

Scottish Education Council (SEC) - Paper for Discussion

Young people's participation in the SEC and the creation of the Children and Young People's Council

Background

1. Children rights representatives and young people (including Liam Fowley MSYP) have been invited to become members of the SEC. This is to ensure that learners' views are taken fully into account in decision-making on the same basis as teacher profession, education authorities and others in the system; and to ensure that children's rights experts are included on a similar basis as part of SEC discussions. In parallel and in coming weeks, the Scottish Government will be seeking a support partner for a new Children and Young People's Council. The Children and Young People's Council is to have parity of esteem with the SEC. In time, the expectation is that a member or members of that Council will join Liam Fowley MSYP on the SEC. These developments are taking place at a time when we are seeing a much wider effort to improve the way that children and young people's views are captured and taken into account.¹
2. These are important developments, but simply creating a new Children and Young People's Council and inviting young people to attend the SEC are not, in themselves, going to achieve a step-change in children and young people's participation. This paper is intended as a starting point for a much broader consideration of children and young people's participation within the SEC itself, between the SEC and the new CYPEC and in national policy making more broadly. It asks the SEC to consider how the SEC itself should operate, how it should relate to the new CYPEC and to agree to more detailed consideration of these issues ahead of our second meeting.
3. It should be noted that this paper was developed by the Scottish Government policy team and not by children and young people, or through genuine collaboration with children's rights organisations. This perhaps demonstrates why the SEC may wish to consider some important adjustments in how SEC papers are developed, and *how* the discussions at SEC are held. As explored later in this paper, meaningful engagement of children and young people requires appropriate lead in times and a genuine commitment to collaboration. We therefore recommend that future papers of this nature are developed with longer lead-in times and according to some key collaborative working principles, in line with the Children and Young People's Commissioner's "[Seven Golden Rules for Participation](#)".

Key issues

Recent experience of children and young people's participation in national forums

¹ One very recent example is the children and young person questionnaires as part of Sir Ken Muir's consultation on education reform, developed in partnership with Scottish Youth Parliament and Together: <https://www.childrenparliament.org.uk/education-reform/>

4. In July this year, Scottish Government officials held a workshop session with representatives from children and young people organisations. The purpose of this session was to reflect on recent experiences – both positive and negative – of children and young person engagement as part of decision-making or national reference forums, particularly in the context of education.
5. The young person organisations shared a number of open and honest points. In particular, they told officials that it is important to consider at the very beginning of the SEC's creation, how it will adjust and adapt to ensure that young person members join as equal members; to ensure that efforts are made to address any power imbalances, and; to ensure that the relationship between the SEC and the new Children and Young People's Council are considered very carefully.

Power imbalance

6. Young people will not come to SEC meetings with the same organisational support and capacity as other members, or with a technical understanding of the complexities of the education system. They are joining an adult forum, and – similar to the NPFs representative - they are joining in a voluntary, not a leadership or organisational capacity. When all other attendees have that type of support, capacity and understanding, this can result in a power imbalance where young people are inadvertently excluded from meaningful participation. We would suggest that it is important to recognise this point and consider how and in what ways it can be addressed.
7. **This paper therefore covers three points in particular:**
 - **It explores the importance of taking a rights-based approach and asks SEC members what this might mean in practice.**
 - **It explore some potential principles for how the SEC itself might operate.**
 - **It explores the relationship between the SEC and the new CYPEC which will be created in the coming weeks.**

A Rights Based Approach

8. Developing and embedding a rights-based approach to engagement and participation of children and young people remains a strategic priority for the Scottish Government. Ensuring that children and young people are at the heart of decisions which affect them, and that their views are listened to, valued, and considered is an important aspect of meaningful participation. Safe, inclusive, and purposeful engagement with children and young people will be critical to the successful implementation of incorporation of the UNCRC in Scotland.
9. We propose, therefore, that a rights-based approach to children and young people's participation in the SEC will be central to the success of their contribution to the discussion.

The working methods of the SEC – some key principles and questions to consider

10. The SEC is invited to consider what this will mean in greater detail, and to provide some reflections on what this might mean for the SEC itself and how it should operate. Building on the starting point of a rights-based approach, we have identified the following key themes and principles which may help to support that rights-based approach:

- **Meaningful Participation** – How can we ensure that children and young people are supported to contribute and be listened to and respected at the SEC?
- **Action and Feedback** – How can we ensure a clear, transparent and effective feedback loop on decision making?
- **Working Methods** – Effective working methods and accessibility requirements are a further and very important aspect to consider. The way that the group operates (eg the timescales with which papers are issued, the content of those papers etc) may need to be modified to ensure young people are meaningfully engaged. What might these look like in the context of the operation of the reconstituted SEC?
- **Materials** – We suggest that it will be important to explore the importance of ensuring that a range of approaches to meaningful engagement and participation (commensurate with age and need), for example access and use of digital or the ability to attend in person meetings.
- **Training and Support** – Finally, we are interested in exploring whether additional support and advice may be helpful, both for those who support the SEC and CYPEC meetings, the children and young people and the members of the SEC. We would invite the SEC to consider how we can embed best practice from the beginning of the new arrangements.

Relationship between the SEC and the Children and Young People's Council

11. The new CYPEC will be an important addition to the education governance landscape. As stated in June, it is to have parity with the SEC. The creation of the CYPEC is therefore not intended to tick a box or to exist separate to the decision-making environment; it is intended to be a key part of the governance of the education system, and; a means by which to engage children and young people who for many reasons - confidence, age, disability, additional support needs - are not going to be best served by an expectation that they attend a formal adult SEC forum. The existence of both Councils means that the *relationship between the two Councils* will be an important consideration going forward.

12. The CYPC will develop its own working practices, and the aim will be that the children and young people on the Council to develop those practices. It will be important for the children and young people who are involved in the CYPC to consider what connections they want with the SEC, they are not passive partners. There is the potential, however, to make some important reforms to how we discuss and agree national policy. For example, adult members of the SEC could attend CYPC meetings when invited, and could participate in ways that children and young people have designed themselves as methods that work for them.

13. To ensure the CYPEC is supported by organisations with expertise in rights-based approaches as well as the capacity to ensure comprehensive support arrangements, the Scottish Government is commissioning for a third party support partner to support the CYPEC. Inevitably, this procurement process will take time, and will mean that the CYPEC will commence after the SEC. Only when both Councils are clear in remit, operation and timelines can we look properly at the connections between both. **At this stage, however, we would invite the SEC to consider the importance of the CYPEC in the broader landscape, and to note the potential impact that the CYPEC could – and should – have on national discussions and decisions.**

Key points for consideration

14. In summary and in reference to the above points, SEC members are invited to provide their thoughts on the following points:

On the Scottish Education Council:

- What are the key **principles** that the SEC should adopt as part of its formal remit to ensure that young people on the SEC are full and equal voices on the Council? In particular, how will be address the risk of power imbalance and what steps might be taken to address this?
- What are the **working methods** that will ensure these vital principles are the lived experience for the young people on the SEC?
- What kind of **training and support** would help you as a SEC member in supporting young person voice on the SEC?
- What **language** should be used regarding the way that young people are engaged in these processes and decisions?

On the Children and Young People's Council and its relationship to the SEC:

- What are the key considerations that we may wish to bear in mind as the CYPEC is created, and as it develops its relationship with the SEC?

Conclusion

15. As stated in paragraph 3, we are acutely conscious that this paper itself was developed not by the young person reps, nor the children's rights organisations, but by Scottish Government officials. Participation is complex and the partnership between adult members and the children and young people needs more thought. We propose that today's discussion be seen as a starting point for more detailed considerations and recommendations, and for the relevant issues to be considered in a further SEC meeting and in a collaborative way between children, young people and adults.

Scottish Education Council minutes: 8 October 2021

Attendees and apologies

SEC members

- Shirley-Anne Somerville, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills - Chair
- Councillor Stephen McCabe, COSLA Children and Young People spokesperson
- Graeme Logan, Director of Learning, Scottish Government
- Fiona Robertson, Scottish Qualifications Authority, Chief Executive
- Larry Flanagan, General Secretary, The Educational Institute of Scotland
- Gayle Gorman, Chief Executive of Education Scotland and Chief Inspector of Education
- Pauline Stephen, Chief Executive, General Teaching Council for Scotland
- Margaret Wilson, Chair of the National Parent Forum of Scotland
- Professor David Smith, Chair of the Scottish Council of Deans of Education
- Carrie Lindsay, President of the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES)
- Grace Vickers, SOLACE lead for Children & Young People
- Audrey May, Regional Improvement Collaborative Lead, Tayside Collaborative
- Helen Budge, Regional Improvement Collaborative Lead, The Northern Alliance
- Dr Gillian Brydson, Regional Improvement Collaborative Lead, South West Collaborative
- Fiona Robertson, Regional Improvement Collaborative Lead, South East Alliance
- Lorraine Sanda, Regional Improvement Collaborative Lead, Forth Valley and West Lothian Collaborative
- Tony McDaid, Regional Improvement Collaborative Lead, The West Partnership
- Professor Mark Priestley, University of Stirling
- John Gallacher, Regional Manager, UNISON Scotland
- Liam Fowley, Vice Chair of Scottish Youth Parliament
- Dr Colin Morrison, Co-Director of Children's Parliament
- Jim Thewliss, General Secretary, School Leaders Scotland
- Shona Struthers, Chief Executive, Colleges Scotland

In attendance

- Professor Ken Muir

Apologies

- Juliet Harris, Director of Together (Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights)

Scottish Government (observing)

- Claire Hicks, Director of Education Reform
- Alison Taylor, Deputy Director Improvement, Attainment and Wellbeing
- Kit Wyeth, Head of National Improvement Framework Unit
- Craig Flunkert, Team Leader, Curriculum, Parents and Pupils

Secretariat

- Judith Tracey, NIF Unit
- Katie Brydon, NIF Unit

Welcome and introductions from the chair

1. The Chair welcomed members to the first meeting of the re-established Scottish Education Council (SEC) which had not met since early 2020, as the focus over the last year and a half had been responding to the pandemic. The SEC would run in parallel with the COVID-19 Education Recovery Group (CERG) but would provide a more strategic oversight of Scottish education, and be a forum for frank and open discussion.

Revised role and remit of the SEC

2. The Council discussed the draft revised role and remit of the SEC. Members raised concerns about the late circulation of papers, which meant that they had had very little time to read and consider them in advance of the meeting.
3. In discussion, the following points were made:
 - In the light of the incorporation of the UNCRC into law, members felt that the need to protect and defend the rights of children and young people should be articulated more clearly in the remit of the Council.
 - Members were also keen to emphasise the strategic role of the Council, and how it differed from other groups which focus more closely on day to day operational issues. The role of the Council should be to focus on high level strategic issues that set the direction for educational improvement.
 - One weakness of the previous iteration of the Council, was that it did not have strong links to the Curriculum and Assessment Board (CAB) or the Scottish Board for Teacher Education (SBTE) beyond seeing the minutes of each meeting. There needed to be a clear line of sight from both the CAB and the SBTE so that the Council had the opportunity to provide constructive input.
 - There was also a request that Scottish Government consider how to reflect back the impact of the Council's advice on Government policy.
4. **ACTION** - Secretariat to ensure that all papers are circulated at least one week in advance of each meeting of the Council.
5. **ACTION** - Scottish Government to clarify the process for escalating issues to the SEC from the CAB and SBTE, so that the Council isn't simply being updated on issues but has the opportunity to provide constructive input.
6. **ACTION** - Scottish Government to consider how to reflect back to the Council the impact of the its advice on the delivery of strategic goals.

