



## Consultation response to the Draft Remit of Qualifications and Assessment Independent Review Group

April 2022

### **About 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.

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Children in Scotland is pleased to respond to the consultation on the draft remit of Professor Hayward's Qualifications and Assessment Independent Review Group (IRG). Education is a key aspect of children and young people's lives. We know first-hand how much they care about the future of Scottish education and making sure every child and young person's needs are met.

We look forward to Scotland delivering on its commitment to our children and young people to be the best place in the world to grow up.

### **Scope**

We are pleased to acknowledge this work will build on work completed already through the Professor Muir report and work with Scottish Youth Parliament and Children's Parliament. It is essential to build on what children and young people have shared already to avoid over-consultation.

We welcome the fact that the overarching approach to qualifications and assessment development will be informed by the principles of co-design. The Convener and IRG must take a child rights approach, with the best interest of children and young people at the heart of activities and decisions. Quality, ongoing, inclusive participation of children and young people will be key to the success of this work.

We would urge the Convener and IRG to take a wider review of achievement and attainment. We work with the Inclusion Ambassadors, a national group of secondary school-aged pupils who have a range of additional support needs and attend a variety of school provision.

One of their priorities is supporting a wider understanding and acceptance of achievement in Scottish education. They contributed to Angela Morgan's Additional Support for Learning Review<sup>1</sup> and developed the vision statement for the Additional Support for Learning Action Plan<sup>2</sup> They are clear that '*Success is different for everyone.*'<sup>3</sup>

We will be happy to share the work of the Inclusion Ambassadors and facilitate their input into this work.

## **Membership**

There has been wide public interest in the potential changes in Scottish education and the challenges and barriers some children and young people have faced over the past two years. We welcome the plan for the membership of the IRG to be a range of stakeholders and that they will liaise with their own networks to gain a wide range of inputs. The membership cannot be solely people and organisations that already work within education.

All education bodies must be answerable to children and young people – their key stakeholders. What is essential is the central role of children and young people in this process. Any tokenistic consultation is not acceptable. The IRG must be a respectful, shared and equal space. It must work in an open and transparent way. Children and young people's participation must be meaningful, ongoing and cover all aspects of the Convener and IRG's remit.

Children and young people have shared their experiences, opinions and suggestions on the future of Scottish education in various ways, including through Professor Ken Muir's recent report [Putting Learners At the Centre](#), the [Education Recovery Youth Panel](#), and various Covid-19 reports such as

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<sup>1</sup> <https://webarchive.nrscotland.gov.uk/20210425012928/www.gov.scot/groups/additional-support-for-learning-review>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/additional-support-learning-action-plan/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://childreninscotland.org.uk/inclusion-ambassadors/>

Intercultural Youth Scotland's [Covid In Colour](#) report. It is important that their recommendations are fully considered and responded to before any new engagement work commences. Future engagement with children and young people must build on what has already happened and not duplicate pre-existing efforts.

The children and young people we have worked with through the pandemic have shared that they have felt in the dark with regards to decisions made in the current education system over the past year. This must change. They are key stakeholders and have a right to hold an equal space in this process.

The Convener and IRG must engage widely with children and young people to fully understand their needs and co-design an education system with them and for them. Although there is a focus on Senior Phase, it will be important to ensure views and ideas from children are sought, heard and considered to help shape their own future experience.

This may be with the support of adults and organisations already working with children and young people. This will ensure a range of experiences are heard, including those with additional support needs, those who are not currently in education, children and young people with care experience, children and young people from BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Colour) backgrounds and early years children.

We would also urge the Convener and IRG to meet children, young people where they 'are', not invite children and young people into an adult system or environment, such as Scottish Government meetings. The children and young people we have worked with over the past year want to be listened to and a wide range of their voices to be heard but want decision-makers to come to them to ensure this happens in a safe and quality way.

## **Activities**

Children in Scotland acknowledges the range and importance of the suggested activities for the Convenor and IRG to undertake.

We have shared above our thoughts on how the Convener and IRG can build on work in the wider context of other relevant strategic reports. This includes the work conducted by Professor Muir and consideration of how important it will be to engage with a wide range of relevant stakeholders pertinent to the work, notably learners, children and young people.

We especially welcome the principle of working at all times in a participative and inclusive way. This must be in line with UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's definition of participation as 'ongoing processes, which include information-sharing and dialogue between children and adults based on mutual respect, and in which children can learn how their views and those of

adults are taken into account and shape the outcome of such processes'.<sup>4</sup> It will take time and support from relevant adults and organisations for children and young people to enjoy an equal role in this work.

We would ask that all findings, recommendations and design principles published are accessible for all, including children and young people. This might include infographics, films etc.

### **Approach and timescales**

We acknowledge the IRG will work between April and December 2022, meet monthly, generate evidence and draw conclusions.

We would ask the Convener and IRG remain flexible on the timeline. It is essential this work gets it right for all of Scotland's children and young people. This will take time, money and quality, ongoing collaboration.

As above, we would ask that all findings published are accessible for all, including children and young people. This might include infographics, films etc.

### **Secretariat support and sponsorship**

Children in Scotland acknowledges that secretariat support required by the Convener and the IRG will be provided through the Education Reform Directorate in Scottish Government and the Curriculum and Qualifications Division in the Education Reform Directorate will be the Convener's sponsor Division within the Scottish Government.

This is a significant time of change in Scottish education and we know how busy the staff are in the Education Directorate. We urge the Convener and IRG to ensure enough time, funding and staffing are available to ensure this essential work is completed successfully.

We also urge the Scottish Government to make connections across Directorates. Some of the issues impacting on children and young people accessing and enjoying education cut across teams and Directorates.

### **Amy Woodhouse**

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<sup>4</sup> UN Committee, General Comment No. 12: The Right of the Child to Be Heard, UN Doc. Crc/C/Gc/12 (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2009).