# Education (Scotland) Bill 2015: Equality Impact Assessment



# EDUCATION (SCOTLAND) BILL 2015: EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

#### Executive Summary

- The policy intentions as set out in the Education (Scotland) Bill ('the Bill') were subject to an equality impact assessment (EQIA) by the Scottish Government during 2014/15. Discussions to inform the EQIA were held between Scottish Government officials with relevant policy responsibilities. The results of the consultations on the section 70, children's rights and Gaelic medium education provisions as well as an equalities workshop (held 12 Jan 2015) on all provisions have also informed the EQIA process.
- 2. The EQIA process has helped the Scottish Government to: consider the potential impacts of the Bill on protected equality characteristics; identify gaps in knowledge about equality issues; and increase awareness of the Equality Act 2010. The EQIA concluded that the Bill's provisions are neither directly nor indirectly discriminatory on the basis of age, disability, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation or gender reassignment. Indeed, it found that the Bill could have many potential benefits and positive impacts, of varying degrees, on individual groups that share a protected characteristic.
- 3. The assessment did acknowledge that in some areas there is limited evidence around the effect that the Bill is likely to have on groups that share certain protected characteristics. In particular, the research identified data gaps on the experiences of transgender children and parents and those who identify as part of the lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transsexual community. No data is currently collected on the sexual orientation of children or on children who may identify as transgender as this is not considered to be appropriate. The EQIA also highlighted the need to ensure information for parents, children and young people on any provision should be accessible and engaging for all.
- 4. The Bill is likely to positively advance equality of opportunity, particularly in relation to disability and age, with specific components of the Bill designed to narrow the attainment gap between those from more and less socio-economically deprived backgrounds, improve rights of children, including those with disabilities and will allow more children to access Gaelic medium education.
- 5. As the Scottish Government does not consider that the Bill will be either directly or indirectly discriminatory, on the basis of age, disability, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation or gender reassignment, it has been decided to proceed with the Bill.

# **Background and Objectives**

- The Bill aligns closely with 4 out of the Scottish Government's 5 strategic objectives – Wealthier and Fairer, Smarter, Healthier and Safer and Stronger. It also aligns closely with a number of the national outcomes, including:
  - We are better educated, more skilled and more successful, renowned for our research and innovation;

- Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens;
- Our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed;
- We have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society;
- We have improved the life chances for children, young people and families at risk;
- Our public services are high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to local people's needs;
- We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others;
- We take pride in a strong, fair and inclusive national identity.
- 7. The Scottish Government is committed to ensuring that all of our children and young people are given the best possible opportunities. Through placing a greater emphasis on closing the attainment gap which continues to exist between children and young people from more and less disadvantaged backgrounds, children and young people will have a better opportunity to improve their educational outcomes. It is also vital that children and young people are able to use their voice in matters that affect them. Specifically we need systems in place to help children with additional support needs have the opportunity to affect decisions which are about their learning.
- 8. Through the Education Bill we intend to achieve the following objectives:
  - Narrow the attainment gap between children and young people from more and less disadvantaged backgrounds. A duty will be placed on education authorities to have regard to the need to narrow the attainment gap when exercising their education functions. The aim is that education authorities should provide school education which is designed to reduce the inequalities of outcome which result from socio-economic disadvantage in order to improve the attainment of the lowest performing children and young people. Education authorities will be expected to work in partnership with schools, parents and other relevant bodies to deliver this change. In addition, a similar duty will be imposed on the Scottish Ministers as well as a duty to issue statutory guidance to which education authorities must have regard in exercising their new responsibilities. The Bill proposes that both education authorities and Scottish Ministers prepare and publish reports on the progress they have made in carrying out these duties.
  - Place a duty on local authorities both to assess the need for Gaelic medium primary education following a parental request and to actively promote and support Gaelic medium education and Gaelic learner education; the Bill will also place a duty on Bord na Gaidhlig to prepare guidance on how Gaelic medium education should operate in Scotland.
  - Extend the rights currently enjoyed by young people (aged 16+) and parents under the additional support for learning Act 2004 (as amended) to children from the age of 12, who have capacity to exercise those rights, if they wish to.

