

Via Email: 24 June 2026

Dear Director / Chief Education Officer,

### **Curriculum Improvement Cycle (CIC) Update**

As we approach the end of term, I wanted to provide a further update on the CIC and to express my sincere thanks to all your colleagues across schools and settings who have made a huge contribution to the CIC work to date. Their commitment and professionalism, as well as your flexibility has been greatly appreciated.

As previously intimated, I intend to share termly updates to support a shared understanding and maintain an open, informed, and collaborative approach. I hope you find these updates helpful, further details available in the annexes below:

[Annex A](#): Summary of how Scotland's Curriculum is evolving through the CIC

[Annex B](#): Planned publications for the year ahead

[Annex C](#): Resources and further support.

### **Professional Learning and Leadership (PLL)**

Please find an initial draft of the professional learning planned by Education Scotland for session 2026/27. This draft [brochure](#) provides a high-level overview of the proposed offer. The content and approach are still being refined, with a final version, alongside further detail and resources to support local authorities, to be shared with you and your Career-Long Professional Learning (CLPL) leads ahead of the new term. We welcome any initial feedback, which will help inform the final version.

Please share comments with the PLL team at: [edspll@educationscotland.gov.scot](mailto:edspll@educationscotland.gov.scot).

### **Corporate Plan**

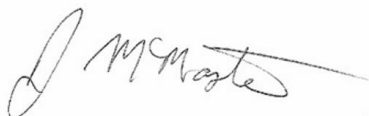
We are in the final stages of sign-off for our Corporate Plan, which will set Education Scotland's strategic direction for the next five years. We expect to share this with you ahead of the new term.

### **Local Authority Links**

Our Strategic Director, David Gregory, will be in touch in the near future to share the names and remits of the local authority links for the CIC, along with those supporting our ongoing equity work.

Thank you all for your continued support. I look forward to working together in the new term and wish you a restful and well-deserved summer break.

Yours Sincerely



Donna McMaster  
Chief Executive Education Scotland

## Annex A - Building on Strong Foundations: What Remains and What Changes

One of the aims of the CIC is to evolve rather than replace Curriculum for Excellence (CfE), while addressing identified areas of improvement in the current technical framework<sup>1</sup> that affect clarity, coherence and progression across the 3-18 curriculum. As a result, many of the building blocks of the curriculum remain in place.

A high-level summary of what is changing, and what is staying the same, is set out below:

What remains	What changes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The four capacities remain as the purposes of the curriculum</li> <li>• Educators will still plan over the four contexts for learning</li> <li>• The entitlement to a broad general education from early years until the end of S3 remains</li> <li>• The entitlement to a senior phase (S4 – S6), which includes qualifications, for young people aged 15 -18 remains</li> <li>• The principles of curriculum design remain unchanged</li> <li>• All 8 Curriculum Areas remain</li> <li>• The ASN Milestones remain</li> <li>• 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 4<sup>th</sup> Level and SCQF Level 4.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From August 2028, the Experiences and Outcomes and Benchmarks will start to be withdrawn. They will be replaced by a Know–Do–Understand (KDU) model, aligned to the curriculum levels, to help guide learning and inform planning for learning, teaching and assessment.</li> <li>• The KDU Model 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 3-18.</li> <li>• The CIC also creates an opportunity for schools and settings to rethink the purpose and design of their curriculum, including their curriculum rationale, in a way that reflects their own local context.</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> 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. Taken from [Language Matters](#)

## Annex B – Key Publication Schedule: June 2026 – June 2027

### **June 2026**

The following [draft outputs are now available on the CIC web page](#). These outputs will, in time, form part of the refreshed technical framework for the evolved curriculum. The materials include:

1. [An early draft of a new curriculum design resource titled \*Building Scotland's Curriculum: a draft resource for discussion and further co-design for initial feedback\*](#). The final version of this document will replace the current *Building the Curriculum* series from August 2028.
2. **Draft samples from each curriculum area within the new Know–Do–Understand (KDU) model**. Each sample includes an illustrative Big Idea and a KDU progression strand from CfE Early to Fourth Level, co-created with teachers, practitioners and partners. The samples build on the [early thinking for mathematics shared in November 2025](#). The KDU model will replace the Experiences and Outcomes (Es&Os) and Benchmarks from August 2028.
3. **The [second in a series of 'CIC Explainers'](#) for teachers and practitioners**, which provides further detail and a simple explanation of the purpose and content of the two aforementioned resources (new guidance and the KDU Model). Please remember that [our first Explainer](#), published in November 2025, described the CIC and why we are evolving Scotland's Curriculum.

The above materials are deliberately being published in **draft**. Their purpose is to give practitioners and stakeholders a clear sense of how the evolved guidance and KDU model differ from the current Es&Os and Benchmarks, rather than to present a complete or finalised framework at this stage. Publishing these materials in draft form also helps us to be transparent about where we are in the process at this moment in time.

### **September 2026**

By the **end of September 2026**, we will publish the full draft KDU Model for each of the eight Curriculum Areas. These drafts will set out the proposed progression from CfE Early to Fourth level within each Curriculum Area. Further refinement to ensure coherence and consistency across levels will still be ongoing at this stage. **There will be an opportunity to feedback on the draft materials between September and November 2026** and we would welcome any support in raising awareness of the draft materials and the feedback process.

