

The 15-24 Learner Journey Review

May 2018

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Scottish Government

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*“I wouldn’t have got to where I am now if it
wasn’t for the support, motivation and
inspiration they have shown me.
It has been amazing.”*

Josh, aged 17

Participant in the 15-24 Learner Journey research
discussing their experience of education and skills in Scotland

The 15-24 Learner Journey Review

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Foreword

Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills



What is the purpose of education?

That is the question we have considered at the heart of our efforts to achieve a fully aligned and coherent education and skills system.

In answering that question, I am clear that we want our young people to be equipped with the skills and knowledge they need to reach their full potential in both their careers and their wider lives. We build our approach to this on three policy pillars of Getting it Right for Every Child, Curriculum for Excellence, and Developing the Young Workforce.

Scotland is rightly proud of its education and skills system. However, we need all of our young people to get as much as possible from that system. This review has highlighted work that partners across the system need to take forward together to make sure that happens. Importantly, as well as education partners, this also means continued, active involvement from employers, who have a key role to play in developing our workforce for the future and ensuring that our education system develops in tandem with our economy.

We have a widening range of opportunities available to our young people, from well-established and well understood academic routes to exciting industry-led technical and professional routes. We need to move away from an inappropriate view that there is a single route to success in life with everything else being a poor consolation. Such a restricted approach does not work in the modern world, if it ever did.

Scotland cannot afford to be one dimensional in its approach to education and we cannot afford to waste the talents of our young people. This is an issue which is central to our inclusive economic growth and social justice ambitions. As a result of the reforms we are taking forward, we have the opportunity to ensure that all of our young people can follow pathways that are tailored to their strengths and interests.

Through Curriculum for Excellence and Developing the Young Workforce we are putting in place a stronger basis for a more balanced offer than we have seen in the past. We see the future being about embedding this balanced offer in all our schools. Our computer programmers, environmental engineers and genetic technicians as well as our future doctors, teachers, electricians, builders and artists will only emerge through such an approach.

To achieve this more balanced approach we are committed to undertaking a number of priority improvements to our education and skills system.

Firstly, we need better advice. We need to do more to ensure that there is a clear connection between the advice and guidance young people receive on subject choices and on longer term career options. They are often making annual decisions about subject choices. We need to ensure that this is informed by a meaningful understanding of career opportunities.

Since 2011, Skills Development Scotland has significantly enhanced the advice young people receive about career information and better focus this on those who need it most. At the same time, the Developing Young Workforce programme has raised expectations for schools to provide increased advice about the world of work.

Building on this progress, this review makes recommendations about the way in which career choices are presented, experienced, and developed through the senior phase and beyond. Central to this is continuing to enhance support which focuses on the individual young person; their interests and aspirations; and their wider health and well-being across transition points.

This will require us to build on the innovative work being done across Scotland to improve outcomes for all of Scotland's children. We will need to ensure that we make the links with colleagues working in Community Learning & Development (CLD); Children and Young People Improvement Collaboratives (CYPIC); those who are participating in Scottish Improvement Leaders (SciL) training; those working on the Scottish Attainment Challenge; and the newly formed Regional Improvement Collaboratives (RICs).

In making these links, I want to emphasise the increasing interest across Scotland about what we can do to stop children from having stressful and traumatic experiences as they are growing up – what are often called adverse childhood experiences, or for short, ACEs. These can be different types of challenging experiences faced by young people and in responding to these I want us all to think about how we evolve the culture of the education and skills system toward greater nurturing and support, anchoring our approach in the rights of the child and young person.

Secondly, we need more work-based learning. Participants in this review told us that we need to build on the early success of the Developing the Young Workforce

programme and continue to broaden our approach to education to ensure that all learners have access to a more balanced range of options which are valued equally.

Our post-15 education system has evolved at a considerable pace, adapting to different economic circumstances and this has resulted in the need for new and stronger types of collaboration. Many young people are leaving school with a wider range of qualifications, skills-based awards and achievements, and more are making successful initial transitions. A record 93.7 per cent of senior phase school leavers were in a positive destination three months after leaving school in 2016/17. This compares to 90.1 per cent in 2011/12.¹

We want to build on this toward a fully co-created 15-24 education and skills system that is capable of preparing all our young people for a rapidly changing world of work; that provides a balance of work-based and academic skills informed by employer engagement; and is driven by a focus on the destinations of young people and the needs of the Scottish economy. To do this we will need strong system leadership to bring together the worlds of education and business and the complementary strengths of practitioners in different education sectors.

Thirdly, we need shorter journeys. Participants in this review told us that we need to improve the alignment of courses so that our learners are able to progress through the post-15 education system as smoothly and efficiently as possible.

We have an internationally renowned four year degree. One of its major strengths is its multiple-entry points. Despite this, this review has confirmed that we are not making the most of this. As a first step to improving the experience for the learner in navigating the system, we are committed to addressing this and this report sets a key expectation for more purposeful collaboration between schools, colleges and universities.

Taking all this work forward will require strong joint leadership and the right evidence base so that we act on evidence of outcomes and return on investment to ensure we continue to invest in the right qualifications and right types of learning.

This report sets out a list of priorities that we want to address now. It also presents a framework for continued joint working to build a consensus and commitment to meeting the future needs of the learner.

I would like to extend my thanks to everyone who invested their expertise and time in contributing to this report. In so doing, I am particularly grateful to Young Scot for its excellent work in engaging with young people.

Mindful of those young people, and many others currently in our education and skills system, it falls on us all to commit to taking forward these recommendations. We all have a role to play in this, and in Scotland's Year of Young People we look forward to working with all partners in the world of education in doing that.

John Swinney
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education & Skills

¹ Scottish Government (2018), '[Initial Destinations of Senior Phase School Leavers](#)'

Executive Summary

Key findings

1. **The Scottish Government's ambition is for a world class education and skills system.** A system that delivers the best value to the learner, wider society and the economy where all learners are on the right route to the right job, through the right course via the right information.
2. To achieve this, and reinforcing our ambitions for inclusive economic growth, social justice, and equity and excellence in education, we need to make sure that every individual young person in Scotland can fulfil his or her potential.
3. To maximise their talent, every young person needs the system to provide high quality guidance, advice and support so that they can be sure they are making the right decisions about their education and skills in line with their aspirations and abilities.
4. Equally, in order to ensure all young people have access to the choices that are right for them, we need the right balance and blend of learning options in our post-15 education and skills system – with parity of esteem between vocational and academic learning/pathways across the system as a whole.
5. Recognising this, we are already committed to further improving the education and skills system through our school reforms; the work on Fair Access; the Student Support Review; and the Enterprise and Skills Review. This report is a further demonstration of our ongoing commitment to improve equity and excellence across the wider education and skills system.
6. Even against a backdrop of historically low youth unemployment rates, the review reinforces the importance of the Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) programme, our youth employment strategy. On 9 October 2017, the Scottish Government announced the achievement of the headline target of DYW - to reduce youth unemployment in Scotland, excluding those in full-time education, by 40% by 2021 – four years ahead of schedule. DYW continues to be central to our approach to education, both to meet the needs of the economy and to provide young people with the start to their working lives we want them to have.
7. Our stakeholder engagement throughout this review has confirmed that we have many of the key component parts of a high quality 15-24 education system in place:
 - A strong starting point in school with entitlements for all young people set out in Curriculum for Excellence – particularly those on the Broad General Education, senior phase curriculum, personal support and skills for learning, life and work.
 - DYW's greater focus on employability, increased access to vocational qualifications and work-based learning, and stronger partnerships between schools, colleges and employers.
 - A focus through the Scottish Attainment Challenge and Pupil Equity Funding that will ensure schools are better able to meet the individual needs of young people and provide a more personalised curriculum.

- A wide range of youth-work opportunities, particularly important in supporting young people most at risk of disengagement.
 - A successful college sector which has been reconfigured to better meet the needs of industry, the economy and communities.
 - An internationally renowned university sector of distinctive universities including some of the world's oldest and most prestigious institutions as well as world-leading modern and specialist institutions.
 - An apprenticeship programme which has grown almost threefold over the past decade and which continues to evolve and innovate in line with industry needs.
 - A qualifications framework, in the Scottish Credit & Qualifications Framework, which can support a flexible learner journey.
 - A national careers service delivered locally, underpinned by a well-established online information service.
 - A wide range of advice, support and resources available across educational sectors to support and assist young people, parents/carers to make informed choices.
 - A body of evidence and data that tells us how young people are doing at the different stages of their journey.
 - A historically low youth unemployment rate which places Scotland among the best performing countries in Europe.
8. The best way to ensure that each young person makes the best choices for them, and to make our system as efficient and effective as possible, is to ensure that learners are supported to make the correct choices in the first place; to improve connections across the system and with employers; and to ensure that the right options are open for those who need additional support at any time in their learner journey.

What could be improved

9. From our engagement with young people, business and partners it was clear that if we want an improved, more coherent learner journey post-15, then we need to focus on advice & system coherence, and **prioritise**:

Priorities for improvement:	This is to deliver:	We will achieve improvement by:
1. Information, Advice & Support	<i>Greater Personalisation</i>	<i>Making it easier for young people to understand their learning and career choices at the earliest stage and providing long-term person-centred support for the young people who need this most</i>
2. Provision	<i>Real Choice</i>	<i>Broadening our approach to education and reframing our offer, doing more for those who get the least out of the system and ensuring all young people access the high level work-based skills Scotland's economy needs</i>

3. Alignment	<i>System Purpose</i>	<i>Making the best use of our four year degree to give greater flexibility for more learners to move from S5 to year one of a degree, more from S6 to year 2, and more from college into years 2 and 3 of a degree, where appropriate</i>
4. Leadership	<i>System Vision</i>	<i>Building collective leadership across the education and skills system</i>
5. Performance	<i>System Success</i>	<i>Knowing how well our education and skills system is performing</i>

10. In response to these priorities, specific commitments to improve the education and skills system are set out below on page 11.

Timings

11. Many of the changes proposed, both new and those building on existing actions, will take time to fully implement and take effect. This report sets out a commitment to undertake short, medium and longer term improvements.

Improvement in the Short to Medium term (1-3 years)

A shared vision and smoother transitions across sectors

12. In taking forward these commitments, we are clear that in the short to medium term we need to improve access to information and ensure that the right level of one-to-one support is available to help all young people make the right choices.
13. For young people progressing to higher education, we need to increase collaboration between schools, colleges and universities to maximise the multiple entry points of the four year degree which are currently under-utilised both from school and from college.
14. For young people progressing to further education, training or work, we need to ensure that we make their learner journey smoother and more stable, ensuring the transitions they make support their progression and meet their ambitions.
15. The review has identified the need to provide system leadership on the vision for post-15 education to be clear on its effectiveness, including, for example, setting out the contribution of the senior phase in schools, and building on the work by the further and higher education sectors, independent training providers and businesses in delivering work-based learning and the range of routes to higher education and employment in Scotland. In building this vision, we are mindful of the needs of all learners, including those involved in the Broad General Education and those in work or adults returning to education, and that the education and skills system needs to be understood in its entirety.

Improvement in the longer term (3 years plus)

A fully aligned 15-24 education and skills system

16. Building on the collaboration visible through DYW and extending this to universities, we want our education and skills system to be more fully aligned toward a unified 15-

24 learner journey, co-designed and delivered by schools, colleges, the third sector, universities, independent training providers and employers.

17. Over the next few years, this will require system leadership and all parts of the post-15 education and skills system to extend collaboration to further:
 - Develop and better align schools, the third-sector, independent training providers, colleges and universities, informed by business to provide learners with meaningful choices, enabling progression and promoting the use of the Scottish Credit & Qualifications Framework – (SCQF, which is explained at **annex D**).
 - Co-create and co-deliver the senior-phase curriculum, aligning timetables, making maximum use of the technical expertise and (human and financial) resources across the combined estate to create the best place to learn and involving new ways of maximising work-based learning, digitalisation and employer engagement.
 - Provide aligned guidance, support and services to enable full participation in the wider range of curriculum choices.
18. These recommendations have implications for quality, governance and leadership of the wider post-15 education and skills system. This includes the need to more effectively join up this leadership by: maximising the input and support of the new Enterprise and Skills Strategic Board; supporting local authorities and the new Regional Improvement Collaboratives to connect with regional colleges, universities and the third sector; and building consistency across the respective quality arrangements of the different parts of the system.
19. The Scottish Government, working with national and local partners, will continue to actively engage with young people and with business in the implementation of this work to ensure that policy decisions relating to the learner journey continue to be informed by young people and employers.
20. This engagement will be a key feature of Scotland's Year of Young People and the first National Economic Forum of 2018.
21. Over the course of 2018, we will work with Young Scot to help us to refine messages and develop new ways to better promote the range of opportunities available within our 15-24 education and skills system. In the years that follow, these messages will form the basis of our vision to ensure everyone - young people, parents, teachers and practitioners – fully value and make the most ambitious use of Scotland's post-15 education and skills system.