Draft work programme for 2021/22

7. The secretariat had produced a draft work programme for 2021/22 which had a particular focus on the work of Professor Ken Muir on the reform of SQA and Education Scotland. However the work programme is likely to change based on emerging priorities over the coming year.
8. In discussion, the following points were made:
 - Framing remits and agendas is challenging. It is important to create a space for the kind of conversation that doesn't take place elsewhere about the big issues facing Scottish education.
 - Members expressed concern about the proposed number of items on the agenda for each meeting, and asked that there should be more consideration of what the "big ticket" items would be in advance of each meeting, and adjust the agenda accordingly.
 - A revised workplan should make it clear that meeting agendas will be developed in collaboration with Council members, who will also be invited to suggest agenda items and to produce papers to support them.
9. **ACTION** – Secretariat to produce an updated role and remit, and future workplan, taking on board the points made at the meeting (particularly around the rights of children and young people) and circulate for further comment and approval.

Children and young people's participation on the Council

10. The sub-group discussed paper 3 which set out proposals to ensure that learners' views are taken fully into account in decision-making on the same basis as the teaching profession, education authorities, parents and others in the system; and to ensure that children's rights experts are included on a similar basis as part of SEC discussions. The paper set out the Scottish Government's plans to establish a new Children and Young People's Council (CYPEC) which would have parity of esteem with the SEC.
11. The paper asked the SEC to consider how the SEC itself should operate, and how it should relate to the new CYPEC.
12. In discussion, the following points were made:
 - Children and young people's participation is a key aspect in the Scottish Government approach to education reform, a foundation within Scotland's curriculum and a growing imperative following the incorporation of the UNCRC.
 - We need to question whether establishing the CYPEC is right approach to ensuring meaningful engagement with children and young people. Members

welcomed the idea of a rights based approach, but there needed to be further consideration of how to take that forward.

- It was important to see how children and young people would like to engage with SEC, rather than making those decisions in advance of the establishment of the CYPEC. Genuine co-production with children and young people was essential to ensure that the final format will meet the needs of children and young people.

Progress on the OECD implementation plan

13. The Scottish Government set out the plans for a framework to address the recommendations in the OECD report on Curriculum for Excellence. A draft had been circulated to members, who were invited to provide comments.

14. In discussion, the following points were made:

- The OECD review gives us an opportunity to be more ambitious, to look again at the four capacities and consider whether they adequately encapsulate the knowledge, skills, and attributes required to equip young people as citizens in a complex modern society.
- We need to be careful not to paralyse the system by trying to look at everything at once. It is important to be focused, and tackle those areas which will make the most difference.
- It is also important that each part of the education system feels real ownership of any changes. That will require a return to the empowerment agenda, empowering schools and teachers to take decisions appropriate to their school community.
- We need to think very carefully about how we establish the systems and mechanisms required to support curriculum making and to support capacity building.

15. **ACTION** - Scottish Government to take on board the Council's comments on the draft response to the OECD report prior to publication.

The reform of the Scottish Qualifications Authority and Education Scotland

16. Professor Ken Muir gave an update on the plans to replace the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) and to consider a new specialist agency for both curriculum and assessment, while also taking forward reform to Education Scotland, including removing the function of inspection from the agency.

17. Professor Muir informed the Council that a national consultation document had been launched on 30 September, and was open to all who were interested in the future of Scottish education. The closing date for consultation responses was 26 November 2021. A series of twilight webinars had been offered to anyone with an interest in this work to support engagement in the consultation.

Plans for the 2022 National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan

18. The Council was informed about the statutory review of the National Improvement Framework (NIF) which will consider whether the actions set out in the 2021 NIF and Improvement Plan remain the right things to focus on given the unique situation we are in, and whether any changes are required to the NIF vision, priorities and/or the drivers of improvement.
19. **ACTION** – Council members to send any written comments on the statutory review of the NIF to the NIF inbox by the deadline of 22 October.

Any other business

20. No other business.

Date of next meeting

21. The next meeting will be held on 8 December, via Teams.

Scottish Education Council minutes: 8 December 2021

Attendees and apologies

Members

- Shirley-Anne Somerville, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills – Chair
- Councillor Stephen McCabe, COSLA children and young people spokesperson
- Graeme Logan, Director of Learning, Scottish Government
- Fiona Robertson, Scottish Qualifications Authority, Chief Executive
- Larry Flanagan, General Secretary, The Educational Institute of Scotland
- Pauline Stephen, Chief Executive, General Teaching Council for Scotland
- Grace Vickers, SOLACE lead for Children & Young People
- Audrey May, Regional Improvement Collaborative Lead, Tayside Collaborative
- Laurence Findlay, Regional Improvement Collaborative Lead, The Northern Alliance
- Dr Gillian Brydson, Regional Improvement Collaborative Lead, South West Collaborative
- Fiona Robertson, Regional Improvement Collaborative Lead, South East Alliance
- Lorraine Sanda, Regional Improvement Collaborative Lead, Forth Valley and West Lothian Collaborative
- Professor Mark Priestley, University of Stirling
- Kay Sillars, Regional Manager, UNISON Scotland
- Liam Fowley, Vice Chair of Scottish Youth Parliament
- Dr Colin Morrison, Co-Director of Children's Parliament
- Juliet Harris, Director of Together (Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights)
- Jim Thewliss, General Secretary, School Leaders Scotland
- Alan Sherry, OBE, Chair of CLD Standards Council Scotland
- Jane Brumpton, Chief Executive of Early Years Scotland
- Clare Hicks, Director of Education Reform, Scottish Government
- Alison Cumming, Director of Early Learning and Childcare, Scottish Government

In Attendance:

Professor Ken Muir

Apologies:

Gayle Gorman, Chief Executive Education Scotland

Shona Struthers, CEO Colleges Scotland

Margaret Wilson, Chair of the National Parent Forum of Scotland

Tony McDaid, Regional Improvement Collaborative Lead, West Partnership

Professor David Smith, Chair of the Scottish Council of Deans for Education

Joe Griffin, Director General Education and Justice, Scottish Government

Douglas Hutchison, President of ADES

Scottish Government (observing)

Alison Taylor, Deputy Director Improvement, Attainment and Wellbeing
Kit Wyeth, Head of National Improvement Framework Unit
Craig Flunkert, Team Leader, Curriculum, Parents and Pupils

Secretariat

Judith Tracey, NIF Unit
Eilidh McCreath, NIF Unit

Welcome and introductions from the Chair

1. The Chair welcomed members to the second meeting of the reconvened Scottish Education Council (SEC) and thanked Liam Fowley MSYP for contributing agenda item 5 for this meeting.

Paper 1 – Minutes from the previous meeting

2. SEC members confirmed that they were content with the minutes recorded from the meeting on 8 October.

Paper 2 – Revised role and remit of the Scottish Education Council

3. The Chair highlighted revisions which had been made to the role and remit of the SEC based on comments provided by members via correspondence after the 8 October meeting. These changes included strengthening references made to practitioners, parents/carers and the partnership between schools and colleges.

4. The Chair invited Dr Colin Morrison, Co-director of Children's Parliament, to provide an update on the participation of children and young people in the support and development of education policy. An alternative proposal to the Children and Young People's Education Council (CYPEC) is being pursued to allow children and young people to shape and lead a format of participation. As part of the proposal, it is suggested that an independent person should conduct a mapping/scoping exercise to examine what engagement already exists with children and young people around education and what impact that is having. In the meantime, all references to the CYPEC have been removed from the role/remit and workplan of the SEC.

5. In discussion, the following points were made:

- Members commented that the alternative approach to children and young people's participation was sensible
- Members raised concerns around representation of certain groups in the role and remit and whether this could be altered again to better reflect a whole system approach.

Action: Secretariat to distribute a final version of the role and remit paper, with stronger references to a whole system approach.

Paper 3 - National and local data for improvement and recovery, including understanding and tackling variation in performance

6. Kit Wyeth presented paper 3 which provided an update on a number of data issues relating to the use of data and proposed new methods of data collection to inform improvement. This paper invited members to comment in particular on:

- the plans for the review of the 11 key measures of progress set out in the NIF;
- how we can strengthen further the use of data for improvement in outcomes and tackle unwarranted variation. This includes setting of local stretch aims and providing support and challenge through the work of ES and the programme of local authority collaborative improvement;
- plans for the proposed sample based survey looking across the four CfE capacities.

7. In discussion, the following points were made:

- Members discussed variation, which was highlighted by Audit Scotland in its recent report on educational outcomes. It was noted that variation in practice, where that responds to the needs of children and young people and the availability of local assets, can be positive and innovative. Members noted that it was not this kind of variation to which the criticism from Audit Scotland refers, but rather variation in outcomes for children and young people, further consideration of which, along with shared learning, could help to improve outcomes.
- The concept of local stretch aims was welcomed, but with the caution that these must be genuinely agreed by schools and local authorities.
- In agreeing a way forward, more clarity was needed as to the role and purpose of the data that would be collected.
- Concerns were raised around the potential negative effects which the narrow application of nationally held data in local systems can have in terms of limiting access to the full curriculum. Local data can help resolve this by contributing towards a more empowered system supported by local evidence. Data is most useful when it positively informs what happens in the classroom.
- We should be building a reformed system of data collection and use through the lens of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).
- Sample surveys provide useful national level data to inform policy development but they do not provide granular data that is helpful to practitioners
- There may be gaps in data around children with additional support needs – we need to measure specific progress and milestones which these children achieve and it is important that we recognise progress that all children and young people make.

- It was not yet clear how we will gather effective data on the four capacities of CfE. Further discussion is required to find some way of giving parity of esteem to all four capacities, and collecting data in a useful and meaningful way.
- The role of data is important in demonstrating what an improving system looks like, and we need to keep in mind the recommendations of Audit Scotland, as well as the purpose of the National Improvement Framework (NIF) in using data to drive improvement and having a clear and shared vision and line of sight from the classroom to national policy. All of this also must be considered in the context of work towards education reform.

Action: Scottish Government officials will do more work on these data issues and bring a further paper to the SEC in due course.

Verbal update on reform work from Professor Ken Muir

8. Professor Ken Muir joined the meeting to update members on progress with work around the reform of the SQA and Education Scotland. Reform work is almost at the end of the stakeholder consultation period, with almost 800 returns which were reported back to the Curriculum and Assessment Board at the beginning of December.

9. Professor Muir outlined some of the key areas of feedback from the consultation, including the following points:

- Some stakeholders at practitioner and senior leader level feel that the Scottish education system in its current state is too complex.
- There was emphasis on moving towards a more user focussed/learner focussed system, including references to UNCRRC.
- There was strong messaging in support of an independent inspectorate.

10. The next stage after consultation will be to consider how these points will feed in to a reformed education system. A key element of this will be to consider where the role of the Scottish credit and qualifications framework might sit in any recommendations for the future and the implications of an independent inspectorate. Another concern lies around capacity issues within the system, with the risk of too many changes or the wrong changes adding unnecessarily to workloads.

Verbal update on the Scottish Youth Parliament Assessment Survey results

11. Liam Fowley outlined the results of a survey of 12-17 year olds in Scotland, which asked participants to indicate their preference for continuous assessment or exams for national qualifications. The majority of respondents opted for continuous assessment, citing less stress and more accurate grades as justification for this choice. Only 12% were in favour of exams. 74% of respondents also answered that teachers should be involved in assessment.

12. Council members reflected on the result of the survey, which provides helpful insight alongside survey work which the SQA have undertaken. Consideration is required over how this information can be taken forward.

Action: Liam Fowley to share the paper version of survey results with SEC Secretariat.

