

Building Scotland's Curriculum: a draft resource for discussion and further co-design

First draft edition for consultation: June 2026

Feedback: September until November 2026

Updated practice guidance publication: January 2027

Formal adoption into practice: August 2028



DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION AND FURTHER CO-DESIGN

Building Scotland's Curriculum will be an interactive, digital resource that provides national practice guidance and supports curriculum making in schools and education settings.

It aims to:

- outline all policy relating to curriculum in one place
- build on the work undertaken for the refresh of the curriculum narrative in 2018/19 and for *Realising the Ambition: being me* in 2018/20
- build on the learning from the range of curriculum design activity that has taken place across Scotland since 2021
- replace the *Building the Curriculum* series
- support and strengthen curriculum making at school and setting level over the ten years of the CIC
- include provocations and practical activities to support professional learning and a shared understanding curriculum making.

This is a first DRAFT for discussion and further co-design with Scotland's educators.

It is deliberately being shared as a draft document.

We encourage leaders and educators to engage with this document and **provide feedback to ensure the final version is practical and is responsive** to their needs and those of the children and young people they work with.

This draft will be updated in September 2026 following initial testing with focus groups.

More **formal feedback** on this guidance will then be gathered until November 2026.

The publication of the finalised first edition of this guidance will be January 2027.

This guidance will continue to evolve over the ten years of the Curriculum Improvement Cycle (CIC) to support continuous improvement and in line with new approaches to inspection.

Language Matters

As work progresses with the CIC it is important that everyone has a shared understanding of what is meant by the use of some key words and phrases.

To support this, Education Scotland (ES) worked with the Curriculum and Assessment Board (CAB) to produce a first glossary of terms related to the emerging work of the CIC. Further terms will be added to the next version of Language Matters as the work develops.

A number of these definitions are used and are highlighted throughout this guidance:

Curriculum in Scotland is defined as the totality of all that is planned and enacted for children and young people from early learning and childcare, through school and beyond. That totality is shaped by the purpose (the 'why') set out in the four capacities and a set of entitlements and can be planned for and experienced by learners across four contexts (the 'what'): opportunities for personal achievement; the ethos and life of the school/setting as a community (and with its community); curriculum areas and subjects and interdisciplinary learning.

Curriculum making – the development of practices, processes and policies – happens across different parts of the education system. Place based curriculum making which happens, for example, in early learning and community learning settings and schools involves work such as curriculum design and the development of pedagogical practices.

Pedagogy is curriculum enacted and manifested in and through the interactions, experiences and spaces and times of teaching, learning and assessment.

The narrative for **Scotland's Curriculum Framework** was refreshed in 2019 and hosted on a [dedicated microsite](#). It re-states the purpose ('why?') in the four capacities and the relevance of the four contexts to enable the 'what'. The key elements for curriculum making were identified in a new section to support the 'how'.

The **technical framework** for a curriculum is the set of guidance documents which educators use in order to plan learning for children, young people and adult learners.

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This section will be the main focus of further development and co-design over the coming months after the publication of the full Draft KDU Model for each curriculum area in September 2027 . Significant work is currently underway to support educators in pedagogy and assessment. This includes practical tools to support and inform planning and day-to-day practice.

These will explored as part of the professional learning offer and feedback loop from September to November 2026.

- 4.1 Understanding our learners and our communities
- 4.2 Knowing the big ideas
- 4.3 Being clear on the practical approaches
- 4.4 Using meaningful learning networks
- 4.5 Knowing our own learning & support needs

References

1. Introduction

This introductory section is the starting point for engaging with the Curriculum Improvement Cycle (CIC). It supports teams to explore the purpose of this guidance, what the CIC is, and an initial understanding of the main changes to Scotland's Curriculum.

Activities to support this section are available now.

1.1 Intended audience and purpose

This resource is intended to support leaders and educators in Scotland to strengthen approaches to curriculum design for children and young people aged 3 – 18.

It is primarily intended for local authority officers, leadership teams and middle leaders who lead curriculum design in schools and settings. It also aims to be accessible and useful for all of Scotland's educators.

Realising the Ambition: being me (Education Scotland, 2020) remains as the national practice guidance for early years (ages 0 to 8). This document, ***Building Scotland's Curriculum***, builds on what was learned from *Realising the Ambition's* approach to providing successful national guidance.

It brings together and outlines clearly the policy that schools and settings should consider in curriculum making, but to do so in a way that is accessible and is practically helpful in enacting curriculum. It makes links to, and will sit alongside, professional learning, practical tools and, ultimately, exemplification.

This work has been shaped by practitioners in Scotland through a process of co-design, and a key ask from the group was to provide actionable guidance that recognises the agency of teachers and practitioners.

The resource can be engaged with individually or used to inform professional dialogue or learning for groups and teams. It recognises the role that a range of educators and partners contribute to curriculum and is intended to encourage collaboration. The guidance sits alongside a broad range of existing and continuing Scottish education policies and aims to bring clarity about what these mean for curriculum design.

The guidance recognises the diversity of how and where children and young people access Scotland's Curriculum, including:

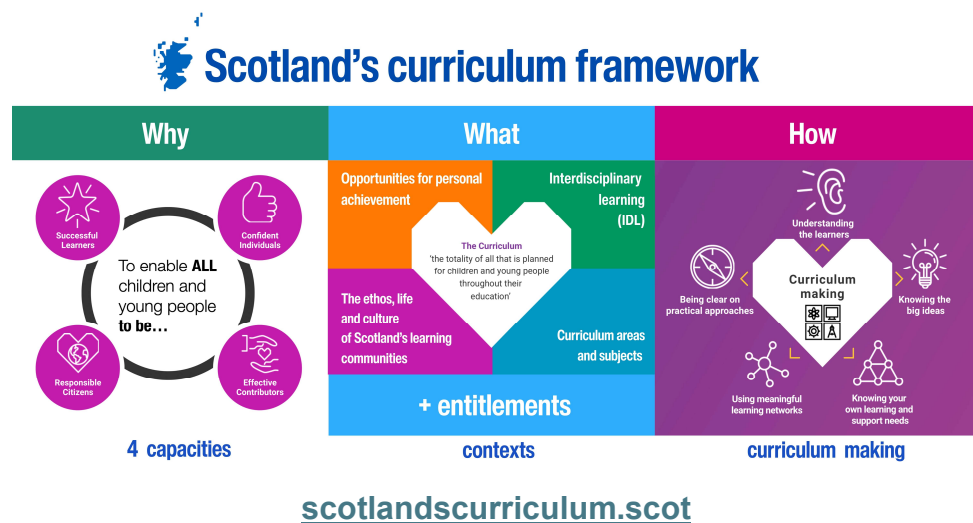
- Private, voluntary, independent and local authority early learning and childcare settings (ELC) including childminders
- Primary, Secondary and 3-18 schools
- Specialist provision and schools for children with complex additional support needs.
- Denominational schools
- Gaelic Medium Education schools and settings
- Community learning settings
- Residential and secure settings
- Colleges
- Work-based learning opportunities
- Digital opportunities such as e-Sgoil
- Home learning.

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As we continue to develop this resource, we will use the feedback to further explore the opportunities to reduce or enhance parts to suit the needs of specific sectors.

The resource is structured around Scotland's approach to curriculum making as a process:

- Why – the purposes of the curriculum
- What – children and young people learn
- How – the practical steps towards curriculum enactment.



Graphic showing the Why, What and How of Scotland's Curriculum Framework.

By January 2027, every section will include provocations and practical activities that can be used with minimal preparation, as well as signposting to further professional learning or resources.

Schools and settings are not expected to engage with the entirety of this resource at once but with each section at a time that suits their needs.

An annual professional learning offer from Education Scotland will also align with the structure set out in this guidance.

For 2026/27, this will include a professional learning offer for school leaders that will focus on sections 1-3 of this guidance to better support understanding of what's changing, curriculum purposes, and what matters in curriculum making. It will also include engagement with the updated Big Ideas Know-Do-Understand model.

Section 4 of this document, on how we enact curriculum, becomes the focus from session 2027/28 onwards.

From August 2028, this guidance, in its final form, will replace:

- Building the Curriculum 1: The Contribution of Curriculum Areas (2006)
- Building the Curriculum 3: A Framework for Learning & Teaching (2008)
- Building the Curriculum 4: Skills for Learning, Skills for Life, Skills for Work (2009)
- Building the Curriculum 5: A Framework for Assessment (2011)

Please note that *Building the Curriculum 2: Active Learning in the Early Years* has already been withdrawn.

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Realising the Ambition: Being Me (Education Scotland, 2020) remains the practice guidance for anyone who works with and for babies and young children across both early learning and childcare settings and in early primary school. However, this document will also support leaders and managers of early learning and childcare (ELC) settings in curriculum making.

This guidance builds on the foundations set within *Realising the Ambition: Being Me*, by better reflecting developmental stages and inclusive curriculum practice from 3-18. *Being Me* has also been incorporated into the language of the Four Capacities.

1.2 Overview of main changes

Curriculum in Scotland is defined as the **totality of all** that is planned for children and young people from early learning and childcare, through school and beyond.

That totality is shaped by the purpose (the **'why'**) set out in the four capacities and a set of entitlements. It can be planned for and experienced by learners across four contexts (the **'what'**): opportunities for personal achievement; the ethos, life and culture of the school/setting as a community (and with its community); curriculum areas and subjects and interdisciplinary learning.

Language Matters (2024)

Scotland has embarked on a ten-year programme to strengthen the curriculum. This is called the Curriculum Improvement Cycle (CIC).

The updated curriculum will start to be formally adopted in schools and settings from August 2028. It is being co-designed by teachers, practitioners, partners and children and young people. Over 1500 educators are involved, with a diverse range of expertise from across the 3-18 learner journey, including practitioners experienced in ELC, primary, secondary, community learning, Gaelic-medium education, the full range of Additional Support Needs and equalities.

Establishing this CIC process fulfils one of the key recommendations from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) 2021 review of Scottish education: to establish a systematic approach to curriculum review (OECD, 2021)¹.

Other recommendations included: improving the position of knowledge within the curriculum, and how it relates to skills and understanding; building capacity for curriculum design within schools and settings; and addressing the disconnect between the broad general education (BGE) and senior phase.

Over the course of the ten-year cycle, the CIC aims to strengthen:

- Connections between curriculum purposes and practice
- All four contexts for learning, and the connections between these contexts
- The essential knowledge, skills and understanding that children and young people develop
- Clarity in the technical framework that educators use to plan learning, de-cluttering the guidance they work with
- The position of cross-curricular themes

¹ [A series of discussion papers](#) outline the case for change and the process which has been undertaken to develop a new model for curriculum.

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- How the curriculum can be responsive to the wide range of additional support needs (ASN).
- Pedagogy and assessment, and how these work together
- 3 – 18 coherence and progression

Greater clarity in what learners need to know, do and understand, with progression made explicit, and learning made more relevant and engaging, creates the conditions for stronger learner engagement and a clearer sense of purpose. This can support stronger participation in learning, improved motivation and greater learner agency.

Over time, this can contribute to increased attendance, reduced disengagement and more positive behaviour. It also provides a foundation for more stable national standards, stronger professional confidence in judgement, improved quality and consistency of data, stronger progression into qualifications, and improved attainment over time.

What has been developed so far?

The focus so far has been on evolving the technical framework.

The main change is a deliberate move away from experiences, outcomes and benchmarks to a concept-based curriculum. This will be a Know-Do-Understand (KDU) model, informed by overarching Big Ideas.

A concept-based curriculum will allow Scotland to balance clear national expectations about knowledge with the flexibility to contextualise learning to suit local needs. This model is explained further on [p.xx](#) and a sample of the updated model for each curriculum area has been released alongside this draft guidance.

Co-design groups have also begun to work on updated guidance and practical tools to strengthen Opportunities for Personal Achievement, the Ethos & Life of School/Setting as a Community (and with its community) and Interdisciplinary Learning.

