Education and Culture Committee

Educational attainment gap

SUBMISSIONS ON DEVELOPING SCOTLAND'S YOUNG WORKFORCE

The Education and Culture Committee invited comments on the implications for schools, teachers and pupils of the Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce.

The following submissions were received—

- Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce
- Association of Directors of Education Scotland
- BEMIS
- Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland
- Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights
- Colleges Scotland
- The Duke of Edinburgh's Award
- East Lothian Council
- ENABLE Scotland
- Federation of Small Businesses
- Glasgow City Council
- Goodall, Aileen
- National Deaf Children's Society
- North Ayrshire Council
- NUS Scotland
- The Prince's Trust Scotland
- Queen Margaret University
- Renfrewshire Council
- Scottish Children's Services Coalition
- Scottish Council of Independent Schools
- Scottish Parent Teacher Council
- Scottish Youth Parliament
- Skills Development Scotland
- Sweet, Anna
- UNISON Scotland
- Universities Scotland
- Voice Scotland
- West College Scotland
- Who Cares Scotland
- Young Scot
- Youth link Scotland
- Youth link Scotland National Development Manager
Education & Culture Committee – Educational Attainment Gap

Submission from Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce (AGCC) welcomes the opportunity to submit evidence to the Education and Culture Committee’s Inquiry on the education attainment gap.

1.2 Aberdeen & Grampian Chamber of Commerce is North-east Scotland's leading private sector, member-focused, business organisation. The Chamber represents more than 1,300 businesses with 130,000 employees in the private sector covering all industry sectors, ranging in size from sole traders to multi-national corporations.

1.3 AGCC supports efforts to ensure all young people have the opportunity to realise their potential, both academic and personal. This is a critical issue as we attempt to retain and attract skilled employees to work in the North-east of Scotland.

1.4 It is estimated that the North-east economy will generate between 9,000 and 39,000 additional jobs in the next 10 years. The higher scenario of 39,000 jobs relies on a co-ordinated package of support including infrastructure investment, skills investment and promotion of the region.

2.0 Business and Schools Engagement in the North-east

2.1 In 2012, AGCC undertook research as part of North East Business Week which aimed to find out whether skills shortages were a barrier to growth and if they were, what businesses were doing to address that challenge.

2.2 Shortages of skills and people were rated as the main barrier to business growth, with 70% of businesses reporting this to be the case.

2.3 Relevant to this committee the research also found that businesses widely wanted to engage with schools, with 77% responding that they were willing to engage with schools.

2.4 AGCC’s research found activity was mostly restricted to ad-hoc engagement or mutually beneficial interventions such as businesses attending careers fairs. However, time constraints on businesses were acute, with only 3 in 10 businesses feeling able to commit a regular resource of 2 hours per month and less than 25% able to offer training for teachers to become better informed of industry and career paths.

2.5 AGCC was keen to find out more about what activity was taking place between schools and businesses, and whether that activity was benefiting businesses, schools and the young people themselves. Therefore AGCC, in partnership with ACSEF and OPITO, delivered further research which assessed the number, type and quality of school and business links which were in place in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire secondary schools.

2.6 The main findings were as follows:

- While all schools valued the support businesses could offer, the way in which links were established and assessed, then managed and evaluated varied significantly between schools.
Approximately 12,000 young people at secondary schools in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire were participating in some sort of industry / business related activity arranged by a third party, i.e. The Youth Philanthropy Initiative or Go4Set. This was the most popular method of engagement between businesses and schools.

Activities focused on the oil and gas industry were most common, with related industries such as science and engineering also common. Gaps in the market included finance, tourism and food and drink.

Programmes being delivered between schools and individual businesses fell into four main categories; schemes which offered practical applications of knowledge, soft skill development support, career information and practical support for teachers in the school setting.

2.7 All of these programmes have the potential to impact on young people’s wider attainment and career choices. However, many of the programmes were aimed at specific groups of young people, often high or mid-achievers. There was a significant gap in the market for young people at the lower-end of achievement to raise their aspirations.

2.7 Based on the findings of the research, the research partners made the following recommendations:

- Create a business database to hold data on businesses who want to engage with schools, and which should be accessible for all schools to use.
- Local Authorities should devise policy guidance to clarify the nature of business which should be approached or partnered by schools.
- Improve the evaluation of opportunities and activities delivered within schools.
- Devise Continual Professional Development (CPD) opportunities for teachers.
- Each school should have a named member of staff to act as a business coordinator and that this coordinator should provide input into a “business links teacher network”.

2.8 Following publication of the research, a small working-group was formed which included the three research partners, Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council and other skills organisations such as Skills Development Scotland. The group met regularly during 2014 to drive forward the quick delivery of the recommendations made in the research report.

2.9 To date, the following actions have been delivered or are in progress:

- the business database which will hold data on businesses who want to engage with schools, and which should be accessible for all schools to use (this is being delivered by the AGCC Research Unit).
- the evaluation of opportunities and activities delivered (AGCC is supporting the delivery of this).
- Continual Professional Development opportunities for teachers.

3 Education Working for All

3.1 AGCC welcomed the publication of Sir Ian Wood’s report *Education Working for All*. The emphasis on supporting non-academic vocational skills was particularly welcomed by Chamber members. Given the research that was undertaken by the Chamber during 2014, the report was also timely addition to the debate on how businesses should engage with schools.
3.2 It quickly became apparent, through engagement and discussion with our membership, that AGCC would be best placed to lead on the development of a North-east Invest in Young People group. AGCC subsequently worked closely with both councils - Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire - and North East Scotland College to develop the Invest in Young People project for the region. It is the Chamber’s view that the Invest in Young People organisation can only be successful with the buy-in of all Local Authorities and colleges.

3.3 Funding for the North-east Invest in Young People organisation was subsequently announced by the Scottish Government on February 16 2015.

3.4 The working groups will meet for the first time in March 2015 to make decisions on what should be the priorities of the North-east groups. However, these are the outline priority areas of the group:

- Equality of access to opportunities
- Challenging perceptions, opinions and current practice around work experience, both with employers and schools
- Increasing participation and engagement in a wide variety of employer led initiatives
- Ensuring Career advice to teachers and young people is contemporary and up to date
- Providing opportunities at an earlier stage in schools
- Improving communication between schools and employers

3.5 We also believe that the network is well-placed to encourage employers to offer more good quality apprenticeships and improve the needs identification which aligns these apprenticeships with the skills that are required. However, certain bureaucracy and financial barriers have to be removed for employers to ensure the right quality of apprentices is delivered.

3.6 It is clear to AGCC members that there needs to be an entire culture change about how vocational qualifications are viewed, particularly with parents and schools. Far too many young people are pushed towards Higher Education when it may not be appropriate. We would encourage the Scottish Government to consider how it enables this culture change.

4 Further Action Which Requires Consideration

4.1 While the recommendations made in the Education Working for All report will go some way in addressing some of the current barriers to raising the attainment and aspirations of young people, AGCC members are of the view that further action needs to be taken to ensure the North-east of Scotland has a ready and able young workforce.

4.2 Research conducted as part of a British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) study, published in November 2014, found that communication and teamwork skills were considered important for around nine in ten AGCC respondents. This figure was significantly higher for AGCC members than for the total UK sample. Likewise, around a third of local firms reported a shortage of leadership and management and language skills in their workforce. Few of these responses relate to ‘subject’ areas and embedding these skills within the entire curriculum is vital.

4.3 It is essential that schools seek to develop these types of skills in young people. In particular, AGCC is concerned about the lack of opportunities for young people to study a language
while at secondary school as part of the Curriculum for Excellence. This is in part being caused by a squeezing of choices under the current timetabling arrangements.

4.4 The same BCC study showed that at least of half of respondents who were members of AGCC believed work experience was the best indicator of a future employee’s on-the-job performance. It is therefore also crucial that significant improvements are made to quality and consistency of work-experience opportunities on offer to young people of all ages.

4.5 Both members and schools have told AGCC that the current favoured model of one work-experience opportunity for one week in either S3 or S4 is not fit for purpose. A more flexible approach is required, with a range of experiences and timescales. Extended placements of 3-6 months for an afternoon each week has proved to be very successful for some secondary schools in the region and has also proved beneficial for the business.

4.6 It is critical that teachers become more informed about career opportunities / paths in the region or that we design a new employer-led method to delivering careers guidance. AGCC members consider this to be an area of significant weakness with young people often receiving poor or incorrect information about careers and work opportunities in particular sectors. This change needs to be embedded in both primary and secondary schools.

4.7 One particular secondary school in the region already requires teachers to visit a business they have established a link with. This has proven to be a positive step both for the school and business, with teachers becoming better informed about the businesses recruitment process and the business having a better understanding of the new Curriculum for Excellence and how a modern school operates. As result, the school has established a strong work experience programme for a large number of the school’s pupils and often support teachers in the classroom.

5.0 Areas of Action

5.1 AGCC would highlight the following action must be taken to ensure the benefits of the Education Working for All report are maximised.

- All future Invest in Young People groups must have the support of the relevant Local Authorities and education providers in that area
- There needs to be a wider culture change amongst parents and schools about the merits and benefits of vocational pathways for young people
- Schools must improve the development of soft skills as part of the entire curriculum
- Career information and support within schools must be improved
- Teacher training should include modules on enterprise / business
- Reduce barriers to securing funding for delivering high quality apprenticeships
ASSOCIATION OF DIRECTORS OF EDUCATION SCOTLAND (ADES)

RESPONSE TO THE EDUCATION AND CULTURE COMMITTEE OF THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT ON DEVELOPING SCOTLAND’S YOUNG WORKFORCE

In advance of the meeting of the Education and Culture Committee on 10 March 2015 at which ADES will present oral evidence, ADES is pleased to make the following written submission, which covers the points raised in the questions posed by the Education and Culture Committee and deals with other aspects of the issues raised by the Commission’s final report and the Scottish Government’s response to it so far.

From the outset, it is important to stress that ADES welcomed the final report of the Wood Commission (Education Working for All!) and is supportive of the work of the National Programme Board and National Advisory Board to progress the recommendations in that report. Indeed, ADES is represented on both these boards.

The final report of the Wood Commission laid down a number of significant challenges for Scottish society. Its 39 recommendations have significant implications for local authorities, schools, colleges and for employers in both the public and the private sectors. There are also major implications for national bodies such as Education Scotland and Skills Development Scotland. If the ambitious success criteria detailed in the report were to be achieved by 2020, Scotland would indeed be a better place in which to live and work and the prospects for young people entering the workforce would be better than at any time in the recent past.

Attainment levels in schools would also be improved, especially for those students for whom traditional “academic” subjects are less appropriate. However, false dichotomies between “academic” and vocational” pathways must be avoided; academic and vocational skills are important for all students, regardless of aptitude. There is absolutely no need for students to be split into separate “academic” and “vocational” streams. However, full implementation of the recommendations in the report would undoubtedly help to address inequalities arising from socio-economic factors.

ADES welcomes the Programme Board’s recognition of the close links between Developing the Young Workforce and Curriculum for Excellence. At the heart of CfE lies a recognition of the importance of developing skills for learning, life and work in all young people. ADES believes that there is strong evidence to show that the Scottish education system has become better in recent years at developing skills for learning and skills for life. However, progress on the skills for work agenda has been at best patchy, notwithstanding some examples of very good practice in individual schools and local authorities.
ADES also acknowledge that schools and local authorities cannot deliver on this challenging agenda on their own and that only effective partnership working between local authorities, colleges, Skills Development Scotland, Education Scotland and employers will produce the desired results.

ADES welcomes the progress made in developing 5 distinct change themes: Broad General Education, Senior Phase, Colleges, Modern Apprenticeships and Employers. However, it will be extremely important that workstreams 1 and 2 (Broad General Education and Senior Phase) work very closely together, given the fact that one of the key aims of Curriculum for Excellence is to develop a 3-18 curriculum which is coherent, progressive and challenging for all young people.

One of the striking features of the final report by the Commission is that one could probably evidence examples of good practice in relation to most of the 39 recommendations somewhere in Scotland at the present time. The problem is one of consistency; the challenge is to develop a comprehensive system of learning for work. At present, young people living in different parts of the country have very different experiences with regard to, for example, access to high quality work experience, high quality vocational education, effective school/college links and modern apprenticeships. A significant challenge is therefore to share best practice in such a way that access to such entitlement becomes a given, regardless of where one grows up in Scotland.

One particular issue relating to this agenda is the fact that there are very varied employment patterns in different parts of the country. For instance, employment opportunities for young people are very different in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire from those which apply in, for instance, Argyle and Bute or North Ayrshire. Some Council areas have many large employers within their boundaries, while in other areas most employers are SMEs or very small businesses. This means that, while it remains important to aim for consistency of entitlement for all young people across Scotland, a one size fits all approach will not work and all initiatives relating to employment must take into account features of the local labour market. In a similar vein, the varying degree to which further education opportunities are open to young people across the country must be considered when planning school/college links.

The announcement of additional funding for Council’s for 2014/15 and 2015/16 to deliver the developing the young force agenda is welcome. However, this is a 7 year programme and sustained improvement will only be achieved if appropriate funding is also allocated in future financial years.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that teachers and head teachers are broadly supportive of this agenda. However, it will be important that any developments which have an impact on schools are seen as being of assistance to teachers in delivering the CfE agenda and not as an additional bureaucratic burden or “initiative”. Although this programme cannot be delivered by teachers alone, it cannot be delivered without the support of teachers. In order to achieve this support, additional training will be required for teachers in areas such as employability and the labour market.

With regard to the implementation of this agenda in the Senior Phase, some of the best examples are presently seen when schools – often in partnership with colleges – adopt imaginative and flexible approaches to timetabling. In the past, timetabling of S3 – S6 has been seen as a menu from which young people choose courses.
If the particular combination of courses which best suits an individual student is not available, then the student has to opt for often less appropriate alternatives. Some schools are now beginning to look at the Senior Phase in a different way, asking young people what they want to achieve from their S4 – S6 experience and timetabling to try to deliver what the young person wants, partly within school, partly in college and partly with employers. This involves a change of mind-set by schools and it will be important that models of good practice are widely shared to maximise the number of schools adopting such an approach.

The success of this agenda will require a significant cultural shift in Scottish society. For all the talk over the years of achieving parity of esteem for “vocational” and “academic” education, vocational education in its broadest sense has remained something of the poor relation in the eyes of many. It is the view of ADES that all young people are entitled to an education which is tailored to their academic and vocational needs. This means that vocational education should not be seen as something which is only relevant for the “less academic” students. It is only when this is accepted by all stakeholders in Scottish education, including, crucially, parents, who have such a profound influence on the aspirations of their children, that true parity of esteem will be achieved.

Obviously, it is essential that employers also sign up to this agenda. Given the lack of engagement by most employers with education, as detailed in the Commission’s final report, it will be essential to persuade employers, especially small employers, that they both have something to contribute to this agenda and have something to gain from it. For example, many small employers believe they do not have the capacity to offer modern apprenticeships. One reason for this view is that apprentices require to be released to attend college on a regular basis and, understandably, this is seen by many small employers as down time when they gain no advantage from the employment of the apprentice. One way to overcome this barrier would be to deliver the academic aspects of modern apprenticeships in a young person’s final year at school. Shared placements involving schools, colleges and employers also require to be explored. Of course, schools would have to be provided with appropriate materials to enable them to deliver aspects of an apprenticeship, since currently schools have little or no expertise in this area.

In conclusion, ADES is supportive of the work relating to Developing the Young Workforce. ADES will work constructively with all partners to help to ensure successful deliver of this ambitious programme. The Commission has asked some difficult questions of Scottish society and it will be essential that everyone, from the Scottish Government down continues to make this agenda a very high priority in the years to come in order to achieve the success criteria.

ADES
MARCH 2015
BEMIS Scotland are the national Ethnic and Cultural Minorities led umbrella body supporting the development of the Ethnic Minorities Voluntary Sector in Scotland and the communities that this sector represents.

Our vision is of a Scotland that is equal, inclusive and responsive: A society where:

- people from the diverse communities are valued, treated with dignity and respect,
- have equal citizenship, opportunities and equality of life,
- and who actively participate in civic society.

BEMIS welcome the remit and scope of the Education and Culture Committees deliberations on raising the attainment in Scotland’s schools and fulfilling the potential of our young work force. We are encouraged by the emphasis placed upon a cross-sector approach and welcome the opportunity to provide evidence on this approach.

The Committee wants to understand what would have to change in schools for the report and the implementation plan to be successful, and how they could enable all pupils to realise their full potential.

Within the report ‘Education working for All’ and the Scottish Governments response ‘Developing the Young Workforce’ there are key recommendations from which BEMIS recognise our key role and responsibility in progressing the objectives of the report and recommendations. Therefore, our submission will focus on two areas.

- Our response to relevant recommendations of Education for All / Developing Scotland Young Work Force and subsequent work programme
- Observations and broader BEMIS recommendations independent of Reports equality related recommendations

**Education for All – Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce Key Recommendations:**

- **Recommendation 26** Scotland should embed equality education across curriculum for excellence.
- **Recommendation 27:** Promotion and communication of career options should actively target equalities groups to promote diverse
participation across gender, Black & Minority Ethnic groups, young people with disabilities and care leavers. The promotion of Modern Apprenticeship opportunities should be to the fore of this activity.

- **Recommendation 31:** A targeted campaign to promote the full range of Modern apprenticeships to young people and parents from the BME community should be developed and launched to present the benefits of work based learning as a respected career option and alternative to university.

- **Recommendation 32:** SDS should set a realistic but stretching improvement target to increase the number of young people from BME groups starting Modern Apprenticeships. Progress against this should be reported on annually.

BEMIS Scotland currently support these ‘recommendations’ and aspirations in part via our ‘Gathered Together’ project in partnership with the Scottish Parent Teacher Council. Within this context we have identified a number of considerations in the advancement of ‘Developing the Young Workforce’ recommendations from an equalities and race/ethnicity perspective;

- We have observed insufficient awareness of current equalities practice and a commensurate lack of confidence in the area of equalities and this coupled with persistent myths around aspirations and career paths within EM communities may have fed into the poor take up of apprenticeships for young people from EM communities.

We would call for increased opportunities for training and support for education practitioners in two specific areas:

- The practical application of 2010 equalities act and the need to be aware of principles around ‘same’ and ‘different’;

- Increased opportunities to engage with, and understand the specific concerns and lack of awareness around current qualifications and routes to further education and/or employment for EM young people and their parents/carers

- Gathered Together have found that parents from Ethnic Minorities are often unsure how to support their children with issues around subject choice and accessing further education, employment opportunities and apprenticeships. Parents who were not born in the UK are unfamiliar with the system and the supports that are available to their children- including the flexibility that is offered by the education system.

- Parents have a key role in supporting and guiding their children- under the UNCRC a child has “the right to be given guidance by parents and family” and greater support needs to be given to parents, ensuring that

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1 See Annex A
they have the correct information and are able to support their children throughout their educational journey and advancement into work.

- Gathered Together’s research with Ethnic Minority parents has found that, while parents are often actively involved in their children’s education at primary school level this is not continued into secondary school and the lack of contact between home and school can result in parents feeling increasing unable to help and support their children at this stage.

- Parents from ethnic minorities are passionate about their children’s education and have high aspirations for them, however without the right information they are not able to support their children to fulfil their full potential.

- Gathered Together have also met with parents who have attended information sessions about the Curriculum for Excellence and found the language used excessively technical- we are aware that the National Parent Forum Scotland have produced accessible information sheets eg “Nationals in a Nutshell” but these need to be more widely distributed and parents provided the opportunity to ask questions about the individual situations of their children.

- Within the social justice context the challenge of adopting a place based approach in tackling endemic social issues presents a problem in coherently engaging with dispersed and diverse ethnic minority communities. A hierarchical focus on ‘areas of multiple deprivation’ over communities in poverty risks reinforcing existing disadvantage. This in part may explain the significant lack of EM communities engaging via national training providers such as SDS.

- EM communities in Glasgow reside disproportionally in areas of multiple deprivation. However in addition across Scotland and out with the focus of policy makers EM communities continue to reside in poverty ensuring that a one dimensional approach focussed on ‘place based policies’ risks reinforcing disadvantage for certain communities. Within the implementation of the ‘Developing the Young Workforce’ and SDS Modern Apprenticeships recommendations the focus needs to be on circumstances and needs and not solely confined to the highest concentrations of people.

**BEMIS General Observations:**

- Potential of the ‘London Challenge Initiative’ being paralleled by the Scottish Governments ‘Scottish Attainment Challenge’
The London Challenge Initiative began in 2003 and has been identified as an example of good practice in raising attainment of pupils.

One of the key assets identified in the programme’s success has been the influence of the ethnic diversity and composition of London classrooms.³

While it has been identified by 'Fiscal Affairs Scotland' that due to the significant differentiation of comparative demographics i.e. London 40% vs Glasgow 12% this ‘London effect’ of a more competitive and focussed migrant community influencing school culture hasn’t made any disenable impact on Scotland that it should continue to be of interest to Scottish policy makers.

The FAS report highlights;

“First, the potential for improvements from encouraging higher migration, especially if a knock-on effect for other disadvantaged school children’s attainment levels can be better established. Second, the potential positive role played by early intervention policies (i.e., pre Secondary school). Third, the prospect of improving the performance of pupils in urban areas with a high concentration of disadvantaged schoolchildren”.⁴

In relation to this general area of interest Gathered Together have collated a series of videos which document the experience of teacher and parents in increasing participation of EM communities in the broad school community and the positive impacts this can have on both the local community and individual educational experiences.

We would highly recommend consideration of these experiences in the committee’s deliberations.

*Series of videos evidencing parental and teachers experience*

http://gatheredtogether.bemis.org.uk/videos/

Annex A:

GATHERED TOGETHER is a pilot project working to support ethnic and cultural minority parents to become more involved in their child’s education and the school community.

We are a joint venture between BEMIS and SPTC, funded by the Scottish Government through its Third Sector Early Intervention Fund, managed by the Big Fund. We have been working closely with parents, schools and local authorities to identify and build good practice in inclusion and equality. We are

working in six local authorities- Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Falkirk, Fife, Glasgow and Stirling & Clackmannanshire.

We are working directly with parents and carers from all ethnic and cultural backgrounds, finding out about their experiences of involvement with their children’s school and education, barriers that they experience to getting more involved and giving them information about their rights as parents and the role of the Parent Council in being a voice for parents.

We also offer training that gives parent councils the chance to think about why parents aren’t getting involved in the school community and provide the opportunity to develop practical solutions to help to overcome any barriers. SPTC are working with us to deliver this training. We want to share your good practice and offer practical advice when it comes to involving parents.
EVIDENCE FOR THE EDUCATION AND CULTURE COMMITTEE INQUIRY ON THE EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT GAP

Consultation 1: Implications for Schools, Teachers and pupil of the Commission for Developing Scotland’s Young Workface (Wood report)

Introduction

We welcome this opportunity to submit evidence to the Education and Culture Committee’s inquiry into Scotland’s educational attainment gap. Established in 2011, CELCIS is the Centre for excellence for looked after children in Scotland. Our remit is to work with service providers (such as schools and colleges) to improve the experiences and outcomes of children and young people who are (or have been) ‘looked after’ by local authorities. For this reason our responses to the questions posed by the Committee are framed in consideration of the particular circumstances of looked after young people and care leavers.

Question 1: If the Wood report were fully implemented, what would be the likely impact on attainment in schools and which pupils would benefit most?

While we broadly welcome the conclusions of the Wood report, we believe that full implementation of its recommendations would have only a limited impact on ‘attainment in schools’. This view is based on a number of factors. First, an important precursor of the ‘attainment gap’ for young people is the ‘literacy and numeracy gap’ among pre-school and primary school aged children. As the recent report from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Closing the Attainment Gap in Scottish Education¹, shows, this literacy and numeracy gap starts to be evident at a very young age. The primary focus of the Wood report is a group of young people aged 14-plus whose attainment is likely to be significantly impacted by gaps in their foundation academic skills. Increased emphasis on providing support for children (and their families and carers) in reading, writing and mathematics at the primary stage will be required if significant and lasting improvement is to made at the secondary and post-school stages, a point acknowledged by the Government’s Scottish Attainment Challenge² with its focus on primary schools.

Second, the Wood report presents a compelling picture of ‘employer retreat’ from Scotland’s young people (with fewer opportunities into employment being made available) without providing a satisfactory explanation of ‘why’ this may have happened. Through our work with organisations providing support to looked after young people and care leavers we suggest that one possible explanation for employers’ apparent preference for

¹ http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/closing-attainment-gap-scottish-education
young people with ‘qualifications’ is that qualifications act as a guarantee of the basic foundation skills (literacy and numeracy). As the annual tariff scores for ‘looked after’ school leavers confirm, many young people are leaving school at 16 with limited skills. In such a context employers’ reluctance to carry the cost of bringing skill levels up to the required standard may be understandable. Unfortunately the result is a recruitment process which disadvantages those already disadvantaged in education, and risks the loss to skilled and higher-paid employment of young people whose ‘capacities’ are not evidenced by traditional qualifications.

Furthermore, the barriers faced by some young people are not restricted only to school attainment or a lack of training and employment opportunities. Children from more socio-economically advantaged homes have better access to opportunities to learn about career options, but they also have better access to social and cultural opportunities which, while not directly vocationally oriented, help to develop the psychological attributes (self-belief, persistence, sociability) which enable individuals to succeed in the modern work environment. In considering how to develop Scotland’s young workforce, all aspects of the ‘senior phase’ (not just the vocational) must be considered, and the broad principles underpinning Curriculum for Excellence kept at the centre.

The third reason why full implementation of Wood may only have limited impact on school attainment relates to the way ‘attainment’ is measured in Scotland (i.e. pupils’ performance during the senior phase). Although Modern Apprenticeships do contribute to attainment measures through the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework (SCQF), the SCQF is weighted heavily towards ‘academic’ qualifications. The Wood recommendation of increasing the availability of Modern Apprenticeships to pupils in schools could have a positive impact on school attainment figures (as young people at risk of disengagement from education continue in school). But it may also divert some young people from the ‘academic’ qualifications which contribute more heavily to a school’s ‘tariff score measure’ of attainment. This point suggests there is a need to consider adapting the current approach to measuring student ‘performance’ and ‘outcomes’.

If the Wood report recommendations are implemented in full, we believe the pupils who would benefit most will be young people whose school attainment is likely to be slightly below the national average. This group may include young people who do not complete the senior phase of school (or do so with only limited ‘attainment’ success) and who, although able and possessing the necessary basic skills, lose out to their peers in an increasingly competitive jobs market. Implementing Wood’s recommendations should lead to growth in opportunities for this group. However, if there is a desire to improve the range (and uptake) of opportunities available to those young people who have disengaged from education at an earlier stage, significant additional support may be required. The cumulative effect of social, emotional and educational difficulties acts as a barrier to engagement in training and employment opportunities. To increase the engagement of this group it will be necessary to have a triple-track approach: first helping the most vulnerable and disengaged families to benefit from pre-school and primary education; second, having suitable arrangements for meeting the additional support for learning needs of individual children throughout school stages; third, providing flexible and continuing social and emotional support (potentially in partnership with the third sector) as they take up educational, employment and training opportunities. The new national mentoring scheme for looked after children, recently announced by the Scottish...
Government, has the potential to make a significant contribution to achieving this triple-track approach. But it is important that looked after children (including those in kinship care and ‘at home’) receive the additional support at school to which they are entitled under the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004.\(^3\) It should be regarded as unusual for a looked after child not to have a Coordinated Support Plan, and the Scottish Government (through its agencies) should regularly monitor the type and range of additional support for learning provided to this population.

**Question 2: The report aims to significantly enhance vocational content “without splitting young people off into separate streams at school age”. What would be the disadvantages of such an approach and how could they be avoided?**

We welcome Wood’s proposals for school-college partnerships. These ‘dual-enrolment’ arrangements have been available in some parts of the United States for many years. For example, Massachusetts instituted the Commonwealth Dual Enrolment Partnership in 1993, allowing students to attend college classes while continuing in high school\(^4\). Benefits cited by State education officials were better grades, higher staying-on rates and improved access to employment opportunities\(^5\). In 2012 the James Irvine Foundation published a review of dual enrolment, which reported that students who participated had better academic outcomes relative to a comparison group (who followed traditional pathways)\(^6\). The Massachusetts programme was suspended in 2001 due to budget cuts (a reminder that such initiatives are vulnerable in the search for immediate savings) but was restored in 2008.

Dual enrolment offers advantages to young people from a looked after background (more than 80% of whom typically leave school at 16 or earlier) in that the school where they are known and have built good relationships would maintain responsibility for their welfare and for monitoring progress. Transitions are particularly problematic for looked after young people, who can easily become lost in the post-school education system. While college is currently an important first destination for a high proportion of looked after school leavers, annual statistics suggest that they are at a high risk of dropping out.\(^7\) Dual enrolment might help to avoid this problem, allowing colleges and schools to demonstrate their corporate parenting responsibility, as set out in Part 9 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. The particular circumstances of residential and day special schools need to be considered in arranging such partnerships.

To mitigate the risk of ‘splitting off,’ and the negative consequences of low status being accorded to vocational education, opportunities should be provided in a broad range of occupational areas (particularly in high skill occupations found within the renewables, Information Technology and hospitality sectors). Thought should also be given to how dual enrolment is configured in a way that is non-stigmatising, perhaps by ensuring it is

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\(^3\) As amended by **Section 8, Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2009**

\(^4\) [http://www.mass.edu/strategic/read_cdep.asp](http://www.mass.edu/strategic/read_cdep.asp)


\(^7\) Scottish Government (2014) Looked After Children’s Educational Outcomes Statistics, Additional Table 2.1
attractive to more than the most disadvantaged, and that options for re-engaging in traditional ‘academic’ subjects are both available and accessible.

We endorse Wood’s recommendations in relation to countering the effects of gender stereotyping in career options. We think that one way to do this is to resist approaches which attempt to match vocational courses in the senior phase too closely to intelligence about local employment needs, but rather to help young people to gain a broader set of modern, transferable skills and aptitudes while also learning about different employment possibilities (through high quality placements and internships). Another valuable influence is for young people to have direct contact with people who themselves represent the opposite of gender stereotyping, such as women engineers and men in caring roles.

It is also important that vocational tracks in the senior phase permit and encourage opportunities for participation in sport, music, drama, travel and other activities that help young people to develop confidence and other social skills. There is considerable evidence that the most disadvantaged are not distinguished from the most advantaged in terms of aspiration, but they may need more support to develop the social capital which is valued by employers alongside formal qualifications\(^8\).

The SCQF framework facilitates progression to more advanced education, principally by allowing progression from non-advanced further education to higher education within colleges. While this arrangement also extends to progression from higher national-level qualifications to degree-level provision, there are significant barriers which continue to impede equality of access. For example, while many college-university articulation arrangements exist, the range of opportunities may be limited in particular areas, and the ‘rules’ surrounding progression tend to be variable and in some cases highly idiosyncratic.

The barrier whereby a student progressing from a Higher National Diploma qualification to a vocational degree programme (e.g. in law or teacher education) would not receive SAAS funding for the first year has now been removed, but this still leaves students having to meet the other costs associated with an extra year (or two years) of study, and raises questions of equity (in respect of the fair treatment of entrance qualifications) across courses, between and within institutions. As a simple first step, the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) should ask Scottish universities to end the practice of designating HNC/HND qualifications under the heading ‘non-standard entry’ or similar, and explicitly indicating that holders of these qualifications will be treated on an individual basis when applying for entrance.

\(^8\) e.g. http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/influence-parents-places-and-poverty-educational
Question 3: Are any measures other than those advocated in the report needed to ensure more young people leave school with “high level vocational qualifications which have strong currency in the labour market”?

We think that a logical extension of the Wood proposals is for the ‘education’ leaving age in Scotland to be raised to 18. This is the approach adopted in England, where from June 2014 all Year 11 (S4 in Scotland) school leavers are legally required to remain in education or training up until their 18th birthday. This would represent an unequivocal statement of how important Scotland considers the education and training of our young people. While we acknowledge that ‘compulsion’ can sometimes be associated with low motivation and disengagement, and that an ‘entitlement’ approach (such as currently available in Scotland) ensures active participation, in view of the scale of challenge identified by Wood, bolder measures are now necessary. Moreover, in relation to looked after children and care leavers, an extension of compulsory education and training should help prevent school staff (and other professionals) from colluding with young people’s view of the senior phase as ‘not for them,’ an effect our contacts tell us is not uncommon. The academic Stephen Ball describes such attitudes as the ‘economy of student worth,’ a condition which compromises the fundamental purposes of education.

We endorse Recommendation 37 (p.66) in Wood which calls for ‘educational and employment transition planning for young people in care to start early’. First, we suggest that Government must be vigilant for any arrangements which use a narrow definition of ‘care’ and thus exclude young people looked after ‘at home’ or in formal kinship care. Second, we think that all looked after children should have access to bespoke and frequent career education (including meaningful work visits and placements) before the senior phase, in order to help them to make informed and supported choices. We also think that career education for looked after children needs to involve families and carers. In view of the obligations placed on many publicly funded organisations as ‘corporate parents’ (Part 9 of the 2014 Act), these aims should be relatively easy to achieve.

Question 4: Does the report – which includes a section on improving equalities – place enough emphasis on pupils’ socio-economic inequalities and how these could be overcome?

While we welcome the Wood’s conclusions and recommendations on equalities, and we are particularly pleased that the report recognised ‘care leavers’ as a special group, we believe the issue needs greater emphasis and exploration. For instance, emphasis must be given to the fact that the term ‘care leaver’ includes children who were looked after at home, or in formal kinship care. While these children have equivalent needs to their accommodated peers, traditionally they have received a much more limited package of support. One outcome of this is a growing attainment (and educational engagement) gap between children ‘looked after at home’ and those who have been accommodated. Working with children who are ‘looked after’ but cared for by families is challenging, but it must be done if outcomes for all care leavers in Scotland are to be improved.

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9 UK Government website, Raising the Participation Age (accessed on 25 Feb. 15)
The notion of guaranteed employment for a year put forward by Wood has merit, but we restate our concern that, for such opportunities to be successful, they must be buttressed by considerable mentoring/coaching support. This would relate to the practicalities of maintaining employment, and in dealing with the continuing effects of childhood trauma and intrusive family difficulties that characterise a looked after background. Local authority ‘aftercare’ and youth employment teams are currently not adequately resourced to provide such support, so detailed consideration needs to be given to how it would be made to work.

The provision of supported employment and training for looked after young people, such as ring-fenced Modern Apprenticeships offered by a number of public-sector and third-sector agencies (e.g. Glasgow City Council’s Commonwealth Apprenticeship Scheme) is a welcome step, but there are still too few examples of this kind of activity. The introduction of a corporate parenting duty to ‘provide opportunities [...] to participate in activities designed to promote their wellbeing’\(^\text{11}\) should result in more of these work-related opportunities, but if the needs of all care leavers are to be met there is also a need for sustained commitment from private-sector companies to provide placements and apprenticeships.

We think there could be merit in having specific initiatives aimed exclusively at the most disadvantaged young people, for example, focusing on STEM-related opportunities, acknowledging to be successful these would require additional support in maths and science. While we welcome the Scottish Government’s commitment to providing supported employment opportunities in the third sector and access to mentoring, we are disappointed that Scotland’s Youth Employment Strategy does not take the opportunity to restate a firm commitment to the Government’s own 2011 report, *Our Family Firm*\(^\text{12}\), and to support reasonable resource allocation which could ensure that the principles and standards articulated in that report could be realised to open up a broader range of employment opportunities to young people from a looked after background. We think there should also be a commitment to provide regular reports so that progress can be evaluated.

Finally, overcoming the inequalities associated with having a ‘care experience’ requires further attention in two related ways. First, while support to address inequalities in education or health should be available across the life course, an increasing level of resource must be targeted at early years and primary school stages. Second, shifting towards a preventive model will require an additional resource commitment (e.g. in investing in specialist teachers) in the short to medium term. The mandatory preparation of Children’s Services Plans in each local area presents the Scottish Government and Parliament with a valuable opportunity to audit how well service leaders are achieving this objective.

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\(^{11}\) Section 58(1)(d) of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014

Question 5: Would there have to be significant reorganisation in schools to accommodate all the proposed changes (for example, to enable more links with colleges / to have a greater focus on work placements)?

It seems reasonable to assume that there would have to be some reorganisation of schools to accommodate all the changes proposed by Wood. There is already a culture of collaboration between schools in relation to meeting the requirements of the senior phase, and many schools have long-standing, constructive relationships with colleges. It will be important to ensure that such partnerships are available across Scotland so that they can be accessed by all young people. There is also a need to consider ways in which residential schools, secure care units and youth custody (i.e. HMYOI Polmont) are accommodated in the senior phase arrangements. This illustrates a more general point, which is that the aim of equality of access to the senior phase means that every young person, wherever they are placed in education, should have a right of access to a broad range of vocational and academic options. The residential school and youth custody sectors have developed creative ways of providing learning opportunities consistent with the principles of Curriculum for Excellence, but they have also typically offered a narrower curriculum, though it is generally broader than in the past. These sectors must not be marginalised in the new arrangements. There are organisational challenges associated with the fact that these institutions are not within local authorities, but it is vital to address these challenges to avoid the young people who are placed in them missing out.

