 Please share any ideas you may have on what is needed to enhance the role of a broader variety of qualifications in the curriculum in secondary schools.

As part of this engagement exercise, all stakeholders highlighted how East Renfrewshire had enhanced the range of pathways and qualifications available in our 7 secondary schools. This included systematically developing our Senior Phase (SP) offer over a period of time. However, although delivered in partnership it was felt that there is scope for further collaboration between key partners, in particular those in Further and Higher Education.

Our pupils explained during this engagement exercise that their choices are often determined by entry requirements, and that at the moment some pathways don't hold the same value as others. They understand the need for prerequisite experience however they challenged the historical nature of this. Our staff also discussed how structures and timetables in the SP had many restrictions caused by the need for young people to access specific subjects within a set period of time.

We would welcome wider national debate, involving all key stakeholders, using the criteria reflected in the Stobart review, on the purpose and principles for Scotland's curriculum, assessment and qualifications system. We would however suggest that any further recommendations from this consultation are not agreed prior to this whole system approach to improvement. As described by our stakeholders, we cannot take forward 2 recommendations in isolation of the other 10, nor did they think it appropriate we create another set of recommendations from the existing 2.

There is a need to debate how the curriculum meets the current national and global context and how we measure success as part of a national measurement framework. As mentioned above Insight and LGBF will have to be reviewed to reflect any changes. The action plan created by the Scottish Government in response to the Additional Support Needs (Morgan) Review also outlines the development of a measurement framework for learners with complex Additional Support Needs. It is important that this is considered at the same time as any other changes to national measures.

### 6.1 Technologies are fully and appropriately utilised as a support for curriculum and assessments.

- Strongly Agree*
- Agree*
- Neither Agree/Disagree*
- Disagree*
- Strongly Disagree*

6.2 Please share any comments you may have on the use of technologies to support curriculum and assessments, and what could be done to deliver improvements.

Although not currently universally in place, our stakeholders recognised the great potential in further developing the use of technologies to support curriculum and assessment, and they emphasised the significant role technologies played in the recent global pandemic. Although it could never replace or provide all the benefits that attending school does, it did allow teachers to explore the potential of using such tools not only to offer remote learning and teaching but also to enhance learners' experiences on their return to school. The development of West OS and East Renfrewshire's Video Vault was recognised by staff as a valuable support and our pupils could describe how it provides reinforcement and support when learning key concepts and ideas.

Our stakeholders, however were keen to point out that there is a danger that an over reliance on technology could diminish pedagogical practices, with young people clear that they still want that interactive face to face session with teachers.

Exploration of technologies to support assessment would be welcomed, however the process of using technologies should not overtake the purpose of assessment and the part it plays as part of learning and teaching. Exchanging a paper based assessment for one which is presented in exactly the same way online may improve the management of assessment, however this will not add anything to the experience of learners or the ability to assess and recognise wider skills, knowledge and abilities. The use of digital approaches for the purpose of assessment must truly consider how assessment approaches can change to assess not only curricular knowledge and skills, but wider skills and abilities; learning from others who use digital assessment as described within the Stobart review could be used to support any changes, including the previous SQA pilots of online assessment and the current use of Scottish National Standardised Assessments.

From East Renfrewshire's point of view a move to this approach would need to have a clear strategic plan, with the correct and ongoing investment at a local authority level. This includes an investment in infrastructure, devices and professional learning of the workforce. Our young people and staff described the frustration when things don't work because of insufficient bandwidth, or how devices and technologies can quickly date. There also needs to be consideration of the assumptions made during the pandemic regarding accessibility, not limited only for key equity groups, with a focus on both devices and the appropriate ongoing connectivity being available. Therefore any such investment be universal and on an ongoing basis, to ensure up to date technologies are in place and at a national level, providing equity across the system.

