RESPONSE BY EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL
EDUCATION AND CULTURE COMMITTEE
EDUCATION (SCOTLAND) BILL

Attainment

1. The setting of targets for improving attainment levels is an individual process. The question for schools and centres is much more focused on the value that has been added to a child’s experience and their consequent readiness for each next stage in the learning journey. Legislation will not be the means to deliver this type of target. In terms of addressing inequality, local authorities already have the information and focus to support specific sets of circumstances, rather than this being set in legislation.

2. This is effective enough. What should qualify this, that local authorities should be required to demonstrate via Education Scotland that they are making an impact. Legislation will not alone provide this.

3. This phrase needs explained as being an endemic characteristic which is as a result of generational deprivation which local authorities can address, with government support, via a differentiation in resource or priority, or focus. Local authorities should therefore be able to demonstrate effective input to a particular set of circumstances. Services and agencies such as housing and social work and health working together to support communities based on SIMD rather than per head of population will be much more effective.

4. There is already the infrastructure in place through joint working, strategic planning, shared outcomes, within the context of the Community Planning process.

5. The focus here must be on improving the quality of educational experience and knowing whether individual children are making the progress that they are capable of, and, if not progressing well enough, to know that plans are in place to address the situation. Legislation cannot deliver these focused outcomes. Legislation can require local authorities to demonstrate clearly that evidence is available to know how much progress is being made.

The Raising Attainment For All initiative, coupled with the early years collaborative, is showing excellent signs of success and at its core is the use of evidence. This type of approach is excellent.

6. In the main people understand these terms. However, ‘closing the gap’ is in need of further exploration. This does not mean that the system would want to hold any young person back from progressing to the highest level possible. We will continue to need our smartest thinkers and creative people more than ever. Closing the gap has to be clearly understood as prioritising raising the attainment levels of the lowest performing children and young people to the point where they have parity of access to the opportunities which will emerge
in the future. For example, only 50% (approximated) of young people leave school with the levels of literacy and numeracy to immediately access a number of modern apprenticeships. This is not a lack of intelligence in the excluded fifty percent.

Deprivation statistics show that, in the most deprived areas young people start their formal education up to 18 months behind the least disadvantaged and never make up the difference. We must ensure that young people from deprived backgrounds stay in the education system long enough to mitigate against deprivation, whilst recognising the need to have effective approaches at the earliest stage in a child’s life.

7. Education Scotland could provide the challenge and support role for local authorities to ensure that schools and partner agencies are delivering, and already have sanctions available.

8. Discussions around outcomes for education take place in a broad multi-agency forum. The outcomes need to be clear and transparent in Stage 2 of the Bill. In terms of reporting, the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 already requires local authorities to report on wellbeing outcomes every three years. In addition, the Standards in Schools (Scotland) Act requires education authorities to publish improvement plans. The danger is therefore another set of reporting arrangements, addition to bureaucracy with no added value.

9. The focus must be needs-driven rather than saying because of individual’s lives in an area of deprivation, that they cannot succeed. There are clearly examples where young people overcome disadvantage and we must learn from this. We now have data from the national links to help us.

**Gaelic**

10. The Bill will deliver increased opportunity for Gaelic medium primary education through augmented parental opportunity and promotion. This will have a subsequent positive impact on the future of Gaelic education in other educational sectors.

11. The promotion of Gaelic Medium Education (GME) is currently an element of support and development of Gaelic Education and forms a key part of the links with a range of groups. Promotional items would include adverts in local press, promotional material, and holding public meetings. These would encourage and support Gaelic Medium education and Gaelic Learner education and have the intended impact of increasing awareness and resulting increased uptake.

12. The Bill establishes a clear process for local authorities to follow in considering parental requests for an assessment of the need for Gaelic Medium primary education. The thresholds are appropriate.
13. Education authorities currently have regard to Bord na Gaidhlig’s education guidance when producing annual statements of improvement objectives. The Bill provides enhancement through increased parental involvement and enhanced promotion. It would therefore be key to have the continued support offered through the Gaelic Specific Education Grant, Gaelic Schools Capital Fund, Storlann Support for School Resources and the Gaelic Learners in Primary Schools Grant.

14. The Bill includes a range of measures supporting the growth and strengthening of Gaelic education.

15. The implementation of the duties outlined in the Bill would have an impact both in terms of finance and human resources and would therefore have a consequential impact on the delivery of other educational services.

**Additional Support For Learning**

16. The general principle of extending rights to a child, aged 12 and over who has additional support needs is supported. This is entirely consistent with the statutory basis of wellbeing and the rights of the child.

   There remains the potential for conflict with parents or carers, which needs to be carefully managed.

17. The test of whether all rights in the ASL legislation has to be one of, why not?

18. The proposal is a natural extension to provide information, advice and advocacy. A dedicated, national service will be beneficial and ensure a consistency to that advice.

**Chief Education Officer**

19. The advantages are that there is a clear focal point for upholding standards, particularly when local authority directorates are now rarely one-service only. If such a post is created it cannot be tokenistic, it must have statutory requirements attached to it for it to be meaningful.

   The Chief Social Worker and Finance Officer for councils would be an example of how it can work well. However, it is recognised that the Chief Social Work Officer post carries with it responsibilities inter alia in relation to secure care placements.

20. The CEO will need to be responsible for ensuring that the Educational Outcomes currently being discussed by COSLA are fulfilled.

**Registering Teaching Staff**

21. Pedagogical issues transcend sectors. It would make sense to have all teachers GTCS registered. Standards in these schools could go up in terms
of the quality of pupil experience if the staff could share practice on an equal footing with state school colleagues.

22. A three-year transaction period would be suitable.

**Early Learning and Childcare**

26. The unintentional exclusion of guardians appointed under section 7 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 should be addressed.