The 15-24 Learner Journey Review: Summary

Key Priority	Our ambition	Recommendation
<p>1. Information Advice & Support</p> <p><i>Making it easier for young people to understand their learning and career choices at the earliest stage and providing long-term person-centred support for the young people who need this most</i></p>	<p>We want young people to have access to greater levels of personal support particularly in terms of how they use the information available to them. As a step toward this, we want to support a greatly improved digital experience, building on and extending My World of Work (MWOW). Our aim is for a <i>one-stop shop</i> approach to better signpost all qualifications, pathways and support to learners in Scotland. This would be a digital hub to which all young people have access through an online account when they start school. The hub would be where their attributes and skills are collated and where they can: link their skills to the planning of career opportunities; explore more about those opportunities; and link to making applications.</p> <p>We want to make improvements to the existing services and adapt them to meet this demand for a <i>one-stop shop</i> approach. To create the hub we will work with Skills Development Scotland (SDS) to build on My World of Work, developing this over time so that it continues to better signpost existing information available on other websites, and promote this better to practitioners, parents, carers and learners. In taking forward this work we are absolutely clear on the importance of more personal support. As learners progress from school to college we also want much greater consistency in the experience of CIAG (Career Information Advice & Guidance) within college and there was clear support from college practitioners for this to happen.</p>	<p>1 We will ensure every learner in Scotland has an online learner account to link their skills and attributes to better course choices. This work will start in 2018. We will work with SDS to develop My World of Work to link fully with existing digital services in school to deliver an online learner account that enables learners to record their attributes, skills and qualifications in a way that follows them beyond school and helps them plan their learner journey into work.</p> <p>2 We will support practitioners, parents, carers and learners to have access to an online prospectus setting out the learning choices available in their region, building toward a one-stop shop approach. This work will start in 2018. We will develop a clear local offer and work with local authorities, colleges, Regional Improvement Collaboratives, universities and SDS to support the development of an online regional prospectus for the senior phase which gives an overview of the courses available to young people in schools in their area – linking to the promotion of DYW.</p> <p>3 We will ensure learners in schools, colleges and universities receive a joined-up approach to careers, information, advice and guidance. This work will start in 2018. We will work in partnership with colleges to ensure greater consistency in CIAG service delivery to learners. This will include better access to specific career practitioners in the college sector. We will work with QAA (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education) and Universities to ensure their quality processes align with Scottish Government aspirations for learner access to CIAG support.</p> <p>4 We will take account of the outcomes of the PSE (Personal Social Education) Review, due to be published later this year, and consider what further improvement is needed on wider personal support for young people in schools.</p> <p>5 We will work with the college sector to improve the ease with which learners can apply to college. We will work with colleges, SFC and SDS to further improve the way learners can search and access course applications. We will move to the use of common information on all college applications to make it easier for learners who make multiple applications. We will move toward a more standardised timetable for college applications and the presentation of offers of places, taking into account UCAS deadlines for offers.</p>
<p>2. Provision</p> <p><i>Broadening our approach to education and reframing our offer, doing more for those who get less out of the system and ensuring all young people access the high level work-based skills Scotland's economy needs</i></p>	<p>We want a school curriculum that works for all young people. This is made possible through the full realisation of the Developing Young Workforce Programme (DYW), within the wider context of CfE. Aligned to this we also want a college curriculum with clear and purposeful pathways to work and higher level study. In doing both of these things, we want to do much more for those who get the least out of the system.</p> <p>As part of the improved offer in school, we want to see greater co-creation of the curriculum by colleges, third sector organisations and business to deliver a more diverse and richer learning experience for all young people. Over time we would expect a planned and connected curriculum to start within the Broad General Curriculum for all learners. This work has started and we need to build on existing initiatives, including approaches emerging through the Pupil Equity Fund and the work of the Children and Young People Improvement Collaboratives.</p> <p>Critically, we want to support schools to work more closely and earlier with other professionals, existing out-with the school environment, so that the curriculum offer is planned as part of a wider child support plan.</p> <p>Although this review focussed on 15-24 year olds, we want to meet our commitments on lifelong learning</p> <p>A commitment to lifelong learning should be at the heart of any credible education & skills strategy. It is important to ensure there is the right balance between undergraduate degrees and other forms of post-secondary education, including shorter tertiary qualifications and work based learning. This balance should be informed by evidence of the benefits of each. Therefore, we will want to continue to review the volume of employment-based training, including Graduate Apprenticeships, as part of a joined up skills investment strategy to maintain the standards of technical education and ensure that our skills investment is in response to and in anticipation of future skills shortages and emerging opportunities.</p>	<p>6 We will develop a national communication strategy to explain and promote the breadth of choices in the 15-24 learner journey. This will build on the promotional activity undertaken during Scotland's Year of Young People and be ready by the end of AY19-20.</p> <p>7 We will raise our aspiration and improve the offer and support for statutory leavers and looked after young people. We will want improvements to be in place from AY19-20. We will support schools to have in place an expanded offer from the start of S4 – involving early identification, a planned curriculum with the necessary support in place - devised in partnership with either the third sector, colleges or an employer, for all young people at risk of disengagement.</p> <p>8 We will better align financial incentives to encourage continued participation in school for young people at risk of disengagement and we will ask Young Scot to assist us with this. This work will start in 2018. We will review how our entitlements align to maximise their impact irrespective of whether learning takes place in the third sector or college whilst a learner is still at school. We will align this effort as part of taking forward the recommendations of the Student Support Review(2017) and will ensure this work has maximum impact on care experienced young people.</p> <p>9 We will embed DYW in the school curriculum by 2021, having achieved the headline target for DYW four years early. We will work with the new Regional Improvement Collaboratives, schools, local authorities, colleges, third sector, CLD, employers and national bodies to embed DYW as the expected approach to curriculum, planning design and delivery.</p> <p>10 We will support and enable the Foundation Apprenticeship and other vocational qualifications to be embedded, providing a range of options for all learners in the senior phase by 2021. As a starting point we will continue with our commitment to 5,000 FAs by 2019.</p> <p>11 We will support colleges to maximise the vocational routes learners and employers need. From 2018, we will build on the college sector's pivotal role in the education and skills system: in access; in enabling routes to work; in delivering higher technical skills; and in providing routes to university. This will include ensuring we have the right provision, the right modes of study and the right measures of success to support the best learner outcomes and make the biggest impact. This will build on the work already started by colleges and support our wider effort to develop a shared narrative about the purpose of post 15 education.</p> <p>12 We will improve choice through the expansion of Graduate Apprenticeships to provide new higher level technical skills as part of a better balanced education and skills system. This work will start with impetus in 2018.</p>

The 15-24 Learner Journey Review: Summary

Key Priority	Our ambition	Recommendation
<p>3. Alignment</p> <p><i>Making the best use of our four year degree to give greater learner flexibility for more learners to move from S5 to year one of a degree, more from S6 to year 2, and more from college into years 2 and 3 of a degree where appropriate</i></p>	<p>We want to see a better aligned system which provides genuine choice and enables smooth progression for learners. DYW is already in place to ensure the senior phase and S6 can be best utilised to support a greater range of options. S6 enables many learners to gain their full complement of Highers, and others to build their qualifications to secure the best positive destination to college and employment. However, a question arises over the value added by S6 to improve the progression for our highest achievers - those with sufficient academic credit to progress to university at the end of S5; or to progress from S6 to university with advanced standing. The review has identified the overlap between S5/S6 and year one of university. For some learners this is necessary and desirable; for others it impacts on the pace of their academic progression and can result in duplicate investment and delivery of SCQF level 7 credit. In the recent past, much higher numbers of young people progressed from S5 to year one of university. Despite a four year degree with multi-entry points and a high proportion of S6 pupils achieving at least one level 7 qualification, of those now staying on into S6 just over 1% of school leavers enter year 2. <i>(Scottish Government analysis of HESA Student Data).</i></p> <p>In recognising that the Senior Phase is a three-year programme of learning – a key entitlement under Curriculum for Excellence - we need greater collaboration across the system to fully support progression. This is to overcome learner maturity issues and ensure more of our most able young people can enter y1 from S5 where appropriate. This establishes a challenge to our colleges and universities to collaborate with each other and with schools at a new level and in new ways. They need to do more to meet learner expectation and schools need to reciprocate their efforts. This requires a step-change in culture and expectation, in university engagement with schools, in curriculum alignment, transition planning and learner support. This is part of our ambition under Priority 2, to ensure greater collaboration across the 15-24 education and skills system.</p> <p>We want to support and build on the recent college improvement effort on retention and attainment; so college courses enable more learners to move into work and others to complete higher education and progress to university. Since many learners now see college as a stepping stone to a degree, we want more articulation to be possible in all universities.</p>	<p>13 We will minimise unnecessary duplication at SCQF level 7. We will make maximum use of the flexibility of the four year degree to enable learners to move, where appropriate, from S5 to year 1 and, through greater recognition of Advanced Highers, from S6 to year 2 of a university degree programme.</p> <p>This will help support delivery of Recommendation 6 of the report of the Commission on Widening Access (“The Scottish Government, working with key stakeholders, should ensure the key transitions phases around SCQF levels 6 to 8 are better used to provide students from disadvantaged backgrounds with the qualifications and experiences required to support fair access.”).</p> <p>14 We will support colleges and universities to ensure more learners progress from college to all our universities without unnecessary duplication of SCQF credit.</p> <p>We will more fully align our college and university higher education system to meet learner expectation, to ensure full recognition of prior college learning where appropriate.</p> <p>We expect all universities to actively support this to happen and to commit to substantially increasing the proportion of HN learners they admit with full credit to at least the 75-per-cent benchmark identified by SFC. We will ask universities to set out the reasons why articulation is not possible for any learners transferring within the same broad subject areas, and the steps being taken to enable it.</p> <p>We expect the universities who traditionally have low numbers of articulating students to also commit to substantially increasing the number of HN learners they admit.</p>
<p>4. Leadership</p> <p><i>Building collective leadership across the education and skills system</i></p>	<p>We want a shared vision to enable a single system approach. Our starting point is to understand why the system needs to change to be better for the learner, accept this and then establish the conditions for this to be realised. This raises questions as to how we support the system to do this. In terms of governance we will need greater alignment in decision making. Aligning key stakeholders within a single vision, will be the beginning of establishing a shared culture, which then creates the conditions to address the capacity issues the system faces together.</p> <p>The leadership challenge will need to address and make clear our expectations of the three year senior phase and maximise its value; our expectations of the four year degree and maximise its entry points; and the role of colleges in ensuring direct routes to employment, delivering high level skills, and routes to degree level study. This requires strong governance, capable of making whole system decisions and of looking ahead to make plans for Scotland’s future education and skills needs.</p>	<p>15 We will provide system leadership to ensure there is a shared vision about the purposes of post 15 education.</p>
<p>5. Performance</p> <p><i>Knowing how well our education and skills system is performing</i></p>	<p>It is important that funding across the system helps young people make decisions based on what works for them and for the economy. Therefore, we need to act on the information we create and use that information to support learners to make more informed choices. We want to maximise the value of existing governance structures, such as the new Enterprise and Skills Strategic Board and the Scottish Education Council; and support a connection between the new Regional Improvement Collaboratives and regional colleges and with universities as well as the respective quality arrangements of the different parts of the system.</p> <p>Acting on evidence of outcomes and return on investment, should redress the inconsistencies of investment in different qualifications and different types of learning. This will start with the commencement of the LEO project (Longitudinal Educational Outcomes). We will ensure a more co-ordinated use of data across national organisations, to better understand the impact of different learner journeys: This will include developing a consistent set of performance measures and to consider how the National Improvement Framework could be developed to support the learner 12 journey 15-24.</p>	<p>16 We will support greater alignment and collaboration across the education and skills system making best use of the Scottish Candidate Number to help support effective transitions.</p> <p>17 We will develop better data and improve how existing data is used to support learners make the right choices for them. We will also develop a performance framework to drive improvements across the system as a whole.</p>

Background

22. This review was established in 2016 to: *‘review education provision for all 16-24 year olds² so their learning journey is as efficient and effective as possible and provides stepping stones to success for those needing most support’*, as set out in the First Minister’s Programme for Government and reiterated in ‘Delivering Excellence and Equity in Scottish Education: A Delivery Plan for Scotland’ in 2016.
23. We want to ensure that all learners are on the right route to the right job, through the right course via the right information. To achieve this we want to ensure that we have a learning system which enables efficient and effective learning journeys through:
 - Informed decision-making by the learner;
 - The quality, value and reach of provision on offer to learners;
 - Straightforward, more efficient connections between parts of the system, including recognition of prior learning;
 - Equality of access to these opportunities, including suitable learner funding;
 - Embedded partnership working with businesses and their representatives.
24. We want our education and skills system to deliver the most value to learners, employers and communities. We also want it to provide an excellent learning experience which meets the needs and aspirations of all young people and equips them with skills for learning, life and work. This means a focus on delivering equity, raising attainment, promoting equality, tackling inequalities and adversity, and supporting those with additional support needs as part of delivering economic success for individuals, companies and employers, and all Scotland’s communities.
25. Throughout our engagement we have had feedback that much of what determines outcomes for young people happens before age 15 and that there are many wider factors outside of education that impact on young peoples’ journeys. In relation to the latter, we are particularly mindful of what more we can do to prevent adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) which can impact on a child’s development, learning and behaviour, and without intervention, can have long-term damaging impacts, affecting mental and physical well-being.
26. In addressing ACEs we recognise the positive role that schools, colleges, training providers, universities and communities play in supporting children to overcome these experiences – enabling young people to feel safe and nurtured and better supported to build resilience.
27. So, whilst this review focuses on ages 15-24, we acknowledge that it sits within a wider education landscape. We note, for example, the significant role that is played by Community Learning Development in improving life chances of young people in Scotland and in providing opportunities for educational and personal development. The recommendations of this report, therefore, build upon the work being taken forward from early years onwards, including work to better prevent adverse childhood experiences, as well in terms of our key education policies, including Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC), Curriculum for Excellence (CfE),

² At the programme design stage, to ensure full coverage of the senior phase, the age range was extended to include 15 year olds.

Developing the Young Workforce (DYW), Raising Attainment and wider work to secure excellence and equity.

28. Equally, delivery of this programme supports the implementation of the Enterprise and Skills Review (2016) and Scotland's Economic Strategy (2015) to create a more successful country, with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish, through increasing sustainable economic growth.
29. Further information on what the review set out to do and the approach taken is provided at **Annex A**.

The Education & Skills System

Key facts about the education and skills system

30. In terms of what we know about the range of journeys through the system, as an early task in the review it was established that:

Key facts:

Most school leavers in Scotland go into further study; the majority of these go to Higher Education (Higher Education (HE) can be in a college (HNC/D) or a degree programme at a university)

- In 2015/16, 37.3 per cent of all school leavers went on to Higher Education, 22.4 per cent into Further Education, 28.7 per cent into employment.³

A substantial proportion of Higher entries are from S6 pupils

- In 2017, 51.7 per cent of total Higher entries were from S5 pupils and 39.4 per cent were from S6.
- In 2017, in S6 most entries were in Higher qualifications (76,710), then National 5 qualifications (37,910) then Advanced Higher qualifications (23,070).⁴

Increasing numbers of young people are staying on at school until S6

- In 2017, the S6 cohort was 62 per cent the size it had been in S3. In 2007 this was only 44 per cent, meaning that there has been an 18 percentage point increase on those staying on to S6.⁵

The vast majority of year one HE entrants from school are from S6 compared to S5.

- In 2015/16, 9.2 per cent (1,210) of S5 leavers went to HE compared to 54.8 per cent (18,200) of S6 leavers.⁶

Over the past 17 years, there has been a decline in the numbers of school leavers going from S5 to year 1 at university

- In 2000/01, 1,150 individuals aged 17 and under entered university falling to 385 by 2015/16. This equates to 4.0 per cent and 1.1 per cent respectively of all Scottish Domiciled individuals going to university.⁷

³ Scottish Government (2017), 'Attainment and Leaver publication 1`5/16'

⁴ SQA (December 2017), 'Attainment Statistics (December) 2017'

⁵ Scottish Government analysis of HESA Student Data

⁶ Scottish Government (2017), 'Attainment and leaver publication 15/16'

⁷ Scottish Government analysis of HESA Student Data

There is limited progression from S6 to year 2 at university, including from learners with Advanced Highers (AH).

- Of those progressing from S6 to university, only around 1.4 per cent enter at year 2 of university.⁸ At the same time, 12,004 learners (84 per cent of all pupils taking an AH course) achieved at least one AH qualification of which 1,945 learners (14 per cent) achieved 3 or more AH qualifications. The majority (96 per cent) of AH are undertaken by S6 pupils.⁹

A large proportion of FE learners in college don't complete at the first go

- In 2016/17, the non-completion rate for full-time FE courses was 34.7 per cent (with partial success completion rate being 9.6 per cent)¹⁰

More than half of college learners repeat a level of study at university

- In 2014/15, 8,402 HNC/D students progressed onto university. Of this number, 4,008 (48 per cent) articulated with Advanced Standing (where their credit was fully recognised); 863 (10 per cent) with Advanced Progression (only some of their credit was recognised) and 3,515 (42 per cent) with Progression (their credit was not recognised).¹¹

Winter leavers have poorer outcomes than other learners

- S4 and S5 statutory winter and summer leavers are less likely to be participating in education or employment after leaving school than those who remain in school after the statutory leave date. The participation rate for winter and summer statutory leavers in October 2016 was 64 per cent, whereas those who left after the statutory date had an equivalent rate of 85 per cent.¹²

The majority of those who enrol on a Modern Apprenticeship end up in work

- In 2016, 91 per cent of completers of a Modern Apprenticeship were in work 6 months after the completion date compared with 63 per cent for non-completers.¹³

31. The Scottish Government invests in the education and training system via a number of routes. Information on the most recent data concerning the Scottish Government expenditure or funding for a range of activities, specifically relating to

⁸ Scottish Government analysis of HESA Student Data

⁹ SQA (2017), 'Annual Statistical Report 2016'

¹⁰ SFC (2018), 'College Performance Indicators 2016-17'

¹¹ Scottish Government analysis of SFC Articulation data

¹² SDS Exploratory Analysis of Outcomes for 2012/13 School Leavers

¹³ SDS (2016), 'Modern Apprenticeship Intermediate Outcomes 2016'

teaching as well as an indication of the number of individuals who are expected to benefit from this provision can be found at <https://beta.gov.scot/policies/young-people-training-employment/15-24-learner-journey-review/>

32. The available data has made clear that whilst the education and skills system works well for most, there are clear areas for improvement, not least in improving the equality of experience for different groups of learners, and that a greater understanding is needed on the reasons for this. The evidence base was subsequently developed over the course of the review and included:
 - Research with young people, undertaken by SQW working with Young Scot
 - Further analysis and preparation of analytical reports by the Scottish Government Education Analysis Division
 - A report summarising the engagement undertaken with all college regions & their partners
 - A report summarising employer engagement
 - Reports from each of the five project review groups
 - Submissions received from partners, including from Colleges Scotland, Skills Development Scotland and Universities Scotland.
33. All of which is available at <https://beta.gov.scot/policies/young-people-training-employment/15-24-learner-journey-review/>
34. The process of engagement is set out at **Annex A**.
35. Gaps in the evidence base persist at the end of this review, reflecting, in part, the way in which data is currently collected separately across the different parts of the system. The need for a more joined-up evidence base, therefore, is a key finding from the review – making clear the need to develop a better understanding of how the system works as a whole.
36. As an outcome of the review, and as part of the implementation of the Enterprise and Skills review, the Scottish Government has begun the process of building a more robust evidence base and skills performance framework. This review recommends that this should take as its starting point the **value added** by parts of the system, and a focus on destinations and longer term outcomes of all learners. This is covered in more detail on page 64 of this report.
37. Given the complexity and breadth of this work, the work on data will be completed over time and as part of an on-going commitment to a more joined up education and skills system, whereby decisions on investment are driven increasingly by the value they create for the learner, business and the economy.

