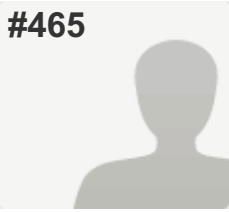


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PAGE 1: Please complete this consultation paper in respect of your area of interest and/or expertise

Q1: Name:	NYCI
Q2: Organisation:	National Youth Council of Ireland
Q3: Email:	research@nyci.ie

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Q4: 1(a) What improvements can be made within existing resources	Respondent skipped this question
Q5: 1(b) What improvements can be made through new provision	Respondent skipped this question

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Q6: 2. Comment on work currently being undertaken by the Department in your area of interest and/or expertise. (What are we doing well, what could we do better)?	Respondent skipped this question
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Q7: 3. Are there opportunities (e.g. new areas of work) which the Department should consider when developing the 2016 - 2018 strategy which would advance the achievement of our mission, vision and objectives across the continuum of education and skills?	Respondent skipped this question
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Q8: 4. How should success on achieving our strategies be measured.	Respondent skipped this question
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Q9: 5. Comment on any issues relating to the continuum of education and skills, in addition to your particular area of interest and/or expertise

Respondent skipped this question

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Q10: 6. Any other observations that you would suggest the Department should consider in the formulation of our strategy for education and skills 2016 - 2018

It is important that future strategy consider the following:

- A commitment to working collaboratively with the Department of Health to maximise the impact that education and training can have in delivering on the objectives and implementation of Healthy Ireland: A framework for Improved Health and Wellbeing 2013 – 2025 (Department of Health).
- A commitment to working collaboratively with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs to maximise the impact that education and training can have in delivering on the objectives and implementation of Better Outcomes Brighter Futures, The National Policy Framework for children and Young People (Department of Children and Youth Affairs).
- Recognition that education is an important social determinant of health and that a healthy school population is a productive school population
- Children and young people's opportunities for health are strongly influenced by the social and economic conditions in which they live. These opportunities are encapsulated in a social determinants approach to health which recognises that a broad range of factors at local, national and global level have important influences on health. As most of these factors are outside the direct responsibility of the healthcare sector, building greater awareness amongst the non-health sector of the impact of their policies and practices on health is vital in working to create better health.
- Education is an important social determinant of health. For the population as a whole, greater levels of education help to create wealthier economies. The benefits of education, however, go far beyond economic ones. Education can impact positively on levels of social engagement, an important factor in generating more cohesive, safer and healthier societies. At an individual level, the knowledge, personal and social skills provided through education can better equip individuals to access and use information and services to maintain and improve their own and their family's health. Improved understanding of the relationship between education and health will help to identify where intervention is most appropriate and effective in improving both individual and population health (Health Impacts of Education; a review. 2008. Institute of Public Health; Dublin).
- A substantial body of international evidence clearly shows that those with lower levels of education are more likely to die at a younger age and are at increased risk of poorer health throughout life than those with more education. A strong positive relationship exists between education and health outcomes whether measured by death rates (mortality), illness (morbidity), health behaviours or health knowledge.
- Access to and participation in the education system are prerequisites to achieving the health benefits that education can provide. While the percentage of the population across the island of Ireland participating in education for greater lengths of time has increased substantially over the last 20 years some groups within the population continue to be more disadvantaged educationally. Many of the root causes of inequalities in education mirror those of health inequalities, a term used to describe the unfair distribution of health in society. Health is not experienced equally by all people; a strong social gradient exists between the average years of good health enjoyed by those in higher socioeconomic groups and those in lower groups. Improving educational outcomes amongst the most disadvantaged groups has the potential to make a positive impact on health inequalities.

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Q11: 1(a) Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).

The National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI) is the representative body for 51 voluntary youth organisations in Ireland. Our member organisations work with and for up to 380,000 young people aged 10 to 24 years in every community in Ireland with the support of 40,000 volunteers and 1,400 paid staff. NYCI functions to represent the interests of young people and youth organisations. NYCI's role is recognised in legislation (Youth Work Act) and is represented on the National Economic and Social Council. As a representative body for youth organisations working with children and young people aged between 10 – 24, early years is not a focus of our policy and advocacy work, however, we are broadly supportive of the commitments in relation to early years as outlined in the current Programme for Government.

Q12: 1(b) How should progress on Prioritising Early Years be measured?

Respondent skipped this question

Q13: 1(c) What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?

Respondent skipped this question

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Q14: 2(a) Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).

NYCI welcomes the measures identified in the Programme for Government to address school completion, but is concerned that educational disadvantage initiatives appear to focus mainly on learners under the age of 18. It is imperative that more support is given to prioritising the learning needs of young people of working age by promoting greater access to further and higher education.

Q15: 2(b) How should progress on Tackling Disadvantaged be measured?

By monitoring progress via the school completion rate and statistics on the numbers accessing, transferring and progressing throughout the education system.

Q16: 2(c) What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?

- Investing in additional supports for people on low incomes to access further and higher education.
- Expansion of Further Education Training and reversal of funding cuts to further education training schemes, introduced during the recession.

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Q17: 3(a) Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).

Respondent skipped this question

Q18: 3(b) How should progress on Diversity and Choice for Parents be measured?

Respondent skipped this question

Q19: 3(c) What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?

Respondent skipped this question

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Q20: 4(a) Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).