What work is still ongoing?

The CIC is entering a period of alignment. Between now and January 2027, the co-design groups will continue to work on:

- Whether any changes are required to the attributes and capabilities that sit under the four capacities to ensure they remain up-to-date and aligned with the emerging national approach to skills being developed by Scottish Government
- The full Big Ideas Know-Do-Understand model for each curriculum area, ensuring fourth level and SCQF Level 4 alignment
- De-cluttering and improving the position of ‘responsibilities of all’ and cross-curricular themes
- Developing pedagogy and assessment approaches required for the updated curriculum. This will include updating the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Cycle, and providing assessment principles and practice guidance 3-18.

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- Developing a holistic approach to Early level based on the content the Know-Do-Understand model across the curriculum areas
- Continuing to consider the CIC through the lens of the wide range of ASN represented in schools and settings
- Further work to explore what the Know-Do-Understand model means for practitioners who use a range of progression frameworks and guidance documents, including the ASN Milestones, to plan learning for children with complex needs.
- The entitlement to a senior phase (S4 – S6), which **includes** qualifications, for young people aged 15 -18 remains
- The principles of curriculum design continue to be helpful for educators and leadership teams
- All 8 Curriculum Areas remain
- The ASN Milestones remain
- The Curriculum levels from early to fourth in BGE and up to SCQF Level 7 in the senior phase remain, however there will be a stronger alignment between CfE 4th Level and SCQF Level 4.

From summer 2026 onwards, the CIC will work alongside Qualifications Scotland to develop the curriculum for the senior phase, ensuring a coherent 3-18 curriculum.

What's not changing?

Much of what already exists to support curriculum making will remain in place, but the move to a concept-based curriculum will mean that schools and settings will want to revisit the key questions of Scotland's process for curriculum making: why, what and how.

Specifically:

- The four capacities remain as the purposes of the curriculum
- Educators will still plan over the four contexts for learning
- The entitlement to a broad general education from early years until the end of S3 remains

What is being withdrawn?

From August 2028, the Experiences and Outcomes and Benchmarks will be withdrawn. They will be replaced by a Know-Do-Understand model, aligned to CfE levels, to help guide learning and inform planning for learning, teaching and assessment.

The updated curriculum will provide a national articulation of progression from early level onwards and will remove the need for local progression pathways. Alongside the development of the senior phase curriculum in partnership with Qualifications Scotland, this will provide a coherent learner journey from 3 to 18.

What happens next?

These changes are still in progress, and this draft (June 2026) of the resource hopes to encourage educators to get involved in the feedback loop which will take place between September and November 2026.

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What should schools and settings do now?

2026/27

Leaders and educators are encouraged to explore, reflect on and consider how this guidance might be meaningfully enacted from August 2028 onwards.

Educators should **not** begin using the draft KDU samples in curriculum making.

The suggested activity for the first part of 2026/27 is on using the provocations and activities to build a shared understanding of the CIC and of curriculum purpose (Sections 1& 2).

This period will also include the time to provide feedback on the draft KDU samples.

Once the final materials are available from January 2027, schools and settings will want to consider and explore the 'What': what does the updated curriculum mean for all four contexts for learning? (Section 3)

2027/28

From session 2027/28, the focus will move into the 'How' (Section 4).

What support is available?

Enacting curriculum change takes time. Schools and settings will be supported by:

- Activities to support professional dialogue and learning amongst leadership teams and with educators in schools and

settings (this first release includes activities for Sections 1 &2).

- A professional learning offer, led by Education Scotland, in partnership with local authorities.
- Dedicated time for head teachers and leaders to come together to develop a shared understanding of the change.

In addition to this Scottish Government is working with partners to explore additional in-service days.

The activities in this Guidance remain at the discretion of schools and settings to determine the most appropriate timing and the extent to which these are relevant to local needs.

Provocations

How much is understood about the Curriculum Improvement Cycle (CIC) across our cluster/learning community?

Who in our school, setting or cluster is involved in the CIC and can support our planning?

What are our priorities at this stage of the process?

Professional Learning Activities:

Activity 1: Exploring the change

2. Why? Purposes of curriculum

The first part of Scotland's approach to curriculum making as a process is to consider questions of purpose: why do we educate? The professional learning activities for this section are available now.

2.1 The Four Capacities

In Scotland, the purposes of the curriculum are outlined in the **four capacities**. These outline what the curriculum is for and influence the curriculum decisions we make.



Realising the ambition: Being Me (Education Scotland, 2020) encouraged us to think about the image of the developing child. This helps us to consider what Scotland's curriculum is trying to offer children and young people across the four capacities.

These are important for children and young people *now* as much as for any *future* world – note that the purpose of Scotland's curriculum is to enable children to *be* the four capacities, rather than become.

The following statements offer a starting point for considering the purposes of Scotland's curriculum, and how they relate to the children and young people we work with in our school or setting.

They do not attempt to describe an individual child or young person, but are intended to support reflection on the purposes of curriculum at school and setting level:

Being Me: as a Confident Individual

Curriculum making in Scotland's schools and education settings helps children and young people to understand themselves, to develop a sense of purpose, and foster belonging and the ability to navigate life with resilience and meaning. Curriculum making supports children and young people to be reflective, emotionally aware and capable of using their personal values and beliefs to make choices that support their wellbeing and fulfilment over time, such as developing self-awareness and making informed decisions about **careers and pathways** and with **money and finances**.

Being Me: as an Effective Contributor

Curriculum making in Scotland's schools and education settings develops children and young people's knowledge, skills and **creativity** to make a positive difference in their communities and in shared endeavour. It helps them develop collaboration and an **entrepreneurial** mindset, modelling how varying and adapting behaviours can solve new problems or complex challenges in ethical ways. Curriculum making fosters the initiative to improve our world.

Being Me: as a Responsible Citizen

Curriculum making in Scotland's schools and education settings helps develop children and young people's understanding of **social justice, rights and equalities**. It develops ethical awareness and responsibility towards others, society and the planet. It helps them to understand how the world around them works locally, nationally and globally, through **democratic values**. The curriculum includes diverse perspectives, values fairness and supports thoughtful participation in civic life. It helps them to understand their status as rights holders and global citizens, and nurtures commitment to **Learning for Sustainability**.

Being Me: as a Successful Learner

Curriculum making in Scotland's schools and education settings helps develop children and young people's curiosity, adaptability and motivation for lifelong learning, including continually evolving their **digital skills**. It demonstrates how they can engage with complexity, deepen their understanding built on knowledge and skills acquired

across curriculum areas and continue developing this in response to new opportunities. It supports children and young people to be well-informed and able to act in the world.

The changing world

Societal shifts are placing increasingly complex demands on our children and young people. They are expected to participate confidently in a world facing sustainability challenges, rapid technological change and growing concerns about social cohesion. We know that these pressures are having a profound impact on health and wellbeing ².

These changes affect our educators too. Considering the environmental, economic and social trends that we see in our own community, as well as in Scotland and globally, helps identify how our curriculum offer can be responsive to the changing world.

Equity

A well-designed curriculum ensures that all children and young people, regardless of background or circumstance, will develop their understanding of the world and have access to the shared and coherent knowledge and skills that empowers them to question, analyse, innovate and solve complex challenges throughout their lives.

² OECD, 2024; UNICEF, 2023; Scottish Government, 2023; Public Health Scotland, 2025

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Scotland's curriculum is a commitment to equity and social justice. It recognises that 'knowledge' is not limited to that which we have historically taught in formal education contexts in Scotland and accepts the validity of global perspectives. It has health and wellbeing at its core and should equip every child and young person with all that they need to shape a fairer, healthier and more sustainable future for us all.

The KDU model will allow Scotland to balance national consistency in the knowledge children and young people have access to, with the ability for educators to contextualise the curriculum to meet the needs of their learners.

Educators will consider what is important locally in the school or setting's community. (See also Ethos, Life and Culture on p. 23 and Place-based approaches on p. 44).

Provocations:

To what extent do we have a shared understanding of the purposes of our curriculum?

Where are the opportunities across our curriculum for children and young people to grow and develop across these capacities?

What economic, environmental and social trends do we see in our learning community, as well as in Scotland and the world?

Considering the learner journey in our setting, what's strong about our curriculum offer? What might we consider as an opportunity to strengthen?

Professional Learning Activities:

Activity 2: Curriculum purposes

2.2 Curriculum Entitlements

A number of 'non-negotiables' must be considered in curriculum making, coming from both statutory and policy commitments. These will continue to be updated, where necessary, within this Guidance.

All of Scotland's children and young people are entitled to a continuous and coherent educational experience from 3-18.

For many, this will be a typical journey from Early Learning and Childcare, to primary and then secondary school. Some children and young people will progress through their learning at different stages, for example with ASN milestones, or remaining within one level in one or more curriculum area for longer periods of time.

This places a strong emphasis on the importance of ensuring that the spaces, interactions, experiences and times of learning are appropriate for their age, stage, interests and motivations.

Beginning in the early years through nurturing, play-based and developmentally appropriate practices, children build the foundations for curiosity, communication, wellbeing and lifelong learning.

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As the broad general education (BGE) continues, children are offered experiences of learning, flexibly designed, within and across a wide range of contexts to support their development as individuals, contributors, citizens and learners. This breadth allows children and young people to develop knowledge, skills and understanding to guide their interest, enabling them to make informed choices when they begin the senior phase.

The senior phase should continue to offer learning across the different contexts and contribute to the development of the four capacities. It includes personalised pathways and the opportunity to achieve a portfolio of qualifications across the three-year span, including interdisciplinary project-based learning. These programmes of learning may include SCQF-rated qualifications, Qualifications Scotland national courses, a range of technical and vocational qualifications, industry and sector-led qualifications and achievement awards.

Throughout the 3-18 learner journey, there is a strong emphasis on opportunities for individuals to achieve and to develop an understanding of their own **skills**, strengths, interests, and the possibilities that lie before them.

A range of **skills frameworks** have been developed to support this, including [Skills Development Scotland's Metaskills framework](#):



The approach to skills taken in the updated curriculum will take account of the emerging national skills model which is currently under development by Scottish Government. An update on the national skills model will be included in the September 2026 version of this guidance.

These opportunities also involve a range of personal support, such as coaching/mentoring, career education, information, advice and guidance and connections to networks beyond a school setting. It includes the skills children with the full range of ASN will need to develop in order to access the curriculum and life. This contributes to increasing sustainable positive destinations and participation. These should be planned as a progressive entitlement across the learner

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journey, supporting exploration, skill development and informed decision-making.

All children and young people should experience a coherent programme of career-related learning, including opportunities to engage with employers, further and higher education, and community partners, ensuring equitable access to meaningful and inspiring pathways.

Learning for Sustainability, which includes outdoor learning, is an entitlement for all learners in Scotland's curriculum. Learning for Sustainability is how we care, hope and act for people and the planet. It is about making the world fairer – both now and in the future. The national ambition is for all settings and schools to be sustainable by the year 2030 – by effectively embedding Learning for Sustainability into their curriculum, culture, campus and community.

Responsibilities of all educators

All educators in Scotland continue to have responsibility for developing children and young people's:

- Mental, Emotional, Social and Physical Health
- Communication, language and literacy
- Numeracy

Work is being undertaken to explore updated definitions of these responsibilities, embed them fully in the KDU model and ensure that educators are supported in these responsibilities.

By the January 2027 release of materials, this work will be fully embedded with clearer, decluttered guidance available for practitioners.

Cross-curricular learning

An exploration of cross curricular learning was carried out in 2024/25. This involved around 500 educators participating in co-design sessions to explore joins and connections across a range of themes known to the system as sitting beyond the realms of curriculum area boundaries:

- Careers and pathways
- Creativity
- Democratic Values
- Digital Skills
- Entrepreneurship
- Learning for Sustainability
- Money & Finance
- Social Justice, Rights and Equalities.