What did we find out and what can we improve?

What did young people tell us?

38. Research undertaken by consultants SQW¹⁴, working with Young Scot, into young peoples' experiences of the education and skills system, told us:
- The highest value learner journey is one that is specific to meet the needs for each individual young person.
 - Many young people make choices about their learning based on short-term, annual options rather than considering longer pathway planning toward particular careers and advanced level knowledge and skills.
 - At a national level we have a job to do in explaining how each component part of our educational structure is part of a single system, geared at presenting a coherent vision for post-15 education in Scotland.
 - Some young people felt the focus on attainment and qualifications within schools was not giving them the skills required to succeed in life, learning and work. As a result, some felt ill-prepared for life after school and this had a negative impact on their learner journeys. This was found to be particularly true of young people from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, who may have limited support to develop life skills at home.
 - When young peoples' learner journeys falter, this is often the result of personal, social and health issues. Some young people reported that schools are not always well equipped to deal with these issues. In some cases, the support required is just a degree of flexibility to be able to identify and respond to individual needs, and in others it is a referral to external support. Access to the right support at the right time was identified as being key to minimising the potential negative impact that these issues can have on young peoples' learner journeys.
 - Young people felt there was a lack of parity of esteem between vocational and academic career pathways. A number of young people felt schools viewed university as the top destination for leavers, with college being the preferred second choice. This ties in with the focus on attainment and qualifications, with a perception that the 'ideal' pathway is to achieve good grades and then go to university. There is an assumption that leavers in the top cohort in terms of grades and attainment will go to university and alternative options, including vocational and technical routes, were reported to be very rarely promoted or discussed with this group.
 - In terms of subject choices, many young people reported a tension between choosing subjects that they enjoyed or were good at versus those that were perceived to offer better career opportunities. They also requested more

¹⁴ Scottish Government (2017), 'Young People's Experience of Education and Training from 15-24 years'.

guidance and support to be made available to inform subject choices, including information on the implications of these on future opportunities.

- First destinations on leaving school were found to be mainly determined by academic attainment, with minimal consideration of individual aspirations, preferred learning styles, personal attributes (such as ability to cope with independent living) or final destinations. The study found that most young people who go to university tend to delay consideration of what to do next until the latter stages of their degree. For those who go to college, apprenticeships or employment, decisions about the next steps are often less well planned.
- Many young people from all backgrounds report negative early experiences of the world of work. Lack of relevant and beneficial work experience was cited as a key barrier to young people getting certain jobs.

What did our partners tell us?

39. Building on our engagement with young people, the five projects of the review led detailed engagement with practitioners, stakeholders and partners over a period of several months, involving representatives from schools, independent training providers, colleges, universities, youth-work, professional associations, parents and national agencies.
40. A summary report for each project is available online at <https://beta.gov.scot/policies/young-people-training-employment/15-24-learner-journey-review/>
41. A full list of those engaged is available at **Annex C**.

What can we improve ?

42. In listening to young people, it is clear that we need to ensure they are better informed of the options available to them and how these can shape their career aspirations. This will require addressing the issue that work-related, vocational options are still not being valued or promoted as fully as they should. This results in young people continuing to be encouraged to take qualifications or courses that are not in their best interests, socially or economically.
43. We have a range of high quality information and resources, and support and guidance facilities available to assist and support young people, with their parents and carers, to make informed choices about their employment and learning options. However, these services tend to be managed within individual institutions and organisations and there is no standard requirement for organisations to signpost and promote the full range of options and opportunities available to young people to achieve their individual potential.
44. There is a strong CIAG (Careers Information Advice & Guidance) offer in place in schools, strengthened further by the Career Education Standard 3-18 and SDS/ School Partnership Agreements. However, evidence from the reviews of the Career Education Standard and CIAG shows that there is still more to be done for

schools to take more responsibility for this and for greater links to be made between learning in the classroom and its relevance to the world of work.

45. Feedback from engagement work also suggests the need for CIAG to be backed up with more on-going personalised support for young people, throughout key points of their journey, which looks at their wider health and wellbeing, as well as career aspirations and academic ability. This would suggest that there is room for improvement in delivering on the CfE (Curriculum for Excellence) entitlement to personal support.
46. In responding to this expectation for greater personal support, we need to recognise and better address the impact that adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) have on a young person's development, learning and behaviour. Schools, colleges, training providers and communities all play a crucial role in reducing the severity of ACEs, supporting children to overcome these experiences in the home and in the community. No one sector or organisation can do this on their own; addressing childhood adversity is a cross-cutting agenda that includes aligning the contribution of education with health, justice, social work, youth work and others.
47. As well as the need for greater personal support, there are also questions about the coherence of the learner journey for young people. This is particularly the case for statutory winter leavers who choose to leave school at the earliest opportunity and as a result of this, who tend to have more transitions in their learner journey than any other group of young people. It is also clear that there is still a 'middle group' of young people for whom the learner journey is not sufficiently smooth or purposeful. Similarly, there is evidence that S6 could be designed more effectively to encourage more meaningful and faster progression to further and advanced level learning; and that articulation routes from college into university could be improved.
48. Reflecting on this information, it is clear that if we want an improved, more coherent learner journey post-15, then we need to focus on addressing learner advice & support and system coherence, and prioritise:

Key priorities for improvement:	This is in order to deliver:	We will achieve improvement by:
1. Information, Advice & Support	<i>Greater Personalisation</i>	<i>Making it easier for young people to understand their learning and career choices at the earliest stage and providing long-term person-centred support for the young people who need this most</i>
2. Provision	<i>Real Choice</i>	<i>Broadening our approach to education to reframe our offer, doing more for those who get the least out of the system and ensuring all young people access the high level work-based skills Scotland's economy needs</i>
3. Alignment	<i>System Purpose</i>	<i>Making the best use of our four year degree to give greater flexibility for move learners to move from S5 to year one of a degree, more from S6 to year 2, and more from college into years 2 and 3 of a degree where appropriate</i>
4. Leadership	<i>System Vision</i>	<i>Building collective leadership across the education and skills system</i>
5. Performance	<i>System Success</i>	<i>Knowing how well our education and skills system is performing</i>

49. In taking forward these priorities, we should remind ourselves that the outcomes of this review will need to be developed and implemented across schools, colleges and universities over time. This will require further engagement, detailed planning and design, and likely significant and on-going work in relation to:
- Qualification design / joined up approaches to learning experiences
 - Joint curriculum design and planning
 - Transition planning for learners
 - Resource sharing and logistical planning
 - Shared measurements and integrated quality standards
50. The review, therefore, acknowledges that to do this well, implementation will take time and that recommendations for the short, medium and long term are necessary.

How will we do this?

Information, Advice and Support

Recommendations 1-4

Recommendations 1 &2: *Better planning of journeys*

“It’s all very well having help to fill out your university application, but you need help deciding what to do.” Emma, aged 21.

Young people told us:

- *There was good support available within schools to complete college and university application forms, but less adequate support available to help young people decide which programme to apply for.*
- *For those going on to college, apprenticeships or employment, decisions about the next steps are often less well planned.*
- *The first key decision point in a young person’s learner journey is when they make subject choices in secondary school. These were reported to be based mainly on things they enjoyed or were good at, rather than on a career plan or an understanding of labour market opportunities.*
- *Parents and carers are key influencers on young people's career choices and learner journeys, both directly and indirectly, and additional support is needed where there is less support at home.*

51. The quality of career information, advice and guidance services delivered by Skills Development Scotland in schools and local authorities continues to be externally reviewed by Education Scotland through the ‘External review of CIAG services’ framework. This approach has consistently reported that there is a high quality and collaborative approach in place to improve outcomes for young people in Scotland. Moreover, that this service supports the development of lifelong career management skills, to enable young people to make better informed decisions about their current and future learning, skills and career choices.
52. In thinking about how we maximise access to this service and information more generally, it was clear from our engagement that many parents, carers, practitioners and young people continue to have limited awareness of the full range of options available. This was also the conclusion of a recent report produced for Skills Development Scotland & Scottish Government, *Parents and Carers Research*, produced by Progressive Partnership and published in May 2018.
53. The report highlights that parental/carer understanding of the range of post-school options is fairly limited and even those parents generally aware of the options available often had very little understanding of the detail of these. Copies of this report are available at <https://beta.gov.scot/publications/parents-and-carers-research-final-report-january-2018/>
54. Replicating these findings, our engagement identified that despite information being available through a number of different sources, parents, carers and young people can find it difficult to access information on the options and support available in their areas. As such, young people are not always being provided with information about the full range of options available to them.

55. As our starting point, we considered if we could bring together the current Career Information Advice Guidance (CIAG) system on My World of Work – managed by Skills Development Scotland - with information on student support and the application system for UCAS, Apprenticeships online and potentially a new college application process.
56. The review revealed that, as well as understanding the choices available, more could be done to help learners understand the different application and assessment processes associated with these. It was noted that My World of Work has the potential to sit at the heart of how young people access and organise information about themselves and about their future education and skills choices. It was noted that further development was needed to link this better to other information to build understanding amongst learners, parents and practitioners and to give an equal footing to both vocational and academic pathways – noting that currently, learners go to different places to access different routes, creating multiple systems, often requiring learners to duplicate information about themselves.
57. The review made clear that to better align services, information needs to be joined up and one central approach would help this. However, thought needs to be given to how individual learners and end users, such as employers, can get the best from such a central / digital service as their needs will be different.
58. It was also noted that universities and colleges need to be clearer to the learner about the reality of the clearing process and all the other factors which impact upon successful progression, in addition to qualifications, such as differential entry requirements.
59. Presenting information effectively to young people, ultimately, therefore, needs a fully joined-up approach rather than simply aligning services.

Recommendation 1

We will ensure every learner in Scotland has an online learner account to link their skills and attributes to better course choices. This work will start in 2018 and be accessible by the start of 2019

To do this we will develop My World of Work (MWOW) to link with existing digital services to deliver an online learner account that enables learners to record their attributes, skills and qualifications in a way that helps them better plan their learner journey into work. The account will also be used to support application processes. Our approach will recognise wider achievements and informal learning, so that all young people have the opportunity to develop a personal statement and clearly articulate the skills gained and achievements made whilst in school.

The online learner account for each individual learner would be based on the existing **Scottish Candidate Number***. When considering the use of a unique learner number, it was felt that further development of the existing SCN offered the most potential as a means of taking this forward. At an aggregate level this will help develop consistent performance measures as well as support the tracking of cohorts through the system for the purpose of evaluation.

The online learner account could become the basis of a wider learner portal that links the learner to different application processes and connects to the developments, set out below in this report, in relation to how learners make an application to college.

In the *Year of the Young Person* debate in December 2017, young people expressed a desire to see the full range of their skills and achievements recognised. In order to address this, work is already underway by Education Scotland, working with the Awards Network, Skills Development Scotland and young people to explore how to best capture all young people's achievements, using MWOW as a starting point. This will form a key part of the work to take forward this recommendation.

*The Scottish Candidate Number (SCN), administered by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), is in place for candidates undertaking SQA qualifications and has been used as the unique pupil identifier in all publicly-funded schools in Scotland since 2006 and covers all children from entry to P1. For post-school learning and training, the SCN is recorded for a large proportion of university full-time undergraduates, college students and those undertaking training. However, it is not used in a systematic way across the sectors where further learning can be linked to school education, or work-based learning.

Recommendation 2

We will support practitioners, parents, carers and learners to have access to an online prospectus setting out the learning choices available in their region, building towards a 'one-stop shop' approach. This work will start in 2018.

To do this, we will work with local authorities, colleges, Regional Improvement Collaboratives and SDS to establish the most effective way of articulating their local offer, supporting the development of an online regional prospectus for the senior phase which gives an overview of the courses available to young people in schools and colleges in their area.

Whilst this will not capture all the learning opportunities everywhere, this would support greater consideration, clarity and expression of value of the range of choices available to young people in the senior phase.

There are already existing examples in areas including Glasgow and East Dunbartonshire.

Taking this forward

60. **These recommendations would be led by Scottish Government working with Skills Development Scotland, COSLA, Local Authorities, Scottish Qualification Authority, Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership and Education Scotland.**
61. SDS have made considerable progress in developing better online services for young people and are committed to developing these further. Digital improvements to information advice and guidance carry the risk of unknown IT system and maintenance costs. This is why we propose to build on what we already have and work with SDS to continue to introduce incremental improvement. The first challenge we want to overcome is to enable learner information that is created at school to have a life beyond school and act as a digital account through a learner's lifetime.
62. Providing an account and enabling learners to be able to easily access their learning information, requires data identifiers. We see the Scottish Candidate Number as being the means to do this.

Long-Term Vision

To further develop the idea of a 'one-stop shop' to better signpost all opportunities available in terms of types of programmes, qualifications, progression routes and support to learners in Scotland.

63. There was a clear desire from stakeholders for a 'one-stop shop' for parents, carers, practitioners, and learners to clearly signpost the full range of formal and informal learning opportunities available to young people across Scotland. Amongst other things, it was argued this should provide easy access to college and university entry requirements to enable learners, parents, carers and practitioners to compare the requirements of different institutions for the same course.
64. We will work with SDS and other national bodies, including SQA and SCQF to build on My World of Work, developing this over time so that it continues to improve signposting of information available on other national websites, and promoting this more widely to practitioners, parents and learners.

Recommendation 3: A joined-up careers experience

“It would have been good to know about college courses and entry requirements before making my subject choices.” Donna, aged 19.

