



RESPONDENT INFORMATION FORM

Please Note this form **must** be completed and returned with your response.

Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?

- Individual
 Organisation

Full name or organisation's name

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If you choose the option 'Do not publish response', your organisation name may still be listed as having responded to the consultation in, for example, the analysis report.

We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They 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 on Guidance for improving education attainment for children and young people from travelling communities

Children in Scotland is Scotland's national agency for organisations and professionals working with children, young people and their families. It exists to identify and promote the interests of children and their families and to ensure that policies and services and other provisions are of the highest possible quality and are able to meet the needs of a diverse society.

We aim to influence the development of policy, to ensure that it best meets the needs of children, young people and their families in Scotland.

Our response to the guidance aims to provide general comment on the direction of the guidance as opposed to dealing with some of the more technical questions.

4) Is there sufficient information in the introduction on the context, cultural issues, responsibilities and evidence, to support improved understanding?

Yes, to an extent. The introduction lays out the some of the broad issues children and young people from travelling communities face and how these relate to their attainment.

However Children in Scotland would suggest that certain changes would improve the document, particularly in relation to the cultural issues. Firstly we would suggest that greater clarity over the additional support needs experienced by children and young people from traveller communities would be useful. Under the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2009, an additional support need is defined as anything that causes a child or young person to require extra support.

The additional support needs that schools are likely to experience when working with children and young people from various travelling communities are likely to be diverse, including a range of health conditions as well as additional support needs relating to interrupted learning or poverty. Greater clarity over this in the guidance would support schools to understand the appropriate measures they need to put in place. We would suggest that developing the skills and experience of staff in responding to the needs of children and young people from various travelling communities would also

better equip schools to deal with these additional support needs and support their educational outcomes.

5) Is the balance of information correct for each issue?

Children in Scotland would suggest that the entitlements section of the introduction section should be given greater prominence. The entitlements should also be more clearly linked to the educational needs of children and young people from different travelling communities, and while this is linked up later in the document it is not as clear as it could be.

A slight expansion of this section would provide the reader with more of a basis for understanding how the Scottish educational environment can fit with the needs of children and young people from travelling communities. It would also provide more clarity for children and young people and their families as to how the Scottish educational environment can meet their needs.

8) Does the Leadership and Management section provide appropriate advice and guidance in relation to pupils from travelling cultures?

Children in Scotland would suggest that the guidance could be tighter in relation to what is expected of schools in preparing for pupils from travelling communities. While we support schools being given the ability to respond to local context we would suggest that schools should be *obliged* to educate staff and engage with networks like TENET even when no children or young people from travelling communities are on the role so as to be prepared for if/when the situation arises as this would greatly ease the transition period and support attainment.

While we understand this puts extra pressure on school resources we feel that by building networks proactively school will be better placed to integrate children and young people from travelling communities and this could be facilitated by open dialogue with particular prominent organizations and ensuring the requisite policies and procedures are in place.

Additionally Children in Scotland would suggest that schools be obliged to have a member of staff within schools who has responsibility in this area and who links into these networks. This would greatly ease transitions and also enhance the schools knowledge base and learning environments to meet the specific needs of children and young people from across these communities.

We appreciate that the document touches on the transfer of information between schools and also acknowledge the data protection issues that come with information sharing. This needs to be in line with new legislation being

developed on information sharing in relation to the Named Person Service (Part 4 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014).

10) Are there any areas missing, requiring strengthening, or which are not required and could be removed?

We believe that the section could be strengthened by being far more explicit about how schools can improve their practice. In its present form the guidance provides points for reflection, which are useful but could be bolstered by providing advice and support on how to actually improve practice. This could be achieved by providing evidence of good and bad practice in relation to certain issues and also by providing more clear links with organisations who can support schools to engage with children, young people and their families from various travelling communities.

For example the reflections on how to support enrolment is too anecdotal and relies on one head teachers account. By providing more of the information highlighted above we feel schools would be better supported going forward to ease the enrolment process, ensure a smooth transition into school and ultimately create an environment that is more likely to support attainment.

11) Please suggest any other ways in which the Leadership and Management section might be improved.

There are some issues with the wording of the section. On P24 we feel that the guidance puts the responsibility for disengagement with education on the child or young person and not on the education system. We would suggest that focusing more on the institutional issues which cause issues relating to engagement with education for children and young people from various travelling communities would encourage schools to think more about the changes they need to make to support the learning of children and young people from these communities.

12) Does the Learning Provision section provide appropriate advice and guidance in relation to pupils from travelling cultures?

We would suggest that the guidance in relation to a flexible curriculum could be more appropriate. The guidance identifies that Curriculum for Excellence allows flexibility in 4-6th year but also indicates that many children and young people have already fallen out of education at this point. The guidance needs to give more support to schools to be flexible earlier in the learning pathway so as to promote prolonged engagement with education from children and young people from different travelling communities.

One area where we feel that the document does provide useful guidance in terms of this is in terms of digital learning. For example insight into the

success of the ELAMP project is useful and identifies what Children in Scotland feel could be a successful route to improving attainment. However the document does not support schools to access projects like this or even highlight current similar models.

