



YouthLink Scotland position on the Scottish Government's response to the Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment

YouthLink Scotland welcomed the report of the Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment (IRQA) in 2023 and its ambitious and learner-focused recommendations to ensure we value the diverse achievements of every young person. This, and the wider suite of education and skills reforms being delivered by the Scottish Government to improve experiences and outcomes for children and young people through Scottish education provides an opportunity to transform the learning experience for children and young people, getting it right for every child¹, lift young people out of poverty and ensure every learner knows they matter.

YouthLink Scotland has responded² to all aspects of lifelong learning and skills reform from a rights-based position, seeking changes to structure, process, and culture to ensure that every child and young person can secure their right to an education (UNCRC Article 28) that helps them develop their personality, talents, and abilities to their fullest potential (UNCRC Article 29). As such, we believe an equitable and rights-based learning system must include access to youth work. Young people active in youth work agree³.

The Scottish Government's response to the IRQA⁴ acknowledges that education is more than the qualifications a young person achieves. We are heartened that it recognises the potential benefits of recognising a broader range of a young person's achievements, including considering how achievement through personal pathways could be equitably incorporated into the curriculum entitlements and any leaving certificate.

Scottish education is broader than schools and other formal settings for learning. This has been reinforced through the various reports contributing to education reform. They reinforce the need for youth work in an interconnected education and skills landscape. The IRQA highlighted the importance of existing partnerships across the system, including community

¹ <https://www.gov.scot/policies/girfec/>

² <https://www.youthlink.scot/education-skills/education-reform/>

³ <https://www.youthlink.scot/wp-content/uploads/Extended-consultation-Oct-2023-YLS-response.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-government-response-final-report-independent-review-qualifications-assessment-future/>

learning, in helping to broaden the range of experiences for learners and value their achievements across education settings. It highlighted the need to capitalise on the expertise of professional experts such as youth workers to support learners in accessing and completing curriculum opportunities such as personal pathways. Additionally, the recent report from the Independent Review of Community Learning and Development (CLD)⁵ recognises that the classroom doesn't work for every learner. It highlights the role of youth work and wider CLD partners in providing tailored learning pathways and approaches, skills development, and support for those who need it.

As the national agency for youth work, YouthLink Scotland is committed to working alongside Scottish Government and Education Scotland to take forward the following recommended actions:

- YouthLink Scotland invites the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills to meet with the youth work sector to explore how youth work - in providing personal pathways, opportunities for skills development and personal achievement can address inequity in education and support the ambitions for Scottish education.
- YouthLink Scotland worked as part of the national co-design group to envision a consistent approach to profiling for every learner. Youth workers use the National Youth Work Outcomes and Skills Framework⁶ to help young people develop, recognise and articulate their skills, strengths and achievements and plan learning. Continued collaboration between Education Scotland, Skills Development Scotland and the youth work sector is needed to ensure that the digital tool to support this will be aligned to meet the needs of young people active in youth work.
- YouthLink Scotland is committed to working with the Scottish Government, Education Scotland, and the new qualifications body to explore how best to recognise achievements through youth work. This includes considering how personal pathways and achievements can equitably be included in a leaving certificate.
- Young people must be at the centre of decisions around education, including being heard within the new qualifications body. Youth workers are in an ideal position to engage with young people and ensure that their voice is heard within the governance structures of Qualifications Scotland. They can advocate on behalf of young people, bringing expert knowledge

⁵ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/learning-life-report-independent-review-community-learning-development-cld/>

⁶ <https://www.youthlink.scot/education-skills/youth-work-outcomes-skills/>

and experience to support decision-making. It will also be important to create pathways for all young people to exercise their right to be heard in decisions that affect them in relation to their education. This is also where youth work can support, including engaging with those who are seldom heard.

- Youth work is experienced in designing and delivering project learning. It can help the refreshed Education Scotland working group to determine the place of project learning/interdisciplinary learning (IDL) in the curriculum, across contexts and settings, including developing a shared understanding of the principles and benefits of this approach to learning.

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