

# Scottish Policy Landscape in Education



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# The policy landscape in education

- Reserved matters within the power of the UK Government
- Devolved matters to the Scottish Parliament including education
- 32 local authorities who employ teachers and 'run' schools
- National bodies who have oversight of educational practice eg Education Scotland, Scottish Qualifications Authority
- A national inspectorate within Education Scotland
- An independent regulator of teachers (General Teaching Council for Scotland)
- National policies eg CfE which are interpreted and implemented through local authorities and within schools
- Comprehensive model of education since 1965, co-educational provision, funded early learning from age 3 (full time), small private sector (4%), a presumption of mainstream education and free university education

# Distinct nature of Scottish policy making

Scottish education has a proud tradition and a distinctive character. Walter Humes and Hamish Paterson's (1983) work on Scottish education's history and culture reveals how Scottish education alongside Scots law and the Church of Scotland are seen as foundational to national identity and an important backstop to assimilation into a more anglicised national life.

There remains in Scottish society a long-held belief (Paterson, 2023) that Scottish education is superior to that of England quite pointedly, and the rest of the UK more generally.

These long-held beliefs are based on an understanding of Scottish education as being developed through social and intellectual principles which can be traced back to John Knox's 1560 Book of Discipline, which (amongst other more questionable beliefs) advocated for a national system of education and equality of access to academic learning for people from all backgrounds (McPherson and Raab, 1988).

The influence of these Knoxian ideals alongside the democratic and egalitarian principles of the Scottish Enlightenment (ibid) are still considered to be of central importance in contemporary Scottish educational policy making.

McPherson and Raab (1988) in their seminal sociology of Scottish educational policy in the post-war period, centre much of their critique on the exceptional continuity of key actors within the Scottish policy community. This view is echoed by Murphy and Raffe (2015) almost thirty years later in their assertion that the Scottish policy community has barely changed since the 1960s.

An optimistic perspective on this remarkable institutional inertia might suggest that this offers stability or even protection from political interference (Cairney, 2013) however most scholars articulate a greater number of concerns over positive elements when analysing such institutional rigidity.



THERE ARE A VAST ARRAY OF ACTORS INVOLVED IN THE  
CREATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF SCOTTISH  
EDUCATIONAL POLICY.



WITHIN THIS WIDER POLICY COMMUNITY THERE ARE CLEAR  
HIERARCHIES AT PLAY WITH CERTAIN INSTITUTIONS FORMING  
AN 'INNER CIRCLE' WITH GREATER PROXIMITY TO  
GOVERNMENT AND DECISION MAKERS WHILST THOSE IN THE  
'OUTER CIRCLE' STILL PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE BUT THEIR  
RELATIONSHIP TO THE KEY PLAYERS IN THE POLICY  
COMMUNITY AND POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IS MORE  
FRAGMENTED.

# Scottish Educational Policy Community

## Inner Circle

AHDS (Est 1975)  
ADES (Est 1930s)  
SLS (Est 1936)  
SQA (Est 1996)  
Scottish Government  
Directorates (Est 2007)  
Education Scotland (including  
HMI, Est 2011)  
COSLA (Est 1975)  
EIS (Est 1850)  
GTCS (Est 1965)

## External Influencers

OECD  
Media/social media  
Audit Scotland  
HMI  
ICEA  
Scottish Funding Council  
Reform Scotland  
Royal Society of Edinburgh  
Scottish Parliament  
Scottish Parliament  
Education Committee

## Outer Circle

UNISON  
Who Cares Scotland?  
Teacher Panel  
BOCSH  
Early Years Scotland  
Individual Academics  
Young Scot  
Youth Link Scotland  
ICYS  
SOLACE  
Care Inspectorate  
RICs  
Unite  
CRER  
SSSC  
Children's Parliament  
Bord na Gaidhlig  
AREP  
Youth Parliament  
Scottish Alliance for Children's Rights  
Sport Scotland  
Creative Scotland  
Social Work Scotland  
NPFS  
SDS  
Universities Scotland