65. As part of the review we considered the implications for the provision of CIAG (career information, advice and guidance) through the education and skills system. We were mindful of the establishment of the entitlements for career guidance developed as part of the Developing the Young Workforce Programme (DYW).
66. It was noted that there is a strong CIAG offer in place in schools, strengthened further by the introduction of the Career Education Standard 3-18. However, evidence from the reviews of the Career Education Standard and CIAG undertaken by Education Scotland in 2017, shows that there is still more to be done for schools to take more responsibility for this and for greater links to be made between learning in the classroom and its relevance to the world of work.
67. The review considered the continuity of learner entitlements through the education and skills system. Critical, again, and reflecting their lynchpin role, were colleges. Discussions with college staff highlighted the variability in CIAG provision in colleges and the need for a consistent and coherent experience for all learners.
68. The discussions also revealed recurring themes of the limitations of the current CIAG approach. Whilst some of these are inevitable consequences of prioritisation and the resource constraints on the service – hence the drive for greater careers engagement within the classroom – there was still a clear expectation that more could be done.
69. As part of this review, Universities Scotland, AGCAS and QAA gave reassurances that career services in HE are working effectively and there was support to ensure these are complimentary to what has been provided before to provide a coherent careers experience through the education and skills system.
70. Stakeholders raised the issue of how we could better align University Careers services to the widening access effort to best assist young people in understanding applications and admissions to particular higher education institutions and so better informing their subject choice decisions.
71. Workshops and discussions identified a commitment from partners for greater consistency for the learner to ensure all parts of the system are committed to providing an aligned service that best meets the needs of learners.

Recommendation 3

We will ensure learners in schools, colleges and universities receive a joined-up approach to careers, information, advice and guidance. This work will start in 2018.

To do this we will work in partnership with Colleges Scotland and the college sector to develop a coherent approach to CIAG service delivery to college learners. This will include equity of access and the support of career practitioners in the college sector and the business community.

We will work with QAA (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education) and universities to ensure their quality processes align with Scottish Government aspirations for learner access to CIAG support.

Taking this forward

72. **This recommendation would be led by the Scottish Government working with the Scottish Funding Council, Colleges Scotland, Universities Scotland, QAA and Skills Development Scotland.**
73. Following publication of this report we would define the scope of improvement with Colleges Scotland & Universities Scotland. The outcome of this work will determine subsequent steps and pace of implementation.
74. Little is required to change in the university sector, where the careers service and its profession is mostly visible and standards are well maintained, including by a professional body. In colleges, we expect there to be further development, and will actively discuss the best way forward with Colleges Scotland.

Long Term Vision

To publish a careers strategy in 2019, which will align with the already published Career Education Standard, and focus on the all age careers service incorporating earlier career advice in schools; CIAG services in FE and HE; as well as support encompassing the wider employability landscape

75. In order for learners to navigate the range of journeys open to them, and understand the implications of their educational choices, they need access to high quality, independent careers education, information, advice and guidance. Building on what is being delivered via DYW, we need to continue to assess:
 - How do we best provide a service to our young people that empowers them to use information more effectively?
 - How does this innovate to tackle particular issues, such as gendered subject choices?

- How do we better align subject choice information with advice about post-school options, careers advice and labour market information (LMI)?
76. Our longer-term ambition is to ensure there is a fully aligned set of learner entitlements to access career advice and guidance from school, in college, university, and the wider skills system.

Recommendation 4: Improving Wider Support

Young people told us:

- *That poor attendance and low attainment were often the result of personal and social issues, such as mental and physical health problems, family breakdown, bereavement and caring responsibilities.*
- *That their learner journeys are often influenced by Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's) including personal and social issues, such as their own and family member's health problems, economic drivers (a need to earn money) and the skills and confidence gained through sports and other hobbies.*
- *That they wanted better links to additional support – there was a reported lack of support within educational institutions to deal with some of the personal, social and health issues that young people might be facing. It was acknowledged that these institutions might not always be best placed to provide this support, but that teaching and support staff should be able to identify when young people are experiencing problems and signpost them to the appropriate support. Getting the right support at the right time was identified as key to enabling young people who are facing these types of issues to continue to progress in their learner journey.*

The Poverty Commissioner recommended that we:

- *Reinforce and develop new advice provision for young people, supported by a skilled, trained workforce.*
- *Take action to understand Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and embed positive approaches to addressing trauma and supporting resilience, such as mental health provision, based on quality evidence, in key settings where young people engage.*

77. Our engagement with stakeholders highlighted the key themes of resilience, including self-confidence, self-esteem, social support, purpose, and adaptability all of which sit around the learner journey and are fundamental elements that need to be in place to allow for full participation in learning.
78. At the outset it was noted that more could be done to better sign post existing services which could also be better utilised or adapted to better meet learners' support needs. This included: the 'Thinking school' guidance service; in-school counsellors; ChildLine; Breathing Space; and online resources like Mind and MindTools that equip young people with coping skills and help to address stigma and isolation. Making better use of these and refocusing their availability was seen as one of the first steps in providing better learner support.
79. The review also made clear the need for more to be done, beyond signposting of information and services, for particular cohorts of learners including, for example, those who have experience of being in care and those young people from gypsy-traveller communities.

80. Throughout the review we heard recurring messages about the importance of relationships, the role of a trusted adult, the need for continuity across transitions and the impact of a young person's wider emotional and social wellbeing on the success of their learner journey. There were also clear messages about the need for a more joined-up approach between careers and pastoral staff, to ensure young people are making the choices that are right for them.
81. Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) set out an entitlement to personal support for all young people. This included personal support to enable young people to:
- review their learning and plan for next steps;
 - gain access to learning activities which will meet their needs;
 - plan for opportunities for personal achievement; and
 - prepare for and be supported through changes and choices.
82. The CfE entitlement also states that *“All children and young people should have frequent and regular opportunities to discuss their learning with an adult who knows them well and can act as a mentor, helping them to set appropriate goals for the next stages in learning”*.
83. Feedback from our engagement suggests the need for CIAG to be backed up with more on-going personalised support for young people, throughout key points of their journey, which looks at their wider health and wellbeing, as well as their career aspirations and academic ability. This would suggest that there is room for improvement in delivering on the CfE entitlement to personal support.
84. There were also clear messages from young people and stakeholders that more planning needs to be done to ensure that young people have a range of options and in this way the most appropriate route can be found, with a clear source/ point of support to help them back into the system.
85. Alongside the work on developing a coherent approach to CIAG and profiling, and building on the review of Personal Social Education (PSE), we want to look at the consistency of personal, individualised support to ensure that young people are being supported systematically across transition points to make choices and move through their learner journey. This should explore how we improve access to the wide range of in and out of school supports that are available and accessible through a range of channels and media, some 24 hours a day 365 days a year, to ensure young people, especially those young people from gypsy traveller communities, have consistent access to supports that meet their varied needs at different times.
86. This is about improving young peoples' life chances by helping them to build a consistent, trusting relationship with a positive adult role-model. Appropriately trained and supported mentors will be key to ensuring that such approaches are impactful and sustainable.
87. In taking this forward we will build on existing approaches across Scotland in relation to mentoring, for example MCR Pathways, which has been shown to be

making an impact on the attainment, attendance and positive destinations of the young people involved.

Recommendation 4

We will take account of the outcomes of the PSE Review, due to be published later this year, and consider what further improvement is needed on wider personal support for young people in schools.

As part of this, we will address how, at a national level, we can promote a greater emphasis on mentoring, focused on wider health and wellbeing support at key transitions. This could draw upon emerging practice across Scotland, for example in Polmont YOI; in work being developed through the Scottish Attainment Challenge; practice in the youth-work sector; and through programmes such as MCR Pathways, intandem and Career Ready.

88. With regard to colleges and universities, we are already seeking stronger partnerships with student associations, other pastoral care providers and NHS Scotland, to ensure a range of support services are in place that are sensitive to the varying needs of all students, that identify mental health difficulties early and provide appropriate support to meet these. This includes expectations for developing an effective, strategic and collaborative approach to preventing gender based violence on campuses¹⁵. Institutions are expected to put in place reporting systems and data capture arrangements that best meet the needs and diversity of survivors, whilst also supporting their continuing engagement at university or college.

¹⁵ <https://www.strath.ac.uk/humanities/schoolofsocialworksocialpolicy/equallysafeinhighereducation/eshetoolkit/>

Recommendation 5: *Easier application to college*

89. In thinking about the way in which the education and skills system is configured to provide and enable choice, the review considered the connectivity of information, advice and guidance with the ease of application to college. This was as part of a series of considerations over the role colleges play at the heart of the education and skills system.
90. In the first instance, stakeholders asked what more colleges could do to streamline applications through school to college for those young people currently undertaking, as part of DYW, college courses whilst at school. Stakeholders were clear that schools and colleges should ensure that learners are on planned pathways whilst at school so that they progress from DYW activity to college seamlessly and without the need for unnecessary applications and process. It was stated that this planned progression should be possible across colleges within the same region, so that pathways are planned together by colleges and subject choice decisions made in school align with the opportunities for progression in all colleges within a region.
91. In terms of the application process itself, the review considered the viability of a national college application system and the extent to which a national system would better support parity of opportunity between college and university – that is, encouraging the same level of support from schools to help students complete college applications as university applications since the two processes would be more similar, better aligned and undertaken in much the same way.
92. Discussions with colleges and stakeholders revealed concerns at the outset that such a system would need to be flexible, fair and simple and work for all students. It would need to maximise opportunities for alignment with existing digital services, especially, *My World of Work*. It was noted that digital access is still a significant barrier to some student groups and any changes to current arrangements would need to be equality impact assessed.
93. The discussions also reflected on the benefits with regard to data collection and it was noted that a national picture of applications and applicants would be beneficial to help more fully understand demand for courses and further enhance regional curriculum planning. Consistent national data also supported improved reporting.
94. In collecting this data, though, we were reminded of the need to be mindful of protocols in response to data sharing sensitivities for both colleges and individuals.
95. Greater information to applicants which set out when to apply; rules about the number of applications which can be submitted; and timings over changing courses/accessing student support funding, i.e. bursaries, all need to be considered. We also noted the importance of supporting late applications, especially for particular groups of learners.
96. Whilst a national college application system would remove duplication of effort for an applicant, it would need to be flexible, fair and simple to use and work for all students regardless of their circumstances or route into college. It was this issue of flexibility and responsiveness to the learner that was a key focus of the

discussions, as it was felt that current processes/practices are already flexible enough for colleges to place students on a different course from the one they applied for if it is more appropriate for them.

97. Practitioners were also concerned that a move to a national process would impact on FE learners' ability to access the local support commonly offered by colleges in supporting students through course choice and application. Concerns mainly focused on the risk of losing the flexibility of local processes and systems which are responsive to student and institutional needs.
98. There was widespread support to simplify and enhance how learners search and find appropriate college courses, including for the collection of standardised national data on college applications.
99. Particular college regions are also already progressing digital approaches to co-ordinated application processes within a region, which we would want to support and build on.
100. At the culmination of the discussions, the balance of opinion was that a national college application system would not best meet the needs of the learner, and instead, that the focus should be on building on the work already being delivered by colleges within multi-college regions.

Recommendation 5

We will work with the college sector to improve the ease with which learners can apply to college. This work will start in 2018.

In particular, working in partnership with the college sector we will support:

- SDS to maximise course search functionality on My World of Work to allow learners to see all college courses offered within a specific curriculum/vocational area or in a particular region and provide links to college sites to allow learners to apply directly to a college.
- Multi-college regions in developing and piloting co-ordinated application processes.
- The collection of a standardised dataset on college application forms to make it easier for learners completing multiple applications to colleges and to allow a clear picture of demand to be established across the college sector.
- A more standardised timetable for college applications and the presentation to learners of offers of a place, taking into account UCAS deadlines for offers.

Taking this forward

101. This recommendation would be led by Scottish Government working with the College Sector, Skills Development Scotland and Scottish Funding Council (SFC).
102. Further work is needed to assess the full extent of search information available through My World of Work and how this can be further enhanced to better meet the needs of the learner, whilst at the same time supporting the technical developments necessary to join up regional approaches. Recognising the value of building on existing infrastructure and investment, we will commission SDS to work with the college sector to undertake the development work necessary.
103. Greater standardisation of application timetables will be challenging given the different levels of courses and modes of study (FT/PT) and the fact that students can currently join courses in January. This means careful scoping work will be required, and we will work with SFC, SDS and Colleges Scotland on the potential for improvement.
104. We will in parallel pursue with the college sector and the SFC, the development of a consistent and national college dataset to help better understand demand for college provision and curriculum planning.

Long-term vision

Depending on the progress with this work and the experience of piloting we would continue to refine and enhance the learner application process, building greater functionality linked to the developments of the learner account established by recommendation 1.

How will we do this?

Provision

Recommendations 6-12

Provision

“It would have been good to get more information about different types of apprenticeships that are available when I was in school.” Jodi, aged 18.

Young people told us:

- *That they often felt unprepared for life after school and that this can hold them back in their learner journey. For example, many who go to university have to cope with living independently (often in a new town or city) for the first time. If they are ill-prepared to do that, their learner journey will falter, regardless of how well they are doing academically.*
- *There is a need for a greater focus on developing the life skills required for learners to make successful transitions, particularly within the senior phase of school.*
- *Taking time out of formal education can provide an opportunity for young people to think about what they want to do; travel; explore different options; and develop their confidence. However, this is often not a realistic or practical option for those who are not being financially supported by their parents or who are in poverty.*
- *Work experience can have a profound impact on career choices, but young people report limited opportunities to access good quality placements.*

QUISE (Quality & Improvement in Scottish Education)¹⁶ found that:

- *Across the college sector, more than 40per cent of learners on full-time programmes are aged 15-18 years. Success rates for this group are amongst the lowest. This age group also has the highest number of learners withdrawing from their programme prior to completion, and the highest number completing with partial success*

105. It was clear from engagement that there are specific groups for whom the learner journey is not as smooth or as successful as it could be.

106. There are still questions about the coherence of the learner journey for young people most disengaged from education, particularly statutory winter leavers, who tend to have more transitions in their learner journey than any other group of young people, partly due to poorer ‘future’ planning. It is also clear that there is still ‘a middle group’ of young people for whom the learner journey is not sufficiently smooth or purposeful.

107. Similarly there is evidence that S6 could be designed more effectively to encourage purposeful and faster progression to further and advanced level learning where that is the best thing for an individual learner; and that articulation routes through college into university need to be better promoted and more accessible. It was also felt that there needed to be more flexibility in year one of university to give young people different learning options.

¹⁶ Education Scotland, (2017), ‘Quality and improvement in Scottish education 2012-2016,

108. It was felt that universities needed to make further progress in providing differentiated offers to reflect the fact that learners are attaining in different ways and at different levels in S5 and S6.
109. Progress in increasing the range of learning options available to young people is well underway, principally through the delivery of the Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) programme. DYW supports greater collaboration between schools, colleges and employers to deliver a greater mix of course choices within the senior phase, emphasising and filling gaps in the breadth of vocational career routes available to young people. These choices include the delivery of the new Foundation Apprenticeship which provides routes to both work and higher level study. Further information on this programme and the Foundation Apprenticeship can be found at: www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/what-we-do/apprenticeships/foundation-apprenticeships/
110. We want to build on the success of DYW, in particular the employer related elements, which are also progressing.
111. Through DYW, we have seen the establishment of the network of employer-led Regional Groups, the development of online resources to help bring together employers and education for the benefit of young people and alignment with new initiatives coming to Scotland such as Founders4Schools.
112. While good progress has been made in terms of creating employer-led infrastructure, there is still much to do to deliver the culture change across employers and education that we seek. DYW Regional Groups face an important challenge in ensuring the employer contribution to an enhanced learner journey is delivered.
113. The experience of the implementation of DYW makes clear that a partnership approach to delivering post 15 learning is key to meeting the different needs of young people. Schools cannot do this alone and it is vital that as well as employers, colleges and universities take a more active role in enhancing the offer in schools and in improving the interface, particularly at SCQF Level 7. This is considered in the following sections of this report.

Recommendations 6 – 10 : *Improving the design, alignment and coherence of the 15-24 learning journey for all young people*

“There should be more options for different types of learners. Some people are more practical and creative / visual. School is all about writing. Sitting in classrooms and listening to teachers.” Ashleigh, aged 20.