Action: SEC Secretariat to distribute paper version of survey results to SEC members.

Paper 4 - Narrative on improving school education in Scotland

13. Graeme Logan presented paper 4 which outlined a new narrative on improving school education in Scotland. Graeme caveated the risk that this narrative becomes a system of name checking, and for that reason the paper needs to be kept at a reasonably high level. Council members were invited to indicate interest for joining a sub-group to develop this narrative further.

14. In discussion, the following points were made:

- The narrative of an empowered system was lacking in this paper for several members, who questioned if this new piece of work would accelerate the pace of change.
- The narrative must also tie in with current reform work, and members asked whether this was the right time for drafting new narratives around education in an evolving system.
- The narrative is useful for articulating how everything in the education system fits together/how one component of the education system impacts others. Members suggested that the narrative should look at the purpose of Scottish Education in its broadest sense, including ELC, colleges and lifelong learning. It should be a whole system approach.
- Narratives such as this one must be based on Article 29 of UNCRC – they should reflect the very process and environment of education as well as examining what we want young people to get out of the education system.
- The hope is that this narrative can send out a powerful message of what does unite us as a system.
- The majority of members indicated their interest for joining a sub-group on this matter.

Action: Scottish Government colleagues will contact members in due course to establish a sub-group to inform this narrative.

Paper 5 – update on the Curriculum and Assessment Board

15. Craig Flunkert presented paper 5 which provided high-level updates on the content of the two previous Curriculum and Assessment Board (CAB) meetings. There was lengthy discussion around reform work in these meetings, with specific comments on the need for involvement of class teachers in any curriculum reform. The issue of bringing in resources to support reform was also raised, highlighting a need to prioritise curriculum reform between short, medium, and long term activity.

16. Members said that it was important to consider how the CAB and the other subsidiary groups such as the SBTE fed into and informed discussion at the SEC, beyond providing a simple update from each meeting.

Action: SEC secretariat to liaise with colleagues to provide a more in-depth paper on key updates from the Curriculum and Assessment Board for the next SEC meeting.

Any other business

No other business was raised.

Next meeting

The next meeting will take place on 2 February 2022.

Scottish Education Council minutes: 02 February 2022

Attendees and apologies

Members

- Shirley-Anne Somerville, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills – Chair
- Councillor Stephen McCabe, COSLA children and young people spokesperson
- Graeme Logan, Director of Learning, Scottish Government
- Joe Griffin, Director General Education and Justice, Scottish Government
- Gayle Gorman, Chief Executive Education Scotland
- Douglas Hutchison, President of Association of Directors of Education Scotland (ADES)
- Fiona Robertson, Scottish Qualifications Authority, Chief Executive
- Larry Flanagan, General Secretary, The Educational Institute of Scotland
- Pauline Stephen, Chief Executive, General Teaching Council for Scotland
- Grace Vickers, SOLACE lead for Children & Young People
- Audrey May, Regional Improvement Collaborative Lead, Tayside Collaborative
- Laurence Findlay, Regional Improvement Collaborative Lead, The Northern Alliance
- Dr Gillian Brydson, Regional Improvement Collaborative Lead, South West Collaborative
- Tony McDaid, Regional Improvement Collaborative Lead, West Partnership
- Professor Mark Priestley, University of Stirling
- Liam Fowley, Vice Chair of Scottish Youth Parliament
- Dr Colin Morrison, Co-Director of Children's Parliament
- Juliet Harris, Director of Together (Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights)
- Shona Struthers, CEO Colleges Scotland
- Jim Thewliss, General Secretary, School Leaders Scotland
- Alan Sherry, OBE, Chair of CLD Standards Council Scotland
- Jane Brumpton, Chief Executive of Early Years Scotland
- Margaret Wilson, Chair of the National Parent Forum of Scotland
- Clare Hicks, Director of Education Reform, Scottish Government
- Professor David Smith, Chair of the Scottish Council of Deans for Education
- Alison Cumming, Director of Early Learning and Childcare, Scottish Government

In Attendance

- Patricia Watson, Senior Regional Adviser, Education Scotland

Apologies

- Lorraine Sanda, Regional Improvement Collaborative Lead, Forth Valley and West Lothian Collaborative
- Kay Sillars, Regional Manager, UNISON Scotland
- Fiona Robertson, Regional Improvement Collaborative Lead, South East Alliance

Scottish Government

Alison Taylor, Deputy Director Improvement, Attainment and Wellbeing

Kit Wyeth, Head of National Improvement Framework Unit

David Leng, Head of Scottish Attainment Challenge Unit

David Begley, Team Leader, Scottish Attainment Challenge Unit

Craig Flunkert, Team Leader, Curriculum, Parents and Pupils

Secretariat

Eilidh McCreath, NIF Unit

Welcome and introductions from the Chair

1. The Chair welcomed members to the meeting. It was noted that a final version of the SEC's role and remit paper and workplan was distributed to members on the 26th of January. The Chair reminded members that the workplan was subject to change depending on emerging priorities and that members should continue to notify the SEC secretariat of any agenda items they wish to bring to a future meeting.

Paper 1 – Minutes from the previous meeting

2. The Chair invited Kit Wyeth, Head of the National Improvement Framework Unit to summarise progress on the actions noted in the minutes. The majority of actions are now completed, with two ongoing actions regarding data issues and a new narrative for Scottish education which Scottish Government colleagues are taking forward. SEC members confirmed that they were content with the minutes recorded from the meeting on 08 December.

Paper 2 – The refreshed Scottish Attainment Challenge framework

3. David Leng, Head of the Scottish Attainment Challenge Unit and David Begley, Team Leader presented Paper 2 on the refreshed Scottish Attainment Challenge framework. The refreshed framework aims to build on the progress made towards

closing the attainment gap before the COVID-19 pandemic and to continue the focus on accelerating progress. Paper 2 outlined the main areas of the refreshed Scottish Attainment Challenge and its refreshed mission, including the introduction of a Framework for Recovery and Accelerating Progress and an updated logic model. Focusing in particular on the Framework, David Begley summarised engagement with stakeholders to date in its development and sought to gather views on some of the key considerations in the paper. SEC members were invited specifically to comment on:

- the ambition of the Framework;
- the proposed approach to achieving that ambition; and,
- how the Council and the organisations represented within it can support the development of a Framework that will support recovery and accelerate progress in tackling the poverty related attainment gap.

4. In discussion, the following points were made:

- Members welcomed the explicit statement within the paper to place the child at the centre, and commented that the framework needs to be expressed more through a children's rights lens.
- Members noted the scale of the reduction in funding for challenge authorities and the impacts that this will have on resources and staffing levels; and questioned whether, whilst the investment is significant, it is sufficient to meet the ambition of the programme. Other members added that it was reasonable to question the impact of spending, and this again leads back to the question of variation in outcomes across the country. There was acknowledgement that developing a better national and local understanding of the impact of the investment is important..
- There were some comments on the understandings and definitions reflected in the paper. Some of the terminology used may be confusing for practitioners e.g. stretch aims – it will be important to be clear what these terms mean. There were also comments around the collective understanding of the term attainment and its scope, noting that too narrow a focus only on academic attainment would overlook the range of wider skills and achievements of children in young people as part of a varied curriculum, in line with CfE.
- Members noted the importance of a whole-system approach to achieve the aims of the Scottish Attainment Challenge, noting in particular the need for greater recognition of the role of, for example, Community Learning and Development and the contribution of colleges and others. The Framework should include clear recognition that other partners outside of the school setting have a key role in closing the attainment gap.
- Despite the references to empowerment in the paper, some members felt that the refreshed framework risks still appearing to be a top-down approach.. Striving for an empowered system risks creating a contradiction with work

towards tackling variation in performance, and it will be important to continue to recognise that trust in the professionals in schools is important to achieve the ambitions of the Scottish Attainment Challenge.

Action: Scottish Government colleagues will take into account this feedback as the Framework is finalised.

Paper 3 – Consultation of the NIF Measures 2022

5. Kit Wyeth presented paper 3 which provided an update on plans to carry out a consultation of the 11 key measures used in the National Improvement Framework. The original intention was that this consultation would focus on attainment measures, but it was now suggested that it should have a wider focus in response to the OECD and Audit Scotland reports. The Council was invited to comment specifically on:

- Whether the consultation should be wider than just the key measures and should cover e.g. the SAC framework and the planned sample survey on the four capacities of CfE.
- Whether the current 11 key measures should be retained to ensure we continue to have longitudinal data.
- What other measures might be added to the basket of key measures.
- The suggested changes in paper 3 to the underlying principles.
- Anything else which may require consideration as part of the consultation process

6. The following points were made in discussion:

- Members generally agreed that the NIF measures need to be broader than they are currently, but also that there should be a move towards recognising the NIF as the Scottish Government's main source of data. The review of the NIF measures doesn't necessarily need to result in pulling every strand of existing data into one place. For example, the SQA already produces information on additional qualifications which teaching professionals can use.
- More consideration is required of specifically what data is collected and what it is used for. The educational rationale in the NIF needs to be more clearly pronounced, as it seems performative and more of an auditing exercise to some professionals. It is necessary to have the NIF, but it should have consideration of what principles it should be guided by i.e. if the purpose of education goes beyond the 4 capacities.
- Members agreed with the recommendation to retain the 11 key measures to ensure continuity with existing data. There needs to be a clear line of sight from the classroom to the national data and a clear understanding of how that contributes to improvement. More needs to be done to get an indication of what

data we are collecting already e.g. what are the circumstances which allow for or influence levels of confidence among young people.

- A wider consultation beyond the 11 key measures would be preferable to ensure a full engagement with the system. The Ken Muir review demonstrated that there is a lot of appetite from stakeholders to have their views heard.
- Members noted that the 4 CfE capacities are not necessarily exclusive to each other – for example, being a successful learner should also incorporate the other capacities.

Action: Scottish Government colleagues to take forward comments to inform a proposal for consultation in March 2022.

Paper 4 – update on the Curriculum and Assessment Board

7. Craig Flunkert, Team Leader of Curriculum, Parents and Pupils, presented paper 4 which provided a high level summary of the CAB's remit, its recent work and the areas that the CAB is likely to focus on in the next 12 months.

8. Members had nothing to add in discussion.

Any other business

9. Colin Morrison from Children's Parliament provided an update on progress with the alternative proposal to the Children and Young People's Education Council which was submitted in December 2021. Scottish Government colleagues at the meeting confirmed that progress was being made with discussion while being mindful that forums such as the SEC and other boards have the opportunity to ensure that young people are involved in decision-making in the interim.

Action: A more detailed update on progress with the alternative proposal to children and young people's participation will be provided at the next SEC meeting in April.

10. The Chair announced that the meeting would be Liam Fowley MSYP's last SEC meeting as he will be stepping down from his position as Vice Chair of the Scottish Youth Parliament. Liam's replacement on the Council will be confirmed in due course.

Next meeting

The next meeting will take place on 28 April 2022.