This exploration identified what learning is important for children and young people within these themes. But is also identified that their position within the overall curriculum can be confusing.

Work is being currently being undertaken across the CIC to address these issues.

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By the January 2027 release of materials, this work will be fully embedded with clearer, decluttered guidance available for practitioners.

In Scotland, curriculum guidance is underpinned by statutory education legislation and national policy, providing a framework through which schools and settings meet their legal responsibilities to deliver positive outcomes for every child and young person in Scotland.

Statutory requirements

Updated guidance on statutory requirements is currently being reviewed and will be provided with the September update to this draft.

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Policy commitments:

- **Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)** – a wellbeing policy ensuring children and young people receive early, co-ordinated support across services
- **1+2 Languages** – promotes learning two additional languages alongside a child or young person’s home language from Primary 1
- All children and young people are entitled to high-quality learning in Health & Wellbeing, including regular physical education (2 hours in primary/2 periods secondary S1-S4) and progressive personal and social education that supports their mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing (MESP)
- **Developing the Young Workforce** – connects education with careers, vocational learning and employability
- **Learning for Sustainability** – the national action plan seeks to embed sustainability, climate awareness, global citizenship and outdoor learning across the curriculum, through an effective whole school, setting and community approach
- The **Anti-Racism in Education Programme, National Approach to LGBT-Inclusive Education** and **Gender Equality in Education Taskforce** support an inclusive, decolonised and diverse curriculum

Each of these commitments is intrinsically linked to Scotland’s ambition for inclusive learner journeys that meet the needs of individual children and young people. They are aligned with the professional standards of Scotland’s educators.

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Further information on statutory requirements and policy commitments can be found [here](#). See also Appendix A.

Provocations:

Why are some non-negotiables necessary for curriculum making?

To what extent does the curriculum experienced by children and young people in your school/setting reflect what is intended in the curriculum entitlements? *How do you know?*

How can we ensure that Responsibilities of All are authentically adding value across curriculum? Why do these matter to all areas?

Professional dialogue / practical activities:

Activity 2: Curriculum purposes

3. What matters?

3.1 Curriculum

After exploring a shared understanding of purpose, educators will consider the ‘what’ of curriculum. The CIC aims to strengthen all 4 contexts for learning and to support better connections between and across the contexts.

This section will be a focus during the professional learning events for head teachers and leaders. Professional learning activities for this section will be available in September 2026.

Scotland’s approach to curriculum recognises that curriculum is more than a set of documents. It is shaped by the ongoing interactions between policy, professional judgement and the lived experiences of children and young people.

We should consider:

- The **intended curriculum**: the aims, expectations and structures set out in this national practice guidance and the Know-Do-Understand model
- The **enacted curriculum**: how educators interpret the intended curriculum. How they design and organise pedagogical approaches to reflect their own children, young people and communities

- The **experienced curriculum**: children and young people’s reflections on what they learn and how

Curriculum making is deliberate and ongoing work. It means selecting appropriate content, organising aspects of knowledge, shaping pedagogy and aligning assessment.

These decisions must respond to local circumstances and the individual needs of children and young people. Across Scotland, we have hugely diverse contexts that range across rural, island, urban and inner-city settings. Each school and setting has its own local place-based opportunities and challenges for curriculum making. Taking time to make sense of these local opportunities, and working collaboratively with others to address shared challenges, is central to ensuring that the evolved curricular model for Scotland can be meaningfully experienced within individual schools and settings, in ways that meet the needs of **all** children and young people.

Provocations:

How connected is our interpretation of intended curriculum across our cluster/learning community?

What are the biggest influences in curriculum decisions in our setting?

How do we know what children and young people actually experience across their curriculum journey?

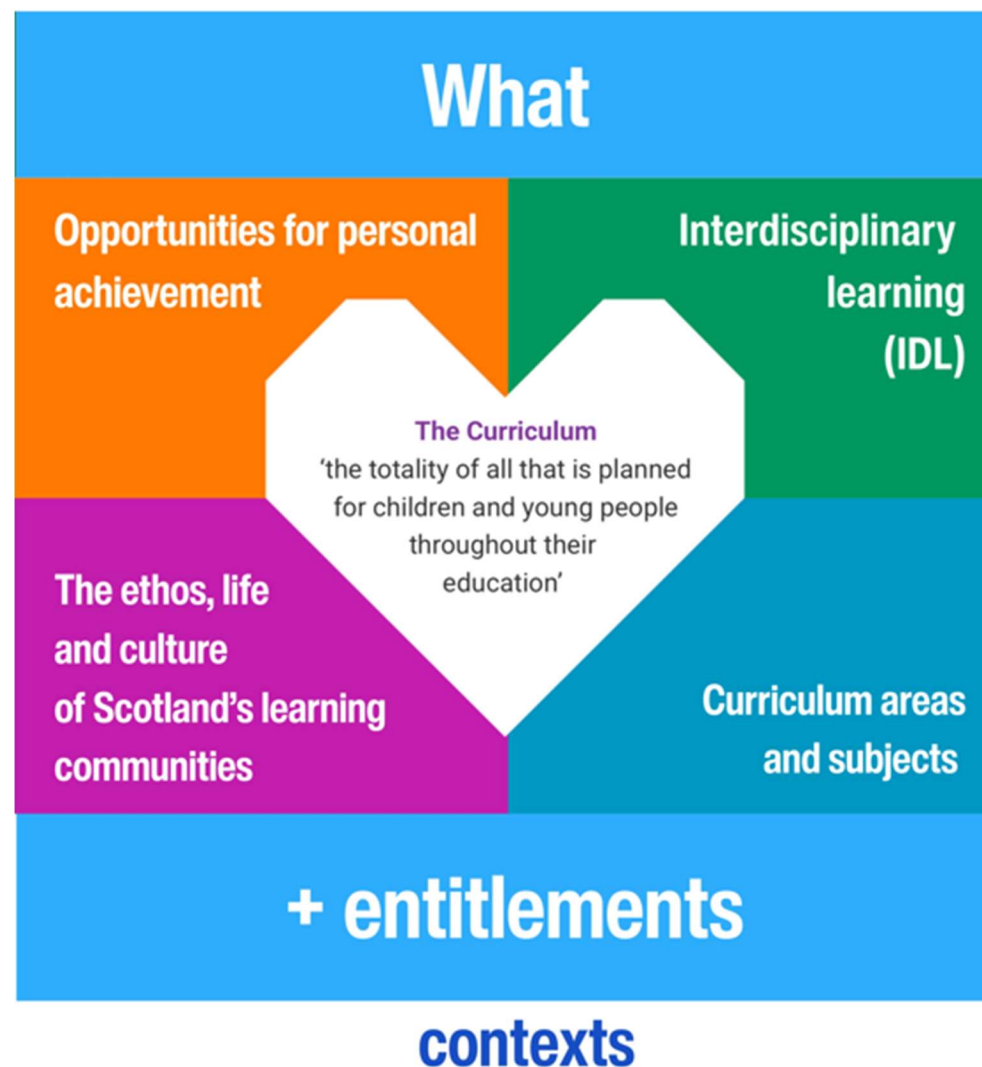
Professional Learning Activities / practical tools:

- [Youth Voice Toolkit | Resources | Education Scotland](#)

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- [Young Leaders of Learning Programme - Information for Parents and Carers | Curriculum in Scotland | Parentzone Scotland | Parentzone Scotland](#)

Throughout the 3-18 curriculum, learning should be planned for and experienced across all **four contexts for learning**.



3.2 Opportunities for Personal Achievement

Beginning with the child or young person, wherever they are on their learning journey, is a crucial first step in curriculum making. When we have trusting relationships with children and young people, and scaffold reflective communication, we can better understand their motivation, interests and unique talents, as well as their developmental needs (see also Section 4.1).

The opportunities provided within the curriculum should be informed and shaped by what we know about our children and young people while maximising the assets of local communities/places (and partnerships)

Opportunities for Personal Achievement offers one way in which the curriculum can be attentive to UNCRC Article 29. It often creates space for a range of partners to contribute to the curriculum.

This context:

- Enables each child and young person to explore and develop their unique talents, interests and identity (What it means to 'Be Me')
- Fosters joy, curiosity and meaning in learning
- Builds confidence, resilience and a sense of self and belonging
- Recognises diversity of strengths and interests and celebrates achievement across all areas of life

- When carefully planned and supported, can remove barriers, leading to fairer access to opportunities
- Develop skills, young people's understanding of their skills, and their ability to articulate their strengths and next steps

Practically, in a school or setting, this context means making curriculum decisions about how we:

- Notice, value and acknowledge the achievements of our children and young people in our day-to-day interactions
- Ensure our children and young people have equitable opportunities to achieve through our collaborations with a range of partners
- Encourage and support all children and young people to reflect on what they learn through their achievements
- Recognise and celebrate achievement.

Schools and settings with their partners should work together to ensure that every child and young person has access to opportunities for personal achievement that meet their aspirations and needs. This includes opportunities for career-related learning, where children and young people apply their knowledge and skills in real-world contexts and develop an understanding of the pathways available to them

There is a wide range of [achievement awards](#) that can offer children and young people tangible, meaningful experiences and can help schools and settings to structure this context

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Profiling enables learners to recognise, capture and reflect on significant achievements throughout their learner journey. When embedded regularly and structurally, it helps them identify the knowledge, understanding and skills developed through their experiences.

[Scotland's Learner Profile](#) provides a free digital platform from P5 onwards, that stays with the learner and allows them to capture evidence of achievements. It can support and scaffold conversations with children and young people, and with parents and carers, about achievements, skills and future goals. A national educator group supports ongoing professional learning and enactment in profiling.

Provocations:

How does our curriculum allow the individual to explore and develop who they are?

Which aspects of our offer might excite or engage children and young people?

Where are there opportunities for choice, creativity or personalisation?

How are achievements recognised and celebrated?

How does this connect to real-life contexts relevant to the individual and stage?

How can we celebrate the joy of learning itself, not just outcomes?

Are the appropriate environments in place to allow each individual to thrive and grow?

Professional Learning Activities / practical tools:

Professional learning activities will be available from September 2026.

[Welcome || Awards Network](#)

[Empowering learners: An educator's guide to My Profile | My World of Work](#)

3.3 Being Us, Together: The Ethos, Life and Culture of Scotland's Learning Communities

This context invites us to look beyond content and experiences, and to consider the environments, relationships and cultures that shape learning every day. Teachers and practitioners from across Scotland worked together to consider and evolve this context from the previous 'Ethos and Life of the School as a Community' articulation. Their work placed the voices of children and young people at the centre. It realises we are all influenced by the communities that we are part of - from before birth and across our lives.

The new title and description presented here recognises that education settings are not single, contained entities; they are complex, layered communities that intersect with families, local contexts and wider global networks. Within any setting, there are multiple interacting groups: learners, staff, partners and families, each bringing their own values, experiences and identities. Denominational settings have unique faith and community considerations which shapes ethos, life and culture.

In daily practice, we recognise that learning is shaped not only by what is taught, but by how it is lived and experienced. Relationships, culture, inclusion, equity, diversity and social justice are not abstract ideas - they are enacted daily through interactions, expectations and routines. The ethos we create influences whether children feel safe, valued, hopeful and able to participate fully as learners.

This connects closely with the four capacities - supporting each learner to develop and grow as a confident individual, responsible citizen, effective contributor and successful learner - within a wider sense of Being Us, Together. It reminds us that individual growth is inseparable from collective experience.

While co-created vision, values and aims are important in a school or setting, to be effective they must be continuously lived, revisited and reflected upon. Every interaction, every space - indoors and outdoors, natural and built - contributes to the ethos, life and culture of the learning community. Ethos, life and culture are therefore inseparable from what learners come to know, do and understand.

