



Consultation response on the Education National Improvement Framework - enhanced data collection for improvement

July 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.

Children in Scotland is pleased to respond to the consultation on the Education National Improvement Framework.

Education is a prominent theme in our Manifesto¹ and we have carried out extensive project work in the area, most recently ranging from the Education Recovery Youth Panel² to diversity in Scottish education with GTC Scotland and Intercultural Youth Scotland³. In addition, we have responded to the review carried out by Professor Ken Muir, the current work with Professor Louise Hayward and many consultations on education.

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.

¹ Children in Scotland, Manifesto for 2021-26 accessed here: https://childreninscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Manifesto_V2.1_March-21.pdf.

² <https://childreninscotland.org.uk/the-education-recovery-youth-panel-october-2020-early-2021/>

³ <https://childreninscotland.org.uk/diversity-in-teaching/>

We applaud the vision and priorities of the National Improvement Framework - to achieve equity for our children and young people by closing the poverty related attainment gap and for all children and young people to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors.

We also welcome the drive to mitigate the impact of Covid, particularly on inequality.

Children in Scotland works with its members through the Children's Sector Strategic Forum to deliver change for children and young people in Scotland. In recent years, the forum has supported the Scottish Government Directorate for Children and Families in their work to develop a series of children and young people's wellbeing outcomes and indicators which will sit under the National Outcomes. We would encourage direct engagement with the Scottish Government team developing these outcomes and indicators as part of this process to ensure there is alignment (where possible) between those indicators and the measures proposed in this consultation paper.

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.

1. Our proposals for the key measures of progress towards closing the poverty related attainment gap are based on a number of key principles. Are there any other principles that should be included?

Children in Scotland welcomes the key principles driving the Framework. In particular 'the need to place the human rights and needs of every child and young person at the centre of education'.

Education is a central aspect of children and young people's lives. It has been a real focus of concern for them over the past two years, throughout the pandemic.

A key theme shared by the children and young people we have worked with through the pandemic is that they have felt very much in the dark with regards to decisions made in the education system⁴. This must change moving forward. They want to be listened to and for a wide range of their voices to be heard. They are key stakeholders and have a right to an equal

⁴ <https://childreninScotland.org.uk/changing-our-world/changing-our-world-manifesto-campaign-work/>

space in this process to ensure the Scottish education system is able to deliver on its aims of excellence and equity.

Children and young people's future participation in education decision-making must be meaningful, ongoing and cover accreditation, assessment, curriculum, and the creation of new national bodies. They should also be involved in decisions around improvement and data gathering.

We have recently completed a project Young People and Their Data⁵ with the Scottish Centre for Administrative Data Research (SCADR). Through this project, children and young people have highlighted that they want to know how their data is collected, stored and used for research and analysis. They also want to know how their data is used to support improvements to services that they engage with. Children and young people and their families must be involved in discussions about enhanced data collection linked to the National Performance Framework.

In relation to taking a rights-based approach, we agree it is imperative to “progress in closing the poverty related attainment gap”. However, we also welcome the consideration of: “the importance of increasing attainment for all children”. From our work with Enquire, Reach, My Rights My Say and the Inclusion Ambassadors we recognise that significant barriers to attainment exist for children and young people with additional support needs that prevent them from reaching their learning potential. We welcome the Scottish Government's emphasis on removing education inequalities wherever they exist (see more on this in our answer to Q2).

We also agree it is essential “measures and milestones should be relatively simple to measure and report against” and “a clear line of sight from the key measures in the NIF, to the strategies and approaches adopted in schools,” to ensure education staff are not overwhelmed by this aspect of their job or indeed driven by it.

Finally, we also welcome emphasis on gathering data from across the education lifecycle and particularly support evidence from children in the early years, in recognition that the attainment gap begins for most at an early age. Early years measures need to be age appropriate, and we would recommend a focus on wellbeing and development in the early years, rather than literacy and numeracy, in line with our previous policy position on the National Improvement Framework and standardised assessments. We cover this area further in our answer to Q8.

2. Should the two sub-measures covering attendance and exclusion at secondary schools be promoted to key measures?

⁵ <https://childreninscotland.org.uk/scadr-young-people-and-their-data-2021/>

Children in Scotland recognises the significance of attendance and exclusion data.

In 2018 we worked with Scottish Autism and National Autistic Society Scotland to publish our report, with, Not Included, Not Engaged, Not Involved⁶.

This report shares the detail that 13% of the 1400 parents surveyed said their children had been formally excluded from school in the two years pre-dating the report and 34% told us their child had been unlawfully excluded in these years.

Parents also shared the amount of school children and young people were missing for reasons other than common childhood illness in the last two years. Nearly a fifth of children were out of school for over six months (17%). Approximately a third of the children (34%) who had missed time from school had experienced more than one absence of more than two weeks during the two years pre-dating the report's publication.

