Scottish Attainment Challenge and partnerships with the Third Sector

This resource sets out how schools can identify shared agendas and create purposeful partnerships with appropriate third sector organisations to improve outcomes for young people. The third sector has experience in delivering projects which address each of the three priorities identified for the Scottish Attainment Challenge but is particularly well placed to support improvements to health and well-being and to improve employability skills and school leaver destinations. One of the primary levers for change is recognised as being partnership work with families and communities and it is here that the third sector can be of particular value.

Background

This resource has been produced for individual schools but will also be of interest to the people who help them make decisions e.g. Attainment Advisors, QIO. It aims to improve understanding about the third sector and the potential it has for helping schools to improve outcomes for young people. It has been co-designed by Education Scotland, COSLA, ADES, the Scottish Government, the Third Sector (with particular thanks due to Youthlink Scotland and the National Third Sector GIRFEC Project) and The Robertson Trust.

The Scottish Attainment Challenge

The First Minister launched the Scottish Attainment Challenge in February 2015 to achieve equity in educational outcomes for young people, ensuring that every child has the same opportunity to succeed. It has a particular focus on closing the poverty-related attainment gap. The Attainment Scotland Fund has been designed to help schools to achieve this aim for learners, by enabling schools to provide additional support and opportunities, particularly those adversely affected by deprivation.

The Scottish Attainment Challenge and the Third Sector

Third Sector is a term used to describe the range of organisations that are neither public nor private sector. It includes voluntary and community groups (both registered charities and other organisations such as informal community groups), social enterprises and co-operatives. These organisations may work in specific geographic locations or across Scotland as a whole and will vary in size and their capacity to engage with schools.

Third sector organisations (TSOs) are well-placed to support delivery in partnership with schools. They bring experience of supporting young people and their families with an ability to forge strong community links. TSOs can be commissioned to deliver work for a fixed period, without the school needing to recruit extra staff for a particular piece of work. TSOs bring innovation and a skilled, competent and motivated workforce.

“Local authorities greatly value the partnerships they have with third sector organisations and recognise the expertise and added value they can provide in seeking to close the educational attainment gap. As a result of partnership working between local authorities and the third sector there are many examples of innovative practice across Scotland that contribute greatly to better outcomes for children and young people”.

Cllr Stephen McCabe, COSLA children and young people spokesperson: Jan 2018
What type of services can the third sector provide?

Third sector organisations can support with the improvement of all three strands of the Scottish Attainment Challenge – literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing – but are particularly well-placed to support with the last of these.

The Scottish Attainment Challenge Interventions for Equity Framework has been designed to support schools to make decisions about how to select interventions and approaches which can help close the attainment gap. One of the primary levers for change is recognised as being partnership work with families and communities and it is here that the third sector can be of particular value.

Where can you find examples?

These websites will you give you inspiration and ideas about the types of services available, and evidence about what works in particular situations:

- **Education Scotland National Improvement Hub**
  The hub contains case studies about interventions that have been used in Scotland, and which have shown encouraging results.

- **Amazing Things (4th edition)** features 26 youth award providers and includes information that helps young people, educators and employers to learn more about youth awards and how they contribute to young people’s learning, life and work skills development.

  This resource provides additional information which might be helpful. [NHS Health Scotland’s paper](#) - Tackling the attainment gap by preventing and responding to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

- **The Coalition of Care and Support Providers in Scotland (CCPS) has produced research** to address the gap in evidence about ‘what works’ in family support services.

Education Scotland and local authority staff, including Attainment Advisors, Area Lead Officers, Quality Improvement Advisors and Community Learning and Development staff, will be able to advise you on interventions that have demonstrated impact in other schools.
How do schools identify their needs, engage with the appropriate Third Sector Organisation, and ensure that the needs identified are being met?

Start by having a conversation with your Attainment Advisor and/or your Quality Improvement Officer. They will be able to provide advice on developing partnerships with third sector organisations and supporting you to speak to the right people about commissioning arrangements and contracts as this advice will vary across the country.

Self-Evaluation and Planning

- The starting point for any planning activity should be the Local Authority Improvement Plan (LOIP), Children’s Service Plan, Community Learning and Development Plan and your own School Improvement Plan along with the National Improvement Framework.

