



23 January 2020

**Call for Evidence: Education and Skills Committee**

**2017 inquiry findings – Has progress been made on these issues?  
What is your view now?**

**Children in Scotland**

Giving all children in Scotland an equal chance to flourish is at the heart of everything we do.

By bringing together a network of people working with and for children, alongside children and young people themselves, we offer a broad, balanced and independent voice. We create solutions, provide support and develop positive change across all areas affecting children in Scotland.

We do this by listening, gathering evidence, and applying and sharing our learning, while always working to uphold children's rights. Our range of knowledge and expertise means we can provide trusted support on issues as diverse as the people we work with and the varied lives of children and families in Scotland.

Children in Scotland is pleased to be able to contribute to the Education and Skills Committee's upcoming inquiry on progress against the recommendations from the 2017 inquiry. We have conducted work in areas related to a number of recommendations and selected recommendations to respond to based on our work. Our response lays out the key points we believe the Committee should consider for potential questions during its upcoming inquiry. We would be happy to discuss these with the Committee in more detail as appropriate.

**GTCS' role**

**Recommendation 3:** *The Committee also recommends that the GTCS reviews all of its entry requirements to ensure that innovative solutions such as these are being implemented wherever possible but without compromising on the ability of the individuals coming into teaching.*

Children in Scotland believes that having the correct people working in teaching is essential for supporting children and young people. By this we include skills, qualities and attitude.

In our 25 Calls campaign we argued that rights and wellbeing should be at the heart of Scottish Education<sup>1</sup>. The call built on the findings from our 2018 project with the GTCS exploring what children think makes a good teacher<sup>2</sup>. Children and young people were clear that positive relationships with their teachers and a child rights approach were key to a positive experience of education.

We believe that entry requirements to teaching courses should reflect the wishes of children and young people and emphasise the importance of the skills, qualities and attitudes needed to take a relationship-based and child rights approach to teacher practice. We would encourage the Committee to explore how well these concepts are currently embedded within the entry requirements and future plans to place both of these concepts at the centre of future entry requirements.

It would also be of value for the Committee to explore how these concepts will be discussed within the delivery of Initial Teacher Education and across CLPL to ensure they are embedded within the teaching profession.

**Recommendation 7:** *The Committee recommends that the cycle of revisiting existing courses to renew accreditation should be shorter to ensure course content is responsive to the changing needs of Scottish education. The Committee recommends that the Government considers the benefits of making one organisation responsible for the accreditation of ITE courses and the assessment of the delivery of these courses.*

Children in Scotland agrees with both points and believes this will support teachers across Scotland to better meet the needs of all children.

We have been working with the GTCS on its refresh of the Professional Standards for Teaching. In 2018 we conducted research with 591 children and young people to explore what makes a good teacher<sup>3</sup>. In 2019 we also worked with the GTCS to support children and young people to feed into the consultation on the refreshed suite of Professional Standards and draft of the new Professional Code.

In our 2018 report we recommended that the refreshed Professional Standards should be at the heart of teacher education and specifically recommended that child development, relationship-based practice and a child rights-based approach should be central to teacher learning, including ITE, going forward. We know that they are all key for supporting learning and health and wellbeing but crucially these were key to children and young people's vision of what makes a good teacher in practice. If the cycle is shorter in reviewing accreditation ITE course content will be better able to reflect the most up to date thinking and research in Scottish education, including children and young people's experiences and opinions.

Thus, we encourage the Committee to consider questions that explore the effectiveness of learning around child development, relationship-based practice and a child rights-based approach within all accredited ITE courses. We would also encourage the Committee to explore whether these issues are considered within assessment of the accredited courses and if so how much weight is currently given

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<sup>1</sup> <https://childreninscotland.org.uk/call-6-rights-wellbeing-and-love-of-learning-must-be-at-the-heart-of-education-if-scotland-is-truly-to-be-the-best-place-to-grow-up/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.gtcs.org.uk/web/files/the-standards/Children-In-Scotland-Review-of-Professional-Standards.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.gtcs.org.uk/web/files/the-standards/Children-In-Scotland-Review-of-Professional-Standards.pdf>

to them. If there was one organisation responsible for accreditation and course content it might ensure greater consistency of experience for both teachers and children and young people across Scotland.