This will enable children, who are able to, to influence decisions about the identification, planning and review of their needs.

- Enhance the process of consideration of complaints made to Ministers under section 70 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 (which allows Scottish Ministers to investigate whether a school or educational establishment has failed in its educational duties and to take action to address such failures). The introduction of statutory timescales is intended to speed up consideration while maintaining a robust process.
- Ensure that all local authorities appoint a Chief Education Officer who has appropriate qualifications and experience to provide advice to education authorities on the provision of their education functions.
- Ensure all teaching staff within independent and grant aided schools are registered through the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) in keeping with mainstream schools.
- 9. A small number of other policy issues have emerged that will require legislation and will therefore be included in the Bill. These will strengthen existing legislation that affects education. These are as follows:
  - It is considered that section 53 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, which sets out the provision for school food in Scotland, including the arrangement for free school lunches, would benefit from restatement. This section has been amended a number of times since its enactment, most recently through the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. The intention is not to amend the existing policy, but to restate and clarify the existing legislation. This will benefit those who have to consider the provisions of section 53.
  - Section 47(3) of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 will be amended as this section currently unintentionally excludes a small group of children who have, or have had a guardian appointed under section 7 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995, from the early learning and childcare provisions (those who would not be eligible for kinship care assistance under section 71(3)(f) of the 2014 Act). Amending this section will ensure that all children aged 2 and over who have, or have had, a guardian appointed under section 7 of the 1995 Act are entitled to the mandatory amount of early learning and childcare.

#### **EQIA Development Process**

10. At the beginning of the EQIA development process, an initial framing meeting was held to discuss in detail the Bill provisions. This meeting included analytical colleagues, who provided evidence for the EQIA, and a range of Scottish Government policy officials to provide their perspectives and understanding of the impact of the Bill provisions.

# The Scope of the EQIA

#### Assessment

11. The internal framing workshop considered the potential positive and negative impacts of the policy intentions of the Bill on each of the protected characteristics. The outputs of this workshop were taken forward by analytical colleagues who conducted further research, identified gaps in knowledge and provided evidence to support the preparation of the EQIA.

#### Key data

12. A variety of information sources were used in developing the assessment with research and statistical data obtained by analytical colleagues. Evidence included the pupil censes, teacher censes and independent school census and themes arising from this are reflected in the summary of key findings.

#### Consultation

- 13. Public consultations took place on the Gaelic medium education, section 70 and children's rights provisions.
- 14. The consultation into children's rights and section 70 took place from December 2013 March 2014 and attracted a large number of responses from equalities organisations. As part of this consultation, through work carried out by Children in Scotland, the views of children with additional support needs were obtained. The Scottish Youth Parliament also submitted a response. All responses, including those received beyond the deadline, were considered in full.
- Non-confidential consultation responses were <u>published</u> on the Scottish Government website on 25 April 2014. The <u>formal analysis</u> of the consultation responses was published on 30 May 2014.
- 16. The consultation on Gaelic medium education took place in July 2014. While this did not attract a large volume of responses from equalities organisations, 13 responses were received from local authorities which highlighted the widespread support for Gaelic medium education. The <u>formal analysis</u> of this consultation was published on 09 December 2014.
- 17. A workshop was held on 12 January 2015 with stakeholders representing a number of equalities organisations. This meeting was scheduled to enable these groups to be informally consulted on the Bill provisions. Each protected characteristic was explored in full and the views given by the group have been incorporated in the EQIA results.
- 18. No specific equality related questions were asked in the formal consultations.

# Potential Impacts

- 19. The consultation responses on the children's rights, section 70 and Gaelic medium education identified the groups that would be impacted most by the Bill as:
  - children and young people
  - parents
- 20. It was a common view among the 59 responses to the consultation, on children's rights and section 70, that children with capacity should have their own rights in relation to additional support for learning. This included the children whose views were sought, as they felt that this would provide them more choice and control. The impact highlighted in this area, through both the consultation and workshop, was that it would be vital to ensure that the complex legislation is explained fully and clearly to children affected by this change. It was also the view of the equalities organisations that information on the new rights should be available and accessible to parents/carers.