- Further information is also available in the National Operational Guidance for Pupil Equity Funding. Guidance on School Improvement Planning is also available on the National Improvement Hub and pages 24 and 25 of HGIOS4 which looks at Leadership of Change and details pertinent Challenge Questions.

- Ensure that information from a range of sources has been reviewed to help identify the needs of pupils. These could include:
  - data and information your school has access to
  - ask staff to identify needs and barriers they've observed for the pupils they work with who need additional support
  - consult with a broad range of stakeholders including pupils, parents/carers and the third sector and communities to get their views and improve understanding of the circumstances affecting children’s lives and learning.

- Use this information to identify themes and trends, and from this prioritise the top issues that need addressing. Where possible, focus on early intervention; support that can be put in place for a pupil at an early stage, before a situation escalates.

- In discussion with staff, parents, pupils and the wider community agree which issues can be addressed from within school resources and expertise and which are best supported by developing a partnership with a third sector organisation, pages 44 and 45 of HGIOS4, Partnerships may be a useful resource.

- Identify solutions and consider how you know if they are being effective

- Decide the outcomes you want to work towards i.e. what changes do you wish to see as a result of any intervention. Youthlink Scotland has produced useful guidance on youth work outcomes which may be a useful starting point along with guidance in the suite of “How Good is Our.....” resources.
Identify interventions or support you can put in place that could help to meet these outcomes. Look at resources (such as the websites mentioned above) to help you do this. Speak to other schools and your Attainment Advisor to see if they are aware of third sector organisations that can provide the required service. Connect with the range of umbrella bodies listed below who should be able to recommend both local and national third sector partners to meet your needs. HGIOTSO gives a range of examples of questions you can ask a third sector organisation to find out more about them.

Even at this early stage begin to think about how you will know if the interventions / support you put in place have been successful. Pages 20 and 21 of HGIOS4, Self-Evaluation will provide some assistance.

Try to set indicators which will help you to assess whether or not the intervention is meeting your needs. You need to know that these can be measured easily (and where possible, use information that you already gather), so that you’re not over-burdened with gathering data. The third sector organisation will often have outcomes measurement processes already in place. This resource produced by New Philanthropy Capital also has some useful guidance.

**Commission a service**

Commissioning guidance varies across Scotland so speak to your Quality Improvement Officer or Attainment Advisor for assistance as soon as you think you might be interested in working with the Third Sector. There are a range of approaches that can be taken to commission services. It is essential that you check the procurement guidelines for your local area before entering into any partnership.

Consider if other schools in the Local Authority area have similar needs to see if you can jointly commission work from third sector organisations. This can have a number of benefits: sharing work associated with managing the contract; helping you to achieve economies of scale on pricing; and allowing the third sector organisation to better adapt their service to your needs (e.g. a smaller third sector organisation may need to recruit more staff to deliver the service, which might not be feasible if only one school is commissioning work from them). Secondary schools can also speak to associated primaries about joint working. Please note this may result in increasing the value of the contract and therefore formal procurement procedures may be required.

Engage with the Third Sector. You can either speak to local third sector organisations that you’re already aware of or, as mentioned above, you can speak to an umbrella organisation that can put you in touch with relevant third sector organisations. Local CLD workers will also be able to provide support and can be accessed through your Local Authority. Identify some possible partners, meet them and see them delivering existing services. Check that they have similar vision, aims and values as the school and that they are someone you think you can trust and respect.
Check that any third sector organisation you intend to commission has the necessary policies and procedures in place and understands the broader education context including knowledge of key policies such as the National Improvement Framework, Curriculum for Excellence and GIRFEC. A risk assessment will need to be carried out and it must be made clear when school policies e.g. child protection would take precedence over those of the third sector organisation.

Agree at the outset ways of tracking or measuring progress against the outcomes and indicators that have been decided. Again, Attainment Advisors and Quality Improvement Officers will be able to assist. You might be able to use existing frameworks to do this see the page on the National Improvement Hub. Most third sector organisations will also have their own robust measurement systems in place so you probably won’t need to start from scratch. Make sure you review the data at regular intervals, so that you can make changes and improvements if the work isn’t delivering the outcomes and impact that you’d hoped.

Agree a Partnership Agreement or Contract which meets the needs of both parties and ensures accountability and agreed expectations including responsibilities, outputs and outcomes. This needs to be clear about what each partner will bring to the table and is particularly useful if things go wrong or personnel change. It also should specify how and when the service will be reviewed and adapted as necessary.