Scottish Education Council minutes: 28 April 2022

Attendees and apologies

Members

- Shirley-Anne Somerville, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills – Chair
- Graeme Logan, Director of Learning, Scottish Government
- Gayle Gorman, Chief Executive Education Scotland
- Douglas Hutchison, President of Association of Directors of Education Scotland (ADES)
- Laura Caven, Chief Officer – Children and Young People, COSLA
- Fiona Robertson, Scottish Qualifications Authority, Chief Executive
- Larry Flanagan, General Secretary, The Educational Institute of Scotland
- Pauline Stephen, Chief Executive, General Teaching Council for Scotland
- Grace Vickers, SOLACE lead for Children & Young People
- Audrey May, Regional Improvement Collaborative Lead, Tayside Collaborative
- Laurence Findlay, Regional Improvement Collaborative Lead, The Northern Alliance
- Dr Gillian Brydson, Regional Improvement Collaborative Lead, South West Collaborative
- Lorraine Sanda, Regional Improvement Collaborative Lead, Forth Valley and West Lothian Collaborative
- Fiona Robertson, Regional Improvement Collaborative Lead, South East Alliance
- Kay Sillars, Regional Manager, UNISON Scotland
- Tony McDaid, Regional Improvement Collaborative Lead, West Partnership
- Sophie Reid, Chair of Scottish Youth Parliament
- Dr Colin Morrison, Co-Director of Children's Parliament
- Juliet Harris, Director of Together (Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights)
- Shona Struthers, CEO Colleges Scotland
- Jim Thewliss, General Secretary, School Leaders Scotland
- Alan Sherry, OBE, Chair of CLD Standards Council Scotland
- Jane Brumpton, Chief Executive of Early Years Scotland
- Margaret Wilson, Chair of the National Parent Forum of Scotland
- Clare Hicks, Director of Education Reform, Scottish Government
- Alison Cumming, Director of Early Learning and Childcare, Scottish Government

In attendance

- Professor Graham Donaldson, International Council of Education Advisers

- Professor Carol Campbell, International Council of Education Advisers
- Professor Chris Chapman, International Council of Education Advisers
- Professor Alma Harris, International Council of Education Advisers
- Dr Pak Tee Ng, International Council of Education Advisers
- Professor Andy Hargreaves, International Council of Education Advisers
- Professor Pasi Sahlberg, International Council of Education Advisers
- Chelsey Clay, Policy and Public Affairs Officer, Scottish Youth Parliament

Apologies

- Councillor Stephen McCabe, COSLA children and young people spokesperson
- Professor David Smith, Chair of the Scottish Council of Deans for Education
- Professor Mark Priestley, University of Stirling
- Joe Griffin, Director General Education and Justice, Scottish Government

SG Officials

- Alison Taylor, Deputy Director of Improvement, Attainment and Wellbeing
- Patricia Watson, Senior Regional Adviser, Education Scotland
- Kit Wyeth, Head of National Improvement Framework Unit
- Judith Tracey, Team Leader, National Improvement Framework Unit
- Helen Mclellan, Senior Policy Manager, Curriculum, Parents and Pupils
- Eilidh McCreath, SEC Secretariat

Welcome and Introductions

1. The Chair welcomed Council members to the meeting and thanked members of the International Council of Education Advisers for attending the Scottish Education Council to advise from an international perspective.

Papers 1 and 2 – Action log and minutes from previous meeting

2. The Chair invited Kit Wyeth, Head of the National Improvement Framework Unit to summarise progress on the actions noted in **paper 1**. The majority of actions in the log are now marked as complete, with one action marked as ongoing. This outstanding action, which concerns a further paper on data issues for discussion at a subsequent Council meeting, will be dependent on the outcomes of the upcoming National Discussion on Scottish Education.
3. SEC members confirmed that they were content with the minutes of the previous meeting on the 2nd of February 2022.

Paper 3 – The National Discussion on Scottish Education – building on Professor Muir’s Children and Young People Consultation

4. The Chair invited Dr Colin Morrison, Co-Director of Children's Parliament, to introduce this item by providing an overview of the consultation with children and young people carried out by Children's Parliament and Together, on behalf of Professor Ken Muir to inform his 2022 report. There were clear suggestions from consultation responses of how learning can be improved, and that any reform work has to start from Article 29 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Dr Morrison highlighted in particular the neutral stance which the majority of respondents demonstrated with regards to how they felt about their education.
5. The Chair invited Clare Hicks, Director of Education Reform, to present **paper 3**. The paper outlined contextual factors for Professor Muir's report recommendations and next steps for developing a National Discussion on Scottish Education. The OECD's recent endorsement of the Curriculum for Excellence's approach means that the conversation would have boundaries – we are not in a position where a National Discussion will lead to an entirely new curriculum.
6. The following points were made in discussion:
 - Members commented on the current context of education recovery and the fatigue of teachers as a result of existing pressures on the system. Other workstreams such as the Hayward Review will present challenges, and there will need to be a balance between creating a framework which pulls different strands of reform together without overwhelming the system.
 - ICEA members highlighted the contrast between the circumstances around the upcoming National Discussion and the National Debate on Education in 2002. The impact of the pandemic and issues around sustainability and technology will require the system to take a long-term view in the role education can play to enable children to thrive. The use of citizen's assemblies was suggested in order to avoid the discussion becoming overly focused on immediate priorities. The example of Estonia was raised, which is now the 'poster child' of PISA due to its long-term investment in technology.
 - Although the profession is exhausted and under pressure, they are keen to get back to core business. There needs to be balance between keeping pace and seizing the moment, and meaningfully engaging with stakeholders and communities to get buy-in.
 - It is positive to see that children demonstrated a neutral stance on their education system in Professor Muir's consultation, as it shows that they are considering the question. It is important to understand what children are saying because their responses in the consultation indicate that we need to be looking beyond the world of education. Learners have felt excluded from discussions on education in the past, and the National Discussion should recognise that young people want the best for their education.
 - Members questioned what the role of colleges and CLD would be in a National Discussion, noting strong partnerships between schools and the colleges/CLD sectors.

Actions and decisions

SG reform colleagues to take forward the recommendations of the Council to ensure the National Discussion involves all key stakeholders. (Action: Clare Hicks)

Update on the Children and Young People's Collaborative Project (verbal update)

7. The Chair invited Helen McLellan, Senior Policy Manager (Curriculum, Parents and Pupils), to provide a verbal update on progress with the Children and Young People's Collaborative Project. A grant funding arrangement with Young Scot was established in March, with the new approach seeking to meet the needs of all children and young people. The implementation has been broken down into 4 key phases: inception; system mapping; direct engagement; and co-design process with children and young people to determine the format for future engagement with young people. This process will also incorporate previous recommendations on a rights based approach, as well as examining what impact engagement has had to date.
8. The planned approach is still for the new participation model to have parity of esteem with the SEC – any future model will ensure that learner voices are prioritised and placed at the centre.
9. The following points were made in discussion:
 - Being mindful of planning around the National Discussion, it will be important to ensure that we build a participation model as effectively as possible to avoid asking young people the same questions.
 - Members also asked if the model would involve all young people in all education establishments. That discussion is still ongoing with CYP organisations, but the intention is to spread the net as far and wide as possible.

Paper 4 – Update on progress with the Audit Scotland Report recommendations

10. The Chair invited Alison Taylor, Deputy Director Improvement, Attainment and Wellbeing, to present **paper 4**, which was jointly prepared with input from Education Scotland, COSLA and ADES colleagues. It has now been a year since Audit Scotland released its report: *Improving outcomes for young people through school education*. Alison invited ES, COSLA and ADES colleagues to offer any further comments and invited other members to indicate whether the balance of activity reflected in the paper was in the right place, and if we are making the best possible use of data and evidence.

11. Patricia Watson, (Education Scotland) said that during the National Discussion item, a point was raised around the will of the system to return to a focus on improvement. The ability to demonstrate activity in **paper 4** underpins that.
12. Laura Caven (COSLA) commented that the collaborative model between SG and local authorities in response to the report is moving at pace.
13. Douglas Hutchison (ADES) raised concerns around the statistical analysis and interpretation of variation in the Audit Scotland report. It is important to have agreement on how we reach a shared understanding of what is meant by variation.
14. The following points were raised in discussion:
 - Members agreed the need to find out why variation is taking place, and to be clear in the distinction between variability and variance.
 - Members of the ICEA advised the Council to not lose sight on the importance of interaction between teachers and pupils. It goes back to a focus on ensuring that every child has access to a high standard of teaching and learning. Internal variance can either be a natural order, or a consequence of an insufficiently well-developed approach to the child's wellbeing.

Actions/Decisions

Further work will be undertaken on variation and evidence in partnership with local authority colleagues, building on discussion at today's meeting. (Action: SG, ES, COSLA and ADES).

Papers 5 & 6 – update on the consultation on the NIF measures

15. The Chair invited Judith Tracey, Team Leader (National Improvement Framework), to provide an update on the upcoming consultation on enhanced data collection for improvement. The consultation will be published on the 9th of May and will close on the 18th of July. Council members were invited to note the update provided in paper 5 and provide any comments on the draft consultation paper (**paper 6**).
16. The following points were made in discussion:
 - Members commented that understanding the context for this consultation is important to ensure that improvement work across the system is joined up.
 - The transition between ELC and primary school is a critical period, therefore it may be beneficial to have a specific focus on how early years professionals can share meaningful data in transition periods.
 - The National Improvement Framework is important in order to signal what counts – there is broad support for the direction of Curriculum for

Excellence (CfE), but there is much less consensus on the specifics. We need to be clear about how we use additional data to improve the experience of young people.

- Some members suggested that the broader CfE is delivering more effectively than we can testify to through data. There is effective social dialogue in Scotland, and the example of the TALIS survey was used as a suggestion of strengthening this, as well as providing further international comparison.
- Insight into the centre of an issue is also important when interpreting data, to ensure that there is still an in-depth understanding of issues in the system when, for example, variation in performance decreases.
- Members questioned the comparability between National Qualifications and other SQA qualifications as laid out in the option for a new 'all SQA qualifications' measure. SG colleagues agreed to take this forward in a separate discussion with SQA.

Actions/Decisions

SG colleagues to arrange a follow-up discussion on the proposed 'all SQA qualifications' measure with SQA. (Action: NIF Unit, Scottish Government)

AOB

17. No further business was raised. The next meeting of the Scottish Education Council will convene in the new term.

Scottish Education Council minutes: 2 September 2022

Attendees and apologies

Members

- Shirley-Anne Somerville, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills – Chair
- Graeme Logan, Director of Learning, Scottish Government
- Gayle Gorman, Chief Executive Education Scotland
- Clare Hicks, Director of Education Reform, Scottish Government
- Alison Cumming, Director of Early Learning and Childcare, Scottish Government
- Douglas Hutchison, President of Association of Directors of Education Scotland (ADES)
- Fiona Robertson, Scottish Qualifications Authority, Chief Executive
- Pauline Stephen, Chief Executive, General Teaching Council for Scotland
- Audrey May, Regional Improvement Collaborative Lead, Tayside Collaborative
- Laurence Findlay, Regional Improvement Collaborative Lead, The Northern Alliance
- Dr Gillian Brydson, Regional Improvement Collaborative Lead, South West Collaborative
- Fiona Robertson, Regional Improvement Collaborative Lead, South East Alliance
- Kay Sillars, Regional Manager, UNISON Scotland
- Tony McDaid, Regional Improvement Collaborative Lead, West Partnership
- Sophie Reid MSYP, Chair of Scottish Youth Parliament
- Dr Colin Morrison, Co-Director of Children's Parliament
- Shona Struthers, CEO Colleges Scotland
- Jim Thewliss, General Secretary, School Leaders Scotland
- Alan Sherry, OBE, Chair of CLD Standards Council Scotland
- Cheryl Burnett, Chair of the National Parent Forum of Scotland

New members

- Councillor Tony Buchanan, COSLA Children and Young People Spokesperson
- Andrea Bradley, General Secretary, The Educational Institute of Scotland
- Professor Margery McMahon, Chair of the Scottish Council of Deans of Education
- Beinn Grant MSYP, Convenor of Education and Lifelong Learning Committee, Scottish Youth Parliament

In attendance for this meeting

- Jamie Dunlop, Deputy Chief Executive, Scottish Youth Parliament
- Robert Quinn, SQA Head of English, Languages & Business
- Matthew Sweeney, Policy Officer, Children and Young People, COSLA

Apologies

- Lorraine Sanda, Regional Improvement Collaborative Lead, Forth Valley and West Lothian Collaborative
- Joe Griffin, Director General Education and Justice, Scottish Government
- Jane Brumpton, Chief Executive of Early Years Scotland
- Grace Vickers, SOLACE lead for Children & Young People
- Tony McDaid, Regional Improvement Collaborative Lead, West Partnership
- Professor Mark Priestley, University of Stirling
- Juliet Harris, Director of Together (Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights)

SG Officials

- Alison Taylor, Deputy Director Improvement, Attainment and Wellbeing, Scottish Government
- Judith Tracey, Team Leader, National Improvement Framework Unit, Scottish Government
- Katie Brydon, SEC Secretariat, Scottish Government
- Emma Sinclair, Unit Head, Qualifications, Scottish Government
- Claire Wilson, Senior Policy Manager, Qualifications, Scottish Government

Welcome and Introductions

18. The Chair welcomed Council members to the meeting and introduced the new members who were attending for the first time (as noted above).

