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Ms Clare Adamson MSP
Convener
Scottish Parliament Education and Skills Committee

19 June 2019

Scottish Government response to the Scottish Parliament Education and Skills Committee's Report on Scottish National Standardised Assessments

Dear Ms Adamson,

I am writing on behalf of the RSE Education Committee in relation to the Education and Skills Committee's consideration of the Scottish Government's response to its report on the Scottish National Standardised Assessments (SNSAs). Specifically, we support the comments you have received from Professor Lindsay Paterson relating to the potential reinstatement of the Scottish Survey of Literacy and Numeracy (SSLN). Professor Paterson's comments align with those of the RSE Education Committee.¹ We were pleased to see that your Committee's report reflected many of the key points raised by RSE and other witnesses, including recommending that the Scottish Government should review the statistical value of the SSLN with a view to determining whether it should be reinstated and run in parallel with the SNSA.

Whereas the SNSAs provide individual level data on learners' attainment that can be tracked over time, the SSLN was a sample survey of both learners and teachers which gathered a wider range of information than that generated by the SNSA, and which was able to provide a system level analysis of attainment. The introduction of the SNSAs need not have come at the expense of the SSLN. Since their introduction, the Scottish Government has clarified that the primary purpose of the SNSAs is to provide 'real time' diagnostic information to support teachers' professional judgement. However, this leaves an evidence gap in relation to being able to evaluate the performance of the school education system. The respective strengths of both the SNSA and SSLN means that they could co-exist and complement one another very well. In his response, Professor Paterson sets out how the design of the previous SSLN could be changed and improved to address the Scottish Government's criticisms. He also highlights how surveys such as SSLN could link with existing longitudinal data, including that provided by the Growing Up in Scotland study, to provide a richer evidence base.

¹ RSE submission to the Scottish Parliament Education and Skills Committee on the Scottish National Standardised Assessments (December 2018)

https://www.rse.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/AP18_23_Standardised_Assessments.pdf



Should the Scottish Government be open to exploring the reinstatement of a survey akin to the SSLN, the RSE would be pleased to offer its help in bringing together independent education researchers and Scottish Government officials to discuss this further. I have therefore copied this reply to the Scottish Government.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch should you and the Committee wish to discuss these points further.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Keir Bloomer FRSE
Convener of the RSE Education Committee

Cc'd Andrew Bruce, Deputy Director-Strategy and Performance, Scottish Government

