The EIS has worked over many years to campaign against poverty and to highlight the impact it has on the achievements and attainment of the children and young people from families who are disadvantaged by living in poverty.

The EIS supports and promotes initiatives which redress the imbalance in achievement and attainment caused by poverty but we do not believe that educational initiatives alone will sufficiently and permanently close the pernicious and damaging attainment gap.

Teachers and lecturers support attainment for all but we believe it is important that extra support be provided to those who live, learn and study under conditions of economic and social disadvantage.

The EIS has welcomed the recent funding announcement of £100 million over four years to help tackle inequality. We hope that this money reaches the targets and is used directly in schools to support learners. The example of the London Challenge model is one that must be treated with caution. The elements within this of private/third sector input do not fit with the structures or values which are at the heart of the Scottish Education system.

Given the high value we all place on GTCS standards and the level of professionalism of the teaching profession of Scotland we do not consider the Teach First model, as found in England, to be appropriate or acceptable here. The EIS supports state funded, comprehensive education and sees no place for Academies or Free Schools within our school estate.

Any proposal for private sector involvement in Scottish Education must be very carefully evaluated. In any such evaluation the expertise and understanding of the teaching profession should be sought.
Flexibility of provision within a comprehensive, inclusive and democratically controlled system makes sense in Scotland and the introduction of possible fragmentation and competition could cause inefficiency and inconsistency.

Third sector organisations may add value to schools and can play a role in achievement. For example, Place2Be projects have been successful in providing support primarily for children but also for families and schools. Partnerships with the third sector can bring added value, whether in directly supporting children and families or in providing support and professional learning opportunities for teachers.

The involvement of organisations and individuals (from outwith the education service) in schools and colleges can have value but it must be controlled and monitored within existing systems. It would be to the detriment of all learners if the aim of such involvement was to diminish or undermine the central role of teachers and lecturers and the framework for professional standards.

The Committee has already heard evidence on the Development of Scotland’s Young Workforce and we welcome the opportunity to comment on this within our evidence. If the recommendations of the Wood Report were fully implemented the EIS hope is that the impact on both attainment and achievement in schools would be significant and all pupils would benefit from a breaking down of the barriers between "academic" and "vocational" education.

We support the increased provision of options for young people but there have to be safeguards against young people propelled along a route too soon or without other options being made available. For students to have the option of vocational or mixed pathways is positive but academic routes must remain open to all.

The currency of high level vocational qualifications in the labour market could be increased if the recommendations in the report are followed but such a change will take time and commitment from all stakeholders.

The re-organisation/organisation of relationships between schools, colleges and employers is not something that will just evolve. There will need to be resources, planning and provision of suitable motivation for all parties to ensure that this is successful.
A diverse and flexible provision is required but this will take financial and other resources to achieve. In the current financial situation with education budgets stretched and cut, we question how this resource will be provided.

As the Committee is soon to consider the role for parents (including guardians) in raising attainment, we would wish our view of their importance to be noted. We believe that parental support for schools is important and that the support of parents for their child’s learning is essential from Early Years through to Further and Higher Education. Parents need information and support to allow this to happen and the communication between parents and schools needs to be effective. Home-link teachers play an important role in bridging gaps in many communities.

In the area of support for families to promote achievement and attainment there may be scope for third sector involvement which can forge strong links with schools. Support for families and communities will have a positive effect on the achievement and attainment of the young people within them.

Tackling inequality and poverty is essential if the attainment and achievement gap is to be addressed. Raising attainment and achievement is a priority for the EIS and our members. Many teachers and lecturers already have experience of supporting children and young people to overcome the barriers that poverty creates. Additional resources are required to help develop approaches to support this work and for there to be a positive impact on the educational attainment gap.