

# Education, Children and Families Committee

10am, Tuesday, 20 September 2022

## Response to the National Improvement Framework consultation on measures

Executive/routine  
Wards  
Council Commitments

### 1. Recommendations

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- 1.1 The Education, Children and Families Committee is asked to:
  - 1.1.1 Note the response to the consultation.
  - 1.1.2 Agree to receive regular updates on progress in relation to the updated measures once these have been published.

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## Response to the National Improvement Framework consultation on measures

### 2. Executive Summary

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- 2.1 This report sets out the response from officers to the consultation regarding educational measures used to monitor progress as part of the Scottish Government's National Improvement Framework (NIF). In general the response is supportive of the aims and direction of the framework and most of the suggested changes. We do however make it clear that action is needed to find more accurate ways of measuring the poverty-related attainment gap, due to current limitations with the use of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) within education; similarly, we argue for the measures used within the NIF to be as inclusive as possible, in terms of recognising wider achievement and alternative pathways.

### 3. Background

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- 3.1 In 2021, both the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and Audit Scotland published reports (see section 8 below) which made recommendations relating to data collection and the need to ensure it reflects the ambitions of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE). In light of these recommendations, the Scottish Government invited stakeholders to submit responses to a consultation paper, with two areas of focus:
- 3.1.1 How to ensure that the basket of key measures to assess progress towards closing the poverty related attainment gap reflects the wider ambitions of the curriculum.
  - 3.1.2 The value of the wider data for improvement purposes, both qualitative and quantitative, and the range of data needed by schools, education authorities and at the national level in order to fulfil their different requirements.
- 3.2 The results of this consultation will also inform the plans for a national discussion on the vision for Scottish education, which is being taken forward in response to the recommendation in Professor Ken Muir's report *Putting Learners at the Centre: Towards a Future Vision for Scottish Education*. The national discussion will include

wider consideration of how to measure the effectiveness of the curriculum as a whole, as recommended by the OECD.

- 3.3 The consultation was published on 9 May 2022 with responses required by 18 July 2022. All interested parties were asked for views. Our response was collated by Quality Improvement Officers with expertise in the use of educational data.

## 4. Main report

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- 4.1 The proposals for the key measures of progress towards closing the poverty related attainment gap are based on a number of key principles and we were invited to indicate if other principles should be included. We were supportive of the principles but pointed out the current difficulties with the use of SIMD to measure the attainment gap. There is evidence that this measure wrongly categorises significant numbers of young people, in terms of their experienced levels of poverty.
- 4.2 In relation to the question, should the two sub-measures covering attendance and exclusion at secondary schools be promoted to key measures? we responded affirmatively to the former but not to the latter. This was due to the levels of complexity involved in the datasets.
- 4.3 We expressed reservations when asked if data concerning confidence, resilience, and engagement from the new Health and Wellbeing census should be included in the basket of measures. We feel the census is too new for this data to be considered robust enough and recognise that good practice in the use of such data is still developing.
- 4.4 We expressed concern at too narrow a choice of measures when considering the attainment of young people at the point of leaving school. We suggested that specific measures for literacy and numeracy should be included; and that all measures should be as inclusive as possible in order to capture attainment outwith more traditional measures and promote parity of esteem in terms of educational pathways.
- 4.5 We agreed that the percentage of school leavers moving into “positive destinations” should be promoted to a main measure, given its importance.
- 4.6 Finally we were asked to make wider comments regarding the use of data for improvement. Our submission included the value of collaboration between local authorities, and the need to ensure that staff are able to use data effectively to make an impact on the poverty-related attainment gap.

## 5. Next Steps

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- 5.1 Once the results of the consultation are published and the NIF framework measures updated, we will ensure that reports on attainment include the agreed measures to allow regular reporting on progress with the aims of the framework.

## **6. Financial impact**

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- 6.1 There are no financial implications envisaged at this stage.

## **7. Stakeholder/Community Impact**

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- 7.1 The Scottish Government invites views from all stakeholders. Head Teachers respond appropriately through their professional associations or other forums.