Parents shared the negative impact this had on children and young people's health and learning:

"My daughter is very behind on her work and is in P6 working at P3 level due to her eight months off school. We ended up moving schools which has helped her progress dramatically. When she started there in P5 she was on P1 work."

"Huge impact, she really struggled with not being able to do National 5s at same time as peers as a result of missing so much schooling."

We believe our report contributed to the growing body of evidence that there are systemic issues in the provision of education in Scotland impacting on outcomes for children with additional support needs on a daily basis.

The report made nine recommendations. Without these actions it will not be possible to identify whether the National Improvement Framework and Additional Support for Learning Action Plan is making a real difference to children with additional support needs and their right to education and support.

Promoting these two sub-measures of attendance and exclusion to key measures may go some way to start to tackle these inequalities children and young people experience. It is vitally important that both of these measures are recorded accurately by schools to avoid the problem of unlawful

⁶ <https://www.notengaged.com/>

exclusions not being recorded that was commonly identified in our NINENI report.

We wish to draw your attention to our colleagues at Enquire's work in this area⁷ and their response to this consultation. They highlight the need for a robust and transparent system for recording children's absence, based on their learning from children and families with additional support needs.

3. Should data on confidence, resilience, and engagement from the new Health and Wellbeing census be included in the basket of measures?

Learning is a key theme in the Children in Scotland Manifesto 2021-26⁸. In our manifesto we call for 'making wellbeing the central focus of Scottish education. A review of Curriculum for Excellence should be undertaken to explore how wellbeing, relationships and play can be fully embedded in the delivery of education'.

We welcome the inclusion of many of the areas in the Health and Wellbeing census in the consultation paper. However, we understand there may be gaps in the data gathered as we are aware some local authorities wish to opt out of the census. We ask the Scottish Government to consider how will these gaps in data can be addressed.

Children and young people's involvement in decision-making is important to support their good mental health, empowerment and feelings of agency. It is their right to have opportunity for their quality participation and engagement in all aspects of decision-making in education and other aspects of their lives.

Based on our direct work with children and young people we know how important good mental health is to them. They shared the impact Covid has had on this through many projects and reports, including the Education Recovery Youth Panel⁹ and Scotland's Children's Strategic Recovery Framework.¹⁰

Confidence and resilience are important aspects of wellbeing and 'Confident Individuals' is one of the four key capacities of the CfE. Both seem appropriate to measure.

⁷ <https://enquire.org.uk/>

⁸ https://childreninscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Manifesto_V2.1_March-21.pdf

⁹ <https://childreninscotland.org.uk/the-education-recovery-youth-panel-october-2020-early-2021/>

¹⁰ <https://childreninscotland.org.uk/scotlands-childrens-strategic-recovery-framework/>

4. At the moment, the measure of achievement in the senior phase is the National Qualifications achieved by young people at the point which they leave school (SCQF levels 4, 5, and 6 – 1 or more on leaving school). Do we need to add other measures to cover wider achievement and attainment?

We welcome the recognition of the importance of wider achievement and engagement of children and young people in Scotland, in part 'to support the understanding of the gap between achievement and life chance'.

Several of our member organisations shared at our most recent Voices Forum that there remains an issue of schools solely focusing on 'successful learners' and how the other capacities outlined in the Curriculum for Excellence (confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors) should not be forgotten.¹¹

We are pleased there is an understanding that 'access to wider awards may not be equal' as we have heard from young people they are worried about an inconsistency of options and choices, depending on where they live and which school they attend.

Our work with the Inclusion Ambassadors¹² has shown us the importance to children and young people that achievement is not purely academic and qualification based. They are undertaking work based on the Additional Support For Learning Action Plan¹³ and the Scottish Government's commitment to recognise and appreciate success for pupils with additional support needs.

They have shared areas of 'success' they have experienced at school, including acting, drawing and sporting activities such as boccia and refereeing. In 2022 they devised their own award 'Success Looks Different'³⁵. They want schools to be recognised and celebrated for the hard work they do to promote inclusion. This award is a chance for school communities to share how you successfully celebrate the achievements of *all* pupils, regardless of exam results and predictions.

The suggested Option 1 and Option 2 have a variety of merit. However, both are focused on accredited courses of one type or another. Based on the above, we welcome the emphasis that data 'may not be appropriate to be collected nationally' and it can be based on 'teacher's professional observations, formative assessments and reflections'.

We urge Scottish Government to look further into these options, whilst ensuring data gathering and inputting must be achievable for education staff and must not perpetuate inequalities of geography etc.

