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The Quality in Education Centre

*A Curriculum for Excellence: A Review of  
Approaches to Recognising Wider Achievement*

**Final Report**

*May 2007*

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## Executive summary

### 1. Introduction

This is the report of work undertaken by the Quality in Education Centre of the University of Strathclyde on behalf of Learning and Teaching Scotland into Recognising Wider Achievements of young people both in and out of school.

Desk research and empirical research were undertaken in January and February 2007. This short timescale inevitably limited the extent of the work undertaken. The views of stakeholders were sought through interviews and questionnaires.

### 2. Issues from literature review

**Definitions of Wider Achievement** have been emerging in the UK since four key areas were identified by the DfES (DfES, 1984). These were recognised in 'National Records of Achievement' and included recognition of achievement (exams and other activities), motivation and personal development, curriculum organisation, and a document of record that is 'recognised and valued'. Further policy development in the 1990s and into this century raised further issues including the range of activities and variation in types of learning, equity of access to opportunities, and challenges of assessment.

Several **parallel developments internationally** have presented interesting solutions to some of these issues, but generally these programmes are relatively young. Key priorities and approaches include:

- The need for clear relevance of activities, and the associated learning, with the 'real-life' context of the learner (Queensland 2004).
- The importance of the provision of structured opportunities which can be seen to positively influence life planning (Feinstein 2006).
- The recognition that there is the potential for wider activities to address issues of dissatisfaction with school (Mahoney 2004).
- A consistent recognition that there is a difference in status between wider achievement and curricular education (Ecclestone 2004), and even within the range of wider activities there can appear a hierarchy of activities which are perceived as 'better' or more clearly supporting learning.

The **literature around wider achievement** can be best understood against three categories of 'value' as proposed by Andersson (2004):

- Exchange value: the value placed on wider achievement by 'end users' such as further and higher education or employers
- Intrinsic value: the degree to which the learning generated by wider activity is relevant to and understood by the learner
- Utility value: recognition of competence and knowledge by the assessment system

In addition to these core areas, the literature raised **several related issues**, including the potential for part-time work to be recognised, and the implication and equity of this (Hart, 2004), and the particular relevance of wider achievement in support of particular areas within *A Curriculum for Excellence*, such as the development of 'active citizens'

**Assessment is a key area of importance** within the literature, with several key issues emerging, including the appropriateness of assessing wider achievement generally. First, that the process of assessment itself will provide value to activities, and generate priorities for pupils, which may work against their own motivations for taking part in wider activities (Kumar 2001). Second, that assessment may raise issues of disengagement with classroom

education, where pupils do not wish to share activities with their schools, or where their experience of assessment has been sufficiently negative to discourage them from taking part in wider activities if they expect assessment (Boud 1995). Finally, there is considerable investigation into assessment models, in an attempt to identify appropriate, effective, and valid assessment practice for wider activities (ANTA 2004 and Skule 2004).

A solution to the assessment debate has been proposed in **the concept of 'dynamic assessment'** (Glover and Thomas, 1999). The principle of dynamic assessment is that the primary objective of the assessment process is to inform teaching, and that the visual, linguistic, behavioural and social clues exhibited by pupils in a learning activity can be used to assess the pupils' understanding of the curriculum area(s). Dynamic assessment matches closely an 'outcomes' based model, where the transferable learning is assessed, as distinct from the wider activity itself.

The challenge of **investment of time and resource** into recognising wider achievement is discussed in the literature, and research suggests that programmes for assessing and recording wider achievement can be offset first by a reduction in associated exam preparation and 'mock exam' time, and further that progressive investment in assessment systems could be best applied to more comprehensive assessment systems that take into account a wider range of learning and learning contexts (Harlen and Crick 2003, Clarke et al 2000, and William et al 2004).

### **3. Issues from research into views of stakeholders**

The majority of stakeholders thought that it was very important to recognise young people's wider achievements. However, many saw it in terms of celebrating and acknowledging success.

Some emphasised the importance of it being a reflective process for young people so that they were able to recognise their own learning and learning needs. To encourage this, any approach to recording achievement needs to go beyond gathering evidence and recording past events; young people need to be encouraged to be proactive in deciding what is relevant to record and why they are recording it. The purpose should be that they know about themselves and can give a clear explanation to others of what they have achieved. Many recognise the value of e-portfolio approaches but it is important to have a variety of ways of capturing young peoples' reflections and achievements to suit the needs of learners.

Motivating young people to reflect on their learning and to record it in some way may be challenging. Over a third of teachers, over a half of pupils and almost three-quarters of parents asked thought that keeping a record of achievement should be voluntary. Many of the young people asked were not keen on schools being involved in what they were doing outside of school. An approach which integrated reflection as part of the learning process rather than an extra activity may encourage their involvement.

Although teachers were not supportive of adults other than teachers acting as mentors to help young people reflect on their achievements, this is an aspect which could be usefully explored to alleviate teachers concerns over workload. The role and contribution of youth organisations may be of value here, given their emphasis on providing more informal learning opportunities and more informal ways of relating to young people.

About one-third of the pupils asked reported that they did not take part in the in-school activities identified as providing opportunities for developing wider achievements. There was also concern that young people who did not have supportive family or community environments might be disadvantaged. Teachers were strongly in agreement that schools

and local authorities had a responsibility for ensuring that children have the opportunity to develop non-academic qualities and a wide range of skills and abilities.

Views were divided on the value of more formal recognition of wider achievements through guidelines, a common framework and accreditation. The majority of educational representatives favoured guidelines, particularly in relation to how to link wider achievements to the four capacities of *A Curriculum for Excellence*. Many thought that accreditation would enhance the status of achievements and, for youth organisations, the status of the informal learning opportunities they provide. However, this presented a dilemma of achieving credibility without enforcing conformity and uniformity. With respect to young people, both formal and informal recognition of achievement were considered valuable, but they should be free to choose which approach suits their needs.

The small sample of FE and HE admissions tutors and employers indicated that they did not want to view portfolios of evidence, particularly those that appear to conform to a set of guidelines. The emphasis of end-users was that they would like young people to be able to present themselves, or information about themselves, in individual and innovative ways.

### **3. Links to *A Curriculum for Excellence* and emerging issues**

*A Curriculum for Excellence (2004)* provided the impetus for this study. The identification of 4 purposes of the curriculum - successful learners; confident individuals; effective contributors and responsible citizens - carried with it an expectation that as the range of skills and dispositions which young people might be expected to acquire was widening, then new ways of recognising achievement beyond the traditional summative test or examination, might need to be explored.

This project set out 'to make recommendations on the basis of evidence about approaches to recognising wider achievement in Scotland'. The following key issues have emerged.

- The use of the term 'wider achievement' does not signal parity of esteem with currently certificated achievements, and, therefore, it is suggested that 'recognising achievement' should be the simple, unequivocal heading.
- A clearer definition of what is meant by such achievement will come through ongoing engagement with all key stakeholders. Evidence suggests that emphasis should be on the learning gained through a wide range of activities and recognised through reflection by the learner.
- The process needs to have the learner genuinely at the centre with a focus on self-referenced progress as opposed to comparison with others.
- While teachers will have a large part to play, there are others in the community who can support young people in the reflective process. This has implications for co-ordination and communication as well as training and development for those who take on this role.
- Employers, universities and colleges need to be committed to taking account of all achievements and encourage young people to present them.
- Processes used to assist both the recognition and recording of achievements, including the use of e-portfolios, need to be flexible enough to suit individual needs and to allow the young people to have real ownership. Evidence from the past suggests that the process should not be too time-consuming or bureaucratic.

This study suggests that there is willingness within many parts of the system in Scotland to make recognising achievement succeed where other attempts in the past have failed.

# ***A Curriculum for Excellence***

## **A review of approaches to recognising wider achievement**

### **1 Introduction**

Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS) commissioned the Quality in Education Centre (QIE) of the University of Strathclyde, in collaboration with Open Futures and 3Square, to review evidence in relation to various aspects of recording and reporting the wider achievements of children and young people. This work will contribute to the development of *A Curriculum for Excellence*.

#### **1.1 The aims of the research**

In the document *A Curriculum for Excellence: progress and proposals* (SEED 2006), it is stated that: *'one of the most important aspects of a Curriculum for Excellence is the need to be able, for each child or young person, to give recognition to a broader range of their achievements than we do at present. We need to develop straightforward and simple ways of doing this, especially so that the processes of assessment do not distort the intrinsic value and satisfaction of achievement'*.

In relation to this, the aims of the research are to:

1. collect and analyse the views of stakeholders and users about aspects of recognising wider achievement. Stakeholders include authority staff, school management, teachers, pupils, parents, employers, FE and HE providers, and voluntary and statutory agencies that support young people in out of school learning and activities.
2. summarise relevant evidence relating to the issues from previous and existing arrangements and research in Scotland and elsewhere
3. evaluate the likely impact on learners of different approaches
4. report on how the different approaches conform to the principles established within *A Curriculum for Excellence*
5. make recommendations on the basis of the evidence about approaches to recognising wider achievement.

#### **1.2 Research methods**

The research comprised a combination of literature review and documentary analysis to identify the appropriateness and potential of different approaches to recognising wider achievement. In particular, a review of e-portfolios was undertaken by 3Square. Views of stakeholders were sought through interviews with key stakeholders and surveys and through a series of 'Open Space' and 'Appreciative Enquiry' events – information sharing events organised by Open Futures.

##### **1.2.1 Literature reviews and documentary analysis**

A wide range of sources were searched for relevant government documents and academic articles. Sites searched included:

- Scottish Executive (<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/>)
- Department of Education and Skills (<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/contents.shtml>)
- Department of Education, Science and Training (Australia) (<http://www.dest.gov.au/>)
- Ministry of Education (New Zealand) (<http://www.minedu.govt.nz/>)



- Education online (<http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/>)
- ERIC Digest (<http://www.ericdigests.org/>)
- IngentaConnect (<http://www.ingentaconnect.com/>)
- Newspapers ([LexisNexis \(News and Business\)](#))
- OmniFile: Full-Text Select
- BUBL Education links (<http://bubl.ac.uk/link/e/educationlinks.htm>)

In addition to broad searches on learning, assessment and achievement, searches were undertaken using the following search terms:

- recognition and informal learning
  - assessment and informal learning
  - assessment and learning through work
  - recognition and learning through non-school organisations
  - out of school learning and assessment
- 
- assessment and portfolio
  - portfolio and informal learning
  - recognition and personal development planning
- 
- citizenship and informal learning
  - citizenship and learning through work
  - citizenship and learning through non school organisations
  - citizenship and assessment
- 
- enterprise education and assessment
  - enterprise education and informal learning
  - enterprise education and out of school learning

LTS had already consulted with groups of pupils, teachers and parents at a variety of events across Scotland and had engaged a number of schools to inform the process. Lists of points gathered by LTS through various means were passed on to the research team at Strathclyde University and these were used to inform the design of the survey instruments.

### **1.2.2 Seeking views of stakeholders**

#### *Local authorities, schools, pupils and parents*

It was agreed with LTS to locate the research to be completed through authorities and schools in 6 authorities, with schools selected to cover a range of geographical and social factors broadly representative of Scotland. Some authorities volunteered to be part of the study and others were selected following discussion with LTS. Six authorities were approached and 5 agreed to participate. Involvement was sought as follows:

- telephone interview with the officer with responsibility for implementing assessment strategy and, in particular, approaches to recognising wider achievement
- telephone or face-to-face interviews with senior staff in schools within the authority: one secondary, two of its associated primaries and one early years provider
- administration of survey (preferably online)<sup>1</sup> to approximately 30-40 pupils in each of S1, S2, S3 and S4 within the selected secondary school

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<sup>1</sup> Although online completion of the teacher and pupil survey was preferred, paper copies were provided to schools where online completion was not regarded as feasible by the school. In these cases, teachers were supplied with pre-paid envelopes to assist in the return of the questionnaires.

- survey to be completed (preferably online)<sup>1</sup> by primary and secondary teachers and early years providers' staff from the schools identified above
- assistance with the distribution of questionnaires to a sample of parents of pupils in primary, secondary and early years stages, again through the schools identified above<sup>2</sup>.

A range of factors led to a more complex sample selection than the approach proposed originally:

- two special needs schools were included in the research
- in addition to the schools identified for the core of the research activities in schools, local authority contacts in the 5 main authorities were asked to forward a request to participate in the teacher online survey to some more primary schools
- a further 5 authorities were requested to forward the same request to one secondary and its associated primary schools – responses were returned from 4 of those authorities
- during the course of the fieldwork, a further two authorities became engaged in certain aspects of the research
- some schools could not complete the pupil survey work within the timescale of the research.

The participation of authorities is summarised in Table 1.1

**Table 1.1 : Authority participation in aspects of the research**

'Core' authorities	Interviews						Surveys		
	LA	SS	PS	EY	P/EY	SpS	Pup	Par	Teach
Aberdeen	ü	ü	ü		ü		ü	ü	ü
Argyll & Bute	ü	ü	ü		ü		ü	ü	ü
Fife	ü	ü	ü		ü	ü		ü	ü
North Ayrshire	ü	ü	üü	ü		ü		ü	ü
South Lanarkshire	ü	ü	üü	ü			ü	ü	ü
<b>Additional authorities</b>									
North Lanarkshire	ü	ü	ü						
Shetland Isles		ü					ü		
City of Edinburgh									ü
Glasgow City									ü
Highland									ü
West Lothian									ü
Total	6	7	8	2	3	2	See below		

Key: LA = local authority      SS = secondary school      PS = primary school  
 EY = early years      P/EY = primary and early years combined      SpS = special school

Target populations for the pupils and parents were determined by a set number to be distributed per school; target populations for teachers were based on estimated numbers of teachers in the targeted schools (based on headteacher, local authority and Scottish Schools online FTE data).

- For pupils the target population was 960; 275 responses were received, representing a 27% return.
- For parents the target population was 685; 228 responses were received, representing a 33% return.
- The target population for teachers was around 1000; 192 responses were received, representing a 19% return.

<sup>2</sup> Parents were supplied with pre-paid envelopes so that the questionnaire could be returned direct to QIE and thereby avoid additional work for the schools in collecting and forwarding the surveys.

Both pupil and teacher return rates were low, but it was possible to give people only a very short timeframe of 2 weeks to complete the surveys, a timeframe which took in the mid-term break. Therefore, given the many demands on teachers and schools, we are very grateful that so many took the time to respond to the survey.

### *Statutory and voluntary organisations*

The views of key organisations with interest in the achievements of young people, including disadvantaged groups, were sought by interview and survey.

Representatives of the following organisations were interviewed:

- HMle
- Careers Scotland
- Scottish Throughcare and Aftercare Alliance
- Fairbridge in Scotland
- The Prince's Trust Scotland
- YouthLink Scotland
- **sportscotland** (Youth Sports Trust)

Additionally, the wider views of youth organisations and further and higher education admissions staff were sought by surveys.

The views of youth organisations are important in relation to recognising young people's achievements as they are key providers of informal out-of-school learning opportunities for young people. Responses were received from 63 organisations, 29 (46%) voluntary and 34 (54%) local authority. Information about the survey was sent to 46 voluntary organisations, so this represents a 63% return. It is not possible to say how many local authorities are represented, as the name of the organisation was asked for but not the specific local authority, and not all local authority respondents included the name of their authority. Also, where names were given, it was noted that there was more than one response from some authorities. (At least 12 authorities are identifiable by name; therefore, more than 12 responded.) However, overall, this can be taken as a good response rate.

An invitation to participate in the survey was sent to all Further Education college principals with the request to pass it to relevant staff. A similar invitation was sent to 25 admissions officers in 18 higher education establishments. 46 responses were received – 16 (35%) from further education, 30 (65%) from higher education.

### *Employers*

Five key employers' organisations were contacted asking them to take part in interviews, but within the timescale of the project it was difficult to establish contact with relevant representatives in order to carry out interviews. Therefore, identified contacts in the 5 organisations plus a further 10 businesses were emailed inviting them to complete a short survey by email. However, only two responses were received.

## **1.3 Research questions**

The broad set of questions, which was customised for each stakeholder group and data collection format, was:

- What do stakeholders understand by the term 'wider achievement' as it is currently being used?

- What should count as, and what kinds of activities lead to, such 'wider achievement'?
- For whom is recognising 'wider achievement' important?
- Who values the recognition of 'wider achievement'?
- How are such 'wider achievements' currently recognised and what do stakeholders consider to be the most effective approaches? (Both for school initiated and out of school achievements)
- How else can 'wider achievement' be recognised?
- What effects does recognising 'wider achievements' have on young people?
- What are the challenges in developing this agenda?

#### **1.4 Organisation of the report**

Chapter 2 presents the findings from the literature review.

Chapter 3 presents the findings from the interview and survey research. More detailed accounts of these are given in the appendices to the report.

Chapter 4 link the study to *A Curriculum for Excellence* and highlights emerging issues.

## 2. Review of the literature

Even as early as 1984, the UK government attempted to define, in policy terms, the nature and purpose of recognising wider achievement (DfES, 1984), although the practice had been developing in schools throughout the 1970s (Broadfoot, 1998a). The DfES document, 'Records of Achievement – a statement of policy', described four key areas of practice which are still relevant today:

- *Recognition of achievement.* Records and recording systems should recognise, acknowledge and give credit for what pupils have achieved and experienced, not just in terms of public examinations but in other ways as well.
- *Motivation and personal development.* Such systems should contribute to pupils' personal development and progress by improving their motivation, providing encouragement, and increasing their awareness of strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities.
- *Curriculum organisation.* The recording process should help schools to... consider how well their curriculum, teaching and organization enable pupils to develop the general, practical and social skills which are to be recorded.
- *A document of record.* Young people leaving school or college should take with them a...document of record which is recognised and valued by employers and institutions of further and higher education. This should provide a more rounded picture of candidates for jobs or courses than can be provided by a list of examination results.

As these categories have shaped policy in the two decades since they were first published, it seems appropriate to consider the existing literature of wider achievement in these contexts. This review will look first at how wider achievement is described, and some methods of presenting these achievements. The second section will look at how learners fit into the process of recognition, including not only what they are learning, but how they contextualize and organize that learning. The final section addresses the last two categories, and considers recording and assessment of wider achievements and the impact on schools and end users.

### 2.1 Describing 'wider achievement'

Wider achievement is a very inclusive term, and difficult to define as it encompasses several issues and challenges. First, is the comparison in the literature between recognising wider achievement and recognising informal learning. Whilst wider achievement is broader than simple informal learning, it is worth noting that the breadth of learning taking place in the wider context is also 'typically of a different kind from the learning prescribed by the content of formal education courses' (Hager, 1998). Consequently, wider achievement does not fit very well within the narrow view of knowledge that is currently taken for granted in formal education (Hager, 1998).

Second, wider achievement as a term comprises several elements:

- *Wider skills and knowledge:* what it is that is being learned, how it is woven into but is distinct from the prescribed curriculum
- *Wider activities:* the types of activities, inside the classroom, inside school but outside the school day, and outside of school, which contribute to wider skills and knowledge
- *Assessment:* the measurement and recording, by the learner, by teachers, and by 'end users' (e.g. progression routes, employment, etc.) of the wider skills and knowledge.

Generally, the practice and associated research has focused on defined elements within each of these, such as assessment practice of employability skills, or how participation in wider activities might improve attainment. There is little research available that considers wider achievement as a holistic concept and, even within these three aspects as defined above, there is little research that looks at the issues, challenges and opportunities of wider achievement as a learning practice beyond a pedagogical issue or a route to lifelong learning or employment. The research presented here attempts to unpick some of this fragmented and highly focused work to give a more general view of the implications of the evidence so far on wider achievement as a policy for learning.

National Records of Achievement (NRA) were established in England and Wales in 1984, with the intention of developing a more comprehensive record of all of a pupil's skills and achievements (Broadfoot, 1998b). This was intended primarily to provide alternative opportunities to evidence learning and success for under-achieving pupils. However, these early NRAs were essentially recording initiatives, although they did have an alternative objective of increasing learner motivation and encouraging effective learning strategies. These were based heavily on Scottish profiling initiatives from the 1970s (SCRE, 1977), which were deliberately distinguished from assessment practice, and encourage young people to record their own experiences and achievements. The raising of the profile of vocational education in the late 1970s, however, engendered a need for NRAs to provide more than a personal record of interests and achievements. NRAs consequently became a more robust and recognised recording and reporting system. To generate evidence for these NRAs, curriculum and pedagogy also changed, with a greater emphasis on transferable skills. It is this conjoined environment that has driven NRAs since (Broadfoot, 1998b).

In 1996, the Dearing Review (Dearing, 1996) recommended that NRAs be restructured, with a greater focus on the process of recording achievement as an element of personal development in its own right, and to increase stakeholder recognition. The NRAs were replaced by Progress Files, piloted in 1998-99 in parts of England and Wales, which attempted to establish a structured portfolio approach to how learners plan, manage, and record their learning. Whilst Progress Files did not explicitly address wider achievement, they were a move towards recording the same kinds of personal and social skill development of wider achievement. Progress Files did show an immediate improvement in learners' motivation, but they were not found to have any substantial or consistent positive impact on learners' attitudes to lifelong learning, or on their levels of certificated achievement. What is significant in this context, though, is that Progress Files did encourage learners to consider and record 'those wider skills and achievements which were not certificated' (Hall and Powney, 2003).

The policy context for wider achievement was further developed in 2004 by the DfES through the work of the Tomlinson Committee (the Working Group on 14-19 reform) (DfES, 2004). However, despite the work of the Tomlinson Committee, as with *A Curriculum for Excellence* there is as yet no *defined* connection between wider achievement and assessment or formal recognition, although there have been fundamental developments within the curriculum, and arguably a significant impact on pedagogy.

The Tomlinson Committee described 'wider activities' as 'activities usually undertaken outside formal learning time and include the arts; sport and recreation; science and technology; family responsibilities; community service; and part-time employment'. These activities were identified as significant experiential learning, and stated that wider activities were key to 'enriching learners' lives and their engagement as active citizens'. Whilst recommending that wider activities should be an entitlement for all 14-19 learners, the Tomlinson Committee fell short of identifying exactly how learning takes place within these

activities, and how that learning can be transferred to the classroom or even to a structured process of reflection and personal development.

The Tomlinson Committee did, however, identify some significant challenges for the concept of recognising wider activities:

- a wide range of activities, within which there is considerable variation in the types of learning that may take place
- the unfairness of making wider activities a requirement for attainment
- the challenge of assessment of wider activities.

Significantly, the Tomlinson Committee recognised that part of the appeal of these activities to young people was their distinction from school, and that formal assessment – or even a requirement on the young person to disclose and record their wider activities – was to be discouraged (Hart, 2006). In any case, the recommendations of the Tomlinson report were not fully adopted and applied. However, the importance of recognising and assessing some of the ‘wider skills’ these activities developed and represented was accepted, and ‘personal skills’, ‘employability skills’, and ‘thinking and knowing skills’ are increasingly a feature across the 14-19 curriculum in England, although there is still no consistent structure to assess the contribution of ‘wider activities’ to the development of ‘wider skills’. Indeed, it is the recognition of the learning that is taking place in wider activities, and how that is recorded, assessed and developed, that appears to be the main challenge for wider achievement policy and practice.

In Scotland, linked curriculum, assessment, and wider learning guidelines have been developing since *Curriculum and Assessment in Scotland: a policy for the 1990s* was published in 1987 (Hutchinson and Hayward, 2005). Today, wider achievement is neatly woven into both curriculum policy (*A Curriculum for Excellence*) and innovative assessment practice (*Assessment is for Learning* programme). The literature reviewed below has been selected to provide useful research, evidence and parallels within the context of recognising wider achievement in the environment of these two initiatives.

A comparable model for implementing recognition of wider achievement as part of fundamental curriculum change was developed in Australia as part of the ‘New Basics’ initiative. This initiative was piloted in Queensland in 2000, in 38 schools. The underlying principle for the New Basics approach was the premise that:

*...to get the right things happening in classrooms, there must be an alignment of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. And the alignment of these three must be in practices, not merely in statements of intention or expectation* (Queensland, 2004).

The New Basics themselves, similar to *A Curriculum for Excellence*, are educational outcomes which reflect the skills and knowledge needed by students and communities served by schools. These outcomes were defined not by describing behavioural objectives, knowledge, or process outcomes, but by ‘envisioning the kind of life...the education system wants to contribute to and build’, or a ‘futures-oriented curriculum’. The outcomes are reached through a range of activities called ‘Rich Tasks’ that provide a scaffold for a sequence of steps, and each of which has specific assessment techniques.

The pilot itself was well received by schools, and the educational system of Queensland as a whole was generally supportive. The most significant positive changes occurred at the extremes of the learning spectrum, i.e. in special schools and with gifted and talented students. The Rich Tasks ‘also provide opportunities for a broad range of students to

experience activities that are deep, connected to the world, substantial, and coherent (Queensland, 2004, p7). However, the programme experienced some challenges which, given the comparability to *A Curriculum for Excellence*, are worth citing here:

- Confusion about how the New Basics fit with traditional, established curriculum and standardised requirements (e.g. exams)
- The application of New Basics as a whole solution, i.e. the New Basics schools did not necessarily see the need to innovate and develop pedagogy if they were applying New Basics; this was also reflected in a learned dependence by some school staff on the New Basics materials instead of deepening teacher professionalism
- A focus on the outcome requirements of the Rich Tasks rather than the operational fields of knowledge they required.

## 2.2 Position of the learner

The first question to consider with regard to the relationship between wider activities and learning is whether there is any proven link between these activities and fundamental positive changes to a child or young person's development. A recent study (Feinstein *et al*, 2006) looked at young people who took part in a 1986 study of wider activities, and attempted to make correlations with their social and personal positions in later life. Despite the difficulties such a long term study posed, the study did find some important correlations, although the most significant finding was that 'most of the dramatic changes that occurred to young people's prospects in the labour market happened in the late 1970s preceding the period when the cohort reached age 16' (p323). This supports the theory that youth clubs and secondary school and college interventions may be reaching young people too late to effect any significant positive change. However, the study did find that 'provision of common objectives, a range of curricula such as sport and music, and engagement in structured...activities may provide developmental opportunities that can significantly transform their life paths at key transition points.' (p324). The suggestion is, then, that the provision of structured wider activities can effect positive change, but it needs to be available from an early age, and for older children, whilst 'leisure contexts matter in young people's development...how they matter can only be fully understood in terms of the context of young people's lives that preceded participation' (p321).

The study also offered some cautionary warnings: first, the recognition that for many young people the attraction of their wider activities of choice was precisely the lack of structure and connection with school. Again, this was identified as reflecting a pattern of development that preceded participation, and reinforces the importance of providing positive experiences through structured activities at a young age. Second, the authors caution that, particularly in the case of very unstructured activities for older children, such as youth clubs, there is a tendency for the developments of behaviours to be significantly influenced by other young people taking part in the activity, rather than the activity itself. A parallel study in Sweden found that, 'if those young people are on a track out of education and towards offending, then the interactional context provided by youth clubs is, on balance, likely to strengthen rather than weaken this tendency' (Mahoney *et al*, 2004).

Research by Ecclestone (2004) goes further to suggest that outcomes-based assessment regimes can inhibit the learner developing cultural and social capital, in that they attempt to proscribe what cultural and social capital students should aspire to attain (Ecclestone and Pryor, 2003), and therefore it becomes less of a development process and more akin to traditional curriculum. Also, it creates the risk of conflicting objectives; that is, the capital valued by employers or further education may not be comparable to that which is described by the school in terms of the outcomes assessed. Ecclestone recognises the influence that



the students' prior experiences – and other factors such as race, class, and gender – may have in shaping their response to outcomes-based assessments. In other words, the students' environment and history will influence their ideas about what 'desirable' cultural and social capital might be, whatever the assessment methods. Moreover, students will establish 'comfort zones' within assessment, where they will limit their exploration of concepts to a 'habitus' within which they feel secure and have an understanding of their place.