SAMEE  
The Promise Board  
Connect  
SCES  
SCIS  
Home Educator Scotland  
Children and Young People's  
Commissioner  
NASUWT  
Dyslexia Scotland  
SCQF Partnership  
Colleges Scotland  
Bobath Scotland  
Children in Scotland  
SSTA  
CLD Standards Council  
SCDE  
Joseph Rowntree Foundation  
Barbados  
Nurture Scotland

# Some History of Policy Development in Scottish Education

1707- Final sitting of original Scottish Parliament

Policy is distinct to Scotland but created by Scottish Office in London

1867- Argyll Commission

1872- Education Act- schooling for 5-13 year olds compulsory but not free-secondary education only available in a few urban schools

1878-1901- Labour Certificate- required to leave school at 13- tasks set by HMI

1883- Leaving age raised to 14

1886- HMI inspections begin

1888- Leaving Certificate- Three tier- Honours (Indian Civil Service)/Higher (University acceptance)/ Lower (leaving requirement at 14

1889/1890- Education Act- funding for secondary education although not all fees were scrapped until 1960s

1891- Merit Certificate- 3Rs/2 class subjects/1 specific subject

1893- Scottish Universities accept women

1902- Intermediate certificate- for those studying a mix of higher and lower courses- introduction of higher grade schools

1908- Education Act- Structure of school system- Primary/Intermediate (3 years) /Secondary (5 years)

1925- Intermediate and Merit Certificates replaced by Group Certificates (2 Highers and 2 Lovers)

1939- Scottish Office moves to Edinburgh

1947- Advisory Council on Secondary Education- laid groundwork for comprehensive education and proposed the end of external examinations

1950- Introduction of single subject awards

1958- Teachers as exam markers- previously university professors

1961- Introduction of O Grade- Highers remain unchanged (since 1888)

1984- Standard Grade was introduced following Munn and Dunning committees of 1977



# Wider Contemporary Policy Landscape

1993- 5-14 Guidelines-  
'first national  
curriculum'

1994- Higher Still-  
Access/Intermediate/  
Higher/Advanced  
Higher

1997- New Labour-  
proposal of devolution  
and emerging trend of  
managerialism

1999-New Scottish  
Parliament convened  
with responsibility for  
education

2001- McCrone  
Review of Teacher Pay  
and Conditions

2002- National Debate  
in Education

2004-2011- Evolution  
of Curriculum for  
Excellence

2007- First SNP government  
elected move to 'Scottish  
Government' rather than  
'Scottish Executive'