## **8. Background reading/external references**

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- 8.1 [Education - National Improvement Framework - enhanced data collection: consultation - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)
- 8.2 [Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence: Into the Future | en | OECD](http://www.oecd.org)
- 8.3 [Improving outcomes for young people through school education | Audit Scotland \(audit-scotland.gov.uk\)](http://audit-scotland.gov.uk)

## **9. Appendices**

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- 9.1 Appendix 1 NIF Measures Response – Edinburgh Council



**A consultation on enhanced data collection for improvement, and the key measures to assess progress towards closing the poverty related attainment gap**

**RESPONDENT INFORMATION FORM**

**Please Note** this form **must** be completed and returned with your response.

To find out how we handle your personal data, please see our privacy policy:  
<https://www.gov.scot/privacy/>

Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?

- Individual
- Organisation

Full name or organisation's name

City of Edinburgh Council  
(Note that this submission is provisional, made subject to eventual approval by our Education, Children & Families Committee, due to meet in September.)

Phone number

Address

Waverley Court, East Market Street, Edinburgh

Postcode

EH8 8BG

Email Address

Quality Improvement Officer

The Scottish Government would like your permission to publish your consultation response. Please indicate your publishing preference:

- Publish response with name
- Publish response only (without name)
- Do not publish response

**Information for organisations:**

The option 'Publish response only (without name)' is available for individual respondents only. If this option is selected, the organisation name will still be published.

If you choose the option 'Do not publish response', your organisation name may still be listed as having responded to the consultation in, for example, the analysis report.

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We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

Yes

No

**Questions – key measures**

<p>Q1</p>	<p>Our proposals for the key measures of progress towards closing the poverty related attainment gap are based on a number of key principles. Are there any other principles that should be included?</p>
<p>More information</p>	<p>As mentioned above, our proposals for the key measures of progress towards closing the poverty related attainment gap are based on a number of key principles shown below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• we are looking at the difference in attainment between those children and young people from SIMD quintiles 1 and 5. However, we recognise the importance of increasing attainment for all children and are therefore proposing to recalibrate the national stretch aims for all five SIMD quintiles</li> <li>• focusing on a single measure is neither helpful or meaningful and would provide a false and limited picture</li> <li>• measures and milestones should be relatively simple to measure and report against</li> <li>• there needs to be a clear line of sight from the agreed measures and milestones to the key priorities set out in the National Improvement Framework, including the need to place the human rights and needs of every child and young person at the centre of education</li> <li>• there also needs to be a clear line of sight from the key measures in the NIF, to the strategies and approaches adopted in schools, and local authorities, to improve outcomes for children and young people</li> <li>• the focus should be across the age ranges – from 3-18</li> <li>• they should be a credible set of measures – understood to fairly reflect progress in closing the poverty related attainment gap</li> <li>• the need to avoid perverse incentives through whatever milestones or stretch aims are set.</li> </ul> <p>The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation is a relative measure of deprivation across 6,976 small areas (called data zones). If an area is identified as ‘deprived’, this can relate to people having a low income but it can also mean fewer resources or opportunities. SIMD looks at the extent to which an area is deprived across seven domains: income, employment, education, health, access to services, crime and housing.</p> <p>Stretch aims for improvement purposes are specifically focussed on the improvement which a system needs to make in order to reach a particular goal (i.e. closing the attainment gap) – they do not generally articulate the goal itself, although achieving the aims would also mean significant steps towards achieving the goal.</p>