In implementing of Wood’s recommendations (and the necessary reorganisation of schools) there is a risk that we create a map of Scotland on which ‘vocational’ schools are clustered in low income neighbourhoods (where fewer pupils have traditionally studied for Highers) and ‘academic’ schools in more affluent areas. Parents in more affluent neighbourhoods may be less likely to value vocational aspects of the curriculum in the senior phase and may exert pressures on schools to avoid reorganising in ways that would facilitate equal valuing of vocational and academic courses. The development of a two-tier school system should be actively avoided, suggesting an important role for Education Scotland and other national agencies.

It is important to guard against an assumption that because a young person is looked after or a care leaver that he or she is best directed to a vocational route. It may be more challenging to support a looked after young person with significant additional needs to obtain Highers, but this should not determine that a vocational option is best. The most disadvantaged young people have a right to realise their academic potential, and while vocational qualifications offer enhanced employment opportunities, with commensurate financial benefits, traditional ‘academic’ routes into the professions still offer efficient and effective ways out of poverty.

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13 Parity of esteem was a major issue which impacted upon the effectiveness of vocational education qualifications in England in the 1990s, and more broadly across Europe. See, e.g.
Finally, if Wood’s recommendations were implemented there may be additional administrative requirements placed on schools, associated with making more complex curriculum arrangements for pupils, and tracking their progress. Assuming the school is the principal point of pupil registration (an arrangement we would support) it likely that the school would need to employ professional staff whose qualifications and backgrounds are more varied, for example, in counselling, youth work or human resource development.

Question 6: What action and resources would be required to deliver the specific recommendations aimed at schools and teachers?

As mentioned earlier in this submission, we support the Wood report’s proposals for school-college partnerships, since dual registration offers significant advantages to young people who traditionally disengage with education at the earliest opportunity. We also favour schools retaining the primary responsibility for their students. Both of these developments will have resource implications, particularly during the set-up stage, and we also recognise that much is being asked of schools currently in reforming the curriculum more generally. Therefore Wood’s proposals have little chance of success without the implementation being carefully costed and the additional costs met.

The changes proposed by Wood will also have implications for teachers’ skills and knowledge base, and therefore for high quality in-service training opportunities. Initial teacher education and CPD will need to include opportunities to learn more about the effects of disadvantage and childhood trauma on education, and about the evidence base for interventions, including approaches being tested in other schools. As teachers work with children in relatively short time frames, it is also important that they learn about the life experiences of young adults who were not conventionally successful at school, but who have subsequently made significant achievements academically or vocationally. The House of Lords report, Make or Break: The UK’s Digital Future\(^\text{14}\), highlighted the need for teachers to adapt in order to provide education in a way that young people can relate to, and also to keep up with the requirements that they should have useful skills in digital technology.

We do not think it is necessary for teachers to become careers advisors, or to tailor the curriculum to data about local employment opportunities. Schools are - and must remain - about more than just employability, and they must continue to have a lead role in helping young people to acquire the transferable social and emotional skills on which a successful and satisfying life depends.

Thank you for this opportunity to contribute to this important inquiry. We would welcome any further discussions with Committee.

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Implications for schools, teachers and pupils of the Commission for Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce

Submission by the Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights (CRER)

Summary

As a Scottish strategic anti-racist organisation, CRER has an interest in education and employment issues where these have the potential for a differential race equality impact. CRER welcomes the focus on tackling inequalities contained in the final report of the Commission for Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce and subsequent government strategy. Tackling these inequalities is first and foremost a matter of social justice and human rights; additionally, it makes no economic sense for the full range of skills and expertise of a significant part of the population to be lost from the labour market.

Different levels of educational attainment and access to the labour market linked to race and ethnicity have been well documented\(^1\), and concerted and sustained attempts to tackle these attainment and access gaps are welcome, if overdue. As noted by the Commission and Scottish Government, there is strong evidence that young people from BME communities “encounter significant inequalities within education and employment” — they are more likely to embark on a narrower range of vocation pathways, more likely to experience prejudice and stereotyping and more likely to experience unemployment. We agree that there are no “quick fixes” to inequality in education and youth employment.

While the report and strategy are broadly welcome, we do believe the scope of the strategy is limited and doesn’t address the full range of barriers and inequalities faced by BME people. The focus appears to be on changing attitudes in BME communities rather than the attitudes and prejudices of others. Particular concerns include the following:

- Action to embed equalities throughout education would be welcome, but action plans to broaden educational opportunities and choices must be tailored to specific BME communities;
- Access to training, including Modern Apprenticeships, must be open, transparent and carefully monitored to ensure equality;
- There is a gap in the Commission report and Government strategy regarding how we ensure employers involved in education, training and partnerships with schools also embed equalities best practice.

Increasing options

CRER agrees there is merit in undertaking extensive work to ensure all pupils are aware of and feel able to undertake the broadest range of education and training, and to overcome barriers which limit the choices of BME young people. The Commission report notes that attitudes can be rooted from an early stage so it is essential that equality is embedded throughout curriculum for excellence, including pre-school (recommendation 26).

The Commission report is absolutely right to point out that communication and promotion of vocational training to pupils and parents will require to be tailored to specific communities in

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\(^1\) See for example, CRER “State of the Nation – Education” 2011; CRER “State of the Nation – Employment” 2014; Runnymede Trust “Aiming Higher – Race Inequality in the Academy” Feb 2015.
different parts of the country (recommendation 31) – as the challenges in and faced by each of the different BME communities are often very different from each other. We are unsure if this has been properly reflected in section 3 of the Government strategy, where action plans for different equalities strands appear to be pencilled in for 2016-17. In fact action plans not just for different strands, but for different BME groups will be necessary. CRER’s report “State of the Nation – Education” highlighted some of the key differences in educational attainment between different ethnic groups, and different course and qualification preferences.

More fundamentally, work to change perceptions in BME communities will be undermined if some of the issues that give rise to those perceptions aren’t tackled at the same time, as explained below.

**Equal access to vocational opportunities – including modern apprenticeships**

Both the Commission report (recommendation 8) and Government strategy advocate increasing pathways to undertake vocational qualifications at school, including the first year of a modern apprenticeship and better quality work experience (recommendation 3).

As the Commission has noted, less than 2% of all Modern Apprenticeship entrants are BME despite making up 6% of Scotland’s young population. CRER has repeatedly raised concerns that modern apprentices are often only recruited by word of mouth, without any open advertisement. This clearly provides a head-start to young people whose families have better networks or connections to those in a position to offer apprenticeships. Fair and open advertising of apprenticeships should be a pre-requisite of employer access to the Modern Apprenticeship scheme. “Consistent concern about the difficulty many young people face in accessing a Modern Apprenticeship” was noted by the Commission, and we agree wholeheartedly that “a national online Modern Apprenticeship application service should be developed in which all employers and prospective apprentices should have the option of participating.” It is essential, as the Commission suggests, that the online Modern Apprenticeship application system should be designed to allow Skills Development Scotland (SDS) to monitor both applications and starts from equalities groups. The strategy currently suggests that by year 3 “it will be easier for young people to find Modern Apprenticeship vacancies through the relaunched My World of Work”. We would welcome clarity that all modern apprenticeships – including those starting at school – will be openly and transparently recruited. Our view is that advertising MA vacancies on My World of Work should be a mandatory requirement, with the exception of where an MA is offered to an existing member of staff.

Similarly, CRER has repeatedly suggested that employers taking part in the MA scheme, and benefiting from government funding as a result, should be required to have in place a strong equal opportunities policy. It is unacceptable that there is no such requirement.

The target in the Government’s strategy to increase the number of apprenticeship starts from minority ethnic communities to equal the population share by 2021(KPI 9) appears reasonable. However, it is essential that progress against this should be reported on annually (recommendation 32), as well as thoroughly scrutinised.

**Employer involvement in education**

As well as a direct pathway to apprenticeships from schools, both the Commission report and government strategy suggest a far broader involvement of employers in schools – including partnerships.

The points we make above regarding access to the Modern Apprenticeship scheme apply more generally. Potentially valuable work to embed equality education across Curriculum for Excellence (recommendation 26) would risk being undermined unless we were sure similar standards were being maintained by employers involved in partnerships, training or work experience with schools.
Broadening the range of options BME young people are attracted to will be undermined if their experience of recruitment and training then reinforces some of the reasons for initial scepticism about a particular career choice. Promotion and monitoring of equalities policies and practices of employers engaging in education is essential.

As noted in the Commission’s Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA), “there is a complex range of factors relating to the choices young people are encouraged to take, the impact of the attitudes of adults on these choices and in some cases to the attitudes of employers”. As young people from BME groups told those undertaking the EQIA, there is concern about discrimination among some employers (page 13). The Commission itself noted that while work to broaden horizons and change perceptions of vocational education could make a contribution, additionally “there are deep rooted mindsets which need to be changed.”

This may be true of both public and private employers. We know that just 1.3% of police staff, 1.1% of local authority staff, and 0.85% of fire service staff are BME—- a significant underrepresentation of the 4% population share. Even in areas with larger ethnic minority populations the underrepresentation remains – for example Glasgow City Council’s BME workforce is 1.9% of the total, despite the BME population of the city amounting to 11.6%. We also know that in 2011/12, while 7.1% of white applicants for public sector posts were appointed, only 4.4% of non-white applicants were successful. For local authorities the figures were even starker: 6.1% V 2.1%. This supports DWP-commissioned research carried out in 2009 – which included Scottish employers - that showed a person with a ‘BME name’ had to send an application away 16 times to achieve a successful response compared to the 9 times for someone with a ‘white name’ despite submitting the same application.

We therefore cannot assume employers involved in education and training are operating to equalities standards. This has not been addressed in the Commission report or indeed the government strategy.

Specific inquiry questions

- if the Wood report were fully implemented, what the likely impact on attainment in schools would be and which pupils would benefit most;
- whether any measures other than those advocated in the report are needed to ensure more young people leave school with “high level vocational qualifications which have strong currency in the labour market”

The Commission recommendations that the relaunched website for Modern Apprenticeships tracks ethnicity of both applicants and successful new starts is important – and also that all recruitment is done openly through the site. Similar monitoring should be considered for other forms of vocational training. We would also argue for monitoring of dropout rates by training providers, as we know from monitoring of higher and further education and exits from public sector employment that rates

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3 “The State of the Nation: Race & Racism in Scotland – Employment”
4 “A test for racial discrimination in recruitment practice in British cities” (Research Report No 607), Department for Work and Pensions (http://www.natcen.ac.uk/media/20541/test-for-racial-discrimination.pdf)
for BME groups may be higher. We need to ensure not only that more BME people are recruited – but that they are also able to stay the course.

- whether the report – which includes a section on improving equalities – places enough emphasis on pupils’ socio-economic inequalities and how these could be overcome;

We welcome the specific focus on specific equalities groups, including race. Explaining different participation rates from BME communities purely as an issue of socio-economic inequality would fail to acknowledge the structural racism which BME communities face. Research also shows that some minority ethnic groups do not get the same economic benefit from social mobility\(^5\) and that enhanced educational outcomes do not lead to enhanced labour market outcomes to the same extent as for young white people\(^6\). So a specific strategy for race is essential. Whether or not a general consideration of the effect of socio-economic inequalities should have been a more central concern of the commission or a separate issues is debatable.

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### About CRER

The Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights works to eliminate racial discrimination and promote racial justice across Scotland. Through capacity building, research and campaigning activities which respond to the needs of communities, our work takes a strategic approach to tackling deep rooted issues of racial inequality. CRER has experience of anti-racist work covering areas such as community engagement and empowerment, research and resource development, practical training and equality mainstreaming support for Public and Voluntary Sector organisations.


Educational Attainment Gap – Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce

Introduction

Colleges recognise and welcome the opportunities to engage in the development of meaningful and productive vocational pathways for young people. Most colleges have existing partnerships and collaborations with local authorities and schools to provide young people of school age with access to vocational programmes. There are many examples of well planned, targeted and successful provision, but there is no consistency of approach across Scotland. These partnerships can take different forms and models, with a variety of recognised qualifications and experiences on offer to school pupils. The intention of the Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) strategy is that in every local authority area there should be consistent, high quality partnership planning of vocational pathways, which enrich the curriculum offer to pupils in the senior phase. These planning structures should support colleges and local authorities as they involve employers in jointly planning meaningful workplace experiences.

The volume of this school-college activity has been affected by funding policy changes introduced in 2010/11, reducing from 45,580 pupils in 2010/11 to 26,330 pupils in 2012/13. Implementation of the DYW Strategy therefore needs to ensure that the best possible use is being made of all available funding to ensure that school-college partnerships are resourced to deliver the best outcomes for young people.

- **If the Wood report were fully implemented, what the likely impact on attainment in schools would be and which pupils would benefit most**

At the present time, schools often see the vocational programmes on offer by colleges as options only for those young people who would not progress to university. The clear intention of the Scottish Government’s implementation plan for its DYW strategy is that vocational pathways will be seen as equally desirable routes to a successful career in employment. And that consequently the new and different senior vocational pathways will be attractive to the academically more able and provide a greater element of choice and relevance. School learners will be able to make an informed choice about vocational or academic routes and this will impact positively on attainment for all.

This more and different provision in the senior phase will require a re-appraisal of how attainment is measured, with a move away from the current perceptions of pupils, parents and employers with ‘Highers’ as the standard to be reached. Our view is that strengthened school-college provision will be more inclusive across the full spectrum of young people in schools, including those with additional support needs. We expect that access to foundation Modern Apprenticeships will also attract candidates of the highest calibre.

- **The report aims to significantly enhance vocational content “without splitting young people off into separate streams at school age”**. *What the disadvantages of such an approach would be and how it could be avoided*

Any system that defers choice for young people is to be preferred to one that forces choice at a time when young people are often unsure of themselves and their future career path. The present school system unfortunately often forces such choices on young people towards the end of the broad general education phase (as early as S2 in some schools). Having the opportunity to experience and understand better what is involved in a particular vocational area will help pupils (and their parents or guardians) make informed choices for their next steps.
whether any measures other than those advocated in the report are needed to ensure more young people leave school with “high level vocational qualifications which have strong currency in the labour market”

One measure that would have a significant impact on the range of vocational opportunities to be offered to young people would be an increase in college funding. This is necessary to support better engagement with employers, a wider range of vocational subjects and more support for young people making the transition from academic approaches to education to learning in vocational contexts.

In addition, providing opportunities to engage in other qualifications such as National Progression Awards and National Certificates as well as making more use of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) in colleges would allow for the development of programmes that are relevant and fill the gaps in labour market demands.

whether the report – which includes a section on improving equalities – places enough emphasis on pupils’ socio-economic inequalities and how these could be overcome

Colleges are well-versed in identifying and meeting the needs of individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds. Colleges achieve this through the implementation of equality policies and the provision of various forms of support for vulnerable learners. The building of effective pathways for such pupils can be enhanced through closer partnerships with third sector organisations with expertise in this area.

whether there would have to be significant reorganisation in schools to accommodate all the proposed changes (for example, to enable more links with colleges/ to have a greater focus on work placements)

In our view schools will have to reconsider the ways in which the senior vocational phase is organised. The quality of the pupil experience in current school-college programmes has suffered because of structural and organisational barriers. Schools don’t appreciate the disruptive effect of their local arrangements on the learning experiences of pupils who attend college. And colleges making arrangements to provide for pupils from multiple schools within their region will require much more collaboration between schools to address the timetabling issues that work placements and college attendance will raise.

What action and resources would be required to deliver the specific recommendations aimed at schools and teachers, for example:

teachers’ skills and knowledge may need to develop in certain areas (for example, “to better understand employability and modern work skills”);
closer links should be established between schools, colleges and employers (for example, “all 363 secondary schools in a long term partnership with employers within 3 years”).

This will be a significant challenge in taking forward the DYW strategy in schools. For many teachers, the world of vocational employment is something of which they may have little personal experience. Certainly for most the up-to-date practices of the workplace may be an unknown. The use of IT in schools is in contrast to its almost universal use in workplace settings. Subject teachers and careers advisors could be supported by accessible and relevant resources provided by agencies such as Skills Development Scotland. In addition, teacher training programmes in universities could provide trainee teachers with better knowledge and understanding of vocational skills.

Colleges have the experience of fostering links with schools, and could offer coaching and guidance to school staff in relation to current industry practice. The strong links that colleges have with employers (e.g. City of Glasgow College has links with over 1500 employers) could be harnessed to assist schools in forming and maintaining their own such links.
Executive Summary

- The Commission report contains little reference to the numerous benefits of wider achievement

- The DofE is the most popular wider achievement award in Scotland. It is an internationally recognised and valued by employers
  - It is the most recognised wider achievement award by employers surveyed by the CIPD
  - 83% of young people doing their DofE believe that achieving their Award will help them get a job
  - When included as part of Modern Apprenticeships, the DofE helps young people reach their “professional potential but also their personal potential”

- The DofE provides a pathway to achievement and to career information and advice, including schools, employers and higher/further education institutions in the approach.

- 13% of all DofE activity is from the lowest 30% SIMD areas, but socio-economic factors are not a recognised disadvantage in the report

- The benefits of wider achievement need to be better understood within the context of the Commission report

The Duke of Edinburgh’s Award

The Duke of Edinburgh’s Award (DofE) is a voluntary, non-competitive programme of activities for anyone aged 14-24. Doing their DofE gives young people the opportunity to develop skills for life and work.

In Scotland:

- There are 42,000 active DofE participants
- 89% of Secondary Schools have an active DofE group
- 1 in 6 young people aged 15 and 16 years old are undertaking a DofE programme
- 13% of all activity is with young people from the lowest 30% SIMD areas.
**Doing a DofE Award**

There are three progressive levels of programmes which, when successfully completed, lead to a Bronze, Silver or Gold Award. Young people create their own DofE programme by choosing a volunteering, physical and skills activity, going on an expedition and, for their Gold, taking part in a residential activity.

**Delivery of The DofE**

A wide range of organisations are licenced to run DofE programmes including, local authorities, businesses, voluntary youth organisations and independent schools.

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**Question:** whether any measures other than those advocated in the report are needed to ensure more young people leave school with ‘high level vocational qualifications which have strong currency in the labour market’

The Personal Reflections provided by Sir Ian Wood in *Education Working for All!* identify the need to recognise wider achievement, specifically in Reflection 5 where he states:

> “There’s similarly a clear requirement for better career information and advice and broader preparation for the world of work.”

However, the report does not go so far as to extend ‘broader preparation’ beyond formal education and training. Specifically, the Commission report does not discuss the benefits of wider achievement for young people and the very important role it can play in enhancing a young person’s employability.

The DofE in Scotland believes that in not providing support for young people to access wider achievement the Commission report does not fully grasp the ability of programmes like the DofE to contribute to a young person’s employability skills outwith formal education and training.

As outlined in the evidence below, failing to recognise wider achievement carries implications for young people and employers alike.

**DofE and Employability**

As is mentioned in the Commission report, employers are looking for “work ready and motivated young people with skills relevant to modern employment opportunities.”

The Confederation of British Industry (CBI)\(^3\) define the skills and attitudes that make someone employable as

- Self management
- Teamworking
- Problem solving
- Communication

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\(^2\) Ibid, p 3.

\(^3\) CBI *Future Fit: Preparing graduates for the world of work*. March 2009.
The DofE delivers on all of these capacities through a flexible programme that is achievable by all young people, regardless of their background or ability.

In new research undertaken by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) 67% of all UK companies surveyed believed entry-level candidates with voluntary experience have more employability skills to offer than those who don’t.  

The Duke of Edinburgh’s Award was the most recognised volunteering experience by the HR professionals surveyed with 37% of UK companies looking for a DofE Award in applications when they recruit, above other wider achievement programmes.

82% said volunteering develops team working skills, 80% said communication; whilst time management and prioritisation, problem solving, adaptability and leadership talent were also identified as key competencies young people with volunteering experience can bring to the workplace.

Young people themselves also believe that doing a DofE programme strengthens their employability skills. Our research shows us that 83% of young people doing their DofE believe that achieving their Award will help them get a job.  

In failing to include the wide range of employability skills that young people develop through participating in wider achievement awards like the DofE, the Commission has missed the opportunity to recognise development that happens outwith formal education and training.

Employability skills gained through doing a DofE programme are widely recognised by employers and young people alike, and in order to fulfil Scotland’s need to produce ‘young people with skills relevant to modern employment opportunities’ the value of wider achievement should not be ignored.

The following sections provide further information about the value of the DofE to employers and young people.

Employers recognise and support DofE

The DofE works with a range of business partners who believe that the DofE programme delivers work ready, motivated young people. Some, like Amey plc, guarantee an interview to anyone with a Gold Award on their CV who meets 70% of the skills needed for the role they applied for.

Mel Ewell, Chief Executive of Amey plc says: “We believe the DofE is incredibly important, offering young people the opportunity to experience fresh challenges and achieve new skills, whilst contributing to their local community. Amey is proud to be working with The Duke of Edinburgh’s Award to help young people fulfil not only their professional potential but also their personal potential.”

Amey plc and other national employer like First ScotRail, have offered the DofE to their apprentices as a way to develop their skills. In a recent survey, 80% of DofE Business Award holders reported that they have:

- Developed in confidence
- Developed leadership skills

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4 CIPD Learning to Work survey results, 2015.
6 DofE work with business includes Tesco, British Gas, John Lewis, First ScotRail, VINCI plc and more.
- Increased motivation and self-management

The public sector in Scotland has also offered the DofE to their Modern Apprentices as a way to develop employability skills.

Case Study – Stirling Council

Stirling Council has given their modern apprentices the opportunity to complete a DofE Award as part of their training with the local authority.

Andrea McFarlane, one of Stirling Council’s youth services workers explains that “The DofE just provides a really good fit with what the Council is wanting to offer apprentices in terms of opportunities to develop their skills and showcase what they’re already doing.”

The apprentices themselves are also recognise the benefits of their DofE. Max McKinstrie, Fisheries Management Apprentice, said “my Volunteering section was coaching the Scottish Youth Fly Fishing team. I was picking up different bits of skills with the coaching that I’d never done before because I’d been in the team. Covering all those Sections I’ve gained a good bit of confidence in myself.”

The participants see the benefits of doing their DofE during their apprenticeship, but the Council also receives the benefit of a highly skilled workforce. Jane Taylor, Youth Services Worker commented that “now they are confident enough to take the lead. I think that’s been a mixture of building up their confidence in work and learning the job, but through their Duke of Edinburgh’s Award as well, and the sense of achievement from carrying out the task and seeing it through.”

DofE provides career information and advice

In Recommendation 2 of the Commission report, emphasis is placed on the need to provide appropriate careers guidance and resources to young people. Particular reference is given to ‘local authorities, Skills Development Scotland and employer representative organisations’.8

The DofE, in partnership with employers, is already is providing career information and advice to young people through our careers platform The LifeZone.

The LifeZone is an exclusive and free site for DofE Award holders and participants designed to help them describe the skills they develop through their DofE on their CVs and applications and learn how to talk about them at interviews. It helps them make the most of the skills they gain through doing their DofE: leadership, teamworking and initiative demonstrated as part of their expedition; or the commitment, communication or positivity showcased through their volunteering and other activities.

The LifeZone also gives young people access to companies that actively believe in the DofE and look for Award holders when they recruit.

The Commission report, although recognising the need to support young people with careers guidance, does not take into account the ability of wider achievement to support this goal.

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One of the guiding principles of the DofE is that it is ‘achievable by all’ young people, regardless of their background or ability. Every participant’s programme is tailor-made to reflect their individual starting point, abilities and interests.

This is particularly relevant to young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, who often have the most to gain from taking part in wider achievement.

By not including recommendations for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds the Committee report misses out a significant measure of inequality in Scotland and how it can be overcome through participation in wider achievement.

According to our annual statistics collection, 1 in 3 young people, aged 15 years old, from South Ayrshire Council, are involved in a DofE programme. In more disadvantaged areas, such as Glasgow Council, this falls to 1 in 17, a discrepancy in equality of provision which is significant. In total, 13% of all DofE activity is from the lowest 30% SIMD areas and our strategic aim is to work with our partners to reach even more young people in this group.

Without broad support for wider achievement within schools, the employability benefits of DofE will not be accessible to young people from all backgrounds. In not foregrounding socio-economic inequality in the Commission report, there is limited scope for working towards a solution to help young people out of a cycle of disadvantage.

**Case Study – Robert from Glasgow**

Robert, from Pollock, started his Bronze DofE Award through the Enhanced Vocational Inclusion Programme. The programme reengages disadvantaged young people in education. Robert had a history of general and persistent disobedience towards school staff and in the community.

Robert's worker found him to be hard working and recommended he start his DofE in addition to the college work he was already involved with.

Robert said “the DofE gave me structure and helped me focus on the future. The more I achieved with DofE the more I wanted to achieve.

I used to tag wall, but when I volunteered with DofE I helped clean up walls at a school. It made me thing about my actions.”

Robert has gone on to be named apprentice of the year for Clydebank College and Apprentice of the year for his trade from construction skills Scotland. The EVIP team said “Robert continues to impress everyone with his attitude and is starting to fulfil the potential which we had all highlighted from working with him.”

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Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD)
Question: Whether there would have to be significant reorganisation in schools to accommodate all the proposed changes

Recommendation 1 outlines the need to develop pathways to industry recognised qualifications in partnership with colleges and other training providers.

For schools already providing the DofE to their students there are already pathways for those young people to connect with employers, colleges and universities while getting an internationally recognised qualification. The DofE in Scotland is committed to providing opportunities to develop employability skills at any age or stage of a young person’s life. Our record keeping system eDofE facilitates this. Young people who have not completed their DofE Award before they leave school can move their online account over to their higher/further education institution. We are currently working with higher/further education to expand their DofE provision.

Additionally, the aforementioned LifeZone is available to young people with an eDofE account. This gives them access to careers information and advice, and access to employers who support DofE Award holders.

Through doing their DofE, young people already have access to a qualification outside of academics that employers recognise and the connections are in place to help them progress through levels of education or training and link that to employment.

Conclusions
The Commission report is the starting point for a broader discussion around the employability of young people and what can be done to improve their employment prospects. The Commission report, while detailed in its recommendations in relation to formal qualifications, does little to recognised the extent to which wider achievement also helps develop work-ready young people.

The DofE, recognised globally by employers as a mark of excellence, is the most popular wider achievement award in Scotland. The DofE develops in young people the key attributes that employers look for.

The DofE also provides pathways for young people into employment through relationships with national employers. This is true for young people regardless of their ability or background.

The DofE in Scotland believes that wider achievement should be better understood within the context of the Commission report for the role that it plays in developing young people for life and work.
Dear Committee Members

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT GAP – DEVELOPING SCOTLAND’S YOUNG WORKFORCE

1. I am writing to offer some views from East Lothian Council officers in connection with the Committee’s work on the educational attainment gap, in particular to the questions it had on the implementation of the Wood Commission report on Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce.

2. East Lothian Council is committed to the best possible outcomes for our children and young people. Our recently-refreshed Council Plan focuses on four priorities:

   2.1. Reducing unemployment, particularly youth unemployment and improving positive outcomes for school leavers, principally through the initiatives developed and supported by East Lothian Works [East Lothian’s multi-agency employability service];

   2.2. Raising attainment in schools, particularly for pupils from more economically ‘deprived’ areas, and providing a broader work based education experience through working with Edinburgh College, Queen Margaret University and Napier University on initiatives such as the Academies;

   2.3. Reducing inequalities and ensuring the most disadvantaged groups and communities, have access to services that maximise opportunities to break the cycle of poverty or mitigate the impact of deprivation; e.g. Children’s early years initiatives and improving health and wellbeing for all age groups;

1 http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/231/business_advice/1493/east_lothian_works
2.4. Supporting the capacity of communities and voluntary organisations to show community resilience and maximise social capital from community and social networks.

3. We appreciate that while the input of teachers is crucial, we know we have to harness other elements of the community to give our children and young people a rounded and effective learning experience. We recognise and value our inter-dependency with families, professional groups, the health service, business people, the third sector and police and fire and rescue colleagues in helping young people learn to make their way in the world.

4. We also put effort into listening to the voices of young people themselves, through for example Pupil Councils and the Student Educational Experience survey.

5. Examples of innovation in the county over the past few years have included:

5.1. Academies in partnership with further and higher education institutions.

- **The Creative Industries Academy**
  Academy students can opt to study for the HNC Media & Communication or the HNC Acting & Performance. Subjects studied include performing arts, media, film, photography, copywriting and public relations. Successful students can then gain access to Year 2 to relevant HND or BA courses in creative subjects at Queen Margaret University or Edinburgh College.

- **The Food Science and Nutrition Academy**
  Two-year course leading to HNC Applied Science. Includes:
  - the study of Chemistry, Biochemistry and Microbiology;
  - practical laboratory experience;
  - data handling skills;
  - work experience in a food and drink company.
  Successful students can apply for direct entry into Year 2 of relevant BSc or HND courses, or alternatively qualify to apply for level 3 Modern Apprentice in Life Science.

- **The Health & Social Care Academy.**
  There are two qualifications offered:
  - National 5 in Care.
  - Skills for Work Higher in Health & Social Care.
  There is also a “Careers Pathways in Health and Social Care” course offered for students thinking of going directly into employment after school.
- **Hospitality and Tourism Academy**
  The HNC Hospitality covers a mix of theory and practical subjects, taught throughout S5 and S6, studying subjects including Management theory, Supervision, Finance and with practical classes preparing and serving meals in the College restaurant.

  Most of the teaching is done through Edinburgh College, at Granton and Milton campuses. Onward destinations include:
  - Employment / Modern Apprentice
  - Year 2 of an HND Hospitality Management
  - Advanced entry to Level 2 of the International Hospitality and Tourism Management degree at Queen Margaret University

- **Engineering Academy – HNC Engineering Systems with Renewables**
  The HNC in Engineering Systems with Renewables at The Engineering Academy aims to develop abilities to apply analysis and synthesis skills to the solution of engineering problems.

5.2. The Tots and Teens programme at Knox Academy in Haddington, has helped school students find excellent motivation and training through the care of young children, with the necessary support and safeguards in place.

5.3. “Paired reading” in secondary schools with volunteers, helps relevant youngsters improve their literacy and thus gain better access to the curriculum being offered.

5.4. “Support from the Start” project\(^2\) helps parents and families give children the very best start in life.

5.5. “Learn to Succeed” initiative at Dunbar Grammar is a tailor-made course, including Rural Skills, Employability, Confidence-building and coping with stress, aimed at helping students complete mainstream education and move on to a positive destination.

6. Head teacher colleagues have noted that the creation of East Lothian Works (see para 2.1 above) has given a much clearer focus to employability issues in schools. As Curriculum for Excellence develops and our senior school structure evolves, we are able to include more opportunities for vocational links, and foster equity of value placed on academic and vocational learning for all pupils.

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\(^2\) [http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/200433/support_from_the_start/1580/early_years_getting_it_right]
7. We consider our biggest challenges and opportunities are around the following:

7.1. The Doran report highlighted that we collectively are not doing enough to ensure that young people with additional support needs – including severe and complex needs - are being fully supported into a positive destination. The statistics for this cohort are very poor, and reflect an opportunity gap and equalities issue. It would be helpful if the Committee would give particular attention to this aspect of its work.

7.2. We need to enable all teaching staff in secondary schools to accept responsibility for employability (in the same way that they now do for literacy skills, whatever the subject they teach). We need teachers to be able to talk naturally in class about the kinds of jobs their subject can lead to, not to leave it to careers guidance sessions.

7.3. “Walking the talk” in our educational system – as vocational subjects increase in schools, there is a requirement to shift the mindset of existing staff and look towards the type of colleague who will best serve our young people in the delivery/engagement of the subject matter: this could go beyond GTC registered staff.

7.4. We need to help parents understand that vocational subjects are not a “second-best” option, both in terms of achievement of qualifications and post-school options, e.g. modern apprenticeships.

7.5. The lack of a further education college campus within East Lothian, coupled with a lack of public transport options, can be a real barrier to some young people. Even where available, public transport can be costly (especially for young people who are not earning), time-consuming and not always reliable. However the planned creation of a construction academy in East Lothian may offer opportunities for further thinking about a college campus presence.

7.6. School attendance can be a particular challenge; in East Lothian our relevant place-based community planning bodies recognise the importance of working together to tackle this. Being able to offer learning that appears more relevant to the student (thinking here of vocational learning) may help to help to raise attendance, engagement and attainment.

7.7. It would be beneficial to foster better partnerships through appropriate community benefits clauses in supplier contracts.

7.8. We need to find the resource to help schools to take up the opportunities that may be offered by employers and link with the wider community. Perhaps a senior manager in each school could take a strategic role and gain practical support from specific colleagues to co-ordinate opportunities. This may also in time help to build a sustainable throughput of opportunities rather than in the current fledgling model which, while always welcomed, still have a
tendency to be ad-hoc and short notice, and sometimes can be missed outright because there is no nominated co-ordinator within a school.

7.9. Primary schools also have a role to play. Certainly in East Lothian they take part in initiatives that can be seen as vocational (e.g. cooking with professionals) and enterprising (events management, fundraising), but there is room for more systematic involvement and an opportunity for secondary schools to work with their “cluster” primary schools.

8. I hope the Committee find this helpful. Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to its work.

Yours sincerely

ANGELA LEITCH
Chief Executive
About ENABLE:

ENABLE Scotland is the largest voluntary organisation in Scotland of and for children and adults who have learning disabilities and their families. We have a strong voluntary network with around 5000 members in 44 local branches and via individual membership.

Around a third of our members have a learning disability. ENABLE Scotland campaigns to improve the lives of people who have learning disabilities and their families and carers. ENABLE Scotland provides social care services to more than 2,000 people across Scotland who have learning disabilities or mental health problems.

ENABLE also delivers a range of programmes in schools and colleges across Scotland to support young people with additional support needs to make a successful post-school transition to a positive destination, for example our Stepping Up programme which is highlighted in the Wood report as an example of best practice.

ENABLE Scotland would warmly welcome the implementation of recommendations in the Wood report, particularly those relating to young disabled people, for example:

- Rec 33 – Tailoring career advice and work experience for young disabled people who are still at school to help them realise their potential and achieve their career aspirations.
- Rec 34 - Funding levels to colleges and Modern Apprenticeship training providers should reflect the cost of providing additional support to young disabled people, and age restrictions should be relaxed for those whose transition may take longer.
- Rec 35 – numbers of young disabled people in Modern Apprenticeships should be increased.
• Rec 36 - Employers should be supported and encouraged to employ young disabled people.

Questions:

1. **If the Wood report were fully implemented, what would be the likely impact on attainment in schools and which pupils would benefit most?**

   Attainment in school is currently focussed on discrete academic qualifications that allow pupils to access Higher Education. For young people who have a learning disability, qualifications, whilst important, do not reflect the full breadth of achievement in terms of the range of skills developed in school or readiness to progress beyond school.

   Implementation of the Wood Report would see the definition of attainment in school fundamentally challenged, broadening it to encompass vocational skills and readiness to progress into industry.

   ENABLE Scotland welcomes the increased focus on advancing equalities for all young people, particularly young people who have disabilities who are not asked 'what do you want to do when you leave school?'

   ENABLE Scotland believe Recommendation 33 of the Wood Report would significantly enhance working aspirations in a generation of young disabled people, their parents, carers and teachers. Combined with support for vocational attainment, this will allow many more young people who have disabilities to make a positive transition from school into work.

2. **The report aims to significantly enhance vocational content “without splitting young people off into separate streams at school age”. What would be the disadvantages of such an approach and how could they be avoided?**

   Early 'streaming' of pupils deemed to be progressing towards Higher Education and those progressing towards vocational qualifications may have unintended consequences on inclusivity in schools – particularly for disabled children.

   Young people who have learning disabilities should be able to access employability and vocational training at school, and it is the responsibility of the Scottish Government to ensure that the curriculum is accessible for all learners, whether it be academic or vocational.

   ENABLE Scotland believe that when children take the lead, the pace of education is appropriate to the child and schools have the right resources and training, an inclusive and successful learning environment can be achieved.
We would hope that, as part of a school’s inspection and review, these elements would be in place and pupils who have learning disabilities could be included with equal degrees of success.

3. **Does the report – which includes a section on improving equalities – place enough emphasis on pupils’ socio-economic inequalities and how these could be overcome?**

The most recent official learning disability statistics tell us that the majority of adults with learning disabilities for whom deprivation is known live in the 40% most deprived areas in Scotland.\(^1\)

The Scottish Government have reported that the proportion of individuals in relative poverty (before housing costs) was higher in families containing a disabled adult than in families with no disabled adults and that the proportion of low paid employees (earning less than £7/hour) with a disability was higher than that for employees without a disability.\(^2\)

We believe that implementation of the Wood Report will indirectly address socio-economic inequalities by focussing on improving attainment for the vulnerable groups targeted.

Alignment of reporting across education, skills and a devolved employability portfolio will allow the Scottish Government the opportunity to directly measure this impact against National Performance Framework. Specifically, indicator number 35 to reduce the proportion of individuals living in poverty in Scotland.

4. **Whether any measures other than those advocated in the report are needed to ensure more young people leave school with “high level vocational qualifications which have strong currency in the labour market”:**

Skills Development Scotland’s recent emphasis on accredited work placement through the Certificate of Work Readiness and Introduction to Workplace Skills qualifications highlight the values put by employers on 'soft skills'.

