



Education Scotland: Our Recovery Year 2020/21

An update on the implementation of our Corporate Plan
2019-22 as a result of COVID-19

September 2020

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CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S INTRODUCTION

In April 2019, we published Education Scotland's new Corporate Plan. Our Plan set out the actions we intended to take over a three-year period, as part of our expanded role to help achieve equity and excellence for Scotland's learners, with Scotland's educators, and with a focus on an increasingly empowered education system.

Less than one year later, Scotland was dealing with the most serious global pandemic in 100 years. Although COVID-19 is first and foremost a public health emergency, it has had huge implications for our education system.

Since the onset of COVID-19, Education Scotland has, and will continue to have, a substantial national advisory role in relation to education recovery. Our staff have a crucial role in providing professional advice, and monitoring and synthesising local intelligence, which directly inform the decisions that Ministers take.

The impact of COVID-19 on our educators and learners will continue for a considerable period of time. As a result, we have reviewed the priorities and planned activity set out in our Corporate Plan. It is important to note that this interim plan does not replace our Corporate Plan published in April 2019: it simply outlines how we will re-focus our work over the course of this year.

In this document we set out how we will lead and support the system during a 'recovery year' up to June 2021, with a key focus on people and place. As a member of the Education Recovery Group, as well as the Scientific Advisory Group, I will ensure that we will work collaboratively with the education profession – including teachers, practitioners, school leaders, Early Learning and Childcare staff, Community Learning and Development workers, local authorities and Regional Improvement Collaboratives. As we move together into our recovery year, my focus will be to ensure that Education Scotland supports individual practitioners wherever they are – bearing in mind that the impact of COVID-19 has not been felt equally across Scotland or for our different groups of learners. The profession will need different kinds of support to meet learners' needs, including bespoke approaches, high-quality professional learning, and system leadership. At this time, the profession is looking for Education Scotland to stand alongside it, working flexibly and collaboratively with them to support recovery, quality and improvement in Scottish education.

Gayle Gorman

Chief Executive

10th September 2020

OUR CHANGED CONTEXT

Education Scotland is a Scottish Government Executive Agency supporting quality and improvement in Scottish education. We published our current Corporate Plan 2019-22 in April 2019. Our Annual Report and Accounts for 2019/20, which we will shortly publish, provides an overview of our performance over the first year of that Corporate Plan.

We have reviewed our Corporate Plan in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. This document sets out our refreshed aim, outcomes, priorities and activities for the 2020/21 academic year. It focuses on how we will work alongside the education system to support recovery. In re-focusing our work, we have drawn on our experience of responding to the impact of COVID-19 since March 2020, and the intelligence we have gathered from across the system – including our stakeholders' needs. Many children, young people and other learners have returned to physical buildings following a significant time period during which they have learned remotely. Other learners will have experienced interrupted learning for a range of reasons. We can most effectively play our part by ensuring the education profession itself has the support it needs to meet the wide and varied needs of these learners.

'TEAM ES'

Our biggest asset is our people. During this recovery year, we will need to take an integrated approach to allow our people to make the biggest possible impact.

Although the formal structure of our organisation will not change, our people will work flexibly across directorates and teams to allow us to support both individual practitioners and specific localities across Scotland. Our work remains guided by our four values of **integrity**, **respect**, **excellence** and **creativity**.



OUR AIM AND OUTCOMES FOR 2020/21

We have re-focused all our work for 2020/21 around a single refreshed **aim**. To achieve this aim, we will contribute to a clear set of **outcomes**. There are strong links between these outcomes and those set out in the **National Performance Framework**, which we contribute to along with the wider education system.

AIM

Supporting **recovery**, quality, and improvement in Scottish education and thereby securing the delivery of better learning experiences, and excellence and equity, for Scottish learners.

EDUCATION SCOTLAND OUTCOMES

Scotland's children and young people experience a safe return to full-time education.

Stakeholders are confident in how well the education system is responding to recovery.

The profession feels supported, engaged and has a strong sense of agency.

The profession has a strong focus on high quality curriculum, with improved and widened pedagogies across Scotland.

The education system is responsive and able to move into / out of lockdown smoothly if / as required.

NATIONAL OUTCOMES



We are well educated, skilled and able to contribute to society.



We grow up loved, safe and respected so that we realise our full potential.



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



OUR PRIORITY THEMES FOR 2020/21

Our Corporate Plan 2019-22 set out five strategic priorities¹. These do not change. However, to achieve the outcomes set out on the previous page, our style of work needs to be adapted and all our work in 2020/21 will address one of four re-focused priority themes. These themes reflect the need to respond to a changed system and will underpin the delivery of our five overarching strategic priorities.

System leadership

Our focus on leadership will build on our national role within the system. We are well positioned to play this leadership role due to our unique national overview of how recovery is progressing, our strong links with colleagues working nationally, regionally and locally and the expertise of our staff. We will also play a lead role in gathering and sharing intelligence on how well the system is responding during the recovery year. This will ensure well-informed and up to date policy advice, support and learning across the system.