### **Additional Support Needs**

**Recommendation 8:** *The Committee welcomes the evidence received from student teachers highlighting the variation across different teacher training institutions and placements regarding training on supporting pupils with additional support needs, including that education on additional support needs is not guaranteed in some courses, which has left some student teachers unprepared to support those pupils with additional needs.*

**Recommendation 9:** *The Committee recommends that the Scottish Government works with the GTCS to address the inconsistency in additional support needs education during Initial Teacher Education, with the aim of ensuring that all teachers receive high quality baseline training which prepares them to assist pupils with a range of additional needs, regardless of which institution and course they receive their initial teacher education in.*

Children in Scotland conducts a range of work in relation to additional support for learning. We are concerned that the needs of children with additional support needs are not always being met in Scottish Education.

In 2018 we published the *Not Included, Not Engaged, Not Involved* report with Scottish Autism and the National Autistic Society<sup>4</sup>. The report highlighted the experiences of children with autism who were experiencing informal exclusions and demonstrated the effect of this on their health, wellbeing and learning<sup>5</sup>. We are very pleased with progress that has been made on call 5 within this report – ‘Enhance the programme of initial teacher training and Continual Professional Development to improve understanding of autism’. We expect a Scottish Government announcement on agreements made on this shortly. We encourage the committee to pay attention to developments in this area and consider additional questioning based on this. Call 12 of our 25 Calls<sup>6</sup> campaign expanded on the *Not Included, Not Engaged, Not Involved* report and specifically argued for the need to embed understanding of ASN in initial teacher training and ongoing development if we are to support pupils and teachers.

Our work with the GTCS in 2018 highlighted that children and young people believe that an essential part of being a good teacher is providing support based on the individual needs of every child. This involves knowing the best methods to support children with specific issues but also identifying appropriate learning strategies for different pupils based on their needs. We would encourage the Committee to explore whether teachers are currently receiving robust support to identify individual methods of support for children and being given practical support to utilise a range of learning techniques within the same lesson.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.notengaged.com/download/SA-Out-Of-School-Report.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.notengaged.com/download/SA-Out-Of-School-Report.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <https://childreninscotland.org.uk/call-12-support-our-pupils-and-teachers-embed-understanding-of-asn-in-initial-teacher-training-and-ongoing-development/>

Children in Scotland would encourage the Committee to explore the effectiveness of current delivery around additional support for learning in ITE with the policy officials who are leading a review of its content and impact.

**Recommendation 10:** *The Committee is also concerned by evidence from student teachers reflecting a lack of content in their courses on online safety for children. The Committee welcomes the Government's acknowledgement of this issue and recommends that the Government works with the GTCS to ensure high quality baseline training is received by all student teachers.*

Children in Scotland is aware of the importance of the digital space for children and young people. We agree that it is important that all student teachers receive a high level of baseline training in this area. Children in Scotland believes that it is important that all training and support for teachers in this area focuses on the benefits as well as the risks of using online spaces.

Children and young people must be supported to access spaces in a safe manner. The '5 Rights Framework' provides a good starting point for supporting children and young people to be safe online. We believe all baseline training in online safety for student teachers should make use of the framework to ensure the teaching profession can empower children and young people in online spaces, support them to manage risk and ultimately be safe online<sup>7</sup>.

We would encourage the Committee to explore whether baseline training on online safety is taking a positive approach to using online spaces and what further support is needed in this area. We would also encourage the Committee to specifically explore the current presence of the '5 Rights Framework' within training on online safety or any future plans to include this within the training.

**If you have any other questions please contact** Amy Woodhouse, Head of Policy, Projects and Participation, [awoodhouse@childreninScotland.org.uk](mailto:awoodhouse@childreninScotland.org.uk), 0131 313 8839

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<sup>7</sup> <https://5rightsfoundation.com/about-us/the-5-rights/>