Recent research led by McDonalds UK, with support from the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) and Confederation of British Industry (CBI), highlighted the £88 billion contribution that 'soft skills' make to the UK


We know that these skills (including communication, initiative, customer confidence and team working) are best developed through real work experience, particularly for young people who have learning disabilities.

ENABLE Scotland believe that whilst 'high level vocational qualifications' are necessary for the development of Scotland's young workforce, an equal emphasis should be given to practical workplace experience that gives all learners an equal chance at gaining employment after school.

5. **Whether there would have to be significant reorganisation in schools to accommodate all the proposed changes (for example, to enable more links with colleges/ to have a greater focus on work placements):**

ENABLE Scotland have, since 2009, developed significant partnerships with over 80 schools and 18 FE Colleges across Scotland, supporting hundreds of young people who have learning disabilities to make a successful transition from education into work.

We believe that strong consideration should be given to the resources that schools and colleges allocate to providing meaningful work experience and individual support for transition for young people with additional support needs. Whilst this type of practical support is sometimes given in school and colleges, it often not given the same priority as teaching and classroom administration.

Opportunities for work experience can be limited to a shortlist of 'friendly businesses' or within the school/college itself, rather than experiences aligned to the young person's skills and interests. Requirements necessary of school/college to ensure workplace safety can be limited by the availability of workplace inspectors, further limiting partnerships with business. Similarly, class sizes dictate the number of young people that can undertake supported work experience off site at any one time, due to restrictions on staff availability. Teaching staff often have limited availability to communicate with partners and ensure quality transition from education for young people leaving school or college.

Dedicated resources to plan, arrange and support work experience as well as partner with employers, agencies and colleges during transition would significantly enhance positive destinations for young people who have additional support needs.

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6. **What action and resources would be required to deliver the specific recommendations aimed at schools and teachers:**

Specifically for staff supporting young people who have learning disabilities, ENABLE Scotland would advocate for:

- Parental involvement and consultation at the earliest point of the vocational curriculum, developing ambition and support at home.
- Local peer mentoring or ‘role model’ programmes that involve former pupils/students who have learning disabilities and made a transition into work with existing pupils/students and their parents.
- Dedicated training and resources for staff to be able to plan, negotiate and deliver supported work experience and coordinate positive destinations.
- Senior staff representation in community planning partnerships and transitions forums to ensure positive destinations.
- Opportunities for All statistics to specifically show positive destinations for vulnerable groups in each local authority, so progress can be measured.

ENABLE Scotland also believes that all student and qualified teachers should receive training on positive behaviour support, learning disability/autism awareness and communication skills, as well as a good understanding of inclusion and equalities. This reflects Rec 26 of the Wood report, which says that Scotland should embed equality education across Curriculum for Excellence. This would enable staff to create an inclusive, supportive learning environment for children with learning disabilities which would benefit the whole school. It would also maximise the opportunity for each child to reach their educational potential.

**For more information contact:**

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4 ENABLE Scotland (2011), Bridging the Training Gap.
Educational Attainment Gap - Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce
February 2015

Introduction
The Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) is Scotland’s largest direct-member business organisation representing over 19,000 members. The FSB campaigns for an economic and social environment which allows small businesses to grow and prosper. An education system that meets the skills needs of small firms and prepares young people for employment is a key element of this environment.

The FSB has taken a close interest in vocational education and has responded to a number of consultations and parliamentary debates in recent years. Most notably, in the work of the Wood Commission,1 the Scottish Government’s response (Developing the Young Workforce),2 and as members of the National Invest in Young People Group.3

We welcome the opportunity to respond to the Committee’s inquiry. Rather than reiterate our key views which are covered in more depth in the footnotes below, we have restricted our response to the questions posed by the Committee and specifically those with a business and economic dimension. It is worth noting, however, that in our preliminary research we were unable to source information on the economic impact Scotland suffers from the variation in educational attainment.4

Summary
The Scottish Government’s aim to create a ‘work relevant educational experience for our young people’ is very welcome. Equally welcome is the financial commitment made by the Government to implement the Wood report. This movement in policy converges with positions we have been articulating for some time, namely: hardwiring a greater focus on employability, employer engagement and work experience in schools and colleges. In our view, the primary purpose of education at

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2 “Response to Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce Debate”, FSB Scotland, December 2014.
4 The contextual data for the final Wood report suggests a major economic loss, stating that the ‘unemployment rate for 16-24 year olds with no qualifications is 47%...twice the rate overall.’
all levels is to equip learners with the skills they need to succeed in the job market – a purpose that is even more important given the impact socio-economic factors have on developing cognitive abilities and attainment more generally.  

Questions

1. If the Wood report was fully implemented, what would be the likely impact on attainment in schools and which pupils would benefit most? The evidence base suggests that the risk of becoming unemployed is greater for those with the lowest qualifications. It is certainly possible that a focus on more vocational content could lead to better engagement in the school environment and improved educational attainment. However, it would be impossible to estimate with any degree of certainty.

2. The report aims to significantly enhance vocational content "without splitting young people off into separate streams at school age." What are the disadvantages of such an approach and how could it be avoided? We have not taken a view on this. It is our belief that creating parity of esteem between the vocational and the academic, as well as clear pathways into employment, would better equip young people for the world of work.

3. Other than those advocated in the report, what other measures are required to ensure young people leave school with "high level vocational qualifications which have strong currency in the labour market"? This issue does not suffer from a lack of evidence; far from it in fact. There is little missing from the Wood Commission’s report and the youth employment strategy. The challenge will be how the education system practically improves vocational education for the benefit of all – learners and businesses alike.

Nonetheless, we would emphasise the importance of the following measures:

- Better equipping young people for the world of work with functional, work-based vocational training.
- Providing annual work experience placements to expose young people to the world of work.
- Better equipping young people to make informed choices about their future via

See: [http://growingupinscotland.org.uk/about-gus/key-findings/](http://growingupinscotland.org.uk/about-gus/key-findings/)
a careers advice service that is in tune with current and future labour market trends.

- Encouraging industry involvement in the classroom where they can offer value and expertise (e.g. in entrepreneurship, coding, accountancy etc.).
- Encouraging more positive outreach by schools through the utilisation of resources available within the wider public sector (Business Gateway, Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and so on) and in the developing Invest in Young People groups.

4. Does the report place enough emphasis on pupils’ socio-economic inequalities and how these could be overcome?
We are not best placed to answer this question.

5. Would a significant reorganisation in schools be required to accommodate all the proposed changes (for example, enabling more links with colleges/greater focus on work placements)?
While we are not experts on the education system, it is our belief that structural reform would not be required to deliver Wood’s vision. The flexibility within the senior phase of Curriculum for Excellence, in particular, should allow schools to embrace the wider cultural change required to create an employer-led system that equally values creates vocational and academic pathways.

6. What action and resources would be required to deliver specific recommendations aimed at schools and teachers?
Regularly exposing teachers old and new to the world outside education is critically important if the Government’s youth employment strategy is to be a success. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to describe teachers as the key delivery vehicle for large parts of the strategy. Undeniably, developing the skills and knowledge of teachers in areas they are likely to have little experience in (employability/skills and enterprise is a challenge) is a challenge – especially at a time of extensive curriculum change. Whether the funding provided by the Scottish Government will allow teachers time out of the classroom to undertake necessary CPD or create closer links with business remains to be seen.

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6 For example, developing teachers’ skills and knowledge in areas like employability and skills and creating closer links between schools, colleges and employers.
**Contact**
For further information on any of the points raised in this submission, please contact Barry McCulloch, Senior Policy Advisor, on barry.mcculloch@fsb.org.uk or 0141 221 0775.
Glasgow City Council
Response to call for evidence from Education and Culture Committee

Consultation 1: Implications for Schools, Teachers and pupil of the
Commission for Developing Scotland’s Young Workface (Wood report)

1. **If the Wood report were fully implemented, what the likely impact on attainment in schools would be and which pupils would benefit most;**

   This is dependent on the definition of attainment being applied. Currently attainment is defined in terms of national qualifications, for example, three or more awards at SCQF level 4. Many of the courses on offer in partnership with colleges would not count in this framework as they are often made up of coherent groupings of units. Attainment is also measured in average tariff points and the units will count in this calculation. However, the tariff score scale puts more weighting onto courses than units, therefore it is possible that the gap between the average tariff score of pupils doing college/school programmes and those doing more traditional school-based courses will widen.

   Schools and local authorities need to get better at telling the ‘story’ of young people’s achievements and not be overly influenced by these national statistics. Conversely, it is incumbent upon awarding bodies such as SQA, working alongside Education Scotland, the Scottish Government and Local Authorities to ensure a greater ‘objective equivalence’ is achieved in apportioning value and recording success in young people’s learning. This work must be developed to create a currency of recognisable achievement which is as credible for business as it is in supporting progression into FE or HE institutions.

   Successful implementation of the recommendations will increase the range of learner pathways for young people. There is not one single group of young people who will benefit from this.

2. **The report aims to significantly enhance vocational content “without splitting young people off into separate streams at school age”. What the disadvantages of such an approach would be and how it could be avoided;**

   Glasgow currently has very well-developed school/college partnerships which are long-standing. We have been working more recently on creating more innovative and bespoke pathways which better meet the increasing numbers of young people returning to school for fifth and sixth year. These pathways allow young people to remain in school receiving strong support from pastoral care staff and achieve qualifications both in school and in college. Young people have responded well to these as they also have a work placement element which enriches their learning further.

   We need to have a clearer shared understanding of vocational courses and not imagine that vocational courses are in any way worth less than an academic course. Medicine is a vocational course. This relates directly to the point made in the response to the previous question. The challenges raised through the implementation of the Wood report are far more around how we articulate successful learner journeys and how these relate to the capacities, knowledge and potential of individual young people in a way which is recognisable and credible to them, their parents, business and HE and FE establishments.
3. **Whether any measures other than those advocated in the report are needed to ensure more young people leave school with “high level vocational qualifications which have strong currency in the labour market”**: 

Local authorities and schools need to engage actively with employers to ensure that the pathways being developed lead to strong employment opportunities. In some cases, this will mean a focus on developing young people’s employability skills through more traditional school-based courses, such as Highers and Nationals, along with a range of broader experiences, such as Sports Leadership, school prefect, Duke of Edinburgh, Student Council, charity work, etc. In other cases, this will mean a bespoke programme designed in partnership with employers and colleges, such as our engineering scholarship programme. We have also been working with NHS GGC who are major employers to design bespoke programmes which lead to careers in health care.

This takes time and involves working with a range of partners. There are also practical challenges around timetabling when working across schools and colleges.

It should be recognised that unlike many other countries in Western Europe, the UK has far less of a tradition of collaborative development between the education and industrial sectors at school level. The critical element in the success of the Wood recommendations is the greater adoption of its principles across the Scottish business community. Schools and Local Authorities have the ability to develop strong partnerships with business to create coherent pathways into employment. However, the Scottish Government must work with business to create either financial benefits or legislative requirements to underpin them. Without these safeguards in place, any partnerships developed between schools and businesses are likely to be transient based on the economic health of the business and the country as a whole. This is a key area in which the Government must take the lead.

4. **Whether the report – which includes a section on improving equalities – places enough emphasis on pupils’ socio-economic inequalities and how these could be overcome**;

The Wood report has the potential to improve the employment opportunities for all young people regardless of their socio-economic background. However, reducing inequalities is a challenging area and we must be mindful not to lower expectations for young people because of their background. This must be about raising standards and giving young people the best possible chance to succeed.

In the last few years, we have worked very hard to raise expectations for all young people regardless of their background. We have challenged the poverty of aspiration which has stubbornly existed in many communities. We are now seeing much improved outcomes, such as 32.8% of school leavers going to higher education when ten years ago it was 18.2%.

As stated earlier, vocational courses should not be seen as a less valuable option for young people. We must also be careful not to narrow down young people’s choices at too early a stage in their development. A strength of Scottish education has been its breadth and this must not be lost. Young people need to be provided with the opportunity to achieve qualifications which afford them more choices not less.

We must also recognise – a point not given due prominence either in the Wood report or in the Government’s Youth Employment Strategy - the fundamental role that social networks play in supporting young people’s aspirations and facilitating their
achievements and progressions. Across agencies we must focus more on the importance of role modelling, mentoring and expanding life experiences for groups of young people whose economic or social circumstances make them more likely to disengage from education and move either into low paid employment or unemployment. Regardless of attainment levels, all too often young people from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, or from minority / under-represented groups, do less well in making successful progressions into well-paid careers or highly valued academic programmes. Again, this is often due to a lack of ‘social capital’ and young people self-selecting out of particular career or learner pathways because of a lack of recognisable peer / role model group. Business has a major role to play here and one which – as described above – must be stimulated and directed to an extent by Scottish Government.

5. Whether there would have to be significant reorganisation in schools to accommodate all the proposed changes (for example, to enable more links with colleges/ to have a greater focus on work placements);

We don’t believe there is a need to make significant changes. However, it will need careful planning and it is complex when timetabling across schools and colleges in the city.

There is also the issue of staffing in schools when young people are learning in colleges. Staffing levels in schools could be adjusted to take account of the fact that young people are not spending 27.5 hours learning in school. Moreover, where learning is split across various establishments, it may be the case that the make-up of school and college staffing evolves to support a more multi-disciplinary workforce. There is a question to be asked about the best use of public money paying for teachers in schools and lecturers in college.

6. What action and resources would be required to deliver the specific recommendations aimed at schools and teachers, for example:

i. Teachers’ skills and knowledge may need to develop in certain areas (for example, “to better understand employability and modern work skills”);

ii. Closer links should be established between schools, colleges and employers (for example, “all 363 secondary schools in a long term partnership with employers within 3 years”).

There are a number of areas in which developments are required to deliver the recommendations for schools and teachers. The main principles underpinning all are centred on the importance of partnerships, effecting sustainable development and ensuring a shared vision and sense of purpose in supporting the development of Scotland’s young people across schools, HE, FE and industry.

There are currently enough skilled staff employed across schools, other educational establishments, SDS and business etc. to support the developments recommended through the Wood report. We do not consider the provision of additional training for teachers to provide bespoke careers advice, for example, as a key driver for the success of the new youth employment strategy. Of far more importance, is the development of a truly collaborative approach across sectors in mapping out flexible learner journeys which support the needs of industry but more importantly recognise the needs, circumstances and particular aptitudes of individual young people. This means that we need to affect change across teaching and business roles to create more time for collaborative approaches in curricular design, to establish new learning environments (e.g. greater focus and value on work based learning) and to recognise
a broader range of successes and achievement which are underpinned by a unifying and equitably valued set of recognition criteria.

February 2015
Response from Aileen Goodall

Please find below my personal thoughts on the Wood report based on my experiences of working with 16-19 year old young people, both during and post-secondary school covering a rural and remote geographical area - Argyll and Bute.

- if the Wood report were fully implemented, what the likely impact on attainment in schools would be and which pupils would benefit most;

Concerned from what I have seen to date in those pilot programmes moving forward foundation apprenticeships that these courses will be swamped by academic young people who are already well catered for in the 'traditional secondary senior phase ' currently on offer under CfE. Also am concerned that the media hasn't yet embraced the value of apprenticeship programme training - not seen as artisan, highly skilled and in turn highly valued the way our European neighbours do - this impacts on parents/carers views, most are very cautious about allowing their young people to become involved in this 'alternative progression pathway'.

- the report aims to significantly enhance vocational content “without splitting young people off into separate streams at school age”. What the disadvantages of such an approach would be and how it could be avoided;

In our rural and remote geographical area it is almost impossible for two secondary schools to work together in offering vocational content to senior phase pupils. This creates huge issues in ensuring we have adequate numbers to meet the minimum funding requirements set by our local college provider.

We have falling school rolls, very little vocational workshop facilities available through local colleges or training providers and already rely on local employers to allow us to access their facilities in order for pupils to gain access to practical spaces for Skills for Work and related qualifications.

Having examined the foundation apprenticeship course content for engineering we would need to remove pupils following this route from their peers if they are to have the necessary practical and study time to complete the course. Due to rural and remote geography we wouldn't be able to replicate the West Lothian model whereby pupils follow a number of timetable national 4/5 classes and complete the foundations courses through involvement in evening and weekend classes - our transport infrastructure wouldn't support such options.

- whether any measures other than those advocated in the report are needed to ensure more young people leave school with “high level vocational qualifications which have strong currency in the labour market”;

- whether the report – which includes a section on improving equalities – places enough emphasis on pupils’ socio-economic inequalities and how these could be overcome;

Based on my experience it would have been great for rural and remote geography to have been included as part of the inequalities issue - our local authority area has a falling and
ageing population (yet this is not reflected in the Skills Improvement Plan produced for the Highlands and Islands area). We have widespread dispersed communities that currently need to travel for an hour in order to access their closest town; weak broadband connectivity preventing access to online learning and working from home opportunities and a reliance on holding down a number of part-time/seasonal employment opportunities with little chance of career progression and development.

- whether there would have to be significant reorganisation in schools to accommodate all the proposed changes (for example, to enable more links with colleges/ to have a greater focus on work placements);

To truly embrace the recommendations and ensure cognisance is taken of all partners needs this agenda needs to be led by a 'lay' person with an understanding of education - school/business/community tripartite way of working requires an individual to be available to all parties rather than the current position whereby this agenda sits as part of a promoted teacher post and they have 2 periods a week designated for delivering the recommendations. Currently our schools have the upper hand in dictating timetable/holidays and partner agencies have to fall into line with these rather than there being the flexibility and consistency required to allow young people to be offered the best programme to allow the to develop the knowledge, understanding and skills required to succeed in the world of work.

- What action and resources would be required to deliver the specific recommendations aimed at schools and teachers, for example:
  - teachers’ skills and knowledge may need to develop in certain areas (for example, “to better understand employability and modern work skills”); currently developing subject teachers knowledge and understanding of the true labour market picture as opposed to tabloid newspaper headlines. All secondary staff should know what the school leaver destination rates/routes are for their pupils and how their subject can support this outcome - which is really what education should be preparing young people for - to take their place in society and the workforce and make the best contribution they can through having excellent knowledge understanding of skills for learning, life AND work. as opposed to what subject teachers currently think which us they are preparing young people to pass the relevant examination in their subject area - doesn't necessarily allow young person to make a posit I and sustained post school transition. No teacher should be allowed to go straight from school to university to teacher training institution and then back to school - all teachers should have spent time in the world of work that the rest of society inhabits. Would help to enhance their knowledge and understanding of the world of worm and employability skills.
  - closer links should be established between schools, colleges and employers (for example, “all 363 secondary schools in a long term partnership with employers within 3 years”). This was already in place in our secondary schools and the majority of our primary establishments through the Determined to Succeed policy. Needs to be refreshed with a focus on employability and strengthen the focus on schools listening to employers and what they need by way of knowledge, understanding and skills from the future work force. For all of this to happen schools will require additional staffing support - as identified earlier - to support moving the agenda forward. Subject staff are exceptionally hard working as they move forward with implementing new Higher qualifications and national 5 awards.

Kind regards
Aileen Goodall
The National Deaf Children’s Society (NDCS) welcomes this opportunity to submit evidence on the implications for schools, teachers and pupils of the Commission for Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce. We would welcome the opportunity to facilitate the inclusion of deaf young people in any further discussions the Committee would like to have.

1. Background

1.1. The National Deaf Children’s Society (NDCS) is the leading charity in Scotland dedicated to creating a world without barriers for deaf children and young people. In Scotland, we have a dedicated team based in Glasgow led by Heather Gray, Director. The team has a strong focus on addressing the attainment gap that exists for deaf learners. This includes the work we do with our Young Campaigners who are a group of deaf young people aged 14-20 years old. They call for better services and campaign on issues affecting deaf children in Scotland.

1.2. As well as this work, NDCS provides a dedicated Family Support Service across the country. Our current service, Your Child, Your Choices (YCYC) delivers family sign across specific geographical locations. NDCS also commissions research to inform the sector and provides training for professionals as well as running a programme of events and activities for deaf children and their families aimed at building skills and confidence.

1.3. NDCS is funded entirely from voluntary income and trusts and foundations in its delivery of services in Scotland.

1.4. We know that with the right support, deaf children can achieve equally well to their hearing peers, however we know that a significant gap in educational attainment and life chances exists for deaf children in Scotland. NDCS are working with partners across sectors to address the issues which we know contributes to gaps in life chances and employability outcomes.

1.5. Our recent research report, Close the Gap highlighted significant gaps in outcomes for deaf young people across education, training and employment and has also raised concerns about the employability of deaf young people in Scotland, highlighting that the group is under-represented in Higher Education, training and employment. In addition, the research has indicated issues in access to support, information and guidance for deaf young people across the range of post-school settings including college, apprenticeships and the workplace.
1.6. NDCS has welcomed the commitment made by the Scottish Government to acknowledge the attainment gap that exists for deaf learners and commit to closing it.

2. Context

2.1. Deafness is not in itself a learning disability. However, Scottish Government figures shows that there is a significant attainment gap for deaf learners. Last year (2012/13), there was an increase in the overall tariff score of deaf pupils from 274 to 289. This is good news. This might be explained by the slight increase in hearing impaired pupils who obtained Advanced Highers (up from 10.3% to 12.7%). Despite the increase, hearing impaired pupils are still significantly trailing behind non-additional support needs peers whose average score was 439 last year¹.

2.2. On a number of important indicators such as numbers leaving school with no qualifications, and those qualifying to enter Higher Education, this group have a worsening attainment profile.

Qualifications²

<table>
<thead>
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<th></th>
<th>Hearing Impaired pupils</th>
<th>Pupils with no ASN</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>9.8</td>
<td>0.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011/12</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>1.1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

2.4. School leavers qualifying for Higher Education (Scottish Government Data)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Hearing Impaired pupils</th>
<th>Pupils with no ASN</th>
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<td>36.3</td>
<td>61.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011/12</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>60.2</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

2.5. The number of deaf school leavers entering Higher Education decreased last year, while access for those with no additional support needs improved.

School leavers entering Higher Education (Scottish Government Data)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Hearing Impaired pupils</th>
<th>Pupils with no ASN</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
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<td>21.8</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011/12</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>38.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FE Access³

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¹ Scottish Government, 2014, [Attainment and Leaver Destination Supplementary Data](#)
² Scottish Government, 2014, [Attainment and Leaver Destination Supplementary Data](#)
³ Scottish Government, 2014, [Attainment and Leaver Destination Supplementary Data](#)
⁴ Scottish Government, 2014, [Attainment and Leaver Destination Supplementary Data](#)
2.6. The number of deaf school leavers entering Further Education increased last year and college is clearly a popular destination for deaf school leavers, which is very positive.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School leavers entering Further Education (Scottish Government Data)</th>
<th>Hearing Impaired pupils</th>
<th>Pupils with no ASN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012/13</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011/12</td>
<td>38.6</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.7. However the National Deaf Children’s Society does have some concerns about the consistency of support in college settings, and how deaf young people are succeeding in their transition out of college into sustainable employment. During the Close the Gap research, interviews with 30 deaf young people aged 18 to 24 years old in 2013 revealed that support was inconsistent for deaf students at college, and a number had dropped out of their programmes due to this.

2.8. NDCS recently commissioned research from the University of Manchester which looked in detail at the experiences of deaf students at college. While this was based on experiences at English colleges, there are likely to be many similarities for the experiences of deaf students in Scotland.

2.9. The research project found that although the vast majority of deaf young people complete their FE course, nearly one quarter do not achieve any qualification at any level. The drop out rate for deaf students in Further Education is twice that of the general population of students in FE.

2.10. Around one third of deaf students in FE will follow a course at Level 3. Of those who follow an AS level course fewer than 4% will actually achieve the qualification when they have completed the course. Deaf young people generally enter Further Education with fewer qualifications and lower levels of academic achievement in comparison with the general population of 16 year olds. But the research project also showed that the majority of deaf young people in FE do not make up the qualification gap they have on leaving school in comparison with other young people of their age.

2.11. The Report has recommended there is an urgent need to establish best practice standards in Further Education for deaf students and a means of demonstrating that provision is effective and meeting their needs. In Scotland there is clearly a need to understand the experiences of college students in Scotland in order to improve the support they receive and ensure they are reaching their full potential and moving into sustainable employment.

Employment

2.12. UK wide employment estimates have shown that approximately 58% of working age deaf people are employed compared to 80% of the non-disabled working age population. In Scotland, this gap is evident among school leavers, with 19.1% moving into employment after school compared with 25.5% of school leavers.

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5 NDCS, 2014, Close the Gap, http://www.ndcs.org.uk/professional_support/external_research/#contentblock1
6 University of Manchester, 2015, http://www.ndcs.org.uk/professional_support/external_research/#contentblock1
7 University of Manchester, 2015, http://www.ndcs.org.uk/professional_support/external_research/#contentblock1
leavers with additional support needs\textsuperscript{8}. It is positive that over the past 2 years employment rates among deaf school leavers have improved, however there is still some way to go to close the gap that exists.

2.13. Similarly, the number of unemployed hearing impaired school leavers decreased to 10.6\%, however deaf school leavers are still more likely to be unemployed than hearing leavers – 8.1\% of whom were unemployed on leaving school last year.

3. If the Wood report were fully implemented, what the likely impact on attainment in schools would be and which pupils would benefit most;

3.1. An increased focus on improving the vocational content of the curriculum and on improving relationships between schools and post school destinations would be likely to improve all young people’s post school outcomes.

3.2. However there are particular issues facing groups of students, such as those who are deaf, which creates gaps in attainment and achievement of post school outcomes. The report does not contain a strong focus on addressing these issues and so may be unlikely to contribute to closing the attainment gap for all learners.

3.3. For deaf learners, there are underlying issues that may mitigate the impact of the implementation of the Report’s recommendations. These issues have the capacity to reduce the likelihood of deaf students benefitting from its implementation.

3.4. In particular, the persisting attainment gap which deaf learners experience means there are a number of deaf students that are not achieving minimum qualifications that may be required to gain employment. Even with the additional supports that implementing the Report’s recommendations would put in place, these students may still struggle to benefit from improved prospects after school.

3.5. According the Close the Gap research, a key contributing factor to this gap in attainment is inconsistencies in the support available for deaf learners across local authorities. There is wide disparity in the support available in different local authorities, with some deaf learners experiencing effective support and others being dissatisfied by what is available locally. In addition, there are problematic issues within the work force of specialist Teachers of the Deaf which may result in support becoming increasingly inconsistent and the attainment gap for this group widening. For example, a third of Teachers of the Deaf do not hold the mandatory qualification which is a statutory requirement\textsuperscript{9}. In addition, over half of the Teacher of the Deaf workforce is due to retire within the next ten years\textsuperscript{10}. These factors mean there is likely to be a shortage of qualified and skilled workforce to meet the needs of deaf learners. This may well put deaf learners at risk of not benefitting from efforts to improve the employability of school leavers.

\textsuperscript{8} Scottish Government, 2014, \textit{Attainment and Leaver Destination Supplementary Data}
3.6. Another factor which may mitigate the benefits of implementing the Wood Report recommendations is the deaf awareness that exists among employers. Our research shows that deaf young people perceive a number of barriers preventing them from gaining employment. Some young people felt that their hearing loss was met with negative views from employers and some felt that disclosing their deafness on job applications limited the likelihood of them being invited to interview. While some employers are well informed about deafness and how to support deaf colleagues there is much work to be done in sharing this good practice and dispelling negative attitudes about deafness among employers.

3.7. While deaf young people would greatly benefit from increased opportunities for work experience placements, there is a need to raise awareness among employers about how to support deaf young people on those placements, and a need to support employers in order to be able to do so. NDCS has delivered bespoke deaf awareness training for organisations taking deaf young people on for work experiences and would welcome the opportunity to roll this out more consistently. In addition, NDCS has a number of video resources with tips on how to support deaf young people on work placement which we would welcome the opportunity to share\textsuperscript{11}.

3.8. In addition, NDCS also considers the experience of the college sector with regards to the formation of regional colleges with more focus on regional labour markets and a greater emphasis on employment outcomes. There is evidence to suggest that this process has disproportionately disadvantaged disabled students. The Educational Institute of Scotland surveyed colleges in 2014 with results showing a significant decline, nationally, in the level of support available to students with ASN in Scotland’s FE colleges – with significant regional differences in provision. At the time of the survey only 46 staff held a Diploma in Special Educational Needs (or equivalent), this is a drop of 30%. Six colleges stated that they had no Diploma in SEN qualified staff\textsuperscript{12}.

3.9. In addition, the EIS’ data shows a year-on-year reduction every year from 2009-10 to 2012-13 in additional support needs student numbers. The number of DPG18 students in the colleges sharing data has dropped from 19,622 to 14,887 between 2009-10 and 2012-13. This is a reduction of 24%\textsuperscript{13}.

3.10. There is a need to learn from this experience, in terms of ensuring that the approach to focusing on vocational content within the curriculum and the employability of young people is fully inclusive of the needs of all learners and does not have the unintended consequence of widening attainment gaps that already exist for some groups of learners such as those who are deaf.

\textsuperscript{11} For an example of NDCS resources see: http://www.ndcs.org.uk/document.rm?id=9325


4. The report aims to significantly enhance vocational content “without splitting young people off into separate streams at school age”. What the disadvantages of such an approach would be and how it could be avoided;

4.1. A streamed approach to education could be detrimental for deaf young people as many may lack the age-appropriate language and numeracy skills that may be required in order to effectively assess young people to determine the appropriate stream for them. As such this may result in schools being reluctant to enrol deaf students into academic streams – limiting their right to reach their full academic potential.

4.2. There would be real benefit to ensuring that all young people are supported to explore their full academic potential and that within the core curriculum there are opportunities for all young people to enhance their vocational knowledge and experience as well.

5. Whether any measures other than those advocated in the report are needed to ensure more young people leave school with “high level vocational qualifications which have strong currency in the labour market”;

5.1. To ensure all of the recommendations are met for all young people there needs to be a strong focus in schools on achieving inclusion. Meeting the aspirations of the Report will require schools to remove barriers to learning and participation and work to eliminate discrimination and promote equality. There are positive examples of where schools are achieving this successfully, such as the roll out of the Dyslexia-friendly schools programme where schools have made efforts to raise awareness and understanding of the needs of learners with dyslexia, as well as challenging the stigma and negative attitudes that may surround it.

5.2. NDCS would welcome this approach being taken consistently in schools across a range of additional support needs, including deafness. Feedback from our Deaf Learners Conference which was held in partnership with Education Scotland illustrated that young people felt that their school should be more deaf aware and there was a need to challenge the negative attitudes towards deafness which often left young people feeling isolated and lacking in confidence.

5.3. In addition, while considering how to ensure more young people leave school with “high level vocational qualifications which have strong currency in the labour market”, we must consider the young people who are currently furthest from achieving these. As mentioned earlier, around 10% of deaf young people leave school with no qualifications at all. For many students we need to make sure they are achieving basic qualifications that they will need for their future and there should be the acknowledgement that getting the basics right for some young people is the most urgent issue to address at the moment.

6. Whether the report – which includes a section on improving equalities – places enough emphasis on pupils’ socio-economic inequalities and how these could be overcome;

6.1. With regards to the section on Equalities contained within the report, NDCS agrees that there should be a strong focus on fostering aspiration among
learners with disabilities. Linked to this is the issue of promoting positive emotional health and wellbeing so that young people can achieve confidently throughout school and beyond. The social isolation and barriers deaf young people face put them at particular risk of experiencing poorer emotional health and wellbeing, and national statistics show that 40% of deaf young people are likely to experience mental ill health compared with 25% of other young people\textsuperscript{14}.

6.2. NDCS has a number of resources and tools which can support schools to promote positive emotional health and wellbeing, including a Healthy Minds training programme for practitioners who are working with deaf young people. We would welcome the opportunity to present further information regarding the positive impact these kinds of resources have in enhancing the wellbeing of young people, and case studies of where we have worked with schools to deliver this training for professionals.

6.3. There is scope to place more emphasis on the specific challenges faced by young people from deprived socio-economic backgrounds and the impact this may have on them developing employability skills. It is also important to consider that socio-economic deprivation does not exist in isolation from other factors which disadvantage young people. Our research has strongly indicated the "double disadvantage" which exists for deaf young people from deprived socio-economic backgrounds. Young people from poorer socio-economic backgrounds experienced far less parental support and advocacy which was required throughout school and beyond to ensure that the additional support needs of the young person were being effectively addressed. This had clear implications for the young person’s education and post school outcomes.\textsuperscript{15}

7. Whether there would have to be significant reorganisation in schools to accommodate all the proposed changes (for example, to enable more links with colleges/ to have a greater focus on work placements);

7.1. The changes proposed by the Report’s recommendations will involve a level of staff training and reorganisation in schools particularly around the issue of transitional planning. There will be a need to ensure transitional planning is happening consistently for all young people, and it is working in a way that enables links with colleges and other post school destinations. Our research has indicated that currently, deaf young people do not consistently experience transitional planning, despite this being a statutory duty on local authorities under the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act (2004). Of the 30 young deaf people who took part in our research project who were aged between 18 and 24, only 4 said they had had a transitional plan\textsuperscript{16}.

7.2. NDCS has been working closely with the pan-Ayrshire authorities to deliver a Statement of Intent for promoting positive post school transitions for deaf young people. The Statement consists of three strands and includes:

- Promoting positive emotional health and wellbeing: through this strand deaf young people are able to access a structured programme to enhance their ability

\textsuperscript{14} NHS, 2005, Towards Equity and Access
\textsuperscript{15} NDCS, 2014, Close the Gap
\textsuperscript{16} NDCS, 2014, Close the Gap
to develop improved confidence and a positive sense of self. This involves the roll out of the NDCS Healthy Minds training programme and improved opportunities for deaf young people to explore peer support;

- **Improving post-school transitional planning:** by embedding the NDCS, Skills Development Scotland and Donaldson’s resource, A Template for Success. This is a toolkit resource for all professionals working with deaf young people at a time when they are moving on from school and is appropriate for teachers, Skills Development Scotland Staff, Careers Advisers, College or University Staff as well as employers. It clearly sets out some of the issues to consider when supporting a deaf young person. We have had very positive feedback from those who have used the resource so far;

- **Facilitating effective partnership working:** NDCS has endorsed the Scottish Transition Forum’s recommendation regarding the benefits of establishing local forums of professionals involved in supporting positive transitions. This forum has been successfully set up in Ayrshire where its members includes local colleges, universities, employers, teachers, Skills Development Scotland staff as well as third sector organisations. This has been a valuable forum for professionals to share information and build relationships.

7.3. NDCS recommends that this structured approach would be beneficial to schools in improving transitional practices in their local areas and would improve post school outcomes of young people. NDCS would welcome the opportunity to share more information about the Statement of Intent approach and the positive impact it has had so far in Ayrshire. We will be working to roll out the Statement of Intent to a number of further local authorities this year.

8. **What action and resources would be required to deliver the specific recommendations aimed at schools and teachers, for example:**

- teachers' skills and knowledge may need to develop in certain areas (for example, “to better understand employability and modern work skills”);
- closer links should be established between schools, colleges and employers (for example, “all 363 secondary schools in a long term partnership with employers within 3 years”).

No comments.

For further information please contact:

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www.ndcs.org.uk
1. If the Wood report were fully implemented, what the likely impact on attainment in schools would be and which pupils would benefit most

It depends what methodology is used to measure “impact on attainment”. Whilst “Insight” provides a benchmarking tool which will be of use to schools and local authorities in analysing attainment data, its tariff scale does not afford the “parity of esteem” argued for in Wood. Many vocational courses are ungraded and based on an accumulation of units. A graded exam based course such as a Higher at the same SCQF level as an ungraded vocational course attracts more tariff points on the Insight scale. It is very important that this issue is fully understood by all stakeholders, including those who have a vested interest in attainment statistics e.g. politicians, Education Scotland (HMIE). There is a danger that if this is not fully understood, then a default delivery to traditional academic subjects will be the result.

If however, the measure of attainment is its impact on individual learners then the Wood report has the potential to benefit every pupil in Scotland. As a minimum, the proposed introduction of a new standard to Work Experience which is to feature on “Insight” should impact on every pupil by encouraging more meaningful and relevant experiences that meet a minimum standard. A broad range of vocational courses across the Senior Phase should offer a more appropriate pathway for many pupils who are not being well served by the current curriculum. For high attaining pupils aiming towards university study there is potential that a vocational course in their chosen area could enhance their future learning.

For lower attaining pupils the opportunity to participate in a range of vocational courses would enhance their employability skills and provide contexts for learning that are real and relevant.

It will be important that there are checks and balance in the system to ensure these opportunities are truly open to all.

2. The report aims to significantly enhance vocational content “without splitting young people off into separate streams at school age”. What the disadvantages of such an approach would be and how it could be avoided.

As highlighted in 1 above, Wood has the potential to provide advantage to all learners. However, a system which resulted in “separate streams” has the potential to narrow choice and close down pathways. Young people should have the opportunity to choose a traditional academic route, a focussed vocational route, or a blend of the two.
Implementation of Wood should create advantage for Scotland’s youngsters and seek to ensure that there are no unintended disadvantages created by ill thought out approaches. For example, if a young person achieves an NC in Engineering but not a recognised qualification in say, Maths, then future job opportunities could be limited.

Employers and business will need to be consulted and informed at all stages of implementation. As the report’s main purpose is to “develop the workforce” the enhancing of vocational provision must be based on a rigorous evaluation of the most appropriate qualifications for the work-place balanced with an enjoyable flexible and meaningful curriculum. Young people do change their minds and the curriculum on offer must be sufficiently flexible to meet their needs as well as those of employers.