### *Recognising the learning*

Another issue to consider in the context of the position of the learner is how readily children and young people can recognise the learning that is taking place outside of the formal curriculum. Piaget (1969) described the pupil as a scientist who tries to understand the world through meaningful learning as an activity of constructing ideas and not as a process of memorizing information, which suggests that pupils could in fact learn more effectively in the contextual environment of wider activities. Although Hager (1998) suggested that 'learners themselves are often unaware of the significance, range and depth of their informal learning', this has been refuted by more recent studies. A study of the situational learning taking place over an extended period of time in a surf club in Australia was the subject of a study by Light and Nash (2006). This study is significant in that it showed how readily young people identify the learning that is taking place in their out-of-school activities, without the interventions of practitioners to enable this process. One young person went so far as to say:

*'What you learn or teach at the club you can see the relevance right then and there...But school is not the same because you can't always see the relevance or the point of what you learn. Not immediately anyway'.*

The learners' involvement in the recording and assessment process is long established as a significant factor in learner motivation and engagement. Even in the 1990s, schools observed that the activity of NRAs 'increased pupil self motivation...and made pupils more pro-active in their own learning' (Somekh *et al*, 1996). Whilst the external value, or status, of the NRA was unclear, pupils valued it. It is unfortunate that the NRA was not clearly endorsed and validated by education authorities and external users, when the value of the process to schools and learners was, and still is, clear:

*Profiles, records of achievement, personal development plans, provide their own mechanisms and templates through which experience is processed, interpreted, and coded...[this] provides a ...discourse which confers expertise and authority, so self managing learners acquire status – as individuals in control of their own learning, and expertise – as having exclusive access to their own identity and experience (Harrison, 2000, p318).*

## **2.3 Recording and assessment of wider achievement**

A further question concerns the establishment of value for assessment and recognition of wider achievement. In this context, it has been noted that there is a need to further describe the nature of value that is being assessed. In the development of processes to recognise prior learning in Sweden (Andersson *et al*, 2004), several different kinds of value were defined:

- *Exchange value*: recognition of competence and knowledge for employment or admission to further/higher education

- *Intrinsic value*: when individuals recognise their competence and knowledge and acquire greater self esteem
- *Utility value*: recognition of competence and knowledge by the assessment system itself.

### *Exchange value*

The establishment of value for 'end users' of wider achievement assessments goes further than the processes developed and implemented in schools; it needs to recognise the behaviours and attitudes of these end users and seek to accommodate these. A study conducted into employment of young people in Cumbria investigated the effect of employer behaviour and attitudes on the career directions and aspiration of school leavers (Canny, 2004). In Cumbria, the vast majority (90%) of employers relied upon local labour, recruiting through familiar local networks, such as advertisements in the local paper, contact with schools and colleges and word of mouth. Furthermore, the majority of appointments made of young people were to low-skilled elementary occupations, where technical and other qualifications were seen as less relevant. Canny went further to discover that 'considering the importance of informal networks and local reputations when accessing jobs, it is likely that rural employers will disregard lack of qualifications if the young person has been recommended to them' (p508).

Herein is another element to exchange value: what is it that the end users are looking for? In the Cumbrian study (Canny, 2004), whilst there were a few examples within sectors where technical and other qualifications were seen as significant (such as manufacturing), generally employers indicated that 'the most important skills required from their young workers were adaptability to the demands of the job' and 'enthusiasm, interpersonal skills, basic work disciplines and a positive attitude'. Moreover, 'it may also indicate that employers are willing to disregard educational qualifications, if individuals display other positive work attributes'.

The debate on the degree to which higher education institutions can and will recognise alternative forms of knowledge and learning is the subject of international debate. A programme established in Northern Ireland in the late 1990s, NICATS, found that

*there must be concern...that selectors at [higher education] institutions will be unwilling to adopt new forms of language when discussing forms of knowledge, or to accept that the established bodies of knowledge created within institutions may not fully reflect the epistemologies existing outside the academic domain' (O'Hagan et al, 2005).*

Systems to recognise formal and informal learning experiences remain developmental in higher education institutions. This is in contrast to the vocational sector (including the voluntary sector), which

*offers a degree of flexibility that allows students to present portfolio-based evidence from a negotiated set of instances...and offers the student opportunities for personal development through a focus on achievements-based approach to prior learning' (p35).*

In Australia, 'an unresolved issue is the reconciliation of the developmental continua approach of the compulsory years with the typical merit ratings approach of the post-compulsory years' (Cumming and Maxwell, 2004).

A consequence of this is the issue of whether higher education assessment practice is progressing the foundation of lifelong learning and inclusive assessment that is emerging

from school-based approaches to wider achievement. In Australia, it has been recognised that assessment practices in higher education 'did not equip students well for a lifetime of learning and the assessment challenges they would face in the future' (Boud, 2000). In the UK as recently as 2003, the QAA determined that assessment was the area of higher education practice most in need of improvement (QAA, 2004). Deficiencies included a narrow range of assessment methods and an over-reliance on traditional exams. Assessment tasks were found to 'present inadequate intellectual challenge and to fail to distinguish between the demands of different levels of study. Feedback was found to be 'perfunctory and lacking in constructive comment', and often provided too late to enable the students to benefit from it (Baty, 2004).

Higher education institutions have also been found to be lacking in the degree of support for self-assessment. Whilst students have been given increasing responsibility for their own learning in recent years, they have not been given the same responsibility for assessment. Yet, it is recognised that for students to be prepared for lifelong learning, they need to develop the capacity to evaluate their own learning. However, this is an area of rapid development, and improvement in student support for self-assessment, in higher education at least, is likely in the near future (Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick, 2006).

O'Hagan makes the point that higher education still needs to develop further its provision of educational offers to meet the needs of students who have followed this route: for example, expanding part-time offers for those not suited to full-time education, the development of staff to recognise prior achievements and learning, and the recognition of barriers to learning, both practical and curricular, which may have been overcome through the portfolio approach. In other words, if higher education admission practice does become more responsive to recognising wider achievements as a legitimate form of evidence for entrance, will the teaching practice and learning environment also adapt to meet the particular needs and expectations of these learners?

### *Intrinsic value*

The achievement of intrinsic value is dependent on the students' recognition of the learning processes, which may be hidden within the curriculum, or achieved outside of the curriculum, or achieved outside of the curriculum but applied to it. There are examples of established practice which seek to describe the kinds of learning that is taking place, but it is another thing entirely to describe the approaches to the learning itself (Jackson and Ward, 2004). It is through the process of self-reflection that students come to recognise their own learning and to understand it in the context in which it was achieved, and also its application to other contexts. Jackson and Ward argue that this recognition requires more than the 'experiential learning' described by Kolb (1984) and that the reliance on the experiential model assumes that if a prescribed activity (whether curricular or voluntary) is taking place, learning will occur through the process of the activity. Jackson and Ward suggest, however, that a more relevant approach is 'self-regulated learning'. That is, that 'personal success involves more than an innate ability and exposure...it also requires the personal qualities of initiative, persistence, belief in self and self-direction. Ultimately it supports an autodidactic (self-directed) model of learning' (Jackson and Ward, 2004).

The implications of this for wider achievement are that students need not only to experience opportunities for extra-curricular learning and personal development, but also to have the opportunity to reflect upon that activity and the learning that has taken place. Furthermore, the student needs to be in charge of this process to ensure relevance and motivation, and this process, too, needs to be supported. Herein lies the dichotomy between how far the student or the school 'owns' the activity and accounts of the students' experiences, or whether the school's responsibility is restricted to facilitating the learning from these activities.

Processes of recording achievement, particularly in the self-managed context, 'can be read as techniques for shaping particular dispositions and habits by bringing learners under their own critical, self regulating gaze, whilst that gaze is managed by a powerful discourse of individualism, managerialism, and autonomy (Harrison, 2000, p318). Harrison goes on to argue that the process of self-reflection through learner managed learning brings about a form of empowerment to the learner, and an enhancement of the learner's sense of place in the world. However, Harrison cautions that the process of recording 'reflects the priorities and goals of those who design and assess the process and the outcomes', and therefore that the empowerment is one that sits firmly within the limits of what practitioners describe as relevant learning.

The link between the form of assessment and students' overall motivation for learning is also significant. Not only is there a growing recognition of the value of learning to learn and the drive and energy to continue to learning, but there is also empirical evidence that these are positively related to attainment (Harlen and Crick, 2003). An OECD study (OECD, 2001) found that the development of 'core skills' could be positively linked to students' interest in what they were learning, 'to the extent to which their learning strategies help them to create links between new and existing knowledge and to the extent to which they feel in control of their learning' (Harlen and Crick, 2003, p203).

#### *Utility value*

In the establishment of value, Andersson *et al* (2004) go on to describe the fundamentals of establishing trust in the assessment of achievement for these contexts:

*The first is the question of method. There are two main aspects of method, validity and reliability. Validity is about the question of whether it measures what the methods aim to measure and reliability is about how reliable this measuring is. When you want to measure competence and knowledge, which are 'silent' and contextual, you need to have open and flexible methods (p68).*

There are two ambitions as regards methods. The first ambition is to make a just assessment of an individual's competence and knowledge. The second ambition is to make assessments that make possible fair comparisons between individuals (Andersson *et al*, 2004, p68), but perhaps the first question to consider is whether assessment of wider skills is appropriate, and what exactly is the objective of this assessment.

One question that has been posed in relation to assessment of personal skills in areas of higher education for professions such as law and medicine is whether these aspects of personal development should be assessed at all (Toohey, 2002). Whilst there is a clear connection, particularly in medical education, between professional capacity and personal skills, there are arguments against assessment, which apply equally well in the context of younger learners in school. First, there is a risk that the assessment itself will create additional stress and competition, in areas where it may not be appropriate or productive (Driessen and Van der Vleuten, 2000). Second, students may not be honest in self-appraisal and may 'say what the assessors want to hear' (Toohey, 2002). Finally, the assessment may inhibit creativity and the willingness to take risks, which are arguably essential to personal development. Toohey argues that, whilst these are real and significant risks, they do not warrant abandonment of assessment of these aspects of personal development. Instead, assessors should

*...look for ways to change the culture around assessment, redesigning the kinds of tasks students are required to undertake and clarifying the*

*...criteria..., using frequent evaluation of our processes to check the impact on students' learning and being prepared for continuing modification and improvement (Toohey, 2002, p532).*

Furthermore, Toohey points out that students tend to seek value and prioritise their study and development according to assessment schedules (Toohey, 2002). In other words, those activities which are clearly assessed are seen as having more educational value and attract more time. This is not to say that young people would forego leisure or voluntary activities to concentrate on assessed tasks, but that the time and energy they allocate to self reflection and development of conscious learning is prioritized to assessed tasks. This may be particularly true on higher achieving students, for whom exam high attainment is already a priority, at the expense of other areas of learning for personal development. Furthermore, there is a risk that assessment sends out a message of what practitioners believe to be important (Taras, 2002; Boud and Falchikov, 2006), influencing how children and young people establish value for other areas of non-assessed learning (Elton, 1996). The solution, posited by Kumar, is that 'assessment must be about things that matter, and everything which we believe matters should be assessed' (Kumar, 2001).

For some learners, however – particularly the lower achievers – the process of assessment has few positive connotations. For all learners

*...the act of being assessed is one that has considerable emotional resonance. Learners tend not to recollect positive experiences of assessment and commonly do not actively seek out opportunities to assess themselves and be assessed (Boud, 1995).*

In light of this, it is worth considering whether the label 'assessment' has so many negative connotations for learners (including adults, and in the workplace) that 'a new way of talking about how learners monitor their work and make decisions about learning may be needed' (Boud and Falchikov, 2006).

Overall, however, the assessment of wider achievement is challenging in that it is highly contextual, in contrast 'to the generality that is privileged in formal education' (Hager, 1998). Consequently wider skills can be recorded and assessed using a variety of methods and activities. For example, in the study by Toohey (2002), medical students may experience a range of practices to assess 'soft skills', including reflective writing (such as diaries and journals, often used with 'prompt' questions such as 'What did I learn?' or 'How did I feel?'), peer assessment, learning plans and contracts, all presented in a portfolio format with appropriate evidence.

A major strategy initiative in Australia to support the nation-wide recognition of employability skills looked closely at assessment methods for the types of wider learning and activities that contribute to employability (ANTA, 2004). Ultimately, they adopted a portfolio model, but extensive stakeholder consultation determined that a non-prescriptive, very general approach was most preferable. The non-prescriptive model focuses more on definition and description of skills than assessment, and enables individuals to tailor their portfolios to reflect their life experiences, and to provide multiple examples of evidence against any skill or skill grouping. However, it is important to note that the non-prescriptive portfolio approach in Australia was not meant to preclude any individual organisation from adopting a more prescriptive model if they wished (e.g. guidance on how the portfolio could be structured, how certain skills could be demonstrated in context, address specific issues of validation of claims, and develop protocols for the formal assessment of some skills).

A study of learning in the workplace in Norway took a different approach. Rather than trying to define the drivers for lifelong learning from the context of education, this study

investigated the conditions in which learning takes place in the workplace, and attempted to assess whether these might be replicated in the classroom (Skule, 2004). What Skule found was that the indicators for measuring learning in the workplace were underdeveloped, and that there appeared to be a 'striking gap between the broad view of informal learning and the types of learning actually measured' (p9):

*'...informal learning cannot be measured by means of indicators traditionally used in the field of education and training, such as participation rates, training hours, expenditures of level of qualification. Neither can indicators to measure formal learning be extracted directly from existing theories of learning (p10).*

Instead of trying to measure informal learning directly, Skule attempted to identify the factors most conducive to informal learning at work, and to develop a generalized conceptualization of the 'learning environment'. What Skule found were seven factors that were consistently conducive to effective workplace learning (p14):

- a high degree of exposure to change
- a high degree of exposure to demands
- responsibilities
- extensive peer contacts
- superior feedback
- support for learning
- rewarding of proficiency.

Whilst these have been identified in the context of learning at work, it is easy to see that these factors would be transferable to other learning contexts, including school, post compulsory education, and voluntary (out of school hours) and informal learning. More complex is the continuing research that Skule cites as necessary to establish a framework for this model. However, the overall concept of measuring the quality of the learning environment in this way, rather than attempting to measure the wide variety of wider learning itself, is an interesting proposition.

There is a general acceptance that the primary function of summative assessment is to validate and certify knowledge, and the primary function of formative assessment is to facilitate learning (Boud and Falchikov, 2006). But in both cases, 'they focus on learning for immediate tasks, and do not concern themselves, except indirectly, with assessment for future learning' (p402). In South Africa, which has only recently moved to an outcomes-based educational system (Glover and Thomas, 1999), it is suggested that traditional practices of formative and summative assessment are not sufficient to measure and assess wider achievement. Glover and Thomas present the concept of 'dynamic assessment', which they believe more closely matches the outcomes-based model. The essence of dynamic assessment is that the primary objective of the assessment process is to inform action. In other words, along with observing the visual, linguistic, behavioural and social clues exhibited by pupils in a learning activity, the teacher assesses what this reflects of the pupils' understanding of the curriculum area(s).

*Assessment in this sense becomes dynamic because it is immediate, takes its clues from ephemeral learner action and leads, if the moment is seized, to immediate and pertinent teacher action aimed at altering the direction of a learner's growing understanding. A judgment must be made and immediate action taken. (p121)*

In Australia, a common shift across authorities towards outcomes-based education and assessment has produced some interesting trends (Cumming and Maxwell, 2004). First, the

curriculum frameworks are emphasizing outcomes of learning that go beyond the traditional content knowledge focus. Second is a tentative development of more coherent assessment and reporting practices across schools, based on developing understandings of the developmental continua and outcome statements. Third is an emphasis on the teachers' professional capacity to develop *in situ* the appropriate assessment activities for determining progress along the outcomes continua. However, Cumming and Maxwell emphasize that across Australia these trends are very nascent, and the value today lies in how this work will provide useful evidence to contribute to the development of outcomes-based teaching and learning.

A significant issue raised by these debates is how to guarantee the validity of the assessment process. Very early on, the portfolio-based assessment systems of English NVQs faced criticism, not of the portfolio method itself, but of the variation in assessment practice. The creators of the NVQ system had failed to realize that such practical- and evidence-based assessment could not be accurately described by written standards, especially across the wide range of activities covered under NVQs (Wolf, 1998). Even by the late 1990s, there existed a 'considerable body of knowledge emphasising the role of tacit understanding, professional judgment and assessor networks in establishing standards' (Wolf 1998, p442). This is not to question the validity of the portfolio-based method for assessing some forms of learning, but rather to emphasize the importance of the assessment practice if portfolio assessment is to have any kind of parity with established exam-based assessments.

Harlen and Crick (2003) suggest that 'the current human and financial resources devoted to test development could be used to create assessment systems that enable all valued outcomes of education, including creativity and learning to learn, to be assessed' (p204). The argument that formative assessment, particularly of wider skills, is time consuming and expensive, is countered by the evaluation of teachers' time spent preparing students for examination, including mock testing and the amount of time spent in revision over further development of skills and knowledge, and the amount invested in expensive summative tests and their assessment (Clarke *et al*, 2000). As formative and broad (i.e. beyond the core curriculum) assessment practice becomes embedded in day-to-day teaching practice, the costs – particularly of teacher time – are further reduced (William *et al*, 2004).

As policy and practice for assessing wider achievement develops, it is important that this evolution is monitored and evaluated throughout. Formative assessment practice is accepted as a 'key theoretical and practical interface for teachers to engage in research and development on teaching and learning' (Torrance and Pryor, 2001, p627), and this capacity for research in a significant and emerging field of practice should not be overlooked. The positive connection between research, policy, and practice that has characterised the development of formative assessment in Scotland so far needs to be maintained, as it has 'the potential to address some of the gaps between assessment for learning and assessment for accountability' (Hayward and Hedge, 2005, p72); precisely the environment required to establish parity of esteem for the assessment of wider achievement.

### *The case of pupils and part-time work*

An extensive study of the educational impact of school pupils undertaking part-time work provides a useful model to examine some of the potential issues and perspectives of the practice of recognising one form of wider achievement (Hart *et al*, 2004). In this study, part-time work includes school-organised work experience and paid part-time work, which are distinct activities with different learning outcomes. However, apart from the complexities of the varied contexts and issues of pupils and part-time work, the research discovered some interesting educational implications.

First, schools indicated that any system to recognise and include learning from the workplace would have to be voluntary, as not all pupils had jobs or chose to work, and of those that did, not all would want to use their employment experience in this way. Some employment was low skilled, and teachers questioned whether it would, in these cases, be desirable to try and unpick learning outcomes 'for the sake of it'; and, similar to the first point, some pupils would have more highly skilled jobs than others. Teachers were concerned that extensive recognition of part-time work would encourage pupils into employment, where this may not be in the pupils' best interests. And finally, but perhaps most significantly, the 'recognition of part-time employment highlighted the need for a review of the role and purpose of vocational education in secondary schooling, and a need to address the academic-vocational divide' (p197). Overall, there was little support from teachers for the formal recognition of part-time work, although the inclusion of part-time work in personal planning was favoured.

Interestingly, pupils consulted for this study were most positive about the model of certificating (formally recognising) part-time work, both in terms of progression to further careers and as a general recognition of something they had done. Pupils also responded positively to using part-time work as part of personal review and planning. They felt that using part-time work as part of the curriculum was a good idea, but they expressed concerns over relevance, access to employment, and a general preference to keep school and work separate.

Parents, too, recognised that part-time work could have educational value, but they were less certain about the value of formal recognition, or of the role of the school in their child's part-time employment. Employers were largely in favour of certification or other formal recognition and, interestingly, they cited benefits to the pupil as the main reasons. In terms of recruitment, employers felt that certification would primarily serve to provide evidence of the motivation to work and to some degree of a positive work ethic, but that potential recruits would still have to demonstrate they had the necessary knowledge and skills, regardless of certification.

This extensive study of one aspect of recognising wider achievement illustrates the complexity of the issue. Schools, parents, employers, pupils, and other stakeholders can have very different perceptions of the value of recognition and how it should be applied, and in many cases there is the potential for underlying negative outcomes (such as encouraging pupils into work where it is not an appropriate option for them). Whatever the activity, it is clear from this example that the process of recognition has much potential to enhance learning and help learners achieve and develop, but that it requires a sensitive and individual approach, and would in most cases benefit from some consultation with stakeholders (pupils included) to identify issues and priorities that reflect the particular activity, geography, or pupil group.

#### *The case of 'active citizenship'*

The discussion in the preceding pages has presented several issues and challenges to the concept of recognising wider achievement. The final question is how the practice of recognition will affect, and be affected by, curriculum policy. Part of the issue is how connected, or separate, the wider activities are in relation to the structured curriculum. Whereas the school-based curriculum allows some room for development and manoeuvre to encompass a developing understanding of how children and young people learn in relation to the four capacities of *A Curriculum for Excellence*, many curriculum requirements are stipulated and change can be slow. Wider activities are free of many of these curricular constraints, and provide an interesting avenue for development (Higgins and Kirk, 2006). In other words, is there scope to develop the objectives of *A Curriculum for Excellence* into wider activities otherwise independent of school? That is, can wider activities, and A



*Curriculum for Excellence*, evolve into a social policy for children and young people, rather than being retained within the limits of an education policy? The following paragraphs consider these questions in the context of one aspect of *A Curriculum for Excellence*, that of developing active citizens.

The described nature of active citizenship is at odds with defining citizenship competencies as outcomes of pre-specified, separated processes of teaching. The development of participatory, moral, biographic and critical competencies cannot be handled through the de-contextual 'packages of deliverable knowledge' so characteristic of the deficiency approach to citizenship education (Jansen *et al*, 2006). Jansen goes on to argue that these competencies are developed in 'spontaneous, informal learning processes' (p201). His recommendation is to recognise 'the primacy of linking formal education to genuine practices, substituting abstract lessons about citizenship by stimulating to participate and critically reflect experiences in concrete practices of active citizenship' (p. 202).

In a sense, the concept of active citizenship also goes against conventional assessment practice which views citizenship as an achievement (Lawy and Biesta, 2006). 'Citizenship-as-achievement is founded on the assumption that citizenship is a status that individuals can achieve. It is associated with a particular set of claims about what makes a citizen and about the necessary conditions of that status' (p42). The main problem with the idea of citizenship-as-achievement – a status that is achieved only after one has traversed a particular developmental and educational trajectory – is that it does not recognise the claims to citizenship of young people.

Citizenship-as-practice, however, is more contextual, and enables young people to learn and reflect upon the process of becoming active citizens, and allows them to apply contexts to their practice which are relevant and appropriate to them, for example reflecting on the effects of learning to drive a car, on themselves, and their community. This enables a recognition that the changes occurring in young peoples' lives through the very development of active citizenship practice will 'be matched by contingent changes in their perceptions, and that these will invariably cause the young people to reappraise their understanding of themselves and those around them' (Lawy and Biesta, 2006, p43).

The implications, then, for teaching active citizenship require a fundamental change in approach from the delivery of a prescribed curriculum in the confines of a classroom. The starting point for such a change needs to be grounded in the experiences of young people, rather than 'in ways that would seem to be disconnected, or at least to lack meaning, for young people' (Lawy *et al*, 2004). Lawy goes on to recommend that citizenship practice for the most part needs to be experienced first hand by young people, 'through their participation in different activities and practices inside and outside of school', and that the idea of citizenship-as-practice 'respects the claims and interests of young people...and invests in their understandings and their agency and does not seek to impose a particular interpretation upon them' (Lawy and Biesta, 2006, p45). However, in the environment of citizenship education for post-19 learners, this practice is recognised to place new pedagogical demands on practitioners, not least of which is re-defining their role less as educators and more as mentors (i.e. a less directive function than 'traditional' teaching), within the recognition that there may be curricular contexts where a more directive approach is perhaps expected (Van der Veen, 2003). This may have implications where the educational organisation is known to reflect a particular point of view, for example in faith schools.

A further finding of the work of Lawy and Biesta (2006) is that young people's learning in school is not necessarily associated with a positive experience of citizenship education, even if the relationships between the pupils and the teachers and their peers were reported as positive. Similarly, even where the perception of citizenship education was not positive, the

experiences of young people in other structural contexts for citizenship (e.g. leisure) were positive, where their participation was voluntary rather than compulsory. Whilst this is not a surprise, it does raise the question of whether citizenship learning is 'context-bound' or 'person-bound', and the significance of the relationship between the activities themselves and the young person's understanding of and reflection upon those activities and experiences. The opportunity created by citizenship-as-practice is that it creates an environment to explore these questions and 'gain a more sophisticated understanding of young people's citizenship than is possible from the perspective of citizenship-as-achievement' (Lawy and Biesta, 2006, p46).

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### 3. Views of stakeholders

This chapter presents an integration of the data collected through interviews and surveys from local authority representatives, school managers, representatives of organisations involved in working with young people, further and higher education admissions tutors and two employer representatives. Some of the issues had been explored through Learning and Teaching Scotland's consultation process and the ideas identified through this work were probed at interview and explored more systematically through the surveys. A more detailed summary of the interviews with local authority representatives and school managers is given in Appendix A; a summary of the interviews with other organisations is given in Appendix B and the datasets for the survey are given in Appendix C.

The final section of this chapter (3.10) reports and reflects on some issues that have emerged during the research:

- how relevant is it to formalise approaches to recognising and recording wider achievements and develop accreditation systems?
- how can informal learning provision be linked to school provision?
- does formalising the recognition of wider achievements potentially disadvantage some young people?

#### 3.1 Stakeholders' understanding of what is meant by 'wider achievement'

Responses from the LTS consultations and interviews with local authority and school managers and other key stakeholders showed that they were in agreement that 'wider achievement' referred to learning gained through a wide range of activities both in and out of school. It referred to the development of personal attributes, relationships with others and knowledge and skills not usually gained, or gained to a lesser extent, through the formal curriculum. It referred to learning and achievements which went beyond that which is formally assessed or examined; it was about individuals' talents and abilities that are not measured by qualifications or certificates.

It included social and personal achievements, growth in confidence, outcomes of effort and 'stickability', things valued by the children themselves, their interests, hobbies and commitment to learning. With respect to achievements outside of school, early years providers said they were interested in helpfulness, kindness, obeying parents and overcoming illness. At primary school they took account of club membership, outdoor pursuits, sport, cycling proficiency and road safety. At secondary school involvement in clubs, community activities and charity work was important.

One pre-5 respondent suggested it was recognising the achievements of 'children, staff, parents and the community' and so children were encouraged to be aware of the achievements of others, not just their own.

Local authority and school representatives also emphasised that recognising wider achievement represented a shift in focus for schools. It was reported that many schools already did a lot to recognise and record achievements (see next section on current practice), but developing *A Curriculum for Excellence* would further emphasise the importance of this and would require development in terms of recognising the four capacities (confident individuals, successful learners, effective contributors, responsible citizens).

## 3.2 Current practice

This section reports on practice reported firstly, in schools and secondly, by other organisations working with young people. It includes specific reference to personal learning planning, *Progress Files* and records of achievement.

### 3.2.1 Current practice in schools

#### ***Recognising wider achievements***

Responses from the interviews showed that, generally, 'recognising' was addressed through praise and reward schemes and celebration activities. Certificates, stars, stickers, pupil of the week or month awards, 'golden moments' were all mentioned. Achievements were highlighted at assemblies, on display boards, in newsletters and on school webpages. Media publicity was sought. Schools organised achievement evenings and showcase events.

Schools were dependent on parents of younger children and the children themselves telling them about their achievements outside of school. In some primary schools children were encouraged to bring in certificates and medals they gained. One secondary headteacher reported writing to local community organisations and youth groups in the area, asking them to let him know if any pupils were involved and what achievements they had gained. Another secondary head teacher explained that the school actively encouraged pupils to take part in community groups and activities.

In the teacher survey there was an open question about approaches used to recognise wider achievements. The responses were largely about celebrating success – indeed, in several cases that was the name given to the approach. The primary teachers mentioned announcements at assemblies (38 mentions), display boards (31 mentions), certificates, stickers, stars – sometimes sent home (13 mentions) and assemblies/events for parents to share in success (5 mentions). Likewise, in secondary schools, assembly announcements and merit certificates and stickers were mentioned. Additionally, secondary respondents spoke of articles in school newsletters, media and press releases, letters home to parents and annual award ceremonies.

These responses suggest that recognising achievement can often relate to a public acknowledgement through 'celebration', or more privately through merit stickers and letters home.

#### ***Recording wider achievements***

From the school interviews it was evident that 'recording' was addressed mainly in terms of keeping class folders, portfolios, profiles, target diaries, computer diaries, learning logs, and personal scrapbooks. Evidence could be supported by photos and DVDs. Some mentioned the use of personal learning planning, *Progress Files* and records of achievement. Some were actively investigating the use of software and e-portfolio developments.

One secondary headteacher said:

*'We are looking all the time to try to find electronic ways and also to find ways where pupils make decisions and how forums and blogs could become an actual vehicle not just for students to formally record progress but to record issues and concerns that will relate in turn to how we help them progress. As a school we're trying to think "How can we tap in to that world where they are engaging a great deal with their peers and with others, that will reflect how they see themselves and what factors are influencing them?" I do not mean intruding on their 'Bebo' or 'MySpace' websites in any sense, but I mean the more we create and use*

*these facilities as part of their learning, the more we reflect the way they communicate as young people’.*

Three of the primary headteachers who were interviewed reported that they do not formally record wider achievements and prefer to focus on recognising and celebrating achievements. One said that in school so much was already recorded and there were concerns over additional workload and paperwork. Another said:

*‘I don’t really see actually how that’s going to benefit the children to record all these things. I think we have to be careful that we don’t introduce more paperwork. For a school to start formally recording all these little things would become far too difficult and I can’t see that there would be great benefit.’*

Another said:

*‘I would hate to go down the road where we tick a box saying ‘He is now a confident individual’ because as we all know that can change by different teachers, different classes, the way they’re treated...I’d hate to go down the road of videoing and filming children to prove that they’re confident. I’m not actually sure what we can do.’*

### **Personal learning planning, Progress Files and records of achievement**

While *personal learning planning* should focus on thinking about learning and therefore help pupils recognise their learning and achievements, most people talked about it in terms of recording achievements. During the interview, 4 primary school headteachers mentioned recording achievements in personal learning plans.