# **Key Findings:**

21. The results of analysis of the evidence and impacts of the Bill provisions on each of the protected characteristics are set out in the following sections of this document.

# CHARACTERISTIC: AGE<sup>1</sup>

22. Under the Equality Act (2010), age is not a protected characteristic in relation to provisions relating to schools. Nevertheless, due to the particular provisions of the Bill this characteristic was considered as part of the development of the EQIA.<sup>2</sup>

# Closing the attainment gap

23. It is expected that the impact on this group will be positive as these provisions will ensure a greater focus on closing the attainment gap which currently exists between children and young people from more and less disadvantaged backgrounds.

# Gaelic medium education

24. Provisions relating to Gaelic medium education are likely to impact primarily upon children of nursery and primary school age and their parents/carers. It is expected that the Gaelic medium education provisions included in the Bill will impact positively on this group as it will ensure that all parental requests for Gaelic medium education will be assessed. Guidance will be produced by Bòrd na Gàidhlig which will clarify for parents what Gaelic medium education should consist of, as well as managing expectations in relation to the assessment of requests.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> 'Definitions of Protected Characteristics' are set out at: <u>http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/private-and-public-sector-guidance/guidance-all/protected-characteristics</u>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Guidance on protected characteristics in relation to schools is set out here: <u>http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/advice-and-guidance/education-providers-schools-guidance/protected-characteristics</u>

# Children's rights under additional support for learning

25. It is expected that the impact on this group will be positive as this provision will establish new rights for children over 12 with capacity to affect decisions made about their education. It was clear from the consultation responses<sup>3</sup> that respondents felt it necessary that a comprehensive support system should be put in place to support children in exercising the new rights. A Children's Support Service will be established.

# Free school meals

26. The restatement of section 53 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, which sets out the provision for school food in Scotland, does not amend existing policy. The intention is to restate and clarify the existing legislation. The legislation in relation to free school meals impacts positively on children and young people in Scottish schools and there will be no change to this impact as a result of the Bill.

#### Section 70

- 27. Provisions relating to the amendment of section 70 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 will primarily impact upon school age children and their parents/carers.
- 28. It is expected that this provision will impact positively on all groups affected as it will establish a statutory time frame in which all section 70 complaints must be dealt with.

#### **Chief Education Officer**

29. It is expected that the provision in relation to the appointment of a Chief Education Officer with relevant qualification and experience will impact positively on all children and young people. It will ensure that post holders are best placed to advise the education authority on the discharge of their education functions.

#### Registration of teachers in independent and grant aided schools

30. Provisions relating to the GTCS registration of all teachers in independent and grant aided schools will impact upon teachers in those schools who are not currently GTCS registered. It is expected that the provisions in the Bill relating to the requirement for teachers to be GTCS registered in independent and grant aided schools will not positively or negatively impact upon anyone as a result of their age.

#### Kinship care

31. Section 47(3) of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 will be amended so that all children aged 2 and over who have, or have had, a guardian appointed under section 7 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 are provided with the mandatory amount of early learning and childcare and not just those who are "eligible" under section 71(3)(f) of the 2014 Act. This amendment will have a

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Extending the Rights of Children with Capacity under Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 (As Amended) and Repealing Section 70 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 – Consultation Reponses: <u>http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2014/04/7613/0</u>

positive impact on those affected as currently the legislation unintentionally excludes a small group of children aged 2 and over with a guardian appointed under section 7 of the 1995 Act, who are not at risk of becoming looked after. The impact will be limited by the fact that this issue is currently dealt with in statutory guidance, meaning that current practice reflects the new provisions<sup>4</sup>.

# CHARACTERISTIC: DISABILITY

#### Closing the attainment gap

32. The closing the attainment gap provisions are intended to improve the attainment of all children and young people including those affected by disability. It is expected that these provisions will have a positive impact as they will promote a greater focus on tackling inequality between those children and young people who come from more and less disadvantaged backgrounds.

#### Gaelic medium education

- 33. The Gaelic medium education provisions in the Bill will apply to all children below school age and parents/carers of those children; including those with disabilities.
- 34. Research suggests that additional language skills help learning and have health benefits. One study, on the cognitive benefits of learning an additional 'minority' language, specifically highlighted the benefits of immersion of children in the second language at school.<sup>5</sup> The health benefits cited include cognitive control, problem solving and working memory, which would be of benefit to some pupils with disabilities.