3. Whether any measures other than those advocated in the report are needed to ensure more young people leave school with “high level vocational qualifications which have strong currency in the labour market.

There needs to be more guidance for schools and local authorities on what qualifications have “strong currency in the labour market”. This information needs to come directly from employers and employer bodies and not only those with a vested interest, e.g. qualification bodies.

Anecdotally, employers report little or no knowledge of “Skills for Work” courses despite the claim that employers have been consulted in their content and frameworks. Funding will need to be available to education departments and schools to properly resource the facilities, qualified staff and examination fees for such qualifications. Parents will need to be informed about vocational qualifications and be persuaded that, for their child, there is a clear advantage to following a vocational pathway. Employers have a clear role to play in supporting schools with those communications.

4. Whether the report – which includes a section on improving equalities – places enough emphasis on pupils’ socio-economic inequalities and how these could be overcome.

Local authorities and their schools working with pupils living in areas of multiple deprivation are well aware of the disadvantage faced by many of these youngsters. By definition, they are more likely to be living in areas with fewer employers, and will sometimes have no working role model at home. Barriers for these youngsters can be complex. Decisions about post school destinations for youngsters can be influenced by the potential impact on a family’s income, particularly where the family is reliant on benefits. Low rates of pay for 16 and 17 year olds can deter young people from taking up employment opportunities. Initial costs of entering employment e.g. a PVG check or purchasing of work clothes, can prove prohibitive to a family living on benefits. The “vicious cycle” continues.
By contrast, those living in more affluent areas are likely to have greater exposure to employers and employed role models. When the economy grows, they and their families and peers benefit.

Steps to ease the transition into employment for more disadvantaged youngsters could include:

- extended transitional support beyond school along the lines of a “guidance/pastoral” teacher with specific employability training;
- a pot of money to support early workplace costs;
- a period of free/heavily subsidised travel;
- employers encouraged to pay more than the legal minimum wage for the younger age groups;
- a transition period where families on benefits are able to have a youngster in employment in the household whose income is not included in household calculations.

The report does make a recommendation (13) about those requiring “more choices, more chances” but it is clear already that at this early stage, it is not those youngsters who are being targeted in pilot models of activity.

5. Whether there would have to be significant reorganisation in schools to accommodate all the proposed changes (for example, to enable more links with colleagues to have a greater focus on work placements).

Schools have already come a long way on this. Creativity and flexibility around timetabling is the single most organisational factor in facilitating the changes recommended in the report. There are already examples of good practice in schools. There needs to be caution around the demands being placed on pupils. For example, models are emerging where there is an expectation that a pupil will undertake a qualification at college over the same time period as a full-time student. However the pupil is expected to be back at school on non-college days with a full or nearly full timetable of other study. There may be some merit in this “stretching” of pupils but there needs to be a clear rationale for models such as this.

There is widespread recognition & agreement that the current model of Work Experience is outdated and in need of revision. However, there are potential workload & resourcing issues in moving to a more flexible model. Most work experience coordinators in schools are willing volunteers who take on a heavy workload for a few weeks in the school year. There are implications for risk assessment, travel arrangements and year-long responsibilities for the coordinator if pupils are participating in more personalised arrangements.

Building the Curriculum 4 (Skills for Learning, Life and Work) already articulates much of the philosophy of Wood. Schools which have developed aspects of BTC4 into their curriculum will be well on the road to meeting many of the report’s recommendations.
In our haste to implement the commendable recommendations in Wood, reorganisation in schools must not be done at the expense of our highly academic pupils. Scotland’s workforce will still require doctors, dentists, lawyers, accountants, academics and so on. We need to meet the needs of all our pupils.

6. What action and resources would be required to deliver the specific recommendations aimed at schools and teachers, for example:- Teachers’ skills and knowledge may need to develop in certain areas (for example, “to better understand employability and modern work skills”)

A robust programme of CPD (which could be designed at national level along the lines of the Schools Enterprise Programme) is required. It would be essential that the CPD is not designed by educationalists alone and that industry and employers contribute. Many teachers will not have worked outside of education and there will be gaps in their knowledge about employability and work place skills.

However, we should not underestimate the expertise and knowledge that already exists in schools. Schools could be given a resource to carry out a robust audit of their own workforce and teachers encouraged to share their expertise. This extra work would have to be acknowledged in some way and not be added onto already demanding workload.

At the earliest possible opportunity, Initial Teacher Training Institutions need to incorporate a module on employability and related issues into all programmes.

7. Closer links should be established between schools, colleges and employers (for example, “all 363 secondary schools in a long term partnership with employers within 3 years”).

This is a further area where there are already good practice examples across the country. A previous drive to increase employer engagement as part of “Determined to Succeed” resulted in some links being made to reach targets – the measure being the number of partnerships and not the quality.

Our present model in North Ayrshire goes some way to ensuring that business/employment engagement in schools is purposeful. Ayrshire Chamber of Commerce effectively acts as a broker, matching school request with a suitable employer. This results in all parties being clear about what the “ask” is, and inputs are far more effective as a result. Similarly, business engagement offers are starting to flow as a result of Community Benefit Clauses – the key is to make the right match.

There is a danger of inequity of access across the country – areas with buoyant local economies are likely to have employers seeking new employees and will immediately see the potential benefit in engaging with schools. Less affluent areas are more likely to have employers whose primary focus is on running their own
business, less likely to be recruiting more staff and therefore less likely to understand
the potential benefits to their business.

The recommendation that all schools should have one long-term business
partnership could be limiting. This could result in input in a school being driven by
one business sector with a narrow view of the range of opportunities to young
people.

The key to the success of this recommendation will be absolute clarity on the
purpose of these links.
Closing the attainment gap in Scottish Education

NUS Scotland’s Position

NUS Scotland welcomes the opportunity to submit evidence to the Scottish Parliament Education and Culture Committee in relation to its Review on the attainment gap. We believe fair access to education at all levels is absolutely crucial to realising the fairer society we want to see. We have brought together this paper as a general position paper and will add short annexes for each of the Committee’s deadlines in relation to Commission for Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce (DSYW), the role of the voluntary/third sector, and the role of parents/guardians.

We have many reasons to be proud of the Scottish education system – our tuition free universities and high-quality college and school education provide great outcomes for many of our pupils and students. However, if we are to provide all our young people with the best education and life opportunities, we must address the large attainment gap that persists among pupils from more deprived socio-economic backgrounds, and those from wealthier background.

In recent years, we have seen some encouraging developments in school attainment and retention levels (albeit at a very slow pace), an increase in articulation from college to university. As well as an increase in the numbers of student from more deprived backgrounds going into university again, only very slow progress only a 0.5% increase from the SMID 20% from most deprived background and 0.4% increase from the SMID 40% most deprived background.¹

Post-16 System

We believe some of this (slow) progress has come through the priorities of NUS Scotland’s work in recent years in relation to post-16 education. Tuition fees have been abolished, and university places have increased. We have fought college budget cuts, and prioritised the protection of full-time equivalent (FTE) places in colleges. The Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) for young people has been protected and the levels of higher education student support have helped to open doors to students from less wealthy backgrounds. Most recently, Outcome Agreements stemming from the Post-16 Education (Scotland) Act, have seen institutions setting targets for improving access and outlining activity with current and prospective students to improve rates of widening access in Scotland. Additional funded places for widening access and articulation students have also seen the door opened to greater numbers of students from deprived backgrounds. Finally, the work of the Wood Commission on vocational education and training, as well as the focus of the Scottish Government on widening access and improving educational attainment, in particular through its Widening Access Commission, have brought these important issues to the fore.

However, while these developments are welcomed, more work needs to be done by the post-16 education sector and our schools to ensure that young peoples’ education and employment destinations are not determined by their socioeconomic background. We need to maintain and build on the widening access system created at the post-16 level, but we must now also see as much of a focus on school education, with closing the attainment gap at the core of our mission. Only then will we begin to see the progress we want to see on building fairer access to education, but also building a fairer society in Scotland.

¹ Measures of Success: Learning of All Eighth update – statistics for 2012-13
**School-level education**

The Scottish education system still faces significant challenges in terms of levelling out education opportunities for all our young people. According to a report by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2014), the attainment gap between young people from the most deprived backgrounds and the least deprived backgrounds is particularly stark at the end of compulsory education. After leaving compulsory education, young persons from the most deprived backgrounds are less likely to end up in positive destinations (including further education, higher education, employment and training). Furthermore, there is a clear link between the socio-economic background of students and the type of post-16 education they will pursue, with pupils from more deprived backgrounds more likely to end up on further education.

In short, we know that pupils enter formal education with an attainment gap, and this generally increases over time meaning that a barrier at aged four, continues and deepens to become barriers to attainment at National 4 and 5, at Higher level, at Advanced Highers, between college and university, FE and HE, undergraduate and postgraduate, and crucially a huge barrier between the careers and life chances offered to people beyond education.

This link between school attainment, education destination and socioeconomic background is an injustice and a disadvantage to both individuals and the society at large. Our education system should tackle inequality, not simply reflect or entrench it.

While much of the work to close the attainment gap needs to be undertaken in schools, this does not mean it needs to be schools themselves, or local authorities themselves that are tasked with undertaking this work. For example, we believe that the further and higher education sectors also have a crucial role to play, in working with schools. In essence, the attainment gap at school should be a problem owned as much by colleges and universities as it is by schools. This would see even greater activity undertaken by universities and colleges with schools in this area than is carried out now.

**Attainment gap does not mean a gap in academic potential**

Finally, a key principle that NUS Scotland would like the Committee to consider is the idea that a gap in exam attainment, may not by any means be the same thing as an attainment gap or a gap in academic potential between school leavers. We are very supportive of measures taken by universities to undertake differential offers through admissions systems, and to offer top-up of school grades, so that the underlying academic potential of people who have faced educational barriers, is not masked by an exam results gap on paper. We may not need to wait until the attainment gap is closed fully, before we can fully closed the opportunity gap between people from different backgrounds. We should not risk taking the pressure off in terms of the many more things that universities can do, in particular, to ensure fairer access to post-16 education.
NUS Scotland has been highly supportive of the work of the Commission for Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce (DSYW), and in particular, of its focus on improving the quality of the further education and training sector in Scotland and its attempts to achieve a parity of esteem between vocational and academic routes. This sector provides an important education route to many of our young people, and in particular, for students from more deprived backgrounds. We also welcome the increased recognition of FE education as a path to high-quality job opportunities, and as a vital part of the Scottish economy.

We believe recommendations in relation to vocational education, equality within subject and skill areas, careers advice, and the role of school, college and employer partnerships made by the DSYW could help to mitigate some of the impact of the attainment gap on young peoples’ education and employment destinations.

In order to make sure that both the FE and HE sector are doing their utmost to mitigate the impacts of the attainment gap on educational and employment destinations, we would encourage the Education and Culture Committee to consider the following areas.

**Improving access to college education**

We are highly supportive of the emphasis in DSYW placed on the need to improve parity of esteem between higher education and further education. The lack of understanding of and value placed on further education has meant that colleges have been widely viewed as a fall-back for students who are not attaining high enough to university. In reality, colleges provide a highly valuable education route to accessing further, articulation to higher education, and entry to employment in particular for students from more deprived backgrounds.

However, in order to provide the best possible opportunities for students with low attainment levels in school, colleges need to receive enough funding, and college students must have access to sufficient student support to take them through their education. Figures released by the Scottish Funding Council in December 2014 showed a huge shortfall in the amount of FE student support funds required by students, and the amount of money available to colleges. Colleges stated they needed £14.7m more than the original budget provided by the SFC to provide support to their students, with the SFC responding with £3.5m, leaving £11.2m of unmet demand. This was a 128% increase in unmet demand, rising from £4.9m of unmet demand last year.

Following a joint effort between colleges, the SFC and the Scottish Government, this unmet demand figure was brought down to around £7m, with the Scottish Government committing to provide the necessary funding to meet the shortfall. We welcome this reassurance for the coming current year, but have serious concerns about future pressure on college budget in the face of unmet demand for student support. We believe that in order to provide the high-quality education routes we want for students with lower attainment levels at school, our colleges must receive the funding they need to support these students.

**More flexible learning pathways**

While, as stated above, colleges and apprenticeships provide a valuable education destination in themselves, they also enable many pupils with lower attainment levels at the point of leaving school to find an alternative route into higher education at a later date. A key principle of DSYW, is the need for better integration of learning pathways between school, college and the workplace, articulated through Recommendations 1-11. The Scottish Credits and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) has already created a system where the building blocks for achieving these flexible pathways can be reached.
Between college and university the articulation route allows young people and other students who did not originally consider going to university the chance to pursue that opportunity. However, this path is not utilised or implemented as well and consistently as it should be. According to SFC’s Learning for All report for 2012/13 there has been an increase of 450 advance standing entrants from college HE to university (to 3469). There has also been an increase of 88 advanced progression entrants from college HE to university (to 729). These statistics show us that although some improvement has been made there is still a ways to go to avoid students unnecessarily repeating levels of study. This is true for all levels of SCQF including the vocational qualifications. In order for the principle of fairer and more accessible pathways of DSYW to be realised, ensuring that pupils who have lower attainment levels when they leave school, or enter a vocational profession, are able to progress at a later stage we need to ensure that the SCQF levels are being recognised and implemented by all institutions and employers.

Vocational Education, work placements and Modern Apprenticeships

A priority for DSYW is the need for more vocational learning and particularly within the senior phase of school, allowing young people to get going with their career earlier. NUS Scotland would like to see better blended routes so potential and interest dictates the young person’s route, not administrative divides.

A positive aspect of the different experiences that young people will have in the senior phase is that it may allow them to make more informed choices. However, these work and college experiences should not limit a young person choices into post-16 education, rather it should widen those choices. Success would see a balance of pupils from all backgrounds taking on this vocational route at the senior phase, anything else will be a failure.

Work placement standards need to be high and at the appropriate level, which is exactly what DSYW recommends. In particular, Recommendations 37 and 38 are encouraging setting out proposals for young people with particular backgrounds to have a longer transition period. Care leavers are one group of people that fall into this category but another group would be those with caring responsibilities, among others that face additional educational barriers.

NUS Scotland welcomes Recommendation 8 in DSYW, prioritising the access to and progression from Modern Apprenticeships. The SCQF already includes apprenticeships awards up to the highest level, level 12; the equivalent of a PhD. We need to make these types of apprenticeships are more accessible, and for society and particularly young people to be aware that they can go that far, through vocational education. The SCQF has laid the foundation for high level professional apprentices at university, and these should be available to all of those who have previously completed an apprenticeship in that skill or subject area.

NUS Scotland recognises that apprentices are learners in their own right, and have a different learning experience from other learners at school, college or university. However, apprentices should be have a voice and be decision makers in their learning. Which is why NUS Scotland set up the National Society of Apprentices Scotland last March, to work with apprentices in colleges and training providers to develop apprentice voice forums, a space for apprentices to share their learning experiences and how changes could be made to improve their learning experience locally and nationally.

Equality for All

NUS Scotland welcomes the cross cutting equality issues highlighted in DSYW. Equality for all the protected areas relevant to young people need to be advanced in schools, colleges, universities, and the work place. The inequalities and barriers to even taking a particular subject is a different form of attainment gap. Young people need to be free to

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2 Measures of Success: Learning of All Eighth update – statistics for 2012-13
choose a profession based on their ability to learn and their particular interests, rather than being excluded because of the ethnicity, disability or gender.

In particular, we welcome Recommendation 28 to readdress gender imbalances across all the occupations. According to figures from 2012-13 only 12.9% of men studied social work at colleges, and 14.7% of men in health related subjects. Women in STEM is also of particular interest to NUS Scotland, especially in light of the expectation that our economy will rely on greater numbers of STEM graduates in the future. Currently in colleges 7.4% of computing students are women, 5.7% of engineering students are women and 5.3% transport students are women. These trends continue throughout the higher education journey for both genders. Men at university are less likely to study health related subjects only 15.5% enrolled and social studies is 31.3%. For women in STEM subjects at university 13.8% study engineering, 26.6% technologies and maths and computing sciences at 23.9%. These subject imbalances spill over into the workplace and must be reversed. NUS Scotland is encouraged that both SFC and SDS will be implementing Gender Action Plans for the colleges and Modern Apprenticeships. We hope that this Gender Action Plans will provide real impact, visible to students across the board, and that adequate thought is given into the evaluation of these Gender Action Plans.

Again, we believe unequal participation in subjects at university or college, stemming as they often do from unequal rates of participation in particular subjects at school level, is a different form of attainment gap, that the Committee should consider. The gap between men and women, for example, in relation to participation rates in STEM or social care and health, is also a gap in opportunities that should be tackled with urgency.

Better careers advice

Careers and guidance service perform a specific function for young people at school or college. NUS Scotland welcomes Recommendation 2 calling for a more comprehensive career’s service and guidance. As part of developing our response to the Wood Commission, NUS Scotland, along with the Scottish Youth Parliament and YoungScot, held a discussion event with young people to hear directly from them their views and perceptions of school and post-16 education, which included a session on IAG. There were a number of common themes throughout the discussion, and in particular many young people reported that they felt a more personal, individual pathway for careers education, starting at an earlier age, would be beneficial as careers advisors would have an opportunity to learn more about them. Equally, many participants felt that careers education was too narrow in scope, and that vocational pathways were portrayed as “non-academic” pathways and higher education pathways are prioritised. Finally, there was a feeling that the relationship between schools, colleges, universities and employers could be strengthened, so that young people are getting the most relevant and up-to-date information about what skills and practices each look for and expect.

Providing better information and guidance (IAG) will increase a young person’s chances of making an informed choice on what route of post-16 education and work is appropriate for them, and again open up routes based on your talent, potential and interests, not based on your background.

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3 Measures of Success: Learning of All Eighth update – statistics for 2012-13
4 Measures of Success: Learning of All Eighth update – statistics for 2012-13
5 Measures of Success: Learning of All Eighth update – statistics for 2012-13
Submission to the Education and Culture Committee
The Education Attainment Gap
February 2015

Key Messages

The drivers of the attainment gap

- The reasons young people struggle for success in attaining skills, qualifications and jobs are many and varied.

- Only support solutions that address individual needs will address those factors.

The Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce

- We welcomed the findings of the Commission, but think it could have done more to recognise the value of the work that organisations such as The Prince’s Trust do to deliver positive outcomes for young people in deprived communities.

- The Commission should also have recommended setting targets to drives support for the most disadvantaged, including young NEETs and long-term unemployed.

Maximising the links between charities, business and the education system

- Our experience and research shows the readiness of businesses to work with charities and the public sector to train the hardest to reach.

- It should be recognised that organisations such as The Prince’s Trust can engage major employers and source jobs and enterprise opportunities for young people across Scotland. PTS can also secure additional private sector finance to help drive this forward and create more opportunities for young people.

- Volunteers make a valuable difference to young people’s lives every day, fulfilling a variety of roles that will support them to take the next positive steps in life. PTS Volunteers are from a range of backgrounds and can support links and identify employment and enterprise opportunities.

- Charities and businesses require flexibility from their partners in order to do more, and our programmes have highlighted how that can happen. At the same time employers and public sector partners need to know that initiatives used to tackle the attainment gap are giving young people the skills to succeed.
1. Introduction

1.1. The Prince’s Trust Scotland (PTS) welcomes this opportunity to help inform the Education and Culture Committee’s work on the educational attainment gap. This briefing addresses the questions in the committee’s call for evidence relating to the implications of the Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce and the role of the third sector and the private sector in improving attainment for all school pupils.¹

2. Supporting the hardest to reach

2.1. The PTS gives practical and financial support to disadvantaged young people, developing key workplace skills such as confidence and motivation. We helped more than 8,000 vulnerable young people last year and aim to help a similar number in 2015. Three in four young people supported by The Prince’s Trust move into work, education and training or business.

2.2. The reasons why many young people struggle to attain skills and qualifications in mainstream education, and then find it difficult to secure jobs later in life, are many and varied. We work with 13 to 30-year-olds who have struggled at school, have been in care, are long-term unemployed or have been in trouble with the law. Many - though not all - come from Scotland’s most disadvantaged communities, and we work hard to target programmes at areas with the most need.

2.3. The latest Prince’s Trust Macquarie Youth Index² suggests that young people from hugely varied postcodes and social circumstances can face similar problems coping with attainment. The research paints a broad picture of large proportions of young people struggling to cope with confidence and attainment.

CASE STUDY: DANI BOYD

Dani was a quiet pupil who lacked self-confidence and needed a lot of encouragement to engage with lessons. She joined the xl programme, delivered by The Prince’s Trust and Smithycroft Secondary School, and her energy and enthusiasm began to shine.

Although Dani, 16, from Glasgow, had received learning support in previous programmes at school, she still struggled to surpass her fears.

In two years on xl her cheerful, vivacious personality made a strong impact on the group. Her supportive influence could always be felt by classmates, as she recognised what each person needed and would continually encourage them in activities.

When the group helped sail a boat across the English Channel in the Rhona Sailing Challenge, Dani kept everyone going by singing, dancing and making them laugh. She was one of just three pupils to win a Scot Award and has shown the potential to take part in the Tall Ships Race.

Dani now takes up opportunities that she wouldn’t have previously done by herself. With The Prince’s Trust, she has been involved in activities ranging from fundraising for a project to help homeless people to gardening, outdoor pursuits and dance. She has chosen to take part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme too.

Before joining the xl club, Dani’s career options seemed limited but now she is thinking of becoming a PE teacher. Dani will always give 100 per cent in everything she does.

“I've become a lot more active since joining xl,” says Dani. “I feel so much more positive about everything and about myself as a person; it's been brilliant for me.

“If it hadn’t been for The Prince’s Trust xl club I don’t think I would ever have had much chance of having a career. I was really struggling but now I think I can do something good that makes me happy.”
2.4. Looking beyond the statistics though, each young person referred to the PTS has in common a potential to reach unnoticed or untapped potential and contribute positively to Scotland’s economy. The programmes run by the PTS offer young people on the wrong side of the attainment gap solutions that suit their individual needs, as well as those of future employers, by giving them invaluable experience that will boost their confidence and self-worth.

2.5. The principal challenge lies in identifying the right support solutions for every individual, so that young people lacking confidence and hope can get onto a better path.

3. Does the Commission fit with the attainment agenda?

3.1. We fundamentally agreed with the final recommendations of the Commission for Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce that more should be done to help young people make the best transition from a broad general education into a comprehensive range of opportunities which improve their employment and enterprise prospects.

3.2. However, we thought it could have done more to recognise that organisations such as The Prince’s Trust can engage major employers and source jobs and enterprise opportunities for young people across Scotland. PTS, and organisations like it, can make a huge impact both as education and training providers, and as successful partners who can join the dots with the both the public and private sector.

3.3. In fact the PTS already have a track record of getting the most from private sector organisations, as well as the capacity to bring new ideas and methods to tackling underachievement. For example, our new Get into Healthcare Facilities programme with NHS Lothian will give unemployed young people aged 18-25 hands-on work experience in a hospital setting within the healthcare facilities sector. There needs to be a clear understanding of this role from the public sector going forward, especially in view of the proposed development of regional industry-led Invest in Youth groups. These will only deliver to their full potential as single points of contact in each region if they include third sector providers like the PTS from the outset.

3.4. We know that youth unemployment is falling; however, there is concern that this hides the true impact of underemployment and inactivity rates in Scotland. Yet, while the Commission set a range of specific and useful targets for improving outcomes among young people, it could have gone further, by setting a target that specifically drives support for the most disadvantaged young people, including young NEETs and those who are long-term unemployed.

4. Leveraging business support

4.1. Among the most important recommendations of the Commission were those associated with building links between industry, schools and colleges. In practice, encouraging substantial and sustainable links between a wide range of leading businesses and the education sector can prove difficult. Yet, amid a recovering economy, the PTS’s Skills Crunch research shows that a majority of senior business executives in Scotland are worried that a shortage of skills in their sector will hinder growth.

4.2. The PTS has more than 30 years’ track record delivering programmes that harness joint working between business, education providers and the third sector. That means we are trusted to meet the needs of our private sector partners as well as the young people on our programmes. As a case in point, the PTS’s ‘Movement to Work’ programme gives a recent example of success in the area involving blue chip companies like Marks and Spencer, Accenture, BAE Systems, Barclays, BT, Centrica, Diageo, HSBC, Kingfisher, National Grid, Tesco, Unilever and WPP. In practice, offering flexibility is crucial to securing the involvement of businesses that we need.
4.3. As the Scottish economy continues to grow it becomes increasingly important that young people are able to access employment and training opportunities across geographical and local authority boundaries.

CASE STUDY: NICOLE GALLAGHER

Nicole, 19, from Bishopbriggs faced a long search for work as she struggled to get a first foot on the career ladder.

While Nicole had worked various jobs after studying make-up at college she was determined to create a rewarding and sustainable career for herself where there was real scope to learn and progress.

During her search for work Nicole sent out applications every weekday and worked at a nightclub on the weekends, on anti-social hours for low pay. While her seven month search for work did see her secure a couple of interviews she struggled to find a job, and was even told by one employer that they received so many applications they ended up throwing many of them away.

While eager to start a career Nicole worried she had left it too late to begin learning something completely new. However after finding out about Get into Car Mechanics at the Jobcentre she jumped at the chance to take part.

"I didn’t know what the options were but as soon as I heard about Get into Car Mechanics I knew it was what I wanted to do," Nicole said.

"It couldn’t have come at a better time. The Prince’s Trust has been amazing. I wake up before my alarm, all bright-eyed and bushy-tailed for the job. It doesn’t even feel like work.

"The best part about the course was proving that to myself and everybody that doubted me—girls can do it too, it is not just a male dominated environment."

Nicole has secured a four year apprenticeship with Arnold Clark and is optimistic for the future. She added: “I have thought about starting my own business, an all-female garage. I might even consider management in the future. It’s a huge opportunity at Arnold Clark and an honour to work there.”

4.4. The PTS is setting out a new way of providing services to disadvantaged young people with the opening of Scotland’s largest Youth Employment and Enterprise HUB later this year. Based in Glasgow City Centre and providing opportunities across Clyde Valley, The Prince’s Trust’s Wolfson Centre will be a combined effort to meet the needs of young people and the careers and business opportunities they aspire to. We currently have a number of young people from across the Clyde Valley area who travel to multiple delivery locations across Clyde Valley for our programmes. For example, a young person living in Paisley could access a Get into Retail M&S programme in Argyle Street, Glasgow in as little as 10 minutes by train. Our new Centre will be a visible and inspiring place that delivers a platform to support disadvantaged young people across geographical and skills boundaries.

5. How can charities work effectively with the public sector?

5.1. Many of the PTS’s public sector partners understand that its programmes help young people because they successfully target young people who have already had problems dealing with mainstream education. This year, we will work in all 32 local authorities in Scotland because our partners know that the interventions we deliver are flexible, cost effective, and easily scalable to reach more young people in more areas to meet new demand. In addition, we will partner with a range of FE college providers, as well as agencies like Skills Development Scotland and Jobcentre Plus.
5.2. In January, the PTS has received new investment of £145,000 from the Scottish Government to deliver a new programme, ‘Future Starts’, in collaboration with schools, colleges and employers. The projects are being piloted in North Lanarkshire, Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dundee – all priority locations for the PTS based on youth employment levels, economic and social need. The programme is specifically targeted at young people in education who are at risk of disengagement by helping them raise their ambitions and build up their confidence so they can move towards vocational training or employment.

5.3. Future Starts is about looking at the challenges set out by the Commission for Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce and adapting them innovatively to target unemployed young people most in need of support. Shaped by a process of formal evaluation at the end of Year 1, the PTS will aim to further develop and grow the programme in Year 2 through expansion into new schools within the existing pilot areas, as well as expansion into new local authority areas. Beyond this, The Trust will look to mainstream the delivery of Future Starts through the new Prince’s Trust Education Product, which is currently under development and due to be rolled out as part of core Prince’s Trust provision during 2016, as well as linking with other vocational Prince’s Trust programmes that provide employment and enterprise opportunities.

5.4. What we would like to see is more local authorities being ready to look at the evidence of success from programmes like Future Starts and replicate them more readily and flexibly across Scotland.

6. Benchmarking attainment

6.1. The PTS has recognised the need to ensure that the young people participating in our programmes not only acquire new skills and confidence, but also attain formal qualifications where possible. Our xl programme works with young people aged 13-19 who are facing problems at school, aiming to help them to re-engage in compulsory education.

CASE STUDY: GARY WILLIAMS

Struggling to cope with his autism at school, Gary found communication challenging and his frustration spilled out into negative behaviour. Then he joined the xl programme at Hollybrook Academy in Glasgow and slowly transformed into a confident, engaged student.

Gary’s problems interacting with others and being understood were hard for him to deal with. He couldn’t focus and was disillusioned with education. With little self-esteem or direction in life, it was looking like he would leave school with few prospects.

After Gary (15) was encouraged to join xl, his problems continued initially. With the perseverance and patience of staff and other members of the group, he eventually began to settle in, change his behaviour and work with his learning difficulties. He developed the ability to be patient and consider the feelings of others, and show respect to himself and others.

Gary is now a strong team player and able to take his time when communicating. He understands instructions well and after two years in the xl club is a hard-working, dedicated and responsible member of the group. He is the kind of student who picks everyone up with his positive attitude and humour when they are feeling down.

“İ couldn’t enjoy school at all before and couldn’t see the point in anything. I just felt uncomfortable all the time and things were just getting worse,” says Gary. “Joining the xl club saved me.”

“The past two years on xl have really helped me to feel better about myself. They’ve been so patient with me, so I’ve learned to do the same and stop reacting in the heat of the moment when I felt frustrated.”

Gary’s teachers are proud of his determination and of what he has achieved.
6.2. The xl development programme runs through informal clubs in schools and community facilities that provide settings for young people to learn, get involved in shaping activities and projects, and take on responsibility as leaders and decision makers. Its aims, flexible model of delivery, and five key activity areas focused on in each xl club are directly aligned to the seven Curriculum for Excellence approaches to learning.

6.3. Our enhanced xl now provides an Employability Qualification. The new programme goes further by providing full SCQF accreditation, together with registration through the Insight benchmarking tool. The crucial thing is that young people achieve formal credit via the SCQF framework for the dedication they demonstrate during the programme – something that will ultimately help them move into further education or employment. Moreover, Insight gives education provider due assurance that xl will count toward measuring its own overall performance each year.

6.4. **We believe that by measuring attainment and setting benchmarks, our enhanced xl programme provides an excellent model for proactive cooperation between the third sector and public sector education providers that can be rolled out elsewhere.**

7. **Concluding remarks**

7.1. The Prince’s Trust Scotland would be happy to provide the committee with further written or oral evidence on any of the issues discussed in this paper.

For more information, please contact Craig Wilson, Senior Head of Education, Training & Development, The Prince’s Trust Scotland, T: 0141 225 3357; E: craig.wilson@princes-trust.org.uk.

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2. The Prince’s Trust Macquarie Youth Index (January 2015) suggested more than half of young people surveyed in Scotland (58 per cent) said they ‘always’ or ‘often’ feel stressed, while more than a third (38 per cent) said they feel down or depressed ‘always’ or ‘often’. More than one in ten reported feeling unable to leave the house due to anxiety issues, while one in five admit in the survey to “falling apart” emotionally on a regular basis: [http://www.princes-trust.org.uk/about_the_trust/what_we_do/research/youth_index_2015.aspx](http://www.princes-trust.org.uk/about_the_trust/what_we_do/research/youth_index_2015.aspx)
3. Commission Recommendation 14
4. The Prince’s Trust, The Skills Crunch: Upskilling the Workforce of the Future (August 2014) highlighted concerns among leading businesses about how workforces often lack the skills to help them grow sustainably. More than two-thirds of Scottish business leaders questioned believed that a skills shortage would result in losing work to competitors (68 per cent). The ramifications of this could be severe, both for individual companies and the wider economy too: [http://www.princes-trust.org.uk/pdf/skillsCrunchScotland.pdf](http://www.princes-trust.org.uk/pdf/skillsCrunchScotland.pdf)
Queen Margaret University written submission to Education and Culture Committee

Queen Margaret Children’s University

INTRODUCTION: AIMS AND BACKGROUND

Queen Margaret Children’s University (QMCU) aims to:

- promote social mobility by providing high quality, exciting and innovative learning activities and experiences outside normal school hours to children aged 5-14 (P1 to S2) and
- engage the wider communities as learning partners in the realisation of this.
- respond to the fact that children need a range of different opportunities and that not all learning needs to be school focused.
- recognise and celebrate children’s learning successes by rewarding them with a ‘Passport to Learning’ which helps record their participation in activities; helping them build their learning experience by encouraging them to work through bronze, silver and gold certificated levels; and providing the opportunity for them take part in an impressive graduation ceremony at Queen Margaret University.

Aligned with the Curriculum for Excellence Queen Margaret Children’s University aims to:

- raise aspirations;
- enrich the learning experience;
- boost achievement and
- foster a love of learning, so that young people can make the most of their abilities and interests, regardless of the background into which they were born.

Widening Access

Although open to all, QMCU aims particularly to reach children and young people facing socio-economic and educational disadvantage through the promotion of activities in areas of deprivation. QMCU also recognises that different children respond to different methods of learning. Children who may not be high academic achievers or lack parental encouragement can be successful learners by taking part in a range of fun, interactive activities within the school or community. The Children’s University has been shown to help children overcome disadvantage to become proud and confident learners and in general it helps young people do things they might never have thought of before.

Background in England and Scotland

The Children’s University is recognised as a highly successful learning model for children in England with 70 local CU centres running across the country. Scotland has two children’s universities – one in Glasgow, and the other run by Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh, the latter being the only Children’s University in the east of Scotland. The project was
established at QMU in 2014. The first CU graduation ceremony was held at Queen Margaret University in January 2015. The event saw approximately 100 children take part in the ceremony.

CURRENT ACTIVITY - East Lothian and Midlothian

Queen Margaret Children’s University has been working with both primary and secondary schools and learning destinations throughout both Midlothian and East Lothian and has now secured partnerships with schools in Haddington, Tranent, Musselburgh, Dunbar and Prestonpans (Cluster meetings happening Feb and March), Dalkeith, Newtongrange, Lasswade and Penicuik.

- Active partnership schools: 27
- Total number of active pupils: 1485 (911 East Lothian 574 Midlothian)

Expected growth

- by June 2015
  - total active schools to increase from 30 to 40
  - total active pupils to increase from 1485 to 2250
- by December 2015
  - total active schools to increase from 40 to 50
  - total active pupils to increase from 2250 to 2750

LEARNING ACTIVITIES AND DESTINATIONS

Queen Margaret University’s outreach team has validated just over 200 learning destinations to date and there are over 500 validated learning activities listed against these learning destinations on the QMCU website for pupils to choose from.

Thirty of the learning destinations are school partners offering a wide range of in-school activities delivered via either breakfast, lunch time or after-school clubs. Activities include: French club, homework club, craft clubs, sports clubs and subjects as varied as STEM Club, archery, Japanese, computer coding, orchestra etc.

The remaining 270 learning destinations include sports centres, libraries, music schools, youth clubs and both local and national businesses such B&Q, Dynamic Earth, Scottish Mining Museum and Scottish Seabird Centre. Activities include a wealth of sporting activities such as swimming, dance and football etc. as well as activities such as construction skills workshops, music lessons, library reading challenges and treasure/info trails.

HOW CAN THE QMCU HELP CREATE A SUCCESSFUL YOUNG WORKFORCE?

- provides an accreditation framework which rewards children for learning outside of normal school hours.
encourages young people to foster a love of learning and motivates them to become active learners as they move throughout their teenage years.
recognises that some children respond to a different learning approach and creates a unique way of recognising and rewarding individuals for getting involved in new things.
targets children from disadvantaged backgrounds and encourages both them and their families get involved in learning experiences.
offers a different approach to learning and targets children who may not be highly academic, helping them to learn in different ways.
ceourages children to build their credits in their own time (voluntary basis) which means that their success is a more personal achievement.
inspires children to participate and to actively seek out learning opportunities.
creates positive learning groups/communities and encourages children, parents, families, teachers, schools and learning destinations to celebrate children's learning successes.
ceourages parents and carers to help children achieve learning goals thereby bringing families together in learning and fostering a culture of learning, recognition and reward within families.
ceourages children to develop enquiring minds and skills that can be used in later life to assist with educational and career attainment.
helps children develop into responsible and enquiring citizens who have the ability to learn in different ways and to grow as responsible, educated citizens.
cecreates the basis for the development of open minded young people who have developed a culture of learning and will hopefully have aspirations to contribute positively to work and society.

USEFUL LINKS

Queen Margaret Children’s University graduation press release:
http://www.qmu.ac.uk/marketing/press_releases/First-Childrens-University-graduation-takes-place-in-east-Scotland.htm

Queen Margaret Children’s University film:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qr_bHaHTYKA

The Children’s University http://www.childrensuniversity.co.uk/

THE ACADEMIES: The South East Scotland Academies Partnership

The South East Scotland Academies Partnership is a project which is recognised by the Scottish Funding Council as one which is delivering real results for Scotland’s young people (aged 15 – 18 years) in terms of skills development, and educational and career opportunities. The unique collaborative model (involving a university, colleges, schools, local authorities and industry partners) prepares young people for real jobs; provides a seamless
The aim of the ground-breaking collaboration is to help young people maximise their educational opportunities and develop transferable skills; smooth the transition between school, college, university and employment; and support the development of Scotland’s key growth industries. By equipping students with the right skills, knowledge and attitude, the Academies project can assist in developing a young workforce which will help raise standards in some of Scotland’s key economic priority areas. The project now provides outstanding learning opportunities to pupils in East Lothian, Midlothian, Edinburgh, Scottish Borders and West Lothian.

