**SUBMITTING EVIDENCE TO A SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT COMMITTEE**

**DATA PROTECTION FORM**

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| **Date:** | **31/5/18** |
| **Organisation: (if required)** | **National parent Forum of Scotland** |
| **Topic of submission:** | **DYW Inquiry** |
| [x]  **I have read and understood the privacy notice about submitting evidence to a Committee.** [x]  **I am happy for my name, or that of my organisation, to be on the submission, for it to be published on the Scottish Parliament website, mentioned in any Committee report and form part of the public record.**[x]  **I understand I will be added to the contact list to receive updates from the Committee on this and other pieces of work. I understand I can unsubscribe at any time.** Non-standard submissionsOccasionally, the Committee may agree to accept submissions in a non-standard format. Tick the box below if you would like someone from the clerking team to get in touch with you about submitting anonymously or confidentially (not for publication). It is for the Committee to take the final decision on whether you can submit in this way. [ ] I would like to request that my submission be processed in a non-standard way.  |

**EDUCATION AND SKILLS COMMITTEE**

**THE SENIOR PHASE OF SCHOOL: HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE PURSUE THE RIGHT PATHWAY FOR THEM**

**SUBMISSION FROM National Parent Forum of Scotland**

The National Parent Forum of Scotland (NPFS) welcomes the opportunity to provide the Education and Skills Committee with evidence for their inquiry on the progress made on two of the Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) recommendations.

The NPFS is a volunteer led organisation. We work in partnership with national and local government, and other organisations involved in education and child wellbeing issues, to ensure that parents play a full and equal role in education. When parents are involved in their children’s learning, it benefits children, families and schools: children do better. The NPFS was a member of the Commission on DYW and currently sits on the DYW National Advisory Group. We believe it is vital the parental voice is heard in these discussions as parental influence in career decisions is strong.

*Senior Phase Vocational Pathways*

*Recommendation 1: Pathways should start in the senior phase which leads to the delivery of industry recognised vocational qualifications alongside academic qualifications. These pathways should be developed and delivered in partnership with colleges and, where necessary, other training providers. Their delivery should be explicitly measured and published alongside other school performance indicators.*

Alternative pathways to the traditional university route are vital. All stakeholders in Scottish education must work to help the ‘’forgotten 50%’’ who do not leave school to go into higher education, for whatever reason. It should not be assumed that it is due to a lack of academic ability that young people do not go on to higher education. These young people are often not being adequately integrated and included in school. For example, young people who wish to remain in school and follow the Foundation Apprenticeship route find it starts at SCQF level 6, the equivalent of a Higher. This level is too high; those at N4/ N5 level (SCQF levels 4 and 5) are more in need. The N4 pathway, in our opinion, needs the most work.

However, the Foundation Apprenticeship is welcomed. Uptake of this qualification, which provides work-based learning for senior secondary pupils, is beginning to increase. There have been 1,200 starts this year – and a target of 5,000 by the end of 2019 – compared with only about 340 two years ago. However, they are not yet available in all local authorities and where they are available, many parents are not being fully informed about the options available.

For parents who are aware of them, National Progression Awards (NPAs) are seen as a valuable progression route for pupils to learn a defined set of skills and knowledge in specialist vocational areas. Unfortunately, they do not seem to be promoted or made use of enough. In a recent group of 23 parents from different local authorities across Scotland, only one parent was aware of NPAs being available in their schools. None of the other parents had any knowledge of what an NPA was or the potential value to their child.

Parents need to be informed of the benefits of alternative paths in education. Young people can be negatively influenced by their parents - largely due to old prejudices of the apprentice route. Parents are key to widening the uptake of apprenticeships at each level and the confidence of parents will take the apprentice family uptake to a new level.  Good role models can help, so it is important to promote positive messages from industry achievers.

The high level of quality assurance around the apprenticeship framework will reassure parents that this is a recognised qualification for their child, with progression in a variety of directions available. This should be promoted as much as possible.  NPFS parent volunteers have also highlighted that an increase in uptake in rural areas, where young people are moving away, would be useful to fill current industry shortages.

The NPFS has been happy to work in close partnership with Skills Development Scotland (SDS) over recent years. We have produced a number of publications for parents (called nutshells) using source material from SDS departments, which includes our most recent and highly popular “Apprenticeship in a Nutshell” to explain various aspects of career education and choices to parents. Communication to parents is vital.

