

Cross Party Group on Children and Young People

A Rights-Based Approach to Education Reform in Scotland

Monday 24th April 2023 17:00 – 18:30

Minutes

Chair: Kaukab Stewart MSP

Present

MSPs

Kaukab Stewart MSP

Fulton MacGregor MSP

Meghan Gallacher MSP

Jeremy Balfour MSP

Invited guests

Ruth Jays, Education Strategy and Recovery, Directorate for Education Reform

Kirsty Anderson, Scottish Government Review Qualifications and Assessment

Neil Cardwell, New Education Agencies, Directorate for Education Reform

Olivia Brown MSYP for Musselburgh and Midlothian North. Policy Trustee, Scottish Youth Parliament

Marielle Bruce, Youth Work and Schools Manager, YouthLink Scotland

Non-MSP Group Members

Chris Ross, Children in Scotland

Arran Goodfellow, Children in Scotland

Sarah Paterson, YouthLink Scotland

Gill Gracie, YouthLink Scotland

Brian Magee, COSCA

Joan Mowat, University of Stirling

Sarah McClarey, Salvesen Mindroom Centre

Fiona O'Sullivan, Edinburgh Children's Hospital Charity

Angus Maclean, Befriending Networks

Megan Farr, Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland

Todd Henshaw, Flexible Childcare Services Scotland

Laura Millar, Fife Gingerbread

Megan Burt, EVOC

Virginia Radcliffe, Licketyspit Theatre & Play Company

Sarah Rogers, Families Outside

Ryan Bowie, Quarriers

Maurice Frank

Judi Martin, Together Scotland

Amy Hall Gibson, Starcatchers

Jenny Wartnaby, Zero Tolerance Scotland

Kirsty-Louise Hunt, Barnardos

Ewan Carmichael

Kelly Munro, Carers Trust Scotland

Adam Crawley, LGBT Youth Scotland
Helen Forrest, Children Health Scotland
Michael Bettencourt, CELCIS
Michael McDaid, Skills Development Scotland
Yuying Ma, University of Edinburgh
Isla Baxter, Scottish Youth Parliament
Douglas Ross, Princes Trust
Vikki Carpenter, CLD Standards Council
Donna Marie Steel, Robertson Trust
Lily McGregor, Princes Trust
Michael Gregori, Princes Trust
Jaya Khasria, West-Dunbartonshire Council
Dylan Stevens, Fast Forward
Abigail pollock, Girlguiding Scotland

Welcome from chair

Kaukab Stewart MSP welcomed members of the CPG to the third meeting of the new parliamentary term. Kaukab informed the group that the meeting would focus on the recent Education Reform in Scotland, focusing on the progress that has been made, and how the voices of children and young people have been used to influence the reform.

Kaukab gave a brief overview of the reform system so far in Scotland and explained that children and young people were asked for their views throughout the process. Some of the changes included:

- The National Discussion on education
- An independent review of qualifications and assessments
- The reforms of education bodies such as the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) and Education Scotland
- Post-school education and training

Kaukab informed the CPG members that they would hear from a variety of speakers including representatives from the Scottish Government teams involved in the reform who would provide an update of the process; a representative from the Scottish Youth Parliament who would discuss their experience on the education council and how they feel about the reform process so far; and a Youth Work Manager regarding the approach of the national discussion in including children and young people.

Kaukab introduced the speakers:

- Ruth Jays, Education Strategy and Recovery, Directorate for Education Reform
- Kirsty Anderson, Scottish Government Review Qualifications and Assessment
- Neil Cardwell, Directorate for Education Reform, New Education Agencies
- Olivia Brown MSYP for Musselburgh and Midlothian North. Policy Trustee, Scottish Youth Parliament
- Marielle Bruce, Youth Work and Schools Manager, YouthLink Scotland

Following this, Kaukab said the members would have the opportunity for more in-depth discussion on education reform in breakout rooms facilitated by members of the secretariat.

CPG Business

a. Minutes

Kaukab stated the secretariat had shared the previous minutes with members of the group. No issues were raised in relation to the minutes, and members were asked to confirm if they were happy to take the previous minutes as read.

This was approved by membership and the minutes were ratified.

b. New members

The following organisations/individuals asked to join the CPG:

- Play Scotland
- Licketyspit
- Ewan Carmichael

All members were in agreement with the above-mentioned organisations to join the group.

Kaukab then handed over to the speakers to discuss their experiences of the education reforms in Scotland.

Ruth Jays, Education Strategy and Recovery, Directorate for Education Reform

Ruth gave a brief overview and explained how the National Discussion was launched in response to the recommendations in Ken Muir's review which proposed a new National Discussion needed to take place to establish a vision of the future of Scottish education and to have children and young people at the heart of it.

There was a listening phase from 21 September – 5 December 2022 which was run by the Scottish Government and COSLA where bespoke events and opportunities were created for children and young people to share their views. Around 26,000 children and young people attended online assemblies, and the government group ended up having contact with around 40,000 people in the listening phase. The group also spoke with third sector organisations, youth workers, and groups who focused on equalities.