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	<p>You can find the existing key measures and sub-measures on page three of the consultation paper. The principles can also be found on page seven of the consultation paper.</p>
<p>Answer</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>City of Edinburgh Council is fully committed to the aims and ambitions of the National Improvement Framework, and ensuring that all of our children and young people have the opportunity to flourish and attain to their fullest, irrespective of their background.</p> <p>We do however contend that the very first principle needs to be challenged, due to the current uncritical use of SMID as a proxy for levels of deprivation experienced by children and young people. We must ensure that the metrics we commit to using, <i>accurately measure what they are meant to be measuring</i> (in particular, with regard to poverty). We have a situation now where PEF funds are allocated based on FME, and yet progress in closing the poverty-related attainment gap is measured via SIMD quintiles. There is a clear mismatch here. Furthermore, available research suggests that around one-third of those children living in poverty, live outwith SIMD quintile 1; and that a quarter of children living in SIMD quintile 1 are not affected by poverty (see for example the surveys <i>Growing Up in Scotland 2011</i> and <i>Scottish Household Survey 2015</i>). It is no longer enough to use SIMD as a proxy for living in poverty when evidence shows it is so problematic: we need something better if we are to truly address the issue.</p> <p>The time is right now to commit to better ways of measuring poverty within education settings, and this should include a review of the use of SIMD in this area. SIMD was not designed to be used for educational attainment, at least not in its current form. This review should also include the use of FME as a proxy for PEF funding, given that this is now affected by free school meals being provided for stages in primary. (We are in the situation where schools are encouraging parents/carers to register their entitlement to free school meals, when in fact the parents/carers don't need to do so as their child already receives free school meals due to their age.)</p> <p>We fully appreciate that accurately measuring poverty within education settings is problematic but if we genuinely want to address the poverty-related attainment gap, we need to find a more accurate way to measure it and avoid any perverse incentives along the way.</p>



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	To be clear, we are calling for this review to include the approach taken by the <i>Insight</i> analysis tool as well, in terms of analysing attainment against deprivation.
Q2	Should the two sub-measures covering attendance and exclusion at secondary schools be promoted to key measures?
More information	<p>There are currently four sub-measures covering attendance and exclusion in both primary and secondary schools, and there is a clear pattern of higher exclusion rates and lower attendance for children living in the most deprived areas. This is particularly the case at secondary school and prompts the question about whether to promote the two secondary school sub-measures. If children are not at school, then it is far more difficult to take the steps necessary to close the attainment gap.</p> <p>The full list of key measures and sub-measures are on page three of the consultation paper.</p>
Answer	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes (Attendance)</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No (Exclusion)</p> <p>Please add your response below:</p> <p>We support the promotion of the attendance measure, subject to some stress-testing to ensure that the data is robust and can be analysed at depth. The use of the exclusion measure is more problematic, given the sensitivity surrounding the data and the possible impact of perverse incentives becoming attached to such a complex matter. We would suggest that this needs further exploration.</p>
Q3	Should data on confidence, resilience, and engagement from the new Health and Wellbeing census be included in the basket of measures?
More information	<p>In terms of health and wellbeing, three of the existing key measures already cover the social, emotional, and behavioural development of children and young people, and four of the fifteen sub-measures cover mental wellbeing. However, there will be data collected from the Health and Wellbeing Census which will be included as part of the indicator of educational attainment in the National Performance Framework.</p> <p>These are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confidence of children and young people</li> <li>• Resilience of children and young people</li> <li>• Engagement in extra-curricular activities</li> </ul> <p>The full list of key measures and sub-measures are on page three of the consultation paper.</p>