**The Academies**

Four academies exist:

- **Hospitality and Tourism Academy** (first intake 2013)
- **Health and Social Care Academy** (first intake 2014)
- **Food Science and Nutrition** (first intake 2014)
- **Creative Industries Academy** (first intake 2014)

The full academy programme is part-time and delivered over a two-year period (while students are still in their S5 and S6 at school). The student commitment to the academy is over and above their normal school curriculum. For all of the academies, classes are delivered at Queen Margaret University and Edinburgh College/Borders College/West Lothian College and for some academies, also within schools.

**Ground-breaking Collaborative Partnership**

The Academies are run by the South East Scotland Academies Partnership - a ground-breaking partnership project spearheaded by Queen Margaret University and Edinburgh College, supported by Borders College, West Lothian College, and local authorities in East Lothian, Midlothian, West Lothian and Scottish Borders.

**Industry Involvement**

A major success of the academy project has been the high-level commitment of industry partners. These specialist partners are instrumental in exposing the young people to the workings of the industry by providing placement opportunities, hands-on practical experience, and offering an insight into specialist fields. Many hotels, which have committed to supporting the Hospitality and Tourism Academy, can clearly see the benefits for their involvement – the opportunity to help shape a ready-made source of young local talent equipped with the right skills and knowledge to hit the ground running when entering the hospitality and tourism industry.

Industry partners can provide industry visits and placement/practical learning opportunities for academy students.

An example of industry partners include:
• **Food Science and Nutrition Academy:** Nairns Oatcakes, Scottish Food and Drink Federation, Skills Development Scotland, National Skills Academy of Food and Drink, Scottish Business in the Community, Global Science, College Development Network.

• **Health and Social Care:** various care homes, NHS Royal Infirmary, Western General, Social Services, Support Works, Wester Hailes Healthy Living Centre.

• **Creative Industries Academy:** BBC Scotland, Aye Write, Creative & Cultural Skills Scotland, Creative Edinburgh Ltd, Creative Skillset Academy (Scotland), Forth One, Young Scot, Royal Lyceum.

• **Hospitality and Tourism Academy:** Archiefield House, Best Western Capital, Doubletree by Hilton, Fraser Suites, Jurys Inn, Macdonald Hotels, Marriott, Mercat Tours, Mercure, Café St Honore, Novotel, Portland City, Premier Inn, Restaurant Martin Wishart, Roxburgh Hotel, Skibo Castle, Visit Scotland.

**WIDENING PARTICIPATION**

Students wishing to participate in the project go through a formal application and interview process – entry is competitive. The Academies also aim to target students from non-traditional backgrounds and those who may not be high academic achievers but have enthusiasm and other talents.

**ACADEMIES GROWTH**

In just two years, the acclaimed academies project has grown from 34 young people from three East Lothian schools, to approximately 360 pupils from 38 schools in Edinburgh, East and Midlothian and the Scottish Borders. The project has recently partnered with West Lothian Council to extend opportunities to schools in the area.

**QUALIFICATIONS, EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES AND CAREER OPTIONS**

After successful completion of the full two-year academy programme, students will be presented with a range of excellent opportunities to progress into further or higher education or go directly into employment. Successful completion also results in students gaining a recognised qualification to add to their CV. Students on certain academies can gain direct access onto the second year of degree courses at Queen Margaret University eg. Hospitality and Tourism Academy students who successfully complete the two year programme can leave school and articulate straight into second year of the BA (Hons) International Hospitality and Tourism Management.

**HOW WILL THE ACADEMIES HELP CREATE A DYNAMIC YOUNG WORKFORCE?**

It develops young people:

- who are better informed about their own futures and have an insight into specific industries
- who have acquired relevant skills, knowledge and the right attitude to contribute positively to the growth and development of key industries in Scotland.
- who have relevant qualifications and industry experience to continue in education or enter the jobs market, and can choose to move seamlessly, at different stages in their lives, between education and career.
- who benefit from accelerated learning opportunities and the acquisition of transferable skills.
• who are acutely aware of opportunities within Scotland’s growth industries and who are developing an understanding of, and a passion for, these key areas.

Further information

For further details on the Academies programme and the South East Scotland Academies partnership visit: http://southeastscotlandacademies.org/
Dear Sir

Education Attainment Gap: Submission of Evidence
Session 1: Commission for Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce

Please find below response from Renfrewshire Council in relation to the implications for schools, teachers and pupils of the Commission for Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce.

1. If the Wood report were fully implemented, what the likely impact on attainment in schools would be and which pupils would benefit most?

If there is indeed ‘parity of esteem’ between vocational and academic pathways, a fully implemented Wood report would increase attainment, as all learners would be on a pathway most suitable to their desired post school destination. When learners are engaged and motivated they achieve their full potential.

To ensure this is the case, all barriers to this ‘parity of esteem’ must be removed – by tackling perceptions of learners, parents and stakeholders of vocational pathways, by ensuring that opportunities to access industry recognised qualifications (IRQ) are available through the senior phase in each school, and by ensuring that Insight gives appropriate weighting to vocational awards.

2. The report aims to significantly enhance vocational content “without splitting young people off into separate streams at school age”. What the disadvantages of such an approach would be and how it could be avoided?

A senior phase that reflects the seven principles of curriculum design and also DYW will provide a range of opportunities that allow ALL young people to access vocational content that will better prepare them for their chosen post school destination, and more generally, the world of work. Pathways should be flexible so that learners can access an individualised programme of school, college and training opportunities.
Parity of esteem is again, crucial, in this regard. Learners should not be labelled or limited to being on one particular pathway over another as this would inevitably lead to pigeon-holing youngsters and closing doors to them at too early a stage in their life-long learning journey.

Vocational content should be given equal status and should feature heavily in the senior phase. Moreover, vocational content should appear in the BGE in both the primary and secondary sectors and every effort taken to emphasise the importance of skills for learning life and work in terms of future destinations.

3. **Whether any measures other than those advocated in the report are needed to ensure more young people leave school with “high level vocational qualifications which have strong currency in the labour market”**.

Companies that receive local and national government contracts should be legally compelled through their corporate social responsibility to employ a certain number of school leavers / apprentices.

New school buildings should have appropriate facilities, such as an industry standard kitchen / engineering works.

Thought given to workforce planning within secondary teaching; there is a commitment to maintain teacher numbers – there is an inherit difficulty in this regard when DYW advocates more vocational courses, IRQ, and learners working with college and training providers. Is this moving school age learners into the tertiary sector and out of schools, or is there a re-training issue for existing staff of ‘traditional’ academic subjects?

Awareness raising amongst parents, learners and other stakeholders around the value of IRQ – linked into local labour market information.

Current practices should be reviewed in light of DYW to look at where there are barriers to successful implementation and then these should be tackled, in, for example:

- Insight
- college funding to support a more appropriate school link programme
- SDS working practices so they can engage in career management with ALL learners, not just those in S4-6
- SQA costs – at the moment the ‘tolerance’ or cap on charges to local authorities does not include vocational subjects such as HNCs which are an additional charge. This is a disincentive to the full implementation of DYW.
- Education Scotland incorporating this agenda in HGIOS4 and supporting local authorities to in turn, support schools, in self evaluating their approach to DYW
4. Whether the report – which includes a section on improving equalities – places enough emphasis on pupils’ socio-economic inequalities and how these could be overcome.

Again, this takes up back to the issue of parity of esteem. This must be tackled or this agenda will be interpreted as simply the provision of more stereotypical and poorly valued vocational type opportunities for ‘less able’ learners whilst ‘more able’ learners continue on a traditional academic pathway which is valued as high status and leads to university.

Renfrewshire Council is committed to the tackling poverty agenda and therefore sees DYW as a way of ensuring that ALL learners across ALL socio-economic backgrounds are able to access appropriate academic and vocational opportunities and are fully supported to achieve their potential in order to gain their desired post school destination.

Socio-economic difficulties can only be overcome by acknowledging them and committing to addressing them through intent and action. The implementation of DYW at local and national levels must take this into account, alongside all other vulnerable groups at risk of missing out.

5. Whether there would have to be significant reorganisation in schools to accommodate all the proposed changes (for example, to enable more links with colleges/ to have a greater focus on work placements).

Renfrewshire Council currently has a working group reviewing the senior phase curriculum to ensure that it meets the needs of ALL learners. DYW underpins this review.

It is likely that structures will need to be reviewed so that our current synchronicity of S5/6 timetables alongside the local college is extended to afford S4 learners the opportunity of accessing college courses through the consortium that is currently in operation.

Moreover, the curriculum will need to be flexible to incorporate apprenticeship learning and HNC delivery, neither of which will fall neatly into existing column structures. We are attempting HNC delivery in Engineering and Hospitality next session.

Work experience week in S4 is also likely to be significantly reorganised as work placements should be more individualised and woven across their senior phase. We are at an early stage with this and offer this opportunity to small numbers of learners across the secondary schools.

It is worth noting that regional colleges who work in partnership with schools in more than one local authority face challenges in accommodating different school timetabling structures. This can have an adverse impact on the range of course provision made available.
6. What action and resources would be required to deliver the specific recommendations aimed at schools and teachers? For example:
   - teachers’ skills and knowledge may need to develop in certain areas (for example, “to better understand employability and modern work skills”);
   - closer links should be established between schools, colleges and employers (for example, “all 363 secondary schools in a long term partnership with employers within 3 years”).

We are already planning for DYW through our strategic employability group that has representation from education and a range of key partners.

With specific reference to the points made above, initial teacher training, professional standards and ongoing professional learning (PL) need to take DYW into account. In Renfrewshire we over a range of PL activities, both at school and authority level, around employability, skills and how to raise the aspirations of our young people. Particular groups are targeted (guidance staff, SMT, employability project leaders) to ensure they have up to date knowledge and access to support on career management skills, labour market information and skills development. However, arguably skills for learning life and work, and in particular, employability, would benefit from being elevated to a ‘responsibility for all’.

All 63 Renfrewshire schools are full members of the Renfrewshire Chamber of Commerce with whom we have a very productive and close working relationship. The chief executive is on our strategic group, regularly meets with head teacher groups and key school staff, and is a tremendous support in linking schools to appropriate employers. This can be most obviously demonstrated through ‘Mission Discovery’ where the Chamber (as a key partner) is linking this NASA affiliated programme to industry leading STEM employers and ensuring a long term legacy for STEM and related careers in our secondary schools.

Overall Comment

The strategy paper on Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) has been well received within Renfrewshire schools. In order to fully implement it over the desired timescales, a number of considerations have to be taken into account:

- funding: increased staffing; professional learning for staff to increase capacity; provision of a wider more appropriate curriculum; focus on impact...
  For example the following initiatives are currently being delivered to enhance employability opportunities for our learners and are resource dependant:
  - Renfrewshire has 12 employability project leaders in secondary and ASN with a remit to implement DYW
  - graduate interns have also contributed to this
  - 450 primary colleagues have engaged in modern languages training with a view to delivering 1+2 in order that learners are fully equipped to compete in a global market;
  - STEM and Mission Discovery
  - a variety of Early Years activities
GETS
- science ambassadors
- inter-authority research around literacy & numeracy development
- early leavers enrichment programmes
- college and university consortium arrangements in the senior phase
- aspire to success programme

- culture change – focus on developing parity of esteem between academic and vocational pathways with all stakeholders, in particular modern apprenticeships must have a higher profile and the equalities agenda 3-18 must be made more explicit

- strategic direction and guidance for practitioners – skills for success group’s 3 year strategic plan on DYW and recently created SLDP 4 group exploring best practice and implementation of DYW

- curriculum design: Senior Phase Curriculum Group currently reviewing the Senior Phase model to ensure a model which meets the needs of all learners in light of DYW

- increased partnership working – clarity of roles and responsibilities; planning with partners to deliver a more appropriate curriculum; currently Renfrewshire has an ongoing partnership agreement with the Renfrewshire Chamber of Commerce and a 3 year engagement plan with UWS

- school improvement – DYW featuring in the improvement agenda (SIPs, authority reviews, the inspection process) – the work of the SLDP4 will support this

- sustainability – all of the above must become embedded after the 7 year programme outlined in DYW concludes

I trust this is helpful to you.

Yours sincerely

Peter Macleod
Director of Children’s Services
Response from the Scottish Children’s Services Coalition (SCSC) to the Scottish Parliament’s Education and Culture Committee’s call for evidence on the educational attainment gap

Commission for Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce

About the Scottish Children’s Services Coalition

The Scottish Children’s Services Coalition (SCSC) is a policy-focused collaboration between leading independent and third sector service providers. These providers have come together to work with political and other key stakeholders to help improve the delivery of children and young people’s services.

SCSC members deliver specialist care and education services for children and young people with complex needs, such as learning difficulties and learning disabilities, as well as direct help and support for them and their families. They also provide independent advocacy, advice and representation for children and young people with care experience.

Members provide tailored support to children and young people from a diverse range of backgrounds and social circumstances.

Members of the SCSC are:

Falkland House School - [www.falklandhouseschool.org](http://www.falklandhouseschool.org)
Mindroom - [www.mindroom.org](http://www.mindroom.org)
Spark of Genius - [www.sparkofgenius.com](http://www.sparkofgenius.com)
Who Cares? Scotland - [www.whocaresscotland.org](http://www.whocaresscotland.org)
Young Foundations - [www.youngfoundations.com](http://www.youngfoundations.com)
Kindred - [www.kindred-scotland.org](http://www.kindred-scotland.org)

Further information about the SCSC can be found at [www.thescsc.org.uk](http://www.thescsc.org.uk)

Background

As a representative body for children and young people with Additional Support Needs (ASN) the SCSC submitted a response to the Wood Commission’s consultation on Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce in April 2013.

The coalition chose to focus its response around the importance of increasing the vocational, education and employment opportunities that are available for those with ASN, such as learning difficulties/disabilities and care experience.
The Commission for Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce recognised the need for more action to support young disabled people and made specific recommendations to achieve that.

In response, “Developing the Young Workforce: Scotland’s Youth Employment Strategy” sets out the framework for how the Scottish Government intends to tackle the issue.

About £3 million has been allocated directly by the Scottish Government in response to the recommendations of the Commission to address wider underrepresentation across employability programmes. It has also provided £2 million for the targeted Employer Recruitment Incentive (ERI), to facilitate transitions to sustainable employment. There is also the community jobs fund, which the Scottish Government delivers in partnership with the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations and which creates targeted opportunities for those who face additional barriers to employment, including those with a disability.

Although we recognise this and that the Scottish Government has taken significant steps in the right direction, as outlined above our response calls for more opportunities and support to be made available to those with ASN.

**SCSC submission to the Committee**

If the Wood report were fully implemented, what would be the likely impact on attainment in schools and which pupils would benefit most?

As with our submission to the Wood Commission consultation, we are going to focus this response on those children and young people with complex needs, such as learning difficulties and learning disabilities, and those with care experience.

Specifically looking at this grouping, if the recommendations from the Wood Report were to be implemented in full, we are in no doubt that the numbers of, and outcomes for those children and young people with complex needs and care experience going on to positive destinations would increase significantly.

Not only would these individuals be more motivated to remain engaged in education, they would be far more likely to be able to achieve sustainable employment in the long term.

*Recommendation 33: Career advice and work experience for young disabled people who are still at school should be prioritised and tailored to help them realise their potential and focus positively on what they can do to achieve their career aspirations.*

Looking at recommendation 33, it is crucial that careers advice is available from the earliest stages of secondary education. Helping young people to develop career aspirations through early careers advice and vocational opportunities through the likes of local employers will provide a platform to ‘learn while doing’, maximising individual motivation and opportunities for skills development.
This person-centred approach will prove to be particularly effective for those young people with complex needs and care experience who traditionally disengage with the academic nature of education during their secondary school years.

It is crucial that ALL young people are given careers advice as early as possible in order to highlight both the vocational and academic pathways that are available to help prevent disengagement.

To help enhance this process, the ‘Getting it right for every child’ approach should be universally adopted to encourage collaborative working across multiple agencies to ensure that the specific needs of all young people are being assessed and met at the earliest possible stage.

This approach cannot be delivered as ‘one size fits all’ as many, particularly those with complex needs and care experience, will require 1:1 support to help identify their career aspirations and opportunities.

**Recommendation 34:** Funding levels to colleges and MA training providers should be reviewed and adjusted to reflect the cost of providing additional support to young disabled people, and age restrictions should be relaxed for those whose transition may take longer.

**Recommendation 37:** Educational and employment transition planning for young people in care should start early with sustained support from public and third sector bodies and employers available throughout their journey toward and into employment as is deemed necessary.

**Recommendation 38:** Across vocational education and training, age restrictions should be relaxed for those care leavers whose transition takes longer.

**Recommendation 39:** In partnership with the third sector, the Scottish Government should consider developing a programme which offers supported employment opportunities lasting up to a year for care leavers.

With regards to recommendations 34 and 37 to 39, we cannot emphasise enough the importance of early and person-centred transition programmes.

Under the Education (Additional Support for Learning) Act 2004, councils and other agencies must start planning transition for ASN students at least a year before they leave school, but it would clearly be better to start transition planning much earlier, perhaps even in the early years of secondary school, a scenario outlined in related official guidance.

The Scottish Transitions Forum (STF) last year recommended that the one in five school leavers with additional support needs (ASN) should be offered more than a decade of help – from the ages of 14 to 25 – as they make the move from school to college, university and work.

While some regions, such as Highland, are very good at helping pupils plan for the future early, for others it is a postcode lottery that leaves some of the most vulnerable in our society out in the cold. Early intervention is absolutely critical if we are to ensure that these young people realise their full potentials and reduce the stress of transitions for this vulnerable group.
As a society we spend heavily in meeting the costs of failure, but through early intervention and tailored transition programmes we can ensure that we give the most vulnerable the best chance as they move from school into further education, employment and training.

Implementing these recommendations will demonstrate a universal commitment to reducing the numbers of young people leaving school with no qualifications. Furthermore, a person-centred approach will help the most vulnerable young people to identify their career aspirations and skills development opportunities, providing them with that critical encouragement and motivation to remain engaged in education.

**Recommendation 35: Within Modern Apprenticeships, SDS should set a realistic but stretching improvement target to increase the number of young disabled people. Progress against this should be reported on annually**

We commend the Scottish Government’s expansion of its Modern Apprenticeship programme from the current 25,000 starts a year to 30,000 by 2020.

However, 2014 figures from Skills Development Scotland show that only 0.32% of those in a Modern Apprenticeship have a declared disability, down from 0.48% in 2010/11, yet approximately 8% of the 16-24 year old target population is disabled. We mention this with caution as figures are based upon self-declaration by the individual and there will be instances where people choose not to disclose their status, but this figure is still woefully low.

As a society, we have a collective responsibility to give the most vulnerable people the opportunity to realise their full potential. The rewards of getting these young people, many of whom boast excellent skills, into work are well worth it, with higher loyalty and retention rates. Apprenticeship programmes provide the opportunity to do just this and at the same time help businesses thrive, especially in the sectors where we are currently facing a skills shortage.

We therefore support the implementation of a target against which the number of young disabled entering apprenticeships can be measured.

**Recommendation 36: Employers who want to employ a young disabled person should be encouraged and supported to do so.**

By the time they are 26 young people with complex needs and care experience are nearly 4 times more likely to be unemployed than their wider peer group, with care leavers facing among the most dire outcomes. Not only languishing at the bottom of employment leagues, but also those for health, education and crime. They are more likely to die prematurely, be unemployed, be addicted to drugs or alcohol and be imprisoned.

As the Scottish Government’s skills agency Skills Development Scotland has a responsibility to work with services and employers to reduce the stigma of employing those with complex needs and care experience and to provide the extra support to those who need it in order to secure sustainable employment and reach positive destinations.

Again, the Scottish Government is to be commended for its recent work in supporting those with complex needs and care experience through the likes of the expanded Employer Recruitment
Incentive (ERI) and the Make Young People Your Business Campaign. These and other packages of support available to employers and young people with ASN should receive further funding and be made more widely promoted, as well as a greater effort made to support employers to personalise and design jobs for young people in this category and provide appropriate training.

We need to now Scotland’s employers to look beyond the label when taking on new employees and take advantage of the various recruitment incentives and support mechanisms that are on offer.

The report aims to significantly enhance vocational content “without splitting young people off into separate streams at school age”. What would be the disadvantages of such an approach and how could they be avoided?

The Wood Commission Report highlights the following existing inequalities for those with complex needs and care experience:

- Young people with disabilities are much more likely to experience difficult transition through education and to be unemployed after they leave education.
- And young care leavers as a group experience some of the poorest educational and employment outcomes of any group of young people in society.

Splitting young people off into separate streams at school age would undoubtedly deepen these inequalities and would serve to increase the existing stigma regarding those with complex needs and care experience.

It would further discourage employers from seeing and understanding the merits of taking on young people from this grouping, who could in turn be left unmotivated and demoralised. This approach could lead to disengagement from education by those with complex needs and care experience.

In order to avoid further disadvantaging this grouping we would recommend the following:

- A national review of educational opportunities and employability services.
- With a specific focus on career management skills, person centred careers advice must become part of the curriculum for ages 13+ to ensure effective engagement with all young people.
- Greater cohesion and increased dialogue between schools, local service providers and local employers. In order to implement careers education, schools need to be aware of the ‘skills for work’ that employers are looking for.
- A greater holistic approach combining financial resources as well as targeted support is vital in assisting those who have care experience and complex needs to re-engage with education and training and ensure that they are ready to take up employment. Learning and training programmes must recognise that these young people will have complicated needs as they make the transition into adulthood, requiring support covering housing, health and education.
- Encourage the public and private sectors as significant employers to make greater use of work experience opportunities, in particular for those young people with complex needs and care experience. It is crucial to begin working with young people as early as possible,
highlighting the vocational pathways that are available in order to prevent them from disengaging.

**Does the report – which includes a section on improving equalities – place enough emphasis on pupils’ socio-economic inequalities and how these could be overcome?**

While we note that socio-economic inequalities are of great concern and are definitely something that should be tackled, we are concerned that this consultation has chosen to focus only on this particular area.

We believe that this question should be expanded to include those with disabilities as the full Wood report does. We are concerned that those with learning disabilities, complex needs and care experience have not been included in this consultation and that the proposed consultation later on in 2015 only extends to those with physical disabilities.

In the equalities section of the Wood Report, Commission specifically illustrated the points made by using a case study from ENABLE Scotland of those with “learning disabilities” not just physical disabilities.

Those with learning disabilities face a huge number of barriers to sustainable employment and it is disappointing that we do not have the opportunity to comment upon how these specific inequalities might be overcome.
Submission from The Scottish Council of Independent Schools (SCIS)

Educational attainment gap - Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce - The Wood Commission

The Scottish Council of Independent Schools (SCIS) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Education and Culture Committee’s call for evidence regarding views on the Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce (The Wood Commission). We have limited our response to the areas that we feel are most relevant to our member independent schools.

SCIS supports the emphasis on engaging employers with schools and young people. Scottish independent schools work hard to establish and maintain links with former pupils and the parents of current pupils and use these networks to encourage opportunities for work experience placements and for public speakers to visit the school and share their experience and knowledge with young people. SCIS believes this provides great benefit to, and increases the attainments of, young learners and would welcome this approach being expanded to all schools in Scotland.

SCIS also agrees with the opinion that careers advice has an extremely important role to play in enabling pupils to reach their full potential. SCIS therefore strongly supports the recommendation for careers services to be provided at an earlier stage within schools. Some independent schools have their own career development service offering advice from S1 whilst others use ISCO (the independent schools careers guidance service). The early involvement of careers services ensures young people are fully prepared for the world of employment and that young people understand how their subject choices for the senior phase will impact on future learning and employment opportunities.

Independent schools recognise the importance of these opportunities and a number of independent schools further ensure that they are available to young people more widely. Loretto School, Musselburgh, for example, organises a UCAS week at the end of summer that is open to all local schools which provides further education/careers guidance to young people. Support is also offered to local authority school pupils by schools such as Fettes College, Edinburgh; which organises careers and higher education fairs open to pupils from local schools and provides trial interviews for candidates; or Gordonstoun in Moray, which holds a Higher Education and Careers Fair for over 1,000 secondary pupils in Moray and Highland schools, to meet representatives from universities, colleges and the armed forces (Gordonstoun subsidises travel to this event so that no student is unable to attend). Work experience opportunities through visits from local secondary pupils considering a career in education and care may also be offered, for example, these opportunities are provided by the Compass School, Haddington. These selected examples highlight just some of the links between independent schools and local schools in sharing careers guidance and work experience opportunities.

SCIS recognises the importance of increasing the uptake of STEM subjects for the future success of Scotland, as was highlighted in a recent members’ debate in the Parliament¹ and

in evidence given to the Education and Culture Committee by the Learned Societies’ Group. Our schools promote these subjects through their significant provision within the school curriculum up to and including the Advanced Higher. The number of candidates who attended our member schools and took STEM subjects at Higher level in 2014 was 5438 which accounted for 37.3% of all candidates and the number of candidates taking STEM subjects at Advanced Higher level was 3629 or 51.4% of all candidates. These numbers demonstrate the commitment of independent schools to the provision and encouragement of STEM subjects. Our teachers also contribute to this area through their involvement in the design and verification of qualifications, such as the new Higher and the new Advanced Higher. Furthermore, a number of member schools act as sponsors for Arkwright Scholarships who provide funding for talented students to encourage and assist them in pursuing a career in engineering and technical design (and do so in partnership with businesses, universities and professional institutions).

Within independent schools a great deal of work is being undertaken in this area, much of which also involves the local community. For example approximately 2000 people attend the annual Science Festival held by St Mary’s School, Melrose, this event is open to all local schools and the general public, and Robert Gordon’s College, Aberdeen hosts the National Association for Science Education Conference which is open to educators across Scotland and beyond. Another way in which independent schools promote the advancement of STEM subjects is through the Association for Science Education holding an annual two day science conference at Morrison’s Academy, Crieff.

Independent schools acknowledge the central importance of individually tailored and up-to-date careers advice and an increased uptake of STEM subjects in raising the attainment of pupils within Scotland and would be happy to provide further evidence on these important issues to the Committee both as witnesses and on site in schools.

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2 http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/28862.aspx?r=9757#.VOs0fnysXeo
PARLIAMENT EDUCATION COMMITTEE – EVIDENCE ON WOOD COMMISSION IMPLICATIONS

SPTC welcomes this opportunity to submit evidence to the Education and Culture Committee of the Scottish Parliament. Scottish education has been and continues to go through significant changes. The report of the Wood Commission gives the impression of being a further game changer in relation to the way in which we seek to meet the needs of all of our young people during their education, prepare them effectively for life beyond school and equip them with the skills they need to participate effectively in the workplace.

1. **SPTC Background**

   SPTC is a long-standing parent-led charity and membership organisation providing help, advice and support to parents up and down the country. Our focus is on making parental engagement with education as good as it can be, by supporting parents and working with local authorities, schools and other stakeholders to build and share good practice.

   We have had both formal and informal contact with thousands of parents and carers over recent years: they have responded to our surveys, emailed and phoned with their queries and worries, spoken to our team as we work with them face-to-face at our information sessions. Our membership comprises almost 2000 Parent Councils and/or PTAs in state schools, representing tens of thousands of parents and carers.

2. **Committee Questions**

2.1 *If the Wood report were fully implemented, what the likely impact on attainment in schools would be and which pupils would benefit most.*

   If implemented in a fulsome fashion, all young people should benefit from a more flexible approach to learning and skills development. The current focus on academic attainment in our school system, which often leaves young folk who are not on an academic route out in the cold, should be substantially influenced by the changes put forward in Wood, fostering a culture where all kinds of achievement are valued and the term ‘parity of esteem’ starts to have meaning.

2.2 *The report aims to significantly enhance vocational content “without splitting young people off into separate streams at school age”. What the disadvantages of such an approach would be and how it could be avoided.*
Over many years, Scotland’s education system has been established as being comprehensive. However, the reality is often that young people are streamed, sometimes from an early stage. Often this is done with the best of intentions: to provide additional support to those youngsters who are struggling. Unfortunately it can lead to a school environment where pupils who appear ‘academic’ and ‘not-academic’ are perceived a fundamentally different, by both staff and pupils. In short, the system fails to address the needs of individuals and instead sees ‘types’ of young people. We believe this is not a helpful approach and one which leads to a two-tier system, whether intended or not.

We therefore agree that we should avoid this approach in our schools and look for a means to provide diverse and appropriate school, college, work and training opportunities for young people working at different levels and with different goals. We believe that ambition is a key component in success: young people themselves and those who are working with them need to have high expectations and positive ideas about what they can achieve.

2.3 Whether any measures other than those advocated in the report are needed to ensure more young people leave school with “high level vocational qualifications which have strong currency in the labour market”.

Teaching and learning - and success as a result of that process - are influenced by very many factors, some of which have been identified in the report. Creative and courageous leadership in schools; high quality, motivated teachers; engaged and motivated learners; involved and empowered parents are just some of the vital ingredients. Wood’s report has identified specific strategies which we believe will support some or all of the above, however success will come from blending and progressing these factors in a way which is right for the individual young person.

2.4 Whether the report – which includes a section on improving equalities – places enough emphasis on pupils’ socio-economic inequalities and how these could be overcome.

It is widely recognised that poverty is the factor which has most impact on outcomes for young people. However, it is not a defining characteristic: young people from deprived backgrounds are not destined to fail. Through their efforts and those of the people who support them, all young people have the potential to succeed. In short, we must have high expectations of all young people.

2.5 Whether there would have to be significant reorganisation in schools to accommodate all the proposed changes (for example, to enable more links with colleges/ to have a greater focus on work placements).

There will need to be a radical overhaul for many secondary schools, which is going to take some time to implement and take root. Given the current issues facing schools – budget cuts, teacher shortages, curriculum and qualifications changes – we anticipate that the necessary changes will present a significant challenge to some. It therefore needs to be recognised that
this work will require specific funding and long term support if it is to really have an impact. In
truth, we believe it will also fundamentally change of shape of secondary education as more
young people spend less of their time in school classes, and more time in work experience,
apprenticeships, college or university. There are implications for the staffing profile of schools
which have not so far been addressed. In many cases, staffing will move to alternative
 provision (eg college) but that will not always be the case.

2.6  What action and resources would be required to deliver the specific recommendations aimed
at schools and teachers, for example:
- teachers’ skills and knowledge may need to develop in certain areas (for example, “to better
understand employability and modern work skills”);
- closer links should be established between schools, colleges and employers (for example, “all 363 secondary schools in a long term partnership with employers within 3 years”).

We do not feel equipped to comment on the specifics of this question, but believe there will
require to be specific funding, training and support provided to teachers and leaders in the
schools sector.

In Conclusion

SPTC is broadly supportive of the Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce principles: we believe it
maps out a programme for positive change to the prospects of a large proportion of Scottish young
people. However, we also recognise that its implementation will demand significant change and
resources of the Scottish education sector.

Eileen Prior
Executive Director

Scottish Parent Teacher Council

2 March 2015
Inquiry on the Educational Attainment Gap - Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce

Education and Culture Committee

Written Evidence from the Scottish Youth Parliament

Background to the Scottish Youth Parliament

The Scottish Youth Parliament is the democratically elected voice of Scotland’s young people. Our vision is of a stronger, more inclusive Scotland that empowers young people by truly involving them in the decision-making process.

Among the strongest youth representatives structures of its type, we provide young people with a democratic platform to affect change, based on a mandate, by facilitating engagement with key decision makers.

In working towards our aims, we support the following values:

- **Democracy** - All of our plans and activities are youth-led, and we are accountable to young people aged 12-25. Our democratic structure and the scale of direct participation across Scotland give us strength and set us apart from other organisations.

- **Inclusion** - We are committed to being truly inclusive. The Scottish Youth Parliament believes that all young people have a right to a voice; it doesn’t matter who we are or where we come from. We celebrate our diversity.

- **Political independence** - We are independent from political parties. Only by working with all legitimate political parties can we make progress on the policies that are important to young people.

- **Passion** - We believe that drive and energy are key to successful campaigning. We are passionate about issues and believe that young people are part of the solution, not the problem.

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1 The Scottish Youth Parliament is comprised of 160 Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament who meet three times a year in national sittings to represent the views of their constituents by selecting campaign priorities, formulating policy and participating in Subject Committees. In the last Scottish Youth Parliament national elections, 67,000 votes were cast. In addition, there were almost 43,000 responses to the consultation on your 2010 youth manifesto, “Change the Picture”. You can find out more information about SYP here: [http://www.syp.org.uk/who-we-are-W21page-66](http://www.syp.org.uk/who-we-are-W21page-66).

Summary of Recommendations

1. The Scottish Youth Parliament supports placing attainment at the heart of the implementation of the Wood Commission recommendations. We believe the recommendations will have a positive impact on attainment, and giving attainment a particular focus during implementation will further this progress.

2. The Scottish Youth Parliament recommends consideration be given to the risk of marginalising young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds in the practical delivery of the recommendations, which could have no effect or an adverse effect on attainment.

3. The Scottish Youth Parliament believes that addressing the perceived split between academic and vocational pathways is extremely important, as is placing vocational education on equal footing with academic education. We believe this will decrease negative stigma, and open up more opportunities for all young people.

4. The Scottish Youth Parliament supports a culture change both at an educational level and at a national economic level, in order to ensure young people take up high level vocational qualifications that have a strong currency in the labour market.

5. The Scottish Youth Parliament supports placing an emphasis on pupils’ socio-economic inequality in the implementation of the recommendations, believing that this would have a positive effect on attainment. Actions such as an attainment mapping exercise and forming links with local authority educational attainment advisers should be considered.

6. The Scottish Youth Parliament believes that further investment is required to fully implement the Wood Commission recommendations, but that this investment is inherently preventative, in line with the Scottish Government’s budgetary priority.
Introduction

The Scottish Youth Parliament welcomes the opportunity to submit written evidence to the Education and Culture Committee’s inquiry into the educational attainment gap. In addition, we welcome the Committee’s decision to consider the recommendations made by the Commission for Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce as an important step in reducing the educational attainment gap.³

Educational attainment, and its impact on child and youth poverty, is a key area of focus for our current national campaign, POVERTY: See It Change It.⁴ We fundamentally believe that addressing the current gap in educational attainment is crucial to eradicating child and youth poverty.⁵ By improving the education and employability pathway for young people, they will be better equipped with the skills and experience to move onto successful and sustainable employment destinations.

While the Scottish Youth Parliament is fully supportive of the recommendations made by the Commission for Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce, we believe that attainment should be at the heart of its implementation.⁶ We believe that the recommendations will have a positive impact on attainment. However by giving attainment a specific focus during implementation, there is an opportunity to make further substantive progress.

In addition, we note the recent report published by Scotland’s Commissioner for Children and Young People, entitled “How Young People’s Participation in School Supports Achievement and Attainment,” which acknowledges the positive impact that pupil involvement and participation have on achievement and attainment.⁷ This provides an empirical evidence base which demonstrates the need to meaningfully involve young people in the practical outworking of the Wood Commission recommendations. We believe this is an issue the Committee could consider as part of its inquiry.

Our submission to this inquiry is based on the policies selected and passed by our democratically elected Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament (MSYPs) at our tri-annual

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³ The Scottish Youth Parliament coordinated an event with the Commission for Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce in March 2014 which provided around fifty young people with the opportunity to feedback their views for the final report.
⁶ Scottish Youth Parliament (2014), Wood Commission findings could have significant impact, http://www.syp.org.uk/blog/2014/06/03/wood-commission-findings/
National Sittings, where MSYPs meet in plenary to debate policy issues of importance to their constituents. Our contribution is further grounded in the policy statements contained in our youth manifesto “Change the Picture,” which received almost 43,000 consultation responses. Therefore, our remarks are shaped by the genuine views of young people.

In addition, in order to provide further insights into the views of young people on the specific themes of the interest to the Committee, we conducted a detailed online focus group with the MSYPs who sit on our Jobs and Economy and Education and Lifelong Learning Subject Committees. 8

1. “If the Wood report were fully implemented, what the likely impact on attainment in schools would be and which pupils would benefit most?”

As previously stated, the Scottish Youth Parliament believes that the full implementation of the Wood Commission recommendations would have a positive impact on attainment. We believe that an education that is more linked to future employability destinations, that has parity of esteem between vocational and academic pathways and further and higher education, and that focuses on addressing specific equalities issues, will have a positive impact.

One MSYP commented:

“I think young people would feel more confident and ready to leave school knowing there are many opportunities out there for them, regardless of their wealth. Students wouldn’t feel held back by their background…”

However, we note that there is a significant risk of marginalising young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds in the practical delivery of the recommendations, which could have no effect or an adverse effect on attainment. For example, the basic costs of sending a young person on good quality work experience may inhibit choice. Associated costs with undertaking vocational pathways, such as additional materials, may reduce the ability of students from poorer backgrounds to take up these subjects.