The results from the listening phase found that 15,000 people were represented, and 10% of responses were from children and young people.

Ruth informed members that the Scottish Government group are awaiting the final report from independent facilitators which should be published in the coming weeks, and the group will then issue a response.

Kirsty Anderson, Scottish Government Review Qualifications and Assessment

Kirsty explained her role as part of Professor Hayward's independent review group which was created in May 2022 with the aim to ensure all senior phase learners have an enhanced and equal opportunities to demonstrate the wide, depth and relevance of their learning.

The review consisted of 3 phases:

1. Summer 2022 – invited people to share views on a draft vision and the underpinning principles for future qualifications and assessment.
2. October 2022 – public consultation held inviting views on different options of change.
3. Phase currently open – seeking feedback on the draft model which has been developed from the feedback from phase 2.

Kirsty explained that there had been engagement with children and young people in several ways, including independent review groups, schools, colleges, bespoke events, consultation work and social media.

Kirsty informed CPG members that the final report will be submitted to the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills next month.

Kirsty also highlighted some key messages they had identified through the process which included the importance of learner choice and flexibility, ensuring the system is inclusive for all learners while focusing on the importance of mental health and wellbeing.

Neil Cardwell, Scottish Government, Directorate for Education Reform, new education agencies

Neil highlighted another recommendation in Ken Muir's report is which stated the Scottish Government should replace SQA and Education Scotland with three new education bodies, which the Government accepted and will be implemented from 2024.

Target operating models have been developed and the next step is to share and explore what that looks like and if the models are able to be implemented in a way that helps children and young people and education staff.

Neil discussed the next step was to engage with children and young people and practitioners soon, and shared his email with the group so people could get in touch for more information about engagement opportunities. Members can contact Neil at neil.cardwell@gov.scot

Policy Trustee, Olivia Brown MSYP for Musselburgh and Midlothian North. Scottish Youth Parliament

Olivia gave a brief outline the Scottish Youth Parliament discussed the impact COVID-19 has had on education and highlighted it needs reform. Olivia's also mentioned projects that the Scottish Youth Parliament is involved in, such as the

SQA Learner Panel and the National Qualifications Group for the Scottish Education Council.

Olivia also referenced The Right Way Project: <https://www.therightway.scot/>

[Click here to view the presentation by Olivia Brown MSYP](#)

Marielle Bruce, Youth Work and Schools, YouthLink Scotland

Marielle discussed the findings of YouthLink Scotland's engagement work with young people in social work which resulted in 738 young people sharing their views which were submitted as part of the National Discussion.

Marielle stated that the voice of children and young people in youthwork was likely to get lost in the overall views of those collected from the Scottish Government groups.

Marielle discussed the summarised findings from their engagement work:

- Only 22% felt they were getting what they needed from education
- 88% wanted the skills they learnt through youth work to be acknowledged alongside formal qualifications
- 87% felt young people should have access to youth work in school

The young people wanted the education system to make them feel safe, respected and included, although many didn't think the current system represented this.

Marielle also discussed that young people wanted help to develop life skills, and appreciated the non-formal approach that youth work takes.

Breakout rooms discussion summaries

Following the discussion, members were placed into breakout rooms facilitated by members of the secretariat. Questions discussed are as follows:

- I. What are your reflections on what you've heard from our speakers? Has the reform process responded to the views of children and young people?
- II. How else should education reform engage with and be shaped by the views of young people?
- III. What more is needed to ensure education reform delivers a rights-based approach to education? The main points raised by the groups were as follows:

The main points raised by the groups were as follows:

- There has been positive progress made for far in the reforms, but there is still a long way to go for this work to achieve its intended goals.
- Members were clear that it is too soon to say whether the process is responding to the views of children and young people.

- There continues to be a heavy reliance on the third sector by government to carry out facilitation work but this needs to be better funded in future as many organisations don't have the capacity.
- Often these processes are not reaching marginalised groups
- Consideration is needed for engaging with children and young people outside of school and youth clubs.
- Many children and young people do not attend school so need to ensure they are being spoken with – e.g., young carers, care experienced children, those in apprenticeships, those with health conditions that stop them from attending school.
- Continuous reform is needed when looking at the education system – with children and young people constantly involved in the process.
- There needs to be a rights respecting movement in schools and training for teachers and students to know what their rights are.
- Importance of children and young people having access to youth work in schools – alternative learning approaches
- It would be interesting to know the proportion of minorities, and also younger children (under 12 and early years) that were consulted for the research.
- Virginia Radcliffe from Licketyspit Theatre & Play Company shared that they have found story play as an approach that empowered children collectively and individually in an environment where every child had something to contribute of equal value. They believe creating a space without competition, comparison or judgement for children and young people is vital in any consultation process.
- Fundamental culture change in education and teacher training needed.
- UNCRC training in Scotland needs be a part of the reforms.

Close

Kaukab thanked attendees for attending and announced the next meeting will be held in June, at the Parliament, with the chance for people to join remotely if required.