Papers 1 and 2 – Action log and minutes from previous meeting

19. The Chair invited Judith Tracey, Team Leader in the National Improvement Framework Unit to summarise progress on the actions noted in **paper 1**. The majority of actions in the log were closed/completed. There were two ongoing actions relating to comments made by the International Council of Education Advisers on the development of the National Discussion and on the collaborative work taking place between Scottish Government, Education Scotland and local government colleagues on variation in performance across local authorities.

20. SEC members confirmed that they were content with the minutes of the previous meeting on the 28th of April 2022.

Paper 3 – Draft Scottish Education Council Work-plan 2022-2023

21. The Chair introduced this item by stating that the work-plan (**paper 3**) provided was in draft format and likely to change based on emerging priorities and items suggested by members in the coming year. Standing items such as education reform and the national discussion have been added due to the importance of the work being undertaken in those two areas. There will also be input from other internal governance groups such as the Curriculum and Assessment Board (CAB) and the Strategic Board for Teacher Education (SBTE). A “young persons takeover” has been suggested as a format for the final meeting of the academic year in June 2023. A similar meeting took place in Musselburgh Grammar School in 2018, where pupils were involved in shaping the agenda and presented items to the Council for discussion.

22. The following points were made in discussion:

- Colleagues are currently looking at reinvigorating the dialogue around the empowerment agenda. However, it would be helpful for members to have an update on how this work is being undertaken and next steps in due course.
- Creating a measurement framework that will more accurately capture the needs of children with additional support needs is a key area on which this forum should focus.
- Early learning and childcare should be covered in more detail, specifically on the successful expansion of services. The Council should also look beyond school education at the future of children and young people once they leave school.

Actions and decisions

- **Shona Struthers to circulate the article on the college sector’s role and developing workforce to members.**
- **Members to contact the SEC secretariat if they have any additional thoughts on what should be added to the work-plan.**

Paper 4 – SQA Results 2022

23. The Chair invited Fiona Robertson, Chief Executive, SQA to deliver a presentation to the group on **paper 4** which provided an update on results of the National Qualifications in 2022. She highlighted that:

- Results day (9 August 2022) was an important day for many thousands of pupils and families across Scotland.
- When the Cabinet Secretary announced the return to exams in 2021-22 following the pandemic, we all acknowledged that this was not a “return to normal”.
- SQA worked with partners across the education sector, including teachers, lecturers, learners, parents and carers, to agree the right package of support that would help learners demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skills despite the disruption. A package of support was announced which included course modifications to reduce the assessment burden, revision

support, an Exam Exceptional Circumstances Consideration Service, and a free appeals service.

- Overall, attainment in 2022 represents one of the strongest sets of results in an exam year and, as predicted, is between 2019, when exams last took place, and 2021, when alternative awarding was in place.
- A huge number of vocational qualifications including national certifications and foundation apprenticeships were achieved, however, sometimes these get lost because of the media and political attention that National 5, Highers and Advanced Highers receive.
- The alternative awarding arrangements in place in 2021, and the significantly different circumstances in which exams took place in 2019 and the years before, mean that comparisons of attainment between years should be treated with significant caution and do not allow for any conclusions to be drawn on changes in education performance.
- As part of its equalities duties, SQA carries out analysis of attainment across different equalities characteristics. Generally speaking, when focusing on attainment in the most deprived and least deprived groups, the attainment gap is narrower than 2019 and wider than 2021.
- The next steps include carrying out the appeals process, preparation on course reports and a review and evaluation of the alternative certification model. The review and evaluation will usefully feed into the Hayward Review of qualifications and assessment.
- Following consultation and engagement, modifications to assessment have been confirmed for the 2022/23 academic year. The National Qualifications Group will reconvene next week which draws membership from across the education sector, to provide further advice on the approach to 2023 and associated contingency planning.

24. The following points were made in discussion:

- It is important that we change the narrative and language around assessment and qualifications, in terms of academic and vocational qualifications. There should be more of a spotlight on wider achievement and, as a group, we need to begin to think about how we change thinking around this and how to spread the message.
- The level of engagement that SQA had with partners across the education sector was a great example of effective and strong collaborative working.. Proactive communication was hugely helpful and contributed to the success of results day, – although it was suggested that communication with young people could have been better, particularly around course modifications
- If we are to improve and drive change in this forum, we need to provide a bit more challenge/scrutiny on these issues. In particular, young people's views are not always reflected particularly as the representation on stakeholder groups such as the SEC is significantly less than other professional bodies.

Actions/Decisions

Officials to consider how we can take forward a shared understanding of the language around wider achievement.

Paper 5 – Education Reform Update

25. The Chair invited Clare Hicks, Director for Education Reform to present **paper 5**, which provided an update on progress on the Education Reform Programme and the National Discussion. Points made during the update included:

- The Reform Programme, National Discussion and the creation of new national bodies provides a huge opportunity within Scottish education to have a general stocktake, reflect on the various reviews and on the experience of COVID, and the innovation that was created within the system as a result. This will allow us to critique and challenge in order to create meaningful reform which puts learners needs at the heart of any decisions.
- The National Discussion also provides the opportunity for us to develop the compelling vision that we so often talk about. The questions that have been designed to aid the discussion have been worked on and discussed with partners, facilitated by Alma Harris and Carol Campbell. How we create a system that is built for the future is a critical question and we want the discussion to be inclusive, innovative and as far-reaching as possible.
- On the creation of new bodies, the target operating models for the organisations are due by December this year. We have been clear that meaningful change is required and business as usual cannot continue.

The following points were made in discussion:

- In order to create real change, it is absolutely vital that we are clear from the onset what the “new” vision and purpose is.
- We need to ensure that reform is not just school centric but includes the continuous journey of learning from early years to post-school education.
- It is critical that the National Discussion serves its intended purpose which is to be a high profile public engagement activity seeking input from as wide and inclusive range of participants as feasible, and ensuring that the views of children and young people are the main component.

Papers 6 & 7 – Initial Results of the NIF Consultation on Enhanced Data for Improvement and the Annual Statutory Review of the National Improvement Framework

26. The Chair invited Judith Tracey, Team Leader, National Improvement Framework Unit to present **papers 6 & 7**, which provided updates on the initial results of the NIF consultation on enhanced data collection for improvement, and an overview of the upcoming statutory review of the National Improvement Framework. Points made during the update included:

- The two papers provided are very much related. The outputs from the NIF consultation underpin the statutory review. There were 75 responses to the consultation, including responses from key stakeholders and other third sector organisations, as well as from a number of individuals. I.
- A more in-depth analysis of the free text and numerical data, including options for additional key measures and sub-measures will be brought to the next SEC meeting in October.

- Some of the issues raised were around the need for a whole system collaborative approach to tackling poverty and to support in closing the poverty-related attainment gap.
- The NIF annual statutory review is underway and is being jointly facilitated by Scottish Government and Education Scotland. We will be engaging with a number of key stakeholders and children and young people from across Scotland to gather their views and experiences of education.
- As part of the review, we will be asking whether there should be a single data set so that there is a consistent approach from school to national government.
- We are also considering how best to capture key improvement activity coming out of the upcoming National Discussion and the Hayward review of assessment in the senior phase, both of which will be reporting in early 2023.
- We are considering publishing an interim update to the 2023 NIF to include these activities, to ensure that the NIF pulls together all the key activity and priorities for 2023 and provides a single source for the wide range of improvement activity planned/underway in the education system.

27. The following points were made in discussion:

- The use of data needs to be as consistent as possible in order, and there should be a single data set used for improvement purposes going forward.
- It is important that we find ways to share good practice around improvement, not only within local authorities and RICs, but nationally.
- It might be worth exploring how we can use the six Regional Improvement Collaborative plans - these show the product of great partnership working and might provide some assurance to the system.

Actions/Decisions

To bring a further paper on the NIF consultation on enhanced data for improvement to the next meeting of the Scottish Education Council in October.

AOB

28. No further business was raised. The next meeting of the Scottish Education Council will take place on 26 October 2022 via Microsoft Teams.

Scottish Education Council minutes: 26 October 2022

Attendees and apologies

Members

- Shirley-Anne Somerville, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills – Chair
- Joe Griffin, Director General Education and Justice, Scottish Government
- Graeme Logan, Director of Learning, Scottish Government
- Clare Hicks, Director for Education Reform, Scottish Government
- Eleanor Passmore, Deputy Director, Early Learning and Childcare, Scottish Government
- Cllr Tony Buchanan, COSLA Children and Young People Spokesperson
- Douglas Hutchison, President of Association of Directors of Education Scotland (ADES)
- Grace Vickers, SOLACE lead for Children & Young People
- Fiona Robertson, Chief Executive, Scottish Qualifications Authority
- Pauline Stephen, Chief Executive, General Teaching Council for Scotland
- Dr Gillian Brydson, Regional Improvement Collaborative Lead, South West Collaborative
- Fiona Robertson, Regional Improvement Collaborative Lead, South East Alliance
- Kay Sillars, Regional Manager, UNISON Scotland
- Professor Margery McMahon, Chair of the Scottish Council of Deans of Education
- Tony McDaid, Regional Improvement Collaborative Lead, West Partnership
- Dr Colin Morrison, Co-Director of Children's Parliament
- Professor Mark Priestley, University of Stirling
- Lorraine Sanda, Regional Improvement Collaborative Lead, Forth Valley and West Lothian Collaborative
- Laura Caven, Chief Officer – Children and Young People, COSLA
- Shona Struthers, Chief Executive, Colleges Scotland
- Jane Brumpton, Chief Executive, Early Years Scotland
- Jim Thewliss, General Secretary, School Leaders Scotland
- Alan Sherry, OBE, Chair of CLD Standards Council Scotland
- Cheryl Burnett, Chair of the National Parent Forum of Scotland
- Greg Dempster, General Secretary, Association of Headteachers and Deputies Scotland

Apologies

- Gayle Gorman, Chief Executive of Education Scotland and HM Chief Inspector of Education

- Audrey May, Regional Improvement Collaborative Lead, Tayside Collaborative
- Laurence Findlay, Regional Improvement Collaborative Lead, The Northern Alliance
- Sophie Reid MSYP, Chair of Scottish Youth Parliament
- Beinn Grant MSYP, Convenor of Education and Lifelong Learning Committee, Scottish Youth Parliament
- Juliet Harris, Director of Together (Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights)

In attendance

- Professor Alma Harris
- Aimee McInnes, Project Officer, Scottish Youth Parliament
- Matthew Sweeney, Policy Officer, Children and Young People, COSLA
- Andy Witty, Director of Sector Policy, Colleges Scotland
- Tom Hall, Senior Policy Officer, Colleges Scotland

SG officials

- Alison Taylor, Deputy Director of Improvement, Attainment and Wellbeing
- Patricia Watson, Strategic Director, Education Scotland
- Jess Dolan, Head of Colleges and Economic Impact
- Kit Wyeth, Head of the National Improvement Framework Unit
- Gary Sutton, Senior Statistician (Information Management, Improvement and Evidence)
- Elisabeth Boyling, Head of Learning Analysis
- Clair Henderson, Head of Education Strategy
- Stacey-Ann Lindsay, Senior Policy Manager – Parental Engagement and Inclusion
- Debbie Carter, Learner Pathways Team Leader
- Judith Tracey, Team Leader, National Improvement Framework Unit
- Katie Brydon, SEC Secretariat
- Eilidh McCreath, SEC Secretariat

Welcome and introductions – Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills

The Cabinet Secretary welcomed members to the meeting and introduced Greg Dempster, General Secretary of the Association of Headteachers and Deputies as a new member of the Council. The Chair also welcomed Professor Alma Harris, who joined the Council to provide a progress update on the National Discussion on Scottish Education as an Independent Facilitator to the project.