The discrepancy between opportunities available to young people from urban and rural communities should also be considered, as transportation and access may limit opportunities available to young people in rural areas.

2. “The report aims to significantly enhance vocational content “without splitting young people off into separate streams at school age”. What the disadvantages of such an approach would be and how it could be avoided?”

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8 The online focus group was facilitated through SurveyMonkey, and contained eight questions based on the consultation document. The questions were adapted to ensure they were conducive for consultation with young people. The survey was sent to all MSYPs, who consulted with their constituents before responding.
On a practical level, we do not view splitting up young people as a negative. In fact, for the practical delivery of a range of subjects, it is reasonable and necessary to do so. The key issue is the perception of the split between academic and vocational pathways, and the negative stereotypes surrounding “streaming”.

According to the young people we consulted during our discussion day on the Wood Commission’s Interim Report, the perceived inferiority of vocational pathways in comparison to academic pathways is a key issue. MSYPs surveyed believed that young people may hesitate to take up vocational education for “fear of being judged” and “negative stigma.” Traditionally, vocational education has often been viewed as a suitable option for young people with less academic ability. This needs to be challenged.

We believe there needs to be a stepwise change in culture that places vocational pathways on a power with academic pathways through education and communication about the value and merits of the former.

Encouraging young people to seriously consider both pathways could reduce this stigma. One MSYP commented:

“It would be good to have all young people learn about vocational options. Some young people may think they have to go to university, when really they could be well-suited to a more vocational job. Giving everyone the same information could also make young people feel as though vocational and academic paths are equal, which they are.”

Another noted that if vocational studies were more fully integrated into the education system, young people may stop viewing vocational pathways as inferior to academic pathways.

One participant shared experience from her high school, in which pupils are able to choose one vocational subject instead of an academic subject, and spend two afternoons per week at a local college. Facilitating this allowed young people to explore both vocational and academic studies, and reduced negative perceptions of “streaming.”

3. Whether any measures other than those advocated in the report are needed to ensure more young people leave school with “high level vocational qualifications which have strong currency in the labour market.”

In addition to a culture change in education in relation to the credibility and profile of vocational pathways, the young people we consulted felt there needed to be a similar culture shift at a national economic level. In order ensure high level vocational qualifications have strong currency in the labour market, they need to be fundamentally valued by the economy and by employers. This involves challenging the traditional mindset that, for example, requires a university degree for many job opportunities.
The MSYPs also stressed the importance of career advice and work experience, asking that more opportunities for meaningful and quality work experience, internships, and apprenticeships be made available.

The importance of reducing stigma was raised again, with one MSYP stating:

“*Young people need to be taught that all jobs/careers are respectable, and have information about what careers are hiring, which aren’t, which make money, which may not, and which they have the right skills for.*”

It was also noted that some young people may feel pressured from peers or their families to continue onto university, or may lack the support and information to choose a vocational path.

Another MSYP noted that placing as much emphasis on pathways into vocational careers as is placed on pathways into university could inspire more young people to earn high level vocational qualifications.

Finally, it was also suggested that schools and colleges adopt focus on employability skills for vocational students. MSYPs suggested that employers be involved in the design of the curriculum so that young people could be trained towards “the job climate and its requirements.” The young people also discussed the option of having employers offer guest lectures or training in schools and colleges to raise awareness of vocational opportunities.

4. “*Whether the report - which includes a section on improving equalities - places enough emphasis on pupils’ socio-economic inequalities and how these could be overcome.*”

The Scottish Youth Parliament would support greater emphasis on pupils’ socio-economic inequality, with 90% of those surveyed believing the report needed this.

One MSYP noted that:

“I was surprised it was not highlighted in the report more, as this crosses over other issues like gender, race, and disability. Teachers should learn how to best help students from poorer backgrounds, and extra effort should be given to help them succeed and find their path.”

The young people consulted believed that a pupils’ socio-economic situation had the greatest impact on their attitudes and attainment. They were supportive of equalities education in schools, and believed that this would reduce negative stigma and help pupils better understand poverty.
We believe an attainment mapping exercise could be carried out to monitor the effect of the Wood Commission recommendations on attainment. Changes that are found to increase attainment can be further promoted and emphasised, whilst those that may widen the attainment gap could be altered. One MSYP noted:

“Attainment is often linked to socio-economic issues, and therefore support should be targeted and increased in areas of deprivation and low-performing league schools.”

Additionally, links could be formed with the recently announced educational attainment advisers in local authorities to find ways of bolstering attainment. The attainment landscape may vary across Scotland, and localised approaches may be necessary to tackle socio-economic inequality to ensure it does not negatively impact a young person’s opportunities.

5. “Whether there would have to be significant reorganisation in schools to accommodate all the proposed changes (for example, to enable more links with colleges/ to have a greater focus on work placements).”

While there will be an inevitable impact on organisation and curriculum management to implement the recommendations, we believe that their successful delivery is more an issue of priority, will, and culture. The emphasis and ethos of the guidance on curriculum management at local authority and school level should focus on future employment destinations. There are already many examples of good practice that exist across Scotland in both formal and informal education settings, under the same budgetary pressures. Best practice models should be shared and celebrated.

6. What action and resources would be required to deliver the specific recommendations aimed at schools and teachers?

We note the very difficult budgetary pressures currently experienced at local authority and school level. In order to successfully implement the Wood Commission recommendations, further investment will be required. However, we believe that this investment is inherently preventative, in line with Scottish Government’s budgetary priority.

By investing in the successful implementation of the Wood Commission recommendations and improving attainment, significant resources are saved over the medium to long term. Not only would this have a positive impact in terms of poverty reduction, but it would also reduce spending in other employment intervention services.

The Scottish Youth Parliament supports many of issues raised in the evidence submitted by our partner, YouthLink Scotland. Specifically, we view the third sector, youth work, and other forms of informal education Scotland as critical to improving attainment. They have a significant role to play in the delivery of these recommendations alongside schools and local authorities.
Additionally, MSYPs noted that employability guidance and connections were crucial, and that resources should be dedicated to ensure work experience placements, links between colleges and employers, and quality career guidance operate effectively.

An MSYP from a rural community noted that, to ensure those from rural areas have parity of access to opportunities, more affordable transportation, awareness of opportunities, connections to employers, and development of rural industries were needed.

“Don’t forget those in rural areas. We need opportunities beyond fishing and agriculture, but do need vocational experience in those areas as an option. Young people in rural areas shouldn’t feel limited in what they can do.”

The young people also asked that more resources be given to teachers, stating:

“The best teachers are those who are informed on important issues...” and,

“Teachers need more time to be creative and look for opportunities.”

Finally, we would echo earlier comments about the importance of meaningfully involving young people in the practical delivery of the recommendations, noting its positive impact on attainment.

MSYPs suggested that more young people be involved in delivering the recommendations, perhaps having young professionals serving as mentors for pupils, especially women in traditionally “male professions.” The MSYPs believed young people, particularly young people with lower attainment, should be consulted to ensure the recommendations are effective and empowering.

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Strand One – Wood Commission

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) welcomes the opportunity to respond Strand One – Wood Commission – of the Education & Culture Committee’s inquiry into educational attainment. At the request of the Committee, in this submission we specifically look to:

1. How we think our work around the Commission recommendations will impact on teachers, schools and pupils.
2. Outline some challenges to be overcome to successfully implement the recommendations.

Within this context, we have sought to answer the questions posed by the Committee in its call for evidence.

SDS is Scotland’s skills body, focused on contributing to the delivery of the Scottish Government’s Economic and Skills Strategies. Our services are further shaped by the Scottish Government’s Career Information, Advice and Guidance (CIAG) Strategy and the recent refresh of the Youth Employment Strategy, which aligns with the recommendations of the Commission on Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce (DSYW). We set out our vision, future development and delivery plans in our Corporate Strategy (2012-15) and annual Operating Plan.

SDS’s key aims include the delivery of support to young people and small and medium sized businesses. SDS has a key role in both supporting people towards and into employment, and enabling individuals to progress within their jobs. SDS is working collaboratively with individuals, employers, training providers and partners throughout Scotland to raise aspirations and create a more skilled workforce, thus contributing to the Scottish Government’s overarching purpose of increasing sustainable economic growth with opportunities for all to flourish.

SDS’s role

The report’s overriding message is the continuing issue of youth unemployment in Scotland and the need to ensure that appropriate measures and interventions are in place to offer opportunities. SDS has a pivotal role to play across all six sections of the report. The key areas where SDS can have an impact are:

1. Provision of earlier CIAG in schools
2. Creation of work-based learning pathways
3. Advancing equalities
4. Extending and expanding Modern Apprenticeships (MAs)
5. Research and evaluation

Given the focus of this inquiry, in this submission we will primarily outline actions we are taking on points outlined in 1-3 above.

Our work in schools increasingly focuses on a more complete pathway, from engaging with young people earlier in their school experience and designing better, wider choices and supporting them through to their entry into sustained employment. Our work is also strongly influenced by our collation of robust market intelligence and our greater interaction with industry to factor in their projected demand for skills. Through our work with schools, we aim to:

- Equip school pupils with career management skills (CMS) from P7 onwards and engage them in CIAG activities to create a foundation upon which to make informed decisions when faced with subject choices and education and employment beyond school;
- Emphasise and further develop the links between CMS and the Curriculum for Excellence;
- Foster strong relationships between employers and schools, making room for the employer voice in curriculum design and engaging employers with their potential future workforce;
- Ensure that parents and carers of young people are integral to and have access to CIAG resources so that they can help their children to make informed decisions;
- Create clear career pathways for young people, giving them options beyond the traditional academic choices with increased focus on work based learning;
- Offer extended options to those young people who are most at risk of disengaging and least likely to progress;
- Provide interactive, accessible tools that enable young people, teachers and parents to connect with CIAG services 24 hours a day.

Last year the Scottish Government provided an extra £3m funding for 2014-15 to SDS to enable us to take work forward in respect of the Commission recommendations on MAs, careers and underrepresentation with immediate effect.

Q1. If the Wood report were fully implemented, what the likely impact on attainment in schools would be and which pupils would benefit most.

All pupils can benefit from the implementation of the report’s recommendations. An ongoing emphasis on vocational education has a positive impact on attainment regardless of an individual’s aptitude. We would however anticipate that pupils who prefer more practical and contextualised teaching methods will be more likely to maximise their potential. This is because young people who follow both vocational and academic pathways at school better understand what they are learning and can make more sense of the curriculum because they can apply it to the world of work. Academically successful pupils should therefore also be offered the opportunity to undertake vocational pathways in parallel/tandem with their academic learning. In our answer to question two, below, we outline how the foundation apprenticeship pilots we are already delivering with partners in Fife and West Lothian are enhancing vocational options in schools.

Earlier CIAG Intervention

In terms of raising attainment and encouraging pupils to consider all available pathways, recommendation two\(^1\) of the Commission provides the opportunity for SDS to provide earlier advice to pupils: “SDS, working with schools and local authorities, should aim to provide some early careers advice and world of work knowledge in S1 and S3 prior to the subject choice towards the end of S3.”\(^2\) Recommendation 13\(^3\) also suggests that support for young people at risk of disengaging from education, and for those who have already done so, should focus on early intervention and wide ranging, sustained support. This should relate to labour market demand and should be focused on helping young people engage in labour-market-relevant pathways.

In an early response to these recommendations, we are already working closely with Education Scotland to create a framework that outlines the offer to young pupils from P7 onwards throughout the entirety of their remaining school career. We have already begun to engage with groups prior to S4 in order to prepare them for the world of work.

Research has found that 96 per cent of school Head Teachers report that SDS services have had either a major, or moderate, impact on school outcomes and that 87 per cent of pupils have achieved at least one employment, training or education benefit as a result of using SDS services\(^4\). We however look forward to being able to do more as a result of earlier intervention. Offering a more comprehensive careers service earlier in schools will act as a catalyst at a crucial juncture in pupils’ lives, and provide them with early information on a combination of pathways, both

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vocational and academic, with the aim of enhancing the career opportunities available to them post school. It will equip them with a greater understanding of Scottish industries and occupations that may otherwise have remained unconsidered.

Individuals will have multiple iterations in their career and there is a need for people to manage their own career and think about the currency of their career skills throughout their working lives. By working with partners to embed career management skills within the Curriculum for Excellence we can enable young people to build the skills and competencies required to move from school into their first transition and beyond.

By working in partnership with schools we can continue to work towards moving away from the idea of “prematurely categorising” pupils into “academic” and “non-academic” groups, and through this, realise the potential of all pupils, regardless of their aptitude. Young people can always achieve more, and should be presented with multiple pathways to success, taking into consideration the current and future needs of the labour market.

Targeted intervention, within a blended service model, is the most widely recommended option for CIAG. Our current offer provides all pupils from S1 to S6 with access to a Career Coach via school drop-in sessions, and to our customer contact centre, as well as 24/7 access to CIAG services through our careers web-service, My World of Work. From S3, the allocation of a Career Coach to young people with a coordinated support plan enhances the support provided by SDS.

In addition to our existing offer, our ambition going forward for CIAG is in line with the objectives of the Scottish Government’s Youth Employment Strategy and will assist in raising attainment for all pupils. We intend to:

- Roll out earlier careers intervention in schools, understanding that there are key points where SDS should be involved, e.g. during subject choice;
- Further develop our web based careers service My World Of Work to make it even more accessible to all groups;
- Develop tools for teaching staff to aid them in gaining their own career coaching skills;
- Be more actively involved with parents, given their key influencing role in their child’s life;
- Work more closely with parent bodies such as the National Parent Forum and the Scottish Parent Teacher Council.

Employer engagement will also be very important. Learning Through Work Week,⁵ held in November last year, saw SDS, training providers, MAs, employers and partners promote the benefits of work-based learning, with a focus on Modern Apprenticeships, to over 300 schools across Scotland. This was just the first step in increasing awareness of the different pathways available to young people, assisting schools to offer enhanced vocational provision and establishing employer/school links. SDS is uniquely placed to support both employers and schools to make these links. Going forward we have ambitious plans to create multiple employer links with schools. We also provide additional marketing materials for schools which highlight routes into work, showcasing employers and young people.

Challenging career perceptions and raising attainment of all pupils

Parity of esteem

A challenge to raising attainment for all, as a result of offering both vocational and academic pathways, is the considerable attitudinal change which is needed towards the value and worth of vocational education by Education Institutions and key influencers of young people, including school staff and parents. Altering perspectives will be very important. Currently vocational pathways, including MAs, are highly valued learning routes for some of the traditional industries,
but there still remains a perception in many occupations that the work-based route is of lesser value. There is frequently a lack of recognition of vocational qualification value for entry to Further and Higher Education Institutions and a lack of understanding amongst them, of the worth of such qualifications by employers. Yet, this is set against a dichotomy of employers placing a great deal of value on work-readiness (attitudinal and behavioural skills) and practical skills in their new recruits which are already well-proven to be gained through such work-based learning routes.

The higher tariff scores which schools attract for academic achievement could be considered as a barrier to achieving parity of esteem. For example, a young person going onto study the Certificate of Work Readiness\(^6\) will attract 50 per cent fewer tariff points for a school than a pupil taking Highers. We know that an average of 10 per cent of those who go to University will drop out in the first year, demonstrating that an alternative - perhaps a combination of vocational and academic pathways - might be more suitable for some pupils.

The Commission highlights that there is scope to highlight the quality and value of college provision to parents, schools and employers to improve perceptions and understanding of how colleges contribute to the Scottish economy and development of our young workforce. SDS will aim to take an increasing role in the promotion of this important message. We know that one of the biggest influencers on a young person’s career is their parents, and the Commission acknowledges this “close contact must be maintained with parents who can significantly influence career choices.”\(^7\) However, as there is still a long way to go in terms of schools being in a position to place more value on vocational education, it will be challenging to change the perception of parents and their children towards it.

SDS work to make an impact on perceptions includes promoting the benefits of vocational education to parents and carers of young people through a dedicated site on My World of Work, called My World of Work for Parents\(^8\). The site provides information to help parents and carers of young people to support their child as they go through school and make choices about their future. It includes information on key dates in the school calendar, subject choices, university courses, MAs, advice articles and videos. The site encourages parents to look at the content with their child.

Learning Through Work Week and our MA Ambassadors, as well as Scottish Apprenticeship Week, are all key initiatives and ways in which we can aim to challenge and change perceptions. These initiatives directly link to Q6 of the Committee's call for evidence “closer links should be established between schools, colleges and employers (for example, “all 363 secondary schools in a long term partnership with employers within 3 years”).”

**Gender segregation**

Recommendation 26 suggests that schools, local authorities, employers, SDS and equality groups should develop materials to deliver career management skills which demonstrate and emphasise diversity in the workplace\(^9\).

By further broadening the horizons of young women in schools, through earlier careers intervention and Foundation Apprenticeships, we can encourage them to widen their skills base and move into careers which they may not have previously considered, such as traditionally male-dominated sectors. Opening up these opportunities in the world of work can help to raise attainment amongst young women who may have wanted to enter a sector, but did not have the confidence to do so. We have been undertaking a considerable amount of work aimed at addressing gender bias in certain career pathways with schools, Training Providers and with employers for some time. However perceptions in this area are difficult to change and require a concerted effort, with partners, over time.

\(^6\) [https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/our-services/certificate-of-work-readiness/](https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/our-services/certificate-of-work-readiness/)


\(^8\) [http://www.myworldofwork.co.uk/section/parents-and-carers](http://www.myworldofwork.co.uk/section/parents-and-carers)

Foundation Apprenticeships offer pupils the opportunity to take part in work-based learning while in full-time education, boosting their employability skills and increasing their chances of moving into the workplace upon leaving school. More information on our foundation apprenticeship pilots in Fife and West Lothian is outlined below. As part of the pilots we have been working closely with employers to improve gender balance in their recruitment from schools and colleges. The programme should produce more role models who will encourage young people from both genders to progress into careers where gender imbalance has long been the norm.

SDS are undertaking some baseline research to frame the challenge of occupational segregation in relation to the MA programme and identify, more specifically, areas for further investment for us. This research will be completed by the end of March 2015. In the meantime, we are investing in a small number of projects which are at various stages of completion. They will all be evaluated in terms of their effectiveness in both attracting young women to and supporting them into non-traditional careers including through MA programmes, particularly in STEM subject areas where women are traditionally very under-represented. This evaluation will look at both quantitative as well and qualitative findings (for example, what can be done to change mindsets about career choices and consider traditionally male dominated options, what can be done to influence employers about the benefits of a diverse workforce). Longer term project activity will depend upon the findings and recommendations from our baseline research, identified above. However, there will be a focus on actions aimed at addressing longer-term cultural and attitudinal issues - from both the supply side (young people and their key influencers) and the demand side (employers) - as well as a range of targeted interventions aimed at boosting representation. SDS is very clear about the importance of avoiding the creation of multiple, un-related and isolated initiatives in relation to this challenging problem. We are therefore working closely with partners and stakeholders to look at how a joined up approach to these issues can be tackled through a systemic approach. To this end, we work closely with stakeholders and experts with expertise in this area including gender-representing organisations (such as Close the Gap, Engender, Equate) and Education bodies. For example, we are working closely with Education Scotland in relation to the STEM agenda within the school phase and with the Scottish Funding Council in relation to the challenges faced within college and University provision.

Marketing campaigns are also important. As of 9 March we will be running a campaign to promote the range of opportunities open to young people and encourage them to consider MAs in roles traditionally regarded as male dominated. By highlighting the stories of female apprentices we want to inspire young women to consider Modern Apprenticeships and work-based learning as valuable career options.

We also have a network of MA Ambassadors from across Scotland who, as well promote MAs to young people, parents and other companies, specifically highlight equal access to MAs. The Ambassador Programme provides a network of people who can share their experience and knowledge with others and help others to understand the benefits of earning-while-you-learn. Ambassadors are individual MAs or businesses who can promote MAs through media opportunities, events and supporting campaigns.

This work is also in line with Recommendation 12 of the report that STEM should sit at the heart of the development of Scotland's young workforce.

Q2. The report aims to significantly enhance vocational content “without splitting young people off into separate streams at school age”. What are the disadvantages of such an approach would be and how it could be avoided.

The Commission highlights that the range of provision in schools could be improved for those less suited to academic pathways that are staying on at school beyond S4 and have little option for

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11 http://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/our-services/modern-apprenticeships/modern-apprenticeship-ambassadors/
progression. There is a general call for industry recognised vocational qualifications to be phased into senior schools, in tandem with equivalent academic qualifications, delivered in partnership with colleges and included in school performance reports.

To this end, SDS has worked with partners to lead on the creation of Foundation Apprenticeship pathways (pilots) to support work-based learning career pathways. The introduction of Foundation Apprenticeships will give all pupils, of all aptitudes, the opportunity to develop employability skills and ensure they are not split into different streams. Learning is in conjunction with academic qualifications and open to all pupils, broadening all of their career pathways. They should also therefore go some way to helping achieve parity of esteem between vocational and academic education.

Two Foundation Apprenticeship pathfinders in engineering are already providing a wide range of pupils in their senior phase (S4 to S6) the opportunity to complete elements of an MA, while still at school, giving them a qualification that sits at the same level as Highers on the Scottish Credit Qualifications Framework (SCQF) (nationally recognised qualifications at SCQF Levels 5 and 6, and align with the requirements of the existing MA framework at SCQF Levels 6 and 7). Qualifications are industry recognised and employer engagement provides enhanced work experience. Young people who complete these qualifications should still be able to make choices of either seeking full-time employment as an MA and entering the workforce on this programme with advanced standing or choosing another route.

Around 50 pupils from six schools in the Fife area have started Foundation Apprenticeships with Fife College, with 32 pupils from four schools in West Lothian having started with West Lothian College. SDS is already working with these schools and colleges to support their next intake.

Foundation Apprentices in these pathfinder projects are able to complete ‘core’ elements of apprenticeships in school during two half days per week or one evening at college campuses. A significant number of employers, schools, colleges and Training Providers have expressed an interest in the programme.

Although our pilots only started in the summer of 2014, their initial success means that we are keen to build on this momentum. We are having conversations with over 40 stakeholders about their further roll out. Following evaluation of the pathfinders, it is hoped that further demand-led apprenticeships in key sectors will be made available to a number of other local authorities.

The sectors being considered initially are:

- Engineering
- Energy (including oil and gas)
- Financial services
- Health and social care
- Construction

We would estimate that there would be around 20 to 40 pupils following each pathfinder, though the number will vary depending on the geographical area they are being rolled out in.

Our Skills Investment Plans identify the future skills needs within Scotland’s key sectors by working with partners and using labour market information. The industry sectors selected for Foundation Apprenticeships reflect our aim to align educational and training opportunities with employment projections, as per recommendation 18\textsuperscript{12} of the Commission.

\textit{The challenge of recognition of work-based learning qualifications}

\textsuperscript{12}p51, DSYW Final Report \url{http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0045/00451746.pdf}
The learning of young people undertaking these foundation apprenticeships will widen their skill sets to include many of the features sought by employers, including employability skills and experience of the workplace. The academic parity of the programme should be recognised as equivalent for entry to other more traditional academic routes should young people not progress to an MA. Vocational qualifications are recognised and highly valued by industry, as they are designed by the sector in order to meet skills demand. The recognition of non-academic qualifications by the Higher Education sector as part of their conditions for entry will be important to the success of foundation apprenticeships and their take up by pupils of all aptitudes.

Q3. Whether any measures other than those advocated in the report are needed to ensure more young people leave school with “high level vocational qualifications which have strong currency in the labour market”.

Working with key influencers

We have discussed the significant challenge of achieving parity of esteem between academic and vocational pathways above. Work with key influencers in the school system will be crucial to the successful implementation of the recommendations in this respect. We are currently in the process of mapping who would be best to engage with and in what manner.

Further prescriptive guidance

We would suggest that further prescriptive guidance for partners on the implementation of the recommendations would be helpful, especially in order to ensure a consistent approach across the country, where appropriate.

Commitment of adequate resource

Vocational education can often be expensive and therefore it needs to be adequately resourced by partners, both in terms of timetabling, transportation, industry standard equipment and resources. There is also often a requirement for low staff:pupil ratios for practical based activity, as well as a requirement to ensure that suitably qualified and trained staff are delivering the vocational programmes. Given that vocational courses on offer will target school pupils, there may also be additional health and safety requirements for schools, employers and colleges to take into account. Strong and synergistic partnership working between schools, Local Authorities, colleges, private Training Providers, SDS, third sector organisations and, of course, employers, will be required to ensure a scalable system can be sustained in local regions.

Furthermore, past-learning from vocational delivery has shown some evidence of pupils having to contribute financially to ensure their participation (e.g. purchase of protective equipment) it is therefore particularly important to be mindful that those from socio-economically deprived backgrounds could miss out on opportunities if programmes are not adequately resourced.

Q4. Whether the report – which includes a section on improving equalities – places enough emphasis on pupils’ socio-economic inequalities and how these could be overcome.

Enabling employer links with schools in deprived areas

SDS uses a risk matrix approach to CIAG which is based on a range of social, economic and geographical data, to identify customer need and determine the level of service offer required. This allows us to target those who need the most support, with the aim of providing intensive intervention to pupils who need extra help. This would include pupils form areas of multiple deprivation. Earlier CIAG intervention in schools will continue to utilise this approach.

Contacts with schools are often made as a result of parent/employer connections. SDS has a key role in assisting schools to make links with employers in catchment areas where socio-economic
inequalities exist. Some schools in deprived areas struggle to make employer links because there may not be a parent who is working in the household. Other schools, by comparison, can organise work experience placements relatively easily because the majority of parents are closer to the job market. A lack of employer connections in poorer areas also affects pupils' access to career networks. Our career coaching approach emphasises the importance of building networks as part of an individuals' career management skills, to assist pupils in their career path beyond school. This will continue to be a key focus going forward, and extra assistance will be given to pupils who would be less likely to find opportunities to engage with employers. We work closely with schools, parents and partners, such as the Federation of Small Businesses and the local Chamber of Commerce, to help build local networks. Learning Through Work Week, as outlined above, was also a first step in creating stronger links between local employers and schools across Scotland.

**Enabling those from under-represented groups to enhance their career prospects**

In deprived areas there are typically more young people from BME communities, those who are disabled, young carers and young people in care. In order to support those from these groups to enhance their career prospects, we are undertaking activity to help address under-representation in our training programmes and challenge perceptions about vocational education. This work is being done in alignment with the recommendations of the Commission and was underway prior to its commencement.

The aim is that by challenging perceptions about vocational pathways, that we can increase their numbers on our programmes. Unsurprisingly, parity of esteem is a particular challenge for us in terms of some BME communities. It is also difficult to raise awareness among young people from BME backgrounds as there are a number of different of small organisations with short-term funding working in various geographies, often working in isolation from one another and statutory services. We however continue to engage small organisations working with the BME groups and raise awareness of the different pathways available.

We have undertaken a significant amount of activity on advancing equalities in alignment with the Commission’s recommendations, focussing on actions aimed at addressing longer-term cultural and attitudinal issues - from the supply side (young people and their key influencers) and the demand side (employers) - as well as a range of short term, targeted interventions aimed at boosting representation. These activities have been determined through engagement with and listening to key stakeholder and community groups thus far:

- **Pilot work** - Funding developmental, pilot work to trial approaches to increasing attracting those from underrepresented groups to our employability and Modern Apprenticeship programmes. The overall ambition of our pilot activity is to shape our future activities by capturing, recording and sharing good practice in engaging individuals, communities and employers in training. Pilot activities and projects have been shaped through our continuous engagement with and listening to key partner organisations;
- **Capacity building** - Developing the capacity of our contracted Training Providers through a range of activities encompassed within our “Get Connected” initiative - including CPD workshops and awareness raising of equalities issues; Supporting all SDS colleagues to increase their current understanding and awareness of equalities issues;
- **Research** - To ensure that our activities are well informed and effective, we are undertaking research to frame the challenge of, and identify what further actions SDS and partners should take in, widening participation on our various programmes;
- **Targeted marketing campaigns** - marketing and communication activity is underway to promote employability programmes and Modern Apprenticeships to underrepresented groups.

One of the main challenges for our work with employers is around emphasising the benefits of a diverse workforce and therefore influencing their recruitment to take positive action. As it is the employer selects the MA for employment, a great deal of our work will be around supporting
employers in relation to the benefits of positive action in their recruitment practice. This requires effort and commitment with partners over time, which makes this a long term commitment.

Whilst it is relatively straightforward to record information in relation to gender, historically it has been difficult for us to accurately record equalities information due to self-declaration of other protected characteristics. We work with Training Providers to build their skills in supporting young people to record accurate equalities information when registering on a programme, the information remains self-reported and young people can record “prefer not to say” against most categories. Evidence gathered from Training Providers suggests young people often do not declare they have a disability or an additional support need for fear of it affecting their employment opportunities or disadvantaging them in some other way such as creating a barrier to entry and/or progression. Support needs can emerge (e.g. literacy support or undiagnosed dyslexia) but the young person may not feel this is a disability and could record ‘no’ against the category “Do you consider yourself to have a disability?”. It is therefore very likely that our figures for those with a disability are actually much higher than currently reported. Work is being undertaken to encourage a culture where disclosure of a disability and additional support needs is encouraged and supported.

A specific action for us going forward is therefore to support Training Providers to give more help to young people during the registration process on training programmes. We also aim to use our learning from the collection of this data to ensure that we address any issues of underrepresentation in foundation apprenticeships at an early stage.

Q5. Whether there would have to be significant reorganisation in schools to accommodate all the proposed changes (for example, to enable more links with colleges/ to have a greater focus on work placements);

Timetabling

Differences in timetabling - between schools, and between colleges and schools - is an issue which we would suggest needs some consideration. In order for schools to more easily accommodate work experience placements and/or vocational training with colleges and employers, it may be sensible to consider a review of the current school timetable structure. A flexible, but consistent approach to school and college timetabling across Scotland, and within local authorities or regions where needed, could avoid duplication of resource and provide more options to pupils. For example, one school may act as a central point for pupils from many schools, but their timetables need to coincide with each other and with the regional college in order to make it work. West Lothian Council and North Lanarkshire Council are examples of where this approach is already working well. As a national body with a local focus, SDS is uniquely placed to act as a broker between schools, colleges and employers on this issue.

Consistent approach to work placements

SDS’s remit does not extend to sourcing work placements for schools, as this is the responsibility of schools and local authorities. However, as outlined above, we would intend to commit to helping establish a minimum number of links with schools in our school partnership agreements. We have a role in facilitating work based learning with employers, including as part of the delivery of foundation apprenticeships, towards which we will take a consistent and strategic approach.

A consistent and centrally co-ordinated (at Local Authority or regional level) approach to work experience placement operational arrangements for schools would be a positive development. This would place less pressure on the same local businesses to provide placements (especially in remote areas) and make it easier for schools to source appropriate opportunities for pupils, allow the development of good quality health and safety induction procedures for work places and the development of regionally supported databases of participating employers. Again, there are many examples of where this is already working well, such as in Fife and Dumfries & Galloway. In terms of remote areas where there are evidently fewer opportunities for work experience, partners and
schools may need to think more creatively, such as running a school fete as a business, so that pupils can still experience the world of work without having to travel further afield.

Q6. What action and resources would be required to deliver the specific recommendations aimed at schools and teachers, for example:

- teachers’ skills and knowledge may need to develop in certain areas (for example, “to better understand employability and modern work skills”);
- closer links should be established between schools, colleges and employers (for example, “all 363 secondary schools in a long term partnership with employers within 3 years”).

Labour Market Information

Over the past year we have put significant effort behind the drive to improve the evidence base on skills, particularly at a regional level, through the development of further Skills Investment Plans (SIPs) in the key sectors and Regional Skills Assessments. The RSAs were published in October last year. We have engaged extensively with partners, industry leadership groups, Sector Skills Councils and other employer representative bodies across Scotland to gather the range of economic, labour market and education and training data available. This knowledge informs career advice and the content of My World of Work, as well as helps to inform investment decisions, particularly those made through the Scottish Funding Council’s Regional Outcome Agreements (ROAs) with regional colleges.

It is important to ensure that the acquisition of skills and careers knowledge does not become an unnecessary burden for teachers. Our aim is to provide teachers with up to date and easily digestible information on the local and national labour market so that they can gain a more in depth knowledge of employability and modern work skills, without experiencing an increased workload.

Bringing careers to life for teachers

Connecting education to the world of work is a key link which needs to continue to progress. A blended curriculum will only be successful if teachers have knowledge of different industries and jobs. In addition to SDS, key partners such as Local Authorities and Colleges have a role in bringing careers into the classroom and allowing teachers to undertake taster courses in various industries so that teaching staff can gain hands on experience of the world of work. Many colleges run these types of courses already.

We propose to offer teachers the opportunity to build their own CIAG coaching and management skills through learning modules with the SDS Academy, as outlined in our answer to question one.

Learning Through Work Week, Scottish Apprenticeship Week, My World of Work Partnerzone and My World of Work Live at the Glasgow Science Centre are all other ways in which we currently promote the world of work and different careers to teachers.

Conclusion

We hope that this has provided the Committee with an insight into the breadth of our activity with schools going forward, in alignment with the recommendations of the Commission, as well as some of the challenges which we, and our partners, may face in the implementation of the recommendations. We look forward to following the inquiry going forward.

Skills Development Scotland
February 2015

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13 https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/resources/skills-investment-plans/
14 https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/resources/regional-skills-assessments/
15 http://www.myworldofwork.co.uk/gsc
Submission from Anna Sweet

I am responding to the call for evidence on the attainment gap by the committee.

I write as a parent of two children who started in the state sector in primary school and are now in the independent sector. I write also as a person entirely educated in the state sector, although married to somebody almost entirely educated in the private sector. I had wanted my children to be educated in the state sector at least for primary, but in the end we moved them after three years in the state sector.

When my daughter left after three years of primary in the state sector, she lacked confidence after the school had been unable to help her integrate socially. When arriving in the independent sector, she was considerably behind other children there in the areas of maths, information technology, music and sport. She also had a much narrower range of experience in terms of extra curricular activities. The independent school she attends assisted her not only to catch up but overtake, and she has been a scholarship girl the last two years. Teachers were more proactive with bullying issues so that she is now socially integrated. My son had a similar although less marked transition.

Most of my comments below relate to primary education as that is most of my current experience. The main differences that seem to be leading to improved attainment by my kids which I perceive are:

1. Far more highly motivated teachers in the independent school, willing not only to do core work imaginatively, but a lot of extra curricular and outside regular school hours work. While there is a small pay differential, my own view is that it is the feeling in the independent sector of being in control of their own school and destiny that really makes the difference. My impression in the state sector was that teachers felt dispirited and limited by the role of the education authority, feeling more like ‘big brother’ watching them than being supported, and having to cope with ever changing policy, paperwork, and demands.

2. Smaller class sizes.

3. A positive attitude in the school as a whole that it is a good thing to try everything and achieve. I contrast this with my own state experience of it not being cool to excel in anything; and to some extent my daughter’s experience at state school. There is a real drive to involve everybody in everything in the independent school so everybody gets a chance – for example in class assemblies right from age 5 every child has a line to be spoken into the microphone, and everybody who turns up for inter-school rugby matches gets a chance to play at least some of the match.

4. A broader curriculum. There are specialist teachers in music, sport, art and science at my kids’ school, who all do additional after school and weekend clubs too. There is plenty of research showing that learning a musical instrument boosts achievement in all areas.

5. Better after school cover incorporating other activities. For example, at their current school my kids have had opportunities to do woodcraft, drama, Code club, chess club, rugby, hockey, cricket, curling, squash, tennis, fencing, judo, football, thunderball, string orchestra, cross stitch, clay modelling, print making, knitting, cooking and many more – a good number of which are run by teachers.
So they can be in school learning in a positive way for a longer day (until 4.30 or so) which fits in more with parental working commitments so enabling the fees to be paid. I contrast this with the previous school where there were only two after school activities on offer (drama and sprights) for which there were few places, and an ‘afterschool club’ which in reality was a room with very little there and felt more like a ‘marking time’ centre until parents could pick up.

6. Availability of foreign language teaching from an early age, in French and Mandarin.

7. Better organisation by the teaching team. They have been able over a number of years to put in a teaching plan for each year that can be rolled forward (so if you have had a P5 child, you have a fair idea what your P3 child will be doing in 2 years – but so does the school which helps with planning and standards, but also managed innovation). Changing fashions in government thinking about education have affected them less and they have been able instead to integrate change they see as desirable.

8. Better facilities. It makes a difference when children have access to instruments, IT facilities, sports facilities, etc.

These approaches have assisted the achievement and attainment of my children at primary school. Most of them are not to do with “embedding in curriculum”, but are to do with funding, and less interference by central and local government.

I consider that there is a role for government in relation to education; for example there should be regulation, in a culture where equality is important, to ensure ‘faith’ schools do not teach against these principles and give an education in keeping with the general values of the country in which we live. But the role of government has to be limited, and to be based on respect and trust for teachers allowing them to get on with it themselves so they can spend most of their time teaching.

The full potential of independent schools to help attainment is not being realised, because not everybody can afford them. It would help more people to be able to go if there was a rebate of what would be spent by the state if their child was educated in the state sector – this could be put towards fees – or fees being able to come out of pre tax income. On the other hand, requiring independent schools to justify charitable status has been a good thing as more of their facilities have become available to pupils in the state sector too.