In the survey, teachers were asked about doing personal learning planning with pupils.

- 44% of teachers (n = 88) in the survey indicated that they do personal learning planning with pupils, though this was more likely in primary schools (53% of primary respondents) than secondary schools (34%)
- of the 88 who reported doing personal learning planning, 58% (n = 49) indicated they included non-academic work (73% of primary teachers and 39% of secondary teachers).

In an open section in the questionnaire, a small number (8) commented on the value of personal learning planning and target setting as an opportunity for discussion and potentially reflection - ‘very valuable time which is appreciated by the child’.

The S1 to S4 pupils were asked if they did personal learning planning:

- 50 (18%) reported taking part in personal learning planning
- two-thirds of those pupils (33) reported that they included goals for non-academic/non-subject work; 20 of those pupils were in S1.

The evidence from these particular samples suggests that personal learning planning was more prevalent in primary schools than secondary schools and that the process in primary schools was more likely to address non-curricular goals.

Of the 6 secondary schools whose management were interviewed, 2 were currently using the *Progress File*, while the other 4 had used it in the past. It was reported that it was helpful to pupils to help them think about learning, and valuable for recording achievement as it had to be updated regularly. It was viewed as effective for in-school purposes, but ineffective for post-school use, as it did not gain credibility and credence with people outside of school. It was beneficial for pupils in that it was a good tool for aiding reflection on learning and achievement, and allowed the young person to see their own development and set further



targets. Some of the perceived limitations were: it was too formulaic in nature; sometimes the achievements reported were minimal; and it could even end up a 'profile of failure'.

Only 35 (18%) of the teachers surveyed used, or had used, the *Progress File* (10% of primary teachers and 23% of secondary teachers). Overall, 21 of the 35 (60%) thought it had been fairly effective or very effective. About half the secondary teachers who had used it thought it was limited in its effectiveness.

Pupils were asked if they kept a *record of achievement or Progress File* (or 'something that they did to think about and record what you are learning'). Half the sample (141 pupils) reported keeping records of achievement with almost half of the 141 indicating that they included non-subject work in the record.

They were asked if they agreed or disagreed with a number of points about keeping records of achievement. The responses to the whole question are given in Table 3.1 (although a number of the points are relevant to other sections of this chapter).

**Table 3.1: Pupils' views on keeping a record of achievement or Progress File**

Keeping a record of achievement or <i>Progress File</i> ...	Agree
helps me know what I am good at	128 (91%)
helps me explain to others what I am good at	124 (88%)
can provide examples of things I have achieved to show college or university admissions tutors	122 (86%)
can provide examples of things I have achieved to show employers and can give them a better picture of what I am like	118 (84%)
can help me when I have to do job applications	113 (80%)
can help me if I want to fill in an application form for university or college	112 (79%)
makes things not covered by exams and tests important	107 (76%)
is something that should be voluntary, that is you do it only if you want to	81 (57%)
is something I find difficult to do	33 (23%)
takes up too much time	26 (18%)
is not very important because I won't use it when I leave school	20 (14%)

Pupils were most likely to agree that keeping a record of achievement helped them identify what they were good at and to be able to explain this to others. This confirms the view from schools that it was a useful tool to help pupils think about their learning. Thereafter it was particularly useful in respect of job or university applications and interviews, although in relation to job and further study applications, the S1 pupils were, understandably, less likely than the other groups to agree with this. The respondents also agreed largely that it gave importance to non-examinable matters. Over half (57%) thought, however, that it should be voluntary. Just under a quarter found completing it difficult and smaller numbers thought it was too time-consuming or not important for future use. While these numbers are low, it is important to recognise that they indicate that within schools there is a substantial minority who are not positive about reflection on and recording of their achievements.

In the survey for parents, a similar question was asked about what they saw as the value of their child keeping a record of wider achievements that 'go beyond what is tested or examined'. Parents were largely in agreement with the perceived advantages of keeping a record of wider achievements, with over 90% agreeing that it helps children recognise what they are good at and it helps them to explain it to others.

Note: The particular case of the North Lanarkshire Diploma of Achievement was looked at in more depth as an example of current practice. More detail on this is included in Appendix D.

### 3.2.2 Current practice of organisations working with young people

Representatives of organisations that work with young people also reported a range of ways of recognising achievement, including celebration events, award ceremonies, newsletters and press releases.

They were asked how their organisations helped young people recognise their achievements and how they were recorded.

Careers Scotland has a key role in developing career planning and employability skills and understanding of the world of work; they also focus on opportunities to develop enterprise skills so young people are able to take risks and make their own decisions. They provide projects and activities which help young people develop career planning skills to help them make appropriate choices. These projects and activities also help them understand the world of work and what employers value. It is important to have face-to-face consultations with all school leavers to help them evaluate their potential and identify any support needed. The important evidence of achievement in this respect is that young people make a positive step on leaving school; this is not something that needs certification. However, if young people work through a specific employability programme (eg Activate), they receive a completion certificate which says they have reached the level of employability skills expected on that course. Career Plans of Action are developed with individuals so they have written down their plans and action points and can record when these have been achieved.

Interviewees from youth organisations emphasised the importance of their being able to work with those disengaged from formal provision –

- in the community
- providing opportunities relevant to their needs
- using innovative, user-friendly learning formats, and
- involving the young people in planning (of their own learning and of the organisation's activities).

In some cases, reflection took place in a very informal way, with one-to-one discussions about progress and achievement and with no recording taking place. Others involved young people in individual learning planning and goal setting and supported them in activities which suited their particular needs. Reference was made to 'Step it Up', which is an online toolkit designed to help young people think about their own development in a number areas, for example, problem solving and decision making, communication, working relationships and the 'world around me'. Youth organisations, particularly local authority but also some voluntary organisations, make use of it (see figures below from survey).

Many youth organisations offer a range of ways of recognising young people's achievements such as ASDAN, Youth Achievement Awards, Duke of Edinburgh and their own awards and certificates. At a recent conference, Sports Trust (Scotland) focused on how the skills young people gain (eg leadership and negotiation skills) through their 'Step into Sport' programme might be accredited.

In the survey of youth organisations, the majority of respondents reported that their organisations gave awards or certificates, many using nationally recognised schemes. Some organisations offered more than one of these to provide opportunities appropriate to the young people who were taking part:

- Youth Achievement Awards 23
- Duke of Edinburgh Awards 16
- Dynamic Youth Awards 12
- Young Quality Scots 8

- Own certificates and awards 7
- SQA awards 6
- Millennium Volunteers 5
- Natural Connections 5.

Two respondents mentioned giving sports awards; ASDAN and the John Muir Award were also mentioned. Fourteen of the 34 (41%) respondents from local authority provision reported using the 'Step it Up' materials, as did 5 of the 29 (17%) organisations from the voluntary sector.

While this diversity of provision was seen as an advantage to suit the needs of young people with great diversity of needs, it was also a weakness as many different approaches to accreditation were in place. During the interviews, the view was expressed that it would help to have a review of this and investigate how it might be done more effectively or how equivalences might be made between very different types of accreditation (eg ASDAN and SQA). *[Note: The research team's understanding is that groups within the Scottish Executive are looking at these issues.]*

### 3.3 The importance of recognising and recording wider achievements

#### **Recognising**

All interviewees from local authorities and schools were unanimously in agreement that wider achievements should be recognised. The main reason given was that it focused on the development of the whole child and not just academic success. Across all school sectors the contribution to developing confidence and self-esteem was viewed as an important aspect of taking account of non-academic achievements. A secondary school respondent highlighted its importance in countering disaffection as it gave more purpose to being at school. One local authority representative spoke of the importance of success being an outcome of the development of the whole personality and personal qualities which the current focus on examinations does not develop.

Likewise, interviewees from other organisations thought this was exceptionally important, indeed vital. Views included the fact that individuals needed flexibility beyond what they can demonstrate through examinations as preparation for their future lives and careers. As there was already a well-established curriculum and system for accrediting academic achievement, there needed to be a system for recognising wider achievements, especially for those less likely to engage in formal education. From a youth work perspective, it was noted that the four capacities of *A Curriculum for Excellence* are well developed in the contexts of youth work and the purposes of youth work were in line with these.

In the teacher survey, respondents were asked to indicate how important they thought it was to take account of achievements gained in a variety of ways. The mean scores and ranking of these activities based on the mean score are presented in Table 3.2 (overleaf).

The majority of teachers (over 90%) thought it was important to recognise the achievements of young people gained through a wide range of non-academic pursuits. Personal progress and individual achievements were rated as more important than taking part in any sort of organised activity or hobby. It is also worth noting that, while all types of activities were considered relevant as a potential source through which young people can achieve, those that related to the school were ranked slightly higher than those related to non-school pursuits (with the exception of after-school clubs). This may reflect the divergence in views on the relevance of taking account of activities from outside of school (see below).

**Table 3.2: Non-academic opportunities for gaining achievement and teachers ranking of the importance of recognising those achievements**

	m (sd)
Taking part in school activities not currently tested or examined (e.g. enterprise, citizenship, eco projects)	3.66 (0.49)
Other individual achievements such as effort, behaviour improvements, personal successes	3.66 (0.51)
Taking part in extra-curricular activities (e.g. school plays, concerts, sports, representing school in competitions)	3.61 (0.51)
Helping in and around the school (e.g. organising events, helping other pupils)	3.60 (0.51)
Responsibilities at home and in the community (e.g. caring, helping)	3.43 (0.60)
Hobbies and interests they may pursue on an individual basis (e.g. music, sports, computer skills)	3.40 (0.66)
Taking part in clubs and groups outside school as part of personal hobbies and interests	3.37 (0.66)
Taking part in out-of-school-hours clubs organised by the school	3.22 (0.65)
Part-time jobs	2.40 (0.86)

There were differences in responses on a number of points between primary and secondary teachers, but the distinction was between the choice of 'important' or 'very important', not that some thought the opportunities were unimportant. The percentages strongly agreeing on these points were:

	Primary	Secondary
• In-school activities not tested or examined	<b>77%</b>	56%
• Individual achievements eg behaviour, personal success	<b>79%</b>	55%
• Extra-curricular activities	54%	<b>71%</b>
• Hobbies pursued out of interest on individual basis	<b>53%</b>	41%
• Responsibilities at home	<b>52%</b>	42%

Having a part-time job was the only activity not endorsed by the majority, with only 42% considering this important. Interestingly, primary and secondary teachers shared similar views on learning gained from part-time jobs, with the same proportions agreeing and disagreeing. Teachers are clearly divided on the value of what can be gained from pupils working.

### **Recording**

It was noted in the section above on current practice that some of the primary headteachers interviewed expressed reservations about recording wider achievements, partly in terms of teacher workload, but also because of uncertainty about what the children would gain from it. It was noted during the interviews that one of the greatest challenges in schools was finding time and, if materials had to be kept as evidence, storage. A challenge identified during interviews with other organisations was finding appropriate recording mechanisms. The purpose is not just to write down achievements but to help young people to be able to recognise their own learning and skills and to be able to demonstrate them to end users.

The majority of teachers who responded to the survey thought it was important (52%) or very important (41%) for children to keep a record of achievements gained through different activities. Only 37% agreed that keeping a record of achievement should be voluntary for pupils, although 76% agreed that they should be free to choose what is included.

Just under half (48%) of the pupils surveyed thought that a record should be kept of the things they did in school in addition to their ordinary class work; only 17% disagreed, while 33% 'didn't know'. However, only 18% thought that the things they did in their own time should be taken account of by the school, with 59% disagreeing and 21% unsure. 57% of the pupils who currently kept records of achievement thought that keeping a record of achievement should be voluntary.

Parents responded to similar questions in their survey:

- 79% thought it was important for children to keep a record of achievements gained through school-initiated opportunities for wider achievement (with 10% saying no and 10% not sure)
- 66% thought it was important that schools know about the activities their children take part in out of school (with 25% saying no and 9% not sure). 71% of parents of primary age children thought this was important, compared to 52% of parents of secondary children
- 62% thought that it was important for their children to keep a record in school of what they had learned and achieved through the things they do out of school (with 30% saying no and 8% don't know). There were no notable differences in the responses of parents of younger and older children in this respect
- 71% of parents thought it should be voluntary, with 77% agreeing that pupils should be free to choose what to include. Parents of older children were more likely to agree with these two points, but it might be expected that parents of older children would want them to have greater autonomy. (Primary: voluntary – 66%; free to choose content – 73%. Secondary: voluntary – 87%; free to choose content – 94%.)

In an open section on the parents' questionnaire, views were expressed both for and against recording children's achievements. On the 'for' side, there were those who simply stated that it should be done because all aspects of learning were important and that 'too much emphasis had been put on the academic side of things' (11 comments). On the 'against side' there were those who said simply that it was not necessary to record such things (6 comments), that schools already did enough recording (1 comment) and that schools should be concentrating on academic issues which were more important, things like 'maths, reading and writing' (3 comments).

Several parents commented on the issue of schools taking account of out of school activities. Seven thought this was important, especially at primary school. However, concern was expressed that some children do not have access to many opportunities out of school, some parents are not interested in encouraging this and it could lead to a sense of failure in and out of school if the children had nothing to record (3 comments). Six parents expressed views about activities out of school being for leisure and enjoyment and should not be recorded in school, young people need a personal life out of school and some might see it as an invasion of privacy. One suggested that it would put extra pressure on parents to ensure their children took part in out of school activities.

**Table 3.3: Summary of views of different groups on recording achievements**

	percentage agreeing		
	Teachers	Pupils	Parents
Keeping a record of achievement is important (in school achievements)	93%	48%	79%
Keeping a record of achievement should be voluntary	37%	57% <sup>1</sup>	71%
Pupils should be free to chose what is included	76%	-	77%
RoA should include achievements from outside of school	-	18%	62%

<sup>1</sup> Percentage of the sub-sample who indicated that they have records of achievement or *Progress Files*. Other percentages are based on the whole sample.

Parents and teachers were more convinced about the value of keeping a record of achievement than the pupils. A high proportion of parents thought that keeping a record of achievement should be voluntary for the pupils and more than half the pupils thought this too. A greater proportion of parents than pupils thought it was important for a record of achievements gained out of school to be maintained in school, but nearly a third of parents thought this was **not** important and the majority of the pupils also felt that this was **not** important. These two points raise challenges for schools: how to find a way to engage those who do not want recording achievement to be compulsory and to consider how the benefits of learning gained out of school might be transferred to the school context without impinging on the privacy of pupils who prefer not to have these things noted.

### 3.4 Which young people is it for?

The views expressed during the local authority and school interviews on whether recognising wider achievement was more important for some children than others were divided.

Just over half thought it was important for all children; academic children needed to recognise that there were other ways of being successful and they also valued having their skills and wider achievements recognised. Just under half thought it was more important for those who were not academically successful, the 'disaffected' and the 'disadvantaged', and a few were uncertain. The view was expressed that it was important for ALL, but that young people who would not normally gain recognition through academic performance had most to gain from the recognition of non-academic successes.

The interviewees from other organisations thought that it was valuable for all young people. Many young people put a lot of time and effort into voluntary work and often this was not recognised. Academic achievers also need to be able to demonstrate social skills and this should be seen as important. However, some groups of young people, particularly those who did not engage with academic and formal education and those who were at risk or who were already in the 'NEET' group, stood to gain in particular.

The majority of teachers surveyed from all sectors (151 – 79% overall) thought that recording wider achievement was equally important for all young people, though around a fifth (41) disagreed, with a higher proportion of secondary teachers thinking it was not important for all pupils (26% of secondary, compared to 15% of primary teachers). Of the minority of teachers who thought that recording wider achievements was **not** equally important for all young people:

- three-quarters indicated that it was very important for those whose family circumstances did not give them much support
- two-thirds thought it was very important for those who find academic learning more difficult
- just under two-thirds thought it was very important for those who are disaffected.

While most of this sub-sample indicated that it was important for those who do well academically, almost a quarter thought it was not important for this group of pupils.

The view of the education interviewees was that it was important at **all stages**. It might be more significant at S4 to S6, but not more important. The interviewees emphasised the importance of starting at the pre-5 stage and continuing throughout young people's schooling. For secondary schools the challenge is continuing it in S1 and S2 to maintain the confidence and achievements of P7 as they progress. One secondary interviewee stated:

*'I think if you can start off reinforcing the positive and downplaying the negative from the moment they go into nursery then you are going to encourage and motivate, rather than having this negative approach and all the attention being negative attention.'*

The majority of the teachers surveyed (156 – 81%) thought recording wider achievements was important at all stages of educational development. About a fifth (36) overall disagreed, a view held more strongly by the secondary teachers (29%, compared to 11% of primary teachers). However, both the primary and secondary teachers who disagreed responded in a way that suggests that they considered it more important as children get older and are preparing to leave school. The numbers and percentages choosing 'very important' for different stages were:

	<b>Very important</b>
• On leaving school	25 (69%)
• Secondary 4 to 6	22 (61%)
• Secondary 1 to 3	13 (36%)
• Primary to secondary transition	12 (33%)
• Primary 4 to 7	6 (17%)
• Primary 1 to 3	1 (3%)
• Transition from nursery to P1	2 (6%)
• Pre-nursery and nursery	1 (3%)

### **3.5 Approaches to recognising and recording wider achievements**

In all the surveys, a question was asked about different ways of recording achievements and respondents were asked to indicate how effective they thought each way was/might be. The suggested approaches were:

- a folder with handwritten sheets and examples of work
- worksheets/books which help the young people think about their achievements
- using a word processing package and storing records in electronic folders
- keeping audio or video diaries
- using specially designed software (e-portfolios)
- allowing children to develop personal webpages or 'blogs'.

The pupil questions were worded slightly differently and they were not asked about using word processing and electronic storage. Youth organisations were additionally asked about the value of portfolios of evidence endorsed by a relevant adult or organisation.

Teacher responses: On the whole, the teachers in the sample found most ways of recording achievements to be effective, with computer based storage of information seen as being more effective (75% effective or very effective) than paper based approaches (60% effective or very effective). Approaches which encouraged reflection were effective or very effective (62%). Teachers were slightly less certain about the effectiveness of audio and video diaries (58%). Using specially designed software (e-portfolios) and the use of 'blogs' were seen as effective/very effective by over 60% of the teachers, but these two items attracted a higher number of 'not sure' responses (17% for both).

There were differences of view between primary and secondary teachers on the effectiveness of two approaches to recording achievement. The combined effective and very effective percentages were:

	<b>Primary</b>	<b>Secondary</b>
Word processing and electronic storage	69%	82%
Audio and video diaries	64%	48%

Secondary teachers were more likely to think using computers was effective than primary teachers, while primary teachers were more positive about audio and video diaries.

Pupil responses: Over the range of options for recording achievements, one-fifth to a third of pupils were not sure what were good ways of doing this. However, the most popular option was keeping a scrap book or folder (60% thought this was good); this was more popular with S1 and S2 pupils (66% and 74% respectively) than with S3 and S4 (57% and 47% respectively). This was followed by using a special computer programme (we did not use the term e-portfolio but this could be taken to indicate approval of such an approach), though only 47% thought it would be good, with this option having the highest proportion (33%) not knowing if it was good or not. 42% thought completing worksheets which helped reflection was a good approach, with 40% favouring personal webpages. Only 17% thought making a video diary was a good idea.

Organisations working with young people: For both local authority and voluntary sector respondents, the two most effective approaches to recording wider achievements were having an endorsed portfolio of achievements (80% effective/very effective) and keeping audio or video diaries (75% effective/very effective). These were followed by resources which clearly encouraged young people to reflect on their learning (70%). While those who felt they could express a view were supportive of using e-portfolios (62%) and making use of personal webpages and 'blogs' (49%), more indicated that they were not sure about these approaches than the other ones listed – possibly due to limited experience of what might be involved. 56% thought that using word-processing and storing records electronically was effective, while 50% supported handwritten, paper-based approaches.

A small number of respondents (5) from youth organisations emphasised the importance of having multiple approaches to recognising and recording achievements.

- It was important that the most suitable method for the young person was adopted – so for some audio or video diaries were particularly beneficial; overuse of paper approaches might be too much like school for some; some may have limited IT skills for IT options.
- It was important to find ways that helped young people recognise they had achieved and learned, ways through which personal growth and development could be identified. Developing portfolios was seen as being an approach which encouraged reflection. However, if young people were asked to do this both in and out of school it could be a 'turn-off'.
- Ultimately, if desired by the individual, there was the need for something which is recognised by and makes sense to an 'end-user', ie employer or FE/HE institution.

Generally, computer based approaches were preferred to paper based approaches, though an endorsed portfolio was seen as effective by the youth organisations (the other groups were not asked about this). There was more uncertainty around the use of audio-visual approaches such as video diaries and the use of e-portfolios. Some were strongly in favour, but people were more likely to say that they did not know how effective these might be. Youth organisations indicated that multiple approaches were necessary to suit the varying needs of young people.

### **3.6 Support for young people in developing records of achievement**

As noted above (3.3), parents and teachers alike thought that children should be free to choose what to include in records of achievement, which was a view also expressed clearly in the LTS consultations. It was emphasised that young people needed to be encouraged (and taught how) to take ownership of and responsibility for the process. The LTS consultations also produced the view that a wide range of people could assist young people



in identifying what they had learned – parents, teachers, guidance teachers, leaders of other organisations they took part in, peers, older pupils and other school mentors.

In the interviews with representatives of youth organisations, there was complete agreement that the young person should be at the centre of the process:

- they need to be encouraged and helped to recognise and evaluate their own learning
- their views need to be taken account of regarding what is important
- they should take responsibility for and make decisions about what is recorded/included in any record of achievement
- they need to be free to take part in the process or not.

In the teachers' survey, respondents were asked to rank different people who might help young people develop records of achievement. In this question the different groups were ranked, with 1 being most important and 7 least important. However, for the purposes of analysis the scores were reversed, with the highest mean score being the most important. The responses are given in Table 3.4

**Table 3.4: Teachers' ranking of who might help pupils develop records of achievement**

	All		Pr/Nur		Secy		Special	
	m	rank	m	rank	m	rank	m	rank
parent, carer or other family member	5.58	1	5.98	1	5.20	2	5.44	1
class/subject teacher	4.94	2	5.98	1	3.88	4	5.33	2
guidance teacher	3.99	3	2.36	4	5.68	1	3.33	3
another adult appointed as mentor	3.17	4	2.64	7	3.69	5	3.22	5
PSE/D teacher	3.07	5	1.67	6	4.46	3	3.11	6
peers	2.67	6	3.28	3	2.00	7	3.33	3
older pupils	2.63	7	2.34	5	2.90	6	2.89	7

Teachers from all sectors were in agreement that parents had an important role in helping young people develop records of achievement. The differences in rank order may be explained by the relevance of the role to the contexts: for example, in primary schools the specific title guidance teacher or PSE/D teacher may not be relevant, although class teachers will teach PSE and may have a guidance role. Clearly, in secondary schools, the role of the guidance teacher and the PSE/D teacher were considered the most relevant staff to help young people, while the class teacher was chosen by both the primary and special school respondents. In primary schools and special schools, peers were considered important, while in secondary school they were given the lowest ranking. In all sectors the role of older pupils was considered less important than other roles.

Responses to the parents' survey showed that 65% of parents of primary children thought they should have role in what is included in a record of achievement, while 52% of secondary parents thought this. Therefore, it would appear that many parents were less likely to see the importance of their role in this, compared to the emphasis given by teachers.

It is also interesting to note that another adult appointed as mentor tended to be considered less important than the class/subject teacher and the guidance and PSE teachers in secondary schools. In management interviews and in open questions in the teacher survey concerns were raised about teacher workload and time in assisting young people with this process. While there are issues of disclosure, the potential of using non-teaching staff to support young people could be explored. This idea can be linked to the views reported later in section 3.10 regarding the potential role of youth organisations.

The views expressed by the education managers at interview were largely positive about the effect on teachers of taking account of pupils' wider achievements (with some saying they

already did this anyway), particularly in terms of knowing their pupils better and encouraging positive relationships between pupils and teachers. The challenges of this were greater in the secondary sector, where teachers tended to see themselves more as teachers of subjects, which may account for the lower ranking given to subject teachers in the question reported above. One headteacher interviewed explained that class teachers were asked to pass on examples of achievements to guidance teachers. This suggests that in secondary schools subject teachers can be involved in the process of identifying, and helping pupils to identify, achievements other than subject attainment. Others also emphasised this, indicating that for some teachers the 'mindset would need to change' and that teachers would need to learn to be constantly aware of opportunities to recognise and record wider achievements.

In the teacher survey, teachers were split on their views as to whether or not they were already well prepared to support pupils in developing records of achievement:

- 7% strongly disagreed
- 41% disagreed
- 45% agreed
- 5% strongly agreed

Primary teachers were more confident, with 60% agreeing/strongly agreeing compared to 40% of secondary teachers.

### **3.7 The value to other users**

#### **3.7.1 Views from education and youth organisations**

During interviews, it was stated that parents valued knowing about the wider achievements of their children, although interviewees from all stages spoke of different responses from parents and noted that a surprising number of parents were not interested, or might not see participation in clubs as learning or achieving but something to keep their children occupied.

All interviewees mentioned the value placed by employers on knowing about young people's wider achievements. Secondary headteachers' views on employers varied, with some thinking that employers were really only interested in exam results, while one felt that their local employers emphasised the development and value of the whole person. Representatives of organisations working with young people likewise held the view that evidence of wider achievement was valued by employers; employers rarely put qualifications at the top of their list ahead of personal attributes which showed a young person's ability to 'fit in and adapt'.

One of the youth work representatives did, however, question the extent to which wider achievements were really valued by employers without some kind of formal accreditation. Lack of use by employers (or lack of usefulness to employers) had been identified as a weakness of the Progress File.

Secondary school interviewees were less sure of the value placed on wider achievements by higher education. One local authority representative spoke of the importance of the personal statement on the UCAS form to higher education providers and expressed the view that, if pupils have reflected on what difference taking part in activities has made to them and not just recorded they have done it, this will help with their application process.

It was noted by one of the youth organisations, in relation to young people who had been out of the education system, that evidence that they had achieved was also valued by those who

offered training to such young people as it was an indication that they were more likely to be able to sustain engagement in the training programme.

### 3.7.2 Views from end users

#### Employers

As reported in chapter 1, only 2 employer representatives provided information to the research team and therefore the employers' perspective is not adequately represented. However, the view was expressed that a range of achievements can demonstrate a young person's potential for a particular job role; school-leavers at interview have, of necessity, little experience of the world of work which they can talk about; if they have other achievements they can talk about, this shows them in a positive light.

Regarding the kind of presentation of achievements employers might find useful, one replied 'short and to the point'. The other indicated that uniformity should be avoided. An approach driven by validation might lead to such uniformity. It was important that young people had the freedom to find innovative ways of presenting their achievements.

Linking this view to the comments about the usefulness of Progress File, it raises the question of what is actually valued by employers – is it a certificate, diploma or portfolio which attests that a young person has non-academic achievements, or is it the young person's ability to explain what their achievements are in a way relevant to the employer? The issue of accreditation of wider achievements is discussed in section 3.10.

#### Further and higher education

The survey distributed to further education and higher education providers led to 16 responses from FE admissions tutors and 30 from HE admissions tutors. This provides only limited information about the views of these education sectors. There is, however, nothing to suggest in the data that the views are unrepresentative.

##### *What is important to admissions tutors (apart from qualifications)?*

For respondents in both sectors, evidence of school leavers' personal abilities in relation to study, working with others, expressing themselves and other personal qualities such as confidence and ambition was more important than evidence of being involved in certain types of activities (over 80% agreeing these attributes were important or very important). Nonetheless, evidence of involvement in hobbies, various youth organisations and clubs, non-academic school activities and helping at home or in the community were valued by a half or more than half of the respondents. It is arguable that the qualities that are valued are likely to be the outcomes of engagement in a wide range of activities and that it is the outcomes that are important.

##### *What evidence do they find useful?*

Personal statements on the application form and teacher references are seen as useful by both HE and FE respondents but FE respondents were more likely to take account of a letter from another adult than their HE counterparts. FE respondents were also more likely to consider evidence of non-academic achievements such as a portfolio as being relevant and useful. Some subject disciplines such as art, textiles and design clearly use portfolios as common practice and therefore find them useful/very useful, but in the wider context this is less valued or not relevant.

##### *What further evidence of wider achievements might be useful?*

The questions asked related to the issue of some approach to verifying the evidence that a young person provides about their achievements, ranging from SQA quality assurance and

endorsement to endorsement by an appropriate adult. On the whole, some sort of endorsed statement was seen to be useful by the majority of respondents. FE respondents rated a statement quality assured by SQA as being most useful (with two-thirds considering it useful or very useful); just over a half of the HE respondents thought this would be useful. FE respondents were more likely to value a portfolio of evidence endorsed by an adult than HE respondents.