NYCI welcomes the commitment in the Programme for Government to enhance the guidance counsellor allocation in secondary schools. The provision of career and life guidance for young people is extremely important. The Education Act 1998 places a legal obligation on schools to provide guidance to students. Since 2011, however, there have been significant cuts to career guidance in schools which has reduced the supports to young people, in particular one-to-one sessions. Both formal and informal guidance and advice can be invaluable for young people in making key choices about their future career and life. A study published by the Higher Education Authority in 2014 found that 7,000 students or 16% did not progress from first to second year at third level in 2011. This would indicate that even before the cuts imposed in 2012 took effect there were deficiencies in the career guidance system. A 2014 ESRI report noted that some students expressed concerns about the absence of options other than Higher Education in career guidance at second level. Guidance and counselling is not only important in the school setting, it is also important for young people who are seeking further education, training and employment. The Ballymun Youth Guarantee pilot evaluation highlighted the importance of good quality career advice and comprehensive holistic guidance to young jobseekers. Likewise the National Implementation Group arising from the EU Structured Dialogue Process on Youth Policy which comprised of twenty young people deliberated on the issue of guidance and counselling. They recommended that a new strategic approach was required for the provision of guidance services. They proposed that guidance should assist young people as they navigate through education, training and in pursuit of employment. They called for a young person centred service that is good quality, supports their development and is accessible when they need it most. Such supports are essential to ensure we provide young learners with the skills to be able to meet future challenges that life may present.

It is also extremely important the student voice is captured in decisions that affect a young person. In line with the National Youth Strategy, it is vital that there is a focus on the promotion of the development of a positive school environment for all students, including marginalised young people, through structures like effective Student Councils (2015: 33). Emphasis needs to be placed on realising the full potential of the Student Council and ensuring Student Councils are fully operational in all schools.

Q21: 4(b) How should progress on Promoting Excellence and Innovation in Schools be measured?

Respondent skipped this question

Q22: 4(c) What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?

- Ensure the rolling out of fully functioning student councils in schools, to provide real and meaningful opportunities for young learners to input into decisions that affect them, within the school environment.

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Q23: 5(a) Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).

Respondent skipped this question

Q24: 5(b) How should progress on Promoting Creativity and Entrepreneurial Capacity in Students be measured?

Respondent skipped this question

Q25: 5(c) What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?

Respondent skipped this question

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Q26: 6(a) Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).

This is a matter that has been discussed many times. There has been limited action taken on previous recommendations.

Q27: 6(b) How should progress on Making Better use of Educational Assets within Communities be measured?

- Establish a database of educational facilities available to the community
- Resolve the insurance and staffing issues identified as barriers preventing better use of educational assets within communities

Q28: 6(c) What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?

Respondent skipped this question

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Q29: 7(a) Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).

Respondent skipped this question

Q30: 7(b) How should progress on Special Needs Education be measured?

Respondent skipped this question

Q31: 7(c) What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?

Respondent skipped this question

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Q32: 8(a) Comment on the approach contained in the Programme for a Partnership Government (are we capturing the essential issues, are there additional matters we should take into account).

A key principle in determining policy should be current and future needs of young people. In terms of policy, another key principle from our perspective is that the voice and views of young people should be incorporated. We would also be of the view that while formal education has an important role in preparing young people to compete in the labour market, it should not be the primary or over-riding consideration. Formal education should be about giving young people the knowledge, skills and resilience for life and supporting them to be engaged and active citizens.

Ensure that every student from Junior Cert year on had minimum number of hours per annum with qualified career guidance/life coach counsellor/advisor to review their education/career/life plans. It is not just about reversing the cuts in guidance. It is about developing a system of guidance and a process that takes into account the needs of young people and the changing nature of the labour market and local employment opportunities. We need a much more sophisticated system of guidance which supports young people to makes education and career choices.

Furthermore, school settings play a key role in determining the health outcomes of the population and can be particularly effective in promoting healthy behaviours and attitudes. Evidence suggests that those who achieve a higher level of educational attainment are more likely to engage in healthy behaviours and less likely to adopt unhealthy habits. To this end:

- We welcome the development of the Draft Wellbeing Guidelines for Junior Cycle. The focus on the broader concept of wellbeing is particularly important and it is encouraging that there is now a commitment to deliver on learning objectives that enhance the physical, mental, emotional and social wellbeing of students. The emphasis on connection to community in the Junior cycle wellbeing approach is also encouraging as it recognises the important influence of the broader determinants of health and education. It is also particularly welcome that wellbeing will now be embedded in the curriculum.
- We feel strongly that the new Junior Cycle Wellbeing Guides should draw on and incorporate existing knowledge and expertise in schools health promotion to ensure effective implementation of the new Guidelines. The Health Promoting School (HPS) model, present in schools in more than 40 countries throughout Europe, adopts a framework which encompasses the curriculum, physical and social environments and the involvement of parents and the wider community. HPS aims to provide knowledge, information and skills to empower young people to make good decisions regarding their health at both primary and second level. This model has been shown to be effective internationally and there is a wealth of expertise in delivering health promotion in secondary schools in Ireland.
- It is important that a dedicated focus on wellbeing is extended throughout the education system to ensure children and young people in ECCE settings, primary schools and the Leaving Cycle have equal opportunity to enhance their wellbeing as those in Junior Cycle. Extending the Guidelines to each of these age groups will be a critical step in ensuring that wellbeing is supported in the school environment at all levels.

Q33: 8(b) How should progress on Meeting the Skills Needs of the Future be measured?

Strive to reduce the attrition rate of young people in further and higher education.

Q34: 8(c) What would you consider to be the priority actions and outcomes in this area?

- There needs to be greater emphasis on opportunities available in further education, apprenticeships as well as higher education
 - For some students pressure of so many exams in a short period can be very difficult and challenging, and their results are not an accurate reflection of their abilities
 - Greater emphasis on project work, group work, supporting young people to gain skills and competencies rather than primary focus on knowledge acquisition and retention, is essential.
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