Papers 1 and 2 – Action log and minutes from previous meeting

The Chair invited Kit Wyeth, Head of the National Improvement Framework Unit, to provide members with an update on progress with actions recorded in the SEC

action log (paper 1). A number of items recorded in the log had been included as agenda items for discussion at this meeting. An action around developing a narrative on wider achievement was signposted to be brought to a future SEC meeting. All other actions were marked as closed. Members were content with the minutes of the previous meeting on the 2nd of September 2022 (paper 2).

Paper 3 – Update on the Education Reform Programme

The Chair invited Clare Hicks, Director for Education Reform, to present paper 3, which provided the Council with an update on the Education Reform programme. The National Discussion is well underway, and the levels of engagement reported in paper 3 have already been exceeded in terms of the number of interactions with stakeholders. Sequencing of the reform programme is key and timings of the National Discussion have been altered to ensure that its outcomes inform the Hayward Review. The design of the new national education bodies will reflect the outputs and recommendations from these two critical pieces of work, along with wider contexts such as the development of Purpose and Principles of post-school education, research and skills, and the review of the skills development system.

Discussion

The following points were made in discussion:

- Members asked for further information on a reference in paper 3 to the establishment of specific user experience panels for the purposes of engagement as part of the National Discussion. Scottish Government officials clarified that these user experience panels would build on the strong foundation of children and young people's engagement as part of Ken Muir's review. Officials will engage further with SEC members as part of this process, recognising their great level of expertise in this area.
- It was suggested that the Education Reform Programme should extend membership to the colleges sector, given its key role in school-college partnerships.
- There was some discussion around the resourcing required in order to achieve the aims of the new agencies.

Progress update on the National Discussion on Scottish Education

The Chair invited Professor Alma Harris to present paper 4, which provided a progress update on the National Discussion on Scottish Education. It was acknowledged from the outset that children and young people have been at the heart of this process. It is important to note that this project is not just about change, but also about consolidating what is good in Scottish education. The team are currently exploring the question of coherence of data and how the views of stakeholders will be presented in the conclusion report of the National Discussion. This report will act not just as a summary of the National Discussion, but also as a call to action, and it is important to seize on the energy in the system as demonstrated through this project.

Discussion

The following points were made in discussion:

- Members welcomed the positive engagement they have received from the National Discussion for their respective areas of expertise such as Community Learning and Development. Some further suggestions for engagement were provided by members, such as young people in their first year of undergraduate courses.
- There was some discussion around measures to enable teachers and practitioners to engage with the reform process within the normal working week. Representatives from COSLA provided the Council with an update on their engagement with local authorities on this matter. It was agreed that officials from the National Discussion team would link up with the General Secretary of EIS to discuss this matter further.
- As well as engaging with children and young people, it is important to ensure that those who care for and support young people are included meaningfully in the National Discussion.
- Members acknowledged the importance of engaging with children and young people who do not usually engage with consultations of this nature. The contact email for the National Discussion team was shared so that members could provide suggestions for areas of further engagement.

Actions

- **Andrea Bradley and Lorraine Davidson to discuss further the approaches for teachers to engage with the National Discussion.**
- **Council members to contact the National Discussion team with any further suggestions for groups and organisations to engage with.**

Paper 5 – School-College partnerships

The Chair invited Shona Struthers, Chief Executive and Tom Hall, Senior Policy Officer, Colleges Scotland, to present paper 5, which set out proposals to deliver seamless transitions between schools and their partnerships. For the purposes of discussion these partnerships were defined as any learning delivered by a college, working in collaboration with schools with the wider aim of gaining skills for life. The paper sought to remove duplication in the system and improve data sharing and performance monitoring to improve learner pathways. The paper recommended the agreement in principle of establishing a short-life sub-group to examine work around improving links between schools and colleges and the role of these partnerships in addressing child poverty.

Discussion

The following points were made in discussion:

- Members agreed that the establishment of a short-life sub-group would be helpful, particularly in the context of reform work taking place across the education system.
- Members acknowledged the valuable role of school/college partnerships in developing the workforce and its ties with the question of capturing wider achievement and an enhanced curriculum offer.
- The consistency of partnership offers varies across Scotland. This has been explored at a previous meeting of the Curriculum and Assessment Board, and the James Withers review around the tertiary sector will be an important part of the reform and review landscape which might be worth further discussion at a future meeting of the Council.
- The wide range of opportunities explored within paper 5 demonstrates the wide range of pathways available with Curriculum for Excellence. Members were keen for the short-life group to work towards a system of partnerships which can help to represent the totality of achievement among learners.

Actions

- **Colleges Scotland colleagues to facilitate the creation of a short-life sub-group. Members interested in joining the group should contact the SEC secretariat who will then liaise with Colleges Scotland with a membership list.**
- **Colleges Scotland colleagues will return to the Council following the conclusion of the sub-group to summarise their work and next steps.**

Paper 6 – National Improvement Framework – new key measures

The Chair invited Judith Tracey, Team Leader, National Improvement Framework Unit, to present paper 6, which set out proposals for new key measures to be included in the National Improvement Framework in response to the recent consultation on enhanced data collection for improvement, and on the key measures to assess progress towards closing the poverty-related attainment gap. One key area of consideration is the inclusion of attendance and exclusion as a key measure. Overall, the majority of respondents agreed that attendance could/should be a key measure, however, many of the respondents raised concerns about adding exclusion to the basket of key measures because of a perceived risk of creating perverse incentives. Most consultation respondents were keen that we have more information around health and wellbeing – confidence, resilience and engagement in particular. The final proposal is around the inclusion of positive destinations as a key measure. Responses to the consultation have also linked in with existing discussions around the use of different data sets - namely Scottish Statistics on Attainment and Initial Leaver Destinations (SSAILD) and Insight. Although the source data doesn't change, schools and local authorities tend to use Insight for improvement and benchmarking purposes, whereas progress against the key measures in the NIF currently uses data from SSAILD. Work is underway to consider how we can move towards a 'single source of truth'; a core data set that we use across Scottish Education for improvement purposes.

Discussion

The following points were made in discussion:

- Members suggested engaging with SDS on the discussion around including positive destinations as a key measure. There were different views on whether to capture positive destinations 3 months or 9 months after leaving school – 3 months may be too short a timescale to achieve an accurate picture of learner pathways, but it provides a closer link between schools and their school leaver destinations.
- There was a discussion about the measurement of outputs vs inputs, and some members suggested that placing a bigger emphasis on measuring inputs such as curriculum development can help to balance the risk around perverse incentives as a result of diverting focus towards meeting performance indicators.
- Some members were supportive of the inclusion of attendance as a key measure but noted that it would be helpful to gather attendance data in order to identify particular patterns in terms of the attendance of specific groups.
- Members agreed that the NIF should capture both SQA qualifications and vocational qualifications, no matter which data set is used.

Actions

- **SG colleagues will return to the SEC at a future meeting with an update on aligning the SSAILD report and the Insight tool.**

Verbal update - work to reduce variation in performance and next steps for stretch aims

The Chair invited Alison Taylor, Deputy Director, Improvement, Attainment and Wellbeing, to provide the Council with a verbal update on progress with work to reduce variation in performance between local authorities and next steps for local authority stretch aims. Much of what was discussed during the previous item links to this work, particularly around the question of measuring what we need to without driving perverse incentives, and how we can move towards a single source of truth with the data we use in Scottish education. Scottish Government colleagues met with colleagues in COSLA and ADES on the 13th of September to discuss the use of a robust evidence base as a tool in our education system for comparing local performance appropriately and in context, and supporting improvement. SG colleagues will examine further how we can work towards this.

The development of stretch aims for the refreshed Scottish Attainment Challenge Framework has been a joint effort between SG, ES, COSLA and local government colleagues. The approach of working from the ground up allows local authorities to identify measures which are most useful to them in their local contexts. Work will be taken forward to identify opportunities for further stretch and challenge, and to identify consistencies in the data to give us a rich source of intelligence for what is working locally.

Paper 7 – Curriculum and Assessment Board update

The Chair invited Clare Hicks, Director for Education Reform, to present paper 7, which provided the Council with an update on the work of the Curriculum and Assessment Board (CAB). The group met for the first time in the 2022/23 session in September, which was also the first meeting to take place since the CAB was repurposed as a Stakeholder Reference Group for the purposes of the Reform Programme. The group discussed the SQA results for 2022 and progress with the annual statutory review of the NIF. The group also discussed the Purposes and Principles work underway in the Directorate for Advanced Learning and Science. The next meeting of the CAB will take place in January.

Paper 8 – Strategic Board for Teacher Education update

The Chair invited Jim Thewliss, General Secretary, School Leaders Scotland, to present paper 8, which provided the Council with an update on the work of the Strategic Board for Teacher Education (SBTE). The SBTE has recently resumed meetings for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic began. In its most recent meeting the Board discussed its key purpose and how best to maintain a line of sight between early/initial teaching education and lifelong learning. The Board also discussed the legacy of Graham Donaldson's report *Teaching in Scotland's Future* and to best ensure that the Board's work remains relevant to the report's recommendations. The final point discussed was around ensuring that the work of the Board would be carried out in best practice of diversity and inclusion.

Any other business and future meeting arrangements

No further business was raised at the meeting. The Chair thanked members for joining the 6th meeting of the SEC, and confirmed that the next meeting would take place on the 15th of December.