#### *How should evidence of wider achievements be presented?*

There was a range of views on what was useful, possibly reflecting the different disciplines represented, some having greater familiarity with photographic or digital output as part of the field of study. However, while both sectors find paper-based evidence more useful in terms of selecting candidates, FE admissions tutors were more likely than HE tutors to consider electronic presentations useful (eg CD, DVDs, webfolios or 'blogs'). Lack of time put constraints on how admissions tutors could make use of evidence. Electronic approaches such as DVD presentations or pupils' personal blogs may be useful but in fact are too time-consuming to consider. At interview there would not be time even for PowerPoint presentations. Comment was made by one FE respondent (Business and Management) in relation to portfolios that too often they were uniform in both content and presentation and that there was need for individualisation or personalisation. (Refer to comment from employer organisation above.)

#### *What would help more?*

Most of the comments indicated that admissions tutors did not so much require more information but better quality information from and about candidates. For example, better prepared and individualised personal statements would be helpful (10 comments); this included clear statements about their own achievements and also aspects of accuracy and neatness of presentation. It was noted that listing of achievements was often 'formulaic'; achievements during a gap year or completion of the Duke of Edinburgh Award are often similarly described. The other source of information that could be more helpful was the school reference (10 comments). There was concern that these were often bland and repetitive; a number referred to wanting 'honest information' with one commenting 'not one which tells me he/she is a lovely boy/girl'.

Findings from this small sample suggest that admissions tutors would not be adverse to some kind of validated or quality assured statement, but that evidence of wider achievements needs to avoid conformity or uniformity, clearly demonstrating personalised and individual achievements.

### **3.8 Extent of young people's participation**

In the research specification, the question to be investigated was to what extent young people are managing and reviewing their own learning, both in and out of school. Management might be taken to mean making choices about what to learn on the basis of self-reflection and self-awareness of need or interest; it could include decisions not only about what to learn but how to go about it. Involvement in personal learning planning at school or in some equivalent out of school might be taken as an indicator of this. However, it was decided that this was an issue that was quite difficult to explore by means of a questionnaire.

As a first step, questions were asked about the extent to which pupils took part in a range of activities both in and out of school, based largely on ideas which had come from the LTS consultations. Pupils (S1 to S4) and parents of pupils at all stages were both asked these questions.

The activities in school were:

- school or class council
- school committee
- school plays or concerts
- enterprise clubs
- working in the community (e.g. helping other people, environmental projects)
- helping other pupils (e.g. buddy schemes, helping with lessons or homework)
- helping to organise school events (e.g. parents' nights, events for visitors to the school, school plays and concerts)
- raising money for the school or charity
- representing school in competitions
- after school or lunchtime clubs
- I don't do any of these things

The activities and interests out of school were:

- Youth and other organisations (for example, Guides, Scouts, Youth Clubs, Sports Clubs, Red Cross, religious groups, charity and voluntary groups)
- Other interests and hobbies (for example dancing, sports, skating, reading, writing, playing chess, horse riding, drama clubs, learning music)
- Using the computer (for example playing games, creating my own webpages, keeping a blog, taking part in chat rooms, using email)
- Watching TV
- Helping at home
- Being a carer (for example, looking after parents or younger children)
- Having a job
- I don't do any of these things

With regard to school-initiated activities, around one-quarter of the pupils reported taking part in one activity, with just over a quarter reporting 2 or 3 activities. Over one-third indicated that they did not take part in any of the school-initiated wider learning opportunities listed.

Pupils were most likely to take part in school organised clubs (41%), followed by representing the school in competitions or raising money (approximately 25% of respondents in each case). Few (less than 10%) reported participating in activities which would be seen to represent citizenship/democratic processes, eg involvement in school committees and councils, helping to organise school events or working in the community. Within this sample, S4 pupils were more likely to take part in school concerts than other groups.

With regard to out of school activities, just over half the sample (54%) reported taking part in 3 or 4 of the listed activities. The most common activities out of school were using a computer or watching TV (85%); 79% reported having interests and hobbies, with just over a third (35%) taking part in youth and other organisations. Just under half reported helping at home, though for some this may be the norm as opposed to being recognised as an achievement. Smaller proportions reported having caring responsibilities, but at 12% this still represents a considerable number of children taking on these roles.

A higher proportion of S1 and S2 pupils (35% and 52% respectively) took part in youth or other organisations compared to S3 and S4 (just over a quarter in each year group). Unsurprisingly, higher proportions of S3 and S4 pupils have jobs (78% and 69% respectively), but 11% of both the S1 and S2 groups also reported having jobs.

It appears, therefore, with this group of respondents at least, that the majority are involved in activities out of school which provide opportunities for wider learning and achieving. In some cases this will be acknowledged, for example, through youth organisation awards and certification for progress in interests and hobbies. In other cases this may not be recognised in any formal way, or may not even be known about, such as helping and caring at home.

Parents were presented with the same two lists as the pupils. Interestingly, the activity most frequently reported by parents that their children take part in is raising money, and that by almost three-quarters of the respondents. The only other activity that more than half the parents reported was participating in school plays and concerts. The differences between the subsets of parents who had children either only in primary school (110) or only in secondary school (52) were substantial.

Parents with children taking part in activities through school:

	<b>Primary</b>	<b>Secondary</b>
• raising money	81%	48%
• schools plays or concerts	71%	18%
• helping other pupils	41%	21%
• helping organise school events	35%	10%
• working in the community	34%	10%

It is recognised that primary schools are smaller communities and there are potentially more opportunities for children to engage in such activities. This needs to be borne in mind when considering the types of school opportunities that are available to pupils in secondary schools through which a wider range of skills can be developed and wider achievements recognised.

Parents were unanimous about their children watching TV and the majority reported their children having interests and hobbies, helping at home and using computers. Over 60% reported their children taking part in youth groups. 18% reported that their children took on the role of carer.

In relation to out-of-school activities, there were only slight differences in responses of parents of primary and parents of secondary age children. The most notable was in relation to participating in youth organisations, with 67% of parents of primary children reporting this and only 44% of parents of older children. Although there was a high number reporting that their children had other interests and hobbies, there was a difference between sectors: 98% of parents of primary pupils compared to 85% of parents of secondary pupils reported this.

In summary:

- Over one-third of S1 to S4 pupils reported not taking part in any of the in-school activities considered appropriate for developing wider achievements. This suggests that a considerable number of secondary children would not immediately recognise opportunities through school as a source of wider achievements, if this were to be reflected on and recorded.
- All took part in some out of school activities. We need, however, to link this information to the view of 80% of the pupils that they did not wish such activities to be taken account of in any school recording system, or did not know if they should be.
- Both pupil and parent surveys suggest that older children are less likely to participate in both in-school and out of school activities. This presents a challenge to engaging some young people in the process of reflecting on wider achievements.

### 3.9 The effects of recognising and recording wider achievements

This section reports on some of the advantages and disadvantages of recognising and recording wider achievement identified by respondents.

Generally, the effects on young people were expressed in terms of gaining in confidence, self-esteem and self worth. The school management interviewees spoke of self-esteem, confidence, self worth, eagerness, belonging, value and pride.

Examples of quotes from an open question in the teacher survey are:

- *I think it is essential to recognise and record personal achievements for developing self-esteem (and creating a positive ethos in the establishment) (primary)*
- *I think it is very important because some children may not excel academically, so recognising non-academic achievements makes the child feel good in school (primary)*
- *I fully endorse the idea of celebrating all achievement by children. It provides the less 'gifted' children with the opportunity to shine (primary)*
- *Very important to recognise and so encourage the positive side of any pupil and encourage them to think of their education in a positive manner (secondary).*

In an open question in the parents' questionnaire, most comments in relation to the effect on children were about developing self-esteem and confidence, and also its importance for to non-academic children or those who did not appear 'to fit in to a school environment as it recognised success in other ways'.

Youth work organisations reported that it enhances self-esteem, confidence, motivation and ownership of learning.

Pupils were asked to indicate how helpful they thought taking part in a wide range of activities was in terms of a number of factors. Their responses are given in Table 3.5

**Table 3.5: How much do the things you do at school and your hobbies and interests out of school help you with the following things?**

	They don't help	They help a little	They help a lot
enjoying myself	11 (4%)	48 (17%)	211 (77%)
developing new skills	16 (6%)	78 (28%)	174 (63%)
getting to know what I am good at	16 (6%)	124 (45%)	131 (48%)
giving me confidence	23 (8%)	110 (40%)	133 (48%)
getting to know other people	20 (7%)	86 (31%)	163 (59%)
working with other people	29 (10%)	115 (42%)	124 (45%)
learning about things we don't learn in class	40 (14%)	134 (49%)	91 (33%)
making me want to do more things	41 (15%)	118 (42%)	108 (39%)
getting to know about the community I live in	114 (41%)	115 (42%)	37 (13%)

The greatest gains from taking part in extra-curricular and other 'non-academic' activities in school and in a range of hobbies and interests out of school were enjoyment, developing new skills and getting to know other people. Identifying what they were good at and gaining in confidence were the next most frequent gains. Opportunities for personal and social development were the most likely gains, while getting to know more about the community they lived in was the least likely gain. S1 pupils were slightly more likely than the other groups to indicate that they gained in confidence – 64% compared to half or less of the other year groups.

In the school management interviews, a number spoke beyond the benefits of gaining in self-esteem and confidence, reflecting on wider gains. Recognising and recording the achievements of children and young people showed the pupils how to develop their life skills, provided a base for lifelong learning, promoted a 'trying culture', made relationships between the schools and pupils stronger, allowed the children to see their progression and to remember the things they have done. For those at risk of disaffection, taking account of wider achievements could improve attendance, lead to reintegration and result in a desire to 'move forward'.

On the negative side, school managers raised concerns over the pressure that some children might feel to succeed in too many areas, and that some children felt *angst* at having attention drawn to them. One respondent raised the point that in the case of young carers, while the school may want to recognise their caring achievements, the child may not want their situation to be known. The issue of 'invasion of pupil's privacy' was raised. Finally, some respondents indicated a concern that 'over praising' can result in the child expecting reward too readily.

Fewer negative comments were made by teachers on the impact on children; and these related to what the effects of the process might be. For example:

- *Recognition should be informal and not seen as another box which needs to be ticked* (primary)
- *Please do not turn this into a certificate for the nice but not too bright. I can see this turning into a standard grade in being 'good'* (primary)
- *I think it is important to recognise wider achievements at the time, but do not think keeping a great long profile of these is helpful. Those with more achievements may become conceited and those with few may feel despair* (primary)
- *... the formality of recording musn't impinge on progress* (secondary).

### **3.10 Issues emerging across the range of stakeholders**

Three points are discussed here. The first has revealed a diversity of opinion across respondents, with some saying it is essential and others suggesting that it is quite unnecessary – that is the issue of developing a national framework and guidelines and some form of accreditation. The second considers the role and contribution of youth organisations – more specifically, that achievements gained through these organisations might in some way be linked to a school record of attainment. The third point briefly explores a concern raised by some that recognising wider achievements will potentially further disadvantage those already experiencing disadvantage.

#### **National framework, guidelines and accreditation**

There was strong support from local authority representatives for SQA to provide guidelines as to what and how achievements should be recorded, particularly taking account of the 4 capacities of *A Curriculum for Excellence*.

In the teachers' survey, about three-quarters of teachers (72%) thought that there should be national guidelines and just under two-thirds (64%) thought that a standardised national framework would be helpful. Comments from the teacher survey included the views that:

- *relevant achievements must be agreed. The system must be credible or it will be useless* (secondary)
- *an excellent idea .... as long as teachers don't have to organise it* (primary).



On the other hand:

- *progress is individual and specific to a child and cannot be measured against other children* (primary)
- *standardisation will put pressure on pupils to conform and this will 'kill innovation and initiative'* (secondary).

This last point was shared by employers and admissions tutors.

The majority of parents (81%) thought that it was a good idea for schools to use the same guidelines for developing records of achievement.

There were arguments both for and against developing a more formal accreditation system with certification. Some school managers argued for formal recognition that went beyond in-house certification. Some saw the need for SQA-type certification (or equivalent) to be developed, with some indicating that SQA should have a role in developing an appropriate recording system. One respondent said:

*'We need more relevant and realistic certification which recognises more than just the academic achievement of kids. If we're being consistent and we're looking for the full remit of confident individuals, effective contributors and so on, then we need to have certification that better reflects that ... not always having to look around for the one that you are reading about in this week's Sunday papers, but somebody who's providing good, coherent certification in all these areas.'*

On the other hand, one local authority representative suggested that because the SQA system is the dominant approach, that might be a barrier in itself, as there is the danger of applying that approach to wider achievements.

*'... my worry is that we try to replicate that kind of process, we formalise it too much, we create a big workload. The outcome should be the effect on the young people as recognised by themselves, rather than being recognised by someone else. It should be self-assessed and conversations with parents, teachers and friends should accompany it. We tend to need to account for everything and to account for everything you have to prove it. ... To try to mark everything that moves will be something that will just kill it. ... The important thing is not that these things have happened but that the kids have reflected on it and understand what a difference it's made to them.'*

In the teacher survey, just over half agreed that a nationally endorsed certificate on wider achievements was important. (There were no significant differences between primary and secondary teachers' responses.) This means, however, that a substantial minority did not agree. Two competing views were:

- *national recognition might make more pupils get involved* (secondary)
- *wider achievement should be recognised but not given the status of externally examined work* (secondary).

Three-quarters of parents thought that there should be a nationally recognised certificate showing that young people have more than academic achievements.

### *The case of youth organisations*

The interview with the representative of YouthLink Scotland had highlighted that the issue of accreditation was currently being investigated by youth organisations, therefore the questions asked about this were discussed with YouthLink Scotland for relevance.

Local authority organisations were more likely than voluntary organisations to agree that it is important or very important for achievements to be linked to the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) (79% compared to 38% of voluntary organisations). More of the respondents from voluntary organisations were not sure about this (24% compared to 3% of local authority respondents).

Just over half of the voluntary organisations (52%) thought that certificates accredited through SQA were important or very important, while 81% of local authority respondents thought this. Therefore, while this aspect appears to be generally important, local authority groups place significantly greater emphasis on the value of certification and SQA accreditation.

In support of credit rating and accreditation, 6 respondents indicated that credit rating their awards would raise the credibility of community and other informal learning opportunities. One local authority respondent stated: *'It is important and long overdue. ... The process will demonstrate the value of youth work services and evidence the results that can be achieved via youth work.'* The valuing of informal learning is important for the young people who gain success through such opportunities. The view was also expressed that certificated courses offered by youth services could bring new opportunities into *'educational and learning establishments, particularly when focusing on an alternative curriculum for those disaffected or at risk of exclusion'*.

Advantages were expressed mainly in terms of benefits to the young people. In addition to enhancing self-esteem as noted above (3.9), the opportunity for formal certification of informal learning:

- provides a 'stepping-stone' to achievements which are recognised by employers and further and higher education providers (12 comments)
- recognises non-academic achievement such as effort, hard work and progress (11 comments)
- gives success to those who might not otherwise be successful and lets them see they can achieve (7 comments).

On the other hand, credit rating and awarding SQA certification had implications for organisations in terms of cost, staff experience and time required for administration, monitoring quality and other 'bureaucracy' (9 comments). This was emphasised by voluntary organisations whose groups were run by volunteers.

Some awards from youth organisations do not readily conform to SQA requirements. One respondent expressed the view that SQA could record other awards on their certificates even though they are not necessarily accredited or levelled against the SCQF framework.

Disadvantages were also expressed in terms of the likely impact on young people. It was felt that for some it would be too much like school and it would be off-putting to them (11 comments). One interviewee indicated that there was a definite value in some kinds of informal provision being linked to formal qualifications, although it was not suitable in all circumstances. However, where it was appropriate, it was important for youth organisations that the process was not too formalised, because if what they did was too much like school, young people might be put off and lose the benefits.

A small number of respondents (4) indicated that success and achieving was more important for young people than certification and that praise and acknowledgement of success was sufficient to help them develop.

The broad consensus appears to be that both informal and formal recognition of achievements are valuable. Linking existing awards to the SCQF framework would be beneficial in terms of giving greater credibility to awards for recognition by 'end-users' such as employers and HE. However, current awards offered by youth organisations could be given greater status and recognition by 'end-users' and more young people could be encouraged to achieve them. Within the informal learning environments offered by youth organisations, it is important that a wide range of approaches to recognition exist and that those most appropriate to the individual are used. The young person's choice is important and there should be no pressure for them to gain formal certification in this context.

### **Closer working between education and youth work organisations**

In the space for comments at the end of the parent questionnaire, one parent commented:

*'It's just a pity that there are not more youth clubs in association with the education establishments where achievements (outwith schools) can be recorded alongside educational achievements. Communities and government need to get together to offer the younger generation more options and link schools to youth centres.'*

One is tempted to speculate that this parent is a youth worker, as the comment raises the issue that was raised with youth organisations. 'How important is it that learning and achievements gained through your organisation are linked in some way to a record of school attainment and achievement?'

One of those interviewed considered that the issue was perhaps not about linking achievements in an informal context to a school record but about finding ways of doing it both in and out of school that suited the young people but kept them separate. It should be left in the hands of the young people to draw them together if they wanted to; it was not something to be forced on them.

Around 60% of voluntary organisations and almost 70% of local authority respondents thought that it was important or very important to link achievements out of school with those at school in some way. While this is a majority, a substantial number of respondents felt this was not important or were uncertain.

Respondents were asked to indicate what they thought schools and youth organisations could do to facilitate such links. The most frequent response to what they could do to facilitate a process that allows a joint record of achievement to be developed for young people was to be open to partnership between schools and youth organisations. There was the potential for community learning and development and education officers within local authorities to communicate more effectively and to work together and for youth workers to have more input into schools. It was acknowledged that this was happening '*to some extent, but it is patchy, lacks consistency and is not really part of a long-term integrated approach*'. This, in turn, would encourage more young people to access alternative provision.

One respondent commented that the current focus appeared to be on widening the formal curriculum, NOT acknowledging the value of the provision made by informal providers. '*It would be beneficial if the formal education system recognised the importance and value of achievement through informal provision.*' It was also important that young people themselves were more aware of informal opportunities and this might be achieved through youth work providers and schools working more closely at local levels.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Note: The Scottish Executive has announced funding to help build the capacity of youth organisations and improve training for youth volunteers. A co-ordinator has been appointed to work with schools and youth workers to strengthen links across the sectors. (TES, March 16, 2007 p10)

The creation of an 'achievement database' was proposed by one respondent – *'which records information for all pupils and leavers up to an agreed age, where input can be authorised by multiple agencies. Quality assurance (would be) undertaken by education/community learning staff.'* Another respondent indicated that a web-based database which could be accessed by the young people (any time/any place) and others on their behalf would be useful.

Representatives of voluntary organisations, while referring positively to developing partnerships with schools, saw their roles as providing better information about their organisations and the value of youth awards, for example through meetings with school management and PSE teachers and presentations to pupils in PSE classes.

## **Disadvantage**

The view has been expressed that taking greater account of wider achievements, particularly any attempts to formalise it, will further advantage those that come from more privileged backgrounds and already have the 'cultural capital' and family support to engage in a wide range of developmental activities. While recognising non-academic success is seen as important for those who have hitherto been considered less successful at school, or who have become disengaged from school, formal recognition within the school system, making it more like school, will not help them. This was a recurring theme through the research, with both parents and teachers expressing the view that some children do not have the opportunities in their communities or support of their families.

In the teacher survey, a small but substantial minority (39%) agreed there was potential for disadvantage. Lack of opportunity because of lack of facilities in communities was highlighted by one respondent from a school in *'the outlying areas of the City'*. In such communities there was need for *'more opportunities for developing "wider skills and talents"'*.

In response to the question about the value of credit-rating and certificating young people's achievements gained in youth organisations, a representative of a voluntary organisation said:

*'I would need to know a whole lot more on what you are talking about. ... I think credit rating would work if it recognised effort and input by the organisation – in the same way the added value is used in schools. It would not reflect achievement or represent meritocratic measurement if it did not do this. In other words, if you had a cohort of young people from a fee paying private school attending a youth club, in comparison to a cohort of disadvantaged young people attending another youth club, it is quite likely all you would be measuring is advantage. That is, not achievement, but privilege. The fee paying kids would obviously achieve more and the other kids would be at another disadvantage because they would not have the same resources.'*

If wider achievement were linked to a formal framework which gave certain levels of certification for predetermined outcomes, then it is quite likely that some who are already culturally well established would gain more.

There is therefore a dilemma between the need to take account of wider achievements to emphasise the development of the whole child but in a way that does not further disadvantage those for whom it might be particularly beneficial.

In the teacher survey, there was substantial agreement that local authorities (98%) and schools (93%) have a responsibility for ensuring that all children have the opportunity to

develop non-academic qualities and a wide range of skills and abilities. Therefore, potential disadvantage might be overcome by strong provision and support from education providers. In this context, the potential collaboration of youth organisations and formal education providers is a valuable area to explore and develop as noted above.

### 3.11 Summary of key points

#### Summary of issues from research into views of stakeholders

- 1. Understanding of 'wider achievement':** Recognising wider achievement was identified by all respondents in terms of celebration and acknowledging success, from outstanding achievements to small individual progress that was valuable and relevant to the child. It encompassed achievements both in school and out of school. Recognising such achievements was particularly valuable in developing confidence and self-esteem. It was also identified by some respondents as the opportunity for reflecting on achievement so that pupils could recognise their own achievements and become aware of their learning and learning needs. This latter view appeared to be less prevalent in people's understanding of what it meant to recognise wider achievement but was perhaps more noticeable when people talked about it in relation to personal learning planning.
- 2. Recording wider achievement:** There was some disagreement around the value of recording wider achievement. From the school perspective there was often an understanding that this meant recording every achievement and keeping long lists or profiles of individuals' achievements. Concern was also expressed over the idea that this had to be substantiated by gathering large amounts of evidence. Evidence from pupils who had been involved in keeping records of achievement was largely positive but, despite that, over half of them thought that keeping a record of achievement should be voluntary, a view shared by parents and a substantial minority of teachers. A small but substantial minority were negative about the experience. Again the challenge is helping young people not just to record but to reflect and be proactive in deciding what is relevant to record and why they are recording it. The purpose should be that they know about themselves and can give a clear explanation to others of what they have achieved. It cannot be assumed that this will happen by making people keep records of achievement.
- 3. Out of school achievements:** While people's understanding of what the term meant in current usage included out of school achievements, there was some disagreement about the relevance of taking account of them in school. A greater proportion of parents than pupils thought it was important for a record of achievements gained out of school to be maintained in schools, but nearly a third of parents thought this was **not** important and the majority of the pupils also felt that this was **not** important. Reasons included that not all children had the same opportunities or support out of school and that children were entitled to 'private lives' out of school. This presents a challenge to schools to consider how the benefits of learning gained outside school might be transferred to the school context without impinging on the privacy of pupils who prefer not to have these things noted. It also presents a challenge in supporting those who do have fewer opportunities.
- 4. Which young people is it for?** The general view was that it was important for ALL, but that young people who would not normally gain recognition through academic performance had most to gain from the recognition of non-academic successes. While it is important at all stages of education, it is perhaps more significant at later stages when moving towards post-school education and employment.

- 5. Support for young people in developing records of achievement:** The key people identified who can help young people were the class teacher in primary and special schools and the guidance teacher and PSE/D teachers in secondary schools. Other adults as mentors were not given a prominent role. However, given the concerns over teacher workload, the potential of involving non-teachers is worth investigating, particularly if there can be greater collaboration with youth organisations (see below). The view was also expressed that subject teachers in secondary school needed support and development to help them be more aware of opportunities for recognising, and helping young people recognise, achievements which go beyond attainment in the subject.
- 6. What approaches are preferred for recording wider achievement:** Generally, computer based approaches were preferred to paper based approaches, though an endorsed portfolio was seen as effective by the youth organisations (the other groups were not asked about this). There was more uncertainty around the use of audio-visual approaches such as video diaries and the use of e-portfolios. Some were strongly in favour, but people were more likely to say that they did not know how effective these might be. Youth organisations indicated that multiple approaches were necessary to suit the varying needs of young people.
- 7. Value to end users:** End users do not want to view portfolios of evidence, particularly those that appear to have been put together to conform to a set of guidelines. While a validated certificate could be useful, the emphasis was on young people being able to present themselves or information about themselves in individual and innovative ways.
- 8. Extent of participation in activities considered appropriate for developing wider achievements:** Over one-third of S1 to S4 pupils reported not taking part in any of the in-school activities considered appropriate for developing wider achievements. This suggests that a considerable number of secondary children would not immediately recognise opportunities through school as a source of wider achievements, if this were to be reflected on and recorded. However, all took part in some out of school activities. We need to bear in mind that many pupils did not wish such activities to be taken account of in any school recording system, or did not know if they should be. Both pupil and parent surveys suggest that older children are less likely to participate in both in-school and out of school activities. This presents a challenge to engaging some young people in the process of reflecting on wider achievements.
- 9. The effects of recognising and recording wider achievement:** The main benefits were expressed in terms of developing confidence and self-esteem. A small number of respondents referred to the benefits of developing reflection on learning which would support lifelong learning habits. Concern was expressed about too much pressure being put on children.
- 10. National guidelines and accreditation:** Views were divided on the value of more formal recognition of wider achievements through guidelines, a common framework and accreditation. The majority of educational representatives favoured guidelines, particularly in relation to how to link wider achievements to the four capacities of *A Curriculum for Excellence*. Many thought that accreditation would enhance the status of achievements, and for youth organisations the status of the informal learning opportunities they provide. However, this presented a dilemma of achieving credibility without enforcing conformity and uniformity. With respect to young people, both formal and informal recognition of achievement were valuable, and they should be free to choose which suits their needs.

- 11. Links with youth work organisations:** While a majority of respondents to the survey for youth organisations thought it was important that achievements gained by young people through their organisations should be linked in some way to a record of school attainment and achievement, a substantial number did not see this as relevant. Appropriateness varied according to the needs of the young person, and some might not benefit from approaches that seemed ‘too much like school’. However, in general terms, closer working between schools and youth organisations was welcomed, with the development of partnerships which could increase the opportunities for young people to take part in informal learning, using approaches well developed by these organisations.
- 12. Disadvantage:** Concerns were expressed that a focus on wider achievements, particularly out of school, might further disadvantage those who do not have supportive family or community environments. Appropriate support through a partnership of local authorities, schools and youth organisations could address some of these concerns.

## 4. Links to *A Curriculum for Excellence* and Emerging Issues

*A Curriculum for Excellence (2004)* provided the impetus for this study. The identification of 4 purposes of the curriculum:

- Successful learners
- Confident individuals
- Effective contributors
- Responsible citizens

carried with it an expectation that as the range of skills and dispositions which young people might be expected to acquire was widening, then new ways of recognising achievement beyond the traditional summative test or examination, might need to be explored.

However, since the ill-fated Records of Achievement launched in the early 1980s, little work had been done in Scotland to explore the concept of 'wider achievement', to examine what 'wider' in this context actually means and to consult stakeholders on their views on the efficacy of this whole area in the context of a changing curriculum.

Thus, the project set out 'to make recommendations on the basis of the evidence about approaches to recognising wider achievement in Scotland'. A number of issues have emerged from the study:

### **Value**

The title of the study, 'recognising wider achievement', is, in itself, problematic. It suggests that there are achievements which are currently recognised (mainly through National Qualifications) and then there are "wider" achievements which may stake a claim to be recognised. This approach does not signal parity of esteem. We would suggest that Recognising Achievement should be the simple, unequivocal heading. The process has to have intrinsic value for the young person and the potential end-users have to see a utility value in the process and product.

### **Definition**

A more precise definition would be helpful. This can only come through a process of engagement with all of the key stakeholders. Those who participated in this study have suggested that recognising achievement is not simply about doing things, but is about the learning gained in the process and the reflection which takes place during and after the activities and events.

### **Learners**

For Recognising Achievement to be meaningful to the learner and to those end-users of the information recorded, the learner has to have ownership of both the process and the products. The learner has to be genuinely at the centre, with progress being self-referenced as opposed to comparison with others. It needs to be something the young people want to do because they see the value of it.

The process should be one of progressive development from early years, through primary and secondary school and beyond. It is likely that there will be more emphasis placed on the process at transition points, particularly when young people are leaving school.



## Teachers and other supporters

While much of the work which will go in to the recording and management of the process of Recognising Achievement will take place within the school setting, many people other than teachers will be in a position to help the reflective process. People in the community, in workplaces, in voluntary organisations, for example, will have a key role to play. This will pose questions of co-ordination and communication and will require some training and development of the teachers and others who might support the children and young people.

## End-users

Critical to the success and sustainability of Recognising Achievement will be the commitment of the end-users. If employers and Universities and Colleges do not value the process, if they do not actively encourage young people to present their achievements in their entirety, if they continue only to focus on academic achievement, for example, the process will not take root. The exchange value of the achievements of young people must be real and meaningful.