The co-design group identified that a helpful way to frame this work is through considering as a setting the terms of *Hope, Care and Action*.

- **What do we hope for as a learning community?**
- **What do we, and should we, collectively care about?**
- **How do we continually action our hopes and cares?**

Action turns vision, values and aims into meaningful daily practice. This framing aligns with GIRFEC, UNCRC and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, supporting us to embed rights-based, inclusive and values-driven practice. It also aligns with the professional standards of Scotland's educators.

Practically, in a school or setting, this means making curriculum decisions about:

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- How we meaningfully notice, listen to, capture and act upon our children and young people's voices
- Our practices to ensure equity
- Our representations and appreciation of diversity
- Our meaningful approaches to inclusion
- Our ongoing connections with the community and multi-agency partners
- Our partnerships with parents, carers and families
- Our nurturing and relational approaches

Leadership teams may want to add considerations to suit their unique context.

**Hope Inspires
Care Sustains
Action Transforms**

Provocations:

How does the lived experience of our setting consistently reflect the values we aspire to, for every learner, their families and those who work with and for them?

In what ways do our interactions, experiences and spaces actively nurture a sense of belonging, agency, wider connection and shared responsibility within our learning community?

Professional dialogue / practical activities:

Professional learning activities will be available from September 2026.

What does it mean to 'be us, together'?

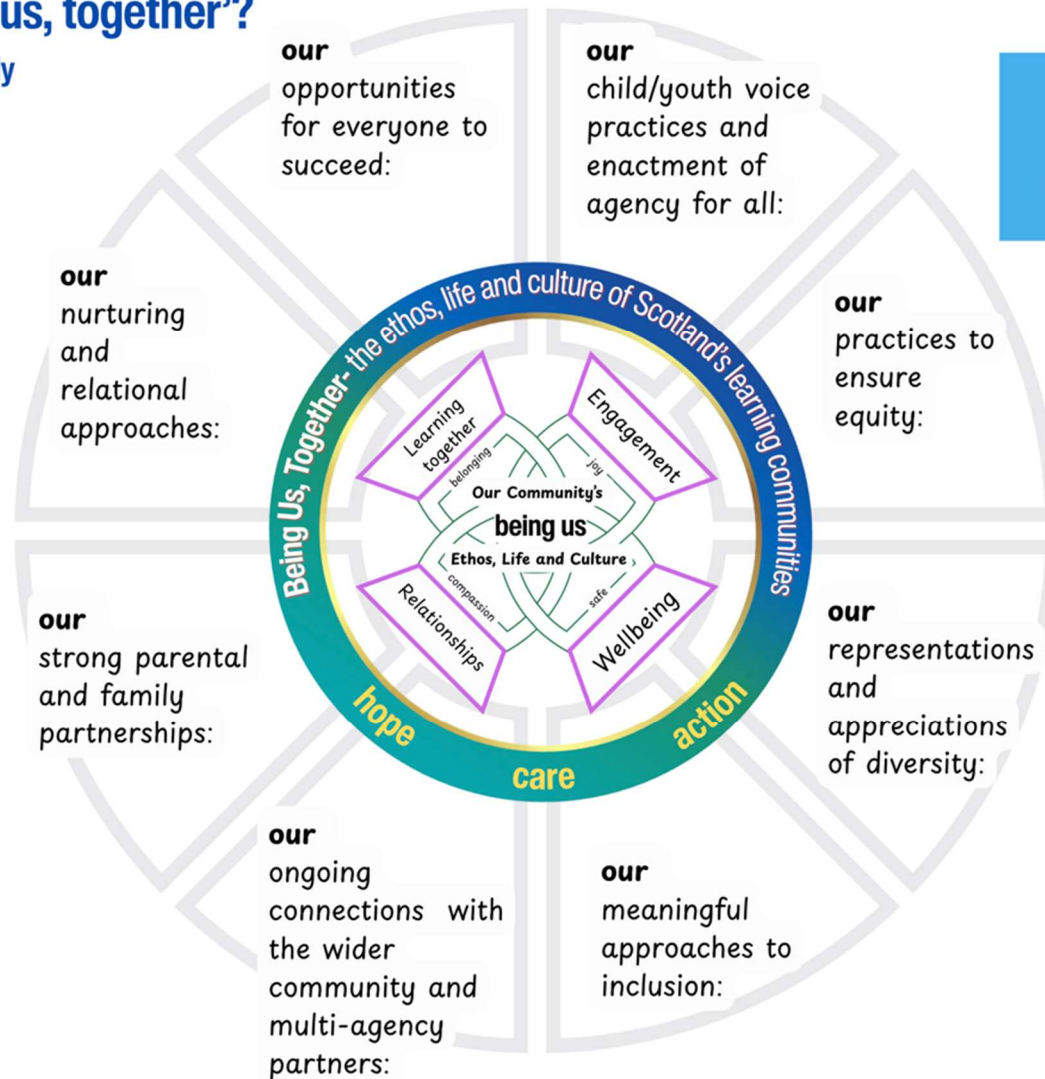
Noticing and working to enrich the daily interactions, experiences and spaces of our learning communities



This resource is designed as a starting point for ongoing discussions about aspects of your community's inclusive ethos, life and culture.

It links Ethos, Life and Culture to what you will already be doing through GIRFEC, UNCRC and LfS approaches.

The words and questions here are suggestions. You may wish to adapt this resource to suit the needs of your unique context.



It can be helpful to remember that;

- Every setting is a 'community of communities' within themselves.
- Our settings are part of, co-exist with, and relate to many other local communities.
- We are part of wider national and global communities
- Ask, what do our children, young people and adults **hope** for and **care** about - and how do we continually **action** this together?

Advice from the National Ethos, Life and Culture Curriculum Improvement group teacher and practitioner participants (2026)

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3.4 Curriculum areas and subjects Scotland's Big Ideas Model: Know-Do-Understand

Scotland's curriculum is deliberately moving away from experiences, outcomes and benchmarks to a concept-based curriculum. This will be a Know-Do-Understand (KDU) model informed by overarching big ideas in each of the curriculum areas:

- Expressive arts
- Health and wellbeing
- English and Literacy
- Literacy and Gàidhlig (Gaelic Medium Education)
- Languages (including Gaelic (Learners) and Scots)
- Mathematics
- Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies (includes Religious and Moral Education (RME) in non-denominational and Religious Education in Roman Catholic Schools (RERC))
- Sciences
- Social studies
- Technologies

The KDU model is aligned to CfE levels and will bring greater clarity, and coherence to curriculum design. It will inform planning for learning, teaching and assessment.

Its core purpose is to make explicit what learners should know (**knowledge**); be able to do (**skills, processes and strategies**); and **understand** (deep, transferable), at developmentally appropriate stages, strengthening the role of knowledge while avoiding fragmentation.

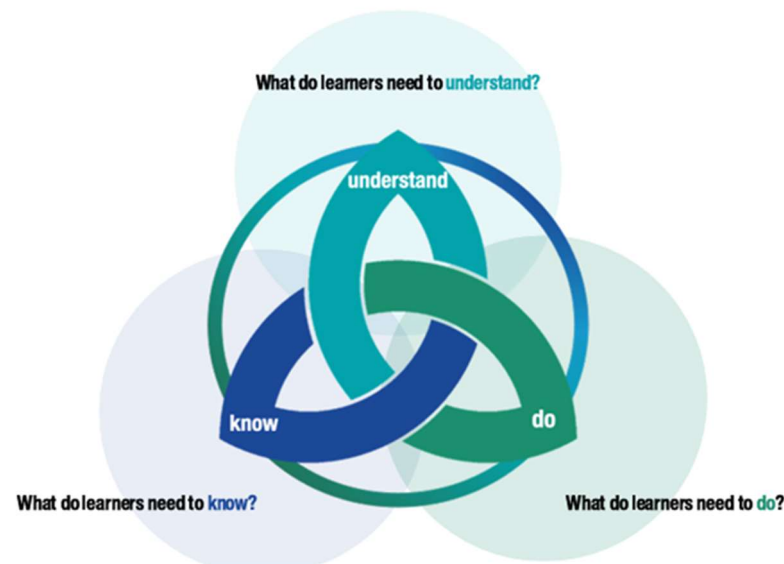
It supports the interconnectedness of know, do and understand, and will support deeper and more meaningful experiences for children

and young people from 3- 18. This will provide a nationally agreed **articulation of progression.**

This concept-based model will allow Scotland to balance clear, national expectations about knowledge with the flexibility to contextualise learning to suit local needs. It will also enable better pedagogy, assessment and progression. Work is currently underway to align with and build on the ASN Milestones.

Scotland's Know-Do-Understand model

3 – 18 Big Ideas



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3-18 Big Ideas

Big Ideas provide a rationale for the ‘why’ and ‘what’ children and young people learn within a curriculum area. They capture the most important overarching understandings and insights that articulate the way that a curriculum area makes sense of the world, the significance of this learning and how it contributes to development of the four capacities.

In the CIC co-design process, Big Ideas were the first part of the new model to be co-created.

The Know, Do and Understand, are deliberately presented as a Celtic knot to further reinforce their interconnectedness. The relative emphasis of KDU shifts according to the learner and the learning.

Understand

“Understand” sits at the top of the KDU knot.

Understand statements describe the relationship between concepts. The concepts that form the understand statements are drawn from the Big Ideas.

Understand statements capture the most important learning across a curriculum level and are transferable across different case studies, contexts, cultures and times. This transferability is what gives them power, enabling learners to use their knowledge beyond the classroom.

Know

This part of the knot outlines the facts, definitions, examples or case studies that children and young people need in order to build and illustrate their understanding.

Do

This part of the knot outlines the things that children and young people learn to do within a discipline. These practical actions and experiences sit alongside knowledge and contribute to the development of understanding. This includes curriculum area and subject specific skills, processes and strategies.

Together, Know, Do and Understand provide a national articulation of progression in each curriculum area.

Co-design thus far (until summer 2026) has focussed on Early to Fourth Level.

Work to co-design the curriculum for the Senior Phase will now take place, in partnership with Qualifications Scotland from academic year 26/27.

A very short extract is shown here from Science (2nd level) and Technologies (4th Level) , solely to exemplify a Big Idea and the KDU model:

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| Science BIG IDEA | |
|---|--|
| <p>Our scientific knowledge: What we understand so far - Scientific knowledge helps us to make sense of the world around us and to discover our place within it. Our understanding of the sciences is refined over time as new evidence emerges. We can all contribute to the development of scientific knowledge.</p> | |
| <p>UNDERSTAND (2nd Level) The use of energy resources by humans is contributing to global warming and climate change.</p> | |
| <p>KNOW</p> | <p>DO</p> |
| <p>The Earth's natural Greenhouse Effect helps keep the Earth warm enough for life to survive, but changes to this natural balance can affect the Earth's climate.</p> <p>Burning fossil fuels releases more greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, which leads to an increase in the Earth's temperature.</p> <p>Global warming affects weather and climate systems, causing the climate to change.</p> | <p>Evaluate how different energy sources contribute to climate change.</p> <p>Identify the impact of human activity on climate systems over time.</p> <p>Use scientific vocabulary: Greenhouse Effect, greenhouse gases, climate change.</p> |

| Technologies BIG IDEA | |
|---|--|
| <p>Innovations, design and Enterprise in Action: innovation is a continual, iterative process of problem finding, prototyping, testing, and refining. It relies on creativity, curiosity, and resilience through learning from failure and adapting to change. Through design, learners experience how products, services, and solutions are created with purpose, tested, and improved through feedback and iteration. They use creativity and collaboration to identify opportunities, use the techniques and knowledge from Make It Happen to develop and model ideas (whether physical, digital, or business related), and refine them against intended purposes and user needs. This demonstrates that strong solutions emerge not fully formed but through cycles of exploration, analysis, and improvement.</p> | |
| <p>UNDERSTAND (4th Level) Solutions are created through a structured, iterative process in which problems are researched, ideas are represented and communicated, prototypes are tested, and solutions are refined based on evidence and constraints.</p> | |
| <p>KNOW</p> | <p>DO</p> |
| <p>Enterprise and innovation is an ongoing iterative process</p> <p>The entrepreneur will consider the feasibility of their idea</p> <p>Entrepreneurs use available data such as financial performance to consider if the enterprise has reached its outcomes or agreed success criteria.</p> <p>Barriers to becoming an entrepreneur may exist for certain groups</p> <p>Business plans and pitches can be used to secure finance from investors such as banks, shareholders, venture capitalists, government (grants).</p> <p>Customers can be split into segments to support the effectiveness of the marketing function</p> <p>USP highlights what makes a product different from competitors and can influence customers choice.</p> | <p>Collaborate effectively with others to solve an identified problem or respond to a brief within an enterprise activity or event planning context.</p> <p>Calculate simple costing of a project, event or product to determine pricing strategy and likely profitability.</p> <p>Evaluate the outcomes of the enterprise activity and the effectiveness of decisions made.</p> <p>Investigate barriers to becoming an entrepreneur and identify sources of support for certain groups</p> <p>Prepare a business plan or pitch for an enterprise idea or investment opportunity</p> <p>Anticipate questions from investors and interested parties</p> <p>Identify goods and services targeted towards different customer segments</p> <p>Develop and/or evaluate a marketing strategy used by an organisation towards their target market</p> |

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Provocations:

What opportunities do we have to explore the sample materials and provide feedback?

