SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE P1 PRACTITIONER FORUM REPORT

The Scottish Government welcomes the opportunity to respond to the recommendations of the P1 Practitioner Forum Report. The Government's response addresses each of the Forum's recommendations in turn and sets out, where appropriate, the action that will be taken. This response has been prepared in consultation with Education Scotland given that the responsibility for action in response to many of the recommendations lies jointly with the Scottish Government and Education Scotland.

The P1 Practitioner Forum took place at a similar time to the Committee's Inquiry into the Scottish National Standardised Assessments and the Independent Review of the P1 SNSAs, which published their findings on 23 April and 11ᵗʰ June respectively. This response should be read alongside the Scottish Government's responses to the recommendations of the Committee's Inquiry Report and the Independent Review.

The Scottish Government's responses to these three reports have been brought together in a summary document "Standardised assessments in Scotland: draft improvement activity 2019/20" which summarises the action we plan to take in response to the recommendations from the three reports. This activity has also been informed by the emerging findings from the 2018/19 SNSA User Review.

All key documents can be found on the National Improvement Framework page of the Scottish Government website.

The P1 Practitioner Forum: Recommendations for SNSA

The purpose of the SNSA

1a.   That there is a clear national rationale setting out the possible purposes and uses of the SNSA within the broader assessment framework of Scottish schools [Responsibility: Scottish Government and Education Scotland]

SG response
Accept. The Scottish Government will work with Education Scotland to provide schools, local authorities and other stakeholders with a clear and definitive statement on the purpose and use of P1 SNSA for the start of the new school session in August 2019.

1b.   That this rationale is publicly available [Responsibility: Scottish Government]

SG response
Accept. As above, the statement will be published. The Scottish Government will work with Education Scotland and colleagues in local government to ensure that the statement is made as widely available as possible and that it also features in SNSA support materials.

1c.   That each school indicates its own specific purposes and policy for the SNSA, accounting for the school context, its wider assessment policy and how the SNSA and other data are woven into professional conversations. There should be a clear link between these stated purposes

and the procedures for ensuring that SNSA and other data inform teaching and learning discussions, planning, monitoring and assessment [Responsibility: Scottish Government, Local Authorities, Schools]

SG response
Accept. *We will work with Education Scotland, COSLA and ADES to explore the possibility of providing guidance to schools on developing a policy for the SNSA within the context of their overall assessment model, for the start of the new school session in August 2019.*

The SNSA fit with play-based pedagogies

2a. That there is support for play-based approaches as an important pedagogy to deliver the learning that Curriculum for Excellence articulates, and practical exemplars and explanations of how play-based literacy and numeracy learning/teaching in P1 address a wide range of the Curriculum for Excellence experiences, outcomes and benchmarks [Responsibility: Scottish Government, Education Scotland]

SG response
Accept. *The Scottish Government and Education Scotland will work with partners to gather guidance and exemplars/case studies on play-based literacy and numeracy learning and how to incorporate SNSAs within a play-based learning environment. This guidance will be published on the National Improvement Hub and the SNSA website by March 2020.*

2b. That there is detailed consideration of the format and presentation of every SNSA item added to the item-bank to ensure it is appealing and intuitive for P1 children to use [Responsibility: Scottish Government]

SG response
Accept. *The content of the assessments is regularly reviewed through a systematic quality assurance process involving a team of Education Scotland experts, all of whom have relevant classroom experience. Each new question is carefully considered with respect to suitability for the curriculum and level of difficulty in relation to the curriculum benchmarks. Moving forward, this review process will be supplemented by input from practicing P1 classroom teachers. The Scottish Government will ensure that this process also includes an assessment of how appealing and intuitive the questions are for children. Questions are then trialled in live assessments before being finally accepted (or rejected). User feedback is included in this review process.*

2c. Clear guidance is available on how the SNSA might be presented in ways that offer P1 children choice and agency, and be interrupted if children need a break, and perhaps a mechanism to record such interruptions [Responsibility: Scottish Government, Education Scotland]

SG response
Accept. *This recommendation is similar to one made by the Independent Review Report. Professional learning and support documents will re-emphasise the ability to stop or break the assessments where it is in the interest of the child. This will also be illustrated in case studies, which will be published on the National Improvement Hub and the SNSA website by March 2020.*

It is already possible to obtain some information from the system on the proportion of assessments resumed (i.e. following a break). This information can be broken down further to provide a comparison between the propensity for P1 assessments to be paused and resumed versus the propensity at other stages. We will work with the P1 Practitioner Forum to identify the information they would find most valuable in relation to assessment breaks, before exploring with ACER the practicalities of recording that data. A question will also be added to the SNSA teacher survey for 2019/20 regarding how frequently children undertook an assessment in more than one sitting.