## Processes

The process of recognising achievements is not unproblematic. Previous attempts, such as Records of Achievement, foundered, at least in part, on the rock of bureaucracy. The Record was a single document with a format laid down from the centre. If this new process is to be successful, it will have to be flexible enough to suit individual needs and to allow the young person to have real ownership.

Technology has clearly advanced since RoAs were tried. E-portfolios are now technically possible. The key here is that technology should serve the aims of the process and should allow the flexible use of the information which the young person has gathered. For those who wish it, hard copy version should be available and there may need to be protocols built in to ensure that only certain users have access to certain parts of the information.

Evidence from the past suggests that the process should not be too time-consuming or too bureaucratic in terms of the kinds evidence required for achievements to be recorded. It has to be easily managed and easily accessed by those who have a stake in the process.

***A Curriculum for Excellence*** has introduced the possibility of radical change in the system. It has made a commitment to providing an educational experience which will enable every learner in Scotland to fulfil his or her potential and go on to be a life-long learner. Recognising Achievement is a core element of this change process. It has its challenges, philosophically and practically. However, this small study has indicated that there is willingness in many parts of the system in Scotland to make it succeed where other attempts have failed.

The Quality in Education Centre

*A Curriculum for Excellence: A Review of  
Approaches to Recognising Wider Achievement*

**Appendices  
to  
Final Report**

*May 2007*

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### Recognising Wider Achievement

#### Summary of interviews with education authorities and school management

Interviews were carried out during January and February 2007. The numbers interviewed were: 6 local authority representatives; 7 secondary school senior managers; headteachers or deputy headteachers from 8 primary schools, 2 early years providers, 3 primary and early years combined, 2 special schools/education centres.

**1. What do you understand by the phrase 'wider achievement' as it is currently being used?**

For many of those interviewed, across all sectors including local authority staff, emphasis was on the fact that recognising wider achievement was a shift in focus for schools, with about half indicating that it meant taking account of achievements gained outside of school as well as those in school. It included social and personal achievements, growth in confidence, outcomes of effort and 'stickability', things valued by the children themselves, their interests, hobbies and commitment to learning. It was noted that for some children 'just getting up in the morning and coming to school' is an achievement. One pre-5 respondent suggested it was recognising the achievements of 'children, staff, parents and the community' and so children were encouraged to be aware of the achievements of others, not just their own.

**2. Do you think it is important to consider young people's wider achievements?**

All were unanimously in agreement that it is important. The main reason given was that it focused on the development of the whole child and not just academic success. Across all sectors the contribution to developing confidence and self-esteem was viewed as an important aspect of taking account of non-academic achievements. A secondary school respondent highlighted its importance in countering disaffection as it gave more purpose to being at school. One local authority representative spoke of the importance of success being an outcome of the development of the whole personality and personal qualities which the current focus on examinations does not develop.

**3. Are there particular groups of pupils for whom recognising achievement is more important?**

Views on whether it was more important for some children than others were divided.

Just over half thought it was important for all children; academic children need to recognise that there were other ways of being successful and they also valued having their skills and wider achievements recognised.

Just under half thought it was more important for those who were not academically successful, the 'disaffected' and the 'disadvantaged', while a few were uncertain. The view was expressed that it was important for ALL but that young people who would not normally gain recognition through academic performance had most to gain from the recognition of non-academic successes. It might therefore be seen to serve different purposes for different types of pupils.

**4. Is it important at different stages in a pupil's school life?**

The view of all interviewees was that it was important at all stages. It might be more significant at S4 to S6 but not more important. The interviewees emphasised the importance of starting at the pre-5 stage and continuing throughout young people's schooling. For secondary schools the challenge is continuing it in S1 and S2 to maintain the confidence and achievements of P7 as pupils progress. One secondary interviewee stated:

*'I think if you can start off reinforcing the positive and downplaying the negative from the moment they go into nursery then you are going to encourage and*

*motivate, rather than having this negative approach and all the attention being negative attention.'*

## **5. What barriers or challenges are there to recognising and reporting on pupils' wider achievements?**

Interviewees identified challenges with respect to teachers and schools, pupils and in the wider system.

Most of the challenges mentioned related to teachers and schools, with the biggest challenge being time, or the lack of it, followed by the practical issues of record keeping and storage of materials. The culture of schools tended to be attainment driven with traditional exam oriented values and therefore this was a barrier to be overcome (ie achieving the shift in focus identified in Q.1; see also impact on schools.) Several mentioned the need for financial resources.

With respect to children, it was noted that some do not like to be 'put in the spotlight' and some can feel uncomfortable with praise: *'there is a cultural barrier in Scotland of not wanting to stand out from the crowd.'* It was also noted that some parents see 'attainment' as more important.

In relation to the wider system, there was evidence of emerging different underpinning perspectives on what RWA should be about. There were those who argued for the need for formal recognition that went beyond in-house certification. Some saw the need for SQA type certification (or equivalent) to be developed, with some indicating that SQA should have a role in developing guidelines and an appropriate recording system. One respondent said:

*'We need more relevant and realistic certification which recognises more than just the academic achievement of kids. If we're being consistent and we're looking for the full remit of confident individuals, effective contributors and so on, then we need to have certification that better reflects that ... not always having to look around for the one that you are reading about in this week's Sunday papers, but somebody who's providing good, coherent certification in all these areas.'*

On the other hand one local authority representative suggested that because the SQA system is the dominant approach, that might be a barrier in itself as there is the danger of applying that approach to wider achievements.

*'... my worry is that we try to replicate that kind of process, we formalise it too much, we create a big workload. The outcome should be the effect on the young people as recognised by themselves, rather than being recognised by someone else. It should be self-assessed and conversations with parents, teachers and friends should accompany it. We tend to need to account for everything and to account for everything you have to prove it. ... To try and mark everything that moves will be something that will just kill it. ... The important thing is not that these things have happened but that the kids have reflected on it and understand what a difference it's made to them.'*

## **6. Which stakeholders do you think value recognising the wider achievements of young people?**

Nursery and primary respondents emphasised that it was important to the school, some parents, the pupils themselves and their peers, who 'enjoy seeing their friends having success'. Two mentioned employers. Secondary respondents likewise said that some parents valued it but understandably spoke more about employers. Views on employers varied, with some thinking that employers were really only interested in exam results, while others felt their local employers emphasised the development of the whole person.

Interviewees from all stages spoke of the different responses from parents and noted that a surprising number of parents were not interested, or might not see their child's participation in clubs as learning or achieving but something to keep them occupied. One authority interviewee noted that parents tend to ask which schools are academically high achieving not those that do well at wider achievement.

Secondary school interviewees were less sure of the value placed on wider achievements by higher education. One local authority representative spoke of the importance of the personal statement on the UCAS form to higher education providers and expressed the view that, if pupils have reflected on what difference taking part in activities has made to them and not just recorded they have done it, this will help with their application process.

## **7. Current practice for recognising and recording achievements**

Schools and local authority representatives were asked about current practice in recognising and recording pupils' wider achievement. Schools were asked about wider achievements both inside and outside of schools, and local authority representatives were asked to give an overview of practice in their area.

### ***Nurseries***

Most nurseries seemed to focus on recognising those wider achievements that represent life skills or emotional, social and personal growth, such as 'sharing', 'independence', 'friendship' and 'cultural differences'. With regard to methods of recognition, one school favoured immediate response to the child with group clapping or praising words, in order that the child understands the link between the achievement and the recognition, while other schools used 'star pupil' awards, stickers, photos and sharing of stories. More than half of the nurseries recorded the pupils' wider achievements in pupil folders, records of achievement or Personal Learning Plans. Several nurseries believed that it was important for them to recognise and record wider achievements because children are with them at an age when self worth starts to develop. (When schools and local authorities were asked if recognising and reporting on wider achievements is more important at different stages in a pupil's school life, many thought that it should begin in early years when children begin to develop their life skills). Recognising wider achievement was also seen as an important way to encourage good habits in the children.

Nurseries also recognised pupils' outside achievements, and relied on the children and parents telling them about what the children had done. They recognised areas such as helpfulness, kindness, obeying parents, overcoming illness and sports. They all encouraged the children to share what they'd done with systems like 'Circle Time', and they recognised achievements with praise and stickers, and in their own newsletters and those published by councils. They used the same recording methods as for school achievements.

### ***Primary Schools***

Most of the wider achievements that schools reported recognising can be said to fall into the social and personal development category: citizenship, social responsibility, buddying, helping and caring; and good behaviour, good thinking, good attitudes, improvement, participation, effort, being healthy and creativity. Activities which fell outside the traditional academic field were also recognised: club membership, outdoor activities, sporting achievements, cycling proficiency and road safety. Certain methods of recognising wider achievement seemed to be used throughout the schools surveyed: 'Star Pupil' awards, in-house certificates, assemblies, 'Achiever of the week', notice boards, photos and newsletters. One school used the local press to run stories about achievements and another wrote about achievements on the school website, both methods which extend the recognition to the wider community. Four schools recorded pupils' wider achievements in Personal Learning Plans. (In one case this was only for P7 pupils – the achievements of younger children were not recorded.) Other schools used the class folder, the Record of Achievement and target diaries. These schools saw it as important to both recognise and record wider achievements: there was widespread recognition of academic achievement in schools and so this provided some balance, and children need to remember their achievements and see their progression. Three schools did not formally record their pupils' achievements. One school said that they *'haven't given a great deal of thinking time to the idea'* of recording and worried about the workload if they did record:

*'We have so many other recording systems in school, I think the thought of having to record when children are achieving might become a bit burdensome because a lot of*

*them are doing it a lot of the time, and we're celebrating success and achievement almost on a daily basis'.*

One head teacher had used the Record of Achievement with pupils in her last school, but was not sure of the value of it. Instead of recording, they preferred to promote the recognising and celebrating side:

*'I think that recognising achievement is more about the ethos within a school and how children are encouraged and helped. You can have the situation where a child is sitting with a folder with lots of achievement but they don't particularly feel good about themselves because it's not backed up'.*

Similarly, the other school who did not record said that 'the recognition is what really matters'.

As with nurseries, children and parents were encouraged to tell schools about outside achievements, and to bring in certificates, medals and awards. Those primary schools who recorded school achievements also tended to record outside achievements, using the same methods. Schools felt it important to consider the outside achievements as they are interested in the 'whole child'. One school was concerned that, while all children are offered the same chances in school, participation in out of school activities depends on family situation, and therefore some children will have more opportunity to gain achievements for the school to celebrate:

*'Sometimes there are groups of children in my school whose parents don't really get very involved in their learning at all, and really don't take them to anything where they could achieve. So you have to watch the balance in that one I think. It's quite a tricky one.'*

### **Education Centres**

The education centres surveyed focused on achievements gained from experiences: outdoor activities, community projects, charity work and buddying. Methods of recognition were similar to those of primary schools – pupil of the month and in-house certificates – but there were some differences. One centre worked to the ASDAN system and another with the Natural Connections Award Scheme (although unfortunately this will end soon due to lack of funding). A system of merits and demerits was reported, and also the use of rewards in the form of gifts and gift certificates, given at an awards ceremony for recognising wider achievements. (The school reported how expensive this was, but that the children seemed to very much appreciate it.) As mentioned, ASDAN recording methods were used, as well as Individual Learning Plans, personal portfolios, daily diaries and DVDs for parents to watch. Of all the schools surveyed, the education centres seemed to place the strongest emphasis on the importance of recognising wider achievements. They integrated a lot of activities into their teaching that perhaps wouldn't be found in a mainstream school. According to one principal:

*'We're actually trying to put in subjects that these kids will buy in to and might equip them for life beyond school. Our kids don't traditionally do all that well with 'chalk and talk' activities; we try to spice that up with as wide a range of practical subjects as we can, and a lot of our kids really enjoy them'.*

The centres provided many opportunities for the pupils to achieve in a wide sense and seemed to focus on wider achievements as a means of showing pupils that even though their academic achievement might not be outstanding ('we don't get too many academic high-flyers'), they were successful in other areas. Thus the centres saw recognising and reporting on wider achievements as extremely important for the same reasons as the primary schools: for self esteem, motivation, to track progression and remember things done in the past, and also to create a positive atmosphere for the pupils:

*'I would much rather be running a school or a centre where we're celebrating what's good instead of dwelling on what's bad.'*

The education centres also took account of out-of-school activities like sustaining college and work placements, citizenship, sporting achievements, community work and fundraising, and use photographs, certificates and praising as methods of recognition. They recorded outside achievements similarly to school achievements, in ASDAN portfolios, Individual Learning Plans and on DVD. One school stressed the importance of recognising out of school activities to take the school out into the community and bring community life in to the school:

*'This is important not just for the children, but the families and community too, especially where there are challenges concerning public behaviour. Our children need experiential learning. We want the children to be able to access their local facilities, to feel comfortable, and we want the community to feel comfortable with the children too.'*

## **Secondary Schools**

Secondary schools reported recognising personal achievements in the areas of effort, behaviour, attendance, performance, improvement, honesty, sporting abilities and musical talent. They also recognised membership of clubs, community service, charity work, and positions held in school (Duxes, Head Boy/Girl etc.) as important, and several schools recognised activities from the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and ASDAN. There was a wide range of recognition methods being used, varying in complexity. Notice and photo boards depicting achievements were common, as were in-house certificates, recognition times at assemblies and prizegivings. Some schools used praise systems like letters home upon achievement and one school assigned 'privilege cards' to pupils they felt deserved them after achievements in areas like improvement, effort and behaviour. Another school used a 'colours' system and awarded pieces of braid to the pupils to attach to their blazers when they achieved. A well-designed website was used by one school to record all the pupils' achievements and to make those achievements visible to family and community. Some schools used the Progress File to record, while others used pupils' personal files, incident manager on Phoenix, notes in jotters and daily diaries. All secondary schools saw it as important to consider the wider achievements of the pupils. Some also stressed the importance of recording those achievements:

*'Well, if you don't record, then what's the point of doing it? When you can see continuous good work, hard work, honesty, good citizenship etc, then you've got a realism to writing somebody's reference. Plus, when the children go for interview or they're writing a personal statement they can say that they are responsible, reliable etc and they can prove it with the presentation of their [record].'*

The schools also considered it important to take account of out of school activities, *'It's a way fundamentally of building a relationship between the child and the school'*. Like the other schools, the secondaries often depended on the pupils telling them things, although one school asked guidance staff to identify achievers and another wrote to community organisations and youth groups to ask them if their pupils were involved there and had made achievements. One school very actively promoted the importance of outside activity to its pupils:

*'We encourage and promote all students to have opportunities to take part in a wide range of out of school activities. Community sporting activities, out of school clubs, musical activities are encouraged with winter and summer musical presentations supported extensively by the community giving recognition to the many talents involved. Out of school participation in Youth Drama is encouraged and recognised in regular performances in and beyond the community. We encourage students to have an international perspective with opportunities for senior students to take part in Virtual Drama with partner schools and in an annual Conference – Global Classroom Conference.'*

Schools tended to use the same methods for recognition and recording as for the in-school activities, and one school also mentioned recording these activities in CVs and on UCAS forms for the older pupils.

Several of the schools talked about the specific case of young carers. One school planned to review their achievement policy to take this group specifically into account as they had a high number of



young carers on their school role. Another school stressed the importance of not singling out young people because of an out-of-school situation that the young person may be sensitive about, for example young carers or those with disabilities:

*'Sometimes if you draw attention to these things it can cause embarrassment to the children in front of the other children, which they don't want. So we try to make sure that everyone's achievement is recognised without it causing them any difficulty. So it's important when we do it that we do it sensitively.'*

### **Local Authorities**

Local authority representatives were asked to what extent they thought schools in their authority already recognised young people's achievements. The general response was that all schools in the authority were doing this, but to varying degrees. Some had very active programmes compared to others. There was a similar feeling from several of the authorities that their schools needed some sort of standard recording system and that we need to encourage all stakeholders to place more value on achievements other than those which are academic.

Authorities were also asked to what extent schools in their authority already recorded young peoples' wider achievements. In some authorities the majority of schools had systems in place, while others were actively developing new recording methods. Again, some respondents called for a standardised system that stakeholders will value.

### **Progress Files**

Of the 6 secondary schools whose management were interviewed, 2 were currently using the Progress File while the other 4 had used it in the past but were not using it now. The 2 who used it did so mainly with pupils in transition, and at leaving ceremonies as the final act before the pupil moved on.

When asked about the effectiveness of the Progress File in reflecting on and recording wider achievement, the response was mixed. One school stated that it was indeed helpful to pupils, and another that it was the best way of recording wider achievements because the pupils had to update it regularly in PSE class. A further response was that, although the Progress File was useful, it needed more thought: several respondents said that it was effective as far as the school's contribution was concerned, but ineffective in the use it was put to after school, as any record needs to have credibility and credence beyond education.

Almost all the schools reported benefits in using the Progress File: namely, that it was a good tool for aiding reflection of learning and achievement and allowed the child to see their own development and set further targets. It also encouraged the discipline of thinking about what they had achieved and where they could go, and for older students was helpful in developing CVs.

The challenges reported were finding the time to keep it up to date and that it was too formulaic in nature. It was reported that sometimes the achievements reported were minimal, and that it could even end up a 'profile of failure'. Again, one of the challenges was external recognition of its value by stakeholders. According to one respondent, *'The benefits disappear in a vacuum if it doesn't lead to anybody else paying any attention to it'*.

## **8. In what other ways can wider achievement be recognised and recorded?**

Heads of schools and local authority representatives were asked about other ways in which we could take more account of children's wider achievements. Some schools thought that they already did a lot. Almost all responses indicated that they were already developing or intended to develop more methods of recording these achievements. The idea of using portfolios was popular and many were already considering the value of e-portfolios. One school had particularly well developed ideas on recording methods that reflected the lives of the children and their interests:

*'We are looking all the time to try to find electronic ways and also to find ways where pupils make decisions; and whether forums and blogs could become an actual*

*vehicle, not just for students to formally record progress, but to record issues and concerns that will relate in turn to how we help them progress. As a school we're trying to think, "How can we tap in to that world where they are engaging a great deal with their peers and with others, that will reflect how they see themselves and what factors are influencing them?" I do not mean intruding on their 'Bebo' or 'MySpace' websites in any sense, but I mean the more we create and use these facilities as part of their learning, the more we reflect the way they communicate as young people'.*

Some head teachers expressed concern over recording in portfolios. In terms of benefit to children and workload for the teachers:

*'I don't really see actually how that's going to benefit the children to record all these things. I think we have to be careful that we don't introduce more paperwork. For a school to start formally recording all these little things would become far too difficult and I can't see that there would be great benefit.'*

But this school did like the idea of including achievements in Personal Learning Plans. Another school also expressed concern about how achievements were recorded:

*'I would hate to go down the road where we tick a box saying, "He is now a confident individual" because, as we all know, that can change by different teachers, different classes, the way they're treated... I'd hate to go down the road of videoing and filming children to prove that they're confident. I'm not actually sure what we can do.'*

Local authorities said that the recording process should be fun for the children involved, and they also stressed the importance of using up-to-date methods:

*'I'm absolutely convinced that when you think of digital technology and recording technology, that's the future for so, so much. Kids can talk into things, they can get images, you can access digital information from home, from school, the kid can do it when they're out on their bike. Particularly as things like iPods and phones get more and more complex and sophisticated, perhaps we are moving in to an era of the kind of digital profile and the e-portfolio. When you think of the future form of an application for a job or a place, it could well be that a youngster burns off a CD or uses a memory stick or just emails a mountain of information that people can see. And of course that can be constantly added to and changed.'*

Across all responses from schools and local authorities, the importance of guidance from bodies like SQA and the development of standardised recording methods that can be valued by all stakeholders were emphasised.

## **9. The impact of recognising and recording wider achievement on teachers and pupils**

Nurseries, primaries, secondaries, education centres and local authority representatives were asked what they believed would be the impacts on teachers and pupils of taking more account of children's wider achievement.

### ***Impact on staff***

The 29 responses illustrated both the positive and negative impacts on staff of recognising and recording wider achievements. On the positive side, 6 schools actively promoted it and believed that their staff already recognised and recorded wider achievements (therefore there would be no major impact introducing further ideas), and a further school stated that their staff would welcome new developments. One school believed that teachers learning about new things would have a good 'knock on effect' on the pupils as everyone would be learning together. Two respondents believed that recognising and recording wider achievement helped staff-student relationships as the children appreciated the interest the teacher took in them. Finally, four respondents believed that the biggest impact of recognising and recording wider achievement is that teachers are encouraged to take a holistic view of the child's learning. This addresses the issue raised throughout the interviews that

some teachers still see themselves as teachers of a subject, rather than of the children – a way of thinking that many respondents seem keen to dispel:

*'Teachers historically are teachers of a subject... I think there needs to be serious changes made to the definition of what qualifies you as a teacher, and what you are able to do. I think that professionalism is much more than 'I'm the deliverer of a subject'... As A Curriculum for Excellence takes hold I think we can see or will hopefully see a shift in curricular structures and priorities that teachers are going to have to keep up with, and the demands for the type of teachers that we're looking for, they could well see themselves with much more flexible roles.'*

The negative response most frequently given (11 schools) was concern over the workload for recording wider achievements. These respondents felt that recording might be cumbersome and time consuming. There was also concern that some teachers would need more encouragement than others to embrace the changes, and that there should be some kind of standardised system to work from and more freedom to recognise and record wider achievements than the 5-14 curriculum currently allows. Finally, one school expressed the concern that it was difficult to get a consensus on the right ways to recognise and record wider achievement, and that there will always be different opinions within a school that may sometimes clash.

*'I think that there is a consensus that we all want to record achievement and we all want to do it in a way that reflects as best we can the holistic child. Where the debates arise, are that there is only so much you can do and there are only so many areas you can go in to – a quantity debate. There's also debate about the extent to which a school should be intruding upon the aspects of a young person's progress and growth – they have a right to their personal lives and they have a right to their own goals and their own ambitions being shared with us on terms that they are comfortable with.'*

There were also more general comments made about the developmental impact on teachers: that the mindset will have to change, that teachers will need to learn to be constantly aware of opportunities to recognise and record wider achievements, that motivated teachers are required, and that schools need support from all stakeholders to ensure that they are delivering what is wanted.

### **Impact on pupils**

Response to the question about the impact on pupils of taking more account of their wider achievements was positive overall. Almost all respondents referred to 'feelings' that the children might have: self esteem, confidence, self worth, eagerness, belonging, value and pride. Some considered the wider picture when they said that recognising and recording the achievements of children and young people: showed the pupils how to develop their life skills; provided a base for lifelong learning; promoted a 'trying culture'; made relationships between the schools and pupils stronger; and allowed the children to see their progression and to remember the things they have done. In addition, for disaffected pupils, taking account of wider achievements might impact positively on attendance, reintegration and a desire to 'move forward'.

On the negative side, there were concerns raised over the pressure that some children might feel to succeed in too many areas, and that some children feel angst at having attention drawn to them. One respondent pointed out that in the case of young carers, while the school may want to recognise their caring achievements, the child may not want their situation to be known. The issue mentioned above, of teachers' difficulty in reaching consensus on the best methods of recognising and recording achievements, was again raised here when one school expressed concern about invasion of pupils' privacy. Finally, some respondents indicated a concern with 'over praising' which can make the child come to expect reward too readily.

## **10. What is the role of the local authority in taking forward the development of recognising wider achievement?**

This question was put to the LA representatives. They broadly shared the view that their role was to support schools and teachers in creating the appropriate cultures and contexts for recognising wider achievements. This would happen through providing appropriate CPD opportunities and mechanisms

for schools to share what they are doing. One respondent highlighted the importance of helping schools to provide appropriate experiences and the means of asking young people to reflect on these experiences. One commented that the authorities were to some degree working in a vacuum as to the best way to progress. Another spoke of the importance of HMIE supporting this and focusing less on attainment targets.

### Recognising Wider Achievement

#### Summary of interviews with other organisations

Interviews were carried out during January and February 2007. Representatives from the following organisations were interviewed or provided information: Careers Scotland, Scottish Throughcare and Aftercare Alliance, Fairbridge in Scotland, The Prince's Trust Scotland, Youthlink Scotland, **sportscotland** (Youth Sport Trust), Scottish Council for Development in Industry and Clydesdale Bank. The views of all organisations are summarised together. Where a particular view was expressed by a specific organisation or type of organisation, this has been noted.

**1. What do you understand by the phrase 'wider achievement' as it is currently being used?**

The views of all organisations were very much in line with the views expressed by education participants – wider achievement referred to learning and achievements which went beyond that which is formally assessed or examined; it was about individuals' talents that are not measured by qualifications or certificates; it referred to lifeskills such as interpersonal skills and understanding of social values.

**2. Do you think it is important to consider young people's wider achievements?**

All interviewees thought this was exceptionally important, indeed vital. Views included the fact that individuals needed flexibility beyond what they can demonstrate through examinations as preparation for their future lives and careers. As there was already a well-established curriculum and system for accrediting academic achievement there needed to be a system for recognising wider achievements, especially for those less likely to engage in formal education. From a youth work perspective, it was noted that the 4 capacities of A Curriculum for Excellence are well developed in the contexts of youth work and the purposes of youth work were in line with these 4 capacities. (See: <http://www.youthlink.co.uk/publications/statementonthenature>)

**3. Are there particular groups of young people for whom recognising achievement is more important?**

In general terms, the interviewees said 'no', that it was valuable for all young people. Many young people put a lot of time and effort into voluntary work and often this was not recognised. Academic achievers also need to be able to demonstrate social skills. However, some groups of young people, particularly those who did not engage with academic and formal education and those who were at risk or who already were in the 'NEET' groups, stood to gain in particular.

**4. What barriers or challenges are there to recognising and reporting on young people's wider achievements?**

One challenge identified was finding appropriate recording mechanisms. The purpose of helping young people record their achievements was so that they are able to recognise their own skills and then be able to demonstrate them to end users like employers, and not just have them written down. It is a challenge to decide what is meaningful and valuable to others. On the other hand, the view was expressed that there was a need for nationally recognisable accreditation of non-mainstream learning experiences if recognition was to be credible.

Many youth organisations already offer a range of ways of recognising young people's achievements such as ASDAN, Youth Achievement Awards, Duke of Edinburgh Awards and their own awards and certificates. It is very important to youth organisations to ensure that young people gain recognition for their achievements.

However, to enhance the contribution of youth organisations, it was a challenge to bring together all the different bodies that work with young people, developing partnerships and providing resources to

do this. Related to this was the issue of developing parity of esteem for professionals who work with young people, with particular reference to the importance of the role of educational professionals working in the formal learning environment and youth work professionals working in informal learning contexts. This included the issue of CPD for youth workers. More formal approaches would be particularly challenging to those who worked with young people in a voluntary capacity.

**5. Which stakeholders do you think value recognising the wider achievements of young people?**

Generally, the view was that it was valued by employers, as they rarely put qualifications at the top of their list ahead of personal attributes which showed their ability to 'fit in and adapt'. The employers also expressed this view and that a range of achievements can demonstrate a young person's potential for a particular job role: school-leavers at interview have, of necessity, little experience of the world of work which they can talk about; if they have other achievements they can talk about, this shows them in a positive light.

One interviewee mentioned the relevance to higher education – that, while it was generally thought that HE providers were mainly interested in academic qualifications, there was evidence that they were taking greater interest in other achievements.

One of the youth work representatives questioned the extent to which wider achievements were really valued by employers without some kind of formal accreditation.

Recognising wider achievement was particularly important to the young people themselves – to know that they could achieve and be successful in different ways. Once again, it was emphasised that this was important for those not used to being successful at school and who were disengaged from the system. Evidence that they had achieved was also valued by those who offered training to such young people as it was an indication that they were more likely to be able to sustain engagement in the training programme.

**[Questions 6 to 9 were not addressed to employers]**

**6. What is the role of your organisation in developing young people's learning and achievements?**

Careers Scotland has a key role in developing career planning and employability skills and understanding of the world of work; they also focus on opportunities to develop enterprise skills so that young people are able to take risks and make their own decisions.

Interviewees from youth organisations emphasised the importance of being able to work with those disengaged from formal provision –

- in the community
- providing opportunities relevant to their needs
- using innovative, user-friendly learning formats, and
- involving the young people in planning (of their own learning and of the organisation's activities).

**7. How does your organisation help young people recognise their achievements? How are they recorded?**

Careers Scotland provides projects and activities which help young people develop career planning skills to help them make appropriate choices. These projects and activities also help them understand the world of work and what employers value. It is important to have face-to-face consultations with all school leavers to help them evaluate their potential and identify any support needed. The important evidence of achievement in this respect is that young people make a positive step on leaving school; this is not something that needs certification. However, if young people work through a specific employability programme (eg Activate), they receive a completion certificate which says they have reached the level of employability skills expected on that course. Career Plans of Action are developed with individuals so they have written down their plans and action points and can record when these have been achieved.