The **draft KDU samples should not be used in curriculum planning**. The **suggested activity** from August to December 2026 is to focus on the provocations and activities in [Sections 1 and 2 of the draft guidance](#). This will support the development of a shared understanding of the CIC and the overall purpose of the curriculum.

### **January 2027**

By the end of **January 2027**, we will publish the final refreshed curriculum design guidance together with the KDU Model for each of the eight Curriculum Areas from Early through to Fourth Level. In addition, we will develop a digital tool for practitioners to access and explore the updated guidance and KDU model. We expect this digital tool to be available in **Spring 2027**.

Once these final materials become available from January 2027, schools and settings will be able to consider and explore what the evolved curriculum means across all four contexts for learning. This is outlined in [Section 3 of the draft guidance](#).

### **Assessment and Qualifications Alignment**

Education Scotland and Qualifications Scotland will continue to work closely together to ensure continuation of the KDU Model and alignment between the Broad General Education (BGE) and the Senior Phase. In parallel, work will begin on the framework of assessment for the evolved BGE, which is expected to be completed in **summer 2027**.

### **Suggested Focus for 2027/2028**

The suggested focus for session 2027/2028 will be Section 4 of the draft guidance that is currently under development and considers the 'how' of curriculum making.

Further support to help schools and setting prepare will be available from January 2027.

## Annex C – Resources and Further Support

The following information may be helpful in supporting Local authority teams, schools and settings to prepare for change.

Suggested Activities	Resources Available	Available from
<p><b>Optional Awareness Raising</b></p> <p><b>Optional:</b> May 2026 / June 2026</p>	<p><a href="#">Scotland's Curriculum Improvement Cycle: an explainer for teachers and practitioners</a> (<i>leaflet</i>)</p> <p><a href="#">Early Sensemaking Resources</a></p> <p>These optional materials are designed for education leaders to support understanding of the CIC. There is also a <a href="#">version for CLD</a>.</p>	<p>January 2026</p>
<p><b>Ensuring all teachers and practitioners are informed</b></p> <p><b>Most useful:</b> August - September 2026</p>	<p><a href="#">August 2026 – short 30min presentation with video and speaking note to support the sharing of key messages with all teachers and practitioners at the start of next session.</a></p> <p><b>Please also share:</b></p> <p><a href="#">CIC Explainer 1: What is the Curriculum Improvement Cycle and why is the curriculum changing?</a></p> <p><a href="#">CIC Explainer 2: Scotland's Curriculum Improvement Cycle: a second explainer for teachers and practitioners</a></p>	<p>June 2026</p>
<p><b>Understanding the KDU model</b></p>	<p><a href="#">Draft samples from each Curriculum Area within the Know-Do-Understand (KDU) Model.</a></p>	<p>June 2026</p>

	<p>These samples aim to give educators a clear sense of how the evolved guidance and KDU model differ from the current Es&amp;Os and Benchmarks.</p> <p><b>Their purpose is to give practitioners and stakeholders a clear sense of how the evolved guidance and KDU model differ from the current Es&amp;Os and Benchmarks, rather than to present a complete or finalised framework at this stage. Publishing these materials in draft form also helps us to be transparent about where we are in the process at this moment in time.</b></p>	
<p><b>Exploring the draft CIC Materials</b></p> <p><b>Most useful:</b> October and November 2026</p>	<p>Updated draft of new a curriculum resource - titled <i>Building Scotland's Curriculum: a resource for discussion and further co-design</i></p> <p>Draft KDU Model (all curriculum areas)</p> <p>Reflective questions and facilitation guide available to support feedback mechanism</p>	<p>September 2026</p> <p>September 2026</p>
<p><b>Familiarisation with new materials</b></p> <p><b>Most useful:</b> March – June 2027</p>	<p><b>Final curriculum design guidance</b></p> <p><b>Final KDU Model</b></p> <p><b>Reflective questions and facilitation guide available to support settings prepare for change</b></p>	<p>January 2027</p>

### **Further practical support and engagement opportunities**

- **Engagement for local authority officers:** we are in the process of finalising dates and a venue, in partnership with ADES Curriculum, Assessment and Qualifications (CAQ) to hold a 2-day engagement for local authority officers in August 2026.
- Similar to last year, this will include 1 day of exploring a shared understanding of the key changes, and 1 day of joined-up planning to support schools and settings. Our aim is to work collectively to reduce duplication across LAs.
- **Professional learning for head teachers and school / setting leaders:** we will work with LAs to ensure all head teachers have the opportunity to participate in 1 full in-person day of shared sense-making and CIC planning in September. The focus at this first event will be to ensure that senior leaders feel confident leading suggested CIC activity at an additional in-service day in the autumn. This will be the first of several face-to-face and online engagements we will facilitate between now and August 2028 to ensure that school and setting leaders have opportunities each term to work together and feel supported in leading curriculum change.
- **Additional in-service days to support the CIC:** To support professional learning about the CIC and to allow for meaningful engagement with the draft materials, the Cabinet Secretary for Education, Culture and Gaelic has indicated her willingness to support two additional in-service days during session 2026/27.
- **Education Scotland professional learning:** Education Scotland is offering a comprehensive programme of Professional Learning and Leadership (PLL) opportunities throughout 2026/2027. All activities have a strengthened curriculum focus, with further details available in the ES PLL Brochure.