114. In considering the design, alignment and coherence of the 15-24 learner journey we had significant feedback that the system is too focused on traditional progression routes to HE, and primarily university, and needs to better understand and better articulate the other pathways available.
115. It was also strongly felt that more needed to be done by national bodies working together, to promote and celebrate the range of different qualifications and pathways young people can undertake. This has been a key aim of DYW, yet there

are still issues around parity. It was therefore felt that a pro-active communications strategy was needed.

116. It was highlighted that we need to ensure the best possible purposing of the senior phase, as a three-year programme of learning, that makes S6 more valuable for all young people.
117. This would require as wide a range of options as possible to be embedded in the senior phase curriculum, alongside a continued focus on personal resilience and life skills, to support transition to further points on their learner journey. Achieving this change requires much greater college and university cooperation in the design and delivery of the senior phase.
118. We also heard that, whilst there are considerable benefits from more young people staying on in school, we need to make sure the learning and skills system is capable of maximising routes into employment. Therefore, we need to achieve the right balance of supporting young people to access good careers as early as possible whilst supporting those to train for higher level qualifications where particular careers demand it. This supports the continued expansion of Foundation Apprenticeships, and other vocational qualifications at a range of SCQF levels, and the availability of the right balance and level of Modern Apprenticeships (MAs). This should also include the promotion of Graduate Apprenticeships within schools, so that young people understand the full breadth of opportunities available to them.
119. It was noted that many of these issues are tackled through the full implementation of DYW and the expansion of a curriculum offer that is co-designed with employers and colleges. As the DYW programme enters its half-way point, developing these wider partnerships and structures is key to its sustainability and becoming fully embedded in the curriculum.
120. It was noted that the full implementation of DYW would enhance the value added to the learner journey through the senior phase, including S6, college, university, training or employment. In particular, that it would help to overcome issues of choice, parity of esteem, to maximise skills and to reflect the range of learning styles, abilities and aspirations of young people.
121. Promoting a wider range of pathways into Higher Education would also help support delivery of Recommendation 6 of the report of the Commission on Widening Access (*"The Scottish Government, working with key stakeholders, should ensure the key transitions phases around SCQF levels 6 to 8 are better used to provide students from disadvantaged backgrounds with the qualifications and experiences required to support fair access."*).

Statutory Leavers

122. In the discussions on the curriculum, the review considered what more we could do to improve the outcomes for statutory leavers.
123. The review provided an opportunity to consider the options available to school pupils who have formally completed 4 years of secondary education but, due to

their dates of birth, are not considered statutory school leavers until December of that year.

124. Whilst DYW is in place to enhance and deliver a richer, blended vocational learning experience in schools, it was felt more is needed for this particular cohort to maximise the value they receive from the learning and skills system between S3-S5.
125. This reflected the evidence from Skills Development Scotland that those who leave on the statutory date tend to have worse outcomes than post statutory leavers and that individuals who enter low skilled employment after school are unlikely to progress to higher skilled work¹⁷.
126. Despite commitments already made within the DYW programme to extend activity agreements to under-14's, progress was considered to be slow and variable.
127. Whilst the creation of an annual single statutory school leaving date would provide this group with access to a wider range of opportunities, stakeholders were divided on this. Some wished the statutory leaving age to rise to ensure more is done and provided in school for young people. Others that it should reduce so that those returning until winter in S5 could leave at the end of S4 and get on in work. To some extent this might suggest that there is no right age for when a young person leaves school and rather we should expect schools to maximise the availability of purposed, planned and meaningful curricula for all young people, leading to successful destinations for all, which will require meaningful partnerships between schools, the third sector, employers and colleges and universities.
128. It was noted that many of these learners disengage from learning from at least the end of S4 and, the challenge, therefore, is ensuring that provision is as rich for them as it is for others.
129. In general terms, it was acknowledged in discussions that this cohort predominantly come from disadvantaged backgrounds and are less likely to sustain a post school opportunity. The review heard that the creation of a wider winter leavers offer could help ensure far more to continue and participate in a learning opportunity and make significant inroads into reducing levels of inequality and poverty experienced by this group.
130. The review highlighted the importance of young people staying in mainstream education and that, supporting the principles of GIRFEC, the Attainment Challenge and DYW, it makes sense to formalise and promote a wider and standardised offer for these young people.

Looked After Young People

131. The review also considered those young people who are looked after whilst at school. This group can experience a number of disruptions earlier on in their learner journey which has a negative impact on their final school leaving academic achievements.

¹⁷ Institute for Public, Policy Research(2106), 'Jobs and Skills in Scotland'.

132. Levels of attainment are measured annually¹⁸ and this evidence suggests trends for looked after children are improving but that there are still children who require extra assistance. In 2015/16, for example, a higher proportion of children who were looked after for part of the school year, and who lived with foster carers provided by the local authority or with friends/relatives, achieved at the CfE level relevant to their stage, compared with children who were looked after for part of the school year and who were looked after at home, or living in residential accommodation.
133. The review revealed the need to increase our aspiration for this group of learners and join up our effort with existing corporate parenting responsibilities. For both statutory leavers and looked after children it makes sense to maximise the combined impact of all parts of the system whilst a young person is still in school and earlier in their school journey, rather than work independently and incrementally with learners on disjointed journeys at later stages.
134. If this were to happen it would enrich the school offer for this cohort of learners, and help overcome a young person's skills deficit prior to leaving, thereby ensuring that those who do leave are best prepared. Importantly, at the same time, it maximises the incentive not to leave, thereby genuinely empowering learner choice.
135. A more substantial blended curriculum needs to be done well and without placing additional burdens on any of the partners involved. Youth-work organisations, Prince's Trust and the Duke of Edinburgh scheme have a history of delivering activity within schools, but the review discussions expressed the need to strengthen this collaboration with a more significant shift toward the co-creation of a blended curriculum (involving qualifications, skills and experience, including of work) for the target cohorts. It was also felt that this should be a central feature of the school inspection process, asking questions of the extent of engagement with specialist regional partners in the creation of this blended curriculum.
136. Critically, it was noted that a number of schools have made real progress in developing their offer. However, we need to address how we support all schools and other professionals to work more closely and at an earlier stage, so that the curriculum offer is planned as part of a wider child support plan and in a more consistent way across Scotland.
137. This will require improved collaborative planning between schools and those involved supporting the child or young person, including the family. We think there is a sophisticated network of partners already involved in this work. The task will be harnessing this and building on the existing corporate parent responsibilities of agencies, in driving the ambition for change.
138. As a starting point to taking this work forward we need to build on both existing approaches emerging through the Pupil Equity Fund and on the work of the Children and Young People Improvement Collaboratives.

¹⁸ Scottish Government (2017), 'Education Outcomes for Looked After Children, 2016/16'.

Recommendation 6

We will develop a national communication strategy to explain and promote the breadth of choices in the 15-24 learner journey. This will build on the promotional activity undertaken in Scotland's Year of Young People and be ready by the end of AY19-20.

Recommendation 7

We will raise our aspiration and improve the offer and support for statutory leavers and looked after young people. We will want improvements to be in place from AY19-20.

We will support schools to have in place an expanded offer from the start of S4 – involving early identification, a planned curriculum with the necessary support in place, devised in partnership with either the third sector, SDS, colleges or an employer - for all young people at risk of disengagement.

Recommendation 8

We will better align our financial incentives to encourage continued participation in school for young people at risk of disengagement and we will ask Young Scot to assist us with this. This work will start in 2018.

We will review how our entitlements align to maximise their impact irrespective of whether learning takes place in the third sector or college whilst a learner is still at school. We will consider this work as part of the recommendations made by the independent Student Support Review (2017).

Recommendation 9

We will embed DYW in the school curriculum by 2021, having achieved the headline target for DYW four years early.

We will work with the new Regional Improvement Collaboratives, schools, local authorities, colleges, DYW Regional Groups, third sector, CLD, businesses and employers and national bodies to embed the expectations set out in the DYW programme within curriculum, planning design and delivery.

Recommendation 10

We will support and enable the Foundation Apprenticeship and other vocational qualifications to be embedded, providing a range of options for all learners in the senior phase by 2021.

We will work to ensure these opportunities are an intrinsic part of the school offer in Scotland, and as a starting point we will continue with our commitment of 5,000 FAs by 2019. We will set out plans to further enhance Scotland's apprenticeship family, recognising the role foundation apprenticeships play in encouraging access to, and progression in, work based learning.

Taking this forward

139. **These recommendations would be led by the Scottish Government working with the Enterprise and Skills Strategic Board, COSLA, schools, Local Authorities, Colleges Scotland, Universities Scotland, the Scottish Funding Council, Skills Development Scotland, Scottish Qualifications Authority, Education Scotland, Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership and Community Learning & Development.**
140. It is important that over the next three years, schools, local authorities, colleges, Education Scotland, SFC and SDS continue to work together to fully embed DYW.
141. This will include work to be undertaken to better understand and promote the full 15-24 learner journey offer across the country and the impact of different curriculum approaches on young people. This will assist in strengthening the senior phase offer for different groups of learners and enhance the S6 experience for all. This work would be part of the remit of the new Curriculum and Assessment Board.
142. This work should also consider other service/operational improvements that might remove existing barriers, for example, meeting the transport costs of young people to enable ease of participation across the system, or supporting schools and colleges to undertake joint timetabling.
143. To deliver the type of tailored pathway necessary, increasing engagement with Further Education, Higher Education, Community Learning and Development and other training providers, we think requires:
- Improved joint planning between schools and colleges in order to deliver a more cohesive curriculum offer.
 - Maximum use of the college curriculum to increase choice.
 - A stronger focus on the completion of the DYW programme.
 - The most effective use of existing funding to ensure best value is made of all employability support.
 - All of this activity being better coordinated through SDS targeted support for identified young people.

“I joined the Activity Agreement, met new people and spoke about my problems and how to be better. This helped me to find out what I’m good at and got me into college.” Ryan, aged 18.

144. Taking this forward, financial incentives will need to be further refined and developed and affordability determined. Thought will need to be given to how we best align entitlements to maximise their benefit on young people. This work sits alongside the recommendations made by the independent Student Support Review (2017), which called for greater parity in funding for further and higher education students.

145. The different eligibility rules of different services have the potential to confuse parents, carers and young people, especially where they are required to make a new application for support with each learning or training transition.
146. A key part of our implementation effort, therefore, will be the better alignment of these services, including undertaking work to fully understand the implications of different incentives on the outcomes of learners.
147. This work will include the joint development of the offer on employability support across the range of services for 15-24 year olds. As part of which, the Scottish Government will hold a discussion on the reform of employability services in Summer 2018.
148. By speaking directly with those who currently use our services, this discussion will seek to refine and better understand the inter-play of different financial incentives on learner choices and outcomes with a view to gathering evidence to drive improvements on alignment and delivery. In so doing, we will take into consideration the recommendations of the independent Student Support Review (2017) for greater fairness, clarity and parity across the further and higher education student support systems.

Recommendation 11: *Improving the design, alignment and coherence of the 15-24 learning journey for those young people who progress to college*

“I attended college for a year training to be a chef. It turns out the industry wasn’t for me. I then worked in several jobs – in a restaurant, a call centre and then for a landscaping company. I have now applied to be a funeral arranger, but have also applied for an MA in Carpentry and Joinery. I have wasted so much time since leaving school not knowing what I wanted to do and chopping and changing my mind.” Abbie, aged 19.

150. Colleges sit at the heart of a joined up tertiary education system and so are key to many different learner journeys. Feedback from the review highlighted the need to ensure that routes through college, and colleges as providers of Higher Education, are fully promoted to learners, parents and practitioners.
151. The review revealed that colleges fulfil the needs of a wide range of learners. For some, college is about enabling learners to have a second chance to access education and skills. For others, college provides the skills needed for work, and for some colleges provide access to higher level technical skills, often as part of a route to a degree. On this latter role, it was acknowledged that Scotland’s colleges are making a significant contribution to HE level learning.
152. The review highlighted that the breadth of the college offer needs to be better understood by learners, employers and stakeholders to help develop a shared understanding of the effectiveness or efficiency of the different journeys being made through college.
153. The review made the case that to build our understanding we need to know more about the prior attainment of learners who enter college and what added value they receive from attending. We need to be clear on what we define as success for different groups of learners. In terms of retention and progression, it was stated that we need to think about the effectiveness of modes of study and the nature of provision in helping different groups of learners achieve the most successful outcomes.
154. It was noted that, in recognising the breadth of the college offer, it is important that we continue to maximise the value of the different curriculum options. In particular, that we build on DYW and the progress with the Foundation Apprenticeship, to establish routes that support the parity of college opportunities so that learners have the greatest confidence of the outcome of their investment in learning, thereby maximising their retention and outcomes.

Recommendation 11

We will support colleges to maximise the vocational pathways learners and employers need.

From 2018, we will build on and help reinforce the college sector's pivotal role in the education and skills system, in particular, in enabling: access and inclusion; routes to work; routes to higher technical skills; and routes to university. This work will include reviewing and developing the range of modes of study and the measures of success to best demonstrate impact.

Building on the progress already made by Colleges Scotland, this would be part of work to provide a clear, shared vision about the purpose of post 15-education. We will develop a national communications strategy to establish an understanding of a range of pathways/ journeys from 15-24.

Taking this forward

155. **This recommendation would be led by Scottish Government working with the Enterprise and Skills Strategic Board, Colleges Scotland, Universities Scotland, business, Scottish Funding Council, Skills Development Scotland, SCQF and the Scottish Qualification Authority.**

Long term Vision

We want to maximise the opportunities for young people to gain a balanced set of work-relevant skills whilst at college.

We want the work on a new narrative for colleges in Scotland to lead to improvement in vocational education – focusing on the key routes available, better purposing their outcomes and so making career education easier to the benefit of learners and employers.

156. We want to work with colleges, employers, lead industry bodies and communities to maximise learner choice, as part of an appropriate regional curriculum.
157. Recognising the important role played by colleges in providing high level technical skills, we will want to support the continued modernisation of the HN (Higher National qualification) linking this with work on college to university articulation (see below) and also to the development of graduate level opportunities within the apprenticeship family.
158. Building on the progress already made by Colleges Scotland, we will take forward this work over the course of 2018 to establish the basis for a framework for best demonstrating college ambition and supporting college effectiveness from AY2019.

Recommendation 12: *Improving the design, alignment and coherence of the 15-24 learning journey for those in-training / in-work*

159. As part of the review we considered the balance of provision and the different opportunities for those young people who are already in work. This review, and the Enterprise and Skills review before it, has reflected on the real challenges faced by our economy from the challenge of low productivity and the rapid rate of advances in technology.
160. In recent years, the Scottish Government has supported its national skills agency, Skills Development Scotland to respond to these challenges within the particular context of youth employment, and we have seen a significant expansion in apprenticeship opportunities as a result.
161. As part of the Developing the Young Workforce programme, SDS has most recently supported the emergence of the new apprenticeship family in Scotland, which includes Foundation Apprenticeships & Graduate Apprenticeships being developed alongside Modern Apprenticeships. Recognising their contribution to delivering Scotland's high level skills needs, Graduate Apprenticeships are now included in the annual delivery target for apprenticeships.
162. These new opportunities are being designed to provide the connections from school to the workplace and from the workplace back into high level training. This means they provide the potential for more entrance and exit routes through the education and skills system. In particular, the new Graduate Apprenticeships provide the potential to respond to Scotland's up-skilling and re-training challenge.
163. The Scottish Government is already committed to the expansion of these new qualifications and recognises their potential to deliver efficiency improvements to the education and skills system.

Recommendation 12

We will improve choice through the expansion of Graduate Apprenticeships, to provide new higher level technical skills as part of a better balanced education and skills system. This work will start with impetus in 2018.

