



YouthLink Scotland response to the extended consultation on the National Discussion on Education and the Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment

National Discussion on Education

What is your top priority for a short-term action?

The Vision Statement for the Future of Scottish Education places children and young people at the heart of Scottish education. It calls on us to respond to their calls for “*a safe, inclusive education system that valued everyone and celebrated all kinds of success*”. To do this, it argues we need to value collaboration “*with all those working in, or connected to, the education system*”¹.

Lifelong learning and skills reform must expressly recognise the integral role of youth work in Scottish education. A strengthened position for youth work is needed as a priority short-term action to drive the structural and cultural changes required to deliver the vision for Scottish education.

The final report from the National Discussion² acknowledged that learning takes place across various settings and approaches, including in the community and through outdoor learning. This includes youth work.

Youth work is part of Scottish education. It is a valuable element of the learner journey for all children and young people, helping them develop a broad range of skills, capacities and achievements to support their success. It complements and enhances the delivery of the formal curriculum, and the provision of support for pupils, contributing to raising attainment and improving outcomes for young people, especially, but not exclusively, those impacted by poverty.

The role of youth work within Scottish education is not currently sufficiently included, resourced, understood or valued. Young people therefore do not have equitable access to the learning opportunities required to reach their potential.

The National Discussion also identified the crucial value of collaborative partnerships to deliver the vision for learners. Through our Scottish Attainment Challenge national programme, YouthLink Scotland has seen the positive impact of effective youth work and school collaboration. Evidence shows that alongside schools, youth work

¹ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/learners-scotland-matter-national-discussion-summary-report/pages/3/#:~:text=Vision%20Statement%20for%20the%20Future%20of%20Scottish%20Education&text=All%20learners%20are%20supported%20in,inequities%20that%20exist%20or%20arise.>

² <https://www.gov.scot/publications/learners-scotland-matter-national-discussion-education-final-report/>

improves health and wellbeing, readiness to learn and educational outcomes for children and young people³.

A strengthened position for youth work in Scottish education is a pre-requisite for the collaborative approach identified as vital to delivering our vision for children and young people. This will ensure all learners have equitable access to support, high-quality learning opportunities and flexible pathways to help them develop the skills, values and attitudes to thrive in a changing world. Importantly, as we strive to deliver a human-rights-based approach to education, collaboration is how we will show all young people they 'matter'.

Over 700 young people learning through youth work responded to the National Discussion, calling for Education Reform to ensure that every young person can access youth work as a fundamental element of their education⁴. They identified the following key changes that were required:

- Skills and achievements through youth work are recognised alongside exam results
- Every young person can access youth work where and when they need it
- Youth workers and teachers will work better together
- All young people can access youth work opportunities as part of their curriculum/timetable
- Schools can provide more opportunities for young people to develop life-relevant skills
- Young people will feel safe, respected, supported and included by those who support their learning.

If we are to achieve the ambition for Scottish education, we need to listen to young people and look at their journey holistically. Create a coherent and integrated system through school and beyond. Demonstrate parity across all settings and approaches to learning that contribute to helping young people develop the knowledge, skills and experiences to make a positive contribution to society. We simply cannot show every learner that they matter until we demonstrate that all learning matters.

We believe that alongside the structural changes recommended through reform, a culture change in how we understand 'education' and the education system is needed. Equitable access to opportunities to learn, develop and achieve cannot be left to local decision-making. Education Reform must be driven by a strong narrative that reinforces youth work as a fundamental element of Scottish education. This includes specific recognition of youth workers and youth work settings in delivering and supporting opportunities as part of the proposed Scottish Diploma of Achievement – and a young person's right to access the opportunities they need to achieve.

³ <https://www.youthlink.scot/education-skills/scottish-attainment-challenge/>

⁴ https://www.youthlink.scot/wp-content/uploads/views-of-young-people-participating-in-youth-work_web.pdf

“Youth work deserves and should be recognised as part of the school curriculum where young people’s learning can be documented” – young person responding to the extended consultation.

“Youth work should be recognised for its ability to provide learning programmes that are alternative to formal learning, both in school and outwith. This is mostly with young people who struggle with that formal learning style”. – youth worker responding to the extended consultation.

“Youth Work, in all its forms, should be on level footing with formal education. It must be appreciated that many of the young people we engage with are the most detached from learning and that every opportunity to capture and celebrate success should be used” – youth worker responding to the extended consultation.

What is your top priority for a medium-term action?

YouthLink Scotland worked with youth workers to consult young people as part of this extended consultation. Young people were asked which of the six key changes previously identified by young people was their top priority. The top priorities were:

- **Young people will feel safe, respected, supported and included by those who support their learning**
- **Every young person can access youth work where and when they need it**
- **All young people can access youth work opportunities as part of their curriculum/timetable**

Our top priority for a medium-term action is therefore to design and deliver a transformed education system where there is an expectation that youth work will be embedded in the curriculum offer, across all levels, as a Curriculum for Excellence entitlement for all young people. Youth work educators must be included in the next steps to make the vision for education a reality. Access to youth work will ensure Scottish education provides young people with a broad range of opportunities to learn and achieve and where they feel safe and supported.

The final report from the National Discussion recognised the vital role of youth workers in supporting health and wellbeing – helping to create safe learning spaces, facilitating youth voice and as trusted adults that provide pastoral care. The need for access to guidance counsellors and youth workers was identified as important⁵. It will be essential to build on the current role and impact of youth work in this space – with sustained investment and stronger coordination, to ensure young people can access the support they need, where and where they need it. This also includes ensuring youth work services and organisations have access to school facilities to ensure safe, suitable spaces for youth workers to support and work with young people.

