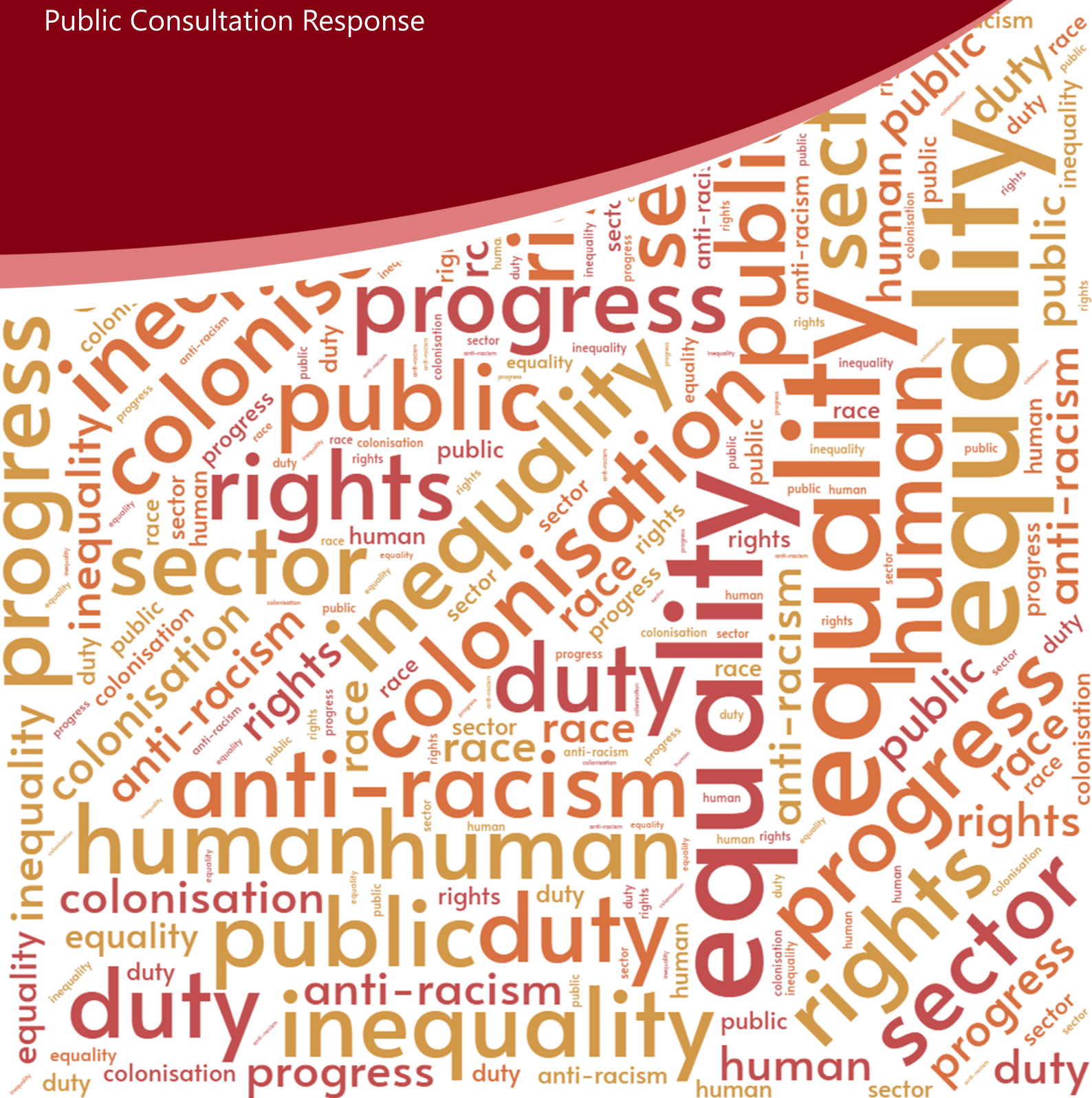


National Discussion on Education

Public Consultation Response



National Discussion on Education – Lets Talk Scottish Education

CEMVO Scotland is a national intermediary organisation and strategic partner of the Scottish Government Equality Unit. Our aim is to build the capacity and sustainability of the ethnic minority (EM) voluntary sector and its communities. Since being established in 2003, we have developed a database network of over 600 ethnic minority voluntary sector organisations throughout Scotland to which we deliver a wide range of programmes that provide capacity building support to the sector.