We will work to ensure that these opportunities are an intrinsic part of the university offer in Scotland, as an affordable, sustainable and a multi-exit alternative pathway within the system.

Taking this forward

164. **This recommendation would be led by Scottish Government, working with the Enterprise and Skills Strategic Board, Skills Development Scotland, Scottish Funding Council, Universities Scotland and Colleges Scotland.**
165. The initial pilot phases of Graduate Apprenticeships are continuing and are now a mainstream element of the Modern Apprenticeship offer, albeit one which has scope for further growth and development. There are also opportunities to further

develop the Graduate Apprenticeship within the skills alignment work being taken forward collectively by SDS and SFC.

166. The expansion of the new Graduate Apprenticeship (as well as the Foundation Apprenticeship) also needs to be understood in the context of a common vision about the priorities and values of the learning and skills system in Scotland – see next section below. This is because the design and development of both asks questions about the types of qualifications and learning experiences we prioritise and the costs and value associated with them. The graduate level opportunities also has implications for the modernisation of the HN and the types of vocational qualifications we expect to see delivered by colleges.
167. We consider the Skills Alignment work that is in progress as part of the work of the Enterprise & Skills Review and supported by the Strategic Board's Analytical Unit, to provide the opportunity for further consideration of these issues.

Long term vision

A commitment to lifelong learning should be at the heart of our education and skills strategy.

168. It is important to ensure there is the right balance of all forms of post-secondary education, including shorter tertiary qualifications and work based learning. This balance should be informed by evidence of demand for and the return on investment of each and we talk more about this on the section of this report on data.
169. Through the Scottish Government's Enterprise and Skills Review, SDS is already working with the SFC to consider how investment in the further and higher education system is better aligned to the rest of the skills system and to the skills required by Scotland's businesses and economy, now and looking forward.
170. The structure of skills demand is subject to uncertainty across the developed economies of the world. While this makes future forecasting of specific skills requirement difficult, the key policy drivers are likely to be:
- to continue to support a demand-led system, based on informed choice, which meets the current and projected needs of industry;
 - to offer rapid learning progression opportunities;
 - to minimise learner costs in terms of direct costs and critically in terms of lost income potential; and
 - to support increased workforce productivity.
171. On the basis of previous industrial restructuring we can anticipate that looking ahead there will likely be a need for increased agility and responsiveness in our workforce and therefore in our skills system. Increasingly, businesses are keen to work in partnership with schools, colleges, training providers and universities to secure the workforce with the right characteristics on which their future success

depends. We will also likely face demands for skills support from a wider demographic than has been the case over the past few decades.

172. For those transitioning across a rapidly evolving labour market it will be important to consider the balance between specific technical skills and wider 'meta-skills'. Development of 'meta-skills' such as critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, collaboration and communication are core to Curriculum for Excellence. For the existing workforce, which has not benefitted from Curriculum for Excellence, the ability to develop and deploy such skills will be important to maintaining a skilled and productive workforce in the years ahead.
173. This will require new capacities and responsiveness in one of the key strengths of Scotland's skills system, the diversity of its delivery agents. We would look to build on this strength to ensure we translate emerging skills demand into a skilled and productive workforce in Scotland.

How will we do this?

Alignment

Recommendations 13-14

Recommendation 13: *Improving the design, alignment and coherence of the 15-24 learning journey for those young people who want to progress to university*

174. We considered the overlap between S5/S6 and year one of university, which for those with high credit attainment at the end of S5 can result in duplicate investment and delivery of SCQF level 7 credit.
175. The review made clear that despite a four year degree with multi-entry points, just over 1 per cent of school leavers enter at year 2 of university.¹⁹
176. It was noted that S6 plays a number of important roles in the education system, not least in enabling many learners to gain their full complement of Highers and others to build their qualifications to secure the best positive destination. However, for those with sufficient academic credit to progress to university at the end of S5, S6 needs to be as well utilised as possible.
177. If our starting point is to make more effective use of the current system for learners then it was clear from the review that we could make much better use of the multiple entry points of the degree through better purposing and incentivising S5 and S6 and establishing the right levels of collaboration between colleges, universities and schools. This would also help support Recommendation 6 of the report of the Commission on Widening Access, *“The Scottish Government, working with key stakeholders, should ensure the key transitions phases around SCQF levels 6 to 8 are better used to provide students from disadvantaged backgrounds with the qualifications and experiences required to support fair access”*; and Recommendation 18, *“Universities, colleges and local authorities should work together to provide access to a range of Higher and Advanced Higher subjects, which ensures that those from disadvantaged backgrounds or living in rural areas are not restricted in their ability to access higher education by the subject choices available to them”*.
178. The review identified many examples of university and school collaboration, many also involving colleges. The South East Scotland Academies Partnership, involving Queen Margaret University the YASS (Young Applicants in School) programme delivered by the Open University, which gives S6 students in Scotland the opportunity to study a range of university level modules in school; and the work of Robert Gordon’s University and the North East Scotland College (NESCOL), are all examples of universities actively supporting greater system alignment.
179. This report is not able to endorse any particular scheme or approach; all will have merits. The test for all of these types of approaches, especially when led by investment in just one part of the system, is the extent to which they enable seamless progression and aligned choice for the learner leading to improved outcomes.
180. In tackling issues of the variability of the offer to the young person from such initiatives it is for bodies like the SFC to ensure that their conditions of grant

¹⁹ *Scottish Government analysis of HESA Student Data*

prioritise the learner and stipulate full recognition of prior attainment and maximise articulation, toward the achievement of a properly integrated system. At a system level, this needs to be supported with a clearer expectation of what the learner can expect to achieve within S5 and S6 in terms of the attainment of academic credit, and support and preparation for their next stage of learning, training or employment.

Recommendation 13

We will minimise unnecessary duplication at SCQF level 7. We will make maximum use of the flexibility of the four year degree to enable learners to move, where appropriate, from S5 to year 1 and, through greater recognition of Advanced Highers, from S6 to year 2 of a university degree programme.

Taking this forward

181. **This recommendation would be led by Scottish Government working with COSLA, Local Authorities, Head Teachers Association, ADES, Scottish Funding Council, Universities Scotland and Colleges Scotland.**
182. We think this will take a number of years to be normalised. It starts by concluding the work on ensuring a shared vision for the education and skills system. We propose this to be taken forward as a national school/university collaboration programme. This comes under the remit of the Curriculum and Assessment Board, and will involve headteachers, Directors of Education, Regional Improvement Collaboratives, Colleges Scotland, Universities Scotland, SQA and Education Scotland to deliver this improvement.
183. We note the important role played here by the Scottish Credit Qualifications Framework (SCQF). In so doing, we also acknowledge the challenge of greater alignment since the volume of learning hours and thus SCQF credit attached to qualifications by programme owners (designers) is not equal. An SCQF level does not mean (or require that) the same volume of credit is attached to each qualification at the same level. For example, an HNC can be achieved with 96 credit points but a year of university study is equivalent to 120 credits (a year of an HND consists of 120 credits). Three advanced Highers (at 32 SCQF credit points respectively) don't make up the 120 credit requirement of a year of university study. The Scottish Baccalaureate is a level 7 qualification but only delivers 104 SCQF credit points. All these qualifications sit at the same level (SCQF 7) meaning they have the same level of complexity and difficulty but the volume of work required by a learner to achieve each qualification is different. This means aligning the system by SCQF credit as well as level is not straightforward.
184. Progress, therefore, will involve universities and schools working more closely together involving greater co-design and delivery of level 7 by universities in schools; involve universities enhancing local arrangements and developing much stronger transition arrangements specifically to overcome issues of learner maturity and the needs arising from school to university transition; ensuring the availability of Advanced Highers and purposing their credit for recognition for entry to year 2 of university.

185. At the same time our approach and commitment to young people needs to be more than just credit alignment. The parental voice in this review expressed concern about young people entering year two of an established degree course. Their concerns over learners receiving a disjointed learning experience makes clear the need for a more coherent offer and learning experience.
186. A first step toward this is mapping availability of Advanced Higher (AH) provision across Scotland and responding to gaps to ensure there is real choice for all pupils staying on into S6 in the senior phase. Work will be necessary to ensure the AH is delivered in such a way as to provide a sufficiently rich learning experience which supports the transition to university, including direct entry to year two where appropriate..
187. Scotland's nineteen higher education institutions will be required to enhance their positive support to date for Curriculum for Excellence. The improvements proposed by this review will have implications for universities' admissions requirements and for how teaching and learning is delivered at university. Since Universities Scotland has been closely involved in the development of Curriculum for Excellence we think institutions will be well placed to respond flexibly to strengthening links with schools. Given the sector's expansion in admitting students with different qualifications from around the world we see this work moving forward with momentum.
188. As part of their partnership with the Scottish Government, we would expect universities to re-state their shared commitments to supporting the school senior phase.

Long term vision

A recurring theme throughout this review is the need for collaboration across a range of partners. It is clear our 15-24 education and skills system can only meet the needs of young people if it is jointly designed and delivered with colleges, universities, CLD and third sector and employers. Through many of these actions we aim to create the conditions to support and enable further collaboration between schools and these partners.

189. We want a senior phase curriculum that works as well as possible for all young people. This will be supported through the full realisation of DYW and as part of this we would expect to see the co-creation of the curriculum by colleges, training providers and third sector organisations to deliver a more diverse and richer learning experience for all young people.
190. We want to normalise the opportunities for young people to develop a balanced set of work-relevant skills whilst within school. We want schools, colleges, training providers, universities and youth work to collaborate on this, developing a joint regional curriculum offer that responds to the changing needs of the economy, and recognises the different skills needed at all levels.

We want to strengthen collaboration by supporting Regional Improvement Collaboratives (RICs) to play a role in this work.

191. There was wide feedback from stakeholders that the new Regional Improvement Collaboratives provide a valuable opportunity to strengthen collaboration between educational partners to improve outcomes for learners and have the potential to play an important role in supporting this work.

We want to develop a national cross-sector CLPL (Career Long Professional Learning) programme for schools, colleges, universities and third sector.

192. There is a significant knowledge-base in colleges and universities and third sector which could be better utilised to enhance the curriculum offer in schools and support transitions and progression. This could include work with national bodies (GTCS, Education Scotland including SCEL, SDS and CDN) to plan staff development and professional learning which can be delivered across all education sectors. This would build on work already underway by SCEL, Education Scotland and the Professional Learning Network to develop staff capacity across sectors. A National Professional Learning reference group has been established by Education Scotland and should be built upon.

Recommendation 14: *Improving the design, alignment and coherence of the 15-24 learning journey for college HE learners*

193. Colleges and universities deliver higher education in Scotland. As part of their higher education offer, colleges deliver HNs - a higher national qualification, vocational in nature but with adaptations capable of supporting a learner on an academic route into higher education at university. The HN is available at two SCQF levels - an HNC at SCQF level 7 and an HND at SCQF level 8.
194. For a long time now many colleges and universities have worked together to deliver full-progression from a college HNC to year 2 of a degree and from a college HND to year three of a degree. This makes maximum use of the four year degree, such that all learner academic credit is recognised and so there is no wasted study time when learners progress to university. The system calls this 'articulation'.
195. The review considered the journeys made in and through higher education and reflected on the fact that more than half of college learners still repeat a level of study at university.
196. The Commissioner for Fair Access, in his 2017 annual report, called for this lack of recognition of college credit to be urgently addressed and recommended that universities commit to substantial progress in this area²⁰.
197. Over the last ten years, curriculum planning and significant additional investment has meant that around 50 per cent of college HN learners now articulate.²¹ Scotland's ancient universities do significantly less articulation. Arguably, this is since they face greater demand for places so they are less incentivised to need to maximise entry by means other than school entry. However, there are reasonable limits to the extent of articulation. Firstly, the HN is designed to promote progression to specific vocations so not all HN courses need to or should be about achieving learner articulation to university. Secondly, if curriculum, pedagogy, support arrangements and learning skills do not align between college and university courses, then completion rates are threatened, which makes the route a more precarious one for learners.
198. Work is underway to further the amount of full-progression possible, and Universities Scotland and Colleges Scotland recently established a National Articulation Forum to help facilitate this work going forward.
199. Through Review engagement, there was consensus to build on the strengths of the progress made to date, but to better systemise the conclusion of this work to overcome the variability of the experience for the learner.
200. The review rejected the idea of developing new level 7 and 8 qualifications as this, arguably, undermines the strengths of the Scottish system, and the HN in particular

²⁰ Scottish Government (December 2017) [Laying the Foundations for Fair Access: Annual Report 2017 from the Commissioner for Fair Access](#)

²¹ SFC (February 2016) ['Articulation: mapping of activity and draft vision and 10-year strategy'](#)

– which in many cases it would need to replace. In addition to this, it was felt this had the potential to create added confusion for the learner; and would take time and resource for further qualification development, whilst acknowledging the time needed for its full adoption.

201. This will help support the recommendation of the Commission on Widening Access that transitions phases around SCQF levels 6 to 8 be better used to provide students from disadvantaged backgrounds with the qualifications and experiences required to support fair access.

Recommendation 14

We will support colleges and universities to ensure more learners progress from college to all our universities without unnecessary duplication of SCQF credit.

We will more fully align our college and university higher education system to meet learner expectation, to ensure full recognition of prior college learning where appropriate.

We expect all universities to actively support this to happen and to commit to substantially increasing the proportion of HN learners they admit with full credit to at least the 75-per-cent benchmark identified by SFC. We will ask universities to set out the reasons why articulation is not possible for any learners transferring within the same broad subject areas, and the steps being taken to enable it.

We expect the universities who traditionally have low numbers of articulating students to also commit to substantially increasing the number of HN learners they admit.

Taking this forward

202. **This recommendation would be led by Scottish Funding Council working with the Strategic Board, Colleges Scotland, Universities Scotland, Scottish Qualifications Authority and Scottish Qualifications and Credit Framework Partnership.**

203. In taking this forward, and to make maximum use of the strengths of the four year degree, universities are asked to commit to substantially increasing the proportion of HN learners they admit with full credit to at least the 75-per-cent benchmark identified by SFC. We will seek to move toward the approach advocated by the Commissioner for Fair Access, whereby the starting assumption for all learners should be that they can articulate with full credit and where this is not the case it must be fully justified. We would expect this work to prioritise resolving the curriculum issues in relation to all courses currently receiving partial recognition; establishing a mechanism to safeguard the learner experience whereby learners are supported to move through and beyond their transition from college to university; and establishing strong monitoring arrangements to show progress.

Long term Vision

Over time this commitment should broaden to include more consistent mechanisms for the appropriate recognition of all prior learning and not just from colleges.

204. This work should also involve a commitment (which can run parallel) to the on-going modernisation of the HN – linking also to the work proposed on colleges set out above and to the on-going development of Graduate Apprenticeships.

Digitalisation

205. In considering the better alignment of the education and skills system, we will want to maximise the opportunities created by advances in digitalisation and the growth in online learning opportunities. E-sgoil, the West Lothian Virtual Campus, the Open University in Scotland and the University of Highlands & Islands are all examples of the use of digital solutions to improving choice for learners, particularly in remote areas, and in supporting our ambition for greater personalisation of learning.
206. In building greater collaboration and enabling learners to learn across institutions and transition points, we will want to see all partnerships make greater use of and embrace the expansion of digital solutions in support of the development of a collaborative regional curriculum offer.

How will we do this?