#### Children's rights under additional support for learning

- 35. These provisions in the Bill will have a positive impact for children over the age of 12, with capacity, who have additional support needs arising from a disability. Research suggests that disabled children may face a range of issues in achieving their rights. One study found that disabled children had low expectations of gaining qualifications at school which lead to them having low life achievement expectations<sup>6</sup>. The Pupil Census September 2013<sup>7</sup> found that there were 15,510 pupils in Scottish schools who were assessed or declared as having a disability and 131,621 pupils who have an additional support need.
- 36. The provisions of the Bill and the associated children's support service which will support children who chose to use their rights, will positively impact children who have an additional support need arising from a disability.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Statutory Guidance on Early Learning and Child Care Practice <u>http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2014/08/6262</u>

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Laughlan, F., Parisi, M., Fadda, R., International Journal of Bilingualism, (2013) Bilingualism in Sardinia and Scotland: Exploring the cognitive benefits of speaking a 'minority' language
<sup>6</sup> Long Term Conditions alliance Scotland (LTCAS) and for Scotland's Disabled Children (fSDC) Liaison Project, "I want to be treated the same as my brothers!" Views about quality of life from children and young people who are disabled and/or living with long term conditions (2011).
<sup>7</sup> Pupil Census 2013 Results: <u>http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/School-</u> Education/dspupcensus/pupcensus2013

#### Free School Meals

37. The Free School Meals provision in the Bill will not change any existing policy. As a result of this, there is no evidence to suggest that it will impact either positively or negatively on disabled people.

# Section 70

38. It is expected that these provisions will impact positively on all who are involved in the section 70 process as it will establish a statutory timescale to be met by all affected. This will lead to a faster conclusion in relation to section 70 complaints, some of which are raised in relation to pupils who have a disability.

# **Chief Education Officer**

39. The provisions in the Bill will positively impact anyone who has a disability. An appropriately qualified and experienced Chief Education Officer will ensure that an education authority's duties to support the education of children and young people with disabilities are effectively discharged.

# Registration of teachers in independent and grant aided schools

40. These provisions are not expected to impact positively or negatively on disabled people. This is because all teachers will be registered and therefore there will be an expectation of quality in relation to teaching which will apply to all pupils including those with disabilities.

#### Kinship care

41. This provision is not expected to impact negatively on disabled people.

# CHARACTERISTIC: GENDER INCLUDING PREGNANCY

#### Closing the attainment gap

42. It is not expected that these provisions will have any positive or negative affect of anyone as a result of their gender. The provision will seek to reduce inequality of outcome between all children and young people who are from more or less disadvantaged backgrounds.

#### Gaelic medium education

43. These provisions will apply equally to all children below school age and parents/carers of those children. As such, these provisions will have no positive or negative impact on children as a result of their gender.

44. It was recorded in the Teacher Census 2013 that 77% of teachers in Scottish schools are female.<sup>8</sup> However, there is no evidence to suggest that either male or female teachers will be impacted in a negative way due to the Gaelic medium education provisions.

#### Children's rights under additional support for learning

45. Data from the Pupil Census in September 2013 highlighted that of the 131,621 pupils in Scottish schools with additional support needs, 81,687 (62%) of these are male.<sup>9</sup> The provisions in relation to children's rights will be equally available to both male and female children. However, given the higher number of male children with additional support needs it may be the case that male children benefit more from this provision.

#### Free school meals

46. As the provision is a restatement of existing policy, there is no evidence to suggest that these provisions will impact positively or negatively on anyone with regards to their gender.

#### Section 70

47. It is not expected that the proposed amendments to section 70 will have any positive or negative affect on anyone as a result of their gender.

#### **Chief Education Officer**

48. These provisions are not expected to impact either positively or negatively on anyone as a result of their gender. The services provided by the Chief Education Officer will be available to all in the sector regardless of their gender.