As a national organisation, we continually engage with the EM voluntary sector and its communities, which enable us to gather intelligence about the needs and issues affecting the sector. This helps our organisation to deliver tailored support to the sector, and to work strategically with public, statutory, and government agencies to tackle a range of prevalent issues such as race equality, social inclusion, capacity building and civic participation.

Part of our work as an identified stakeholder in public policy involves contributing to Scottish Government Stakeholder Partnership Groups (SPG) from a race equality and human rights perspective, and regularly provide a lived-experienced response to our strategic consultations. These include, but is not limited to:

- Anti-Racist Education Programme (AREP; formerly known as REAREP)
- Fair Work Action Plan; Anti-Racist Employment Strategy
- Hate Crime Strategic Partnership Group (HCSPG)
- National Care Service (NCS)

We are also a member of the Scottish National Action Plan for Human Rights (SNAP) which is lead by the Scottish Human Rights Commission.

The response from CEMVO Scotland is formed through our input and expertise drawn from our overall contributions within the employment and race equality sector in Scotland. Our commitment to working with the Scottish Government in achieving the goals set in the Race Equality Framework 2016 (REF) is still a priority due to the slow progress in the race sector. In addition to our recent community consultations, a further discussion was organised for EM members specifically for this contribution.

Methodology of engagement

The target audience for this session was ethnic minorities who are parents, carers, young people or who are educators. Through Eventbrite, 17 people registered with 10 participants who took part in the 1 hour zoom session. The 10 questions were put on to a whiteboard, so that attendees could participate and answers the questions in their words. The opportunity was provided to submit their opinions using the chat function, or by unmuting to engage vocally. All users preferred to keep off screen and type their answers directly on to the whiteboard. Using the facilitators guidance for adults, the notes, explanations and examples provided in the PowerPoint to talk through the questions where shared whilst participants provided their feedback. These have shaped the overall response from CEMVO Scotland to the questions asked in the National Discussion on Education.

1. What kind of education will be needed by children and young people in Scotland in the future?

CEMVO Scotland strongly believes that every child and young person had the right to access quality education, free from discrimination and racism. Our organisation has advocated for mainstreaming race equality within the Scottish public sector since its inception. In line with the changing landscape of the demographics of the Scottish population, we further advocate for an anti-racist approach in public policy, including (but not limited to) education, employment, care and justice. Building on the foundations of human rights, where the core principle focuses around dignity and respect, we support **“Education which is inclusive of all, including anti-racist approaches by teaching staff (staff training for example)”**. This is further supported by **“an education that teaches the future generations how to be a global citizen – i.e. think of the SDG [sustainable development goals]”**. We support the need of **“an education that promotes equality, diversity and inclusion”** especially implementing anti-racist education as a means to achieve this level of fairness.

An anti-racist education system would mean representation of different ethnicities in all aspects of the curriculum, pedagogy, profession and policies. This is not limited to visual representation, but a more enhanced approach to inclusion, where the needs are learner-centred and comprehensive of the impact of historical racial trauma on generations of learners. For example, the teaching of climate change and the environment to include the research of academics and activists from around the world, not just white people. This allows for difference experiences to be shared in the classroom, and relatable to those who do not have the traditional Scottish heritage or roots. This shifts the pedagogical approach to **“real world experience, moving away from decontextualised learning.”**

Based on our past and present work, we have continuously found that the confidence, self-esteem and value that EM people have, in comparison to their white peers, is lower which results in the inability to achieve their full potential. This is further exasperated for those who have multiple identities which cause the intersectional barriers preventing the individual to contribute to Scotland’s economy and society. We would support an education system that will empower, improve the confidence and capacity of CYP to recognise and reinvent approaches to tackle societal racism.

2. How do we make that a reality?

A common narrative encountered with white people in positions of influence is to be complacent, where there is a strong call for them **“not to stir away from difficult topics but to further educate teachers in such areas so they're prepared to teach it.”** This means for everyone in the Scottish Education system to be aware of the institutionalised and systemic racism that people from ethnic minority backgrounds have been subjected to in the past, present and potentially the future, and its impact on individuals as members of Scottish society. For example, one EM young person commented that they are **“Not taught about societal issues properly in school – Ukraine, homophobia is given more attention and education than racism.”**

The Curriculum for Excellence (CofE) embodies the principles for the modern and adaptable outcomes we want our young people to become - successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens, effective contributors. However, these outcomes are subjective to the quality of education received and would be ideally implemented through a learner-centred approach (further explored in the following questions).