Youth organisations emphasised again addressing the individual needs of those they worked with. In some cases reflection took place in a very informal way with one-to-one discussions about progress and achievement, with no recording taking place. Others involved young people in individual learning planning and goal setting and supported them in activities which suited their particular needs. Reference was made to 'Step it Up', which is an online toolkit designed to help young people think about their own development in a number of areas, for example, problem solving and decision making, communication, working relationships and the 'world around me'. Youth organisations, particularly local authority but also some voluntary organisations, make use of it.

As noted above (Q4), many youth organisations offer a range of ways of recognising young people's achievements such as ASDAN, Youth Achievement Awards, Duke of Edinburgh Awards and their own awards and certificates. At a recent conference, Youth Sport Trust (Scotland) focused on how the skills young people gain (eg leadership and negotiation skills) through their 'Step into Sport' programme might be accredited.

Youth organisations also reported a range of ways of recognising achievement, including celebration events, award ceremonies, newsletters and press releases.

**8. Is it important that learning and achievements gained through involvement in youth organisations are linked in some way to a record of school attainment and achievement? If yes, why? If yes, how can this be done?**

Interviewees varied in their views on the value of this and raised a number of points.

In the current climate, the focus appeared to be on widening the formal curriculum, NOT acknowledging the value of the provision made by informal providers. It would be beneficial if the formal education system recognised the importance and value of achievement through informal provision. It was also important that young people themselves were more aware of informal opportunities and this might be achieved through youth work providers and schools working more closely at local levels.

One interviewee indicated that there was a definite value in some kinds of informal provision being linked to formal qualification, although it was not suitable in all circumstances. However, it was important for youth organisations that the process was not too formalised, because if what they did was too much like school, young people might be put off and lose the benefits. The issue was perhaps not about linking achievements in an informal context to a school record but to find ways of doing it both in and out of school which suited the young people but kept them separate. It should be left in the hands of the young people to draw them together if they wanted to; it was not something to be forced on them.

Another interviewee indicated that there had been discussion about some youth organisations having a shared database with Careers Scotland to assist in the tracking and aftercare of school leavers, but this had not been developed.

**9. Do you work with the 'NEET' population? What developments might help in recognising achievements for such young people?**

Careers Scotland reported a high level of commitment to NEET clients, who are supported by key workers on a one-to-one basis and activities tailored to suit their needs, to help them move into employment or training. They are supported by the key worker as they progress through their training courses. Careers Scotland also has programmes (eg Activate) for those still at school but perceived to be at risk of becoming NEET, where the focus is equally on employability and social development.

The youth organisations all worked with young people in this category. Again, the emphasis was on engaging them through informal approaches and the need to address issues of previous negative learning experiences and their lack of awareness of the options open to them. It was emphasised that at the moment many different agencies worked with such groups and they were using different accreditation methods. It would help to have a review of this and investigate how this might be done more effectively or how equivalences might be made between very different types of accreditation (eg ASDAN and SQA). One interviewee highlighted the need for any approach to formalising the

recognition of achievements not to be overly bureaucratic or time-consuming as young people were involved in small community projects and such projects had limited staff and resources to support them.

**[Employers/employers' organisation only]**

**10. What kinds of presentations of achievements would employers find useful?**

It needs to be short and to the point! If it is validated in some way it clearly adds value from the employers' perspective. However, there is a need to avoid the uniformity which might be encouraged if a validation-driven approach was developed. Employers do not always understand the different levels of qualification and any 'standardisation' of wider achievements may not be understood. Young people need to have the freedom to find innovative ways of presenting their achievements and convincing employers of their merits.



# Recognising Wider Achievement

## Stakeholder surveys

This appendix contains the results from surveys undertaken on behalf of Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS) to investigate views of stakeholders on the issue of recognising young people's wider achievements. Teachers of all stages, pupils between S1 and S4, parents of children of all stages, further and higher education admissions tutors and youth organisations from local authority and voluntary sectors were invited to participate. Target populations and sample size are reported at the beginning of each survey.

LTS also asked that FE lecturers should be included. It was agreed that lecturers who worked with school pupils through Skills for Work would be included and information about the survey was distributed through local authority Skills for Work coordinators. However, only one response was received and this is not included in the analysis.

LTS had already consulted with groups of pupils, teachers and parents at a variety of events across Scotland and had engaged a number of schools to inform the process. Lists of points gathered by LTS through various means were passed on to the research team at Strathclyde University and these were used to inform the design of the survey instruments.

The surveys were designed to be completed online. However, paper questionnaires were distributed to parents via schools. The online address was given on the questionnaire and a small number of parents did complete it this way. Although online completion of the teacher and pupil survey was preferred, paper copies were provided to schools where online completion was seen to be not feasible by the school. Admissions tutor and youth organisation surveys were carried out entirely online.

### Note on presentation of data

The results are presented here following the outline of the questionnaires. The actual questions as asked have been retained, followed by the response to each question.

The figures in the tables do not always add up to the total number of respondents due to a small number of missing responses; percentages do not always add up to 100 due to missing responses and rounding up or down. Where 4-point scales have been used and means calculated, this is based on the negative end = 1 and the positive end = 4.

The results from the teacher, pupil and parent surveys have been presented for the whole sample. The data were investigated for differences in the responses for sub-groups of the sample, eg primary and secondary, pupils in each year group. Chi-square and t-tests were used as appropriate to the data, using a significance level of  $p < 0.05$ . Where differences were evident they have been reported, although the details of the inferential statistics have not been reported.

# Recognising Wider Achievement

## Questionnaire for teachers

The invitation to take part in the teacher survey was distributed in 9 authorities. Schools identified by the assessment coordinators to form the core schools for the research were asked to participate, with some additional primary schools targeted in the same authorities. Additionally, 5 other authority coordinators were asked to send information about the survey to at least one secondary and its associated primaries and invite them to complete the survey. A target population of 1000 teachers was based on the estimated number of teachers in the identified schools (from headteacher, local authority and Scottish Schools Online FTE data). The survey was carried out online; some schools requested paper copies of the questionnaire and these were supplied. In total, 192 responses were received, which represents a 19% return. This was disappointing, but it was possible to give people only a very short timeframe of 2 weeks to complete the survey, a timeframe which took in the mid-term break. Therefore, given the many demands on teachers and schools, we are very grateful that so many took the time to respond to the survey.

In the tables which follow, in some instances the responses of each sector have been reported. In others only the whole sample has been reported, but where statistically significant differences emerged between the primary and secondary respondents they have been reported. As only 9 teachers from special schools responded, they are reported separately as appropriate.

### 2. Which sector do you usually teach in?

- Nursery/pre-school 9 (5%)
- Primary 83 (44%)
- Secondary 91 (47%)
- Special (all through) 4 (2%)
- Special (pre-school/primary) 2 (1%)
- Special (secondary) 3 (2%)

For the purposes of analysis the primary and pre-school have been grouped together, as have all the special school teachers.

### 3. What is your main role in school or college? Please select one option only.

- Class teacher 111 (58%)
- Principal teacher 45 (23%)
- Deputy head 12 (6%)
- Head teacher 13 (6%)
- Probationer/NQT 4 (2%)
- Missing 7 (4%)

### 4. Do you have a formal guidance role?

31 (16%) indicated that they have a formal guidance role: 16 of the 31 were in nursery/primary schools, 14 in secondary and 1 in a special school.

### 5. Do you teach personal and social education/development?

95 (49%) teach personal and social development: 79 were in nursery/primary schools, 13 in secondary and 3 in special schools.

**6. A Curriculum for Excellence emphasises the importance of taking more account of young people’s wider achievements. In this context, please indicate how important you think it is to recognise achievements made in the following ways.**

	Not at all important	Not very important	Important	Very important	m (sd)
Taking part in school activities not currently tested or examined (e.g. enterprise, citizenship, eco projects)	0	2 (1%)	61 (32%)	129 (67%)	3.66 (0.49)
Other individual achievements such as effort, behaviour improvements, personal successes	0	3 (2%)	60 (31%)	129 (67%)	3.66 (0.51)
Taking part in extra-curricular activities (e.g. school plays, concerts, sports, representing school in competitions)	0	2 (1%)	70 (37%)	119 (62%)	3.61 (0.51)
Helping in and around the school (e.g. organising events, helping other pupils)	0	2 (1%)	72 (38%)	117 (61%)	3.60 (0.51)
Responsibilities at home and in the community (e.g. caring, helping)	1 (0.5%)	8 (4%)	91 (47%)	92 (48%)	3.43 (0.60)
Hobbies and interests they may pursue on an individual basis (e.g. music, sports, computer skills)	3 (2%)	10 (5%)	85 (44%)	92 (48%)	3.40 (0.66)
Taking part in clubs and groups outside school as part of personal hobbies and interests	3 (2%)	10 (5%)	91 (47%)	85 (44%)	3.37 (0.66)
Taking part in out-of-school-hours clubs organised by the school	2 (1%)	17 (9%)	106 (55%)	63 (33%)	3.22 (0.65)
Part-time jobs	30 (16%)	62 (32%)	70 (36%)	15 (8%)	2.40 (0.86)

Overall, the majority of teachers (over 90%) thought it was important to recognise the achievements of young people gained through a wide range of non-academic pursuits. Personal progress and individual achievements were rated as more important than taking part in any sort of organised activity or hobby. Having a part-time job was the only activity not endorsed by the majority, with only 42% considering this important.

There were differences on responses on a number of points between primary and secondary teachers, but the distinction was between the choice of important and very important. The percentages strongly agreeing on these points were:

	Primary	Secondary
• In-school activities not tested or examined	<b>77%</b>	56%
• Individual achievements eg behaviour, personal success	<b>79%</b>	55%
• Extra-curricular activities	54%	<b>71%</b>
• Hobbies pursued out of interest on individual basis	<b>53%</b>	41%
• Responsibilities at home	<b>52%</b>	42%

Interestingly, primary and secondary teachers shared similar views on learning gained from part-time jobs with the same proportions agreeing and disagreeing. Teachers are clearly divided on the value of what can be gained from pupils working.

The 9 special school teachers thought these were all important or very important.

**7. If you think there are other types of achievements which should be recognised, please tell us about it here.**

Seventeen additional comments were made. Most of these, from both primary and secondary sectors, referred to behavioural or personal issues such as being kind, having good relationships in class, being hard-working and overcoming difficulties and challenges such as bullying and peer pressure. Five mentioned the role of carer for parents, grandparents or disabled people. One person mentioned ‘strong performances in drama and music in end of year showcase’.

**8. How important is it that young people keep a record of such wider achievements?**

	Not at all important	Not very important	Important	Very important	m (sd)
Primary/nursery teachers	0	7 (7%)	46 (50%)	38 (41%)	3.34 (0.58)
Secondary teachers	0	5 (5%)	50 (55%)	36 (40%)	3.34 (0.62)
Special school teachers	0	0	4	4	3.50 (0.54)
Total	0	12 (6%)	100 (52%)	78 (41%)	3.35 (0.60)

The majority of teachers also thought it was important or very important to keep a record of achievements gained through a wide range of activities.

**9. There are different ways of recording wider achievements. How effective do you think each of the following are/might be in recording an individual's achievements?**

*Note: scale not sure = 0 to very effective = 4*

All teachers	Very limited	Limited	Effective	Very effective	Not sure	m (sd)
Using a word processing package and storing records in electronic folders	6 (3%)	30 (16%)	101 (52%)	45 (23%)	9 (5%)	2.87 (0.96)
Worksheets/books which help the young people think about their achievements	10 (5%)	54 (28%)	91 (47%)	29 (15%)	4 (2%)	2.70 (0.87)
Keeping audio or video diaries	12 (6%)	52 (27%)	61 (32%)	50 (26%)	13 (7%)	2.65 (1.11)
A folder with handwritten sheets and examples of work	11 (6%)	57 (30%)	89 (46%)	26 (14%)	7 (4%)	2.61 (0.92)
Using specially designed software (e-portfolios)	6 (3%)	30 (16%)	69 (36%)	51 (27%)	33 (17%)	2.52 (1.38)
Allowing children to develop personal webpages or 'blogs'	8 (4%)	27 (14%)	80 (42%)	43 (22%)	33 (17%)	2.48 (1.35)

On the whole, the teachers in the sample found most ways of recording achievements to be effective, with computer based storage of information seen as being more effective (75% effective or very effective) than paper based approaches (60%). Approaches which encouraged reflection were effective or very effective (62%). Teachers were slightly less certain about the effectiveness of audio and video diaries (58%). Using specially designed software (e-portfolios) and the use of 'blogs' were seen as effective/very effective by over 60% of the teachers, but these two items attracted a higher number of 'not sure' responses (17% for both).

There were differences of view between primary and secondary teachers on the effectiveness of two approaches to recording achievement. The combined effective and very effective percentages were:

	Primary	Secondary
• Word processing and electronic storage	69%	82%
• Audio and video diaries	64%	48%

Secondary teachers were more likely to think using computers was effective than primary teachers, while primary teachers were more positive about audio and video diaries.

Most special school teachers indicated that the approaches were effective or very effective.

**10. If you think there are other effective ways of recording wider achievements, please tell us about it here.**

Two primary teachers suggested that there was no need to record wider achievements. Otherwise across all sectors suggestions were similar:

- folders or records of achievement (13 mentions)
- announcements in assemblies (8 mentions)
- certificates and stickers (7 mentions)
- display boards (6 mentions)

**11. Is recording wider achievement equally important for all young people?**

	Yes	No
Primary/nursery teachers	77 (84%)	15 (16%)
Secondary teachers	67 (74%)	24 (26%)
Special school teachers	7	2
Total	151 (79%)	41 (21%)

The majority of teachers in all sectors thought that recording wider achievement was equally important for all young people, though around a fifth disagreed, with a higher proportion of secondary teachers thinking it was not important for all pupils.

**12. How important is recording wider achievement for the following groups of young people?**

The responses to this question are from the 41 who said 'no' at question 11.

	Not at all important	Not very important	Important	Very important	m (sd)
Those whose family circumstances do not give them a lot of support	0	0	10 (24%)	31 (76%)	3.76 (0.44)
Those who find academic learning more difficult	0	1 (2%)	12 (29%)	28 (68%)	3.66 (0.53)
Those who are disaffected with schooling	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	14 (34%)	25 (61%)	3.54 (0.67)
Those who do well academically	1 (2%)	9 (22%)	26 (63%)	5 (12%)	2.85 (0.65)

Of the minority of teachers (21% of the sample) who thought that recording wider achievements was not equally important for all young people, three-quarters indicated that it was very important for those whose family circumstances did not give them a lot of support, and two-thirds thought it was very important for those who find academic learning more difficult, with just under two-thirds thinking it was very important for those who are disaffected. While most of this sub-sample indicated that it was important for those who do well academically, almost a quarter thought it was not important for this group of pupils.

**13. If you think there are other groups for whom it is important to record wider achievements, please explain here.**

Seven comments were given. These referred to children with special needs, those who do not often experience success, those who are well behaved but do not otherwise do well, and those who miss school a lot due to family circumstances.

**14. Is recording wider achievements equally important at all stages of young people's educational development?**

	Yes	No
Primary/nursery teachers	82 (89%)	10 (11%)
Secondary teachers	65 (71%)	26 (29%)
Special school teachers	9 (100%)	0
Total	156 (81%)	36 (19%)

The majority thought recording wider achievements was important at all stages of educational development. About a fifth overall disagreed. This was a view held more strongly by the secondary teachers.

**15. How important do you think it is to record wider achievements at the following stages?**

The responses are from the 36 respondents who responded 'no' to question 14.

	Not at all important	Not very important	Important	Very important	m (sd)
On leaving school	2 (6%)	8 (22%)	0	25 (69%)	3.60 (0.78)
Secondary 4 to 6	1 (3%)	1 (3%)	10 (28%)	22 (61%)	3.56 (0.71)
Secondary 1 to 3	0	2 (6%)	21 (58%)	13 (36%)	3.31 (0.58)
Primary to secondary transition	1 (3%)	5 (14%)	18 (50%)	12 (33%)	3.14 (0.76)
Primary 4 to 7	2 (6%)	7 (19%)	20 (56%)	6 (17%)	2.86 (0.77)
Primary 1 to 3	5 (14%)	10 (28%)	18 (50%)	1 (3%)	2.44 (0.79)
Transition from nursery to Primary 1	6 (17%)	17 (47%)	9 (25%)	2 (6%)	2.21 (0.81)
Pre-nursery and nursery	7 (19%)	18 (50%)	9 (25%)	1 (3%)	2.11 (0.76)

The minority of teachers from this sample (19%) who thought that recognising achievement was not important at all stages of young people's education indicated that it is more important as children get older and are preparing to leave school. This view was shared by both secondary and primary teachers.

**16. If you think that there are other stages that are important, please explain here.**

Four comments were given: at times of specific difficulty such as family breakdown, bereavement or illness (2 comments); at earlier stages, especially if there are learning difficulties, and at later stages as they take on more adult responsibility.

**17. Who should help young people develop records of achievement? Please rank your choices 1, 2, 3 etc. If you think any of them are not appropriate then do not rank them.**

In this question the different groups were ranked, with 1 being most important. However, for the purposes of analysis the scores were reversed, with the highest mean score being the most important.

	All		Pr/Nu		Sec		Spec	
	m	rank	m	rank	m	rank	m	rank
Parent, carer or other family member	5.58	1	5.98	1	5.20	2	5.44	1
Class/subject teacher	4.94	2	5.98	1	3.88	4	5.33	2
Guidance teacher	3.99	3	2.36	4	5.68	1	3.33	3
Another adult appointed as mentor	3.17	4	2.64	7	3.69	5	3.22	5
PSE/D teacher	3.07	5	1.67	6	4.46	3	3.11	6
Peers	2.67	6	3.28	3	2.00	7	3.33	3
Older pupils	2.63	7	2.34	5	2.90	6	2.89	7

Teachers from all sectors were in agreement that parents had an important role in helping young people develop records of achievement. The differences in rank order may be explained by the relevance of the role to the contexts: for example, in primary schools the specific title 'guidance teacher' or 'PSE/D teacher' may not be relevant to the context, although class teachers will teach PSE and may have a guidance role. Clearly, in secondary schools, the guidance teacher and the PSE/D teacher are considered the most relevant staff to help young people, while the class teacher was chosen by both the primary and special school respondents. In primary schools and special schools peers were considered important, while in secondary schools they were given the lowest ranking. In all sectors the role of older pupils was considered less important than other roles.

**18. To what extent do you agree with the following statements about records of achievement?**

	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>m (sd)</b>
A record of achievement should focus equally on academic and non-academic achievements	3 (2%)	17 (9%)	102 (53%)	69 (36%)	3.24 (0.68)
Parents should have a role in deciding what is included in records of achievement	5 (3%)	37 (19%)	127 (66%)	21 (11%)	2.86 (0.63)
The pupils should be free to choose what to include in a record of achievement	6 (3%)	37 (19%)	132 (68%)	16 (8%)	2.83 (0.61)
Keeping a record of achievement should be voluntary for the pupils	16 (8%)	104 (54%)	65 (34%)	5 (3%)	2.31 (0.66)
A record of achievement should focus mainly on non-academic work	15 (8%)	156 (81%)	17 (9%)	2 (1%)	2.03 (0.46)

There is clear agreement that both academic and non-academic achievements should be included in records of achievement, while there is general disagreement that they should focus only on non-academic work. While generally there is agreement that pupils should have freedom to choose what is actually included in a record of achievement, over 60% disagreed that maintaining a record should be voluntary. No significant differences were noted between primary and secondary responses.

	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>m (sd)</b>
It is important to have national guidelines for developing records of achievement	9 (5%)	44 (23%)	109 (57%)	28 (15%)	2.82 (0.73)
It is important to have a national framework so there is standardisation in the things that get recorded as wider achievement	9 (5%)	59 (31%)	95 (50%)	27 (14%)	2.74 (0.76)
It is important to have a nationally endorsed certificate validating the claims made about young people's wider achievements	10 (5%)	77 (40%)	78 (40%)	25 (13%)	2.62 (0.78)

About three-quarters of teachers thought that there should be national guidelines, just under two-thirds thought that a standardised national framework would be helpful, and just over a half agreed that a nationally endorsed certificate on wider achievements was important. There were no significant differences between primary and secondary teachers' responses.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	m (sd)
Local authorities should ensure that opportunities are available for all children and young people to develop a wider range of skills and abilities	2 (1%)	2 (1%)	89 (47%)	98 (51%)	3.48 (0.58)
Schools should have a responsibility in ensuring that all pupils get the opportunity to take part in activities that allow for the development of non-academic qualities	4 (2%)	7 (4%)	107 (55%)	73 (38%)	3.30 (0.64)
Teachers/lecturers are already well prepared to support pupils with records of achievement	13 (7%)	79 (41%)	87 (45%)	9 (5%)	2.49 (0.70)
Emphasis on wider achievements will disadvantage some young people	20 (10%)	96 (50%)	70 (36%)	6 (3%)	2.32 (0.70)

The view has been expressed that taking greater account of wider achievements, particular any attempts to formalise it, will further advantage those that come from more privileged backgrounds and already have the 'cultural capital' and family support to engage in a wide range of developmental activities and thereby benefit. While recognising non-academic success is seen as important for those who have hitherto been considered less successful at school, or who have become disengaged from school, formal recognition within the school system, making it more like school, will not help them. There is therefore a dilemma of the need to take account of wider achievements to emphasise the development of the whole child but in a way that does not further disadvantage those for whom it is seen as most beneficial.

In this survey sample, a small but substantial minority (39%) agreed there was potential for disadvantage. There is, however, substantial agreement that local authorities (98%) and schools (93%) have a responsibility for ensuring that all children have the opportunity to develop non-academic qualities and a wide range of skills and abilities.

Teachers were split almost equally on their views as to whether or not teachers were already well prepared to support pupils with records of achievement. 60% of primary teachers agreed, while only 40% of secondary teachers agreed.

#### 19. Do you do personal learning planning with pupils?

	Yes	No
Primary/nursery teachers	49 (53%)	43 (22%)
Secondary teachers	31 (34%)	60 (66%)
Special school teachers	4	5
Total	84 (44%)	108 (56%)

Primary teachers were more likely to be doing personal learning planning with pupils.

#### 20. Do pupils include non-academic work in the personal learning planning process?

The responses are from the 84 respondents who said that they do personal learning planning.

	Yes	No
Primary/nursery teachers	36 (73%)	12 (24%)
Secondary teachers	10 (32%)	20 (65%)
Special school teachers	3	1
Total	49 (58%)	33 (39%)



Primary teachers were much more likely to be including non-academic targets in the personal learning planning process.

**21. Are you currently using the 'Progress File' or have you used it in the past?**

	Yes	No
Primary/nursery teachers	9 (10%)	83 (90%)
Secondary teachers	21 (23%)	70 (77%)
Special school teachers	5	4
Total	35 (18%)	157 (82%)

Just under one fifth of the teachers had used or were using the Progress File, with more in the secondary sector having used it.

**22. In broad terms, how effective do you consider the Progress File to be in both recognising and recording young people's wider achievements?**

These responses are based on the 35 who said 'yes' at question 21.

	Extremely limited	Limited	Fairly effective	Very effective
Primary/nursery teachers	0	1	5	2
Secondary teachers	2	9	9	1
Special school teachers	1	0	1	3
Total	3 (9%)	10 (29%)	15 (43%)	6 (17%)

Out of the small number of primary teachers who had used the Progress File (9), 7 thought it was fairly effective or very effective, while of the 21 secondary teachers who had used it, half thought it was limited and half thought it was effective. Four out of 5 special needs teachers thought it was effective.

**23. Do you have another approach in your school/college for recognising and reporting on pupils' wider achievements?**

**24. What is this approach called?**

**25. Please describe the approach briefly.**

	Yes	No
Primary/nursery teachers	57 (62%)	35 (38%)
Secondary teachers	28 (31%)	63 (69%)
Special school teachers	4	5
Total	89 (46%)	103 (54%)

Over 60% of primary teachers indicated that their schools had other approaches to recognising achievements – around 30% of the secondary teachers and half of the special school teachers. As these teachers represented about 8 secondary, 15 primary and 3 special schools, some of the responses are duplicates.

The approaches reported most frequently related to events and ways of recognising achievements in terms of celebrating success – indeed, in several cases that was the name given to the approach. The primary teachers mentioned announcements at assemblies (38), display boards with photos and other evidence of success (31), certificates, stickers, stars – sometimes sent home (13) – and assemblies/events for parents to share in success (5). Likewise in secondary schools, assembly announcements and merit certificates/stickers were mentioned. Additionally, secondary respondents spoke of articles in school newsletters, media and press releases, letters home to parents and annual award ceremonies.

In terms of recording achievement, there were 7 mentions of some sort of folder or record book to keep examples of work, certificates or photos; some referred to these as portfolios. An example from a nursery was a Floor Book. *'Children record their ideas in a large self-made book. All this is brought together and discussed by the staff, who help children incorporate and record their individual ideas in a variety of ways using a variety of media and techniques.'*

Eight primary teachers mentioned personal logs or personal learning plans with target setting. One respondent mentioned that the discussion process that accompanies this was a 'very valuable time which is appreciated by the child'.

Seven secondary teachers mentioned Records of Achievement – in some cases this was for senior pupils only. The special school teachers mentioned the ASDAN award (which requires an evidence folder), an adapted version of the Progress File and Youth Achievement Awards.

These responses suggest that recognising achievement can often relate to a public acknowledgement of it through 'celebration' or more privately through merit stickers and letters home. There was less reference to means of recording it beyond accumulating evidence, though those using personal learning planning and target setting indicate that this is an opportunity for discussion and potentially reflection.

**26. In broad terms, how effective do you think this approach is to both recognising and recording young people's wider achievements?**

The responses reported are based on the 86 who said yes to question 23.

	Extremely limited	Limited	Fairly effective	Very effective
Primary/nursery teachers	0	11 (20%)	26 (46%)	19 (34%)
Secondary teachers	0	8 (30%)	18 (66%)	1 (4%)
Special school teachers	0	0	1	2
Total	0	19 (22%)	45 (52%)	22 (26%)

**27. Please add any other comments you would like to make about recognising and recording children and young people's achievements.**

Forty-two respondents added further comments. A number of comments were made which described what some practitioners were doing and repeated points made at question 25.

Three main themes were addressed: children, teachers and the value of having national guidelines or a national framework, with both positive and negative views being expressed for all three.

The positive comments about **children** referred mainly to the children feeling valued and successful. For example:

- *I think it is essential to recognise and record personal achievements for developing self-esteem (and creating a positive ethos in the establishment) (primary)*
- *I think it is very important because some children may not excel academically, so recognising non-academic achievements makes the child feel good in school (primary)*
- *I fully endorse the idea of celebrating all achievement by children. It provides the less 'gifted' children with the opportunity to shine (primary)*
- *Very important to recognise and so encourage the positive side of any pupil and encourage them to think of their education in a positive manner (secondary).*

Fewer negative comments on the impact on children were made and these related to what the effects of the process might be. For example:

- *Recognition should be informal and not seen as another box which needs to be ticked* (primary)
- *Please do not turn this into a certificate for the nice but not too bright. I can see this turning into a standard grade in being 'good'* (primary)
- *I think it is important to recognise wider achievements at the time, but do not think keeping a great long profile of these is helpful. Those with more achievements may become conceited and those with few may feel despair* (primary)
- *... the formality of recording musn't impinge on progress* (secondary).

Lack of opportunity because of lack of facilities in communities was highlighted by one respondent from a school in *'the outlying areas of the City'*. In such communities there was the need for *'more opportunities for developing "wider skills and talents"'*.

For **teachers** the only benefit was that it can also give 'staff and parents a sense of worth' (nursery).

The negative comments all related to workload and time.

In respect of **national guidelines or framework**, 3 positive views were expressed:

- *relevant achievements must be agreed. The system must be credible or it will be useless.* (secondary)
- *an excellent idea .... as long as teachers don't have to organise it* (primary)
- *national recognition might make more pupils get involved* (secondary).

Views not supporting a national framework were:

- *progress is individual and specific to a child and cannot be measured against other children* (primary)
- *lack of opportunity for pupils in certain communities* (secondary)
- *standardisation will put pressure on pupils to conform and this will 'kill innovation and initiative'* (secondary)
- *wider achievement should be recognised but not given the status of externally examined work* (secondary).

## Recognising Wider Achievement

### Questionnaire for pupils

Six secondary schools were invited to include a sample of 40 pupils each from S1, S2, S3 and S4. This gave a target population of 960 pupils. For a variety of reasons, but largely due to the tight timescale within which the research had to be completed, only 4 schools were able to participate, with only 3 including pupils from most year groups. In total 275 responses were received, which represents a return of only 29%. While this gives some indication of pupils' views, it cannot be taken as a representative sample for pupil voice in Scotland and therefore should be used with caution. The data are presented here following the outline of the questionnaire.