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Answer	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No  <p>Please add your response below:</p> <p>We would suggest no, at the moment. The survey is in its infancy and we would suggest waiting a few years to see how much value can be placed on any emerging trends, or whether there turns out to be any trouble with the data (and data collection and interpretation).</p> <p>We also have questions over the morality of setting a target for such a complex area, in particular if this were to come down to school level.</p>
Q4	<p>At the moment, the measure of achievement in the senior phase is the National Qualifications achieved by young people at the point which they leave school (SCQF levels 4, 5, and 6 – 1 or more on leaving school). Do we need to add other measures to cover wider achievement and attainment?</p>
Answer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Q5	<p>If you answered yes to Q4, some options for consideration are set out in the “more information” box below. However, we would also welcome any other suggestions for additional measures.</p>
More information	<p><u>Option 1</u></p> <p>In response to feedback from users, and to improve the evidence base on the attainment of broader achievements and skills as part of the Curriculum for Excellence, a new ‘all SQA qualifications’ measure has been developed which includes National Qualifications (National Courses, Skills for Work) and other SQA qualifications (Customised Awards, Higher National, National – Workplace, National Certificates, National Progression Awards, Professional Development Awards, Scottish Vocational Qualifications, Ungraded National Courses). Details can be found in section 6.3 of the School Leaver Attainment and Initial Destinations publication. The ‘all SQA qualification’ measure details the proportion of school leavers who attained a number of passes (e.g. one pass or more, two passes or more etc.) at a given SCQF level or better across all of the qualifications outlined above. One or more combination(s) of passes and SCQF levels could potentially be used.</p> <p>These statistics are currently labelled as Experimental Statistics, reflecting that they are undergoing development and subject to revision based on informed feedback from users.</p> <p><u>Option 2</u></p>

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	<p>A measure of attainment in vocational qualifications. Section 6.1 of the School Leaver Attainment and Initial Destinations publication contains a measure covering only ‘vocational’ qualifications. Unlike the existing NIF key measures on school leaver attainment and the ‘all SQA qualifications’ measure outlined above, this measure does not include attainment in National Qualifications but focuses on vocational qualifications. Specifically, the measure includes National Certificates, Higher National Qualifications, Scottish Vocational Qualifications, National Progression Awards and Skills for Work. It shows the proportion of school leavers with one pass or more at a given SCQF level. The proportion of school leavers with one pass or more at SCQF level 5 or better is used as a Key Performance Indicator for Developing Scotland’s Young Workforce.</p>
<p>Answer</p>	<p>Please provide your views on the options presented above, and any other suggestions or comments below:</p> <p>The decision taken in the NIF – to exclude NQ awards at D grade, and to exclude qualifications beyond the “traditional” NQs – is deeply problematic and entirely at odds with the prevailing narrative of increasing awareness of alternative pathways and approaches to widen (and recognise) achievement opportunities. It also means that schools – and local authorities – do not recognise the achievement data which is published by the NIF, as accurately capturing the achievement of our children and young people.</p> <p>We therefore support the adoption of option 1, which would therefore bring the approach taken by the NIF into line with that recognised by HMIE/Education Scotland, and local authorities, and support a parity of esteem in terms of recognising (and promoting) wider achievement and pathways generally.</p> <p>The decision to focus on SCQF levels 5 and 6 (1 or more on leaving school) for Stretch Aims is problematic and arguably open to those who may seek to “game” the system (as was the case with the previous National Priorities’ narrow focus on “five at three, five at five” etc. A more sophisticated approach based on (for example) complementary tariff scores would be far more preferable and would more accurately capture overall attainment.</p> <p>We also question the exclusion of literacy and numeracy data for school leavers. Given this is the major focus in primary NIF measures, it seems puzzling not to take the opportunity to join the dots, longitudinally, by looking at the literacy and numeracy levels at point of exit from secondary education.</p>
<p>Q6</p>	<p>In terms of measuring progress beyond school, should the percentage of school leavers going to a “positive destination” on leaving school be included alongside the participation measure?</p>

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More information	<p>Positive destinations for young people leaving school include Higher Education, Further Education, Employment, Training, Voluntary Work and Personal Skills Development (whilst other destinations include unemployed and seeking work, unemployed and not seeking work and unknown). These provide valuable information on the activities being undertaken by school leavers. However, they are based on a snapshot of the activity being undertaken by school leavers on a given day and are not the best indicator of long term sustained success for young people accessing future work or study.</p> <p>That is why the indicator we have used previously is the Skills Development Scotland Annual Participation Measure, which reports on the wider activity of the 16-19 cohort, including those still at school. This is an indicator of school success in preparing young people for access to future work or study.</p>
Answer	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>Please add your response below: Yes, this is an important metric at school and LA Level.</p>