To achieve these aspirations, many respondents to our consultation were in agreement that **“children should be able to see themselves in the curriculum - reading books should show a diverse range of names and characters, science and math topics could look at non-white contributions”**. A further example was provided for **“initiatives to support inclusivity and diversity such as different languages and cultures, these could start with focus weeks and hopefully become embedded, such as diverse reading books, colouring pencils for different skin tones, a celebration of important festivals.”**

It was also noted that teacher education is crucial to support our educators in creating the best learning environments for our children and young people. Therefore, an anti-racist pedagogy to be taught in Initial Teacher Education (ITE) establishments as well as **“training for teachers and other professionals, would be ideal to help them understand how to promote this kind of learning.”**

Those in positions of influence, including educators, need to be reflective of the population, who would have shared values, lived experiences and the academic knowledge to adapt policy, practices and procedures into a learner-centred approach.

3. How can every child and young person’s individual needs be supported and addressed in the future?

The education system has the policy of Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) which is a commitment to inclusive education, for their individual needs to be supported. However, the implementation of this policy has highlighted the institutionalised barriers to accessing mainstream education for those who come from marginalised groups.

Central to progress is **“inclusion and being seen as individuals”** by allowing for **“more control and say on what helps them succeed and feel supported in their learning”**. Empowering children and young people through various approaches of learning (such as problem-based, cooperative, facilitating) is crucial to a learner-centred approach. **“We need to move away from assuming that the school and teachers are responsible for supporting learning”** and **“explore how parents/ families and the community can be included in school again”**.

Access to education should not be stipulated by traditions. The trend of outdoor-classroom show that learning is not confined to a school building, where community groups and third sector organisations have played a crucial role in the past to provide education in different forms for those who are not receiving quality education through mainstream education.

The duty on authorities and the state to support and address a CYP’s individual needs are stipulated (but not limited to) in the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which involves undertaking equality impact assessments. However, there is no accountability to the implementation or outcomes of these equality impact assessments. Whilst potential barriers

or issues may be recorded, there needs to be an accountability mechanism to ensure that proactive measures are put in place to support the learning. For example, **“bilingual support for those who speak English as a second language”** should be available to everyone, regardless of which area they live in, to fulfil the equality of opportunity condition in the Equality Act 2010.

4. What is one thing that needs to stay and why?

CEMVO Scotland would like to acknowledge that the education system in Scotland has a less prescriptive approach to the curriculum, which allows for the flexibility of schools and teachers to include subjects that are relevant to the area/demographic makeup of the school, such as local dialect, history and the involvement of community group, with a focus being on the experiences and outcomes from the learning to take precedence.

Beyond the academic learning, one respondent commented that the **“buddy system in primary school”** is one key element to remain as **“it teaches children/young people on responsibility and developing positive relationships with others”**. This shows that such holistic practices embedded within school life contributes to the outcomes of becoming confident individuals and responsible citizens during the critical formative years of a child’s life.

5. What are the most important priorities for a future Scottish education system?

As an anti-racist organisation, we have advocated for race equality within the education system for nearly twenty years. Historical evidence and studies have shown that matters related to this field are still prevalent, therefore we would urge for an anti-racist education system. EM parents, educators and young people have expressed the need for:

- Addressing hate crime and racism through a school setting. This can be achieved by:
 - More work in high schools education about racism, such as **“understanding who experience racism and how to approach it differently to other forms of discrimination.”**
 - Mandatory training for educators in hate crime and reporting, including **“understanding race and how it impacts on children of colour.”**
 - Mandatory education for children and parents who are perpetrators, which links in with the principle of becoming responsible citizens.

Parent councils to play a bigger part in tackling racism in schools, to reinforce within our society, that racism is not acceptable and it is within our homes, streets and communities that we can change attitudes, not just in schools. **“Having more events where people from different ethnic group, religion; origin and orientation may gather and learn about each other.”**

With a focus on the employment sector, the teaching profession needs to have better **“representation”** that is reflective of the population of Scotland. The importance of this is for **“people of colour to lead Anti-Racism education and also other topics”** which will contribute to **“a diverse , rich curriculum with a variety of experiences”**. This in turn facilitates an anti-

racist education system through the experiences and capabilities that are unique to those from marginalised communities.