2d. Worked examples are made available detailing how SNSA data might be triangulated with observational data from play-based activities and interactions to provide robust evidence of learning and/or attainment, with a choice of sustainable and time-efficient recording formats [Responsibility: Scottish Government, Education Scotland]

SG response
Accept. *The Scottish Government and Education Scotland will work with local authorities and practitioners to identify and develop case studies specifically highlighting how the SNSA and play-based learning approaches work together. These will be made available on the National Improvement Hub and SNSA website by March 2020.*

The implementation of the SNSA

3a. Implementation guidance and training are available online, outside of the SNSA system and maybe on a protected forum such as 'GLOW', so that all educators can access it easily at a time that is convenient to them [Responsibility: Scottish Government, Education Scotland]

SG response
Accept. *The implementation and training guidance has been made available online on GLOW. This allows teachers with a GLOW account to access the material at any time that is convenient to them. The Scottish Government will continue to refine this guidance and will publish information on how to access it prior to the start of the new school session in August 2019.*

3b. A list of the online training opportunities about how to implement SNSA is available, with clear signposts to indicate the suitability for class teachers, other school staff, senior school leaders or local authority staff [Responsibility: Scottish Government]

SG response
Accept. *Action has already been taken in response to this recommendation. The SNSA platform has updated guidance which better signposts the purposes, scope and range of training materials available and for which professionals these are best suited. Links are now provided from a single contents page to relevant and appropriate materials for particular professionals.*

3c. Online staff development videos are made available on how SNSA implementation has been organised in different school/class situations, including play-based and non play-based classrooms. They should offer advice on using the practice assessments as playful activities and

on children choosing the school technology they use for the SNSA *[Responsibility: Scottish Government, Education Scotland]*

SG response
Accept. *A number of case studies have been developed, and made available on the National Improvement Hub and the SNSA website, describing the successful experiences and actions of professionals taking forward SNSA presentations in different and varied school settings and with different age groups of learners. The Scottish Government and Education Scotland will continue working with schools to provide additional video materials that offer guidance and advice in support of developing professional understanding of the SNSA in play-based and non play-based contexts in schools. These will be made available on the National Improvement Hub and the SNSA website by March 2020.*

3d. That school staff make their own decisions about when and how SNSAs are conducted, and how the SNSA data are woven into professional conversations about children, teaching and the curriculum [Responsibility: Scottish Government, Local Authorities, Schools]

SG response
Accept. *The Scottish Government will restate its clear policy position that it is for teachers, in consultation with schools and local authorities, to decide when SNSAs should be presented to learners. In addition, the advice developed by the Scottish Government in conjunction with local authorities on school based policies (recommendation 1c), will cover the use of SNSA data within professional conversations.*

3e. That clear expectations are set that senior leaders in schools will discuss the SNSA implementation arrangements with P1 class teachers, and will seek their views and advice on this and on working with particular children. [Responsibility: Scottish Government, Local Authorities, Schools]

SG response
Accept. *The Scottish Government will recommend, as part of the guidance for schools on developing a school based policy (recommendation 1c) that school senior leaders should discuss implementation arrangements with class teachers.*

3f. A succinct 'Implementation Checklist' is published which includes an 'Administration Checklist' of practical things senior leaders and class teachers should consider/decide before implementing the SNSAs [Responsibility: Scottish Government, Education Scotland]

SG response
Accept. *Current support materials, in Courses 1 and 5, contain guidance in the form of pre-assessment checklists for professionals considering presentation of the SNSAs to learners, including children and young people who have additional support needs and those learning English as an additional language. We will draw the advice together in a single location to enable professionals to access this readily and at a time of their choosing. In addition, the Scottish Government and Education Scotland will consult practitioners and senior leaders on the development of a checklist for school leaders. These will be made available on the National Improvement Hub and the SNSA website by March 2020.*

3g. Stronger guidance is made available to inform how teachers interact with, and support, children during the SNSA, particularly on: how much help to give P1 children; the kinds of help not to give; how to choose the materials provided; when it is appropriate to offer a break, and specific kinds of support for children with Additional Support Needs or English as an Additional Language [Responsibility: Scottish Government, Education Scotland]

SG response
Accept.   The SNSA Help Section, available to practitioners working with the SNSA, provides specific advice on supporting children and young people who are undertaking SNSAs, including the extent to which support can be provided. This advice will be reviewed for the start of the new academic session with a view to providing further clarification on the help and support teachers can provide to individuals during an assessment. In addition, we will provide case studies highlighting situations in which a break might be of benefit to the child or young person undertaking the assessment. These will be made available through the National Improvement Hub and the SNSA website by March 2020.

3h. That there are time-efficient ways for educators to record their professional observations of P1 children's SNSA experience if they so wish. These may be paper-based and outside the SNSA system [Responsibility: Schools]

SG response
Accept. The Scottish Government and partners will gather examples of school practice where teachers have recorded professional observations of P1 children's SNSA experience. These will be made available on the National Improvement Hub and the SNSA website by March 2020.