## Questions – wider data

Q7	<p>What more do we need to do in order to ensure that a wider range of measures are in use across the education system, and that they are valued as equally as traditional attainment measures?</p>
More information	<p>We need to consider the value of the wider data (beyond the key measures which have a specific role in measuring the attainment gap) both qualitative and quantitative data (both of which are included in the National Improvement Framework) and the range of evidence needed by schools, education authorities and at the national level in order to fulfil their different requirements.</p>
Answer	<p>Please add your response below:</p> <p>Firstly, ensure that the measures themselves do not exclude valid attainment – see response to questions 4 and 5 above.</p> <p>Secondly, we need to promote more inclusive language for our qualifications – for example, we should routinely refer to SCQF Level 6 qualifications and only ever refer to “Highers” if they are genuinely the only qualifications under discussion at that point. Many schools are already moving to adopt this terminology.</p> <p>Finally, we need a consistency of approach in terms of measures being used across the system. As an example, consistency between measures used in NIF and in the Local Government</p>

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	Benchmarking Framework, would help to declutter the data landscape.
Q8	Are the existing wider data collections, and the new data developments enough to ensure that the National Improvement Framework reflects the ambitions of Curriculum for Excellence, national policy priorities such as health and wellbeing and confidence, and key priorities for COVID-19 recovery and improvement, as recommended by Audit Scotland?
More information	You can find more detail on the existing wider data collections at Annex A (pages eleven - thirteen) of the consultation paper.
Answer	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p>Please add your response below:</p> <p>See answer to question 1 above. We are not accurately measuring attainment in relation to poverty and the non-critical adoption of SIMD needs to be reviewed and replaced with something more robust and meaningful.</p> <p>We would also argue for the adoption of the OECD's recommendation in relation to developing an increased understanding of levels of attainment – for example, by reintroducing the Scottish Survey of Literacy and Numeracy (or something similar). Whilst the introduction of “standardised” assessments via the SNSA programme may have brought some benefits at individual school or local authority level (though this is by no means a settled view), the cessation of sampled data via programmes such as the SSLN has left us with a paucity of meaningful data at national level, in relation to the BGE. This urgently needs to be addressed.</p>
Q9	How can we make better use of data to focus and drive improvement activity at school, local, regional and national level?
More information	Improvement activity is any activity that is undertaken to deliver the priorities set out in the National Improvement Framework.
Answer	<p>Please add your response below:</p> <p>The work of the small team of <i>Insight</i> advisors is much valued and should continue to be developed. <i>Insight</i> itself needs to be reviewed and, crucially, needs to be extended (perhaps via the BGE Improvement Tool) to cover BGE attainment as well as Senior Phase. Secondary leadership teams are used to being able to call on a rich source of data and analysis via <i>Insight</i> whereas primary colleagues have to rely on more local solutions. Similarly, creating a small team of advisors to support primary settings with data interpretation, would be of great value.</p>

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	<p>More generally, greater awareness of data needs to be promoted throughout the system – both in terms of awareness of statistics generally and the ability to critique and interpret data. The newly developed National Progression Awards in Data Science (e.g. at SCQF Level 4 or 5) may be a useful resource and its content (or equivalent) should arguably be delivered to some degree in initial teacher education. Crucially, we need to ensure that practitioners are able to use data to take action (and track progress): we need to avoid getting into a cycle of generating ever more data sets without seeing any impact.</p> <p>We would welcome greater collaboration between Local Authorities (outside of the current Regional Improvement Collaboratives) to share good practice and offer support. Although RICs make sense geographically, there are also benefits from linking with similar LAs in terms of demography. We recognise that work in this area is already under way via ADES.</p>
Q10	How can we make better use of data to help reduce variation in outcomes achieved by young people in different parts of the country?
More information	The current variation in the level of improvement identified by Audit Scotland demonstrates that we need to do more to understand what works to drive improvement across all parts of the education system.
Answer	<p>Please add your response below:</p> <p>The first step is to ensure that the data is accurate – see response to question 1. We simply do not have an accurate picture of what these outcomes are, within education settings.</p>