Scottish Education Council minutes: 15 December 2022

Attendees and apologies

Members

- Shirley-Anne Somerville, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills – Chair
- Joe Griffin, Director General Education and Justice, Scottish Government
- Graeme Logan, Director of Learning, Scottish Government
- Clare Hicks, Director for Education Reform, Scottish Government
- Gayle Gorman, Chief Executive of Education Scotland and HM Chief Inspector of Education
- Andrew Watson, Director of Early Learning and Childcare, Scottish Government
- Cllr Tony Buchanan, COSLA Children and Young People Spokesperson
- Douglas Hutchison, President of Association of Directors of Education Scotland (ADES)
- Andrea Bradley, General Secretary, Educational Institute of Scotland
- Fiona Robertson, Chief Executive, Scottish Qualifications Authority
- Pauline Stephen, Chief Executive, General Teaching Council for Scotland
- Dr Gillian Brydson, Regional Improvement Collaborative Lead, South West Collaborative
- Fiona Robertson, Regional Improvement Collaborative Lead, South East Alliance
- Kay Sillars, Regional Manager, UNISON Scotland
- Tony McDaid, Regional Improvement Collaborative Lead, West Partnership
- Audrey May, Regional Improvement Collaborative Lead, Tayside Collaborative
- Dr Colin Morrison, Co-Director of Children's Parliament
- Lorraine Sanda, Regional Improvement Collaborative Lead, Forth Valley and West Lothian Collaborative
- Laura Caven, Chief Officer – Children and Young People, COSLA
- Jane Brumpton, Chief Executive, Early Years Scotland
- Jim Thewliss, General Secretary, School Leaders Scotland
- Alan Sherry, OBE, Chair of CLD Standards Council Scotland
- Cheryl Burnett, Chair of the National Parent Forum of Scotland
- Greg Dempster, General Secretary, Association of Headteachers and Deputes Scotland
- Laurence Findlay, Regional Improvement Collaborative Lead, The Northern Alliance
- Sophie Reid MSYP, Chair of Scottish Youth Parliament
- Beinn Grant MSYP, Convenor of Education and Lifelong Learning Committee, Scottish Youth Parliament

Apologies

- Juliet Harris, Director of Together (Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights)
- Professor Mark Priestley, University of Stirling
- Shona Struthers, Chief Executive, Colleges Scotland
- Des Murray, Solace lead for Children and Young People
- Professor Margery McMahon, Chair of the Scottish Council of Deans of Education

In attendance

- Aimee McInnes, Project Officer, Scottish Youth Parliament
- Matthew Sweeney, Policy Officer, Children and Young People, COSLA

SG officials

- Alison Taylor, Deputy Director of Improvement, Attainment and Wellbeing
- Kit Wyeth, Head of the National Improvement Framework Unit
- Laura Murdoch, Deputy Director, Curriculum and Qualifications
- Debbie Carter, Learner Pathways Team Leader
- David Leng, Head of the Scottish Attainment Challenge Unit
- Judith Tracey, Team Leader, National Improvement Framework Unit
- Katie Brydon, SEC Secretariat
- Eilidh McCreath, SEC Secretariat

Welcome and introductions – Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills

The Cabinet Secretary welcomed members to the 7th meeting of the Scottish Education Council.

Papers 1 and 2 – Action log and minutes from previous meeting

The Chair invited Kit Wyeth, head of the National Improvement Framework Unit, to provide members with an update on progress with actions recorded in the SEC action log (paper 1). Several actions were signposted to be brought to a future SEC meeting, including an update on the work of a new short-life sub-group on school-college partnerships. Members were content with the minutes of the previous meeting on 26 October 2022 (paper 2).

Paper 3 – Update on the Education Reform Programme

The Chair invited Clare Hicks, Director for Education Reform, to present paper 3, which provided the Council with an update on the Education Reform programme. A number of key milestones have been reached since the last meeting of the Council, including the conclusion of the listening phase of the National Discussion on 5 December 2022. The next step of the process, which involves the analysis of

consultation responses, will conclude in Spring 2023. Consultation for the Hayward Review is ongoing looking across the broad range of exams and other forms of assessment available to learners. Outputs of the National Discussion will help to inform the conclusion of the Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment in Spring 2023. The final output from work around the purposes and principles for post-school education will also be published in Spring 2023. Sequencing of the reform programme is key and timings of the National Discussion have been altered to ensure that its outcomes help to inform the Hayward Review. Target Operating Models (TOMs) have been agreed for the new public bodies and further advice will be provided to the Council at a future meeting on progress with the design of the new bodies.

Discussion

The following points were made in discussion:

- Members reflected on the significant response to the National Discussion across the country during the listening phase of the project.
- Members raised the issue of representation on the Stakeholder Reference Group at section 12 of paper 3, and queried how organisations which are not represented on the group will feed into the design of the new public bodies.
- Members discussed the sequencing of the reform programme and the importance of establishing a key direction between all the key areas of work, including the key decision makers at each stage of the programme. Officials assured the Council that the Scottish Government will continue to ensure that the reform programme aligns different reform workstreams coherently across the changing education landscape, and agreed the need to ensure that consultation in the new year as part of the Hayward Review brings the benefits to the learner to the foreground.

Verbal item - 2022 SQA appeals outcomes

The Chair invited Beinn Grant MSYP and Sophie Reid MSYP to introduce this item, which outlined concerns aired by children and young people around the 2022 SQA appeals outcomes. These included the lasting impact of COVID-19 on learners and the disparities between numbers of appeals according to areas of deprivation.

Fiona Robertson, Chief Executive of the SQA, provided the Council with further details on the 2022 appeals process, including consideration of the impact of COVID-19 on learners, the process for awarding revised grades in exceptional circumstances and communications to learners in the lead up to the 2022 appeals process. Fiona Robertson highlighted that SYP attended the NQ 2023 Group and organised the SQA Learner Panel. She had also offered to meet SYP members separately at a time which was convenient to them.

Discussion

The following points were made in discussion:

- Members noted the need for all adult professionals to be mindful when convening key stakeholder groups of the demands on the availability of children and young people during school hours to ensure that there is young people representation at key meetings.
- Members discussed the disparities highlighted by the MSYPs in the number of pupils applying for appeals across SIMD levels and the need for further investigation around this issue. Fiona Robertson highlighted that this was a wider issue and all eligible learners had a free and direct right to appeal. This will be discussed further at a separate meeting between Fiona Robertson and the MSYPs.

Actions/Decisions

- **The Chair and SEC secretariat will be mindful of the challenges which timings of future Council meetings during school hours may present for accommodating the needs of young members. (Action: SEC secretariat)**
- **Fiona Robertson to follow-up on the points raised with MSYP members around the 2022 appeals process in a separate meeting. (Action: Fiona Robertson)**

Paper 4 – Improving the narrative on assessment and qualifications

The Chair invited Debbie Carter, Learner Pathways Team Leader, to present paper 4, seeking the views of the Council on a new narrative around assessment and qualifications. The purpose of this narrative is to ensure parity of esteem for different course choices and learner pathways.

Discussion

The following points were made in discussion:

- Members discussed gender, social class and cultural issues underpinning the esteem in which various qualifications are held, and which require further consideration as part of this work.
- What often adds to the complexity around developing a narrative is the additional accountability agendas which are created as a result. Therefore it is important to consider how this narrative would link to other projects such as the Scottish Attainment Challenge, and how it will show consistency with work around culture and language within education establishments.
- Members noted that this item echoes similar discussions within the Hayward Independent Review Group. One of the emerging ideas from these discussions is the need to capture much more of what young people are learning throughout their journey. While there is an annual SQA results day, vocational qualifications are awarded throughout the academic year, and further work may be required to recognise this breadth of achievement.

Actions

- **SG colleagues to work further on developing a narrative on assessment and qualifications, and whether this narrative will achieve its anticipated aims on the ground, and will return with a proposal to Council members in early 2023 (Action: Senior Phase and OECD Curriculum Reform Unit, SG).**

Verbal item – update on the refreshed Scottish Attainment Challenge model

The Chair invited David Leng, Head of the Scottish Attainment Challenge Unit, to provide the Council with an update on the refreshed Scottish Attainment Challenge model and 2022-23 local authority stretch aims, which were published on 8 December 2022. Some key emerging themes from these stretch aims include health and wellbeing, capturing wider achievement and supporting care experienced children and young people.

Next steps following publication of the stretch aims include establishing agreed data sources and understanding variation across local authorities, linking to discussions held at previous SEC meetings.

Discussion

The following points were made in discussion:

- Members noted the need to continue work to close the attainment gap with a multi-service approach to support young people in achieving the best outcomes.
- There was a discussion around the link between teacher numbers and the closing of the attainment gap. Members also queried the lack of inclusion of wider school staff, such as speech and language therapists, who are not captured by the inclusion of teachers in local authority stretch aims.
- Members commented on the importance of clarifying the purpose and process of stretch aims to avoid locking local authorities into a process of annualised targets as opposed to developing ambitious stretch aims.
- Members queried where the development of stretch aims will sit within the wider empowerment agenda, noting that something more akin to 3 year planning might be useful to link in with existing school plans.
- SG officials provided assurance that partners and stakeholders would be included in the 'lessons learned' phase of the refreshed SAC framework, noting that the new system of stretch aims is designed to establish a rhythm of reviewing ambitions and opportunity for further stretch, rather than to create annual targets.

Paper 5 – Strategic Board for Teacher Education update

The Chair invited Jim Thewliss, General Secretary, School Leaders Scotland, to present paper 5, which provided the Council with an update on the work of the Strategic Board for Teacher Education (SBTE) following their most recent meeting in November 2022. The Board discussed their developing workplan which will aim to

incorporate the various work strands of activity across teacher education, embedding the principles within the *Teaching Scotland's Future* document. Other areas of discussion included challenges around intakes to Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes and the evaluation of the Into Headship programme undertaken by Professor Alma Harris.

Discussion

The following points were made in discussion:

- Members noted the need to maintain existing standards and expectations for entrants of ITE programmes, despite the concerns around numbers in specific programmes or geographical areas.
- Teacher numbers, contact time, and availability of permanent contracts were all identified as contextual issues linking to challenges around ITE numbers.
- Members queried points raised in the Into Headship evaluation around concerns about the academic workload for busy professionals and whether there would be further discussion on those points at a future meeting of the Board. Jim Thewliss confirmed as the SBTE representative that this work would be looked at further by the Board.

Actions/Decisions

- **Challenges around ITE numbers in the context of work to reduce contact time for teachers to be noted as a substantive agenda item at the next SEC meeting. (Action: SG officials).**

Any other business and future meeting arrangements

No further business was raised at the meeting. The Chair thanked members for joining the 7th meeting of the SEC, and confirmed that the next meeting would take place on the 22 of February.