Our work with local authorities, who are also education authorities, has highlighted that whilst there is a desire to have a representative workforce, the racist systems and environments are still in place to prevent career progression for ethnic minority teachers. This is evident through data collected regularly from the teachers census and research commissioned by the Scottish Government and independent sources (Runnymede Trust). Implementing an anti-racist employment approach would see more ethnic minorities in well deserved higher positions, addressing white privilege that influences the next generations career choice.

6. How can we ensure that everyone involved in education in Scotland has a say in future decisions and actions?

The changing landscape of Scottish policy to incorporate human rights practices into our legislation and process is critical to ensure everyone involved in education has a say. However, this is subject to implementation and accountability – a learning through the ineffective/delayed implementation of PSED’s stemmed from the Equality Act 2010. CEMVO Scotland advocate for the use of PANEL principles as a tool to approach the decision-making process (further information can be found here: <https://www.scottishhumanrights.com/projects-and-programmes/human-rights-based-approach/>). This would support a habitual scheme of **“seeing their [the CYP] individual needs and not shy away from providing necessary support.”** and **“Allow then greater control on what fits them and their needs.”**

Participants and network members have voiced their concerns about the involvement of parents/carers/guardians in education, especially using the present lifestyle norms in addressing racism in school communities. Acknowledgement that **“the family ecosystem has changed and that families are intergenerational support whilst parents are at work. But bring families and stakeholders into schools or off sit visits will encourage shared experience and mutual understanding across culture and religion.”**

GIRFEC supports a family-centred approach to address the needs of children and adults in a family at the time of need rather than at crisis point, where it is understood by EM that **“some parents need help and support, schools cant do everything”**. Listening to the needs of EM parents, and of those from marginalised groups, there is a unanimous agreement that **“other agencies need to be well funded and staff well supported”** to **“Adopt a person-centred approach so focusing on the needs of the individual. It may not only be the child but also their parents/family”**. An example provided, and repeated by religious EM parents, is that **“the new RSHP curriculum does not suit many from faith perspectives”** as individual cultures and religions have their own methodologies of teaching about relationships and sex education. Therefore, parental input into the teaching of sensitive topics needs to take place in a structured and progressive manner, rather than schools operating a closed door policy.

7. How can children and young people be cared for and supported in the future? (i.e. physical and mental wellbeing)

Using a human rights based approach specifically asking EM CYP what they need to feel that they are cared for and supported is essential to the incorporation of the UNCRC. The state has an obligation to the implementation of the 42 articles of the UNCRC, not just choosing which rights suits the democratic agenda/status quo. A balance needs to be established where the care and support of CYP is **“not just for schools and teachers. The state should not have so much input and control especially if they are not all encompassing of differences. There needs to be value and worth given to the family home lives of children, and these are all characterised by different practices and beliefs.”**

Respondents, including EM parents/guardians, carers and educators, are expressing that the care and support for CYP is **“by seeing and acknowledging every individual child. Listening to parents and work together for the best of the child”** which **“needs to be made more of a priority than it is so far”**.

It cannot be ignored that educators within establishments, regardless of their level of seniority, have responsibilities towards the care and support of CYP, therefore it is pertinent that **“ensuring teachers are trained (or undergo regular training) and can act appropriately when recognising that a child needs support”**. This means to have the capacity to dismantle the institutionalised racism through mandatory training at ITE courses and CPD, so that teachers are aware of the implications of racism on the outcomes of an EM CYP and therefore in a better position to take proactive measures.

“Continue initiatives like free school meals for all, possibly including things like breakfast and dinner if needed” to have equitable channels in place, evidenced by research which correlates the improvement of a CYP’s health and wellbeing.

8. How can the right of every child and young person to have opportunities to develop their full potential be achieved in future?

A common theme has been developed through those who we have engaged with CEMVO Scotland. Due to racism that is upheld and old parts of Scottish society, there is a recognition that EM CYP do not have the same opportunities to develop their full potential. There is a unanimous agreement for the need of **“representation in teachers of colour and in all areas of the curriculum”** so that the educators who bring lived experience and to their profession are in a better position to see the racial structures that prevent children and young people to develop and achieve their full potential. This includes learning to be responsible citizens and respecting others.

Outwith the realms of racism, participants of our National Discussion of Education consultation said that **“schools need be aware of industry, and what is happening in the world of work so young people have the skills they need. They should be able to liaise with Council groups such as STEM and sports to help them in the classroom”**.