#### Registration of teachers in independent and grant aided schools

49. These provisions in the Bill are not expected to impact positively or negatively on account of gender.

#### Kinship care

50. There is no evidence to suggest that these provisions will impact either positively or negatively upon anyone as a result of their gender.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Teacher Census 2013 data – <u>http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/School-</u> Education/teachcensuppdata/teachcensus2013

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Pupil Census 2013 Results: <u>http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/School-Education/dspupcensus/pupcensus2013</u>

# CHARACTERISTIC: TRANSGENDER

# Closing the attainment gap

51. As no data is collected on schools pupils who identify as transgender, as this would not be appropriate, there is no evidence to suggest that these provisions will impact either positively or negatively on anyone who identifies as transgender.

# Gaelic medium education

52. These provisions will apply to all children below school age in Scotland and parents/carers of those children. It is therefore not anticipated that discrimination will arise as a result of this provision.

# Children's rights under additional support for learning

53. The Pupil Census for Scottish Schools does not collect data on gender reassignment in relation to pupils as this would not be deemed as appropriate. LGBT Youth Scotland note that *"Although the exact numbers are unknown, there are transgender people in Scottish schools. In 2007, one third of LGBT Youth Scotland's Lothian service advice and referral contacts were with transgender young people and their mean age was 16.75 years."<sup>10</sup> Given that the children's rights provisions will relate to children aged over 12 there is no evidence to suggest that the Bill would contribute to discrimination of those affected by gender reassignment. However, the rights introduced by the Bill will be fully inclusive of all children.* 

# Free school meals

54. There is no evidence to suggest that this provision will impact positively or negatively on anyone who identifies as transgender.

# Section 70

55. These provisions will not contribute to discrimination of people affected by gender reassignment. It is expected that these provisions will impact positively on all who engage in the section 70 process.

# Chief Education Officer

56. There is no evidence to suggest that this provision will impact either positively or negatively on anyone who identifies as transgender.

# Registration of teacher's in independent and grant aided schools

57. These provisions are not expected to impact positively or negatively on anyone who identifies as transgender.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> LGBT Scotland - <u>https://www.lgbtyouth.org.uk/m-pro-gender</u>

# Kinship care

58. No data exists in relation to gender reassignment and kinship care. Research by the Scottish Transgender Alliance, with 71 respondents, found that just over half of male-to-female transsexual women, a fifth of female-to-male transsexual men and a third of non-transitioned transgender respondents had children (either biologically or that they helped to raise.) <sup>11</sup> It is not anticipated that this provision will impact either positively or negatively on those who identify as transgender.

# CHARACTERISTIC: SEXUAL ORIENTATION

# Closing the Attainment Gap

59. The Pupil Census for Scottish schools does not collect data on sexual orientation in relation to pupils as this would not be deemed as appropriate. However, there is no evidence to suggest that the provision in relation to closing the attainment gap will impact either positively or negatively on anyone as a result of their sexual orientation.

#### Gaelic medium education

60. These provisions will apply to all children below school age in Scotland and parents/carers of those children. It is therefore not anticipated that it will result in discrimination of anyone in relation to their sexual orientation.

# Children's rights under additional support for learning

61. As above, the Pupil Census for Scottish Schools does not collect data on sexual orientation in relation to pupils. The children's rights provisions will be fully inclusive of all children aged over 12, with capacity and as such it would not be anticipated that this provision will impact negatively on anyone in relation to their sexual orientation.

# Free school meals

62. There is no evidence to suggest that this will impact positively or negatively on anyone as a result of their sexual orientation.

# Section 70

63. These provisions will not contribute to discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. It is expected that these provisions will impact positively on all who engage in the section 70 process.

# **Chief Education Officer**

64. There is no evidence to suggest that this will impact either positively or negatively on anyone as a result of their sexual orientation.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Morton, J., Transgender Experiences in Scotland, Scottish Transgender Alliance (2008)

# Registration of teacher's in independent and grant aided schools

65. These provisions are not expected to impact positively or negatively on anyone in relation to their sexual orientation.

# Kinship care

66. No evidence exists in relation to Kinship Care and sexual orientation. It is not anticipated that this provision will impact either positively or negatively anyone as a result of their sexual orientation.