Collaboration

Collaboration has been a key feature of our development over the last eighteen months as we worked with colleagues across Scotland. As the education profession responds to the impact of COVID-19 on our learners, we will continue to work alongside practitioners, schools and local authorities to provide them with the support they need. We will plan and learn together at a local level and use this knowledge to ensure that our national offer is responsive to demand and builds on the evidence from evaluation of our delivery.

Education support and improvement

We will provide a strong support and improvement offer – delivered in ways which suit our current unique context. This will increase the system's resilience to continue to support learning in the event of any future national or local lockdowns. We will be agile and flexible in responding to requests for support from our stakeholders.

Professional learning

We will continue to support the profession through a variety of professional learning programmes and opportunities. These will include facilitating professional dialogue, providing opportunities to share thinking and practice and delivering more structured professional learning and leadership opportunities. Importantly, these will reflect the lived reality of the current context and draw heavily on our experience at local and national levels.

¹ Effective Partnerships; A Strong Focus On Learning, Teaching and Leadership; Getting it Right for Every Child; National Collaborative Professional Learning Networks; and Best Use of High Quality Evidence.

PEOPLE AND PLACE: DELIVERING OUR PRIORITY THEMES

To deliver on the priority themes set out in the previous section, we will organise our work for 2020/21 into two broad areas: **People** and **Place**.

Our focus on **people** involves a strong national support and improvement offer that is accessible for individual practitioners. Although school buildings have now re-opened, we will continue to develop support for remote learning – including through Glow, Scotland Learns and e-Sgoil. We will continue to offer professional learning and leadership opportunities. Reflecting current ways of working, our professional learning will be largely delivered online, including through our well-received ‘Blethers’, however we will be ready to re-introduce some face-to-face learning when it is safe to do so. Our national offer will be flexible and responsive to the kinds of support that individual practitioners need as we progress through the recovery year. Having a national focus for support to the system allows for faster dissemination of good practice and enables practitioners from across Scotland to benefit from the best of practice at this time.

Through our focus on **place**, we will provide direct support that is responsive and targeted at school, community, local authority and regional level. Our teams will work with other education specialists across the Regional Improvement Collaboratives to provide the right blend of expertise which schools and services need at this crucial time. We want to build on the relationships we already have with local authorities to ensure that we are responsive to their circumstances and needs. We will work directly with schools and services, as we have always done, but we will use these experiences to influence and lead the national challenge at this time. By focusing on place during 2020/21, we believe we can make flexible and effective use of our people to support a recovering system, whilst still leading and contributing to national programmes and priorities such as the Scottish Attainment Challenge, National Improvement Framework and the Curriculum Review.

Our Scrutiny function

To deliver our focus on supporting the education system as it recovers and changes, we have paused several of our activities to ensure the system has as much capacity to respond as possible. Notably, our Early Learning and Childcare and School inspection programme is on hold, which will enable our team of HM Inspectors to support the system in different ways during this period. However, we will undertake targeted and risk based inspections as required. We will also publish a scrutiny plan outlining the planned range of activity which we will undertake when we resume our programme of inspection.

Our Corporate Services Teams

Our Corporate Services Teams will continue to provide high-quality leadership and support for our externally-facing work. We are currently refreshing our communications approach to ensure that all our stakeholders are aware of how to access the support they need. We will also continue to progress our Transformation Programme, which is taking a user-centred approach to the design, delivery and evaluation of our services, systems and processes in order to build better systems to support our role.

EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF OUR RECOVERY WORK

Our evaluation work this year will focus on key elements of our work to support educational recovery, as set out in this plan. This will allow us to demonstrate the role we have played and capture learning about our activities. We will build an external perspective into our evaluation work, including through continued dialogue with practitioners, school leaders, senior colleagues across Local Authorities and Regional Improvement Collaboratives. The ongoing user research as part of our Transformation Programme will contribute to the evaluation evidence that will help inform our planning and next steps. Some of our usual evidence gathering activities have been affected by COVID-19. This means we may not be able to report on each one of our current KPIs for 2020/21, due to a changed educational landscape. For instance, due to the pause in inspection activity, we are currently not delivering all of our usual post-inspection questionnaires. Nevertheless, we are conscious of the continued requirement to evidence our impact and we will continue to ensure that strong governance and reporting are in place.

PLANNING FOR 2021/22 AND BEYOND

This document has set out our focus for 2020/21. Given the uncertainty around the future path of the COVID-19 pandemic in Scotland, our approach to planning for the coming year and beyond will need to be flexible. We will publish any updates to our 2020/21 plan as required, and ensure our stakeholders are aware of these. Following the end of the 2020/21 academic year, we will publish a further refreshed document setting out our plans for 2021/22.

2020/21 – OUR PLAN ON A PAGE



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OUR AIM

Supporting recovery, quality, and improvement in Scottish education and thereby securing the delivery of better learning experiences and excellence and equity for Scottish learners.

OUR OUTCOMES FOR 2020/21

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The profession has a strong focus on high quality curriculum, with improved and widened pedagogies across Scotland.
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PRIORITY THEMES

System Leadership
Collaboration
Education support and improvement
Professional learning

PEOPLE

Professional Learning and Leadership programmes
Glow
National e-learning programmes
Scotland Learns
Blethers, Webinars and Online Events

PLACE

Targeted, bespoke support and improvement on a locality basis
Learning from and with the system to ensure progress with recovery