What opportunities do we need to create next session to begin to consider what this means for our approaches to curriculum making?

Link to all 8 samples.

Professional dialogue / practical activities:

These will be available in September.

3.5 Making Interdisciplinary Connections across learning

Interdisciplinary Learning (IDL) is the context in which children and young people experience and explore the ‘in-between’ spaces of curriculum and engage with problems or questions where the relevant knowledge, skills and understanding sit across more than one curriculum area. It supports children and young people to deepen their understanding of themselves, their learning and their world.

By intentionally integrating disciplinary KDU from different curriculum areas and subjects, children and young people can explore different perspectives through a range of lenses, interrogate and challenge their thinking, and synthesise this learning for greater transferable understanding.

In a world where complex environmental, social, technological, economic and political issues are increasingly emerging, there is an urgency for children and young people to be equipped with the knowledge, skills and understanding to negotiate these challenges. IDL provides the context to enable them to do this.

In a 3-18 curriculum, IDL should be guided by developmentally responsive pedagogy. This means it will look different at different stages of the learner's journey. For example, at the early level, educators should cultivate an environment rich in open-ended possibilities, where IDL occurs organically through holistic, child-led play and where the learning is embedded in the experience itself.

As learners progress through the broad general education, IDL evolves to become an intentional bridge between curriculum areas

and subjects, challenging older learners to apply specialised disciplinary knowledge to complex real world problems.

The inclusion of IDL programmes in the senior phase is increasingly enhancing personalisation, choice and learning more directly aligned to interests and the preparation of young people to the world beyond ‘schooling’.

Questions or themes for IDL can be identified in a range of ways including:

- A (big) question identified by an individual or group of children or young people about which they are curious
- Assets, needs or questions in the local community
- Solving a real-world problem
- Global technological, health or environmental issues
- Cross-curricular themes such as Learning for Sustainability and Social Justice, Rights and Equalities
- Opportunities to engage with community partners
- Opportunities to engage with employers, industry sector representatives, and future destinations.

By considering IDL as a significant feature of curriculum design, we intentionally create a context which cultivates the four capacities through authentic, purposeful and meaningful connections.

Much has been learned over the past 15 years, and the co-design group are committed to supporting enhanced IDL through high quality professional learning, support materials and exemplification.

Provocations:

To what extent do we have a shared understanding of IDL and why it is important?

[Fresh approaches to interdisciplinary learning | Resources | Education Scotland](#)

Professional dialogue / practical activities:

Professional learning activities will be available from September 2026. This includes a pilot national programme.

3.6 An inclusive, diverse and anti-racist curriculum

An inclusive curriculum refers to a curriculum that is accessible and flexible to meet the needs of all learners, including those with additional support needs and complex learning needs. An inclusive curriculum also refers to a curriculum with a wide range of diverse perspectives, with an intentional focus on marginalised perspectives.

There are many reasons why children and young people may need support to help them learn. Additional support needs can be both long- and short-term, or can simply refer to the help a child or young person needs in getting through a difficult period. Additional support needs can be due to:

- [disability or health](#)
- [learning environment](#)
- [family circumstances](#)
- [social and emotional factors](#).

During the period preceding the Curriculum Improvement Cycle, several national programmes of work have galvanised educators across Scotland to consider proactively the identities, perspectives and voices represented – and those not represented or under-represented in schools' and settings' curriculum offers. These include:

- The Anti-Racism in Education Programme
- The national approach to LGBT-inclusive education
- The Gender Equality in Education Task Force

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- Additional Support for Learning Action Plan & the Doran Review
- Keeping the Promise
- Gypsy Traveller education

These programmes, along with the Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) programme, gender-neutral play and anti-ableist and rights-based approaches, also aim to strengthen how children and young people recognise and challenge discrimination and prejudice.

This work continues to inform the development of the Big Ideas KDU model to ensure that the understanding, knowledge and skills that these national programmes have identified as being important in a contemporary curriculum are embedded within the tools that teachers and practitioners use to plan learning. This is an important part of strengthening the inclusivity of Scotland's curriculum and supporting learners to understand themselves, others and their place in the world.

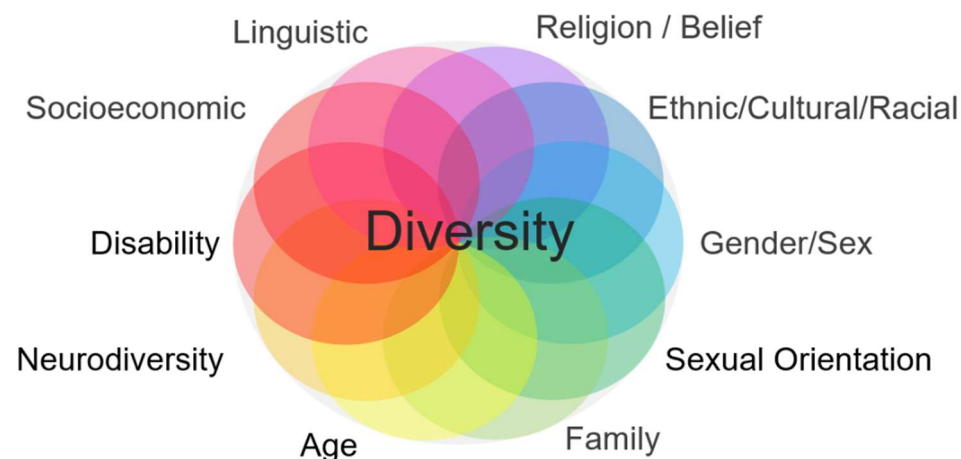
Another important focus is continuing to build capacity in schools and settings to develop curriculum experiences that are inclusive, diverse and anti-racist.

Diversifying the curriculum refers to addressing the absence of diverse narratives, ideas and practices. In LGBT inclusive, anti-racist, gender equal and anti-ableist education, educators across Scotland have been using Rudine Sims Bishop's "Mirrors and Windows" (Bishop, 1990) approach to diversify the curriculum. This approach is often impactful when done with children and young

people, auditing the curriculum and engaging in learning walks. It involves asking:

- Where are the "mirrors" in the curriculum for learners to see themselves and their diverse identities?
- Where are the "windows" into the lives and perspectives that are not their own?
- Are any of those mirrors and windows presenting distorted, stereotypical or harmful representations?

Drawing on protected and non-protected characteristics that can lead to marginalisation, the following types of diversity should be considered: **age; ethnicity, culture and race; disability and neurodiversity; gender and sex; linguistic; sexual orientation; family** (e.g. care-experienced, young carers, nomadic families, LGBT families, lone parents, etc.); **religion and belief; socioeconomic.**



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An anti-racist curriculum recognises that knowledge presented in education is not neutral. This might be considered a part of decolonising the curriculum. This requires educators to explore:

- which knowledge is valued?
- how is it assessed?
- how was it produced?
- by whom?
- at what cost?

By actively addressing colonial legacies, decolonising the curriculum enables anti-racist education and it uncovers multiple, intersectional diverse perspectives. It involves drawing attention to marginalised knowledge (e.g. indigenous oral practices) and to the roots of knowledge (e.g. Arabic and South Asian origins of numbers). It encourages consideration of the social, cultural, environmental implications of historical and ongoing unjust practices behind the creation of knowledge (Gandolfi, 2021).

Being aware, for example, of the human and environmental cost of artificial intelligence today and, in the past, of the discoveries during the Enlightenment period that relied on the exploitation of women, children, disabled, LGBT, colonised and enslaved people.

Using pedagogical approaches such as critical literacies, children and young people can contribute to the examination of traditionally dominant, normative knowledge, amplify historically marginalised knowledge and engage in the co-creation of new knowledge for a socially just and sustainable world.

All schools and settings are encouraged to consider, as they begin enacting the updated curriculum, their current capacity for an inclusive, diverse and anti-racist curriculum, and to consider what appropriate next steps are for them in strengthening this aspect of the curriculum.

Professional dialogue / practical activities:

Exploration of Mirrors & Windows [professional learning](#) and [resource](#)

Exploration of national offers such as [antiracisted.scot](#); [lgbteducation.scot](#) ; [Mentors in violence prevention \(MVP\) | Resources | Education Scotland](#) ; [Toolkit home - STEP](#); [Toy Box Diversity Lab - Funded by the QMU Innovation Fellowship Fund](#); [Talking About Learning Disability – Lessons to promote understanding and acceptance of people with learning disabilities.;](#) [Home | Autism Toolbox](#) [Autism Toolbox](#) [Addressing Dyslexia Toolkit | Dyslexia Scotland - Dyslexia Scotland](#); [Keeping the Promise Award Programme | Resources | Education Scotland](#); [Neurodiversity | Resources | Education Scotland](#); [respectme | Scotland's anti-bullying service](#); [I Am Me Scotland Learning Platform](#)

How do Scotland's [Breaking the Mould](#) the anti-racist curriculum principles inform our approaches?

To what extent have we engaged with the national 2-stage offer on professional learning on LGBT-inclusive education, the ASN Teachers' Programme, the Building Racial Literacy programme, [Making Sense - Dyslexia Review | Addressing Dyslexia](#) [Addressing Dyslexia?](#)

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Consider how partnership working in our learning community or local authority can support us (e.g. Building Racial Literacy alumni, UNCRC champions, MVP coordinators, Equalities representatives, Inclusion ambassadors, National ComplexNeeds network (NCNN) etc.)

What opportunities are there for co-designing an inclusive, diverse and decolonised curriculum with existing children and young people's groups and perspectives? E.g. pupil councils, equalities groups, anti-racist clubs, LGBT groups, Young Leaders of Learning, dyslexia ambassadors, inclusion ambassadors, etc.

Have our teachers and practitioners engaged with the [Digital Discourse Initiative](#) national PL offer?

4. How do we enact curriculum?

Curriculum making – the development of practices, processes and policies – happens across different parts of the education system. **Place based** curriculum making which happens, for example, in early learning and community learning settings and schools involves work such as curriculum design and the development of **pedagogical practices**.

Language Matters (2024)

Once questions of why, and what have been considered, educators can move on to questions of enactment: how do we do it?

This section relates to the enactment of the updated curriculum from August 2028 onwards and live co-design is ongoing.

This section uses the existing 5 parts of ‘The How’ of Scotland’s approach to curriculum-making to support ongoing and periodic activity in schools and settings.