Additionally while we agree with this in principle there are still areas where schools and children and young people from the various travelling communities will need additional support to allow them to fully utilize digital learning. OFCOM have noted that 7% of Scottish premises do not have access to acceptable broadband speeds and only 27% have access to superfast broadband¹. Further roll out of high speed broadband is required to ensure that digital learning can be accessed and utilized appropriately to improve educational outcomes. There is also limited understanding of the access that children and young people from the various travelling communities have to devices like laptops that would support this digital learning and clearly without access to such resources digital learning is unlikely to increase attainment.

In relation to the above points we would also suggest that the provision of learning is too deeply rooted in the school environment. While we accept that the document aims to focus on providing a school environment that works for children and young people from the various traveller communities we would also suggest that this is too rigid an approach. Article 12 have found in their engagement with the various traveller communities that they often do not want to work within the school environment and to promote attainment we feel that alternative models will be required.

The guidance could instead provide greater support for partnership learning as this could promote the curriculum flexibility identified above and promote more skills based learning which may be in line with what children and young people from traveller communities want from education.

Evidence from our own engagement with third sector organisations has also identified that schools and partners can find navigating this process extremely complex. The guidance should provide more support on how to navigate partnerships and also more support in identifying organisations who are already embedded in these communities to support such work.

20) Are there any general comments you would wish to make about the guidance 'Improving educational outcomes for children and young people from travelling cultures' ?

¹ https://www.ofcom.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0038/95879/CN16-Scotland.pdf

Children in Scotland feel the guidance could be improved by revisiting the terminology used to describe the communities it aims to support. While we accept that the guidance makes the attempt to acknowledge different traveller communities, the fact that it refers to them as a homogenous group throughout throws up issues of accessibility. In discussions we have had with Article 12 we have found that families from across various travelling communities have not wanted to engage with the document specifically for this reason, and we feel this greatly limits its impact.

Additionally by treating communities in this way the document potentially does provide enough flexibility to meet the needs of groups who have very different needs. For example the Roma community who are not nomadic in the UK will require different support from nomadic communities.

We would also suggest that more evidence of meaningful engagement with children and young people from traveller communities and their families would greatly improve the guidance.

Currently evidence of engagement is woven throughout the document and we feel this does not provide enough clarity on a complex issue. We would also suggest that due to this lack of engagement the document makes assumptions about what children and young people will want from education based on their cultural characteristics.

The document instead should place greater emphasis on engagement with individual children and young people from the various communities both in terms of its own structure and formation but also in terms of the guidance it provides for schools.

The guidance would have more weight if more engagement was conducted with children and young people and their families to identify what they want from the Scottish education system and this was used far more clearly to structure the guidance for schools.

Additionally we feel far more emphasis should be placed on supporting schools to engage with children and young people from the various traveller communities. While we are pleased to see the document mention that schools may have to work with communities to gain an understanding of their aspirations we feel there should be more of a focus on engagement with individual pupils.

For example the document identifies barriers to education that children and young people from traveller communities face as a whole, we would instead suggest that schools should focus on identifying the barriers that individual children and young people who will be attending schools feel that they face.

This places the children and young people at the heart of their learning experience and treats them as individuals as opposed to members of their cultural background and would be much more clearly aligned with the principles of the UNCRC and GIRFEC that the document relies upon.

We would also suggest that such engagement will improve educational outcomes as children and young people will be given the chance to identify what they want from education and will gain more of an insight into how the Scottish education system can support this. Schools could be supported in this sense by the inclusion of a clearly defined section that focuses good practice, methods of engagement and organizations that can support engagements with these communities.

We would also suggest that the document does not necessarily have the information required to be successful. On p17 the guidance states *'we are committed to ensuring that we achieve the highest possible standards and success for all learners.... these are shaped by our clear understanding of the social, economic and cultural context in which children, young people and their families live'*.

Children in Scotland does not feel the document actually provides this information and as such seems unlikely to then promote the inclusive school ethos that the document rightly aims for. We would suggest that the Scottish Government should go back and engage directly with children and young people from the different traveller communities and their families to increase the information available to schools.

We also feel that greater evidence of engagement would have a positive influence on schools and show them that such engagement is possible and allow them to work to coproduce a school ethos with children and young people from travelling communities and their families as opposed to creating an ethos based on assumptions.

While we also accept that the term 'school' in the document does also mean early years provision, we would suggest that tailored guidance on the provision of early years education may be helpful, as there may be specific issues in terms of the provision of learning for very young children that should be addressed.

To ensure that any guidance on improving the educational outcomes of children and young people from the various traveller communities is effective the Scottish Government will also need to tackle the other social issues that impact on their education. Children and young people from these communities are more likely to be have parents who are economically inactive or who work

in the lowest employment grade than those from the rest of the population². Therefore they are more likely to live in low-income families and face the issues that go along with this and so improve their educational outcomes the Scottish Government must use policy levers across government to tackle poverty and lack of employment to support guidance of this sort.

² <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0049/00490969.pdf>