**7. Please share any additional comments you have on curriculum and assessment.**

East Renfrewshire welcomes the national focus on curriculum and assessment. There is a strong commitment from our stakeholders to use the evidence gathered nationally to effectively implement locally. They believe the local approach is working well and as previously noted, they are very receptive to a refresh but question the need for any complete overhaul. The current capacity within the whole system needs to be considered prior to any decisions on change, in particular the pace of change for pupils, staff and parents. There is no stability within the current system, with all feeling the challenge of policy and initiative overload, against a backdrop of recovering from a global pandemic. Change needs to be an improvement and given time to embed and impact measured. A strategic, coherent approach combined with ownership of all improvement agendas needs to be in place, i.e. NIF, SAC 2, GIRFEC, The Promise, etc.

At a national level, it is important that any agenda moving forward doesn't become overly weighted towards assessment in the Senior Phase. It needs to focus on curriculum, and assessment as part of learning and teaching. With this in mind, consideration needs to be given to the national professional learning offer required to support systematic change.

Overall our staff, parents and elected members are committed to their role in effectively implementing CfE, with the ongoing support of the Local Authority and the Regional Improvement Collaborative. They believe CfE is effectively implemented within East Renfrewshire but would welcome the potential to collaborate with any new improvement agency.

## SECTION 3 - ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

**To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?**

**8.1 There is clarity on where the responsibilities for the strategic direction, review and updates for Curriculum for Excellence lie.**

- Strongly Agree*  
 *Agree*  
 *Neither Agree/Disagree*  
 *Disagree*  
 *Strongly Disagree*

**8.2 Please indicate where you think the responsibilities for the strategic direction, review and updates for Curriculum for Excellence should lie.**

A fundamental challenge of having a clear strategic direction for Curriculum for Excellence is that there are multiple policy makers across the 3 – 18 agenda, including within the Scottish Government, where we have the Children and Families and the Learning Directorates. Education Scotland's and SQA's role and guidance further blurs the strategic direction. This coupled with the tension between the empowerment agenda and national directives has left East Renfrewshire stakeholders feeling that the original messages and guidance around the curriculum and empowerment have been diluted and in parts tokenistic.

If we truly want an empowered system we should move away from a top down model and create and develop an approach that has teacher ownership at the heart of curriculum design. To do this we need to have consistent strategic leadership at a national level, joined up policy decisions, clear reference to curriculum and improvement, the correct balance between autonomy and accountability, streamlined reporting and clarity between advice and policy.

Within East Renfrewshire the strategic approach to the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence has included the development of policies and guidance designed to provide a framework of improvement for schools, however, these have not been overly prescriptive. Our staff don't feel this can be said about the national approach, sighting incidences of where their autonomy has been challenged by external national agencies, despite their evidence of impact and outcomes for their learners. Our head teachers could provide further examples where they've felt judgement has been unfairly made for no other reason than they are not following the route that national agencies would prefer.

Our stakeholders would welcome strategic direction and a national framework for them to effectively implement, alongside the guidance, support and challenge provided by Local Authorities and Regional Improvement Collaboratives. Although the review by OECD and its recommendations are well received, schools and LAs need to be involved in setting our own strategic direction and not be heavily reliant on external review. This bottom up approach would enable this and support the strategic direction, implementation and the ongoing evaluation of CfE at a national level. This would allow the Curriculum and Assessment Board or equivalent to have a clear role with agreed responsibilities not only for strategic direction and framework but for ongoing continuous evaluation of national progress and CfE impact.

**9.1 There is clarity on the roles played by national agencies and other providers for responding to needs for support with curriculum and assessment issues.**

- Strongly Agree*  
 *Agree*  
 *Neither Agree/Disagree*  
 *Disagree*  
 *Strongly Disagree*

**9.2 Please share which aspects of the support currently provided by national agencies and other providers is working well.**

Our head teachers believe the current structure and organisation within Education Scotland is not adding sufficient value to the current system. Teachers no longer recognise them as a relevant or consistent resource that supports improvement, with Local Authority and Regional Improvement Collaboratives being referenced as the drivers for improvement within the system.