2007- OECD Review

2010- Donaldson  
Report

2011- McCormac  
Review

2012/2021- GTCS  
Standards

2013- Professional  
Update

2014- 'Nationals'  
replace Standard  
Grades and  
Intermediates

2015- OECD Review

2015- Scottish  
Attainment Challenge  
launched

2016- International  
Council of Education  
Advisers created

2016- National  
Improvement  
Framework launched

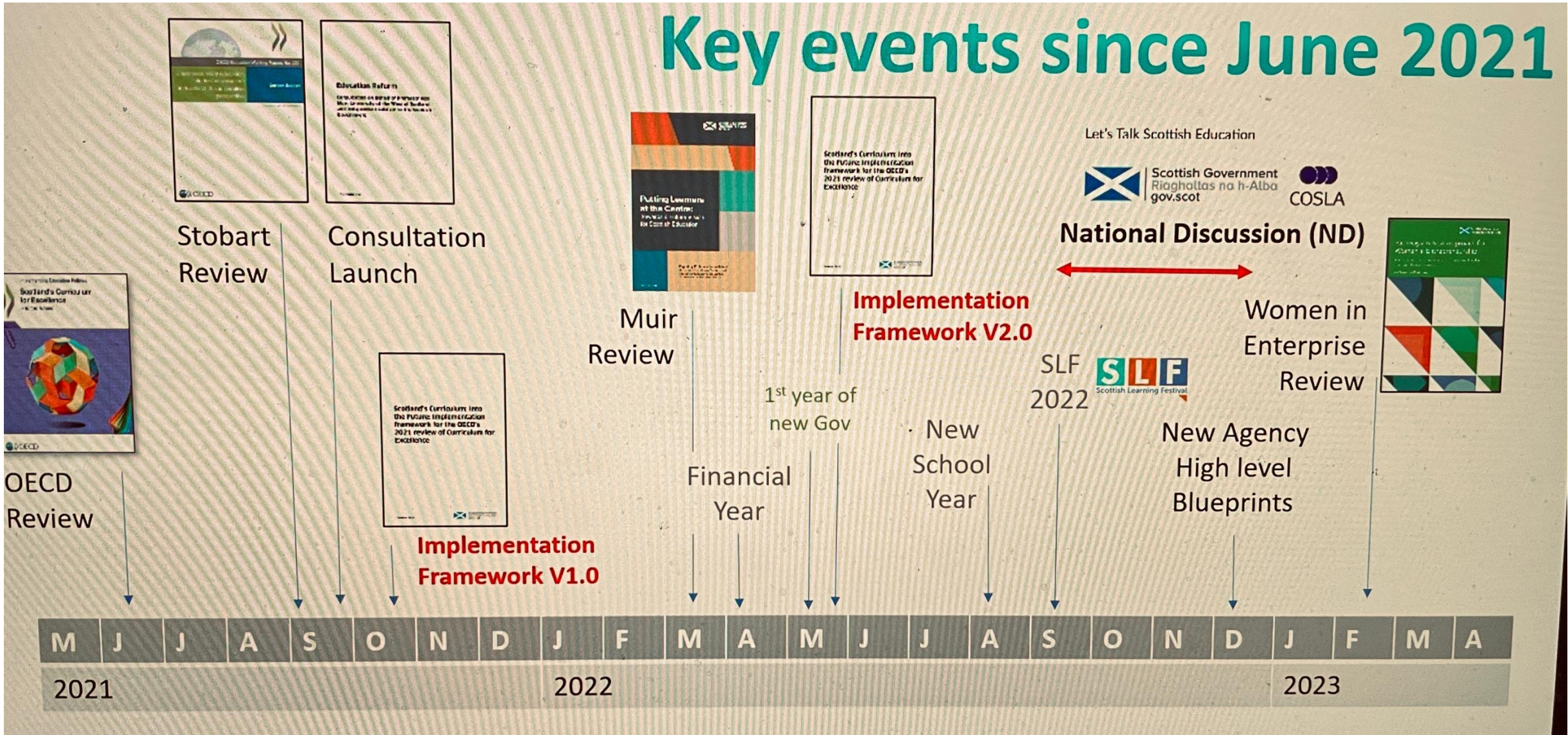
2020- Priestly Review  
of qualifications