A reformed Scottish qualifications and assessment system must also demonstrate parity across formal and non-formal learning. There should be a coherent (and young

⁵ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/learners-scotland-matter-national-discussion-education-final-report/>

person-led) approach to learner profiling that allows every young person to record and value their skills and achievements across all the places they learn. This will include youth work. The term 'wider achievement' must also be phased out of the language of Scottish education. All achievements are achievement.

Finally, to embed youth work within the education offer for every young person, the National Youth Work Strategy should reinforce youth work's position within a reformed education system and there must be sustained investment in the sector as a vital component of Scottish education. This includes equitable support and professional learning for the youth work workforce.

"The people that make the decisions need to know that its not just the teachers who help us. It's all the other people who really help when it's hard" – young person responding to the extended consultation.

What is your top priority for a long-term action?

Ultimately, we believe that every young person has a right to access youth work, where and when they need it. Our top priority for a long-term action is to ensure a right to youth work for all young people in Scotland. This will require sustained and equitable investment in the sector, including to support its role across school and post-school education. The structural changes required must sit alongside a continued commitment to changing the culture of Scottish education. This is a long-term challenge, but one that is fundamental to achieving the ambitions for Scottish education.

Long-term, youth workers must be recognised as key contributors to planning, delivering and supporting young people towards the Scottish Diploma of Achievement. If Personal Pathways and Project Learning are described as entitlements that must be available to all learners, then access to youth work must be recognised as an entitlement. In a reformed qualifications and assessment system that recognises the diverse achievements of every learner, learning programmes, pathways and achievements through youth work (including youth awards) must be included in the definition of 'Programmes of Learning'.

Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment (Hayward Review)

Which recommendations in the final report do you believe are the most important?

- Adopt the Scottish Diploma of Achievement as the new approach to qualifications and assessment. The SDA (the Diploma) should contain three elements: Programmes of Learning, Project Learning and the Personal Pathway.
- Personal Pathway: Include the Personal Pathway element as a prerequisite for the award of the Diploma. It is an entitlement and must be available to all learners.
- Project Learning: Include the Project Learning element as a prerequisite for the award of the Diploma. It is an entitlement and must be available to all learners.

- Programmes of Learning: Should remain an important aspect of the Senior Phase and will be a prerequisite for the award of the Diploma. There should be a reduction in external assessment across the Senior Phase.
- Assessment: Reduce the number of external examinations in the Senior Phase; increase the breadth of assessment methods including digital assessment methods, and remove external assessment up to SCQF level 5.
- Modularised Courses: Programmes of Learning should be organised into modules to allow learners maximum flexibility to build credit as they progress through courses. SCQF Level 6 Higher courses should be progressive allowing learners to build credits over two years.
- Digital: All learners should have a digital profile to allow them to record achievements in Programmes of Learning, Project Learning and Personal Pathway. The profile will be owned by the learner. Digital technologies should be used to expand assessment methods.
- Workforce and Professional Learning: An expanded programme of professional learning should be developed to support the changes to qualifications and assessment. Time should be made available for staff in Education to access professional learning, to collaborate and to engage with the changes being proposed. Build a national strategy for standards.
- National Monitoring and Accountability systems: Require national monitoring and accountability systems to gather information on the breadth of achievements recognised within the Scottish Diploma of Achievement. Insight and the National Improvement Framework (NIF) should be updated to reflect success as envisaged in the SDA.
- 10. Parity of Esteem: Enhance Parity of Esteem between types of qualifications by recognising as equal all qualifications at the same SCQF level with the same credit points. Qualifications at the same level should Scotland, should use the SCQF Level followed by the name of the qualification in promotional literature and in recording of results for example, Chemistry - SCQF level 6 - Higher

Tell us why you have selected these recommendations.

We consulted our members on this extended consultation. They identified the following priority actions that should be included when taking forward the recommendations in the final report:

- Youth work must be recognised as key contributors to planning, delivering and supporting young people towards the Scottish Diploma of Achievement.
- Personal pathways and project learning are described as entitlements that must be available to all learners. Youth work must be recognised as one of the settings through which young people should be able to access these entitlements.
- The definition of 'Programmes of Learning' must include learning programmes and pathways through youth work, including youth awards. As a prerequisite for the award of the Diploma, young people who are not engaging through formal programmes of learning, but through youth work programmes (e.g.

learning accredited through a youth award) must have an equitable opportunity to achieve the SDA. Otherwise, the SDA will not achieve the aim of recognising the diverse achievements of all learners

- Workforce and Professional Learning: There should be professional learning opportunities and time to collaborate/engage with proposed changes for youth work workforce

It was also considered important that:

- A digital profile for every learner should actively encourage young people to record achievements from youth work and other experiences that contribute to Programmes of Learning, Project Learning and Personal Pathway. This includes skills development.
- Enhance parity of esteem between types of qualifications by recognising as equal all qualifications at the same SCQF level with the same credit points. The narrative to support this should also extend to recognising youth awards as equal.

“Youth work provides a setting and environment young people feel comfortable to learn and achieve. This must be taken into consideration and their achievements recognised” – youth worker responding to the extended consultation.

“All qualifications that are earned in Scotland should be SCQF-rated, with a wider explanation of the SCQF ratings or be able to be counted towards the SDA....This should include all youth awards, DofE, volunteering awards, vocational learning and academic learning. These should all count towards the SDA” – youth worker responding to the extended consultation.

Are there any recommendations which you disagree with? – no

Tell us why you have selected these recommendations. – n/a

For further information regarding this response please contact Marielle Bruce, Youth Work and Schools Manager, YouthLink Scotland, mbruce@youthlink.scot