Scottish Education Council minutes: 22 February 2023

Attendees and apologies

Members

- Shirley-Anne Somerville, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills – Chair
- Graeme Logan, Director of Learning, Scottish Government
- Clare Hicks, Director for Education Reform, Scottish Government
- Gayle Gorman, Chief Executive of Education Scotland and HM Chief Inspector of Education
- Andrew Watson, Director of Early Learning and Childcare, Scottish Government
- Douglas Hutchison, President of Association of Directors of Education Scotland (ADES)
- Fiona Robertson, Chief Executive, Scottish Qualifications Authority
- Pauline Stephen, Chief Executive, General Teaching Council for Scotland
- Dr Gillian Brydson, Regional Improvement Collaborative Lead, South West Collaborative
- Fiona Robertson, Regional Improvement Collaborative Lead, South East Alliance
- Kay Sillars, Regional Manager, UNISON Scotland
- Audrey May, Regional Improvement Collaborative Lead, Tayside Collaborative
- Dr Colin Morrison, Co-Director of Children's Parliament
- Juliet Harris, Director of Together (Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights)
- Lorraine Sanda, Regional Improvement Collaborative Lead, Forth Valley and West Lothian Collaborative
- Laura Caven, Chief Officer – Children and Young People, COSLA
- Shona Struthers, Chief Executive, Colleges Scotland
- Jane Brumpton, Chief Executive, Early Years Scotland
- Jim Thewliss, General Secretary, School Leaders Scotland
- Alan Sherry, OBE, Chair of CLD Standards Council Scotland
- Professor Margery McMahon, Chair of the Scottish Council of Deans of Education
- Cheryl Burnett, Chair of the National Parent Forum of Scotland
- Greg Dempster, General Secretary, Association of Headteachers and Deputies Scotland
- Des Murray, Solace lead for Children and Young People
- James Wylie, Regional Improvement Collaborative Lead, Northern Alliance
- Sophie Reid MSYP, Chair of Scottish Youth Parliament
- Beinn Grant MSYP, Convenor of Education and Lifelong Learning Committee, Scottish Youth Parliament

Apologies

- Cllr Tony Buchanan, COSLA Children and Young People Spokesperson
- Professor Mark Priestley, University of Stirling
- Joe Griffin, Director General Education and Justice, Scottish Government
- Tony McDaid, Regional Improvement Collaborative Lead, West Partnership
- Andrea Bradley, General Secretary, Educational Institute of Scotland

In attendance

- Aimee McInnes, Project Officer, Scottish Youth Parliament
- Matthew Sweeney, Policy Officer, Children and Young People, COSLA

SG officials

- Alison Taylor, Deputy Director of Improvement, Attainment and Wellbeing
- Kit Wyeth, Head of the National Improvement Framework Unit
- David Leng, Head of the Scottish Attainment Challenge Unit
- David Begley, Scottish Attainment Challenge Unit
- Elisabeth Boyling, Head of Learning Analysis
- Andrew White, Learning Analysis
- Helen Mclellan, Senior Policy Manager: Learner Participation
- Judith Tracey, Team Leader, National Improvement Framework Unit
- Katie Brydon, SEC Secretariat
- Eilidh McCreath, SEC Secretariat

Welcome and introductions – Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills

The Cabinet Secretary welcomed members to the 8th meeting of the Scottish Education Council. The Council acknowledged that this would be Gayle Gorman's last meeting in her role as Chief Executive of Education Scotland and the Chair thanked Gayle for her many years of service in Scottish Education.

Papers 1 and 2 – Action log and minutes from previous meeting

Alison Taylor provided a short verbal update on progress with the working group on understanding and comparing local performance following the most recent meeting on 16 February. While providing a verbal update on progress with the short-life sub-group on school-college partnerships, Shona Struthers asked the Council for assistance in finding a headteacher to join the sub-group on school-college partnerships to represent the school sector. The other progress updates and outstanding actions were noted by the Council.

Members were content with the minutes of the previous meeting on 15 December 2022 (paper 2), and an amendment was agreed at the request of the Chair to add a line of reassurance in response to comments raised by members during the

Education Reform update around ensuring a key direction of travel in the reform programme. An updated version of the minutes will be circulated to SEC members via correspondence.

Actions/Decisions

- **SEC members to recommend a possible head teacher representative for the sub-group on school-college partnerships (Action: SEC members)**
- **SEC Secretariat to circulate an updated version of the minutes from SEC20221215 via correspondence. (Action: SEC Secretariat)**

Paper 3 – Updated SEC workplan February-June 2023

The Chair invited Eilidh McCreath, SEC Secretariat, to present paper 3, seeking the views of the Council on an updated workplan for the remainder of the academic year. The Council last reviewed the workplan in September 2022. The revised workplan included a proposal to delay the young person's takeover, provisionally planned for June 2023, in anticipation of the outcomes and recommendations from the Young People's Collaborative Project. The Council were invited to suggest any further items they wished to be added to the workplan for the remainder of the academic year.

Discussion

The following points were made in discussion:

- Members asked whether young people have been consulted on the suggestion to delay the young people's takeover to the next academic year. The Secretariat clarified that an education setting to host the young person's takeover had not yet been confirmed, and as such there have been no discussions with children and young people outside of the SEC. The Secretariat agreed to pick up this discussion with the two young people representatives on the Council, and the Chair would take a steer from the outcomes of that discussion to establish an approach to a young person's takeover.
- Greg Dempster, AHDS, suggested adding a discussion around headteacher applicant numbers to the discussion on Initial Teacher Education intake numbers due to take place in April 2023.
- Gillian Brydson proposed an item on behalf of the South West Collaborative around digital access to SCQF Level 7 and the potential benefit this has on curriculum access for rural education settings.

Actions/Decisions

- **SEC Secretariat to arrange a follow-up discussion with Sophie Reid MSYP and Beinn Reid MSYP regarding the young person's takeover. (Action: SEC Secretariat)**
- **Discussion on headteacher applicant numbers to be added to the discussion on ITE intake numbers at the April SEC meeting. (Action: SEC Secretariat/Greg Dempster)**

- **Item on digital access to SCQF Level 7 to be brought to a future SEC meeting. (Action: SEC Secretariat/Gillian Brydson)**

Paper 4 – Update on the Education Reform programme

The Chair invited Clare Hicks, Director for Education Reform, to provide the Council with an update on progress with the Education Reform programme. The most recent meeting of the Education Reform Stakeholder Reference Group took place on 18 January 2023 and included an update from Professor Louise Hayward on progress with the Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment. There was also further discussion around the draft Target Operating Models (TOMs) for the new education bodies. A detailed analysis of 6000 responses to the National Discussion on Scottish Education is currently underway, and Professors Carol Campbell and Alma Harris will be testing initial outputs from this analysis with the International Council of Education Advisers in early March. Officials will ensure alignment across the various strands of reform with a phased approach over the Spring period. Phase 2 of the Hayward Review is coming to a close, with an interim report to be published in early March. The review's timeline has been extended to take on board outcomes of the National Discussion and the Purposes and Principles of Scottish Education, with the Withers Review also to be published in Spring 2023.

Discussion

The following points were made in discussion:

- Members discussed the potential costs associated with the TOMs and establishing what budget is available, while also ensuring that there is opportunity for innovation as part of the reform process.
- Members asked about work around the National Discussion in consideration of Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). In particular, members asked if there will be a summary of the demographics who responded to the consultation as part of the analysis, particularly among groups such as care experienced children. Officials confirmed that a lot of detailed planning and work went into ensuring that the National Discussion included seldom heard voices – particularly those of care experienced children and young people. The analysis of responses needs to be able to provide assurance around how the input of seldom heard voices is evaluated and taken into account.
- Members commented that, despite the complexity of the work across different areas of the system, the reform programme provides a unique opportunity to examine how different parts of the system interact with each other, and how these interactions can be strengthened.
- Members asked if the report recently published by Dr Marina Shapira and Professor Mark Priestley - *Exploring the impact of curriculum policy on choice, attainment and destinations* – was being factored into work around the Hayward Review. Officials confirmed that the different strands of reform work will respond to that report, as well as work carried out by the Curriculum and Assessment Board. The new improvement agency will also have an important role in leading on curriculum work in a way which can address the challenges identified by the report.

- Juliet Harris provided the Council with an overview of a report submitted to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in February 2023 by Together (Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights). The report includes points around inclusive reform and the need for seamless transition between Early Learning and primary education, with a rights based approach throughout this transition.

Actions/Decisions

- **An item on a children's rights-based approach to Education Reform to be brought to a future SEC meeting (Action: SEC Secretariat/Juliet Harris).**
- **SEC members to approach the Director for Education Reform with any follow-up questions on the reform programme (Action: all members).**

Verbal update – Progress with the refreshed Scottish Attainment Challenge Framework

The Chair invited David Leng, Head of the Scottish Attainment Challenge Unit, to provide the Council with a verbal update on progress with the refreshed Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) framework. During the last meeting in December the Council were updated on the publication of 2022-23 local authority stretch aims and their emerging themes. The process observed a high degree of engagement and ownership from all local authorities, with rigorous use of data for improvement. Work is now moving from ambition to implementation, with the establishment of a short-life working group to examine key challenges associated with the refreshed framework. These include ensuring that the core measures are inclusive of a wide set of achievements, and examining the difference between ambition and tracking/monitoring. The group is also considering timelines for reporting, and how the release of different data sets can be better aligned into some form of annual reporting cycle. The Chair thanked colleagues in local government for their work in this area, noting that the new process has produced a lot of learning at pace. The Chair was keen to see how we (as a system) can take forward that learning into the new year.

Discussion

The following points were made in discussion:

- Members discussed how to increase the pace and momentum in our shared ambition so that we can improve attainment and progress. Members noted that one of the challenges is that progress is measured differently across different councils, and capturing the wider workforce picture beyond teachers would be helpful to capture work underway in local settings.
- Members noted the importance of examining the empowerment agenda to ensure that resources are targeted to the point of need at an individual level.
- Members flagged that any changes to data sets will also mean that benchmarks will change, and ambitions will therefore also need to be

adjusted. It is important to adopt a granular understanding of interventions to data sets as part of any further work around wider achievement.

- Members discussed the significant impact of the cost of living crisis on children and how that is picked up within the data used to capture progress.
- Collaboration, both in terms of headteachers working together and schools working in partnership with universities can help to push the improvement agenda. This can also help to avoid the trap whereby an indicator of equality becomes the definition of equality. Instead of being driven by external accountability we need to work towards collective responsibility.
- Gayle Gorman and Matthew Sweeney updated the Council on the work of the School Empowerment sub-group to balance an empowerment agenda with a nationwide reform. The Chair noted that a further update on this work at a future meeting of the Council would be helpful.

Actions/decisions

- **A more detailed update on the work of the School Empowerment sub-group to be brought to a future meeting of the SEC (Action: SEC Secretariat/Education Scotland Officials/COSLA Officials).**

Verbal update – ‘Single source of truth data’ work

The Chair invited Andrew White, Learning Analysis Unit, to provide the Council with a verbal update on work to align the Summary Statistics for Attainment and Initial Leaver Destinations (SSAILD) and Insight data sets. The SSAILD data published each February provides data for 3 of the NIF key measures and 2 of the SAC core stretch aims. Insight is a benchmarking tool for the Senior Phase which is based on a wider set of qualifications. This work aims to align the two data sets which would produce a single set of measures with a single methodology for both national statistics and Insight. Officials are currently discussing this work with the relevant parties and will be consulting in due course with the intention to have an agreed approach in place by the end of the year when the next iteration of the NIF is published in December.

Discussion

The following points were made in discussion:

- There was broad agreement to move away from referring to this as work to establish a ‘single source of truth’, as it might suggest that other achievements not captured by the aligned data set are not truthful.
- Members noted that the aligned data set needs to be accessible for stakeholders as well as policymakers so that all levels of the system can use data to establish if their initiatives are having the desired impact.
- Members had a discussion around the utility of the data captured across the different sets, and whether a new core data set would be specific to Senior Phase or to the whole system.

Actions/Decisions

- **SG officials will rename work to establish a core data set before returning to the Council with an update. (Action: SG officials).**

Paper 5 – Curriculum and Assessment Board update

The Chair invited Clare Hicks, Director for Education Reform, to present paper 5, which provided the Council with an update on the work of the Curriculum and Assessment Board (CAB). The Chair noted that this standing item would usually also include an update from the Strategic Board for Teacher Education (SBTE) but the Board has not met since the SEC was last updated on their work in December. During its last meeting in January 2023 the CAB discussed curriculum review and improvement activity, before moving on to discuss a paper on Gaelic Medium Education (GME). The two items are tied in terms of ensuring that GME is considered from the outset in the context of curriculum development and review.

Discussion

- Members asked if the full package of curriculum development and improvement activity underway at present is aligned with UNCRC incorporation. Due to time constraints, it was agreed that this matter could be picked up at the next SEC meeting.

Actions/Decisions

- **Further discussion to take place at the April SEC meeting around incorporating the UNCRC into curriculum development. (Action: SEC Secretariat/Colin Morrison).**

Any other business and future meeting arrangements

No further business was raised at the meeting. The Chair thanked members for joining the 8th meeting of the SEC, and confirmed that the next meeting would take place on the 27th of April.