This was particularly true during the recent period of school closures where East Renfrewshire's schools felt that Education Scotland's response to supporting them was out of tune with the work of schools at that time. This may be in part due to the detached approach between Local Authorities and Education Scotland that is in place now with the removal of Area Lead Officers. This post was valued in the system and led to a deep and shared understanding and knowledge between both parties. Our head teachers and departmental staff also reported as part of this consultation that the shift from improvement to scrutiny by Education Scotland during the pandemic did little to negate their view that the agency truly understood the challenges facing education at that time. Although the reviews were referenced as sharing of good practice, stakeholders believed them to be unsupportive, adding to workload and stress.

An area that stakeholders did speak positively about during this time was the opportunity for scrutiny and improvement teams of Education Scotland to work together to provide professional learning opportunities for school staff. Almost all staff participating highly evaluated the learning and expressed a wish for further opportunities.

The reasoning behind the amalgamation of HMIE and Learning Teaching Scotland has never achieved the desired outcomes and impact. There is a sense that there is confusion about where Education Scotland fit within the system. Stakeholders stated a sense of tension between scrutiny and locality teams and did not think they fulfilled the role required by a national agency.

**9.3 Please indicate where you think greater clarity is needed in relation to the roles played by national agencies and other providers for responding to needs / requests for support with curriculum and assessment issues.**

There needs to be a review of all the national inputs, agendas and layers that the current national agencies contribute to and whether they bring support and structure to the vision of Curriculum for Excellence and / or if they support improvement within the system. Many stakeholders within East Renfrewshire were unclear of the purpose or impact of some of the layers and roles within Education Scotland, for example National Improvement Framework Advisors, Attainment Advisors, Senior Regional Advisors. They believed the numerous roles contributed to the fragmentation of the agency.

**10.1 There is clarity on where high quality support for leadership and professional learning can be accessed to support practitioners.**

- Strongly Agree*  
 *Agree*  
 *Neither Agree/Disagree*  
 *Disagree*  
 *Strongly Disagree*

**10.2 Please share any comments you may have on support for leadership and professional learning.**

The General Teaching Council (GTC) supports professional learning by providing a range of opportunities. There is room for further collaboration across agencies, in particular between Initial Teacher Education (ITE), GTC, SG and ES. There is a sense that the system is not talking to each other and that there is no system wide improvement agenda for leadership and professional learning. The Professional Leadership and Learning (PLL) function of Education Scotland in part supports the leadership and professional learning across the system. Our staff feel that it has a clear role and makes a strong contribution to supporting and developing leaders and ensuring that the national standard for head teachers is accessible. They also collaborate with higher educational establishments to ensure staff across the system have a range of professional development opportunities. These opportunities are highly evaluated by school staff. However the PLL appears to work in silo from the other functions of Education Scotland preferring to deliver “discrete” types of learning and not taking advantage of the intelligence or improvement agenda to design and deliver professional learning opportunities to support with leadership of curriculum and assessment. In preparation for change we need to build the capacity of staff. All agencies with this remit must collaborate to ensure that a needs analysis identifies the professional learning required to create a state of readiness for education reform. It is important however that any offer for professional learning continues to add value and is not a duplication of professional learning that is already on offer through the RICs or local authorities.

**11.1 There is sufficient trust with all stakeholders, including children, young people, parents & carers, so they are genuinely involved in decision making.**

- Strongly Agree*  
 *Agree*  
 *Neither Agree/Disagree*  
 *Disagree*  
 *Strongly Disagree*

**11.2 Please share any ideas you may have on how trust and decision making can be further improved.**

Overwhelmingly our stakeholders reported that they feel trusted and empowered to make decisions and bring about improvement. They spoke about the ethos of trust that exists in East Renfrewshire, and how staff feel comfortable learning from mistakes and are encouraged to take initiative; within a consistent framework. Our head teachers are

empowered to take forward learning and teaching in their schools within broad local authority guidelines which have been written collaboratively by head teachers and education department officers. As a result, teachers have the autonomy to design the curriculum and lead improvement based on evidence-based research and an understanding of their school community. This approach has undoubtedly contributed to the overall sense by East Renfrewshire's stakeholders that Curriculum for Excellence has delivered for our learners.