#### 1. & 2. Gender and year group

	S1	S2	S3	S4	Total
Boy	36 (13%)	32 (12%)	52 (19%)	26 (9%)	146 (53%)
Girl	35 (13%)	23 (8%)	46 (17%)	23 (8%)	127 (46%)
Total	71 (26%)	56 (20%)	99 (36%)	49 (20%)	275 (100%)

#### 3. Do you get free school meals?

A total of 34 pupils (2%) out of the 275 indicated that they were entitled to free school meals. These were 11 in each of S1 and S2 (4% of each year); 8 in S3 (3%) and one in S4 (1%). As the national figure for free meal entitlement is 14%, this group is underrepresented in the sample.

#### 4. School

Of the 275 respondents

- 78 (28%) were from school A
- 53 (19%) were from school B
- 142 (52%) were from school C
- 2 (0.7%) were from school D\*.

\* Unexpected circumstances in school D prevented the school from arranging completion of the survey within the required timescale. The other 3 schools included pupils from all years with the exception of S2, which had responses from only 2 schools.

#### 5. Do you take part in any of the following activities as part of school life? Please select all that apply.

114 (41%)	After school or lunchtime clubs
73 (26%)	Representing school in competitions
66 (24%)	Raising money for the school or charity
41(15%)	Helping other pupils (e.g. buddy schemes, helping with lessons or homework)
32 (12%)	School plays or concerts
18 (6%)	Enterprise clubs
18 (6%)	School or class council
13 (5%)	Helping to organise school events (e.g. parents' nights, events for visitors to the school, school plays and concerts)
11 (4%)	Working in the community (e.g. helping other people, environmental projects)
7 (2%)	School committee
100 (36%)	I don't do any of these things

Of the 275 respondents, the highest number of activities any one individual took part in was 10 and the lowest was 0. The mean number of activities was 1.43 (SD = 1.65). Around a quarter reported taking part in one activity, with just over a quarter reporting 2 or 3 activities. Over a third indicated that they did not take part in any of the school-initiated wider learning opportunities listed. This suggests that a considerable number of children would not immediately recognise opportunities through school as a source of wider achievements, if this were to be reflected on and recorded.

Pupils were most likely to take part in school organised clubs (41%), followed by representing the school in competitions or raising money (approximately 25% of respondents in each case). Few (less than 10%) reported participating in activities which would be seen to represent citizenship/democratic processes, eg involvement in school committees and councils, helping to organise school events or working in the community. Within this sample, S4 pupils were more likely to take part in school concerts than other groups.

**6. We would like to know if you have any hobbies or interests outside of school. The following suggestions are quite broad and can include a number of hobbies. Try to fit what you do into these categories. Select as many options as apply to you.**

233 (85%)	Using the computer (for example playing games, creating my own webpages, keeping a blog, taking part in chat rooms, using email)
234 (85%)	Watching TV
217 (79%)	Other interests and hobbies (for example dancing, sports, skating, reading, writing, playing chess, horse riding, drama clubs, learning music)
131 (48%)	Helping at home
96 (35%)	Youth and other organisations (for example, Guides, Scouts, Youth Clubs, Sports Clubs, Red Cross, religious groups, charity and voluntary groups)
34 (12%)	Being a carer (for example, looking after parents or younger children)
51 (18%)	Having a job
2 (1%)	I don't do any of these things
39 (14%)	I do other things. If you tick this, please tell us about it in the box below.

Of the 275 respondents, the highest number of activities any one individual took part in was 7 and the lowest was 0. The mean number of activities was 3.62 (SD = 1.39). Just over half the sample (54%) reported taking part in 3 or 4 of the listed activities.

The most common activities out of school were using a computer or watching TV, with 85% reporting doing these things; 79% reported having interests and hobbies, with just over a third (35%) taking part in youth and other organisations. Just under a half reported helping at home, though for some this may be the norm as opposed to being recognised as an achievement. Smaller proportions reported having caring responsibilities, but at 12% this still represents a considerable number of children taking on these roles. A higher proportion of S1 and S2 pupils (35% and 52% respectively) took part in youth or other organisations compared to S3 and S4 (just over a quarter in each year group). Unsurprisingly, higher proportions of S3 and S4 pupils have jobs (78% and 69% respectively), but 11% of both the S1 and S2 groups also reported having jobs.

It appears, therefore, with this group of respondents at least, that the majority are involved in activities out of school which provide opportunities for wider learning and achieving. In some cases this will be acknowledged: for example, through youth organisation awards and certification for progress in interests and hobbies. In other cases it may not be recognised in any formal way, or may not even be known about, such as helping and caring at home.

**7. Other things I do are**

Many of the pupils repeated items already responded to in the closed question. They added examples of other interests/hobbies, e.g. drawing, athletics, swimming, football, rugby, table tennis, netball, trampoline, volleyball, cheerleading, ice hockey, golf, martial arts, kickboxing and ballet. Some specified types of internet activities, computers and computer games, e.g. Bebo, Nintendo Wii and DS, PlayStation 2, Soccer Manager.

**8. How much do the things you do at school and your hobbies and interests out of school help you with the following things?**

	<b>They don't help</b>	<b>They help a little</b>	<b>They help a lot</b>
Enjoying myself	11 (4%)	48 (17%)	211 (77%)
Developing new skills	16 (6%)	78 (28%)	174 (63%)
Getting to know what I am good at	16 (6%)	124 (45%)	131 (48%)
Giving me confidence	23 (8%)	110 (40%)	133 (48%)
Getting to know other people	20 (7%)	86 (31%)	163 (59%)
Working with other people	29 (10%)	115 (42%)	124 (45%)
Learning about things we don't learn in class	40 (14%)	134 (49%)	91 (33%)
Making me want to do more things	41 (15%)	118 (42%)	108 (39%)
Getting to know about the community I live in	114 (41%)	115 (42%)	37 (13%)

Note: The totals don't add up to total sample because of a small number of missing responses.

The greatest gains from taking part in extra-curricular and other 'non-academic' activities in school and in a range of hobbies and interests out of school were enjoyment, developing new skills and getting to know other people. Identifying what they were good at and gaining in confidence were the next most frequent gains. Opportunities for personal and social development were the most likely gains, while getting to know more about the community they lived in was the least likely gain. S1 pupils were slightly more likely than the other groups to indicate that they gained in confidence – 64% compared to half or less of the other groups.

**Keeping a record of your achievements**

**9. Please indicate if you agree or disagree with the following statements.**

<b>I think ...</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
a record should be kept of the things I do in school in addition to ordinary class work	131 (48%)	47 (17%)	91 (33%)
the things I do in my own time should be taken account of by the school	49 (18%)	162 (59%)	59 (21%)
the things I do in my own time should be kept separate from my school work	178 (65%)	46 (17%)	47(17%)

Just under half thought that a record should be kept of things done in school in addition to ordinary class work, with a third not sure. However less than a fifth thought that the school should take account of things they did in their own time. This question was asked in both positive and negative format as a consistency check and the pupils responded consistently. The majority felt that what they did in their own time should be kept separate from their school work. This raises issues for schools as to how the benefits of learning gained outside school might be transferred to the school context without impinging on the privacy of pupils who desire it.

**10. If you are asked to keep a record of your achievements please say which of the following ways you think are good or not good.**

<b>I think a good way of recording my achievements is to ...</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Not good</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
keep a folder or scrapbook with examples of what I have done	164 (60%)	52 (19%)	54 (20%)
use a special computer programme that helps you do this	127 (47%)	50 (18%)	91 (33%)
fill in worksheets which help me think about what I have achieved	117 (42%)	79 (29%)	72 (26%)
make a personal webpage or 'blog'	109 (40%)	78 (28%)	80 (29%)
make a video diary	48 (17%)	148 (54%)	71 (26%)

Over a range of options for recording achievements, a fifth to a third were not sure what were good ways of doing this. The most popular option was keeping a scrap book or folder (60% thought this was good): however, this was more popular with S1 and S2 pupils (66% and 74% respectively) than with S3 and S4 (57% and 47% respectively). This was followed by using a special computer programme (we did not use the term e-portfolio but this could be taken to indicate approval of such an approach), though only 47% thought it would be good, with this option having the highest proportion (33%) not knowing if it was good or not. 42% thought completing worksheets which helped reflection was a good approach, with 40% favouring personal webpages. Only 17% thought making a video diary was a good idea.

### Personal learning planning

#### 11. Do you take part in personal learning planning in school?

'Yes' responses were:

	n	(% of whole sample)
S1	21	(30%)
S2	0	
S3	19	(20%)
S4	10	(20%)
Total:	50	(18%)

If yes, please answer question 12.

If no, go to question 13.

#### 12. When you do your personal learning planning do you include goals for non-academic (or non-subject) work?

'Yes' responses were:

	n	(% of those who said 'yes' at Q11)
S1	20	(95%)
S2	0	
S3	9	(47%)
S4	4	(40%)
Total:	33	(68%)

Overall, less than a fifth of pupils in the sample were involved in personal learning planning, with more in S1, which may reflect schools' gradual introduction of this. It is also notable that the majority of the S1 pupils who were engaged in personal learning planning indicated that they did include goals for non-academic work ('yes' responses from more than one school).

### Records of achievement

#### 13. Do you have a record of achievement or progress file in school (or something that you do to think about and record what you are learning)?

'Yes' responses were:

	n	(% of whole sample)
S1	42	(59%)
S2	13	(23%)
S3	65	(66%)
S4	21	(43%)
Total:	141	(51%)

If yes, please answer questions 14 to 16.

If no, go to question 18.

**14. When you prepare your record of achievement or progress file do you include non-academic (or non-subject) work?**

'Yes' responses were:

	n	(% of those who said 'yes' at Q13)
S1	28	(67%)
S2	7	(54%)
S3	22	(34%)
S4	11	(52%)
Total:	68	(48%)

Half of the pupils from the 3 main schools in the survey indicated that they kept some kind of record of achievement, with approximately half of these in turn indicating that they included non-academic or non-subject work.

**15. Here is a list of statements about keeping records of achievement and progress files. Please indicate if you disagree or agree with them.**

The responses and % are based on the 141 pupils who indicated that they kept records of achievement.

Keeping a record of achievement or progress file ...	Agree	Disagree
helps me know what I am good at	128 (91%)	11 (8%)
helps me explain to others what I am good at	124 (88%)	15 (11%)
can provide examples of things I have achieved to show college or university admissions tutors	122 (86%)	16 (11%)
can provide examples of things I have achieved to show employers and can give them a better picture of what I am like	118 (84%)	20 (14%)
can help me when I have to do job applications	113 (80%)	26 (18%)
can help me if I want to fill in an application form for university or college	112 (79%)	26 (18%)
makes things not covered by exams and tests important	107 (76%)	34 (24%)
is something that should be voluntary, that is you do it only if you want to	81 (57%)	57 (40%)
is something I find difficult to do	33 (23%)	105 (74%)
takes up too much time	26 (18%)	112 (79%)
is not very important because I won't use it when I leave school	20 (14%)	118 (84%)

Pupils were most likely to agree that keeping a record of achievement helped them identify what they were good at and to be able to explain this to others; thereafter it was particularly useful in respect of job or university applications and interviews, although in relation to job and further study applications, the S1 pupils were less likely than the other groups to agree with this. The respondents also agreed largely that it gave importance to non-examinable attributes. Over half (57%) thought, however, that it should be voluntary. Just under a quarter found completing it difficult and smaller numbers thought it was too time-consuming or not important for future use. While these numbers are low, it is important to recognise that they indicate that within schools there is a substantial minority who are not positive about recording their 'wider' achievements.

**16. Is there anything you don't like about keeping a record of achievement or progress file?**

Eighteen pupils reported something they didn't like, with 9 of them from S1 (21% of the S1 year group). S2 = 1, S3 = 6 and S4 = 2 comments (less than 10% of each year group).

**If yes, answer question 17.  
If no, go to question 18.**



**17. Please tell us what you do not like about keeping a record of achievement or progress file**

Thirteen (10 girls and 3 boys) of the 18 pupils who said 'yes' at question 16 made comments about things they didn't like.

5 themes emerged:

- Too long (5 comments)
  - *It could take ages* (S1 girl)
  - *Takes up too much time* (S3 boy)
- Difficult to write about self (4 comments)
  - *I find it hard to write about what I'm good at* (S3 girl)
  - *Writing things about myself* (S4 girl)
- Lack of things to put in it (3 comments)
  - *It makes people who don't achieve anything feel sad and depressed!!!!* (S3 girl)
- Privacy (2 comments)
  - *Because I would not like some people looking at it because I don't know who all the people are* (S1 boy)
- Negative record (1 comment)
  - *I don't like keeping a record of bad things I've done* (S1 girl)

Although only a very small number of comments, these are a reminder that for some children this is not an easy process.

**18. Please add any comments you want about how you think your achievements should be recognised and recorded.**

66 pupils made comments.

Many comments related to suggestions of ***ways of keeping a record and displaying achievements.***

- achievements should be recorded and put up on a website/webpage (11 comments)
- keep an achievement log and attach it to your report card (8 comments)
- achievements should be recorded and put in a special folder (6 comments) or stored on a computer (8 comments)
- classroom assistants should be recording the achievements, and teachers should be informing you of what you have done, or have a chart displaying it (7 comments)
- keep a list that you check off every time you achieve what's on it (1 comment)
- letters should be sent home (1 comment)

Others commented more generally on the ***broad idea of recording achievements.***

- pupils should get rewarded for their achievements eg certificates, trips, points and 'pie!' (8 comments)
- their achievements should be taken more seriously (6 comments)
- achievements outside school should be private and not part of school (5 comments)
- not sure how much people like universities are interested (1 comment)
- it should be voluntary (1 comment)

One response, which may have been tongue in cheek or may need to be taken seriously as the view of more young people, was: ***'I DON'T HAVE ANY ACHIEVEMENTS !!! xXxXxXxXxXx'***

## Recognising Wider Achievement

### Questionnaire for parents

Questionnaires were distributed to a sample of parents from 5 secondary schools, 11 primary schools/early years providers and 3 special schools. In total, 685 questionnaires were distributed; 228 responses were received, representing a 33% return. Reply paid envelopes were provided with each questionnaire so that parents could return the questionnaire directly.

The respondents had children at a variety of combinations of schooling:

- nursery/pre-school only                      9            (4%)
- primary only                                      110        (48%)
- secondary only                                  52        (23%)
- nursery and primary school                17        (7%)
- nursery and secondary                      1        (0.5%)
- nursery, primary and secondary          2        (1%)
- primary and secondary                      31        (14%)
- special schools                                  4        (2%)

Two did not respond.

Such a variety of combinations made it difficult to see if any particular group of parents responded differently from the others. The data were investigated using 3 categories: children in primary/nursery only, children in secondary only, and children in more than one sector. However, in many cases, the combined group was falling somewhere between the responses of the others or sometimes agreeing more with one than the other. Such parents were clearly trying to balance their views on the experiences of children at different stages. Therefore, to investigate different perspectives, those parents who indicated they had children in primary only or secondary only were selected.

#### 1. Does your child take part in any of the following things through the school but which are not part of classroom lessons?

	Yes	No	Don't know
Raising money for school or charity	163 (72%)	63 (28%)	2 (1)
School plays or concerts	132 (58%)	90 (40%)	1 (0.5%)
Representing school in competitions	92 (40%)	122 (54%)	9 (5%)
Helping other pupils (e.g. buddy schemes, helping with lessons or homework)	82 (36%)	133 (58%)	9 (4%)
After school clubs run by the school	81 (36%)	142 (62%)	2 (1%)
Helping to organise school events (e.g. parents' nights, events for visitors to the school, school plays and concerts)	66 (29%)	148 (65%)	11 (5%)
Working in the community (e.g. helping other people, environmental projects)	57 (25%)	158 (69%)	7 (3%)
School or class council	46 (20%)	174 (76%)	2 (1%)
School committee	28 (12%)	193 (84%)	3 (1.5%)
Enterprise club	26 (11%)	184 (81%)	13 (6%)
After school care	21 (9%)	201 (88%)	6 (3%)

Interestingly, the activity most frequently cited by parents as the one their children take part in is raising money, and that by almost three-quarters of the respondents. The only other activity that more than half the parents reported was participating in school plays and concerts.

The differences between the subsets of parents who had children either only in primary school (110) or only in secondary school (52) were substantial:

Parents with children taking part in activities through school:

	Primary	Secondary
• raising money	81%	48%
• schools plays or concerts	71%	18%
• helping other pupils	41%	21%
• helping organise school events	35%	10%
• working in the community	4%	10%

It is recognised that primary schools are smaller communities and there are potentially more opportunities for children to engage in such activities. This needs to be borne in mind when considering the types of opportunities that are available to pupils in secondary schools through which a wider range of skills can be developed and wider achievements recognised.

**2. Do you think it important that your child keeps a record of what they have learned and achieved through these kinds of things?**

Yes	179 (79%)
No	22 (10%)
Don't know	23 (10%)

The majority thought that achievements should be recorded.

**3. Does your child take part in any of the following outside of school?**

	Yes	No	Don't know
Watching TV	225 (98.5%)	3 (1.5%)	0
Other interests and hobbies (e.g. dancing, sports, skating, reading, writing, playing chess, horse riding, drama clubs, learning music)	215 (94%)	10 (4%)	3 (1.5%)
Helping at home	212 (93%)	16 (7%)	0
Using the computer (e.g. playing games, creating their own webpages, keeping a 'blog', taking part in chat rooms, using email)	205 (90%)	22 (10%)	1 (0.5%)
Youth and other organisations (e.g. Guides, Scouts, Youth Clubs, Sports Clubs, Red Cross, religious groups, charity and voluntary groups)	138 (61%)	85 (37%)	1 (0.5%)
Being a carer (e.g. to a family member, older person, young child)	40 (18%)	184 (81%)	4 (2%)
A part-time job (if your child isn't old enough just miss this question out).	15 (7%)	65 (29%)	0

Parents were pretty unanimous about their children watching TV and the majority reported their children having interests and hobbies, helping at home and using computers. Over 60% reported their children taking part in youth groups. 18% reported that their children took on the role of carer.

In relation to out of school activities, there were only slight differences in responses of parents of primary and parents of secondary age children. The most notable was in relation to participating in youth organisations, with 67% of parents of primary children reporting this and only 44% of parents of older children. Although a high number of parents reported that their children had other interests and hobbies, the figures were 98% for primary pupils compared to 85% for secondary pupils.

**4. Do you think it is important for the school to know about the activities your child takes part in out of school?**

Yes	151 (66%)
No	57 (25%)
Don't know	20 (9%)

A slightly smaller proportion of the parents (66%) thought it was important for the school to know what their children did out of school compared to those (79%) who agreed that the school should keep a record of wider achievements gained in school. 71% of parents of primary children thought this was important compared to 52% of the parents of secondary children.

**5. Do you think it is important for your child to keep a record in school of what they have learned and achieved through the things they do out of school?**

Yes	141 (62%)
No	68 (30%)
Don't know	18 (8%)

There was no difference between parents of younger and older children.

**6. Here are some statements which have been made about why it might be helpful to record young people's achievements which go beyond what is tested or examined. Please indicate if you agree with them.**

	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
It helps children recognise what they are good at	217 (95%)	8 (4%)	2 (1%)
It can provide examples of things they have achieved to show employers at interview	209 (92%)	8 (4%)	11(5%)
It helps children realise that activities not covered by exams and tests are important	209 (92%)	11(5%)	8 (4%)
It helps them explain to others what they are good at	205 (90%)	10 (4%)	13 (6%)
It helps parents know more about their child's progress	199 (87%)	18 (8%)	10 (4%)
It can provide examples of things they have achieved to show college or university admissions tutors	203 (89%)	10 (4%)	15 (7%)
It can help them if they want to fill in an application form for university or college	191(84%)	15 (7%)	22 (10%)
It can help young people when they have to fill in job applications	190 (83%)	14 (6%)	23 (10%)

All parents were largely in agreement with the perceived advantages of keeping a record of wider achievements. Lesser agreement was generally not because of greater disagreement but greater uncertainty, as in the case of helping young people fill in application forms. There were no notable differences between parents of younger and older children.

**7. Here are some further views on ways of recording children’s and young people’s achievements. Please indicate if you agree with them.**

	Agree	Disagree	Don’t know
All schools should use the same guidelines to help pupils keep a record of their achievements	184 (81%)	25 (11%)	17 (8%)
There should be a nationally recognised certificate showing young people have more than academic achievements	171 (75%)	30 (13%)	26 (11%)

The majority of parents were strongly in support of schools all working from the same guidelines, and three-quarters thought that some nationally recognised certificate would be valuable.

	Agree	Disagree	Don’t know
The pupils should be free to choose what to include in a record of achievement	176 (77%)	30 (13%)	21 (9%)
Keeping a record of achievement should be voluntary for pupils	161 (71%)	47 (21%)	19 (8%)
Parents should have a role in deciding what is included in records of achievement	140 (61%)	56 (25%)	30 (13%)

The majority of parents thought that children should be free to choose what to include in a record of achievement and that it should be voluntary. Parents of older pupils were more likely to agree but it might be expected that parents of older children would want them to have greater autonomy.

	Primary	Secondary
• free to choose	73%	94%
• voluntary	66%	87%.

65% of parents of primary children thought they should have role in what is included in a record of achievement while 52% of secondary parents thought this. To some degree this contradicts agreement that the child should be free to chose, but may reflect parents’ desire to be involved rather than controlling.

**8. Please add any comments you want about how you think your child’s achievements should be recognised and recorded.**

Seventy-nine parents added comments – 46 from parents of pre-5 and primary school children, 17 from parents of secondary pupils, 15 with children at a range of stages and 1 with a child at special school.

Some gave descriptions of what their schools did in terms of giving awards, certificates and display boards and some spoke very highly of the quality of experience their children had in this respect (15 comments). On the other hand, 2 parents indicated that they felt that schools did not do this well. One parent felt that children who are always ‘good, polite and hardworking’ are not noticed. Children who misbehave and improve are more likely to get rewarded. Another felt that the school was not interested in achievements out of school.

Views varied from those who thought it was ‘invaluable’ and ‘vital’ to record wider achievements to others who thought it was a ‘waste of time’ and ‘more unnecessary paperwork’.

On the ‘for’ side, there were those who simply stated that it should be done because all aspects of learning were important and that ‘too much emphasis had been put on the academic side of things’ (11 comments). Some thought it should be voluntary (3 comments), while 2 parents thought it should be compulsory ‘even if the child doesn’t want to do it’. On the ‘against’ side, there were those who said simply that it was not necessary to record such things (6 comments), that schools already did enough recording (1 comment) and that schools should be concentrating on academic issues which were more important – things like ‘maths, reading and writing’ (3 comments).

In relation to the impact on the young person, those in favour emphasised the benefits to non-academic children or those who did not appear to fit in to a school environment as it recognised success in other ways (6 comments); most comments were made in relation to such recognition promoting confidence, self-worth and self-esteem (10 comments).

Several parents commented on the aspect of schools taking account of out of school activities. Seven thought this was important, especially at primary school. However, concerns were expressed that some children do not have access to lots of opportunities out of school, some parents are not interested in encouraging this and that it could lead to a sense of failure inside and outside school if the children had nothing to record (3 comments). On the other hand, 6 parents expressed the views that activities outside school were for leisure and enjoyment and should not be recorded in school, and that young people need a personal life out of school and some might see it as an invasion of privacy. One suggested that it would put extra pressure on parents to ensure their children took part in out of school activities.

Six parents specifically referred to their schools' use of personal learning planning and indicated that wider achievements could be included in the PLP. Two emphasised that if further developments go ahead it must be more than 'box ticking' and include conversation about learning with the child.

Further comments of note are:

- *Dancing exams should be part of the curriculum in Scotland!*
- *It's just a pity that there are not more youth clubs in association with the education establishments where achievements (outwith schools) can be recorded alongside educational achievements. Communities and government need to get together to offer the younger generation more options and link schools to youth centres.*
- *It isn't the school or the state's job to assess these activities; it will only add pressure to children.*

## Recognising Wider Achievement

### Questionnaire for admissions tutors (FE/HE)

Invitations to participate in the survey were sent to all Further Education college principals with the request to pass it to relevant staff. A similar invitation was sent to 25 admissions officers in 18 higher education establishments. 46 responses were received – 16 (35%) from further education, 30 (65%) from higher education.

They represented the following disciplines:

	FE	HE	Total
Arts and Humanities	1	4	5
Business and Management Studies	3	4	7
Creative and Performing Arts	2	0	2
Education	4	2	6
Engineering	0	1	1
Maths, IT and Computing	0	1	1
Science	0	8	8
Social Sciences	1	1	2
Architecture	0	2	2
Art and Design	0	1	1
Psychology	0	1	1
Textiles and Design	0	1	1
Sport and Fitness	1	0	1
Hospitality	1	0	1
Support/advisory role	3	1	4

With such diversity across disciplines and the low numbers represented in each, no comparisons can be made on this basis.

In the tables that follow, both frequencies and percentages have been included for purposes of comparison. However, due to the small number of respondents, they should be interpreted with caution and considered indicative rather than representative.

#### 1. When you are recruiting school leavers to your course(s), how important is it that you know about the following non-academic (ie non-certificated) attributes?

University/Higher Education	not at all important	not very important	important	very important	m (sd)
The ability to apply themselves to study	0 (0%)	4 (13%)	13 (43%)	13 (43%)	3.30 (0.70)
The ability to express themselves	1 (3%)	3 (10%)	14 (47%)	12 (40%)	3.23 (0.77)
Personal qualities such as confidence, ambition and willingness to try new things	1 (3%)	5 (17%)	17 (57%)	7 (23%)	3.00 (0.74)
Abilities to work with others	2 (7%)	9 (30%)	11 (37%)	8 (27%)	2.83 (0.91)
Achievements developed out of interest (eg music, writing, designing web-pages, art, outdoor activities)	3 (10%)	10 (33%)	14 (47%)	3 (10%)	2.57 (0.92)
Involvement in non-school groups (eg sport clubs, youth organisations, voluntary activities)	5 (17%)	11 (37%)	9 (30%)	5 (17%)	2.47 (0.97)
IT skills	3 (10%)	11 (37%)	14 (47%)	1 (3%)	2.45 (0.74)
Participation in non-academic school activities (eg choirs, sports, organising events, fundraising, enterprise activities)	5 (17%)	12 (40%)	8 (27%)	5 (17%)	2.43 (0.97)
Helping in the home or community (eg supporting family members, working with children, old people, environmental projects)	6 (20%)	9 (30%)	11 (37%)	4 (13%)	2.43 (0.97)

<b>Further Education</b>	<b>not at all important</b>	<b>not very important</b>	<b>important</b>	<b>very important</b>	<b>m (sd)</b>
Abilities to work with others	1 (6%)	0 (0%)	7 (44%)	8 (50%)	3.38 (0.81)
The ability to apply themselves to study	1 (6%)	1 (6%)	5 (31%)	9 (56%)	3.38 (0.88)
The ability to express themselves	1 (6%)	0 (0%)	10 (63%)	5 (31%)	3.19 (0.75)
Personal qualities such as confidence, ambition and willingness to try new things	1 (6%)	1 (6%)	6 (38%)	8 (50%)	3.31 (0.87)
Involvement in non-school groups (eg sport clubs, youth organisations, voluntary activities)	2 (13%)	3 (19%)	7 (44%)	4 (25%)	2.81 (0.98)
Helping in the home or community (eg supporting family members, working with children, old people, environmental projects)	2 (13%)	4 (25%)	6 (38%)	4 (25%)	2.75 (1.00)
Achievements developed out of interest (eg music, writing, designing web-pages, art, outdoor activities)	2 (13%)	3 (19%)	8 (50%)	3 (19%)	2.75 (0.93)
Participation in non-academic school activities (eg choirs, sports, organising events, fundraising, enterprise activities)	2 (12%)	4 (25%)	7 (44%)	3 (19%)	2.69 (0.95)
IT skills	2 (13%)	3 (19%)	9 (56%)	2 (13%)	2.69 (0.87)

For respondents in both sectors, evidence of school leavers' personal abilities in relation to study, working with others, expressing themselves and other personal qualities such as confidence and ambition was more important than evidence of being involved in certain types of activities. Nonetheless, evidence of involvement in hobbies, various youth organisations and clubs, non-academic school activities and helping at home or in the community were valued by half or more than half of the respondents. It is arguable that the qualities that are valued are likely to be the outcomes of engagement in a wide range of activities and that it is the outcomes that are important.

**2. If there are other achievements that you consider important, please give us more information here.**

Relevant placement in industry or job experience was mentioned by both FE and HE respondents. Taking part in activities relevant to the subject to be studied was also valued by respondents from both sectors.

