

National Discussion on Scottish Education: Islands Communities impact assessment screening

May 2023

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Objectives:

The National Discussion is an unprecedented opportunity for children, young people and those who support them to have their voices heard in a debate designed to establish a compelling and consensual vision for Scottish education.

The National Discussion delivers a Vision and Values and a Call to Action with clear priorities for the future of Scottish education that engages learners and meets their wide ranging and diverse needs.

By setting a 20-year vision for Scotland's education system, the National Discussion contributes to the delivery of many of Scotland's National Outcomes, including:

Education: We are well educated, skilled and able to contribute to society

Children and Young People: We grow up loved, safe and respected so that we realise our full potential

Human Rights: We respect, protect and fulfil human rights and live free from discrimination

Communities: We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe

Culture: We are creative and our vibrant and diverse cultures are expressed and enjoyed widely

Economy: We have a globally competitive, entrepreneurial, inclusive and sustainable economy

Environment: We value, enjoy, protect and enhance our environment

Health: We are healthy and active

The National Discussion is one part of the Scottish Government's wider suite of education reform, which includes:

A review of qualifications and assessments to ensure all senior phase learners have an enhanced and equal opportunity to demonstrate the breadth, depth and relevance of their learning.

The creation of three new national education bodies – a qualifications body, a national agency for Scottish education, and an independent inspectorate body – to replace the SQA and Education Scotland.

A purpose and set of principles for post-school education, research and skills

An independent review of the skills landscape in Scotland.

The National Discussion's Vision and Values and Call to Action is intended to influence the work of everyone connected to the education of 3–18-year-olds in Scotland. It will reflect diversity and shape the experience of all learners.

As a result, the National Discussion seeks the participation of all sections of Scottish society and, in particular, it will aim to be learner-centred. This will ensure it can explore the different needs of different learner groups.

The National Discussion's Vision and Values and Call to Action is a high level strategic document intended to inform a broader process of education reform. Education stakeholders will use the findings of the National Discussion to inform their short, medium and long term decisions. In this way, the direct and indirect impacts of the National Discussion cannot yet be defined. It is therefore our intention is to conduct more detailed Impact Assessments on the policies and practices that ensue from the National Discussion's Vision and Values and Call to Action.

How do the intended impacts/outcomes potentially differ in the islands?

An Island Communities Impact Assessment has been undertaken to consider whether the National Discussion on Scottish Education is likely to have any effect on island communities that is significantly different to its effect on other communities (including other island communities).

The findings here are based on desk research, and feedback from key stakeholders in the National Discussion's design phase. These stakeholders include: Association of Directors of Education in Scotland, Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) and Bòrd na Gàidhlig.

We identified two potential issues:

Access: Many island communities are located in remote or rural areas, which could have made it difficult for children and young people to access in-person events.

Curriculum: It is possible that island communities hold different educational priorities and requirements and it is possible they could be disadvantaged by a vision for education unless it is also attuned to their needs.

We suggest the following mitigations:

We will adopt an invitational, grassroots approach to engaging participants to ensure the National Discussion is as inclusive as possible. This will include producing discussion guides to help teachers, parents/carers and youth workers engage children and young people in their local places of learning. It will also include engaging children and young people in places they use, in ways that work for them, including via social media campaigns on TikTok, Instagram and Twitter, and through children and young people's organisations.

We will work with Directors of Education, the National Parent Forum of Scotland and Connect to encourage local discussions around the country.

Our nationally coordinated focus groups and events will be online to ensure they remain accessible to communities irrespective of geography.

It will be necessary to ensure analysis and reporting refers to patterns between rural and urban participants. This will make sure that the vision for Scottish education responds to the commonalities and divergence between the needs of learners by geography. Such an approach was recommended by those consulted in the design of the National Discussion to ensure that things that have a significant impact on a proportion of the population are known and are considered within the vision for education.

We will produce Gaelic versions of the National Discussion's key documentation, including a consultation paper and the resulting outputs of a Vision and Values and a Call to Action. This will respect any Gaelic speaking learner's UNCRC Article 30 right to speak their own language and to follow their family's way of life.

Assessment

We have concluded that with a well-adjusted engagement plan and with a consultation analysis sensitive to rural / urban differences there will not be any unique impacts on island communities and that a full ICIA is not required for the National Discussion on Scottish education.



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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at

The Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

ISBN: 978-1-80525-931-2 (web only)

Published by The Scottish Government, May 2023

Produced for The Scottish Government by APS Group Scotland, 21 Tennant Street, Edinburgh EH6 5NA
PPDAS1302882 (05/23)

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