

Facilitators Guidance Notes for Parents and Carers Toolkit

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The National Discussion: Let's Talk Scottish Education

Background

- Twenty years ago, Scotland held a national debate on the future of education and this led to the development of Curriculum for Excellence.
- The recent [Muir Review](#) (2022) recommended holding a national discussion to agree a clear vision for the future of Scottish education.
- Scottish government is inviting everyone who has an interest in the future of our education system to join 'Let's Talk Scottish Education' – Our National Discussion. This includes children and young people, parents and carers, adults, practitioners, and those in the community.
- Professor Alma Harris and Professor Carol Campbell, members of the International Council of Education Advisers, have agreed to oversee the process. They have developed eight core questions to support the national discussion. These can be found at the start of the Facilitators Toolkit for Parents and Carers. Additional questions are also included at the end of the Toolkit to facilitate further discussion as appropriate.
- The key principles underpinning the national discussion are that:
 - it is inclusive
 - it is in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which states that children and young people should be at the heart of the process.
 - parents and carers are involved and meaningfully engaged in the process as outlined in the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006.

Children and young people, and parents all had a unique experience of education during the COVID-19 pandemic and are well placed to inform the future of education in Scotland.

Guidance

- Facilitators working with parents and carers are best placed to decide how, where and when national discussions can take place.
- Facilitators should use the 'Facilitators Toolkit for Parents and Carers' along with these Guidance Notes as appropriate and adapt if necessary. They are not meant to be prescriptive. Rather they should be used as an aid to support and facilitate meaningful discussions. Consideration should also be given to parents and carers circumstances and barriers to participation should be addressed before any sessions are delivered.
- Our National Discussion will lead to a '**Call to Action**' that will help identify clear priorities for the future of Scottish education.

Purpose of National Discussion Toolkits

- Prepare participants to give a considered response to one or more of the eight core National Discussion questions and/or any additional questions.
- Produce artefacts (posters, drawings, video clips) that can be easily shared with the ND research team via email or Twitter.

Guidance for facilitating national discussions

- View the introductory video linked in the Toolkit from Professors Campbell and Harris at the outset of each session, if possible, to ensure a consistent understanding of the National Discussion.
- There is no requirement to cover all the questions.
- The Toolkit and text in this guide are for exemplification only.
- Facilitators are welcome to use the activities in the Toolkit or adapt their own group activities, or those from the other toolkits, to support discussion and exploration of the questions. Facilitators will know their participants' needs best.
- You may also wish to engage parents and carers in discussions about the best ways to capture views around the questions. This will help to ensure that adults feel this process is being done 'with' them rather than 'to' them. Adults involved may have very creative ways of approaching and gathering data around the core questions.
- It is inevitable that in discussing the future shape of education in Scotland that participants may well refer to their personal experience of school, including their child's current setting or school. It will therefore be important to set boundaries around what should and should not be raised. For example, facilitators should request that individuals are not named and that discussions around people's experiences of education are sensitive and respectful
- It is important to ensure that the video from Professors Campbell and Harris is shown at the outset of the session, if possible, to ensure a consistent understanding of the National Discussion.
- It is important to establish ground rules, such as respect and honesty, for your group discussion. For example, the ground rules should include:
 - requesting that individuals are not named
 - discussions around people's experiences of education are sensitive and respectful
 - setting boundaries around what should and should not be raised
 - allowing the time and space for everyone's voice to be heard.
- Facilitators are also encouraged to respond separately to the national discussion from their own personal perspective.

Session 1: Parent and Carer Voice

Facilitator Notes

Purpose

This session supports participants to consider the core National Discussion questions. Facilitators are encouraged to support parents and carers to discuss each of the eight questions before summarising and sharing their discussions. Depending on the group, each of the questions could be discussed in turn, or alternatively the participants could be grouped and allocated different questions to explore.

A summary of the outcomes from the group discussions can be shared via the [online feedback form](#).

Facilitators may wish to read Education Scotland's guidance on effective facilitation before holding any session. Click [here](#) to access this.

*Questions 4–7 can be used together to facilitate deeper discussion on vision and prioritising the actions for implementation. Alternatively, they can be discussed separately.

Core Question 1:

What kind of education will be needed by children and young people in Scotland in the future and how do we make that a reality?

Reframing the question:

As a parent or carer, and thinking about your child or young person:

1(a) What kind of education will be needed by children and young people in Scotland in the future?

1(b) Do you have any thoughts on what might be needed to achieve this?