Our stakeholders, however recognised that not all levels of the system are empowered, therefore the trust and decision making is stronger in some partnerships than others. The lack of strategic direction and clear roles and responsibilities within the national system also impacts on the trust and decision making. There needs to be a collaborative approach to the improvement agenda, with all stakeholders involved in any reform or pending national debate on curriculum design.

We must take this opportunity to rebuild system wide relationships, improve communication, focus on excellence and equity and align to other priorities such as GIRFEC, UNCRC and the Promise.

### **12.1 Independent inspection has an important role to play in scrutiny and evaluation, enhancing improvement and building capacity.**

- Strongly Agree*  
 *Agree*  
 *Neither Agree/Disagree*  
 *Disagree*  
 *Strongly Disagree*

### 12.2 Please give examples of how you would like to see scrutiny and evaluation being carried out in future.

An external independent agency with responsibility for scrutiny and evaluation is the preferred way forward. This will bring professional respect to the agency as well as providing public reassurance and regulation.

Moving forward, however scrutiny needs to be different. The model and language around inspection should be reviewed. Nationally we need to look outwards and forwards focussing on how quality is assured within an empowered system. Stakeholders expressed a desire to feel connected to the process, demonstrating the difference between local authority inspections and Education Scotland led scrutiny. Although our stakeholders are pragmatic about the six point scale, they strongly felt that the professional dialogue around visits should be strengthened with less emphasis on gradings, and more focus on building the capacity to improve. The model should be agile, nimble and evolving so that it supports self-reflection and internal accountability. The scrutiny body also has to be relevant and connected to all levels of the system, therefore the role of Associate Assessors is vital. Each local authority should have a significant number of Associate Assessors across all sectors who can support the process. Associate Assessors should bring a different range of experiences to the process, for example departmental staff with responsibility for quality assurance activity at authority level should be considered alongside senior leaders in schools.

Our Community Learning and Development (CLD) stakeholders also believe the consistency and transparency of how inspection models and Quality Improvement (QI)

Frameworks are used/deployed during cycles of inspection needs to be strengthened, citing examples of how definition or interpretation of QIs can change during a national inspection cycle.

Serious consideration needs to be taken of the cluttered scrutiny landscape in ELC. With two self-evaluation frameworks and two scrutiny bodies there is a risk of over scrutiny and conflict of interest. The Scottish Government's Children and Families and the Learning Directorates must streamline and simplify the process and ensure that it is the same agency that scrutinises education across 3 – 18.

**13. Please share any additional comments on roles and responsibilities in Scotland's education system.**

Although there is a strong appetite for change if it brings about improvement there is a risk that the current capacity within the system is not taken into consideration. The continued impact of Covid-19 at all levels presents a risk for the success of reform, therefore all stakeholders must be engaged and involved in the process and listened to when deciding on an appropriate pace. This is relevant not only to the context of this consultation but all 12 recommendations detailed in the OECD report and accepted by the Scottish Government. Local authorities and Regional Improvement Collaboratives can play a vital role in helping respond to these recommendations and ultimately bringing about improvement for all learners but they must be involved and truly empowered in order to do so.

In doing so there also should be strong cognisance of the statutory duties and functions of the Local Authority and the devolved responsibilities. The opportunity to collaborate over a refreshed shared agenda would be welcomed by East Renfrewshire Council.