- Understanding our learners and our communities
- Knowing the big ideas
- Being clear on the practical approaches
- Using meaningful learning networks
- Knowing your own learning and support needs.

Under ‘Being clear on the practical approaches’, significant work is currently underway to support educators in pedagogy and assessment. This includes

practical tools to support and inform planning and day-to-day practice.

These will be explored as part of the professional learning offer and feedback loop from September to November 2026.

Education Scotland and Qualifications Scotland are working in partnership to ensure alignment between broad general education and senior phase.

For the remaining parts of curriculum making, initial contributions are shared here and will also be explored during the feedback loop.

Professional learning activities will be created for this section to support activity in schools and settings from session 2027/28 onwards.

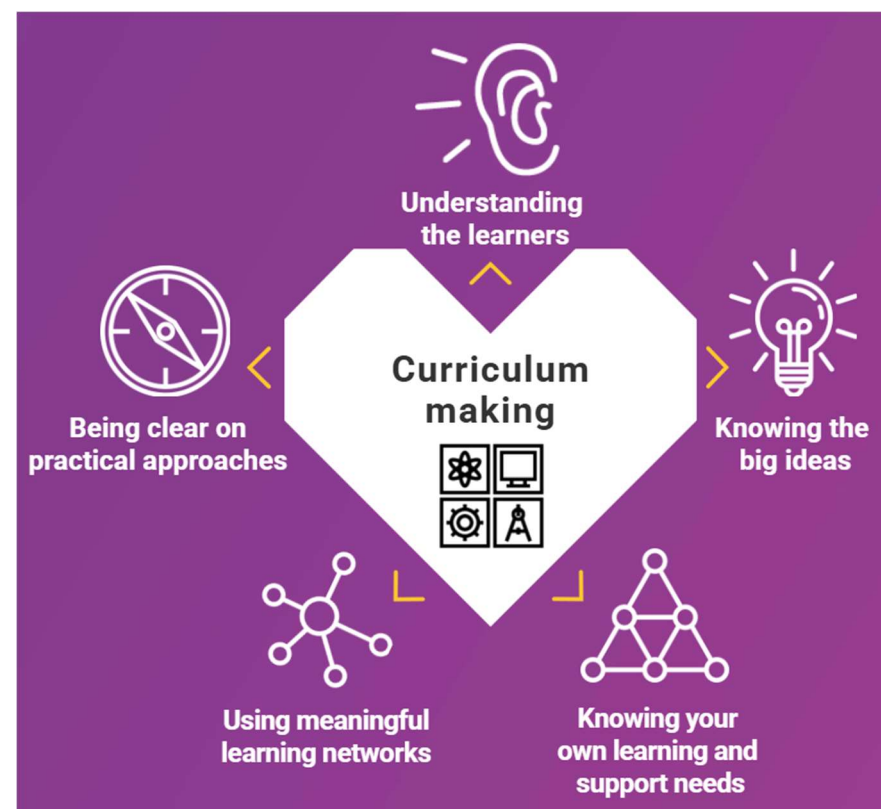
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Curriculum making is far more than a framework or set of documents, it is a ‘multilayered social practice’ taking place across multiple sites (Priestley et al., 2021).

| Site of Activity | Examples of activity | Examples of actors |
|------------------|--|---|
| Supra | Transnational curricular discourse generation, policy borrowing and learning, policy lending | OECD, World Bank, UNESCO, EU, Council of Europe |
| Macro | Development of curriculum policy frameworks; legislation to establish agency and infrastructure | National governments, curriculum agencies |
| Meso | Production of guidance, leadership of and support for curriculum making; production of resources | National governments, curriculum agencies, district authorities... subject-area counsellors |
| Micro | School-level curriculum making; programme design, lesson planning | Principals, senior leaders; middle leaders; teachers |
| Nano | Curriculum-making in classrooms and other learning spaces, pedagogic interactions, curriculum events | Teachers; students |

Adapted from Priestley et al. (2021) p. 13.

Using these definitions, this guidance, and the Big Ideas KDU model, are examples of macro/meso layer documents, co-created with the profession, to provide tools to support teachers and practitioners with curriculum-making at the micro and nano-layers.



4.1 Understanding our learners and our communities

The 3-18 curriculum learning journey is most effective when it is understood as a shared responsibility across a networked learning system, often known as a cluster or associated schools' group, which includes educators, families, communities and partners.

This section prompts educators to start their curriculum work by thinking about:

- How children and young people develop from birth to 18 and beyond
- The contributions of communities and places

As such, it is helpful for all educators to understand the stages coming before and after the developmental level of the children for whom they are designing curriculum experiences.

4.1.1 How children and young people grow and develop

In Scotland, much has been learned through the national commitment to *Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)*, which has firmly established a shared language, values, and practice framework across services supporting children and young people. This approach has strengthened collaboration, emphasised early intervention, and reinforced the importance of placing the child at the centre of decision-making.

However, improving outcomes requires ongoing reflection and renewal. A continued and intentional focus on understanding who our children and young people are, their identities, experiences, rights, and diverse needs, will be critical to sustaining progress and

ensuring we continue to truly “get it right” for every child and young person across Scotland.

Child development is shaped by the interaction between biological factors (including genetics and neurodevelopment), a child or young person’s environment, and the experiences available to them.

Children and young people with additional support needs may show differences in the pace, sequence, and pattern of development, including wider developmental delays.

The following outline of child development draws on two sources:

- The existing text in *Realising the Ambition: Being Me* for babies, toddlers and young children is reproduced here
- Additional text to include middle childhood, adolescence and young adulthood has been created by a sub-group of the Association of Scottish Principal Educational Psychologists (ASPEP).

It is important to note that all children and young people develop at their own pace and while some will be able to exhibit these developmental competencies earlier, other may be later and some will not progress through these stages. There will also be significant variation between individuals as they grow and develop.

Note: when this draft becomes a live, digital resource, the following text will be “chunked” into relevant sections to improve accessibility, and displayed via a menu.

Babies – [Realising the Ambition p19](#)

From birth, babies know how they like to be held, be comforted and who they like to be with. They have already gained a range of skills learned in the womb. These skills help a new-born baby make secure attachments and reciprocal relationships with their caregivers. Babies are making active choices, even at this early age, and are deciding how they prefer their world to be. They want and need to make relationships with the people around them. Babies thrive when they experience relationships which are warm, secure, consistent, loving and responsive.

Learning while being carefully nurtured suggests an emotional response and commitment to the child. Babies are eager and keen to make sense of their world around them. They have an innate power or drive to develop and revise their thinking processes. The more practice a baby gets in recognising similarities and patterns in the world around them, the more competent they will become as brain connections increase quickly as they begin to make sense of their world.

They learn through using their senses, being active and mobile, through inquiry, communicating in a variety of ways, discovering new things and interacting with others. Babies do this by practising their skills over and over again, returning to previous connections in order to make sense of their world

Toddlers – [Realising the Ambition p20](#)

When the baby starts to be mobile their world changes and the desire for independence increases. Toddlers become more involved in doing things for themselves; they have a very strong drive to

repeat actions, move things from one place to another, they cover things up, put things into containers, move in circles and throw things. These actions can be observed frequently through their play. This learning through these repeated actions and engagement can be described as a form of schematic play.

The toddler still enjoys familiar routines and experiences. Having these routines gives them the confidence to explore further and take risks. Toddlers will often become frustrated where they have problems vocalising their feelings and this may lead to some challenging phases.

Caring for children at this stage requires sensitivity and understanding to the child's conflicting needs to balance independence, risk, reassurance and support.

Young Children – [Realising the Ambition p21](#)

As children get older they become more independent and sociable. They need to be active both physically and mentally as they have a growing capacity to think, inquire and communicate. They enjoy conversations and have a rapidly growing vocabulary.

They often show more perseverance in their play and concentrate on experiences which are interesting and personally meaningful. As the young child develops and learns they may continue to engage in schematic play, often integrating and coordinating schemas by exploring more than one at a time. The coordination and connection of schemas lead to higher-order concepts, and refine the child's skills, leading to consolidation of their learning through opportunities to develop and apply them in familiar and new situations. Their

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schematic play may become more sophisticated and educators will observe a wider range of skills being developed that link crucially to early literacy and numeracy. For example, moving on from filling and emptying to using materials to, match and sort, order by size, count one for one and recognise the number of objects in a group without counting them (subitise), exploring volume and capacity and concepts such as full/empty and heavy/light.

A developed interest in rotation and trajectory can lead to mark making as the young child makes circular patterns using their fingers with paint and begins to make horizontal and vertical marks representing their drawings and 'writing'. The defining feature of being a young active learner is the need to widen experiences and learning in all areas of development. The important role for the practitioner is to determine what the young child could learn through their own interests, balanced with learning across the areas of the curriculum. Supporting this in a quality learning environment with high quality interactions will enable the young child to support and extend their learning, deepen thinking and make progress.



Middle Childhood – Broadly between the ages of 6 to 12 years

In middle childhood there is significant growth in children's executive function skills. Executive function during these years involves a set of skills and processes that can help children with everyday tasks including:

- Organising;
- Planning;
- Problem Solving;
- Focusing Attention; and
- Emotional Regulation.

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Generally, at this stage children are more able to focus on tasks and follow multi-step instructions. This typically improves as they progress through middle childhood. Such planning and organisational skills allows children to become more independent in daily functioning. For example, this might involve taking on a class 'job' by keeping track of their belongings, gathering materials for an activity and completing self-care tasks like getting changed for physical education.

Children have more control over their thoughts, feelings, actions and behaviour. Self-regulation, that is a child's ability to manage their own stress, feelings and behaviour, and executive functioning throughout middle childhood, are supported through the co-regulatory support, guidance, teaching and modelling provided by the adults (and peers) around them. When children are stressed, they will be less able to evidence these skills and may require adult or peer support to do so. Their ability to be able to pause and think before acting, and to have more rational reactions to emotional moments or challenge, all develop further during this period.

In middle childhood, children's articulation of speech develops and their sentences become more complex. Their vocabulary continues to expand, and they become more able to organise spoken and written information logically. Children's word use becomes more varied. For example, they can use more specific descriptive words like gigantic, huge, massive, to describe a concept that they may previously have described in more simplistic terms like 'big'. This, in turn, can impact on their spoken and written language, meaning that their stories and narratives become more elaborate and complex.

At this stage, we can also see advancements in the use of social language & communication. This impacts on children's play and interactions with others. For example, children develop more understanding of conversational conventions, like turn-taking and maintaining a conversation. They are able to use language for a variety of different purposes for example., greetings, endings, requests, commands and they are more proficient in adapting their speech style depending on their audience. This developmental growth also allows children to gossip, joke, tease, and engage in 'banter' in the shape of verbal battles and in turn supports shifts in how they play and socialise.

Middle childhood is a time where children are very much developing their social understanding and learning both about themselves in relation to social groups and how these groups work. Children are very much involved with social rules, perspective taking, competing with peers and negotiating social conflicts. Friendship groups and close friendships become more important to children during these years. Acquiring the ability to adapt to 'the rules' in a variety of social contexts is an element of this developmental stage. Social competences during these years include the ability to cooperate, be assertive, show empathy, more independently manage their emotions and take on responsibility successfully.

Moral understanding and reasoning is also developing further, with children increasingly able to understand conflicting views and perspectives.

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Adolescence – Roughly between the ages of 10/12 and 20

The term adolescence is generally used to describe a transition stage between childhood and adulthood. Adolescence can also refer to both teenage years and puberty, as these terms are not mutually exclusive. Adolescence is one of the most dynamic events of human growth and development, second only to infancy in terms of the rate of developmental changes that can occur. Its start and end varies by person. Children's transition to secondary education often coincides with the onset of adolescence and the changes that this brings.