Prompt:

In considering questions 1(a) and (b) above, parents and carers could be provided with the following scaffolding to support their thinking and any discussion. For example:

- What do children and young people need to learn to prepare them for the future and help them thrive? This may include developing skills that do not currently exist. They are skills to excel; to collaborate and empathise with others and to create their own future.
- What is needed for an education system that is fair to everyone and equitable (i.e., it works for everyone and any barriers to access and educational opportunities that any young person faces are removed)? What needs to be done to make this happen?

- Who else should be involved in your child education, what does links to industry, Further and Higher education look like?
- How should you as a parent or carer be involved in the life of the setting/school and you child's learning in this new vision?

Core question 2:

How do we ensure that children and young people in Scotland feel supported in their learning in the future?

Reframing the question:

Thinking about your child or young person:

- As a parent or carer, what do you think children and young people in Scotland will need in the future to help them feel supported in their learning?

Prompt:

In considering question 2 above, parents and carers could be provided with the following scaffolding to support their thinking and any discussion. For example:

- How can learners' views, experiences and suggestions be listened to, respected and included in future education decisions? What existing approaches can be built on or what new approaches are needed?
- What supports for mental health and wellbeing are required? And how can the right help at the right time be provided?
- What is needed to ensure all children and young people feel safe in education settings?

Core Question 3:

What is the one thing that needs to stay and why?

Reframing the question:

Thinking about your child or young person's experience of education in Scotland:

- If there was one key thing about Scottish education that you think should continue, what would this be and why?

Prompt:

In considering question 3 above, parents and carers could be provided with the following scaffolding to support their thinking and any discussion. For example:

- Reflecting on your own and/or your child's experience of Scottish education, what works well and should continue?

Core question 4*:

What are the most important priorities for a future Scottish education system?

Reframing the question:

In your opinion as a parent or carer:

- What do you think the most important priorities for the Scottish education system should be in the future?

Prompt:

In considering question 4 above, participants could be provided with the following scaffolding to support their thinking and any discussion. For example:

- What should the 'point of education' be in Scotland? This question can support participants to consider what they see as current priorities in education as well as who sets them and how far they feel involved in that process. It will likely involve discussions about success and how it is/might be measured.
- What is most important for children at different ages and stages of their development and education?
- What will the curriculum of the future look like?

Core question 5*:

As a parent or carer: Overall, what is your vision for the future of education in Scotland?

Reframing the question:

As a parent or carer:

- Do you have any thoughts on what the future of education in Scotland should look like?

Prompt:

In considering question 5 above, parents and carers could be provided with the following scaffolding to support their thinking and any discussion. For example:

- What would the school day look like?
- What would classrooms look like?
- Where and when might learning happen?
- What would a timetable in a secondary school look like?
- What would assessment look like?
- What would teachers be like in future? How would they teach?

Core question 6*:

How can we make that future vision for education a reality in Scotland?

Reframing the question:

Now that we have thought about the vision for education in Scotland...As a parent or carer:

- Do you have any thoughts on how that future vision for Scottish education could be achieved?

Prompt:

In considering question 6 above, parents and carers could be provided with the following scaffolding to support their thinking and any discussion. For example:

- Is there something that education in Scotland should be doing in future that it isn't now? This 'compare and contrast' question invites parents and carers to consider how things might be, in contrast to how they are just now. This might involve them suggesting things to keep, discard or improve.

Core question 7*:

What do you think are the most important steps we need to take to achieve the future vision for education in Scotland?

Reframing the question:

As a parent or carer:

- What do you think would need to happen first to achieve that vision for education in Scotland?

Prompt:

In considering question 7 above, parents and carers could be provided with the following scaffolding to support their thinking and any discussion. For example:

- Reflecting on your answers for questions 5 and 6 above, what is the first thing that needs to be addressed to make this happen?
- Who needs to be involved in the process?

Core question 8:

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

Reframing the question:

As a parent or carer:

- What needs to happen to enable everyone with an interest in Scottish education to have their say and contribute to future decisions and actions?

Prompt:

In considering question 8 above, parents and carers could be provided with the following scaffolding to support their thinking and any discussion. For example:

- How can parents and carers be meaningfully engaged in knowing about and contributing to their child's learning in education settings, such as early years and schools?
- Thinking about your own circumstances, what would help you engage and contribute to future discussions and actions on Scottish education.

Core question 9:

Do you have any further comments or thoughts about your hopes for a future vision of education in Scotland?

Reframing the question:

As a parent or carer:

- Is there anything else you would like to add to the national discussion on the vision of education in Scotland?