SECTION 4 - REPLACING THE SCOTTISH QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY AND REFORMING EDUCATION SCOTLAND

**Removing Scrutiny (Inspection and review) from Education Scotland**

**14. Please share any comments or suggestions you have on this proposed reform below.**

We are particularly interested in hearing your views on:

- a) the approach this reform should take (for example what form should this agency take)
- b) the opportunities these reforms could present (for example the development of a new national approach to inspection including alignment with other scrutiny functions)
- c) the risks associated with any reform (for example whether the independence of the inspectorate could be jeopardised by change)
- d) how any risks might be mitigated
- e) the timescales over which these reforms should take place.

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) To be recognised as a credible and professionally respected agency, the scrutiny body must operate independently. They must have autonomy to challenge and support across the system, maintaining a focus on ensuring that children and young people have the best possible learning experiences. They should scrutinise, evaluate and analyse findings, providing information which will support the national agenda for improvement. They should feed into national debates but not take on the agenda of others and remain independent throughout.</li> <li>b) The language and model associated with scrutiny needs to change to allow all stakeholders to feel connected to the process. Currently our stakeholders do not feel this is the case. Our Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) staff also raised a concern regarding the current scrutiny process for ELC establishments. This has to be addressed as currently nurseries have 2 self-evaluation frameworks with 2 sets of quality indicators, and head teachers with a nursery class as part of their primary school have 3. Our head teachers report this increases workload, bureaucracy and confusion as there is sense of real tension between Education Scotland and the Care Inspectorate. Given a choice our head teachers would prefer to be aligned to education standards rather than care and would prefer to have the same self-evaluation framework as schools.</li> <li>c) Although the rationale for having the improvement body and scrutiny body within one agency was convincing, the reality has been different. That said we don't want to go back to a scrutiny agency that operates in silo, they must contribute to system wide improvement by collating evidence and data around performance and shining the light on where the national improvement should focus.</li> <li>d) A clear, transparent and collaborative approach will support reform. Autonomy with accountability is required with the prerequisite that the inspectorate undertake internal and external self-evaluation (e.g. peer evaluation) on a cyclical basis. This could involve stakeholders from across the system and partners from other scrutiny regimes.</li> <li>e) There is a genuine risk if you change one part of the system without aligning or exploring the other changes, therefore a careful plan on how this should take place is required,</li> </ol> |
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taking into consideration the timescale for the implementation of the other agreed 12 recommendations of the OECD report.

## Further Reform of Education Scotland

### **15. Please share any comments or suggestions you have on how the functions currently housed in Education Scotland could be reformed.**

We are particularly interested in hearing your views on:

- a) the approach this reform should take (for example which functions should continue to sit within a reformed Education Scotland, and are there any functions which could be carried out elsewhere)
- b) the opportunities reform could present (for example should more prominence be given to aspects of Education Scotland's role)
- c) the risks associated with any reform (for example disruption of service to education establishments and settings)
- d) how any risks might be mitigated
- e) the timescales over which these reforms should take place.

- a) Where Education Scotland sits in the current system is unclear. There is limited unity of purpose between the scrutiny, improvement and professional learning bodies within the agency, consequently our stakeholders do not regard them as a support at this time. The current structure is vast and the creation of locality teams has brought layers and uncertainty about who is actually leading and making decisions. The main function should be to drive and support the vision for the curriculum.
- b) The current role and responsibilities of Education Scotland requires clarity, until this is clear it is challenging to identify opportunities.
- c) The pandemic has presented an opportunity for us to look at things differently, engagement and involvement has been limited over the past 2 years, therefore the risk is low.
- d) A clear identify and purpose to ES.
- e) Again we would urge caution that we don't implement significant change without fully considering the actions required to implement the other 12 recommendations from the OECD report.