Leadership

Recommendations 15–16

Recommendations 15 & 16: Leadership

Young people told us:

- *There is still a strong focus on attainment and qualifications within schools, to the neglect of wider development and support needs.*
- *This focus on attainment and qualifications was reported to be resulting in high levels of stress and pressure on young people, particularly during exam periods.*
- *There is a perceived lack of parity of esteem between academic and vocational career pathways, with fewer options available to those who want to pursue technical subjects in the senior phase of secondary school, and an assumption that those who do well academically should go to university.*
- *They are aware of biases surrounding different post-school routes. University is positioned as the 'gold standard' for those who achieve well academically, with alternative options and routes rarely considered or discussed with this cohort. Vocational pathways, including apprenticeships and other types of training, were perceived as being a lesser option. Young people said that they would like to be given impartial information on all available pathways in order to make informed choices.*

The Poverty Commissioner recommended that we must:

- *Do more to value non-academic learning routes, post-school.*

207. It is clear from our engagement work that, at a national level, we need to articulate a more coherent vision and a clear overarching rationale for post 15 education in Scotland.
208. This should set clear expectations in relation to collaboration between local authorities, schools, colleges, youth work, universities, business and employers, clearly articulating the roles they should play and the outcomes we expect to see for all young people. In order to address the longstanding issue around parity of esteem, this must demonstrate the value of all the different pathways that young people can follow and the options at different points of leaving.
209. In terms of post 15 learning, this should clarify the breadth of learning we want to deliver; the range of places in which it can be delivered; and the value of different pathways for young people. It should also focus on the needs of different learners (with particular attention given to statutory leavers and the “middle group” of young people, for whom the learner journey is not as coherent as it could be).
210. The education and skills system needs to be capable of doing several things at once in order to respond to learner choice and meet employer needs. This means there will always be judgements to make about the balance and nature of provision. An effective system is able to adjust this balance accordingly because it has the tools and information needed to do so.
211. To do this we need to be clear on the effectiveness of the system, which requires us to be clear on what we want the education and skills system to achieve and the contribution we expect to be made by its respective parts.

212. This will require greater alignment and collaboration across the system. Governance of the system is changing and stakeholders highlighted that the new Regional Improvement Collaboratives could play a pivotal role in helping to deliver the vision.

Recommendation 15

We will provide system leadership to ensure there is a shared vision about the purposes of post 15 education.

Recommendation 16

We will support greater alignment and collaboration across the education and skills system making best use of the Scottish Candidate Number to help support effective transitions.

This includes consideration of how we maximise the value of existing structures, such as the new Enterprise and Skills Strategic Board or the new Scottish Education Council; and how we support a connection between the new regional collaboratives with regional colleges, universities and the respective quality arrangements of the different parts of the system.

This also sets an expectation for leaders to commit to further improving the collaboration effort across the system, and including the commitments of head teachers, CLD leaders, college and university senior staff and employers.

Taking this forward

213. **These recommendations would be led by the Scottish Government with all our key agencies and partners.**
214. We should take time to develop a single narrative which better explains what we expect of the contribution of the whole system in supporting the aligned, but often competing interests of learner choice, attainment and inclusive economic growth. The starting point for this should be the experience of the learner and the employer and it should build on: Curriculum for Excellence and the relationship between the four learner capacities (successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens, effective contributors); extending this into our understanding of colleges, universities and workplaces. This work should give further consideration to the type of skills and vocational education we expect schools, colleges and others to deliver in partnership with business, employers and universities.
215. There are potential implications for the governance and leadership of the wider education and skills system. This includes the need to more effectively join up this leadership; get the maximum contribution from the new Enterprise and Skills Strategic Board and the new Scottish Education Council; and enable the new Regional Improvement Collaboratives to connect with business, regional colleges, universities and help align the respective quality arrangements of the different parts of the system.

216. Leaders will also be required to address how schools, colleges, universities, CLD and employers best provide and align subject choice and careers information across the system delivering for young people, employers and the wider economy.

How will we do this?

Performance

Recommendation 17

Recommendation 17: Performance data

Young people told us:

- *There is a need for better integration of the various elements of the education and learning system, and for learners to receive appropriate advice and support at key points in their journeys, to enable them to successfully navigate this.*

The Poverty Commissioner recommended that we:

- *Continue work to improve data collection and sharing to track post school participation in learning, training and work for young people and make better use of that information to improve service delivery and develop Scottish Government policy.*

217. It is clear that a raft of information and data on young peoples' progress is held by national and local bodies in Scotland but work is needed across national partners to better share data and to monitor and track learners' journeys more coherently from 15-24 years, with the aim of ensuring that all individuals are supported to participate and that outcomes inform provision planning.
218. In terms of information about the impact generated from the system we considered the return on investment of different parts of the education and skills system.
219. In these discussions, whilst average costs of provision were known, it remained extremely difficult to make judgements about efficiency without a clearer understanding of what the system is measured against. It was felt that a framework of shared outcomes is required to determine the system's effectiveness for learners in order to better determine value and funding decisions.
220. We discussed better incentivising positive outcomes/destinations for early school leavers and other vulnerable groups via existing/planned mechanisms, for example, attainment funding and the implications of the intensification of college and university outcome agreements.
221. Better and more coordinated use of data to support learner journeys, and a more consistent approach to measuring performance to drive improvements was the main conclusion - noting that, as we currently do not measure value consistently across our system, making judgements about its effectiveness for learners is, therefore, difficult.
222. We need, therefore, to improve the measurement of the return on investment and establish the financial effectiveness and efficiency of the system to drive our investment in the system to be able to tell the full story of impact. This will allow us to be able to use this information to inform the balance of provision and inform learners of the probability of a positive outcome for the different pathways available to them.

Recommendation 17

We will develop better data and improve how existing data is used to support learners make the right choices for them. We will also develop a performance framework to drive improvements across the system as a whole.

We will ensure a more co-ordinated use of data across national organisations, to better understand the impact of different learner journeys:

- This will start with the Longitudinal Educational Outcomes (LEO) project which will improve the evidence around outcomes for university and college learners and those undertaking training.
- Look to develop a consistent set of performance measures and make best use of the Scottish Candidate Number.
- We will consider how the National Improvement Framework could be developed to support the 15-24 learner journey.

Taking this forward

223. This recommendation will require a multi-agency approach. It will be led by the Scottish Government with input from a range of organisations including SFC, SDS, Local Authorities, Colleges, Universities, Education Scotland, SQA and also working alongside the Enterprise and Skills Analytical Unit.

224. When considering the need for a unique learner number, it was felt that the existing Scottish Candidate Number (SCN) offered the most potential to allow learners to better track their progress through the education and skills system, and to assist easier transitions. At a national level, the SCN would allow agencies which support young people to better understand learner pathways through school and beyond and more accurately capture the outcomes of their different choices. Predictive analysis could also support planning of interventions from early years, through school and into further and higher education and training and employment.

225. By extending the scope of the National Improvement Framework to age 24, we could better fulfil the original ambition of the NIF by asking "everyone working in Scottish education" to be clear about how they can contribute to addressing the four key priorities. This would promote greater collaboration and provide a holistic overview of young peoples' progress through their learner journey and support the shared vision across partners.

226. This work is likely to involve a number of stages. Initially, we will look to scope how existing data can be improved and identify data gaps. We will then develop a performance framework to drive improvement across the system and measure impact in a consistent way – looking at the value added by each part. This will

allow us to provide better access to evidence that will support learners and employers to make more informed decision on their learner pathways.

Long term vision

227. It is important that funding works across the system in such a way that it helps young people make decisions based on what works for them and for the economy. Therefore, we need to act on the information we collect and use that information to support learners to make more informed choices.
228. Over time, and making maximum use of better aligned governance of the system as a whole, acting on evidence of outcomes and return on investment, should redress the inconsistencies of investment in different qualifications and different types of learning.

A vision for the future

229. We recognise that we have a system of education and skills that works well for many. It is also clear that the system has worked hard to better align itself over the last ten years. We see this in the numerous examples of school-college partnerships and in the progress with college to university articulation.
230. We also note some of the ‘sticking-points’ which are beginning to suggest the limits of progress than can be reached by existing collaboration. There are also increasing expectations placed upon the system by the need to do more for our young people. We hear this through the voices of young people themselves. We see this through the expectations of the Commission on Widening Access and also in the ambition of the Developing Young Workforce programme. We also see it in a changing external environment, and in, for example, the challenges expressed within the Scottish Government’s Mental Health Strategy, 2017 and the ambitious set out in, *Every Child, Every Chance: the Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2018-22*, the first Child Poverty Delivery Plan under the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017.
231. Interestingly, we also see new emerging partnerships, seemingly taking shape in response to the limits of the system and increasingly linked to employer need. For example, the work of the South East Scotland Academies Partnership as evidenced in the submission received from Universities Scotland.
232. These new collaborative approaches to engender new ways of working and overcome the existing limitations of the current system suggest an appetite for deeper and more purposeful collaboration between schools, communities, colleges, training providers and universities. This is critical since, within an aligned education and skills system, there should be fair and equal responsibility shared across its respective parts.

A Fully Aligned 15-24 education and skills system

233. Throughout this report we have made reference to our longer term vision. This is an attempt to set out a course of travel that we know will take time and that will develop incrementally as levels of collaboration increase.
234. At the heart of this vision is the need for:
- Scotland to see itself as possessing a unified learning system in which practitioners across all sectors are working toward the same vision. This includes CLD, training providers and all teaching that takes place out-with the classroom.
 - Leaders of sectors, institutions and agencies to guide and support staff toward contributing to this shared goal and make decisions to achieve it. This will require a strengthening of behaviours to prioritise a learner’s entire journey and the development of cross-sector collaborative practice in support of this.

- Greater shared understanding and a common language fully embracing the SCQF to describe and chart progress of our young people as they move through the different forms of learning.
- The measurement of the system to consider the added value of each part with an equal focus on the shared ownership of impact, rather than a focus on institution or agency success; and, that this is used to foster collaboration, measuring SCQF attainment rather than specific qualifications.
- A balanced curriculum across the Learner Journey that gives sufficient value to work based learning and is well matched to local and national current and projected economic needs that avoids duplication and makes maximum use of shared approach to estates, resources and expertise.
- A curriculum offer that is mutually agreed by partners in the system and informed by need and opportunity.
- The delivery of the curriculum that maximises blended approaches, with digital solutions embedded as appropriate for different groups of learners, and which is structured and scheduled together from the outset.
- That this curriculum is underpinned by an embedded approach to learner support and guidance and partnership working with business.

235. We are at an important point in time, with the recent education reforms providing the opportunity to develop and enhance regional collaboration between schools and with their partners and with the development of digital learning approaches showing how this collaboration can be extended to all parts of the country.

236. Our ambition has to be greater than the promotion of good partnership practice.

237. Our test should be that alignment within the system is sustainable and guarantees the equity of learning opportunity across Scotland. This is because Scotland's education and skills system can only justifiably be world class if it systematically works together for all.

Next Steps

238. Following the launch of this report we will meet with key stakeholders to discuss the findings in more detail. As part of these discussions we will collect feedback which we will use as part of a meeting of the Learner Journey Review Group, which we will hold as quickly as possible after launch.
239. The Review Group discussion will commence the implementation process.
240. Further detail on programme implementation will follow, including setting out how the work will be governed and progress reported.

Annex A: Our Approach

SQW research with young people

241. The review commenced in September 2016, when the Scottish Government commissioned consultants SQW, working with Young Scot, to undertake a piece of research with young people of their experiences of the education and skills system. The views of young people are summarised in this report. The final report, detailing the approach taken is available at <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/09/5151>
242. A total of 145 young people took part in the research and representatives of this group, a total of 35 young people, also participated in a workshop discussion with Shirley Anne-Somerville, Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science.

Learner Journey Review Group

243. Supporting the review at a national level we established a Learner Journey Review Group, to provide advise at three stages of the programme: at its initiation, informing our key values, and scope; at the mid-way point in tackling early challenges; and in conclusion, helping us to shape final policy propositions to Minister's.

The five projects of the review

244. To manage engagement we created five project teams to lead five strands of activity; three focussed on careers, choice and application and the other two on the system (provision, transitions and progression) and its funding. The Scottish Government led each project, with agency, stakeholder and user involvement, and used critical friends to provide advice.
245. These projects are set out below on page 72. Reports from each of the projects are available at <https://beta.gov.scot/policies/young-people-training-employment/15-24-learner-journey-review/>
246. To ensure the work of the five projects was aligned, it was connected to, and assisted by a central programme team.
247. Through these mechanisms the review prioritised engagement from across the whole education and skills system. This included:
- Each project working with a range of representatives including from agencies, schools, colleges, training providers and universities.
 - Joining up engagement at a programme level through an over-arching discussion with the Review Group.
 - Engagement was supplemented by a programme of regional events, delivered across Scotland including with the regional DYW employer groups and with Colleges and their partners.
248. Membership of all the programme groups can be found at **Annex B**.

Values

249. In taking forward the review we agreed a set of cores values, developed in discussion with partners, to enable an education and skills system that:

- ***Puts the learner at the centre***

It is important that our education and skills system delivers the full range of learning young people need at the right level and the right quality

- ***Prioritises access and works for all learners, so that non-linear and part-time journeys are supported and joined up***

It is important – not least to provide the stepping stones for those that need them - that the journeys remain flexible to best support learner needs and preferences.

It is important that we give learners the time they need as part of a commitment to life-long learning.

- ***Is straightforward, connected and designed for the learner***

It is important that learners should easily be able to identify the best journey for them and avoid unnecessary duplication of effort and cost as they travel within the education and skills system.

The Projects used to structure the review and engagement with stakeholders

15-24 Learner Journey Review: Projects				
1 LEARNER CHOICE AND APPLICATION	2 LEARNER CHOICE AND APPLICATION: COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES	3 ACCESS & APPLICATION	4 PROVISION TRANSITION/ PROGRESSION	5 FUNDING, STRUCTURES, LEGISLATION
<p>Improving information, advice and application processes</p> <p>This will include evaluating the cost/benefit of a learner choices and applications service which brings together student support information and the careers, advice and information system on My World of Work with UCAS, Apprenticeship on line and a new college application process.</p>	<p>Improving information, advice and application processes</p> <p>This will include a review of current careers, advice and guidance services for learners in college and university.</p>	<p>Improving the ease and equity with which young people can apply to college</p> <p>Recognising the work already being taken forward as part of the Commission for Widening Access, this will focus specifically on evaluating the benefits and costs/ of a common application process for colleges.</p>	<p>Improving the design, alignment and coherence of the 15-24 learning journey</p> <p>Improving the ease with which <u>all</u> young people move through their learning, regardless of where they are studying.</p> <p>This will include evaluating the opportunities and 15-24 Learner Journey choices in and across schools, colleges, training providers and community / third sector based learning. Identify and consider any unnecessary duplication of learning.</p> <p>We will establish options for removing unnecessary repetition and maximising progression through levels of study in or between school, community, college, training and university.</p>	<p>Improving the system & removing unnecessary duplication</p> <p>We will develop a system wide analysis of unit cost and rate of return across school, community, college, training (including employability programmes), and university.</p> <p>We will use this to inform options for the future balance and method of investment. We will consider the future strategic direction of the learning system in Scotland.</p>