I don’t consider the school has to be responsible for reporting on wider achievements- it is just more paperwork for something that happens outside school. There is nothing wrong with parents and pupils having a role in bringing relevant achievement to the attention of employers and learning providers. Schools can just facilitate recognition – in my kids’ school there are awards assemblies and any child can tell the school of something they want to be awarded for and they get a certificate and a round of applause.

I think the school worked more effectively with children of 10 and under than older children, although my experience only goes up to age 12. This is in part due to the pupils themselves – the enthusiasm and willingness to try everything seems to go in the senior school as the pupils have become more body and self conscious.
To sum up. We started in the state sector because I hoped it could be just as good for my kids’ attainment, and I did not want to desert the state sector. But all parents are the same in wanting the best for their children. If the state sector doesn’t deliver an equally good opportunity, it is human nature that parents who are able to will try the independent sector. I am a convert to that sector, and now know what I myself missed in the state sector. I believe that whatever education policies Scotland adopts, the independent sector should be strongly supported. It contributes hugely to Scotland, not just in attainment for children, but also in terms of job creation and contribution to Scotland’s economy.

Anna Sweet
28 January 2015
Educational attainment gap - Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce -

Response to the Call for Written Evidence from the Scottish Parliament Education and Culture Committee

The UNISON Scotland Submission to the Scottish Parliament’s Education and Culture Committee

February 2015
Introduction

UNISON is Scotland’s largest public sector trade union. UNISON members deliver a wide range of services across every sector in education including nurseries, primary schools, secondary schools further education colleges and universities as well as careers advisors in Skills Development Scotland. UNISON is able to analyse and collate their experience as service users and staff to provide evidence to the committee. UNISON welcomes the opportunity to provide evidence to Education and Culture Committee.

Evidence

UNISON welcomes the committee’s inquiry into closing the attainment gap. There is widespread agreement that children from low income households do significantly worse at school than those from better of households and that this gap starts early and continues. What there is little agreement on is what to do about it. Research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation also points out that “the quality and quantity of attainment data from primary and early secondary school pupils vary widely. This makes data-driven project design and evaluation difficult”. If we are to succeed with evidence based policy making the Scottish Government needs to get much better at collecting and collating data and ensuring that it is available for researchers to use. They recommend a national evidence base of what works. The Rowntree report indicates that that by age five the gap between children from low income and high income households is between 10 and 13 months. By age 12-14 pupils from better off areas are more than twice as likely to do well in numeracy as those in the most deprived areas. Parental socio economic backgrounds has more influence than the school attended.

The report suggests the following as routes forward

- High quality full day pre school education
- Parental involvement programmes
- Literacy teaching
- Children working together in small groups
- Nurture groups
- Academically focussed after school activities
- Peer tutoring, meta-cognitive tutoring and one-to-one tutoring
- Mentoring
- Professional development for teachers
- Targeted funding
- Evidence based whole school reforms

Given the shortage of Scottish data the recent Department of Education report based on an extensive longitudinal study of children from pre school to age 16 provides useful evidence.

Key findings:

- Enduring legacy of pre-school: the positive effect of high quality pre-school lasts up to and beyond compulsory education. This is most significant for relatively low earners. Attending a pre-school (or not) was a significant predictor of higher grades in GCSE
- The difference represented is getting 8 GCSE at C grade as opposed to 8 at A grade. The effect is stronger for those whose parents had low qualification levels. High
quality preschool was also linked to better self regulations, pro-social behaviour and lower levels of hyperactivity

- Even after controlling for individual, family and neighbourhood influences and GCSE results, children who attended a high quality pre-school had a “greater likelihood of” entering the most demanding academic route.

- Interestingly “positive relationships with teachers” and to a lesser extent “teacher professional focus” had a significant impact on GCSE scores and academic progress in maths in secondary schools.

- The strongest predictor of exam success is family influences. While there is a significant gap between exam scores of children receiving free school meals and those not (a full grade in English or Maths) family income and socioeconomic status while significant have a weaker effect than parental education. Again while “place poverty” or living in a deprived area both predict poorer exam results over and above family status, it is still a weaker influence than a student’s own family demographics.

- Learning opportunities at home and outside school: “the current capacity of students’ families to support academic enrichment activities had significant effects on GCSE scores and on social behavioural outcomes.” Enrichment activities include independent reading or educational visits outside school. So while there has been previous support for school support for these types of activities for younger children there is a strong argument for similar activities for those in secondary school.

- Girls’ success at school doesn’t translate into later life: they outperform boys consistently but boys aspire to higher status jobs than girls with similar exam score.

There is no evidence to back up claims that low levels of aspiration amongst children from poorer economic backgrounds contribute to their lower academic achievements. Over two thirds of children receiving free school meals aspired to go to university. Choices of ideal job did though still show strong gender stereotyping.

UNISON is concerned that the current cuts particularly to local government budgets will not only prevent improvement they will also make things worse. High quality childcare is clearly very important and while we welcome the Scottish government promises of expanded hours we are concerned that this has not been properly costed or funded. The current system is expensive, complex and hard to navigate. This further disadvantages those on low incomes. Scotland needs a comprehensive childcare strategy. To provide high quality childcare requires qualified staff and continued professional development for those staff. The most cost effective way of providing this service is in the public sector paid for via taxation.

Academic enrichment activities are also effective in improving attainment. Cuts in local authority budgets are increasing charges for a range of activities either provided directly by the councils or through increased letting charges for local authority facilities hired by private/voluntary providers. This makes it harder for children from low income families to take up the opportunities. School trips whether for a day, afternoon or a week are increasingly costly again reducing the ability of children from low income families to participate. There is evidence that children from low income families do not even ask parents if they can participate in activities which require payments a they don’t want to put
pressure on their parents for money as they know the sacrifice that it would involve. Children from better off families are therefore able to undertake a range of activities: sports clubs and outdoor activities, visits to museums, galleries and theatres and trips abroad either provided directly by their parents or via schools which boost their educational attainment.

According to an EHRC report iii

- Less than 0.5% of all Modern Apprenticeship placements are taken by someone with a declared disability. Around 8% of the target population (16-24) is disabled.
- 98% of construction placements are still taken by men.
- Although men are increasingly moving into “traditionally female” apprenticeship programmes, there is no evidence of an increase of women entering “traditionally male” apprenticeships.
- Less than 2% of all apprenticeships in Scotland are taken by ethnic minorities. Around 4% of the target population (16-24) is from an ethnic minority

The report also states that the vast majority of industry demand statements published for key sectors in Scotland do not mention equality issues, despite in some cases being written by Scottish Government agencies, which have specific duties with regards to the advancement of equality. Indeed the first part of the Wood Commission report specifically stated that it had not yet looked into equalities as that would take place in the next part of the review rather than ensuring that these issues were mainstreamed into all their work.

Where equality issues are considered, they do not make firm or measurable commitments for improvement. Again (equality employment) data remains a significant hurdle to equality analysis across the key sectors. UNISON Scotland agrees with the STUC that the expansion of modern apprenticeships can only be successful by tackling inequality and improving diversity as a key factor. This is supported by their research on modern apprenticeships undertaken through the Scottish Union Learning Fund

UNISON Scotland believes that the application of the Equality Act 2010 and the general duty and specific duties (Scotland) need to applied in a consistent and positive way that would enhance and deliver on a diverse apprenticeship programme. We recognise that many modern apprenticeship programmes are in the private sector and that these companies are only covered by the Equality Act and not the Public Sector Duty. Nevertheless, the Act allows for positive action measures to be taken, if required and we believe that would provide many employers with the opportunity to diversify their workforce.

We also believe that the Scottish Government can play a key role by, through the promised statutory guidance to Procurement Reform Act, ensuring that private companies who receive Scottish Government contracts are required to implement the SDS Equality Impact Assessment & Action plan.

UNISON agrees with the Wood Commission that all school pupils need to be better prepared for employment and better informed in career choice. It is however disappointing that the crucial role careers guidance professionals play in ensuring young people and parents are informed about routes into work, career planning and employment opportunities merits only limited reference in both the final report and Scottish Government’s implementation plan. Whilst understanding the viewpoint (Recommendation 1 and 2) that young people should commence vocational pathways alongside academic studies during mainstream schooling it is equally crucial that young people are supported to help them integrate these experiences
into their career management skills and their personal future plans. Before, during and after exposing young people to these wide ranging opportunities they should be guaranteed, as a minimum, ongoing face-to-face interactions on a one to one basis with a Careers Guidance professional. Recently published academic research by Edinburgh University\textsuperscript{iv} on the impact of careers websites and other careers support indicated that if the effectiveness of public funding for Careers Information Advice and Guidance is to be maximised then resources should be predominantly directed towards face-to-face services. The research further stated that whilst careers websites are and will continue to be an essential and valuable component of Careers Information Advice and Guidance provision they have a limited impact on young people’s careers management skills compared with other approaches.

Indeed, UK wide this position is shared by many others as there are now growing calls for face-to-face career guidance to be made available to all young people. The report states:

“it is notable that in its review of careers guidance for young people in England, the House of Commons Education Committee stated that ‘We believe that face-to-face guidance is an integral part of good quality careers guidance’ and went on to recommend that ‘a minimum of one personal careers interview with an independent adviser should be available for every young person’ (House of Common, 2013 p3).

Furthermore, a recent Barnardo’s\textsuperscript{v} study of careers advice concluded that face-to-face advice is vitally important in providing quality career guidance to young people and it calls for face-to-face guidance to be guaranteed for all young people who ask for it.

The Commission report also raises valid concerns that there may exist an ill-informed culture that somehow vocational education is an inferior option. Our members welcome the opportunity to assist with raising the status of vocational and further education amongst school pupils but again fear our ability may be limited unless resources are re-directed to both personal face-to-face approaches alongside additional group sessions to young people and their parents. A website can in no way challenge the perceptions of students or their parents round gendered work or the value of vocational/academic pathways.

An important aspect of career guidance is to challenge gender and stereotypical thinking, occupational segregation and to encourage individuals to consider alternatives and to raise aspirations. Unless current under-represented groups have in-depth face-to-face contact with a careers professional then hoping to encourage all pupils to be aware of and consider the merits of e.g. Modern Apprenticeships will be difficult to achieve. Careers guidance professionals are ideally placed to highlight the benefits of work placed learning as a respected career option and alternative to university.

The current SDS risk matrix used to assess the need for service is largely based on social, economic and educational need. Some consideration should be given to how an enhanced targeted support can also be offered (and resourced) to groups believed to have difficulty entering and sustaining the wide range of opportunities including apprenticeships.

In recognising the importance of Recommendation 13 it should be noted that there are also many examples of historical good practice delivered by careers professionals within Skills Development Scotland for disadvantaged groups ranging from care leaver to young parent initiatives. Other initiatives such as Activate which delivered an employability based
programme to targeted pupils. The common theme was the early intervention of a linked careers’ guidance professional who offered on-going support to young people making the transition to the world of work. These programmes made great strides towards improving employability outcomes for targeted groups at risk of not progressing into a positive destination and would be a good basis for developing future initiatives aimed at improving successful transition and participation levels of specific pupils.

The Commission’s report also suggests (Recommendation 2) that young people in S1 to S3 should have access to the Careers Service to help prepare them for employment. Whilst historically this was on offer in lower school this tended to be only for S2 subject choice and predominantly consisted of one-off class talks alongside possible attendance at S2 parent evenings. Whilst this is now changing as part of service modernisation, if all pupils by the end of S3 should have a demonstrable understanding of the process of finding, applying for and successfully getting and sustaining a job, this will have resource implications. Furthermore, the ability of all S3 pupils to reach and demonstrate this standard of awareness and knowledge may also prove challenging without the knowledge and expertise of careers guidance professionals.

UNISON believes our members in SDS have a fundamental role to play in developing Scotland’s Young Workforce and can achieve this by concentrating on what actually works. Whilst the evidence session is focussing on the implications for schools, teachers and pupils it is important to realise that the implementation plan will also have capacity and resource implications for key partners such as Skills Development Scotland. Careers professionals have a crucial role in a future inter agency partnership approach to widening awareness of the range of choices available to young people and supporting them in making the most appropriate choices.

The development of a high quality, trained workforce is crucial in any modern and progressive economy. That can only be achieved by addressing the significant inequalities in the workforce whether in the private or public sectors.

A good modern apprenticeship programme should include strategies to ensure that Modern Apprenticeships are accessible to the widest possible demographic spread of people. Recruitment and retention policies should not discriminate against anyone.

The further education sector has gone through a period of substantial change at the same time as substantial cuts in its budget. UNISON members working in colleges do not share the government’s optimism about the sectors readiness to deliver on these new commitments. The report’s recommendations will clearly have an impact on the sector and staff. The changes will result in additional training requirements for staff. Job cuts and increased workloads mean members are already under severe pressure. Colleges need more staff and this means additional funding if colleges are to meet the commitments contained in the bill.

UNISON members do not have the same level of confidence as the Scottish government that colleges are well placed to meet new challenges. The regional structures are very new and there has been no evaluation yet of its effectiveness. Edinburgh College has recently “lost” its Principal and Clyde College in Glasgow has suspended its Principal amid allegations regarding management style and acrimony with regional board. Members are very concerned about the future of this vital sector. Colleges are important places for the delivery of vocational training and for many, particularly those from less well-off backgrounds, are...
the first step to a more academic qualification. Any serious strategy to reduce the attainment gap needs to invest substantially in further education institutions.

The sector is struggling to meet current demand and does not have adequate funding to meet any increased demand from the Developing the Young Workforce strategy. Feedback from our members indicates a pattern of students being rejected or given course full letters every year. The government needs to better collate data on current demand for college places and those who are missing out. This should include part-time as well as full-time courses and demographic data to insure that for example women of people with disabilities are not being disproportionally affected. This data can be used to work out the funding requirements to deliver the government’s aims.

UNISON as the largest public sector trade union in Scotland represents a range of staff working across all sectors of education including nurseries, primary schools, secondary schools further education colleges and universities as well as careers advisors in Skills Development Scotland could therefore play a significant roll on the National Advisory Board to support the Delivering Young Workforce programme.

Conclusion
UNISON is the largest public sector trade union in Scotland. We are able to analyse and collate members’ experiences of the sector, as service users and staff, to provide evidence to the committee. UNISON believes that tackling inequality and its consequence, like the gap in educational attainment, are vital. This will require resources. There is no indication that the resources needed are being calculated far less allocated. UNISON welcomes the opportunity to provide evidence to the committee.

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Glasgow
G2 6RX

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i Closing the Attainment gap in Scottish Education E Sosu and S Ellis May 2014
ii Student’s education and developmental outcomes at age 16: effective pre-school, primary and secondary education project K.Sylva et al September 2014 Department of Education
iii “Modern Apprenticeships: Equality & The Economy - Spreading The Benefits “( July 2014),
Educational attainment gap – Commission for Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce

Universities Scotland Response

Universities in Scotland welcome the report from the Commission on Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce. While the report, and the subsequent Scottish Government Youth Employment Strategy focuses actions on the school and college sectors there are many parallels and implications for the university sector which the sector are eager to respond to.

Universities particularly welcome the emphasis on partnership, the recognition of the role of the education sector as a driver of economic growth and social mobility and the commitment to tackling inequality in all levels of education.

Scotland’s universities share an interest, and a responsibility, in raising the educational attainment of all of Scotland’s school pupils and in closing the attainment gap that is already evident between Scotland’s wealthiest and poorest children as young as five years of age.¹

The Universities Scotland response to the Committee will cover the following areas:

- Closer links should be established between schools, colleges and employers
- The emphasis on pupils’ socio-economic inequalities and how these could be overcome
- The disadvantages of “splitting young people off into separate streams at school age” and how it could be avoided

Closers links should be established between schools, colleges and employers

The recommendations in the Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce Report on closer links between education providers and employers are welcomed by universities.

The promotion of a regional approach and emphasis on partnership working between schools and colleges are key to the Wood Commission aims and benefit from further partnership with universities to raise educational attainment and aspiration. Many universities have seen demonstrable success in this area and can demonstrate success in supporting widening access through these partnerships.

There are various methods employed by universities to support educational attainment within their region.

Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen has a long established partnership Aberdeen City Council and, through this, has a number of ‘partner schools’ throughout the North East of Scotland. The aim of these partnerships is to support educational attainment and achievement of positive destinations. The model supports direct delivery by the University in local schools and a suite of on-campus programmes. This has led to 15.9% of Senior Phase pupils in partner schools becoming ‘Associate Students’ of the University.²

The University of the Highlands and Islands aims to develop and oversee the delivery of a partnership-wide strategy for increasing the range of the curriculum offered to and utilised by schools and school pupils in the region. Through the college structure of the institution, the

¹ Joseph Rowntree Foundation report found an attainment gap of 10-13 months is evident in children as young as five: www.jrf.org.uk/publications/closing-attainment-gap-scottish-education.
² http://www.rgu.ac.uk/future-students/degree-link/associate-student-scheme
University works with partner schools directly delivering courses, in person and online, at SCQF levels 4-7 to approximately 3000 students. This supports delivery of advanced-learning enabling study across a largely rural area which would otherwise not be available.

The Advanced Higher Hub at Glasgow Caledonian University provides Advanced Higher study in English; Mathematics; Biology; Chemistry; History; Business Management and Modern Studies to enable learners in the Glasgow area to undertake study which might not be available in their school and which may otherwise prevent them from reaching their educational attainment abilities. The Hub works in partnership with Schools who have lower-than-average progression to higher education and students from an SIMD40 background. The Hub worked with 17 partner schools and 97 pupils in Year 1 (2013-14) and increased this to 21 partner schools and 155 pupils in Year 2 (2014-15). The Hub has achieved attendance rates of 94% and a pass rate of 76%. Similar programmes are also run at the Dundee City Campus Model by Dundee University and Abertay University and the S6@Uni project run by Aberdeen University.

Universities have a long history of employer engagement in course and programme design and review, of working with industry and employer advisory boards and through provision of placement and work-based learning partnerships. The university sector believe schools and colleges would equally benefit from this input.

Heriot Watt University engages employers throughout all of the above aspects – and considers this to bring value to employers, students and the university. The University has active industry advisory boards with representatives from local, national and international businesses. In tune with Wood Commission Report themes, the board supports a mutual understanding of employers’ needs and graduate skills. This informs the development of the curriculum and encourages business to become involved in the delivery of the curricula.

Abertay University provides work-related learning opportunities for students on all degree programmes. These may involve work-based learning or work-simulated learning. Evidence from sector organisations such as Scot Grad suggests that students’ employability and skills are enhanced by placement experiences. Since 2010, over 800 graduates have undertaken a placement through ScotGrad and over 75% of these graduates have progressed to graduate-level employment (this is higher than the Scottish-wide average of 69%). The universality of the approach taken by Abertay is supportive of the drive to reduce inequality and broaden aspiration and ensures fair access to opportunities.

The emphasis on pupils’ socio-economic inequalities and how these could be overcome

The Commission for Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce Report challenges schools, colleges and employers to reduce inequality particularly focussing on gender, ethnicity, disability and care leavers.

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3 The partner school progression to HE rate is 19% compared to a Glasgow City Council average of 31% and a sector wide progression rate of 36%.
4 The attendance rate across all pupils in Glasgow City Council schools is 91%.
5 http://www.scotgrad.co.uk/graduates/overview
6 http://www.universities-scotland.ac.uk/uploads/HESA%20DLHE%202014.pdf
The Wood Commission Report did not directly deal with socio-economic impact on educational attainment, however this is of significant importance to universities as universities are currently measured against the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation.

Universities Scotland welcome the acknowledgement from the First Minister in November 2014 and from the Leader of the Scottish Labour Party in February 2015 that more must be done to improve school attainment in Scotland’s most deprived communities to facilitate access to university.

The attainment gap starts young and continues through school. By the time university is a consideration the attainment gap between the wealthiest and the poorest presents a considerable challenge.

- Across Scotland, school pupils from the wealthiest 20 per cent of postcode areas are three times more likely to get the minimum entry requirements needed to go to university (three or four Highers at any grade) as their peers from the poorest 20 per cent of postcode regions (Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD)80 and SIMD20 compared). 7

- The attainment gap doubles again if you look at the difference between the numbers of pupils from SIMD20 postcodes achieving three or more ‘A’ grades at Higher and/or Advanced Higher compared with pupils from SIMD80 postcodes. 8 Only 4.3 per cent of pupils living in SIMD20 achieved the grades compared to 26.1 per cent of pupils living in SIMD80.

On the broader aspects of equality of attainment and therefore access to further and higher education or employment, universities in Scotland are committed to widening access of opportunity and removing barriers to access to higher education. All universities signed up to a widening access statement in 2012 including the following statement:

“University should be equally open to any learner with the appropriate academic potential to benefit, regardless of their social or economic circumstances.” 9

Universities Scotland research has identified a range of challenges to educational attainment which subsequently affects positive destinations for school leavers.

As the Wood Commission identified, gender has an impact on educational attainment. One of the key issues of gender imbalance in access to higher education is the lower proportion of males staying in education and attaining qualification levels which prepare them for university entry, and the consequent female/male imbalance in the undergraduate population. 10 While universities undertake a great deal of action to reduce this imbalance, this cannot be resolved without cross-sector working and increased equality of attainment in schools.

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7 Scottish Government Attainment and Leaver Statistics 2012/13. 21% of SIMD20 school leavers got 3-4 SCQF level 6 qualifications compared to 63% from SIMD80.
8 SFC Learning for All – eight update report (2014) table 22c_i
9 http://www.universities-scotland.ac.uk/uploads/Widening%20Access%20recommendations.pdf p4
10 Data provided in Annex – table 1 demonstrating the greater retention of female students, table 2 and 3 showing greater educational attainment at SCQF Level 6 by female students
The disadvantages of “splitting young people off into separate streams at school age” and how it could be avoided

The Wood Commission Report identifies the importance of establishing pathways for young people which aid transition from school to college to employment. Universities strongly support the Wood Commission recommendation to develop pathways “without splitting young people off into separate streams at school age.”

University is not always the first step for school-leavers, who may legitimately chose to study at college or progress to employment immediately following school but it is important to ensure that the pathways remain flexible to allow university to be a future step. Pathways should be flexible and should to be considered as stopping at college or employment. The Committee should consider routes into and through various levels of education as the norm rather than a fixed path.

Universities are responsive to this desired flexibility. Universities are increasingly establishing articulation agreements with colleges to support students transitioning from college to university. In 2012-13 almost 8000 students entered university from college.11

To facilitate this, universities work in close partnership with colleges to undertake extensive curriculum mapping to ease progress through all levels of the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework (SCQF). The University of the Highlands and Island, itself a partnership of thirteen independent colleges and research institutions, is an excellent example; the University is currently aligning curriculum planning across all further education and higher education courses and have seamless curricula in Tourism and Hospitality, Creative Industries, and Engineering and Energy. This facilitates the development of coherent pathways in-line with, and exceeding, the ambition established in the Wood Commission report.

The university sector is committed to lifelong learning and providing higher education to those who desire it and are capable at the appropriate time in their life. In 2013-14, there were over 80,000 mature students studying at Scottish universities.12 This underlines the importance of supporting educational attainment and raising aspiration in schools to ensure that all pathways remain open to students regardless of how or when they may choose that path.

ENDS

Further information

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Gavin@universities-scotland.ac.uk

11 Data provided in Annex – Table 4
12 Data provided in Annex – Table 5
Annex – Statistical evidence for Universities Scotland submission to Education and Culture Committee on educational attainment gap and Commission for Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce

Table 1: Percentage of S4 cohort completing S6

<table>
<thead>
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<td>Male</td>
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<td>50.6</td>
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<td>57.4</td>
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<td>6.8</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>7.3</td>
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Table 2: Percentage of S4 cohort with at least 3 SCQF level 6 qualifications (e.g. Higher) at the end of S6

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<td>29.2</td>
<td>30.8</td>
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<td>41.8</td>
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<td>Female to male difference</td>
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<td>9.0</td>
<td>9.8</td>
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Table 3: Percentage of S4 cohort with at least 5 SCQF level 6 qualifications (e.g. Higher) at the end of S6

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Table 4: Number of students with HNQs entering Scottish universities

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<td>529</td>
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<td>Progression (P)</td>
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<td>Annual Total</td>
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<td>6675</td>
<td>6714</td>
<td>7708</td>
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Table 5: Number (headcount) of Scottish mature students (21 and over) at Scottish universities 2013-14

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<th>25-29</th>
<th>30+</th>
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<tr>
<td>Total number of students</td>
<td>32,340</td>
<td>14,130</td>
<td>33,635</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>80,185</td>
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Voice Scotland response

Educational attainment gap - Commission for Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce

We welcome the recognition being given to vocational education and enhanced careers information, advice and guidance. Whilst much depends on the effectiveness of implementation strategies, we believe that implementing the recommendations of the Wood report are likely to improve provision and support for vocational education and have a positive impact on attainment and achievement. Pupils most likely to benefit would include those who have become (or are at risk of becoming) disaffected by the traditional emphasis of a narrow academic curriculum which has proved to be neither suitable nor relevant to their interests and abilities. Such pupils are not necessarily less able than their academic counterparts, but rather differently abled and, therefore, in need of a curriculum which is more tailored to their skills and learning preferences. At the same time, it is unhelpful to maintain stereotyped distinctions between academic and vocationally inclined students, as there are many students for whom vocational education reignites interest in academic work, because they benefit from seeing the practical relevance of academic skills applied in a vocational context.

We would, however, caution against an over-prescriptive approach to vocational education, whether tied to an age group (e.g. senior phase) or subject area (e.g. STEM). Flexibility is needed so that schools and colleges can tailor provision to match the needs of students rather than the needs of performance tables, funding agreements or curriculum requirements (all of which should be sufficiently flexible to allow for a tailored and best-practice approach, rather than giving incentives for perverse practices). Therefore, the question of how attainment is to be measured will also require consideration.

The present system, which emphasises ‘academic’ education, often with vocational education tacked on casually as a late addition, is wasteful of resources, including the human resource of young people caught up on both sides of the academic/vocational divide. Those who follow a traditional academic path up to Highers and then fail to obtain a university place are often ill-equipped to find an alternative pathway into employment, whilst many students who have entered vocationally training may end up being employed in a field unrelated to the ‘vocation’ for which they have studied. This situation can only be resolved by breaking down the false dichotomy between vocational and academic education.

We, therefore, support the recommendation to enhance vocational content “without splitting young people off into separate streams at school age”. It is probably a mistake to label an entire section of knowledge as ‘vocational’, thus identifying it as being ‘different’ (in some, possibly, indefinable way) from the rest of education. This inevitably leads to a ‘pecking order’ in which vocational education is seen as inferior. Content and application of knowledge should take priority over status and parity. The aim of all education (whether perceived to be academic or vocational) should be to develop cohorts of young people with key transferable competencies which will enable them to progress to generic roles in the economy and to move flexibly between these roles according to the exigencies of the labour market and their personal aspirations and interests. Whilst those who show a preference and/or aptitude for more specialised roles should be given the opportunity to progress to appropriate education or training courses, early specialisation should generally be discouraged as it often entails cutting off alternative options at too young an age. We would also submit that individual classes in whatever subject should be comprised of pupils of similar ability, to ensure that individual pupils’ needs are adequately met.

We welcome the recognition of the critical role to be played by further education colleges in the delivery of vocational options. The inclusion of professional staff with dual qualifications in both teaching and vocational specialisms will be pivotal to the effective delivery and success of vocational education in schools, colleges and the workplace.

It is important that appropriate support, funding and guidance is made available so that implementation of the recommendations is fully resourced, promoted and publicised. This should include properly resourced access to high quality careers information, advice and guidance, including one-to-one face-to-face provision, to ensure that young people are adequately assisted to make
appropriate and well-informed decisions about which options to pursue. Specialist and dedicated support is particularly required to reach young people who are disengaged (or at risk of becoming disengaged) from education. Much of this support is already available through those further education colleges which are already experienced in reaching out to hard-to-reach groups, but more effectively tailored funding and resourcing will be needed to extend this facility to a wider clientele.

Waiting until the senior phase of education, whilst appropriate for dedicated courses, is too late to introduce access to work-related learning, as such learning should not be kept in reserve until all else has failed. Vocational elements should be included from the earliest years of compulsory education, with opportunities for all children and young people to engage with a wide range of crafts, practical science and technology, business and work with people during all stages of their education. It is important that this is not restricted to STEM subjects, as better links are required between vocational education and all sectors of the labour market. Social enterprise projects, or other kinds of business enterprise initiatives, can effectively foster a wide range of skills – in literacy, marketing, creativity, entrepreneurialism and working with people, as well as in science, technology, engineering and mathematics – and have been found to be especially effective in reconnecting disengaged students. Curriculum for Excellence provides an opportunity for embedding such inter-disciplinary initiatives and this should be fully exploited for all age groups.

Engaging with employers is a particular challenge especially as, in the current post-industrial age, the majority of workers are employed in small enterprises, all of which have diverse requirements (even when they are in the same area of economic activity). Whilst many employers appear to expect new workers to arrive fully trained (although there might be disagreement over what this ‘training’ should include), others believe that they have a unique approach to their trade or business and prefer to put significant resources into training new recruits in these distinctive methods. Therefore, more contact, interaction and networking between schools, colleges, private and third sector training providers and the widest possible range of employers must be encouraged by all available means.

The Wood report includes a very useful section on advancing equalities but, whilst (understandably) this section focuses on the protected characteristics of gender, ethnicity and disability, reference to socio-economic inequalities more generally is addressed only in relation to care leavers. This needs to be widened to include other vulnerable groups, such as children and young people in persistent poverty. Often, such children are required to find employment at an early age (often in a part-time capacity whilst still at school, and foregoing opportunities to engage in further and/or higher education). Such paid employment is often highly valued by employers (more so than work experience) and provides scope for the development of employability skills, so it would be helpful to draw on such experience to structure learning about the workplace and motivate students, especially those who are economically disadvantaged.

It is also essential to ensure that appropriate continuing professional development opportunities are provided so that school staff can “better understand employability and modern work skills”. This should include opportunities to network with further education colleges and employers, undertake short-term secondments (e.g. a week’s work experience in industry) and attending structured training events (including online learning). Teacher workloads and staff shortages also pose a considerable barrier in terms of time for staff to plan developments and will require consideration.

The question of whether there would need to be significant reorganisation in schools to accommodate all the proposed changes depends largely on what arrangements are currently in place in particular schools and the resource implications for any given area of the country. For example, in rural areas, travel costs and travel time can make working with colleges difficult in practice. Our members report timetabling being a particular issue, with school classes missed as a result of timetabling for a day out at college not proving possible. Our members also report that it is not uncommon for pupils to drop their college commitments in these circumstances, having found balancing school work and college work a struggle in practice. Truanting and disaffection are issues which our members report would require particular vigilance given the movement of pupils between different learning locations.

Some schools and local authorities already have well-developed and successful links with colleges and employers, whilst others are further behind in this process. Those that are further ahead will, no doubt, wish to maintain and further strengthen links (which may have suffered because of recent
austerity cuts), whilst those which are further behind will require more support to implement the changes. Schools with appropriate experience should be encouraged to disseminate and showcase good practice and, perhaps, provide mentoring support to other establishments. Adequate resource will be required to ensure that a larger scale strategy is successful in ensuring comprehensive delivery.

The whole process needs to be designed so that it is both intrinsically and extrinsically rewarding by celebrating the achievement of targets at each stage. This may include displays, presentations, exhibitions, competitions, awards (both group and individual), visits, residential experiences, and so on.

Please don’t hesitate to get in touch should you have any queries further to the above response.

I would be most grateful for acknowledgement of safe receipt of this e-mail.

Kind regards

Jennifer Barnes
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Response from West College Scotland
27th February 2015

Introduction

West College Scotland provides education to some of the most socio-economically challenged young people in Scotland. As such, the College has a keen interest in ensuring education delivers for all young people.

In 2013-14, 25% of our enrolments came from the 20% most deprived areas in Scotland, yet 65% of these students were successful in fully completing their course. This is only a few percentage points below the success rate for students from across all areas, and shows that these challenges can be overcome, if we continue our work.

The College makes this submission to highlight the success of our partnerships with schools. We work with over 40 schools and have over 3000 school pupils studying in the college each week. We believe such work is key to mitigating the effects of socio-economic challenges on educational attainment. Here we highlight some of our successes, and those issues which the College feels are preventing us from achieving greater success.

Session One: Commission for Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce

- What action and resources would be required to deliver the specific recommendations aimed at schools and teachers, for example:
  - closer links should be established between schools, colleges and employers.

West College Scotland welcomed the findings of the Commission for Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce. Indeed, in many ways WCS is already engaging in the activities recommended by the commission. In particular, WCS has been involved in a number of partnerships with schools. Below we highlight a number of examples that have been particularly successful in contributing to improved outcomes for young people, and outline how these could be further developed.

Case Study One: HNC Engineering Partnership with St Peter the Apostle High School

In partnership with St Peter the Apostle High School in Clydebank, the College has offered 14 S6 school pupils the opportunity to study HNC in engineering. The pupils attend our campus at Paisley, twice a week. Successful pupils are guaranteed a place on the HND course after leaving school, and may be able to continue their studies into 3rd year at university.

This has increased the range of opportunities available to pupils. They are provided with a taste of the subject at a higher, more vocationally-specific level, without committing to a longer course; they

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gain experience in the sort of learning environment and learning skills needed to succeed in their future education; and the programme creates a simple and accessible pathway to engineering, encouraging pupils who may not have previously considered the subject.

This could not have been developed without strong partnership working between West Dunbartonshire Council, St. Peter the Apostle High School, and West College Scotland. It is an excellent example of how partnership working can benefit young people to increase their educational opportunities and gain employability skills, in a way that is accessible to a wider range of pupils than before.

Significantly, in just 12 months, the College now has 8 such HNC programmes working with a number of schools across the whole region, with demand continuing to rise. The programmes reflect the key economic sectors of Scotland and support the College focus on STEM.

Work Experience and Employer Links

An additional benefit of such school-college partnerships are the growing the opportunities to immerse our students and school pupils in key industry sectors while they study.

A key priority is to increase the exposure of school pupils to the workplace, including through meaningful work experience. However, targeting schools to provide such work experience may have unintended consequences: employers often describe the educational landscape as ‘cluttered’ and it is possible this will be compounded by large numbers of schools approaching the same local employers for work experience opportunities. Employers do not often see themselves as being defined by either local authority or regional boundaries.

West College Scotland partners with over 40 schools and over 500 employers across the region. For employers, the College can be the one point of contact when engaging in training and work experience. For schools and pupils, our links with employers already engaged in vocational education provision and skills training and employers from a wider geographical spread, can provide structured engagement and a wider choice.

As an example, a senior phase cohort of school pupils from West Dunbartonshire are studying an HNC in Engineering in specialist simulated work environments at the Paisley Campus of the College and benefiting from the links the College has with local employers and employers across the region.

Case Study Two: Consultation of Parents and Pupils on Course Provision

In partnership with Renfrewshire Council, the College has been working to improve the vocational educational opportunities available at school. We sought the views of all learners S3-S5 and their parents/guardians. The aim of the consultation was to generate useful information that will help inform both the Council’s and West College Scotland’s plans for the delivery of courses and targeted programmes from August 2015 onwards.

Survey questions were worded so that learners could respond on their own behalf, and in a way that parents/guardians would respond with their child in mind. We also investigated local market forces data to build a picture of local demand for skills from employers.
Using this research, we have jointly planned the delivery of College courses for S5 and S6 pupils for 2015-16. Where both student and local employer demand for courses has been high, we have targeted new courses that will satisfy pupils' interest, providing vocationally beneficial education, and serving the needs of the local economy.

Building ‘family capital’ is a key priority: engaging with parents and teachers in such an exercise ensures they have the awareness, knowledge and understanding of the benefits and choices offered by vocational education and skills training. Experience to date reinforces the lack of awareness amongst teachers and head teachers of vocational education as an alternative or addition to more traditional academic routes that feature prominently in schools provision and careers advice.

This has been a beneficial piece of work, which we would seek to replicate across each of our local areas. We believe it might be of benefit to other regions, too, and would benefit from becoming more formalised, with funding and policy advice used to develop and promote.

Case Study Three: Taster in vocational college courses at school

In partnership with Inverclyde Council, West College Scotland delivered a 4-week programme of taster courses for S4 pupils in May 2014. This was in response to feedback from pupils who said they were sometimes unsure of what courses involved, and that courses sometimes did not match their expectations. This would lead to pupils leaving or changing course, disadvantaging the student, and causing disruption for the College.

These taster courses proved very successful and allowed the pupils to make more informed choices. Feedback from the tasters has influenced planned delivery for the senior phase. Evaluation of retention data has shown that the taster programme contributed to improved planning and increased pupil enjoyment and satisfaction. Due to this success the College will be running tasters again this year with more options available.

Areas for Development and Improvements

West College Scotland has very good partnerships with all of our local authority and school colleagues. As highlighted by these examples, working with schools has led to a number of successful outcomes. These outcomes will only be improved by increased partnership, as called for by the Commission for Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce. However, there are a number of issues that currently make implementing these challenging:

1) Some regional colleges, including West College Scotland, work with a number of local authorities. Very often adjacent authorities employ different procedures and models which can be challenging when colleges seek to harmonise delivery. For example, some authorities will grant study leave for senior phase pupils studying at National 4 level; the academic year is sometimes different among neighbouring authorities; and some operate “prelims”, while others do not. Occasionally, the same local authority will apply different models and procedures to different schools within its area.