During adolescence, connections in the brain strengthen and allows for increased multitasking, enhanced ability to solve problems, and the capability to process complex information. This also allows for the capacity to more deeply engage with meta-cognition (thinking about thinking or about our own emotional responses). In this way adolescents can become increasingly able to self-evaluate and analyse as they progress through adolescence.

It has been established that, around the age of 12 years, adolescents decrease their reliance on concrete thinking and begin to show increased capacity for abstract thinking, visualisation of potential outcomes, and develop a more complex and logical understanding of cause and effect. There is continued development in areas such as working memory where young people now show increased ability to manage complex and abstract, multi-part tasks and are better able to integrate learning across curricular areas and connect up more complex experiences.

Adolescents' metacognitive skills increasingly progress meaning that they are able to reflect more on their own learning, think about the strategies they have used and consider how they might improve a task. We also see developments in strategic planning and organisational skills meaning that young people can become more proficient in prioritising tasks, planning how to study and evaluating study methods, for example, as they move through adolescence.

Experiences at this age and stage can elicit deep feelings and this sensitive period of brain development provides an opportunity to develop specific skills and lifelong interests.

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By the age of 15, there is little difference in adolescents' and adults' decision-making patterns for hypothetical situations. However, in real-life situations adolescents are much more influenced by their context and tend not to apply this decision-making skill as maturely as adults.

The vocabulary and conversational skills of young people continue to progress throughout adolescence with children having better use and understanding of figurative language such as sarcasm, idioms, metaphors and abstract concepts such as equity and justice. Peer influence and self-identity are often considered prevalent features at this stage of development where language is adapted and modified to fit in with groups or as an expression of self-identity, the use of slang being an example of this.

Adolescence is a stage where young people further develop their sense of who they are, their identity, what they believe, and how and where they fit with others. At this time adolescents are exploring what makes them 'them', including racial, ethnic and sexual identities. Adults have a key role in affirming pride in adolescents' sense of identity, which impacts on wellbeing.

Adolescents also have an increased need to explore and experience novelty. Risk taking is often a feature of early and mid-adolescence. Most risk taking at this age and stage does not occur in isolation; critically, it happens in the presence of peers. Adolescents are likely to respond better to learning that focusses on the immediate social consequences of their actions. They benefit from experiences that allow them to take risks in the right situations and in the right contexts, such as in their learning or to broaden their social circle, or to perform in front of an audience, for example. Adolescents who

tend to engage in risky behaviours in relatively safe environments, develop the confidence and competence to tackle more complex situations.

While adults still have an important role in the lives of adolescents, starting in early adolescence the increasing influence of peers is also a hallmark of this stage of human development, in our society. Fitting in and peer acceptance is important to adolescents. and peers hold more weight than the opinion of important adults. They can also become more sensitive to peer opinions and hyper-sensitive to rejection in the form of social exclusion. Fear of such social exclusion can then drive adolescent decision making – social factors often have a higher weighting in adolescent decision making than in adults. This can be both a risk or a protective factor, depending on the peers and the context. Schools and settings can harness these peer effects when intentionally cultivating connection and pro-social norms and behaviours, as peers can influence others by 'setting the tone.' The need for social connection, can be a risk or a protective factor depending on the context. It can lead to an increase in anti-social behaviour or conversely an increase in pro-social behaviours such as activism and volunteering.

Adolescents tend to care deeply about what others think of them and have a growing awareness of comparison and judgement from others. Adolescents can experience a heightened sense of both self-consciousness and a heightened sense of embarrassment.

Development at this stage also means that adolescents can contribute more meaningfully to their social groups and community. This can provide a sense of purpose. Developmentally appropriate

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opportunities to contribute and develop a sense of purpose are important within educational settings.

The values, expectations, and behaviours that adolescents encounter in their immediate social circles and the broader culture can either support or hinder healthy development. The social norms can dictate what is considered appropriate behaviour, what goals are deemed important, and how adolescents are expected to navigate challenges and opportunities they face. In this way schools and settings can provide a crucial context.

Late Adolescence and the Transition to early adulthood from 18 onwards

The point at which an adolescent becomes an adult will vary from person to person. Adolescents continue to develop their cognitive reasoning, executive functioning skills and self-regulation abilities as they transition to early adulthood. It is not too late to intervene to improve educational outcomes, for those who have had a challenging childhood and/or adolescence.

While there is a tendency to see the greater advancements in language and communication skills at earlier stages in development, language progression in adulthood is often a period where there is further refinement, mastery and more specialised use of language. Adults can become more attuned to and skilled in adapting language and delivery dependent on context, for example using professional language at work and more causal language and tone with peers. Adults that pursue further or higher education or are within specific places of work may also start to use more specialised language

based on subjects they are learning or the context they are working within.

Through experience, opportunities and practice many adults will continue to refine their language and communication skills leading to a more proficient use of language and increased fluency in speech. This is evident in the refinement of advanced communication skills for example, in negotiation, persuasion and public speaking.

During this stage, progression in long term planning, goal setting and organisational skills are often made. These in turn can help young adults navigate their transition into life beyond school education. The capacity to be able to switch between thinking about different concepts or simultaneously thinking about multiple ideas or concepts develops throughout adulthood, along with working memory, helping young adults to more effectively manage new environments, experiences and more complex life challenges.

Executive functioning can become more reliably integrated with self-regulation, meaning that these developments support young adults' ability to both navigate and manage more complex social situations and help sustain relationships, all the while managing their own emotional responses. Young adults generally become less impulsive and less emotional decision makers.

Further development of the capacities related to metacognition can lead to an individual having a better knowledge and understanding of self, and their own capabilities, strengths and limits. This can help them, with guidance, to make more informed decisions about work, life and/or further and higher education. Early adulthood brings an increasing sense of independence where individuals become more

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pro-active and set personal goals based on their own insight and understanding of who they are, who they want to be and what they want to achieve. At this stage, we generally see an increase in the ability to put the knowledge acquired through their education into action to achieve real life goals.

Provocations and professional learning activities:

These will be available in 2027/28.

4.1.2 Place-based curriculum – the contribution of communities and places

Scotland's curriculum offers the flexibility to respond to the needs of each unique setting, such as geographical area, school size and the particular opportunities or needs within a local community.

It is incumbent upon educators to understand what makes their own school and setting unique. This understanding will ensure the curriculum is relevant and inclusive to the diverse needs the children and young people in the community it serves.

Community Learning and Development (CLD) partners play a strong role in curriculum making that is connected to assets, needs, questions and partners in the local community.

When we consider curriculum design and development alongside the context of the lived experience of the children and young people in the communities we serve, we can create meaning and relevance that not only inspires engagement and participation, but also leads to improved outcomes in attendance and achievement.

In accordance with the aspiration outlined above, in section 3.6 above, teachers and practitioners will give consideration to the identities and perspectives represented in the community they are serving, how to be attentive to these in the curriculum, and how to amplify perspectives or identities that are missing.

Place-based curriculum making will build on a secure understanding and knowledge of the assets, resources and needs of the community. It will be typified by joint working, collaborative practices, shared evidence and data.

Professional dialogue / practical activities:

These will be available in session 2027/28.

4.1.3 Considerations for practice

Across the world, learner diversity is the norm rather than the exception.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) states:

- Every child has the right to an education (Article 28)
- Education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full (Article 29)

All of Scotland's children and young people deserve equal opportunity to thrive and to be recognised and celebrated for their own journey of personal growth. Children and young people bring a range of cultural, linguistic and social assets into the place where they learn.

Responsive practice uses educators' knowledge about children's needs, development and community to inform approaches. It recognises that children of the same chronological age may be at very different stages socially, emotionally, cognitively and physically and that meaningful learning occurs when curriculum making responds and adapts creatively to these differences.

Inclusive curriculum design begins with understanding those needs, strengths, circumstances and entitlements rather than retrospectively adapting once barriers emerge.

The four interconnected factors that give rise to Additional support needs are:

1. Health or disability, for example:

- Ill health
- Hidden and Visible Disabilities
- Sensory impairments (e.g. hearing or vision difficulties).
- Autism, ADHD
- Learning difficulties (e.g. dyslexia, dyspraxia, processing difficulties)
- Physical disabilities requiring adaptations or assistive technology.
- Intellectual disabilities e.g. down syndrome, global delay.
- Mental health challenges (e.g., anxiety, depression, eating disorders).

2. Social and emotional factors, for example:

- Children and young people who have experienced trauma or loss.
- Children and young people experiencing bullying.

3. Family circumstances factors, for example:

- Children with English as an additional language (EAL).
- Children affected by family breakdown, domestic abuse, or parental imprisonment.

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- Young carers balancing school with caring responsibilities.
- Looked after and care experienced children and young people.
- Pupils whose learning is disrupted due to frequent school moves (e.g., Armed Forces families, Traveller families, refugees).

4. Learning environment factors, for example:

- A child's or young person's learning environment can create barriers to learning, achievement, and participation. These barriers may arise from the school ethos and relationships, inflexible curricular arrangements, or teaching approaches that do not accommodate different learning needs.
- Highly able learners needing additional challenge.

This list is provided only for guidance purposes and is **not exhaustive**. A need for additional support does not imply a lack of ability, skills, or strengths. Not all potential circumstances giving rise to additional support needs are listed above and not all children captured by these circumstances will necessarily require additional support.

In considering what this means for curriculum making, educators should:

- Consider how the factors identified affect a child's ability to engage meaningfully with education.

- Adopt a personalised approach to identifying and addressing their needs.
- Ensure the support offered is inclusive and flexible.

Provocations:

Who benefits most from our curriculum?

Who might be unintentionally marginalised?

What makes our learning community unique?

Why are we teaching what we are teaching in the way we are teaching it?

How does it reflect local context and population?

How does it reduce barriers to participation?

How is learner diversity recognised?

How is ambition maintained for all?

How is this reflected in our curriculum rationale?

Professional learning activities:

These will be available in session 2027/28.

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4.2 Knowing the big ideas

Each of the 8 Curriculum Areas is informed by an overarching set of Big Ideas. They provide a rationale for the 'why' and 'what' children and young people learn within a curriculum area. They capture the most important overarching understandings and insights that articulate the way that a curriculum area makes sense of the world, the significance of this learning and the contribution it makes to the development of the four capacities.

It is not envisaged that the Big Ideas will be used in day-to-day planning, but on a more long-term basis by educators to support connections across learning, and to consider how those main overarching insights become more and more visible for children and young people as they progress through the 3-18 learner journey.

They will be a source for professional dialogue and professional learning.

A school or setting's chosen approaches to skills will also feature in a similar way. The most important thing is that children and young people develop an understanding of their developing skills and are able to articulate them.

A school/setting, cluster or local authority skills framework may help with shared language and making the skills and attributes of the four capacities explicit. Scottish Government are working towards a national approach to skills, and the CIC will take account of this in preparation for enacting the updated curriculum from August 2028 onwards.

Scotland's Learner Profile, as part of an agreed approach to profiling, can help children and young people from P5 to senior phase develop

and articulate their own understanding of their journey through the curriculum.

All educators have responsibility for developing children and young people's:

- Mental, emotional, social and physical health
- Communication, language and literacy
- Numeracy

Work is being undertaken to explore updated definitions of these responsibilities, embed them fully in the KDU model and ensure that educators are supported in these responsibilities.

By the January 2027 release of support materials, this work will be fully embedded with clearer, decluttered guidance available for practitioners.

In 2024/25 an exploration of cross-curricular learning was conducted by 500 teachers and practitioners. This included the 3 areas above, as well as:

- Creativity
- Careers & pathways
- Democratic values
- Digital skills
- Entrepreneurship
- Learning for sustainability
- Money and finance
- Social justice, rights and equalities

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The exploration identified the learning that was important and how this needs to be both **embedded** in the curriculum and **explicit** for children and young people. There was a recurring desire expressed to move these themes from being 'bolt-on' single experiences to being planned more coherently across the 3-18 learner journey.

