

## **“Let’s talk education – our national discussion”**

### **SOSCN’s Response**

**December 2022**

#### **1. What kind of education will be needed by children and young people in Scotland in the future?**

From the perspective of the Scottish Out of School Care Network (SOSCN), the national representative body for school age childcare in Scotland, we believe that this review should be looking at education in its broadest sense. At every level of education: from early years into lifelong learning for adults, everyone needs to reach their fullest potential in obtaining core skills such as literacy and numeracy, however, everyone must also have the support to thrive in a learning environment where their rights are respected and different needs catered for as a matter of course.

This means children and young people of whatever background, ability/disability, age etc, access truly child-centred care and education which meets their individual needs within a holistic learning community. We believe school age childcare is part of that community and we welcome the Scottish Government’s commitment to expanding the sector in the near future.

Formal schooling is just one, albeit highly important facet, of how children and young people learn and develop. Fellow professionals in daycare of children services (including school age childcare) providing play, care and learning opportunities outside school hours all contribute much to children and young people’s learning and development. This is achieved through the loving and caring family-type, friendship and mentor relationships that give children and young people a secure base from which to explore the world around them.

All staff in registered daycare of children services must be qualified professionals registered with the Scottish Social Services Council, and in the case of Lead practitioners they are required to have (or be working towards) a degree-level qualification in Childhood Practice. School age childcare professionals promote informal but vital learning through fun, social activities.

All children and young people need access to a variety of cultural and sporting interests both inside and outside school without being excluded from doing so due to economic or other barriers- school age childcare already supports this.

In order to fulfil the UNCRC there needs to be a radical mind shift in terms of how we define education and educators. We all learn and develop through relationships with others, and education in its broadest sense should take a more holistic, community-based approach, which may require a more tailored and individual approach rather than one which is ‘one-size fits all’.

Our children and young people are facing one of the most challenging futures in world history: climate change and huge inequalities affect everyone across the globe and technological change and advances in all fields will be needed to address this. We may not know exactly what skills will be needed, therefore children and young people must learn to think and advocate, whilst being encouraged to be adaptive and creative for as yet unknown futures. They must be grounded in nature and in understanding the intrinsic value of caring for the environment.

## **2. How do we make that a reality?**

We need to train a new generation of teachers and fellow professionals on a rights-based education model, which goes further than Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) and addresses inequality as it exists now.

Any overhaul of the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) should include, for example, philosophy in schools, which encourages children to learn how to think, question and challenge; every school should have school age childcare and youth work professionals to help children learn and develop through outdoor and indoor play, leisure, sports and arts activities, and crucially, to help build a network of caring relationships which they can take forward into the challenging future.

Trauma informed practice must be in all training for everyone who works with children and young people, and resources should be there, including mental health professionals, to support children and young people dealing with the legacy of, or indeed ongoing, trauma in their lives.

## **3. How can every child and young person's individual needs be supported and addressed in the future?**

By ensuring children, young people and their families have access (when needed and wanted) to a community of support of equal professional partners working respectfully and helpfully to address their individual needs. Such partners can include (but are not limited to) school age childcare, ELC, youth work, health and social work, as well as specific, specialist support on a social model of disability for those experiencing barriers to participation.

## **4. What is one thing that needs to stay and why?**

GIRFEC, alongside the UNCRC needs to be better embedded into day-to-day practice and cross sector support, however this should be expanded to Getting it Right for Everyone, as we cannot expect nurturing, caring and expert learning and development support from teachers and fellow professionals unless we ensure that they too are valued, and supported in their own wellbeing, learning and development. The rights of every person involved in Scottish Education must be considered. This includes fair pay, fair workloads and support when needed.

## **5. What are the most important priorities for a future Scottish education system?**

To equip children and young people to think for themselves, and for them to develop a range of holistic life skills (especially in respecting others and the environment) in addition to the more traditional academic learning.

Empathy and compassion for self and others, should be at the heart of a new learning model whilst at the same time equipping individuals with the necessary skills for an ever-changing and uncertain future.

## **6. How can we ensure that everyone involved in education in Scotland has a say in future decisions and actions?**

If a more holistic-community based learning approach is taken, then school education must be recognised as part of the process, and not the whole thing. On the one hand, teacher training should include learning about participatory techniques and engagement with others and recruitment to the profession should be widely reflective of all the diversity of our society. However, in addition, community leaders, business professionals, etc could be part of the wider education process- many people in the community have real-life skills and knowledge which learners could benefit from. The teaching profession should not be expected to do everything- as the saying goes "it takes a village to raise a child."

## **7. How can children and young people be cared for and supported in the future? (i.e. physical and mental wellbeing)**

All professionals who work with children and young people should have good relationship-building skills, as well as knowledge and understanding of: child development; the growth mindset approach; how the body affects mind and vice-versa; as well as the impact of trauma, adversity and toxic stress on behaviours.

All children and young people should have access to physical activities they can choose as well as tasty and nutritious food and learning how to plant, grow and cook in sustainable ways.

Children should have vocational choices as well as academic ones and one should not be put above the other. Ideally all children and young people should be able to try out for themselves a mix of creative, academic, vocational and social activities where they are encouraged to expand their horizons and not be afraid of failure.

## **8. How can the right of every child and young person to have opportunities to develop their full potential be achieved in the future?**

As well as reforms to educational practice as outlined in other questions, investing in a range of different types of support to complement the school day, such as school age childcare and activities, youth work, culture and sports, and removing barriers to full participation in all of this which should be led by their own choices and interests.

**9. How can children and young people be helped to learn about our changing world, so they feel able to positively contribute?**

The environmental challenges and how/what to do to address them should be a core part of children and young people's holistic education, including being able to debate, advocate and be respected for doing so.

More outdoor and experiential learning should be used rather than traditional sedentary and classroom restricted learning. Meaningful and ongoing educational links should be made with parks, museums, galleries, sports centres, theatres etc and for these venues to host regular learning sessions and as such become part of the wider education community and campus.

An example of this is SAMi (Science and Maths Institute) a High School in Tacoma, Washington State USA, which is based in Point Defiance Park with teaching venues throughout the park and in the zoo, aquarium, and beach as well as purpose-built locations. Staff and students are encouraged to walk the trails daily to reach classes, or just spot some of the natural beauty. <https://sami.tacomaschools.org> Link to related article "What happens when you put a school in the confines of a zoo?" <https://cplinc.com/thinking/sami/>

**10. Do you have any other comments that you like to provide about a vision for the future of Scottish Education?**

Fundamentally a greater emphasis should be placed upon people-based and practical skills which cover things like, positive relationships, caring for ourselves and others, growing and preparing our own food etc from ELC upwards. We also believe there should be more interaction between age groups- ELC to secondary school campuses with attached services for older people in order to create that holistic approach and embed empathy and respect across the ages.