Prompt:

In considering question 9 above, parents and carers could be provided with the following scaffolding to support their thinking and any discussion. For example:

- Is there anything that hasn't already been included in the questions above that you feel needs to be discussed to help shape the vision of education in Scotland?

Session 2: Our future learning, equity, wellbeing, rights & world

Facilitator Notes

Purpose

This session supports facilitators to explore the five additional questions of the National Discussion with parents and carers. This session is additional, and it is suggested that if it is used, parents and carers are split into groups to explore all or some of the five questions.

Summaries of any discussions relating to these themes can be shared via this [online feedback form](#).

Scaffolding/reframing Prompts

In considering each of the five additional questions, the following scaffolding/reframing prompts might be useful:

Our Future Learning: How can high quality educational experiences, teaching, and learning be best supported for children and young people in Scotland?

- What could effective learning for every young person look like in the future? What is most important for children at different ages and stages of their development and education and for meeting each child and young person's individual and diverse needs?
- What will those supporting learning need to achieve this? How can high quality learning and teaching and the work of practitioners be supported and developed to meet future learner' needs? What is the role of parents and carers and other local and national organisations in supporting learners' success?
- How can parents and carers be meaningfully engaged in knowing about and contributing to their child's learning in education settings, such as early years and schools?
- What will the curriculum of the future look like? What will young people need to know and do in order to be successful?
- Does Curriculum for Excellence need to be updated in any way? Are the four capacities - successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors still relevant for future learners?
- What should be considered successful outcomes for learners? How will all learners have opportunities for their successes to be recognised? What reforms, if any, to assessments will be required to meet future learners' needs?
- What would a successful education system look like?

Our Future Equity: How can every child and young person's individual needs be supported and addressed in the future?

- What is needed for an education system that is fair to everyone and equitable? For example: it works for everyone; barriers to educational opportunities are removed for children and young people. What needs to be done to make this happen?
- What would a future education system look like if every child was respected, valued and included, and no-one was left behind? How can this be achieved in future?
- How can the education system be inclusive of, and appropriate for, the diversity of Scotland's children and young people, and their communities?
- What would need to change to make this a reality?
- How will parents be included in any conversation related to their child's individual needs and any support that may be put in place?

Our Future Well-Being: How can children and young people's mental, emotional, social, and physical wellbeing and safety be cared for and supported in the future?

- What is needed to ensure all children and young people feel safe in education settings/schools?
- What supports are required for children and young people's wellbeing? How can the right help at the right time be provided?
- What opportunities are needed in the future for children and young people to be physically active in play and learning?
- What should the priorities be for children and young people's mental health? What can the future education system do?
- How can learners' views, experiences and suggestions be listened to, respected and included in future education decisions? What existing approaches can be built on or what new approaches are needed?
- How can respectful relationships continue to be developed throughout the education system in future? What would this require?
- How can the future wellbeing of parents and carers be supported and addressed? What is required and how can this be achieved?

Our Future Rights: How can the right of every child and young person - 'to have opportunities to develop their full potential' - be achieved in future?

- How can a child-friendly and learner-centred education system be developed for the future? What current successes can be built on and what changes are needed?

- How will an education system in the future fully represent and safeguard your rights and the rights of all young people?
- How can children and young people be supported to develop their understanding of human rights, to live peacefully, and to respect other people and the environment?
- How can schools involve parents and carers to further support children and young people to have opportunities to develop their full potential? What should that look like?

Our Future World: How can children and young people be helped to learn about our changing world, so they feel able to positively contribute?

- How can young people be supported in their educational pathways and transitions to fulfil their personal aspirations and future career ambitions?
- In your opinion, what would an appropriate and effective integration of digital technologies look like in learning and teaching.
- What do Scotland's learners need to know about the world we are living in, how it is changing, and how they can contribute to the world (locally and/or globally)?
- How do parents and carers support children and young people to positively contribute to a changing world?

Feeding Back:

Thank you for taking part in the National Discussion.

These tasks will have helped us all think about some of the National Discussion questions.

Learners should now either work in groups – or with the facilitator - to complete their group's response via the following link: [Let's Talk Scottish Education - feedback from group discussions - Scottish Government - Citizen Space \(consult.gov.scot\)](https://consult.gov.scot/learning-directorate/national-discussion-on-education)

Or, complete their own personal response via the following link:

<https://consult.gov.scot/learning-directorate/national-discussion-on-education>

If neither of these options fit your group's needs, you can instead choose to email a summary to: nationaldiscussiononeducation@gov.scot , or post on social media #TalkScottishEducation (via Instagram or Twitter). Please remember to include a rough description of who was in your group and how many people took part