Work is currently being undertaken across the CIC to address these issues.

By the January 2027 release of materials, this work will be fully embedded with clearer, decluttered guidance available for practitioners.

A key part for teachers and practitioners to consider is how to draw these out and make these themes explicit for children and young people as they progress through the 3-18 learner journey.

This could include, for example, choosing topics or resources that use some of these themes to provide an engaging context to bring the curriculum to life. These themes also provide a rich opportunity for interdisciplinary learning.

At school or setting level, leaders and teams could consider what these themes look like across the learner journey. These themes might also support design of universal or targeted programmes of learning in line with robust self-evaluation, e.g. "Preparing for the future" programmes in careers and pathways.

Further tools, resources and networks to support this will be explored over sessions 2026/27 and 2027/28.

Scots Language education provides a rich context for learning in a number of curriculum areas, and is particularly well-suited to cross-curricular and interdisciplinary learning. There are 4 key curricular areas for Scots as part of the CIC refresh: Literacy, Languages, Social Subjects and Expressive Arts. Data and evidence collected directly from teachers over the lifetime of CfE shows that Scots can stand alone within a curricular area, or can be planned for in a coordinated way to include multiple curriculum areas as well as explore cross curricular themes such as Creativity and Equality.



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Scots language communication is lived and experienced by many children and young people, linking directly to their learning about and experience of culture, inclusion, equity, diversity and social justice. These are not abstract ideas and should be planned for and given appropriate consideration as part of the ethos, life and culture of schools to properly reflect and represent Scotland's diverse communities to ensure children feel safe, valued, hopeful and able to participate fully as learners.

Provocations:

How might we engage with the Big Ideas as part of ongoing approaches to curriculum design?

How does our approach to skills help our learners develop an understanding of their skills and the ability to communicate them?

How does our approach to profiling support learners to understand and articulate their growth across the four capacities?

Exploring the cross-curricular podcast series, and resources as developed.

Professional learning and practical activities:

These will be available in session 2027/28.

4.3 Being clear on the practical approaches

Pedagogy is curriculum enacted and manifested in and through the **interactions, experiences** and **spaces** and **times** of teaching, learning and **assessment**.

Language Matters 2024

This section, which will cover pedagogy and assessment is currently live in the co-design process. It will include overarching principles and practice guidance, and this will be aligned with the work on qualifications for the senior phase. Practitioners in co-design groups have expressed excitement about the agreed definition of pedagogy above, and how this will enhance practice.

As an initial step in this section, teams could consider the principles of curriculum design, and how these might be enhanced by the updated curriculum and KDU model.

Consultation and engagement over the coming months will ensure that this section is the best it can be, and educators are invited to contribute to this through the feedback loop.

The curriculum design principles

When we consider the interactions, spaces, experiences and times of teaching to enact curriculum, these considerations should be underpinned by our understanding of the **design principles**:



Breadth requires children and young people should have plentiful opportunities to engage with a wide range of contexts and themes, both within their learning environment and in the community. Cross-cutting themes such as *learning for sustainability*, and *social justice* can often enhance breadth of learning, creating links between different areas of learning

Challenge and enjoyment emphasises the relationship between experiencing the appropriate level of challenge and enjoying learning. Enjoyable learning is learning which is active and appropriately challenging.

Depth extends children and young people's capacity for exploring, thinking deeply and applying their learning are vital. It is important that depth is not achieved at the expense of breadth, nor vice versa - both are essential. Well-planned interdisciplinary learning can often

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provide meaningful opportunities for learners to extend and deepen their understanding

Relevance allows children and young people to identify their own values, culture, experiences or future aspirations in their learning

Personalisation and choice helps to ensure that children and young people's interests, motivations and needs are being responded to and met.

Progression highlights the importance of building on prior learning to further develop knowledge and skills; this means effective collaboration are essential to ensure smooth transitions

Coherence ensures a connected journey and avoids unnecessary repetition. Learning builds and connects over time

Alongside this guidance, ES has developed a new national professional learning programme, *Pedagogy in Practice*, to support practitioners to engage more deeply with pedagogy as curriculum enacted. Drawing on practitioner experience, research evidence and emerging priorities within the CIC, the programme creates time and space for educators to reflect on how learning is shaped through interactions, spaces, experiences and time.

A timescale for further work

In preparation for the phased implementation phase of the CIC, work is ongoing at national level to ensure that assessment is coherent and progressive from 3-18 – this will be especially important across transitions. This work learns from and builds on the extensive work on assessment both nationally and within local authorities.

It includes:

- Reviewing approaches to assessment to ensure they reflect the ambition of a Big Ideas KDU Model 3-18
- Developing processes for quality assurance and moderation in the Broad General Education
- Working in partnership with Qualifications Scotland to develop senior phase curriculum and qualifications
- Developing processes for quality assurance and moderation in the new qualifications (led by Qualifications Scotland)
- Exploring implications for national performance measures
- Working with national and local networks that support approaches to assessment.

This work will be developed over sessions 2026/27 and 2027/28.

Provocations:

How do the principles of curriculum design feature in our work?

How might they be enhanced by the move to the updated KDU model?

What do we find most helpful in developing our approaches to pedagogy and assessment, and are we feeding this into the CIC through the feedback loop?

Professional learning and practical activities:

These will be available in 2027/28.

4.4 Using meaningful learning networks

Curriculum and its subsequent learning is most effective when it is understood as a shared responsibility across a networked learning system, including educators, families, communities and wider partners.

In a learning ecosystem, these relationships are intentional and interconnected, enabling more progressive and inclusive pathways for every child and young person. This type of approach recognises that meaningful learning is shaped by context and by collaboration and that this type of engagement strengthens not only the individual outcomes, but wider societal cohesion.

When schools/settings collaborate deeply and intentionally, they create a collective force that accelerates improvement, strengthens professional practice and ensures better outcomes for every child and young person in Scotland. This is not just beneficial – it is essential for building a future-ready education system grounded in equity, empowerment and shared expertise.

Working together and learning from each other, we ensure that every child and young person in Scotland benefits from a connected, innovative and inclusive education system.

The following statements, developed by a national co-design group that explored the conditions for effective curriculum making in 3-18 clusters and communities, outline the principles and benefits of working collaboratively to design curriculum:

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Adapted from Docherty (2025)

1. Professional expertise is shared, not isolated

Collaborative networks create spaces where educators and partners can connect across boundaries - sharing ideas, evidence-informed practice, and innovations that would be difficult to develop alone. By pooling our strengths, we expand the professional knowledge base available to all children and young people.

2. Improvement is collective, not competitive

A networked system replaces isolation with solidarity. Educators benefit from joint problem-solving and shared accountability, as well as the support of each other. Progress becomes a shared mission: when one community improves, we all benefit.

3. Children experience continuity and coherence in their learning

From 3-18, collaboration ensures that children and young people experience a curriculum that builds progressively on strengths, making transitions smoother. This coherence is especially crucial for closing the equity-related attainment gaps, as it reduces disruption and variability in learning experiences.

4. Innovation grows through diversity of thought

Networks bring together educators from different contexts - rural and urban, large and small, ELC and primary, primary and secondary, CLD partners and employers. This diversity sparks innovative thinking and encourages new approaches that are more creative and responsive to all children and young people's needs.

5. Leadership is distributed and empowered

Collaborative networks cultivate leadership at all levels - classroom practitioners, early learning and childcare practitioners, support staff, senior leaders, and partners. By recognising that improvement is everyone's responsibility, Scotland builds a system where leadership is grown, not appointed.

6. Communities benefit from shared responsibility for children and young people's wellbeing

Stronger relationships between settings, families and community organisations create a supportive ecosystem around every child or young person. Collaboration ensures that the right support is provided at the right time, in the right setting.

7. The system is more resilient and adaptive

A connected system learns faster. Collaborative networks help educators respond more quickly to challenges - whether arising from

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curriculum change, societal pressures, or the ever-evolving needs of children and young people

In practical terms, clusters or associated schools groups that form 3-18 learning communities are encouraged to think proactively, alongside local partnerships, about:

- Planned opportunities to spend time together on curriculum design
- What are the “not for sale” interactions, experiences, spaces and times that all children and young people across our cluster will access
- The conditions that will support us to work effectively together across the 3-18 learner journey.

Provocations

Where are the connections to support us to work as a 3-18 community or cluster over the enactment phase of the curriculum improvement cycle?

How does our learning community ensure a coherent learning journey for every child and young person?

<https://youtu.be/mjx7BUZQHWw?si=v6l9vVIAS4mehDIT>

Communities of practice and enquiry - [Enquiry in Education | Self-directed professional learning | Professional Learning | Education Scotland](#)

John Hattie (2018) - [Collective Teacher Efficacy](#) (10 minute video clip)

Dr Vicki Hargraves, The Education Hub, NZ - [Using data for inquiry and improvement](#)

Professional learning and practical activities:

These will be available in 2027/28.

4.5 Knowing our own learning and support needs

Inclusive curriculum is the underpinning principle of Scottish education.

This inclusive approach depends on the reflective practice of educators as they guide and adapt pedagogical approaches to meet the needs of children and young people.

This is reflected in the General Teaching Council’s revised Professional Standards for teacher registration, career-long professional learning and leadership and management. Educators aligned to other professional standards will identify similar links.

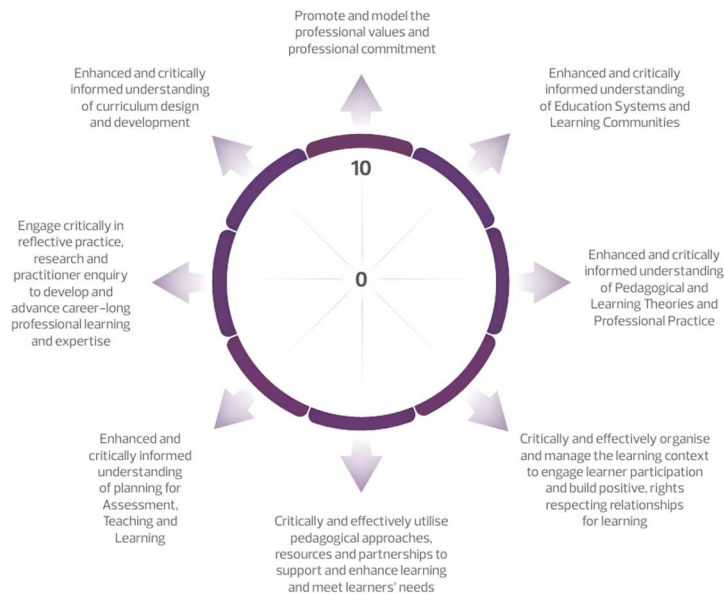
These make it clear that inclusive, reflective approaches to teaching and learning are fundamental for all who works in Scottish settings and schools. Scottish universities also play an important role in preparing teachers to meet these Professional Standards.

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These standards provide a framework that supports the professional growth of educators throughout their career. They emphasise the importance of curriculum-making as a core professional responsibility at every stage of an educator's career, contributing to improvements in outcomes for every child or young person in Scotland.

Leadership in curriculum therefore extends beyond strategic planning and decision-making, although these too are important. Effective evaluation and strong leadership at all levels evolves curriculum in meaningful and ambitious ways.

GTCS Self-Evaluation Wheel: Standard for Career-long Professional Development



3

Provocations:

GTCS Self Evaluation Wheel

[65de09220f29fe2765cef499_GTB421~1.PDF](#)

What are my key strengths as a curriculum maker?

What one aspect of this resource might help my development goals this year?

Who might also be working on this that I could link with?

What other sources of support can I identify that will help me in my role enacting the curriculum improvement cycle?

More directly related to CIC... /

A range of professional learning is available:

[Professional Learning | Education Scotland](#)

³ GTCS Self Evaluation Wheel [65de09220f29fe2765cef499_GTB421~1.PDF](#)

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