I write in response to your request for accounts from people who worked with Education Scotland. I went on secondment to Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS) in 2006 to take up the post of Development Officer for Game Based Learning (GBL). Due to the success of what we did with The Consolarium initiative I was offered and accepted a permanent contract with LTS to continue our work however I was left with no option but to leave in August 2013 as a result of the culture and conditions that I experienced when Education Scotland was formed. The work we did was successful and did put Scotland on the digital map in relation to game based learning and game design in schools. The following text details my experience with Education Scotland at the time of their formation and the two years that I then spent working for them. I hope that you can give some time to read my feedback.

By 2009 the work that I had done in growing the idea and practice of game based learning across Scotland had resulted in me growing what was a two year secondment into a permanent post for me with 4 secondees in the team that I led. This allowed us to meet the ever increasing demand from schools to work with us and to continue to grow the culture of creation and not just consumption of digital material mainly through computer games design - thus addressing the CfE Tech outcome that explicitly stated this at 2nd level and above. Our work had gathered momentum and lauded across the UK, had attracted considerable international interest and put us in the position to work very closely with Microsoft and their then new product Kodu. In 2010 we organised a national computer games design competition for primary and secondary schools. The entries were of a high standard and showed just what children can do when the bar of aspiration and expectation is raised. We also had a large space on the LTS stand at SLF 2010 that seemed to be a successful addition to the event. This was all well before any of the recent movements in the coding space such as Code Club or Barefoot Computing.

At this time though there was a distinct change in attitude to our work. My team and I all went to the Game Based Learning Conference in London with me as keynote speaker and also the host of a Spotlight Scotland session. My team were presenting various projects that we were doing and we also took a number of Scottish teachers with us to showcase what they were doing with us at a Spotlight Scotland session. This was successful event for us as it allowed us to showcase the Scottish creativity, imagination and leadership in the field of digital learning at the time. Much of the work by Scottish educators in the digital learning world at this time was seen as inspirational by the growing digital tech. community in and beyond Scotland.

Here I will bullet-point the story:

- The formation of Education Scotland led to the closure of the Consolarium space, my team all being sent back to school and my budget stopped. No discussions between me and the new ES leadership about my work and what this meant for
the Consolarium and our place in the digital space. We were introduced to the three HMie ICT specialists who it appeared were the ones who we were to defer to in all things digital and learning. None of these people appeared to have any digital footprint/presence of note and, it became apparent very quickly, that they were also not au fait with the wide range of contemporary technologies that so many of us were championing and evidencing effective use in schools. One of these ES/HMie specialists wanted to spend £6K on getting a map with pins in it to show where they had been with their Three Horizons project not realising that this could be done for free on Google Maps and another wanted me to write their blogposts on a WordPress blog and confessed it was because they didn’t know how to do it. These people were being deferred to in all matters digital tech and their attitude to Glow was worrying and questionable even though we were working hard to ensure that it was recognised within ES and used effectively as a communication and learning environment. In my view Glow has been severely wounded internally due to HMie attitudes within ES but this is another story. We checked the accounts of the three ICT specialists and had found that there had been little or no evidence of logging in to Glow for over two years prior to their engagement with us.

- In 2012 we were asked to come to London on two occasions to share our practice with the team from NESTA who had been commissioned by UK Government to write the Next Generation report.

- I continued to try to convince my new colleagues from HMie that what we were doing was significant and of some importance in helping to ensure better outcomes for learners in schools and to this end I set up, with the help the CPD team, CPD Consolarium in Glow. This loan service allowed teachers across Scotland to loan out resources from our store of equipment We had over 250 artefacts that included class sets of DS, a suite on Macs for animation, Arduino Kits Lego Wedo and a host of games and consoles. It was pretty successful and prior to me leaving the service had received 250 requests for loans (even without new material being bought since 2011).

- During this time I was asked to become the technical video support operative for HMie colleagues who wanted to me video and edit their Case Studies for Journey to Excellence. No input on educational matters was required from me.

- I worked with a much respected and innovative colleague to submit an entry to the NACCE awards in 2012 to try to capture the interest and eye of those in charge at Education Scotland. The Consolarium initiative won the best consultant/service award across the UK however this success carried no weight back at Education Scotland.

- In January 2012 the British Council in Delhi visited me to discuss how we could help them set up a Consolarium type resource in their building in Delhi. The proposal regarding this was thrown out on first reading by managers at Education Scotland.

- In late 2012 NESTA approached Education Scotland with proposal to have a £250K match funded project looking to build on digital skills. I helped shape and author our response however Education Scotland declined the opportunity and the Digital Directorate at Scottish Government took it up.

- In February 2015 I discovered that Education Scotland and deleted all evidence of the rich case study material that we published. Material from the early 2000s is still available on their site however all evidence of what we did is almost gone.
I resigned my post and took up my current one in August 2013. My professional heart was, to be honest, rather scarred by my experience working with Education Scotland. I was totally committed to making things work and to working hard to ensure that our children are engaged with learning contexts that are relevant, purposeful, engaging and culturally appealing. There were real issues at Education Scotland in relation to the status driven hierarchical culture that was we found ourselves working in.

Since the formation of Education Scotland I think that there has been a lack of inspiration, guidance or leadership to encourage the agency of teachers in order to embed digital tools and spaces into their practice. There has generally been a lack of personality and imagination coming from Education Scotland in relation to how their presence is felt in the digital world of learners and how this can be made relevant to the aims of the school. It has to be said though that some of the improvements to Glow, the work on digital communities of practice in Glow and some of the efforts by those engaged with pushing Digital Learning Week has shown what can be done to change this. Apart from these examples, in my view, Education Scotland has played quite a dispiriting and destructive role in the very important space of digital tools and spaces in learning in Scottish schools. Yes I see that there are efforts to move things forward but the damage that was done due to the behaviours, attitudes and culture that came with Education Scotland’s formation have to be acknowledged.