¹¹ <https://childreninscotland.org.uk/voices-forum/>

¹² <https://childreninscotland.org.uk/inclusion-ambassadors/>

¹³ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/additional-support-learning-action-plan/>

5. If you answered yes to Q4, some options for consideration are set out in the “more information” box below. However, we would also welcome any other suggestions for additional measures.

We believe Professor Louise Hayward's independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment¹⁴ will be very useful in shaping these decisions as it will engage with a range of stakeholders in a national conversation around this issue.

We welcome her inclusive approach to this important review. We know from our work with children and young people how important an issue it is to them and how passionate they are about having their voices heard.

6. In terms of measuring progress beyond school, should the percentage of school leavers going to a “positive destination” on leaving school be included alongside the participation measure?

We are aware of the inequalities young people face around positive destinations.

For example, at a recent meeting of the Cross-Party Group on Children and Young People¹⁵, CRER (Coalition For Racial Equality And Rights)¹⁶ gave a presentation which highlighted the inequality of participation in higher and further education and employment rates for BAME young people. They shared findings from Skills Development Scotland's report 'Annual Participation Measure for 16 – 19 year-olds in Scotland 2019'¹⁷ and the Scottish Government's 'Scotland's Labour Market: People, Places, and Regions - Statistics from the Annual Population Survey 2019'.¹⁸

Information on young people's destinations after school would seem pertinent to achieving the aims of the National Improvement Framework.

¹⁴ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/independent-review-of-qualifications-and-assessment-terms-of-reference/>

¹⁵ <https://www.parliament.scot/get-involved/cross-party-groups/current-and-previous-cross-party-groups/2021/children-and-young-people>

¹⁶ <https://www.crer.org.uk/>

¹⁷ https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/45904/2019_annual-participation-measure-report.pdf

¹⁸ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-labour-market-people-places-regions-statistics-annual-population-survey-2019/>

7. What more do we need to do in order to ensure that a wider range of measures are in use across the education system, and that they are valued as equally as traditional attainment measures?

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We welcome her inclusive approach to this important review. We know from our work with children and young people how important an issue it is to them and how passionate they are about having their voices heard.

8. Are the existing wider data collections, and the new data developments enough to ensure that the National Improvement Framework reflects the ambitions of Curriculum for Excellence, national policy priorities such as health and wellbeing and confidence, and key priorities for COVID-19 recovery and improvement, as recommended by Audit Scotland?

We would like to draw your attention to the work of Children in Scotland members Upstart²⁰, focusing on Early Years.

We agree with their assertion that since the attainment gap is developmental in origin, data on children's early development is clearly of great importance.

Based on their expertise, they believe the best age for collection of reliable developmental data is five, when all children are in the educational system. They suggest using an internationally recognised assessment tool for the five-year-old age range the EDI - Early Development Instrument, which was trialled in East Lothian in 2014.²¹ EDI gives a more rounded assessment of early years development and not simply focusing on literacy and numeracy.

9. How can we make better use of data to focus and drive improvement activity at school, local, regional and national level?

From our work on the Young People and Their Data project,²² the young people pointed out the different ways that data could have a positive impact on their lives. One young person pointed out that schools hold a great deal of data about young people and suggested that this could be helpful for identifying clear patterns (such as poor attendance and low grades) and creating solutions. The group were also aware that a large

¹⁹ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/independent-review-of-qualifications-and-assessment-terms-of-reference/>

²⁰ <https://upstart.scot/>

²¹ https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210557/schools_and_learning/12088/early_years_support_from_the_start/2

²² https://childreninscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/SCADR_FINAL-Report.pdf

amount of data is currently collected about children and young people and stressed the importance that there must be a benefit to this.

The young people also said that data-holders must:

- Ensure that the information they work with has been collected legally and ethically and is stored appropriately
- Must be proportionate to the aim of what the data is being used for

Providing feedback to children and young people about how their data has been used and what changes have happened as a consequence is of vital importance.

10. How can we make better use of data to help reduce variation in outcomes achieved by young people in different parts of the country?

From our work on the Young People and Their Data project,²³ any data collection and inputting must be accessible to all. Any potential barriers must be removed. Consultation with key stakeholders will inform this.

An important consideration in this area is being considerate in how information is portrayed and communicated about different groups of young people. As one young person put it, those dealing with data “always need to be respectful no matter what the situation and understand the impact it may have on people”²⁴. This means avoiding values-based judgements on, for example, attendance data, and a recognition of the wider challenges that children and young people might be experiencing outside of school that can impact on their ability to learn.

Staff understanding, training and engagement is also essential to ensure reliability and consistency of approach.

Amy Woodhouse

Head of Policy, Projects and Participation
Children in Scotland
awoodhouse@childreninscotland.org.uk

²³ https://childreninscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/SCADR_FINAL-Report.pdf

²⁴ https://childreninscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/SCADR_FINAL-Report.pdf