**3. How useful do you find the following approaches to identifying school leavers' non-academic achievements and other qualities? If you do not use some of them please select 'not relevant'.**

<b>University/Higher Education</b>	<b>not at all useful</b>	<b>not very useful</b>	<b>useful</b>	<b>very useful</b>	<b>not relevant</b>	<b>m (sd)</b>
Reference from school/teacher	0 (0%)	1 (3%)	12 (40%)	15 (50%)	2 (7%)	3.27 (1.05)
Personal statement on the candidate's application form	0 (0%)	2 (7%)	9 (30%)	16 (53%)	3 (10%)	3.17 (1.23)
Candidate's account of achievements at interview	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	8 (27%)	9 (30%)	13 (43%)	2.00 (1.82)
Evidence provided by the student of their non-academic achievements (eg a portfolio)	2 (7%)	4 (13%)	9 (30%)	5 (17%)	10 (33%)	1.90 (1.56)
Reference from another adult	3 (10%)	11 (37%)	8 (27%)	1 (3%)	7 (23%)	1.77 (1.19)



Further Education	not at all useful	not very useful	useful	very useful	not relevant	m (sd)
Personal statement on the candidate's application form	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	10 (63%)	6 (38%)	0 (0%)	3.38 (0.50)
Candidate's account of achievements at interview	0 (0%)	1 (6%)	5 (31%)	9 (56%)	1 (6%)	3.31 (1.08)
Reference from school/teacher	1 (6%)	6 (38%)	3 (19%)	6 (38%)	0 (0%)	2.88 (1.03)
Reference from another adult	1 (6%)	5 (31%)	9 (56%)	1 (6%)	0 (0%)	2.63 (0.72)
Evidence provided by the student of their non-academic achievements (eg a portfolio)	1 (6%)	3 (19%)	2 (13%)	7 (44%)	3 (19%)	2.56 (1.59)

Personal statements on the application form and teacher references are seen as useful by both HE and FE respondents, but FE respondents were more likely to take account of a letter from another adult than their HE counterparts. FE respondents were also more likely to consider evidence of non-academic achievements, such as a portfolio, as being relevant and useful. Some subject disciplines such as art, textiles and design clearly use portfolios as common practice and therefore find them useful/very useful, but in the wider context this is less valued.

**4. If there are other ways of recognising applicants' wider achievements that you consider useful, please give us more information here.**

No relevant responses.

**5. As additional ways of recognising young people's non-academic achievements, how useful do you think following approaches would be?**

Higher Education	not at all useful	not very useful	useful	very useful	m (sd)
A summary statement by the young person endorsed by a teacher or other school representative	1 (3%)	7 (23%)	17 (57%)	5 (17%)	2.87 (0.73)
A summary statement by the young person endorsed by another adult such as a youth group leader	3 (10%)	8 (27%)	17 (57%)	2 (7%)	2.60 (0.77)
A summary statement quality assured by an awarding body eg SQA	5 (17%)	8 (27%)	13 (43%)	4 (13%)	2.53 (0.94)
A portfolio of evidence of achievements endorsed by relevant adults or organisations	6 (20%)	7 (23%)	14 (47%)	3 (10%)	2.47 (0.94)

Further Education	not at all useful	not very useful	useful	very useful	m (sd)
A summary statement quality assured by an awarding body eg SQA	0 (0%)	6 (38%)	6 (38%)	4 (25%)	2.88 (0.81)
A portfolio of evidence of achievements endorsed by relevant adults or organisations	1 (6%)	3 (19%)	9 (56%)	3 (19%)	2.88 (0.81)
A summary statement by the young person endorsed by a teacher or other school representative	0 (0%)	5 (31%)	10 (63%)	1 (6%)	2.75 (0.58)
A summary statement by the young person endorsed by another adult such as a youth group leader	0 (0%)	6 (38%)	8 (50%)	2 (13%)	2.75 (0.68)

This set of questions relates to the issue of some approach to verifying the evidence that a young person provides about their achievements, ranging from SQA quality assuring and endorsement to endorsement by an appropriate adult. On the whole, some sort of endorsed statement was seen to be useful by the majority of respondents. FE respondents rated a statement quality assured by SQA as being most useful (with two-thirds considering it useful or very useful); just over half of the HE

respondents thought this would be useful. FE respondents were more likely to value a portfolio of evidence endorsed by an adult than HE respondents.

## 6. What formats for presenting evidence by young people would you find useful?

Higher Education	not at all useful	not useful	useful	very useful	m (sd)
Paper based evidence	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	19 (63%)	10 (33%)	3.27 (0.64)
Photographic evidence	4 (13%)	11 (37%)	11 (37%)	1 (3%)	2.33 (0.78)
Electronic presentation via the internet (eg a webfolio or 'blog')	5 (17%)	11 (37%)	10 (33%)	2 (7%)	2.32 (0.86)
Electronic presentation on CD or DVD, eg video diary	6 (20%)	14 (47%)	7 (23%)	1 (3%)	2.11 (0.79)

Further Education	not at all useful	not useful	useful	very useful	m (sd)
Paper based evidence	1 (6%)	1 (6%)	13 (81%)	1 (6%)	2.88 (0.62)
Electronic presentation on CD or DVD, eg video diary	1 (6%)	3 (18%)	10 (63%)	2 (13%)	2.81 (0.75)
Electronic presentation via the internet (eg a webfolio or 'blog')	1(6%)	4 (25%)	8 (50%)	3 (19%)	2.81 (0.83)
Photographic evidence	1 (6%)	4 (25%)	9 (56%)	2 (13%)	2.75 (0.78)

There was a range of views on what was useful, possibly reflecting the different disciplines represented, some having greater familiarity with photographic or digital output as part of the field of study. However, while both sectors find paper-based evidence more useful in terms of selecting candidates, FE admissions tutors were more likely than HE tutors to consider electronic presentations (CD, DVDs, webfolios or 'blogs') useful.

## 7. If you think there are other ways of presenting evidence that would be useful, please give details here.

Some took the opportunity to comment here that lack of time put constraints on how admissions tutors could make use of evidence. Electronic approaches such as DVD presentations or pupils' personal blogs may be useful but in fact are too time-consuming to consider. At interview there would not be time even for PowerPoint presentations. Comment was made by one FE respondent in relation to portfolios that too often they were uniform in both content and presentation and that there was need for individualisation or personalisation (Business and Management).

## 8. If you have candidates of equal strength and a limited number of places, explain briefly how you currently chose between them.

For around a fifth of all respondents, representing both sectors, this was not an issue, either because they were not oversubscribed or they took suitably qualified candidates on a first-come, first-served basis. A small number (5) used formal testing; the others relied on performance at interview (11), the quality of the candidate's statements on their application forms, including neatness and accuracy of the completion of the form (11) and the school references (8).

## 9. What more could be done to help you with such choices (either by schools or the applicants themselves)?

Most of the comments here indicated that admissions tutors did not so much require more information but better quality information from and about candidates, or that candidates should be better prepared for current approaches to applying for further study. For example, better prepared and individualised personal statements would be helpful (10 comments): this referred to clear statements about their own achievements and also to aspects of accuracy and neatness of presentation. It was noted that listing of achievements was often 'formulaic'; achievements during a gap year or completion of the Duke of Edinburgh Award are often similarly described; one respondent indicated that statements should relate more clearly to the institution and course being applied for rather than being a generic statement for 6 different institutions. The other source of information that could be more helpful was

the school reference (10 comments). There was concern that these were often bland and repetitive; a number referred to wanting 'honest information', with one commenting that there was *'not one which tells me he/she is a lovely boy/girl'*. One commented that references from state schools *'fail to enthuse'* while those from the independent sector *'get the message across that I'd be letting the university down if I did not accept this candidate'*.

**10. Please add any other comments you want to make about recognising young people's achievements.**

Some of the additional comments have been incorporated into the summary of responses given above. Additional comments revealed a variety of stances on the issue:

- *Young people who have achieved outwith the education system don't need us to endorse their achievements (FE)*
- *We need more meaningful assessment of the person's citizenship, social and personal skills (FE)*
- *Some pupils achieve well outwith the school environment; this needs to be recognised (FE)*
- *A whole person is more than a set of exam results; we must go beyond these as ways of determining who would make a 'good' teacher (HE)*
- *The only achievement which is currently relevant to us is academic achievement (HE)*
- *I would go as far as to say an exceptionally positive (school) report (on wider achievements) would make up for a shortfall in required qualifications. There are benefits to be had if a sort of 'Leaver's Report' were to become commonplace. It can only be good for all if pupils get a sense that their all round performance is being monitored and recorded and reported as opposed to basically their academic record (HE).*

## Recognising Wider Achievement

### Questionnaire for youth organisations

The survey for youth organisations was distributed through Youthlink Scotland, who forwarded the invitation to participate to their local authority and voluntary organisation networks. The views of youth organisations are important in relation to recognising young people's achievements as they are key providers of informal out-of-school learning opportunities for young people. The purpose of the survey was to identify the ways in which such organisations recognised young people's achievements, their views on formally recognising such achievements through credit rating and certification, the value of linking school and out of school achievements and views on a range of ways in which young people might record their achievements. The questionnaire was discussed with Youthlink Scotland, who assisted with the development of the questions.

Responses were received from 63 organisations, 29 (46%) voluntary and 34 (54%) local authority. Information about the survey was sent to 46 voluntary organisations, so this represents a 63% return. It is not possible to say how many local authorities are represented as the name of the organisation was asked for but not the specific local authority and not all local authority respondents included the name of their authority. Also, where names were given, it was noted that there was more than one response from some authorities. (At least 12 authorities are identifiable by name; therefore, more than 12 responded.) Overall, this can be taken as a good response rate.

**3. Please indicate the ages of young people that your organisation works with. Please tick all that apply.**

	Voluntary	Local authority	Total
under 5	1 (3%)	2 (6%)	3 (5%)
5 to 7 approx	9 (31%)	7 (21%)	16 (25%)
8 to 12 approx	16 (55%)	19 (56%)	35 (56%)
12 to 16 approx	22 (76%)	33 (97%)	55 (87%)
over 16	26 (90%)	27 (79%)	53 (84%)

The age ranges covered by the organisations were:

	Voluntary	Local authority	Total
all (pre-5 to 16+)	1 (3%)	2 (6%)	3 (5%)
5 to 16+	8 (28%)	4 (12%)	12 (19%)
8 to 16+	4 (14%)	9 (26%)	13 (21%)
12 to 16+	5 (17%)	8 (24%)	13 (21%)
8 to 12 only	1 (3%)	-	1 (1%)
8 to 16 only	1 (3%)	4 (12%)	5 (8%)
12 to 16 only	3 (10%)	6 (18%)	9 (14%)
16+ only	6 (21%)	1 (3%)	7 (11%)

While the organisations worked largely with age 12 and older groups, more than half worked with older primary age children and a quarter with younger primary children; a small number also worked with pre-school age children. Two-thirds of the organisations worked with both pre- and post-16 young people, just over a fifth worked only with pre-16 year olds and around one-tenth (all voluntary bar one) worked with only post-16 year olds. The views on raising wider achievement relate to the full range of school age children and beyond.

**4. Please indicate if your organisation works with boys or girls or both.**

	Voluntary	Local authority	Total
Boys only	1 (3%)	0	1 (1%)
Girls only	1 (3%)	1 (3%)	2 (3%)
Both	27 (94%)	33 (97%)	60 (95%)

**5. Does your organisation work with specific target groups of young people?**

**Yes**

Voluntary	14 (48%)
Local authority	24 (71%)
Total	38 (60%)

**If no, go to question 7**

**If yes, go to question 6.**

**6. Which groups of young people do you work with?**

The target groups were described in various ways, but the main focus is on young people who are to some degree socially disadvantaged, for example, those not accessing other services or having problems in maintaining mainstream schooling; those underachieving at school and those with emotional or behavioural problems. Terms used included 'at-risk', 'vulnerable', 'disadvantaged'. Specifically named groups were NEET (3 respondents), minority ethnic groups (3) and those with additional support needs (3).

[Note: data from later questions were analysed to see if there were any differences between the answers of respondents working with targeted groups and those who did not. No notable differences were evident in the sample.]

**Recognising young people's achievements**

**7. Does your organisation give awards for achievements?**

**Yes**

Voluntary	25 (86%)
Local authority	34 (100%)
Total	59 (94%)

**If no, go to question 9**

**If yes, go to question 8**

**8. What kind of awards can young people gain for achievements through your organisation?**

The majority gave awards or certificates, many using nationally recognised schemes, with some organisations offering more than one of these to provide opportunities appropriate to the young people who are taking part:

- Youth Achievement Awards 23
- Duke of Edinburgh 16
- Dynamic Youth Awards 12
- Young Quality Scots 8
- Own certificates and awards 7
- SQA awards 6
- Millennium Volunteers 5
- Natural Connections 5.

Two mentioned giving sports awards; ASDAN and the John Muir Award were also mentioned.

**9. Does your organisation use the 'Step it Up' materials with young people?**

**Yes**

Voluntary	5 (17%)
Local authority	14 (41%)
Total	19 (30%)

'Step it Up' is a toolkit designed specifically for use by voluntary and local authority youth organisations. It is an online learning tool to help young people think about their learning and development in an out of school setting: <http://www.youthlink.co.uk/practicedevelopment/stepitup>

**10. How important is it that achievements gained through taking part in your organisation are linked to the SCQF framework?**

	Not sure	Not at all important	Not very important	Important	Very important	mean (sd)
Voluntary	7 (24%)	3 (10%)	8 (28%)	6 (21%)	5 (17%)	1.97 (1.43)
Local authority	1 (3%)	2 (6%)	4 (12%)	12 (35%)	15 (44%)	3.12 (1.04)
Total	8 (13%)	5 (8%)	12 (19%)	18 (29%)	20 (32%)	2.59 (1.35)

Local authority organisations are more likely to agree than voluntary organisations that it is important or very important for achievements to be linked to the SCQF framework (79% compared to 38% of voluntary organisations). More of the respondents from voluntary organisations were not sure about this (24% compared to 3% of local authority respondents).

**11. How important is it that young people can gain certification accredited through SQA for achievements gained through taking part in your organisation?**

	Not sure	Not at all important	Not very important	Important	Very important	mean (sd)
Voluntary	4 (14%)	3 (10%)	7 (24%)	9 (31%)	6 (21%)	2.34 (1.32)
Local authority	0	2 (6%)	4 (12%)	13 (38%)	15 (44%)	3.21 (0.90)
Total	4 (6%)	5 (8%)	11 (17%)	22 (35%)	21 (33%)	2.81 (1.18)

Just over half of the voluntary organisations (52%) thought that certification accredited through SQA was important or very important, while 81% of local authority respondents thought this. Therefore, while this aspect appears to be generally important, local authority groups place significantly greater emphasis on the value of certification and SQA accreditation.

**12. Please tell us your views on the advantages and disadvantages of credit rating and certificating young people's achievements gained through your organisation.**

**Advantages**

A number of respondents (6) indicated that credit rating their awards would raise the credibility of community and other informal learning opportunities. One local authority respondent stated: *'It is important and long overdue... The process will demonstrate the value of youth work services and evidence the results that can be achieved via youth work.'* The valuing of informal learning is important for the young people who gain success through such opportunities. The view was also expressed that certificated courses offered by youth services could bring new opportunities into *'educational and learning establishments, particularly when focusing on an alternative curriculum for those disaffected or at risk of exclusion'*.

Advantages were expressed mainly in terms of benefits to the young people. The opportunity for formal certification of informal learning:

- provides a 'stepping-stone' to achievements which are recognised by employers and further and higher education providers (12 comments)
- recognises non-academic achievement such as effort, hard work, progress (11 comments)
- enhances self-esteem, confidence, motivation, ownership of learning (10 comments)
- gives success to those who might not otherwise be successful and lets them see they can achieve (7 comments).

## Disadvantages

Credit rating and awarding SQA certification had implications for organisations in terms of cost, staff experience and time required for administration, monitoring quality and other 'bureaucracy' (9 comments). This was emphasised by voluntary organisations whose groups were run by volunteers. Some awards from youth organisations do not readily conform to SQA requirements. (One respondent expressed the view that SQA could record other awards on their certificates even though they are not necessarily accredited or levelled against the SCQF framework.)

Disadvantages were also expressed in terms of the likely impact on young people. It was felt that for some it would be too much like school and it would be off-putting to them (11 comments).

A small number of respondents (4) indicated that success and achieving was more important for young people than certification and that praise and acknowledgement of success was sufficient to help them develop.

The broad consensus appears to be that both informal and formal recognition of achievements are valuable. Linking existing awards to the SCQF framework would be beneficial in terms of giving greater credibility to awards for recognition by 'end-users' such as employers and HE. However, current awards offered by youth organisations (see question 8) could be given greater status and recognition by 'end-users' and more young people could be encouraged to achieve them. Within the informal learning environments offered by youth organisations, it is important that a wide range of approaches to recognition exist and that those most appropriate to the individual are used. The young person's choice is important and there should be no pressure for them to gain formal certification in this context.

### 13. How important is it that learning and achievements gained through involvement in your organisation are linked in some way to a record of school attainment and achievement?

	Not sure	Not at all important	Not very important	Important	Very important	mean (sd)
Voluntary*	1 (3%)	6 (21%)	3 (10%)	6 (21%)	11 (38%)	2.74 (1.32)
Local authority	6 (17%)	1 (3%)	4 (12%)	9 (27%)	14 (41%)	2.71 (1.50)
Total	7 (11%)	7 (11%)	7 (11%)	15 (24%)	25 (38%)	2.72 (1.40)

\* 2 missing responses

Around 60% of voluntary organisations and almost 70% of local authority respondents thought that it was important or very important to link achievements out of school with those at school in some way. While this is a majority, a substantial number of respondents felt this was not important or were uncertain.

**If important/very important go to question 14.  
If not important/not sure go to question 17.**

### 14. What can schools do to facilitate this process?

### 15. What can youth organisations do to facilitate this process?

The most frequent response to what schools and youth organisations could do to facilitate a process that allows a holistic record of achievement to be developed for young people was to be open to partnership between schools and youth organisations. There was the potential for community learning and development and education officers within local authorities to communicate more effectively and to work together and for youth workers to have more input into schools. It was acknowledged that this was happening '*to some extent, but it is patchy, lacks consistency and is not really part of a long-term integrated approach*'. This in turn would encourage more young people to access the awards outlined above in question 8.

The creation of an 'achievement database' was proposed – 'which records information for all pupils and leavers up to an agreed age, where input can be authorised by multiple agencies. Quality assurance [would be] undertaken by education/community learning staff.' Another respondent indicated that a web-based database which could be accessed by the young people (any time/any place) and others on their behalf would be useful.

Representatives of voluntary organisations, while referring positively to developing partnerships with schools, saw their roles as providing better information about their organisations and the value of youth awards, for example through meetings with school management and PSE teachers and presentations to pupils in PSE classes.

**16. What would be the role of the young person in this process?**

There was complete agreement that the young person should be at the centre of the process:

- they need to be encouraged and helped to recognise and evaluate their own learning
- their views need to be taken account of regarding what is important
- they should take responsibility for and make decisions about what is recorded/included in any record of achievement
- they need to be free to take part in the process or not.

**17. There are different ways of recording achievements. How effective do you think each of the following are/might be in recording an individual's achievements?**

Voluntary organisations	Not sure	Very limited	Limited	Effective	Very effective	mean (sd)
A portfolio of evidence of achievements endorsed by relevant adults or organisations	0	1 (3%)	2 (7%)	10 (35%)	13 (45%)	3.35 (0.80)
Keeping audio or video diaries	1 (3%)	0	5 (17%)	10 (35%)	9 (31%)	3.04 (0.98)
Worksheets/books which help the young people think about their achievements	1(3%)	0	7 (24%)	14 (48%)	4 (14%)	2.77 (0.86)
Using a word processing package and storing records in electronic folders	2 (7%)	2 (7%)	5 (17%)	8 (28%)	8 (28%)	2.72 (1.24)
Using specially designed software (e-portfolios)	6 (21%)	1 (3%)	0	9 (31%)	9 (31%)	2.56 (1.61)
Allowing young people to develop personal webpages or 'blogs'	6 (21%)	1 (3%)	4 (14%)	7 (24%)	6 (21%)	2.25 (1.54)
A folder with handwritten sheets and examples of work	1 (3%)	2 (7%)	11 (38%)	9 (31%)	3 (10%)	2.42 (0.95)



Local authorities*	Not sure	Very limited	Limited	Effective	Very effective	mean (sd)
Keeping audio or video diaries	0	0	1 (3%)	13 (38%)	15 (44%)	3.48 (0.57)
A portfolio of evidence of achievements endorsed by relevant adults or organisations	1 (3%)	0	1 (3%)	10 (29%)	17 (50%)	3.45 (0.87)
Worksheets/books which help the young people think about their achievements	0	1 (3%)	3 (9%)	16 (47%)	10 (29%)	3.17 (0.75)
Using specially designed software (e-portfolios)	2 (6%)	1 (3%)	5 (15%)	11 (32%)	10 (29%)	2.90 (1.15)
A folder with handwritten sheets and examples of work	0	1 (3%)	9 (27%)	14 (41%)	6 (18%)	2.83 (0.79)
Allowing young people to develop personal webpages or 'blogs'	5 (15%)	0	6 (18%)	6 (18%)	12 (35%)	2.69 (1.47)
Using a word processing package and storing records in electronic folders	1 (3%)	2 (6%)	7 (21%)	15 (44%)	4 (12%)	2.66 (0.94)

For both types of respondents, keeping audio or video diaries and having an endorsed portfolio of achievements were considered to be the most effective of the suggested approaches to recording wider achievements, followed by resources which clearly encouraged young people to reflect on their learning. While those who felt they could express a view were supportive of using e-portfolios and making use of personal webpages and 'blogs', more indicated that they were not sure about these approaches – possibly due to limited experience of what might be involved.

- Note: whole sample ranking:**
- |                             | m    | sd     |
|-----------------------------|------|--------|
| • endorsed portfolio        | 3.40 | (0.80) |
| • audio/video diaries       | 3.28 | (0.81) |
| • reflective worksheets     | 2.98 | (0.82) |
| • e-portfolio               | 2.74 | (1.38) |
| • wp and electronic folders | 2.69 | (1.08) |
| • folders with examples     | 2.64 | (0.88) |
| • webpages/blogs            | 2.49 | (1.50) |

**18. Please add any further comments you have about the issue of recognising and recording children and young people's achievements.**

Final comments referred to ways in which achievements might be recorded and to recording wider achievements in general.

**Ways of recording achievement**

Several respondents (5) emphasised the importance of having multiple approaches to recognising and recording achievements:

- It was important that the most suitable method for the young person was adopted – so for some audio or video diaries were particularly beneficial; overuse of paper approaches might be too much like school for some; some may have limited IT skills for IT options.
- It was important to find ways that helped young people recognise they had achieved and learned, ways through which personal growth and development could be identified. Developing portfolios was seen as being an approach which encourages reflection. However, if young people are asked to do this both in and out of school, it could be a 'turn-off'.
- Ultimately, if desired by the individual, there was the need for something which is recognised by, and makes sense to, an 'end-user', ie an employer or FE/HE institution.

The use of IT options was endorsed by some and referred to with caution for others. Access to equipment, facilities, time and staff training were limiting factors for some voluntary organisations.

One respondent gave a lengthy comment based on experience:

*'Many of the places we have clubs don't have access to pcs and electronic equipment. You didn't mention photos? Getting kids to annotate photos is the most important method of demonstrating someone was involved in the way they said they were. Note on video diaries: it costs a lot of time and money to operate a video diary. Editing facilities are limited. Regardless, and if you have time, videos are great fun, though be warned the editing can be a real bore; make sure you have staff who are able to do the bulk of the boring stuff, and let everyone else have a go. Even in our web design ICT group of S1 and S2s, it is quicker and more effective to get young people to write down in one sentence what they did that day on a paper record kept by staff than get them to open up a pc record and then to save it properly etc. Blogs are great but hard to control – there are few 'clean' blog providers. The use of XXX is prohibited in the young people's club as the content is uncontrollable. We did one as a group in the past, 4 young people took turns to update it. But there were problems with what else you could randomly access through using a commercial weblog service.'*

### **General comments**

Some respondents noted that recording of achievements was more important to adults than the children. The children were more interested in the *'here and now'*, the *'enjoyment of what they were doing'* than keeping a lasting record for future use.

It was recognised that the learning opportunities offered through youth organisations contribute to the development of the four capacities of A Curriculum for Excellence and that access to resources on making the connections to ACfE would be appreciated.

### North Lanarkshire's Approach to Recognising Wider Achievement

Learning and Teaching Scotland suggested that the North Lanarkshire Diploma be reviewed as one approach to recognising and recording wider achievements. Two local authority representatives and three headteachers – one nursery, one primary and one secondary (Deputy HT) – were interviewed. Additionally a group of 19 S5/S6 pupils from the same secondary school completed a short online questionnaire. The schools were recommended by the authority as schools where there was good practice in recognising achievement and using the authority's materials.

#### Background

North Lanarkshire's focus on recognising wider achievement can be seen to stem from the 1998 *Raising Achievement for All* policy which was developed to target the substantial academic underachievement related to deprivation seen throughout North Lanarkshire. The policy's overarching aims were to find ways to build confidence, feed aspirations and recognise the wide ranging successes of all children and young people. North Lanarkshire wanted to capture the things that registered with the young people themselves as achievements. They wanted to stress the value of achievements other than the traditionally academic ones, and to respond to the idea that academic success does not necessarily translate into actual success – there must also be social and personal successes. Furthermore, they wanted to recognise those children who have skills and talents other than the academic.

#### Celebrating achievement

Materials support a system of recognising and recording wider achievement for nursery, primary and secondary school pupils. All learning experiences are considered and valued equally: social, creative, cultural, sporting, academic, moral and spiritual, in line with *Raising Achievement for All*.

On 'graduation', nursery school pupils receive their *Pathway to Primary* certificate listing their latest and best wider achievements. P7 pupils work towards the *Passport to Secondary* which results in a certificate listing their four *Star Achievements* from the areas of *Citizenship, Active Health, Endeavour and Creativity, and Personal Interest and Activity*. Recognising achievements for contribution to these certificates is incorporated into personal learning planning where this is used.

The secondary provision, *The North Lanarkshire Diploma*, is significantly more developed, and there is a programme for students from S1-S6. The materials are presented in high quality folders and include guidance notes for students, parents and teachers on the purposes and use of the materials. There is also a booklet for each student – the Student Record. At each stage, students record their latest and best achievements in the areas of *Values and Citizenship, Enterprise, Environment, Community, Skills for the Future, Health, Personal Interest and Personal Statement* and are encouraged to consult parents and teachers for discussion. Pupils work on sets of activities designed to help them recognise their own achievements and consider how they might be able to develop further what they have learned. Therefore a large part of the *North Lanarkshire Diploma* is about the pupils reflecting on their own experiences and learning and identifying the value in the things that they see as achievement. Upon completion, pupils are presented with a certificate which carries the stamp of the Confederation of British Industry in reflection of the work that they have done on employability skills within the *Diploma*.

#### Views of headteachers and pupils

Overall, the headteachers were positive about using the materials at all stages. They considered that they were effective for reflecting on and recording achievements:

- they show the children's emerging qualities as they develop
- the children enjoy the 'ownership' of the record, as they are in charge of deciding what to record
- the pupils are encouraged to think broadly about what achievement means

- S5 and S6 have something concrete to support employment/further education application forms and CVs, and to take to interviews.

The secondary DHT reported some challenges in using the *Diploma* materials:

- the intention was to offer the *Diploma* at all stages throughout the school, but this would require a lot of commitment
- it was time-consuming to prepare the certificates for all the different stages
- not all the support materials were relevant and there was some overlap between stages, so they were used selectively
- it was too expensive to provide the pupils with the full-colour, 'glossy' versions and so they worked from photocopies
- although, on leaving school, the pupils had a certificate endorsed by the authority and CBI, it was not clear that this was valued by employers.

The views of the pupils reflect the headteachers' views. Almost all students thought that keeping a record of their achievements was a good idea, and they understood that the *Diploma* aimed to make pupils aware of all the things that they have done, including those achievements that are not academic. The pupils liked having an up-to-date record of their achievements, that they could list all their skills and talents, and that they could use the record when applying to further education or employment. Some thought that it could be too time-consuming and boring; they also thought that it was informal compared to their academic qualifications and therefore was less important to employers and universities.

### **Ongoing developments**

The authority will continue to work to help schools provide experiences which encourage wider achievements and support them to help young people reflect on their achievements. The *Diploma* will continue to be developed and 'rolled-out' to more pupils.

Figures received from the authority indicated that around a third of secondary schools in the authority were using the *Diploma* during 2005-06, with around a further third planning to introduce it in 2006-07. There was higher use with S5 pupils. It was felt that a number of areas needed to be addressed to improve the way it was used. For example:

- pupils needed to be encouraged to reflect more on what they were learning, rather than just gathering evidence
- encouraging reflection was perhaps not happening as much as it should because it was perceived as time-consuming by the school staff
- some schools were not using the *Diploma* because they think it means collecting a lot of evidence and it is time-consuming to produce certificates. It was important to encourage people to see that it was a process that involved more than evidence and certificates
- teachers in all subjects needed to find time to encourage pupils to reflect on what they have achieved during the lesson, not only in terms of what they have learned about the subject but also other achievements – for example, working as part of a team or helping someone else.