Annex B: Who we engaged

15-24 Learner Journey Review Group members

Name	Organisation
Brenda Stewart	Polmont YOI
Ollie Bray	Kingussie High School
Steve Dougan	Bo'ness Academy
Jon Reid	Larbert High School
Hugh Hall	Fife College
Dr Ken Thomson	Forth Valley College
Lydia Rohmer	Colleges Scotland
Heather Dunk	Ayrshire College
Tony Jakimciw	Borders College
Shona Struthers	Colleges Scotland
Professor Andrea Nolan	Edinburgh Napier University
Alan McGregor	University of Glasgow
Alistair Sim	Universities Scotland
Alan Armstrong	Education Scotland
Stuart Mckenna	The Scottish Training Federation
Alison Hardie	Young Scot
Sandra Macintyre	Youthlink
Damien Yeates	Skills Development Scotland
Eve Lewis	Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland
Dr Gill Stewart	Scottish Qualifications Authority
Aileen Ponton	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework
Rowena Pelik	Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
Paul Reddish	Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations
David Reid	Highlands and Islands Enterprise
Pamela Smith	Scottish Local Authorities Economic Development
David Lively	National Union of Students
Graham Smith	Scottish Trades Union Congress
Bernard Chisholm	Association Directors of Education
Douglas Hutchison	Association Directors of Education
Robert Nicol	Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
Paul Lowe	Student Awards Agency for Scotland
John Kemp	Scottish Funding Council
Linda Murray	Scottish Enterprise
Chris Oswald	Equality and Human Rights Commission
Sir Peter Scott	Commissioner for Fair Access
Debbie Newlands	National Parent Forum of Scotland
John Gallagher	UNISON
Mary Senior	University and College Union
Ann Gow	University and College Union
David Belsey	Educational Institute Of Scotland

Scottish Government Project Leads

Leads	Organisation
Jon Gray (Programme Manager)	Scottish Government
Danielle Hennessy	Scottish Government
Scott Gray (Projects 1 & 2)	Scottish Government
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15-24 Learner Journey Review Group – Project 1

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15 – 24 Learner Journey Project 4 – Work-streams

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Annex C: Summary of existing learner journeys

250. When considering the journeys currently possible within the education and skills system, underpinned by the relationship between different qualifications, it was established that the education and skills system is currently structured to offer a series of planned journeys for learners, that take place, for example, from:
- The senior phase to community (activity agreement) and employability based courses and activity
 - The senior phase to employment
 - The senior phase to apprenticeships
 - The senior phase to further education courses in college
 - S5 of the senior phase to higher education in college and university
 - S6 of the senior phase to higher education in college and university
 - College higher education to university
 - Employment involving re-skilling and up-skilling with colleges and universities
251. These journeys are set out in the diagram overleaf, showing the structural relationships between the parts of the education and skills system. The diagram also highlights those areas where options to improve learner journeys might be made.
252. At the outset, therefore, it was established, that the **potential** for improvements for the learner, come from more efficient progression from:
- School to community (activity agreement) and employability activity and back into learning and employment
 - school direct to employment / apprenticeship
 - school to higher education in college
 - S5 to HNC in college / year one of university
 - S6 to HND in college / year 2 of university.
 - an HNC in college to year 2 of university
 - an HND in college to year 3 of university
 - Strengthening the links between employment and education, for example, through Graduate Apprenticeships
 - Shortening the time it takes to achieve a university degree via maximising the entry routes
 - Structural changes in relation to the recognition of level and volume of academic credit within the SCQF

The 15-24 Learner Journey

Broad General Education

School Senior Phase

College

Apprenticeships

University

S4

S5

S6

NC

HNC

HND

MA1

MA2

MA3

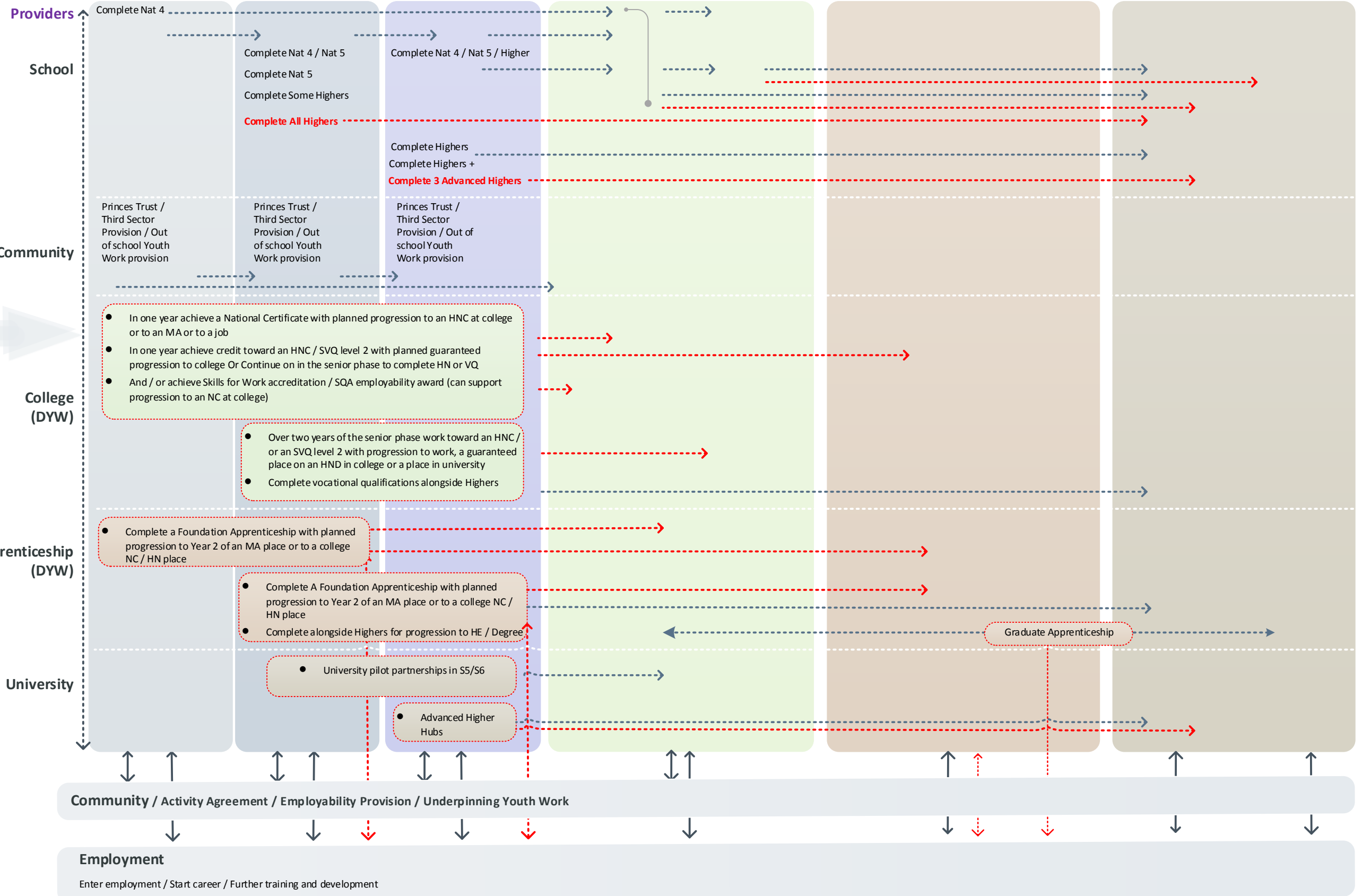
GLA

Yr1

Yr2

Yr3

Yr4



DYW aspires to ensure that career and employability education is delivered from primary school, through into S1-S3. There is an ambition that this features significant employer involvement in its design and delivery, and is focused on career and employability education, workplace exposure, and work experience.

DYW also aspires that the teaching profession is equipped to deliver career and employability education, which promotes the value of all post-school pathways to pupils, and that works in partnership with industry.

As the system currently stands, the SQW research (2017) with young people suggests a number of young people remain dissatisfied with the way in which options and choices are provided.

Key

This diagram is an attempt to illustrate some of the learner journeys available from the senior phase.

These journeys are all possible within the existing 15-24 learning and skills system.

Routes which can deliver faster and more efficient learner journeys, in part because of strengthened collaboration between parts of the system, are indicated by the red arrow.

Annex D: Glossary

THE SCOTTISH CREDIT AND QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

This Framework diagram has been produced to show the mainstream Scottish qualifications already credit rated by SQA and HEIs. However, there are a diverse number of learning programmes on the Framework, which, due to the limitations of this format, cannot be represented here. For more information, please visit the SCQF website at www.scqf.org.uk to view the interactive version of the Framework or search the Database.



SCQF Levels	SQA Qualifications		Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions	Apprenticeships & SVQs
12			Doctoral Degree	Professional Apprenticeship
11			Masters Degree, Integrated Masters Degree, Post Graduate Diploma, Post Graduate Certificate	Graduate Apprenticeship Professional Apprenticeship SVQ
10			Honours Degree, Graduate Diploma, Graduate Certificate	Graduate Apprenticeship Professional Apprenticeship
9			Bachelors / Ordinary Degree, Graduate Diploma, Graduate Certificate	Graduate Apprenticeship Technical Apprenticeship SVQ
8		Higher National Diploma	Diploma Of Higher Education	Higher Apprenticeship Technical Apprenticeship SVQ
7	Advanced Higher, Awards, Scottish Baccalaureate	Higher National Certificate	Certificate Of Higher Education	Modern Apprenticeship SVQ
6	Higher, Awards, Skills for Work Higher			Modern Apprenticeship Foundation Apprenticeship SVQ
5	National 5, Awards, Skills for Work National 5			Modern Apprenticeship SVQ
4	National 4, Awards, Skills for Work National 4	National Certificate	National Progression Award	SVQ
3	National 3, Awards, Skills for Work National 3			
2	National 2, Awards			
1	National 1, Awards			

Glossary

Some of the key terms and phrases likely to be encountered as part of the 15-24 learner journey review

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs): These are stressful events occurring in childhood including: domestic violence; parental abandonment through separation or divorce; a parent with a mental health condition; being the victim of abuse (physical, sexual and/or emotional); being the victim of neglect (physical and emotional); a member of the household being in prison; or growing up in a household in which there are adults experiencing alcohol and drug use problems. When children are exposed to adverse and stressful experiences, it can have long-lasting impact on their learning, ability to think and interact with others.

Articulation: Describes the recognition by a university of the academic credit achieved by a learner in the completion of an HNC and an HND. This recognition enables a learner to progress to year 2 of a degree from completion of an HNC and year 3 of a degree from completion of an HND.

Graduate Apprenticeship (GA): A new approach / qualification to blended work based learning which includes elements of academic, as well as work-based learning to degree equivalent or above.

Curriculum for Excellence (CfE): The Scottish school curriculum framework. This comprises a broad general education up to the end of S3 followed by a senior phase of learning from S4 to S6. Increased emphasis is placed on inter-disciplinary learning, skills development and encouraging personal achievement. CfE is intended to foster four capacities in all young people: successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors.

Curriculum Assessment Board (CAB): The Curriculum and Assessment Board has been established to improve curriculum and assessment policy in education. The Board will be a forum for frank and open discussion about what is working in the curriculum and where improvement is required.

College & University outcome agreements (OAs): These are funding agreements which set out what colleges and universities plan to deliver in return for their funding from the Scottish Funding Council. Their focus is on the contribution that the tertiary institutions make towards improving life chances and creating sustainable economic growth for Scotland. Outcome agreements span a 3-year period and comprise a regional context statement and an outcome progress table.

Developing the Young Workforce (DYW): Scotland's youth employment strategy. Through DYW, we aim to reduce youth unemployment levels by 40 per cent by 2021. The strategy aims to create an excellent work relevant education offer to young people in Scotland, giving them the skills for the current and anticipated jobs market. Together with

Getting It Right for Every Child and Curriculum for Excellence, DYW is the key policy approach through which the SG is creating excellence and equity in Scottish education.

Enterprise and Skills Review: The review aims to ensure the Scottish Government and all of our public agencies are delivering the joined-up support that our young people, universities, colleges and businesses need to increase sustainable economic growth. The Strategic Board was established in November 2017 in response to the Enterprise and Skills Review. Its objective is to help Scotland progress towards achieving our aim of ranking among the top quartile of OECD countries in terms of productivity, equality, wellbeing and sustainability. This ambition will be supported by improved alignment and co-ordination of the activities of Scotland's enterprise and skills agencies: Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Skills Development Scotland and the Scottish Funding Council.

Foundation Apprenticeships (FAs): A new work based qualification in the senior phase of secondary school (S4-S6). It combines nationally recognised qualifications and the acquisition of industry recognised work based skills and capabilities, through learning undertaken in the workplace and school/college. Derived from the existing Modern Apprenticeship frameworks, to better prepare a young person to progress into further or higher education, employment or offer a head start and second year entry into a Modern Apprenticeship.

Getting It Right For Every Child: GIRFEC is the national approach in Scotland to improving outcomes and supporting the wellbeing of children and young people by offering the right help at the right time from the right people.

Insight benchmarking tool: Insight is an online benchmarking tool designed to help bring about improvements for pupils in the senior phase (S4 to S6). It is a professional tool for secondary schools and local authorities to identify areas of success and where improvements can be made. Insight has a focus on helping to reduce the gap between higher and lower attainers, raising attainment for all, improving literacy and numeracy and helping more young people to reach positive post-school destinations. Insight will continue to reflect the wide range of awards undertaken in school or through school college partnerships where these awards meet the criteria for inclusion. These criteria are: be SCQF (see below) credit rated; fit in with Curriculum for Excellence principles; and meet the Insight technical requirements.

Modern Apprenticeship (MAs): Modern Apprenticeships are work based learning opportunities where the learner is employed. MAs adhere to a framework of skills and standards approved by the Modern Apprenticeship Group (MAG).

My World of Work (MWOW): This is an online careers information and advice service for people of all ages.

Personal Social Education (PSE): This is a taught subject which covers a range of health and wellbeing topics - aspects of planning for choices and changes, substance misuse, relationships, sexual health and parenthood, in addition to aspects of physical activity, sport and health. The Scottish Government's Mental Health Strategy 2017-27 contained a commitment to Review Personal and Social Education (PSE), the role of

pastoral guidance in local authority schools, and services for counselling for children and young people.

Private (or Independent) Training Providers: Generally provide employability programmes, work based learning and a range of related accreditation and certification. They are key in the delivery of Scottish Government funded programmes such as: Modern Apprenticeships and Individual Training Accounts.

Regional Skills Assessments (RSA): Documents which provide evidence about economic and skills performance and delivery at a regional level across Scotland. They are intended as a resource to inform future skills planning and investment at a regional level.

Regional Improvement Collaboratives: There are six newly established RICs across Scotland with each one being led by a Regional Improvement Lead. The Collaboratives will include sector and curriculum area support including additional support for learning. They will provide targeted advice and support in order to drive improvement, making use of all available evidence and data.

SCEEN: SCEEN serves as a national network of strategic lead officers on enterprise in education in local authorities. The network operates as an independent and non-representative body to facilitate discourse on all aspects related to enterprise in an education setting 3-18.

Scottish Credit Qualifications Framework (SCQF): Scotland's national qualifications framework. The Framework helps people of all ages and circumstances to access the education and training that is appropriate to them over their lifetime. The Framework is for all learners, whether:

- At school
- At college or university
- An adult returning to education
- Considering getting into learning
- Wanting to re-skill or change career, perhaps after being made redundant
- A student from outside Scotland

The SCQF has 12 levels. Qualifications at level 1 are the simplest to achieve, and qualifications at level 12 are the most demanding. The SCQF credit points show how much learning is involved in achieving each qualification. One SCQF credit point represents an average of 10 hours of learning. For example, one person may study a course at National 4 (SCQF level 4) and another at Higher (SCQF level 6). Both award the same number of SCQF credit points, but they are at different levels of difficulty.

Skills Investment Plans (SIPs): Statements of industry skills needs on behalf of the relevant Industry Leadership Groups.

STEM: Subjects of science, technology, engineering and mathematics. The Scottish Government's STEM Strategy²² aims to build capacity to deliver excellent STEM learning, close equity gaps in participation and attainment in STEM, inspire children, young people and adults to study STEM and connect the STEM education and training offer to labour market needs.

²² <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0052/00526536.pdf>



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