Pages 28 and 29 of HGIS4 – Management of resources to promote equity may also be a useful resource.

Ensure that good communication takes place across all stakeholders both within the school and across the wider community to inform people about the project and engage them as required in its delivery.

Review the Partnership

Ensure that time is set aside on a regular basis to review progress, talk through any challenges and agree any changes to the programme that may be required to ensure the desired outcomes are met. A strong, honest relationship between the school and third sector delivery partners is essential for the service to develop and best meet the needs of young people and their families.

Resources

The “How Good is Our School?” (HGIS4) document will also be a useful resource and specific sections are referred to in the section above.

Other related publications which have useful sections on partnerships are How Good is Our Third Sector Organisation (HGIOTSO) and How Good is Our Community Learning and Development.

Children in Scotland has produced a useful resource on well-being to help organisations understand how their work contributes to the wellbeing of children and young people.
The Health and Social Care Standards set out what we should expect when using health, social care or social work services in Scotland. They seek to provide better outcomes for everyone and to ensure that individuals are treated with respect and dignity and that the basic human rights we are all entitled to are upheld.

The National Third Sector GIRFEC project has produced a paper which provides a basic overview of joint strategic commissioning. A second paper has been written to assist the third sector to understand how to link with schools and be considered for Pupil Equity Funding.

Youthlink Scotland has produced guidance on youth work outcomes.

**How can schools find out about third sector organisations, both local and national?**

There are a significant number of umbrella groups and intermediary bodies that can provide information on both national and local third sector organisations active in any particular theme and/or area of Scotland. Some contact details are given below but this list is not exhaustive.

Each local authority has a third sector interface (TSI) that supports third sector organisations in the local area. You can find your local TSI here, and contact them to ask for advice on third sector organisations to approach.

Youthlink Scotland is the national agency for youth work in Scotland and represents over 100 youth work organisations from the third sector and local authority youth work services. Their networks include national voluntary youth organisations (including uniformed and non-uniformed youth work) and both regional and local organisations. You can search their members' database for further information.

Youth Scotland is the largest non-uniformed youth organisation in Scotland and delivers quality youth work programmes, information, resources, training and support to community-based youth work. They support a network of over 1,200 local youth groups and will be able to provide local contacts.

The National Third Sector GIRFEC Project has helped to develop or strengthen local third sector children and young people’s forums across the country. The membership of these Forums will give you a good idea of which third sector organisations are active in your area. Your local TSI (as above) should be able to give you contact details. From 1/4/18 the project will be hosted within Children in Scotland, the national network organisation for children’s services.

CCPS is the Coalition of Care and Support Providers in Scotland. They represent and promote the interests of third sector social care and support providers in Scotland including those working with children and their families.

Parenting Across Scotland aims to support families in Scotland in bringing up their children. They do this by providing information and support for parents, carrying out research and influencing policymakers. They also host a range of resources which share and promote good practice in parenting support.

CLD Partnerships support Community Learning and Development approaches at a local level and are usually led by the Local Authority but will have a range of third sector organisations as members including youth work, adult and family learning and community development organisations. Individual plans for each Local Authority area can be found here.
**SCVO** (Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations) is a national membership organisation for third sector organisations and social enterprises in Scotland. Their websites [https://goodhq.org/](https://goodhq.org/) and [https://getinvolved.org.uk/organisations/](https://getinvolved.org.uk/organisations/) are searchable directories of third sector organisations.

**Development Trust Association Scotland** (DTAS) supports the network of community-based Development Trusts across Scotland which are set up by local people to tackle local issues and to improve the quality of life in their community.

**Social Enterprise in Education Programme** is supported by the Scottish Government to work towards the delivery of enterprise activity in every school across Scotland.

---

**How independent funders can support this work, and how they can be contacted**

In addition to the funding available from the Attainment Scotland Fund, third sector organisations may be able to access additional funding and support from independent funders. Many grant-makers in Scotland are interested in funding interventions that improve equity and support young people to reach their potential. Grant-makers will usually only be able to fund third sector organisations and social enterprises, rather than schools directly.

Information about independent funders in Scotland can be accessed through the Scottish Grant-Making Trusts Group - [http://www.scottishgrantmakers.org/](http://www.scottishgrantmakers.org/)