The responses received to this question further advocated for a learner-centred approach, where **“the rate and pace of physical development influences the child’s development and their readiness to learn. Thus, a one size fits all curriculum does not fit all learners in a given year group. A acceptance within government policy that a learner in year 5 may be**

learning at year 3”. but also realising that **“children who are able are often left behind! they need to be looked after too, the school learning support system should aim to support and appropriately challenge those children too.”**

9. How can children and young people be helped to learn about our changing world, so they feel able to positively contribute?

Embedding an anti-racist approach will facilitate the requirements needed for well-rounded education. Empowering our CYP **“not to shy away from racism and the institutional form it takes”** would not only overcome the structures perpetuated by the status quo, but further investing in **“what white people can do to support people of colour globally”** would give all CYP the tools to become responsible citizens. This includes to **“educate on world history and not just white world history”**.

Further feedback was presented as progressive solutions to enable this needed learning:

“Scotland is becoming ever more multicultural given the rise of net migration in the UK. It's important to allow children and young people to learn more about global issues/history. Perhaps consider introducing programmes/initiatives for young people to come together and work towards a common cause while promoting diversity.”

“Learning about the changing world is about engaging with real-world events and understanding how these events were influenced by a historical context and predicting future. Free of risk of recrimination to the educator (teacher) when difficult/ taboo topics are explored. However, these topics will challenge stereotypes and social normal which results in parents and media backlash. There may need to be specialised trained staff/ psychologist to address some of these issues.”

Those in responsible positions to help CYP and their learning, such as key workers, social services, childminders, youth workers and other people in positions of influence, need to also comprehend the changing world, so they can also positively contribute to the learning environment. From the hate crime strategy consultations we undertook, there was a strong opinion that racism still exists because people do not experience the world without prejudice. By exposing CYP to outside cultures and the world, it will provide the capacity to better understand the nuances around the changing world, such as migration, human rights and the contribution of technological advances.

10. Do you have any other comments that you would like to provide about a vision for the future of Scottish Education?

There is a unanimous agreement that an anti racist approach is vital for a progressive future for the Scottish children alongside a resonating call for **“better mandatory training for educators on issues that aren’t often or barely covered.”**

Challenging the narrative on how racism is dealt with in schools, the common message from ethnic minority communities is to **“take racism at schools as a serious issue and stop excusing it as bullying”**. Education of hate crime and racism at all levels of schooling by building it in to the curriculum and being delivered by those trained properly in the issue. We would further

advocate that teachers and educators should be properly trained in dealing with and supporting hate crimes to uphold the values of respect and tolerance. CEMVO Scotland's work on the AREP and Racism and Racist Incidences workstream seeks to shape future policy to facilitate this change in landscape and better reflect the needs of our diverse population. Mainstream support and implementation is crucial to have the outcomes of the AREP embedded for a progressive future.

It was also noted that the focus on attainment gap has given priority to those who are less able but not necessarily those who are most marginalised. Whilst it is felt that there is **“too much focus on lower achieving end, it needs to be fair for everyone including children who are able, they need to be supported in schools too, else school is 'boring' - because they already know it!”**

11. Overall, what is your vision for the future of education in Scotland?

CEMVO Scotland has continuously worked with the Scottish Government, and the variety of communities in Scotland over the past twenty years, to influence and make change in policies, so that we can have a future where there are **“true equal opportunities for all and less "tick-boxing".** Our focus on employment and skills within the race sector in Scotland support **“an education where it can enable future generations to become global citizens and embrace diversity.”** This would include embedding **“a modern, up to date curriculum which is relevant for children today”**.

Providing equal opportunities to CYP has proved to be an incomplete method of inclusive education, with an equitable approach imminently needed. We advocate for the layers systemic barriers to be removed in totality, however if the exclusion of parental, community and lived experienced involvement is not utilised, then progress towards and equitable society will be delayed.

Respondents to our consultation also noted that **“school ethos and approach should openly value achievements, too often this is shied away from for fear of those left behind (and proper support should be given here too)”**. A general comment about the future of education should be one **“which is challenging, pushes boundaries of children's learning”** because **“all too often, children are not even pushed to learn”**.

Decades of inequality, and the current hostile climate of societal inequities has created mistrust and low confidence in public services and authorities. We would hope for those who are in positions of influence to acknowledge and reflect the needs of EM CYP in the future of Scotland.