Dear Sir

Education Attainment Gap: Submission of Evidence
Section 2: The role of the third sector and the private sector in improving attainment for all school pupils, particularly those whose attainment is lowest

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.

Our response to the following questions were carried out in consultation with Engage Renfrewshire and the Renfrewshire Chamber of Commerce.

1. The scale of the third and private sectors' involvement in schools, in terms of improving attainment and achievement, and the appropriate dividing line between their role and the role of education authorities:

The third and private sectors are involved in wide ranging engagement with Renfrewshire schools. The main purpose of this engagement is to inspire young people, provide information about progression pathways, to develop rounded individuals with the skills to contribute effectively in their communities and to adequately prepare young people for the world of work.

We must be clear that, although the private and third sectors can contribute to raising attainment and achievement, there is no accountability on their part when it comes to exam results. This responsibility currently lies solely with schools and local authorities. Therefore, although the third and private sectors can, and do, play an important part in the joint effort to raise attainment/achievement, it is done so by complementing the excellent work of teachers. Effective partnerships between schools and private and third sectors can help learners to make valuable links between their studies and the world of work. Learning is given meaningful context and purpose by role models who have the ability to inspire.

Renfrewshire Chamber of Commerce (RCoC) works with all 63 schools in Renfrewshire (primary, secondary, ASN and alternative provision), all schools are chamber members with access to events and curricular input.
Similarly the third sector involvement in schools is best illustrated by Engage Renfrewshire – the single access point for community action, volunteering and social enterprise in Renfrewshire – and member organisations. Engage Renfrewshire is engaged in the promotion of the value of volunteering and of voluntary opportunities and assistance with Saltire Awards (a national programme designed to recognise the achievements of young people).

2. **Whether their approaches have been particularly successful in improving achievement and attainment for school pupils:**

We have yet to explore the full impact of these activities, however there are some examples of young people moving to a positive destination as a direct result of these partnerships. There is a growing number of young people being involved in the Saltire Award, Youth & Philanthropy Initiative and Young Enterprise.

The approaches have been successful in preparing young people for the recruitment process i.e. CV building and interview practice and reinforcing the expectation of employers. However, there is no research to evidence a direct link between these activities and young people making the transition to positive destinations. The SLDR has increased by 1.8% as a result of many approaches, including partnership working.

3. **If so, whether their methods could be more embedded in the curriculum; whether the full potential of the third and private sectors in helping to improve children’s attainment and achievement is being realised;**

Effective and relevant partnership working between schools and the third and private sectors should be embedded in the curriculum to help meet a series of aims. This enables learners to understand the importance and value of curricular activity and the skills they are developing; providing career and progression information; and helping young people to become responsible citizens with the ability to build positive relationships. The local authority continues to work with schools in improvement planning and involving partners in the planning and delivery of curricular activities that have a positive impact on achievement and attainment. In particular we are investigating how the third and private sectors could become more involved in mentoring and/or target setting based on ambition and aspiration. There is also the potential to demonstrate how CfE outcomes and experiences are used in everyday life and business.

In the context of community planning the third sector plays a vital role in supporting a range of curriculum support.

4. **How successful schools have been in reporting on pupils’ wider achievements (i.e. not just examination results) such as those the third sector helps to deliver:**

Schools are committed to reporting on wider achievements and this is done using a variety of methods. Currently a local authority group is exploring positive engagement with parents, including all aspects of reporting and profiling. The RCoC magazine devotes column inches to wider achievements, especially where links to the world of work are a main feature i.e. Renfrewshire Recruit. Engage Renfrewshire recently requested that a school assembly be held to award an S6 learner with a Saltire Summit Award in recognition of this achievement. Local Authority Reviews and HMie inspections across establishments highlight good practice in this area.
5. Whether such achievements are valued by parents, employers and learning providers as much as formal qualifications; given the strong policy focus on the early years, whether the third and private sectors have been able to work equally effectively with pupils of all ages.

We are developing a culture where parents, employers and learning providers value a combination of formal qualifications and wider achievements. Even those with a very academic focus require opportunities to develop their skills for life and work. A recent consultation with all learners in S3-5 and their parents on WCS’ school/college courses has shown a move towards valuing more vocational options and HNC courses featured prominently. Work continues to be done in this area.

There are a number of ongoing opportunities for the third and private sectors to work with young people of all ages in Renfrewshire establishments. However, more like-minded role models are required to help inspire our youngest learners and advance the equalities agenda.

Opportunities are developing for extending and enriching work experience. In particular, pupils in S4 undertaking National 4 qualifications are given opportunities to work in a range of areas with employers and third sector organisations. These are proving to be valuable and helping to support transition to sustained destinations.

Our early years strategy works across community planning partners and includes a range of third sector organisations to work in partnership with us to deliver early years strategic outcomes.

I trust this is helpful to you.

Yours sincerely

[Signature]

Peter Macleod
Director of Children’s Services