*Preparing Young People For The World Of Work*

*Recommendation 2: A focus on preparing all young people for employment should form a core element of the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence with appropriate resource dedicated to achieve this. In particular local authorities, Skills Development Scotland and employer representative organisations should work together to develop a more comprehensive standard for careers guidance which would reflect the involvement of employers and their role and input.*

We welcomed the introduction of the new Career Standard 3-18 in 2015, as parents had frequently told us of inconsistences in the quality of career guidance and work experience in Scottish schools. Children and young people are learning crucial skills through Curriculum for Excellence (CfE). Now they will be encouraged to understand the importance of these skills to jobs and careers.

The guidance sets out clear expectations for parents or carers.

*Parents/Carers will:*

*• work in partnership with schools/other settings to support career education and share skills and knowledge as employees or employers where appropriate;*

*• as key influencers, be better informed and equipped to discuss options with their child and offer support in making choices;*

*• be informed of their child’s progress in gaining skills and will discuss that with his/her practitioner/teacher;*

*• discuss their child’s ambitions and appropriate learning pathways with teachers/ practitioners;*

*• be able to request a discussion with a Career Adviser and their child to inform subject and career choices;*

*• have access to career information through dedicated websites, including My World of Work; and*

*• have access to a Career Adviser and information on CMS and how to support their child/young person to make informed choices about future career pathways.*

These expectations are entirely appropriate for schools to aspire to; parents should be able to work in partnership with their school to ensure their child can make informed choices. Following the introduction of the new guidance, we are aware of some excellent practice across the country. For example, Renfrewshire schools now have a member of staff who is the ‘employability project leader’ and many schools across the country have someone in a similar role. Several of our local authority volunteers, such as those in Aberdeen, highlighted many parent events in their Academies where employers and colleges attend. However, we feel that some schools view their parents in a deficit model, concentrating on the difficulties in engaging with parents. Many parents have skills and workplace experience they would be happy to bring to the classroom if correctly supported to do so. Despite pockets of excellent practice around the country, this area of the guidance could be better implemented. ‘Work days’ (events where parents come in and explain what they do in their own workplace) are also an effective way of involving dads in the life of the school, especially in Secondary school settings where the interaction between school and parents is reduced.

We are heartened to hear of some schools involving SDS advisors at parents’ evenings from S1. However, many NPFS volunteers have said that although career opportunities are being highlighted more frequently in schools, particularly the promotion of apprenticeships, this tends to be focused in years S5 and S6. This is not early enough.

Schools often target the pupils they think are suitable for particular progression routes, but every pupil would benefit from considering different pathways. All options should be outlined to pupils in a broad sense in S2, so they can make the right decision based on all the options available. Staff should also be aware that it is not only vocational work that is suitable for apprenticeship; many business and accounting apprenticeships can lead to further training through professional bodies, such as the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants.

Good practice does exist but there is inconsistency between schools, with variability across and within local authorities. As in all aspects of our education system, parents need clear, jargon free information at the appropriate stage to be able to fully support their child in making decisions. The evidence the Committee has gathered from young people is applicable to parents too; parents are not yet receiving adequate information and advice to achieve the parity of esteem between vocational and academic pathways.

Parents need to be supported to have a better understanding of CfE itself; how their child’s learning fits into the capacities and how the skills they are learning will be useful in the workplace. In a recent NPFS commissioned YouGov survey of parents, with children aged 3 to 18 who are in school, less than half (49%) said that they understand how all of their child’s learning fits into each of the four capacities.[[1]](#footnote-1) Parents (and frequently pupils) are also unclear about the core skills within subjects. This was also highlighted by our NPFS parent volunteers, when they completed Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) training last week; the ‘Core Skills’ and SCQF profile supplied with exam results shows very useful information on skills that are important for work, but this information stands alone and it is not always clear how it relates to each qualification.

Finally, Pupil Equity Funding offers schools the opportunity to be more creative and innovative in approaches to career education. Best Practice examples should continue to be shared around the country and between the new Regional Improvement Collaboratives. All stakeholders are still onboard with the DYW programme, so we believe the Committee really needs to get to the bottom of why more progress is not being made.

1. Figures are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 2028 Scottish adults, of which 297 were parents of children aged 3 to 18 who attend school. Fieldwork was undertaken between 5th - 16th April 2018. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all Scottish adults (aged 18+). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)