2) School timetables and how subjects are placed across them can, at times, lack the flexibility which allows senior phase pupils to access college courses, either in school or in college. This is especially true of smaller secondary schools.
3) West College Scotland is delighted by the demand from local schools to access teaching in the STEM disciplines. However, staff availability and a lack of available, suitable workshops and laboratories means that we cannot always meet that demand in a way that we would like to.

4) We continue to be concerned by the ‘vocational barrier’ which still exists in some schools.

5) West College Scotland is already delivering some of the teaching models for schools recommended by the Commission into Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce. However, we would welcome clearer and more detailed information from the responsible authorities about the funding of such models. It is unclear, for example, what happens to funding if a school pupil fails units in an HNC programme in S6. We expect this to be an area of growth in the future and would welcome such information and guidelines.

6) We would welcome a more collaborative approach between College lecturers and schoolteachers in the development of courses for senior phase pupils. We feel this would bring about a better understanding of which areas “fit” with the school curriculum and which with the College curriculum. Our view is that this would help bring about a “true” collaboration, as described in the Commission’s report.

7) We would welcome more information to be provided centrally by the SQA on progression pathways in each discipline. It would be helpful for students, parents and employers to know as early as possible what qualifications exist, how they relate to each other and what job or further area of study they would allow the student to progress to.

West College Scotland is regional college for the West, serving five local authority areas, with a campus in three of these. As such, the College is in an excellent position to lead partners in exploring opportunities to contribute to a ‘regional perspective’ within the educational landscape. Such opportunities include the development of a regional school-college STEM strategy which engages all local authorities; regional timetabling across the schools sector; and the development of a regional school-college curriculum, including a regional progression ‘Map’.

Strengthening our partnerships with schools is vital to implementing the findings of the Commission into Developing the Young Workforce. This would be assisted greatly by the allocation of additional resources and we hope that the Government will recognise this when considering future financial settlements.

We believe that the efficiency of our College’s work with our local schools would be improved by the development of some standard procedures. This would require a certain level of investment but we think it is important to offer the same quality of service and equality of opportunity to all pupils at all schools, not least those schools where pupils are less aware of the opportunities available, or where staff are less engaged in partnerships.

Funding has been provided to local authorities to support the recommendations of Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce. Unfortunately, this has the potential to limit developments to within local authority boundaries; to miss opportunities for a step change at a regional level; and to contribute to unnecessary duplication of activity.

A Regional College, particularly in the context of the West Region, has the potential to be the catalyst to drive change across local authority boundaries – to pool resources, practice and expertise.
Response from Who Cares? Scotland to the Education and Culture Committee’s call for evidence on the educational attainment gap

Commission for Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce

About Who Cares? Scotland

Who Cares? Scotland supports young people who have care experience up to 26 years of age, by providing ongoing support and independent advocacy. We are the only organisation in Scotland to provide this service. Who Cares? Scotland aims to provide looked-after young people in Scotland with knowledge of their rights and strives to empower them to positively participate in the formal structures they are often subject to solely as a result of their care experience. At Who Cares? Scotland we utilise the voice of the care experienced population of Scotland to inform everything we do as an organisation. Most recently we have published research that sought to ascertain care experienced young people’s interpretation and views of the new Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. 87 care experienced young people contributed to the research. This research can be accessed here.

Background

Who Cares? Scotland is a member of the SCSC, a representative body for children and young people with Additional Support Needs (ASN). As a coalition the SCSC has responded to this committee’s call for evidence, with our support. The SCSC submission is focused on the needs of children and young people from a diverse range of backgrounds and social circumstances. Our organisation has a purpose to represent the needs of the care experienced population of Scotland, and as a result we are submitting an individual response focused solely on the views and needs of this group of young people.

We believe there is a need for an individual response as the report has a focus on tackling socio-economic inequalities. However, the inequalities faced by care experienced young people do not appear to have been afforded the same consideration. In 2014 Scottish Government statistics highlighted that 85% of the looked after population leave school at the earliest possible stage\(^1\) and only around 4% presently transition from school to university education. Educational outcomes highlight the need for care experienced young people to be provided with adequate support, tailored to their needs. Needs led support will better enable them to achieve the same as their non-

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looked after peers. We asked young people about their education experiences in the research mentioned above. 75% of the young people who were consulted informed us they were not in further or higher education. 60% of these young people had aspirations to access further and higher education in the future and they identified that they would need support in doing this to overcome the barriers they face2.

Since the publication of The Curtis Report in 1946, a report on children and young people deprived of a normal home life, it has been widely acknowledged that educational attainment has implications for looked after children’s future life chances3. Care experienced young people are at higher risk than their non-looked after peers of experiencing social problems. It is imperative that education is a protective factor that they can achieve, better preparing them for independent living and positively impacting on their life chances.

Who Cares? Scotland submission to the committee

If the Wood report were fully implemented, what would be the likely impact on attainment in schools and which pupils would benefit most?

If the Wood Report’s recommendations were to be fully implemented we believe that the educational outcomes for the care experienced population would improve. We believe that the full implementation of the recommendations would also lead to an increase in the numbers of looked after young people going on to positive destinations.

We are of the view however, that any form of support should be needs led, and underpinned by relationship based practice. If support was not done on a needs led basis then the support package offered to the young person would be misinformed, and therefore ineffective. The focus of vocational educational opportunities should not result in teachers seeing beyond presenting issues and encouraging all young people to achieve at whatever level they are capable of, regardless of whether or not they have a care identity.

In saying this we are of the view that if the recommendations were to be fully implemented then the numbers being able to better engage in education would be better placed to transition into employment, further training or education.

The following recommendations of the Wood Report speak specifically to care experienced young people:

Recommendation 34: Funding levels to colleges and MA training providers should be reviewed and adjusted to reflect the cost of providing additional support to young disabled people, and age restrictions should be relaxed for those whose transition may take longer.

Recommendation 37: Educational and employment transition planning for young people in care should start early with sustained support from public and third sector bodies and employers available throughout their journey toward and into employment as is deemed necessary.

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Recommendation 38: Across vocational education and training, age restrictions should be relaxed for those care leavers whose transition takes longer.

Recommendation 39: In partnership with the third sector, the Scottish Government should consider developing a programme which offers supported employment opportunities lasting up to a year for care leavers.

As with the SCSC response to the committee, we cannot stress how important early and person centred transition programmes are.

Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2009 deems that looked-after children and young people are entitled to ASN support throughout their education; unless the education authority assesses otherwise. This Act also informs that all students who have additional support needs should be supported in a multi-disciplinary manner to plan for their transition out of secondary education; at least a year in advance. We support calls from our partners in other organisations who advocate that this transitioning planning should begin at an earlier stage. We believe that the imbedding of GIRFEC into legislation, with the incremental implementation of The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act, will ensure this can be done with greater ease. It is important to note however, that when schools assess a care experienced young person as not in need of additional support for learning then their automatic entitlement to support ceases. At Who Cares? Scotland we are fully supportive of the minimum intervention principal of legislation. However, we believe that care experienced young people should have support to address any unmet need as their looked after status evidences they require intervention to meet their most basic of needs. Our advocacy experience informs that there are instances when care experienced young people do not have access to support as their needs are not assessed to be complex. We would advocate that the care experienced young person’s views are taken into account during all assessment process they are involved in. This will ensure that a greater number of care experienced young people feel prepared to transition out of secondary education successfully.

Our independent advocacy experience informs us that the inclusion of care experienced young people in this assessment process varies not only from school to school but from individual to individual. It is essential that those assessing the educational support needs of an individual ensure that the young person is aware of the process and that they can contribute to it. Assessments are utilised to inform intervention; in this instance educational support. If the assessment is not holistic and accurate then the support implemented will be insufficient. This could not just adversely impact on the distribution of scarce resources, but most importantly leave educational support needs unaddressed. It is imperative that all care experienced young people are enabled to reach their full potential and support is available to address all unmet needs.

We are supportive of the recommendations that access to education for care leavers is not impeded by the enforcement of rigid age-restrictions. This will ensure that a more needs led approach is adopted in the provision of vocational education. We would encourage that this approach is considered across the education system and not solely afforded to those pursuing access to vocational education.

The implementation of GIRFEC across the public sector has meant that ‘achieving’ is one of the indicators used in assessing a child or a young person’s wellbeing. The use of the wellbeing indicators should assist those supporting care experienced young people through educational

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transitions by doing it earlier and more effectively. We are hopeful that the Named Person provision, Part 4 of The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014\(^5\), will also assist in the efforts in improving the educational attainment for all, but more specifically the care experienced population; and those on the periphery of being taken into care. These provisions should ensure that education, and additional support if required, will be delivered in a manner underpinned by relationship based practice and in a collaborative manner by all those providing support in the young person’s life.

The report aims to significantly enhance vocational content “without splitting young people off into separate streams at school age”. What would be the disadvantages of such an approach and how could they be avoided?

It is acknowledged within The Wood Commission Report that the educational and employment outcomes for those with care experience are amongst the worst of Scotland’s young people. The attainment level for Scotland’s care experienced population will not be addressed by “splitting young people off into separate streams at school age”. We commend the reports aim to enhance vocational content, whilst still ensuring inclusion within the education system.

If groups of young people were to be taught in differing “streams” during their school career we believe the stigma and discrimination, which care experienced young people are often subject to, could potentially worsen. Positive work is being done within the care system to better enable care experienced young people to become more integrated within their community. This must now be replicated across the public sector. We must support meeting the needs of all our young people, including the care experienced child, whilst promoting inclusion for all.

Does the report – which includes a section on improving equalities – place enough emphasis on pupils’ socio-economic inequalities and how these could be overcome?

It is essential that attempts are made to address socio-economic inequalities as there is undoubtedly a link between poor educational attainment and deprivation. However, the Wood Report acknowledges that educational attainment will not improve by having a singular focus on one issue.

We, along with other organisations, are concerned that this call for evidence is not fully reflective of the measures required to best support the care experienced population in education. We are hopeful that the consultation proposed for later this year will acknowledge the needs of the care experienced population in considering measures to address the attainment gap.

If the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act is to truly evoke transformational change in Scotland then all measures taken by corporate parents to improve the outcomes of the general population must consider the needs of the care experienced young people. All of Scotland’s children need the same opportunities enabling them to aspire for a better future and to become a contributing responsible citizen.

If you wish to discuss this further please contact:

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Educational Attainment Gap
Commission for Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce
Response from Young Scot – February 2015

1. Introduction and background

Young Scot is the national youth information and citizenship charity for Scotland. We provide young people, aged 11-26, with the best blend of information and engagement to support young people to make informed decisions and choices and engage in their communities. Our vision is that young people take responsibility for changing our world now and tackling social issues – so they grow up in a Scotland that promotes aspiration, enterprise, opportunity, inclusion and wellbeing.

As a universal service, we focus our work on five strategic impacts where young people can:

- **Inform**: make informed decisions to support transitions
- **Access**: enjoy healthy, active positive lifestyles and opportunities
- **Engage**: contribute as assets to their communities
- **Progress**: reach positive destinations that give them the opportunity to maximise their aspirations
- **Celebrate**: be celebrated as citizens – locally, national and globally

We pay particular attention to reaching both young people “in-school” and those aged 16+, supporting them through key transitions with information and opportunities relevant to their needs and life stage.

Young Scot welcomes the opportunity to provide evidence to the Scottish Parliament’s Education and Culture Committee on the Education Attainment Gap, in relation to theme 1: Commission for Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce (“Wood Commission”). Young Scot supports a number of youth employment programmes including Modern Apprenticeship programmes and the Certificate for Work Readiness. In addition to this, we have supported young people to engage with policy makers around vocational education and youth employment:

- Recognising the importance of ensuring young people contribute directly to the findings of the Commission, a discussion day was held, organised by Young Scot, the Scottish Youth Parliament and NUS Scotland, focusing on the Commission’s Interim Report. This discussion day took place on Saturday 8th February 2014 in the COSLA
Conference Centre in Edinburgh, attended by around 45 young participants, including young people at school, young people at college, Modern Apprentices, college graduates and unemployed young people.

- The Scottish Government asked the Scottish Youth Parliament, YouthLink Scotland and Young Scot to deliver an event to engage young people at the start of a process to develop a refreshed strategy for tackling youth unemployment. A full day event took place on Tuesday 19th August in Edinburgh to give over 50 young people aged 16 to 21 who are experiencing, or have experienced, different journeys towards employment the opportunity to directly influence the development of refreshed Youth Employment Strategy.

This response is based on some of the key themes identified from young people through these engagement events and the experiences of our staff team working with young people.

**Committee question: If the Wood report were fully implemented, what the likely impact on attainment in schools would be and which pupils would benefit most.**

At the young person’s Wood Commission discussion day in February 2014, a number of key issues were discussed which subsequently were included in the final report, such as:

- The need for more emphasis to be put on work experience and vocational training;
- The need for young people to be introduced to the world of work at an earlier age; and
- The need for more person centred approach to education.

Some specific comments on the potential impact of vocational education reforms on school and college attainment included:

- ‘Less emphasis on traditional subjects will allow young people will be able to choose what options suits them best; this may lead to overall marks improving.’
- ‘Young people may become more engaged in their school work and this could lead to higher marks in exams.’
- ‘With more options available to young people there will be a higher chance that upon leaving school, they will have attained enough qualifications to help them reach a positive destination.’

If the 39 recommendations were to be fully implemented we believe that all young people will benefit. However, we believe that the greatest potential for impact is amongst young people who are at risk of disengaging with secondary school education.

Some of the recommendations which resonate most with the feedback from young people include:
• Receiving quality career advice and guidance from an earlier age. Most young people we have engaged with have indicated that understanding the world of work early on in secondary school would have been beneficial to their learning.

• Redressing the gender bias in specific career pathways, as many young people saw a need to challenge traditional job stereotypes.

• Providing early intervention and sustained support for those at risk of disengaging with education or requiring additional support.

Committee question: Whether the report – which includes a section on improving equalities – places enough emphasis on pupils’ socio-economic inequalities and how these could be overcome.

We welcome the separate section of the Commission specifically recognising the significant inequalities faced by young people from particular backgrounds, including the issues related to gender, race, disability and care leavers. However, as the report notes, there is a need for a wider investigation of the barriers faced by other groups of young people.

At our event focusing on the Commission’s Interim Report in February 2014, the attendees responded to the Interim Wood Report with the following recommendations on equalities issues:

• Schools and colleges should make use of opportunities for peer education and role models in order to breakdown gender stereotypes about career pathways.

• There should be increased investment in teacher training about equality issues.

• Equality issues should be more holistically built into the all subjects and classes within the context of the Curriculum for Excellence, including careers education.

• Schools, colleges and universities should be required to identify young people with additional needs in a more timely fashion, in order to provide any required additional support to their career development.

• Information for parents on careers advice should be tailored to meet the needs of different cultural groups.

Committee question: Whether any measures other than those advocated in the report are needed to ensure more young people leave school with “high level vocational qualifications which have strong currency in the labour market”.

Young Scot has experience of supporting around fifty young people through Modern
Apprenticeship qualifications over the past three years. Regular feedback and questions from Modern Apprentices often highlights the fact that young people do not understand the levelling of their vocational qualification, or what the qualification means resulting in them struggling to compare their achievements to the ‘standard’ academic qualifications. In turn, this can make it difficult for them to effectively sell themselves to potential new employers, or for them to recognise the worth of their own achievements without the support of dedicated members of staff who can help them with this. This can be down to a number of factors, including a lack of awareness and knowledge of the SCQF qualifications framework.

In November 2014, Young Scot worked with SCQF to bring together a focus group of young people to examine marketing produced by SCQF. There were many findings from this group, but importantly: “There was a feeling that schools should be doing more to promote the framework – none of the group had been informed of the SCQF through their school and believed that young people should understand it.” We feel that more should be done both to emphasize the value of high level vocational qualifications, but also to enhance awareness and understanding of the worth of the qualifications gained to allow young people to make the most of them, and for employers to truly understand their worth.

We have also worked with young people, employers and training providers through a pilot project of the Certificate of Work Readiness in the Creative Industries. The Certificate of Work Readiness provides guided support for young people entering in to work experience for the first time, and is assessed by the employers with the support of training providers. Working with five national performing arts organisations in Scotland (Scottish Opera, Scottish Ballet, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, National Theatre of Scotland and Royal Conservatoire of Scotland) and in partnership with Skills Development Scotland, we acted as ambassadors for the qualification. We feel that this role was vitally important to the process of supporting employers who had no previous experience of the qualification, to allow them to offer up these opportunities where they had not previously done so. This reassurance for an employer was vital for them to agree to invest both their time and effort in support for a young person with no previous work experience. We would therefore suggest that an ambassadorial role would be a key fit with the findings of the Wood Commission Report.

Through our experience of the Certificate of Work Readiness programme and Modern Apprenticeship programmes, we understand that all young people may not be ready to enter in to a full apprenticeship programme as their first experience of the world of work. We are therefore supportive of Skills Development Scotland’s approach of introducing the Certificate of Work Readiness to act as a twelve week-long introduction to a workplace as a structured way for young people to gain understanding of a workplace but also to gain a better understanding of work in a particular sector. The importance of pathways of progression for young people of all abilities is something which we support, in conjunction with the need for high level vocational qualifications.

Young Scot have experience of working with both training providers and sector skills councils, and appreciate the challenges associated with ensuring equality of provision across
training providers. Ensuring young people and employers have a positive experience of vocational training assessment will go a long way to ensuring that qualifications have ‘strong currency in the labour market’. Employers need to be able to trust that training providers can provide significant enough guidance to them in the delivery of work-based training and that the quality of assessment is reputable. In the past, we have worked with young people who have suggested their qualification assessment was just a ‘tick box exercise’ and with employers who have needed to chase training providers for months in order to get an assessor to the workplace – these scenarios are not commensurate with building the reputation of vocational qualifications with either employers or young people.

Young people have spoken to Young Scot about what they feel are their barriers to finding employment. In a survey of 532 young people in 2012, the issue of ‘Need more work experience’ was identified as the greatest barrier to employment for young people questioned (42.1%). Young Scot supports the need for increased quality of careers advice and support with CVs in school. However, from our experience of supporting Modern Apprenticeship opportunities, we also feel that it is beneficial for young people to document their experience of vocational learning in a way that can further support them when applying for future employment and is not merely a folder of their written work. This could be through the collation of a portfolio of their work, or an online blog. Young Scot have previously supported a programme of work experience opportunities in partnership with Nesta, where young people have blogged about their experience and learnings throughout their experience – this was hugely valuable as a tool to showcase their work both to schools and employers, but also useful as a collection of visual aids, such as photographs and videos, which could then be utilised when completing presentations and at other times necessary to talking about their experiences. Showcasing and recording the learning of young people can also be of benefit to employers too, and encourage others to take on the provision of work-based learning programmes.

**Committee question: What action and resources would be required to deliver the specific recommendations aimed at schools and teachers.**

During the Youth Employment Strategy Refresh session in August 2014, young people clearly identified the fact that career guidance teachers should have more experience of the labour market. However, they also highlighted a number of other areas which would help in the delivery of report recommendations. These included ‘bringing in industry experts into school’ and ensuring that there is adequate time allotted to ensure that good quality careers advice can be delivered. They also saw the value in other support providers who should be remembered in this process, including the importance of youth worker and parental support, and the recognition that students should also take some of their own responsibility for finding places and information that can support them.

As a national organisation, Young Scot recognises the importance of local expertise, and therefore recognises that individual teachers and careers advisors may have valuable knowledge of the local area which is essential for making local work-based connections. The
learning of our Digital Academy Coordinator on a recent Fellowship to the United States highlighted the importance of a local connection in schools, who has strong personal links with the business community. New York City Department of Education supports work-based learning programmes in schools financially, but also in providing an online resource centre for work-based learning Coordinators. These Coordinators play a key role in the school environment, teaching classes on employability and work environment skills whilst also building valuable connections to local businesses in their school catchment area, often tailoring their approach to businesses with the requests of sector specific placements from individual pupils. These Coordinators and the learning programmes became a key element of the school offer and were embedded alongside academic learning to ensure no separation of streams between ‘academic’ and ‘vocational’. This has demonstrated the benefit of dedicated staff to be in place in schools to implement the recommendations and to be an identifiable point of contact for businesses and training providers who may be able to offer the school opportunities.

Although the report is clearly correct in identifying the need to develop teachers’ skills, we believe it is valuable also to consider the need for changing attitudes to vocational training among teaching staff. Young people have fed back about their experiences at school which has suggested that school staff are much more focused on academic qualifications and the need for students to pass exams, rather than attaching importance upon vocational skills or qualifications. Reversing this attitude may be just as important in ensuring that recommendations are delivered in respect of schools and teachers as upskilling staff. We also recognises that it would be difficult to upskill staff in relation to employability in respect to every sector of work, as there are just differences, for example in relation to developing a CV and portfolio for the creative industries, in comparison to doing so for an administration position.

Finally, more should be made of free resources which are open for teachers and school staff to access. During the Youth Employment Strategy Refresh young people discussed the fact that teaching staff rarely referred them to useful career information sources; “We got shown My World of Work once and that was it”. More could be done to raise awareness of sites such as My World of Work and the Young Scot website in schools, to ensure teachers are pointing students in the direction of key resources.
Contacts

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss any of the issues identified in this document. For more information or clarification, please contact:

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Young Scot Enterprise is a recognised Scottish Charity No 029757 and a company limited by guarantee, registered in Scotland No 202687.
Introduction

The Wood Commission interim report highlighted the need for those in education, particularly in schools, to understand and consider the delivery model of Activity Agreements and their possible role in the school setting for those under 16 who have disengaged from education or who are at high risk of doing so.

It is suggested that the key principles of the Activity Agreement approach could be easily transferred to a school setting, contributing to the successful implementation of Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce.

YouthLink Scotland asks that this be considered in the context of the discussions taking place as part of this inquiry. This submission is being made alongside but separate to the main YouthLink Scotland response because the evidence for consideration by the Committee extends beyond the youth work sector.

Background

Activity Agreements provide support, post-school, to young people (16-19) who have been identified prior to leaving school, or who are already not in education, employment or training and whose learning and skills needs have been assessed as requiring first step engagement support and tailored learning in order to make a successful transition toward and into further learning or training and ultimately employment. Integral to the Scottish Government’s Opportunities for All Commitment they provide a key intervention for those young people furthest from the labour market and for whom this is the most appropriate offer of further learning or training.
The Activity Agreement approach has been developed and delivered through local authority partnerships across the 32 local authority areas in Scotland since 2012. The skills, expertise and knowledge of a wide range of partners, including youth work, third sector providers and employers offers young people attractive and meaningful pathways for those at greatest risk of disengagement. From 2012 to date over 7,000 of Scotland’s most vulnerable 16-19 year olds have been supported through Activity Agreements, with 70% making a successful onward transition to further learning, training or employment.

The Scottish Government appointed YouthLink Scotland as the host organisation for the Activity Agreement National Development Manager. YouthLink Scotland provides support for this role and the wider development of Activity Agreements.

**Activity Agreements and Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce**

Activity Agreements play an important role in delivering the *More Choices More Chances* recommendations of the Commission for Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce; providing early intervention and wide ranging, sustained support for young people at risk of disengaging from education and for those who have already done so. With a clear focus on preparing young people for employment, education or further training, Activity Agreements seek to address the inequalities different groups of young people experience, which impact on their choices and chances, as they move from school towards economic participation.

The focus on a young person’s skills and experience coupled with the person centred learning approach has allowed Activity Agreements to accurately identify supported routes into work, further education or training. It also allows for the undertaking of certified training and qualifications relevant to the individual.

Schools have been a key partner in the identification and referral of those likely to be in need of Activity Agreement support post school. The Wood Commission’s interim report highlighted the opportunity for schools to learn from the whole person Activity Agreement approach for those under 16 who have disengaged from education or who are at high risk of doing so.

The key principles of the Activity Agreement approach, focusing on individualised learning and person-centred attainment, offer a clear framework to support the wider development of flexibility and choice in senior phase learning and pathways pre-16, enabling all young people to realise their potential.
Key principles

**Early identification**
Activity Agreements focus on early intervention. Local planning with key partners enables early identification of those young people likely to require Activity Agreement support. This approach allows preparation and assessment to be undertaken while the young person is still at school. This has helped reduce the number of young people lost at point of transition.

**Strengths-based assessment**
Each young person receives a robust assessment of their strengths, needs and interests. This identifies their current skills and experience and what is needed to help them engage in and sustain learning, moving towards more formal engagement and ultimately employment. This forms the basis of the programme of activity and support they will receive.

**Tailored/flexible programme of learning and activity**
Each young person is supported to create an individual Activity Agreement learning plan. This will start from their expressed interests and be tailored to their needs including flexibility of duration and frequency of participation. The activities and learning which make up a young person’s Activity Agreement are related to the local labour market and form a clear pathway towards more formal engagement with learning, further training or employment.

**Consistent one-to-one support**
Consistent personal support underpins the Activity Agreement approach and its success in helping young people engage with and sustain participation in the opportunities it offers young people to continue to develop their skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work and in moving them into positive and sustained destinations.

Activity Agreements offer young people regular one-to-one support from a consistent professional, throughout their period of engagement. These professionals are referred to as Trusted Professionals. Trusted Professionals come from a range of professions, including community learning and development/youth work, education, health and careers. Each local authority area has developed a Trusted Professional workforce to meet the needs of young people.

**Strong partnerships**
Activity Agreements recognise that senior phase support cannot and should not be delivered in isolation. Activity Agreements are planned and delivered through strong partnerships, with a shared vision about how to best support young people. The need for strong partnerships is evident across the Activity Agreement model. At a strategic level Opportunities for All staff work alongside business and industry,
colleges, school, and training providers to ensure that young people have access to meaningful opportunities within a local pipeline of delivery, and that this is linked to real opportunities within the local labour market. Operationally, Activity Agreement partnerships harness the willingness, skills, expertise and knowledge of a wide range of partners, including youth work, the third sector and employers, to offer young people attractive and meaningful pathways for those at greatest risk of disengagement. For example, in partnership with third sector providers and colleges young people are able to achieve vocational qualifications relevant to the local labour market. Staff also work in partnership with the young person to plan, review and evaluate their Activity Agreement.

**Access to financial support**

Young people who are participating in Activity Agreements have access to financial support in the form of an Education Maintenance Allowance in the same way as young people learning in more formal settings. This is an important part of meeting those young people’s entitlement to support, set out in Building the Curriculum 3.

**Case study example**

The East Ayrshire Council model for senior phase transition support allows young people in need of support to be identified early in-school and to receive consistent and sustained support post-16.

The Council have put in place a School Transitional Support Team to work with young people at risk of disengaging from education and those who have already done so. Young people receive one-to-one support from the team, building a trusting relationship through which they can co-design a senior phase to meet their individual needs. The team works in partnership with schools and other local partners offering young people an alternative, informal, environment in which to engage in relevant and meaningful activities. This continues post-school in the form of an Activity Agreement.

*For further information please contact Sandra McIntyre, National Development Manager, Activity Agreements. smcintyre@youthlinkscotland.org or 0131 313 2488.*
Introduction
YouthLink Scotland welcomes the opportunity to submit written evidence to the Education and Culture Committee. In our evidence we highlight our view of the impact of implementing the recommendations of the Wood Commission and youth work’s contribution to developing Scotland’s Young Workforce.

Background to YouthLink Scotland
YouthLink Scotland is the national agency for youth work. It is a membership organisation and is in the unique position of representing the interests and aspirations of youth work in both the voluntary and statutory sectors.

YouthLink Scotland champions the role and value of youth work, challenging government at national and local levels to invest in the development of the sector for the benefit of our young people.

Our vision is of a youth work sector for Scotland that offers sustainable, dynamic and accessible youth work opportunities that support young people to become successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors, and responsible citizens.

The Value and Purpose of Youth Work
Youth work is an educational practice contributing to young people’s learning and development. Youth work engages young people as learners in their community and when appropriate within their school. The purpose of youth work is to:

- Build self-esteem and self-confidence
- Develop the ability to manage personal and social relationships
- Create learning and develop new skills
- Encourage positive group atmospheres
- Build the capacity of young people to consider risk, make reasoned decisions and take control
- Develop a world view which widens horizons and invites social commitment.

The National Youth Work Strategy 2014-18\(^1\) says that “effective engagement with young people is an empowering process. It offers young people developmental opportunities as well as the ability to lead, take responsibility, make decisions, and make a real and lasting contribution – both economically and socially – to

Scotland’s present and future.”

This outcome is at the core of our ambition for young people in Scotland, and we welcomed the recommendations of the Wood Report and the subsequent publication of Developing the Young Workforce: Scotland’s Youth Employment Strategy.

**Theme A: If the Wood report were fully implemented, what the likely impact on attainment in schools would be and which pupils would benefit most.**

We would welcome full implementation of all the recommendations of the Wood Report. We believe that the impact of such implementation would be wholly beneficial to young people in Scotland. The aspiration of the Wood Report enables young people to follow the learning journey most suitable for their hopes, aspirations and abilities. Whilst employers will have more input into shaping education and ultimately gaining young people into their organisations who are work ready and eager to make a difference. Learning providers (schools, colleges, youth work) will be able to effectively recognise all learners’ achievements and parents will have a clearer understanding of the routes available for their child.

We believe that effective monitoring of the impact of the recommendations over time will be the best measure of success, with particular attention made to those young people where inequalities currently exist due to poverty, health, and the wider protected characteristics of the Equalities Act 2010. This approach must work to reduce inequalities and not act to widen the attainment gap.

We would advocate for frequent and regular opportunities for the sharing of practice which is working well, this should be local, regional, and national and should at its heart be lead from the experience of the young person, as well as from the perspective of the learning provider and employer.

**Theme B: The report aims to significantly enhance vocational content “without splitting young people off into separate streams at school age”. What the disadvantages of such an approach would be and how it could be avoided.**

Our sector supports the enhancement of learning opportunities for all of Scotland’s young people. We do this in an inclusive way which puts the learner at the centre. Youth Work has developed a culture which truly supports and promotes personalisation and choice. This is essential for learning to be inclusive of the hopes and aspirations of each individual learner, and to avoid the need to ‘stream’ young people. Youth Work has a proven track record at delivering group learning environments, in which each learner is working towards their own goals and personalized learning outcomes. The Youth Worker is skilled at supporting reflection of learning and supporting young people to recognise progression and achievement. The success of this relationship is the defining characteristics of youth work: the relationship between the young person and youth worker is a partnership in learning. To achieve a similar ethos within the formal education sector it will likely require a shift in leadership culture and organisational changes within the structure of both schools and colleges.
The National Youth Work Strategy 2014-18\(^2\) is clear in its ambition for the Scotland to be the best place to grow up – but to achieve this ambition is states that “strengthening partnerships between school staff and youth work practitioners remain a priority for Curriculum for Excellence.” Further to this is recommends that we continue to build on the “many good examples where schools and youth work are working collaboratively to plan and deliver personalised learning opportunities.”

Youth Work has a contribution to make within this approach, from our wealth of experience in person-centered learning. The Youth Work ‘curriculum’ begins with the needs of the learner and a programme of learning is developed around this need – creating experiences and outcomes for each learner. There are numerous examples from across Scotland of a youth work and school partnership working to deliver this approach and support young people’s achievement and attainment.

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**Example: Callander Youth Project Trust**

Callander Youth Project serves young people in rural Stirlingshire. It is rooted in the community and offers a continuum of services for young people from primary school through to the age of 25. Very good working relationships have been built with key partners including Stirling Council, McLaren High School and the Forestry Commission.

The Project delivers the SCQF Level 4 Steps to Work programme. This opportunity works with young people from the local secondary school who are identified as being at risk of being furthest from the labour market. The youth workers support the young person’s personal development by supporting them to identify their own skills and strengths and to identify areas they wish to improve and develop. From this stage they begin to work on employability skills and preparation for employment. The programme is completed after the young person participates in a 30 hour relevant work experience placement, which meets their needs and vocational interest.

The personalised nature of the programme ensures that the young person can continue to learn in school as well as complete Steps to Work. Learners negotiate their 4 hours each week with Steps to Work to work within their schools timetable.

The Project operates two social enterprises – a 5 star tourist hostel and a successful community café. Each of these social enterprises has created employment and vocational training opportunities for young people in the community as well as generating income to be reinvested in the charity.

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Theme C: Whether any measures other than those advocated in the report are needed to ensure more young people leave school with “high level vocational qualifications which have strong currency in the labour market”.

YouthLink Scotland would recommend greater recognition of the need for the use of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) within the implementation of the Wood Report. This established Framework is already a nationally available tool which enables parity of esteem or comparability of

vocational and academic qualifications. This is vitally important to learners particularly for those who are most suited to the vocational route. Every qualification on the SCQF is underpinned by a set of descriptors which set out the competencies that all learners should be able to demonstrate regardless of whether the qualification is academic or vocational. This allows comparability of all qualifications whilst accepting that they may be very different forms of learning utilised to achieve the qualification. This Framework has the potential to be at the heart of many of the recommendations in the Wood Report and provides a valuable tool for both learners and employers – creating a common currency for achievement and attainment. The youth work sector has developed the Amazing Things\(^3\) publication which sets out a suite of learning awards for young people, many of which are SCQF credit rated. In addition the newly developed Insight system allows any learning programme which has been credit rated onto the SCQF and which meets certain other criteria, to be recognised in school statistics.

**Theme D: Whether the report – which includes a section on improving equalities – places enough emphasis on pupils’ socio-economic inequalities and how these could be overcome.**

The inclusion of recommendations which advance equalities is greatly welcomed by YouthLink Scotland. We would welcome additional emphasis on socio-economic inequalities to be considered, in particular to give consideration to how poverty and inequality can impact on aspiration and choice. Particularly for successful implementation of these recommendations there must also be a commitment to remove any barriers (such as cost, transport, specialist equipment) to young people having a full choice and personalisation of their learning for employability.

We are concerned that the experience of young people in rural and urban areas may differ, and that opportunities for vocational and academic progression may require the movement of young people. We need to ensure that young people in rural areas are supported to make choices that meet their needs now and in the longer term. Rural economies must be supported to develop and to avoid saturation of certain vocations as a result of shortage of options made available to young people whilst at secondary schools. The diversity of vocations must be made full accessible to ensure that rural communities can flourish and that young people see these as an attractive place to remain or return to should they choose.

We bring to the attention of the Committee the work of Save the Children and Scotland’s Commissioner for Children (2014), *Learning Lessons – Young People’s Views on Poverty and Education in Scotland*\(^4\). In this report attention is drawn to the experience of pupils who are concerned about extra costs for subject specific equipment – this effected subjects such as design & technology and home economics. YouthLink Scotland would impress upon the committee that the cost of materials associated with vocational subjects must be addressed nationally to ensure that further disadvantage and inequality is not faced by learners and their families.

YouthLink Scotland is committed to valuing young people. We see an inherent discrimination against young people in the workplace due to the current minimum wage legislation. The minimum wage currently differs


\(^4\) Elsley, S (2014), *Learning Lessons Young People’s Views on Poverty and Education in Scotland*, SCCYP and Save the Children: Edinburgh
for different ages, creating an inequality of value of young employees – giving the impression that their work and contribution is of a lesser value than their older colleagues. The Wood Report and the Youth Employment Strategy must be proactive in supporting employers to recognise the value of young people as equal employees in their organisation and where possible to be a proponent of the living wage. This becomes an important prevention measure to break the cycle of poverty in Scotland. Creating a young workforce which can live free of poverty.

**Theme E: Whether there would have to be significant reorganisation in schools to accommodate all the proposed changes (for example, to enable more links with colleges/ to have a greater focus on work placements).**

YouthLink Scotland’s members work on a daily basis in partnership with schools. This is set out in Building the Curriculum 3, which places importance on partnership working and curriculum planning for each individual learner. Youth Work provided by the both statutory and third sectors is well placed to continue to achieve this aim, and with the right ethos and funding relationship can do more. The key to this success is the opportunity for joint planning between professionals in schools, youth work and colleges to ensure that the learner need is met. Our members tell us that such opportunities for joint planning are diminishing due to wider pressures on school teaching staff.

The Youth Work sector has a contribution to make as an employer as well as a learning provider. The sector is widely committed to the ethos of ‘growing our own’ youth workers, and supporting young people to transition from service user to service provider. The Modern Apprenticeship in Youth Work is one way in which this can be achieved. However due to the nature of funding, particularly for the third sector, we require a commitment from funders to invest in young people as Modern Apprentices in our sector.

**Theme F: What action and resources would be required to deliver the specific recommendations aimed at schools and teachers.**

YouthLink Scotland would encourage the committee to consider the equality of the relationship between partners involved in young people’s learning for employment. Whilst schools are naturally well placed to lead as the universal provider of education, the learning partners of colleges, employers, and youth work should be considered as equals by this committee and the Scottish Government when discussing this matter in the provision of resources and actions.

For our sector, we would call for sustainable and longer-term funding to third sector youth work providers who are contributing to the employability of young people both in partnership with schools and post-16. There is also a need to protect and maintain the level of provision for youth work and schools work which is planned and delivered by local authority youth work services. We would call for funding to evaluate the impact of existing youth work and schools provision for employability to be able to influence the development of practice across Scotland – ensuring that we achieve our ambitions for all of Scotland’s young people.

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