<u>The use of SNSA data</u>

4a. Training opportunities are available to help practitioners explore the nature of SNSA data, its links to Curriculum for Excellence and the information it can generate about the learning of both individual children and groups of children [Responsibility: Scottish Government]

SG response
Accept.   Current SNSA professional learning courses, specifically Courses 2 and 4, provide opportunities for professionals to explore the diagnostic information available to teachers within SNSA reports and how this articulates with wider assessment evidence. Course 4 supports professionals when examining data within different school contexts, identifies opportunities to see patterns in learning where strengths or development needs might be suggested and offers advice on how best to approach data analysis and for which purpose it is required. These courses will be reviewed and refined on an ongoing basis, in response to user feedback.

The recommendations in 4a and 4d are similar to one made by the Independent Review Report on improved access to high quality training. As set out in our response to the Independent Review, the Scottish Government and ACER will work with local authorities to develop the range and frequency of training programmes. While it is a matter for local authorities to indicate to ACER their needs and preferences as regards the delivery of SNSA training, the Scottish Government and ACER will continue to encourage wide uptake, highlighting to practitioners the

Review findings regarding the benefits of training in terms of a heightened understanding of the value of the diagnostic information generated by the system.

4b. Clear signals in the SNSA reporting and recording formats to show which items contribute to professional judgements about which experiences, outcomes and benchmarks. This will widen understanding of what the SNSA does and doesn't do. [Responsibility: Scottish Government, Education Scotland]

SG response
Partially accept. *Education Scotland has already begun discussions with ACER around the language used in item descriptors, with a view to aligning the language of the descriptors more closely with the language of Curriculum for Excellence. This work will continue to influence the development of the assessment reports over the next 2 academic sessions. While the Scottish Government and Education Scotland recognise the importance of ensuring the language used within the SNSA is understandable and recognisable within the context of the Scottish curriculum, we would wish to guard against articulating a direct link between specific questions and individual experiences, outcomes or benchmarks. This could risk establishing a tick box approach to the SNSA, and would not be in the spirit of our assessment model for the broad general education, which encourages the bundling of experiences and outcomes for assessment purposes.*

4c. The publication of case studies and exemplar material showing how educators use the SNSA data and triangulate it with other assessment evidence to make robust, holistic judgements and detailed analysis of a child's learning [Responsibility: Scottish Government, Education Scotland]

SG response
Accept. *The Scottish Government will continue to develop case studies which will highlight the use of SNSA data as part of the school improvement process. These will be made available on the National Improvement Hub and the SNSA website by March 2020.*

4d. Online staff development materials showing effective and time-efficient use of SNSA data for analytical and responsive teaching, class planning, school management and professional evaluation purposes [Responsibility: Scottish Government, Education Scotland]

SG response
Accept. *As set out in the response to 4a above the Scottish Government and Education Scotland will review existing materials and develop new guidance to support teachers in the effective use of SNSA data. These will be made available on the National Improvement Hub and the SNSA website by March 2020.*

4e. The publication of technical reports on SNSA data and on teacher judgement data to assist educators, researchers, Education Scotland and local authority staff in making educationally sound decisions about how to respond to children's needs, and not overplay the reliability or predictive capacity of the standardised assessment data [Responsibility: Scottish Government]

SG response
Partially accept. *The Scottish Government in conjunction with ACER UK will consider the possibility of publishing technical reports on SNSA data.*

4f. Detailed measures are in place to avoid the SNSA becoming 'high stakes' for children or for educators. This might include creating a 'Code of Practice' for data-use that outlines responsible, ethical, attainment discussions and decision-making processes, with systemic checks and balances that prevent misuse [Responsibility: Scottish Government, Education Scotland]

SG response
Accept. *In response to David Reedy's Independent Review of the P1 SNSA, the Scottish Government has undertaken to produce a draft code of practice/practical framework which sets out what SNSA data in P1 should productively be used for and what it should not, including a statement about purpose. The scope of this work will be widened to include all stages of SNSA presentation. The draft will be made available by autumn 2019, and will then be consulted upon widely, including through channels such as the P1 Practitioner Forum and the Scottish Education Council.*

Clearly, in order for us to engage meaningfully with practitioners and wider stakeholders, it will not be possible to finalise this framework in time for the beginning of the 2019/20 school session. We believe, however, it will be possible to produce a final version of the framework by March 2020. Because the framework will focus on the purpose and use of data generated by the SNSA, rather than the assessment content or experience itself, we do not believe its introduction at a mid-point in the delivery of year three of the SNSAs would materially affect or disadvantage those learners who have already undertaken the assessment. Consultation will, however, include the invitation of views on an appropriate timeline for final publication.

4g. That the teaching unions and school/local authority staff work to establish a forum for educators to debate ethical data-use, to discuss any concerns about data-use that may breach the Code of Practice, and processes that allow them to raise concerns with those who can act on them [Responsibility: Scottish Government, Education Scotland, Local Authorities, Schools, Practitioners, Unions]

SG response
Partially accept*. The Scottish Government will engage with a range of stakeholders to consider the ethical use of data on an ongoing basis, using existing channels for consultation, outreach and engagement, including our quarterly National Improvement Framework programme meetings with the professional associations. Concerns about breaches of the Code of Practice can also be addressed during the annual telephone calls between the Scottish Government, Education Scotland and Directors of Education, to discuss issues related to the National Improvement Framework.*