# CHARACTERISTIC: RACE

# Closing the attainment gap

67. It is not expected that there will be any positive or negative impacts on anyone in relation to the provisions in the Bill about closing the attainment gap. These provisions will positively impact all affected by the attainment gap regardless of their race.

# Gaelic medium education

- 68. The Pupil Census from September 2013 highlighted that there were 143 languages recorded as the main language spoken at home by pupils in Scottish schools. Gaelic was the main language in 525 homes.<sup>12</sup>
- 69. The provisions in the Bill about Gaelic medium education will apply to all children under school age in Scotland and parents/carers of those children. It is therefore not anticipated that it will encourage discrimination of anyone in relation to their race.

# Children's rights under additional support for learning

70. There is no evidence to suggest that these provisions will have any positive or negative impact on anyone as a result of their race. The rights afforded to children through the Bill will be open to all with capacity aged over 12.

# Free school meals

71. There is no evidence to suggest that this provision will impact positively or negatively on anyone as a result of their race.

# Section 70

72. It is not expected that anyone will be negatively impacted as a result of these provisions on account of their race as the section 70 process is open to all, and it is expected that the amendment to the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 will positively impact upon all who engage in the process.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Pupil Census 2013 Results: <u>http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/School-Education/dspupcensus/pupcensus2013</u>

# **Chief Education Officer**

73. There is no evidence to suggest that this provision will impact either positively or negatively on anyone as a result of their race.

# Registration of teachers in independent and grant aided schools

74. These provisions are not expected to impact positively or negatively on anyone in relation to their race.

# Kinship care

75. It is not anticipated that this provision will impact negatively on anyone as a result of their race.

# CHARACTERISTIC: RELIGION OR BELIEF

# Closing the attainment gap

76. It is not expected that these provisions will impact positively or negatively on anyone as a result of their religion or belief. The provision will impact positively on all children and young people who are affected by the attainment gap which currently exists between those from more and less disadvantaged backgrounds regardless of their religion or belief.

#### Gaelic medium education

77. These provisions will apply to all children under school age in Scotland and parents/carers of those children. It is therefore not anticipated that it will encourage discrimination against anyone in relation to their belief or religion.

#### Children's rights under additional support for learning

78. No data is collected about the religion and belief of pupils in Scottish schools. As a result of this the impact of the provisions in relation to children's rights cannot be measured. However, it is not expected that anyone will be impacted on account of their religion or belief as the rights afforded by the provision will be available to all over the age of 12 with capacity.

#### Free school meals

79. There is no evidence to suggest that these provisions in the Bill will impact positively or negatively on anyone as a result of their religion or beliefs.

# Section 70

80. These provisions will not contribute to discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief. It is expected that these provisions will impact positively on all who engage in the section 70 process.

# **Chief Education Officer**

81. There is no evidence to suggest that this provision will have any negative or positive impact on anyone in relation to their religion or belief.

# Registration of teachers in independent and grant aided schools

82. These provisions are not expected to impact positively or negatively on anyone in relation to their religion or belief.

# Kinship care

83. There is no evidence to suggest that these provisions will impact positively or negatively on anyone in relation to their religion or belief.

#### **Recommendations and conclusion**

- 84. The EQIA process has highlighted the need for the Scottish Government to continue to engage closely with stakeholders to ensure that equalities issues continue to be at the forefront of policy development processes and that any new issues can be dealt with as they arise. The formal consultations on section 70, children's rights and Gaelic medium education were informative and useful in considering the potential equality impacts on groups affected by the Bill. The workshop which was held to gain the specific input of equalities organisations was valuable and raised the awareness and understanding of the key issues on which the Bill may impact. Specifically, as a result of the workshop, consideration will be given to using the guidance on children's rights to ensure that it is understood that all information must be accessible to children and parents/carers.
- 85. The impacts of the Bill on the protected characteristics have been considered as a result of the EQIA. No changes have been proposed to any of the provisions as a result of this process, as no negative impacts were identified. However, it has confirmed the need, highlighted as part of the responses to the consultations, to ensure that information and advice in relation to these provisions is fully accessible to parents, children and young people. It is expected that the Bill will help to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations within and between groups.



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