## Replacing SQA

### 16. Please share any comments or suggestions you have on this proposed reform below.

We are particularly interested in hearing your views on:

- a) the approach this reform should take (for example could a function be carried out elsewhere)
- b) the opportunities these reforms could present (for example should more prominence be given to an aspect of SQA's role)
- c) the risks associated with any reform (for example loss of income, confusion as to system of awards in Scotland)
- d) how any risks might be mitigated
- e) the timescales over which these reforms should take place.

- a) There has to be a clear remit and purpose to any replacement agency with a focus on adding value. We cannot run the risk of replacing like with like. Improvement is needed around leadership, communication and transparency, however we must also take into consideration the current strengths in this system, not just at school level, but across Community Learning and Development, Adult Learning, Further Education, etc.
- b) The integrity and validity of national qualifications is crucial. Our stakeholders emphasised that this must be maintained irrespective of the lead agency. We are aware of the historical concerns, including the challenging relationships, however moving forward there is an opportunity to learn from mistakes and develop a suite of assessments that support the curriculum, align with pedagogical approaches and recognise the wider holistic achievements of all children and young people. There should be consideration given to how Scotland recognises and celebrates the wider achievements of young people, such as the development of the four capacities, and to how this should be certificated. Any developments in this area must be accompanied by significant communication and work with all relevant stakeholders to ensure the credibility and value of such certification and to avoid the failing of previous attempts at such non-certificate recognition, such as the S3 profile of learning; this requires a change in what society considers as success.
- c) There is a real opportunity to significantly enhance approaches to assessment, using digital technologies to do so. The use of technology should not simply be to replicate paper based approaches in a digital form. The use of technology can provide a greater opportunity to assess wider skills and attributes which young people are developing as a consequence of curriculum for excellence. Examples of approaches used in other countries as described within the Stobart report can and should be considered. However this is an opportunity for Scotland to be forward thinking and innovative in what and how it assesses.
- d) Disconnect within the system is a concern where the agency works in silo and doesn't consider the impact on pupils and teachers in terms of workload and bureaucracy, nor take cognisance of the changes to curriculum. We cannot make the same mistake of the "*tail wagging the dog*". Stakeholders in East Renfrewshire would like reassurance that assessment will come after the national debate on curriculum. The credibility of national qualifications must also remain so that there is a consistency, coherence and comparability across the nation.

- e) Involving all stakeholders in professional dialogue to ensure that any changes are fully considered.
- f) Changes should not be made until the curriculum agenda is clear, therefore the role of the new agency should be clear along with reassurance on the interim approaches to delivery of national qualifications.

## **Considering the Establishment of a new Curriculum and Assessment Agency**

### **17. Please share any comments or suggestions you have on this proposed reform below.**

We are particularly interested in hearing your views on:

- a) the approach this reform should take (for example are there alternative models for this reform?)
- b) the opportunities these reforms could present (for example what should the role of the new agency be?)
- c) the risks associated with any reform
- d) how any risks might be mitigated
- e) the timescales over which these reforms should take place.

- a) Our stakeholders are disappointed that the suggestion of a Curriculum and Assessment Agency has been made without full consideration or collaboration with them. It is disappointing that the opportunity to discuss the OECD recommendations with those in the system was not further explored, therefore there is a tension that reform will continue to be a top down model.
- b) There is a real opportunity for assessment to sit as part of learning and teaching and curriculum. This potentially presents the opportunity to truly have a coherent curriculum from 3 – 18.
- c) As previously detailed we have a pattern around quick changes which are not improvements, therefore the role and responsibilities of this agency need to be fully explored with opportunities for co-production across the system on determining the role and responsibilities.
- d) Dialogue and consideration of the landscape required for change prior to any decisions.
- e) The system needs to be ready for change, therefore timescales need to be considered within the current context. A clear timeframe must be agreed and shared and the professional learning opportunities aligned. Pupils and parents must be fully engaged and involved and communication must be informative, honest and reassuring.

**If you have any additional comments and suggestions relating to this consultation, please send them to [EducationReform@gov.scot](mailto:EducationReform@gov.scot)**

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