2021- OECD Review  
and Stobart Report



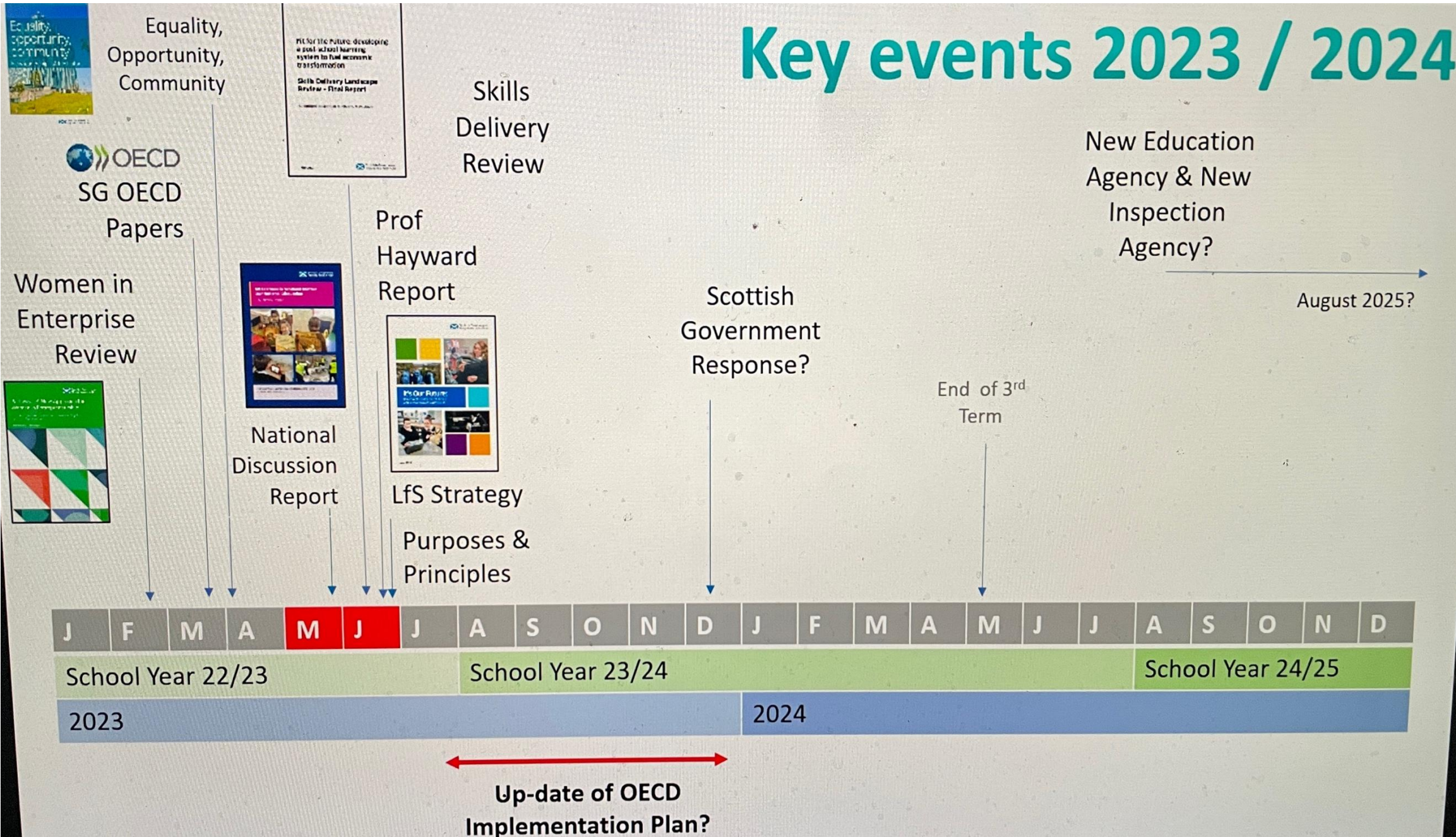
# A time of reform

## Key events since June 2021

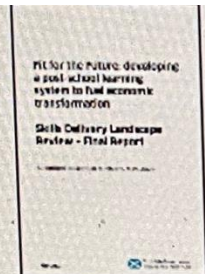




# Key events 2023 / 2024



Equality, Opportunity, Community



Skills Delivery Review



Women in Enterprise Review



National Discussion Report

Prof Hayward Report



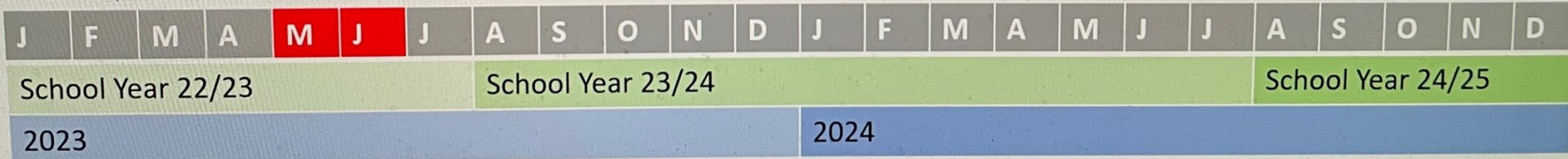
LfS Strategy Purposes & Principles

Scottish Government Response?

End of 3<sup>rd</sup> Term

New Education Agency & New Inspection Agency?

August 2025?



Up-date of OECD Implementation Plan?



# CFE AND HEADSHIP

Head teachers and teachers as curriculum makers

The 'introduction' of CfE- 2009 until ???

De-cluttering the curriculum

Curricula for communities

Flexibility versus accountability

The Assessment question

The refresh and the OECD

Data collection and the NIF



# Inclusion

Historical perspective

ASL Act 2004

GIRFEC

Presumption of mainstreaming

Austerity

Discipline-Behaviour-Relationships

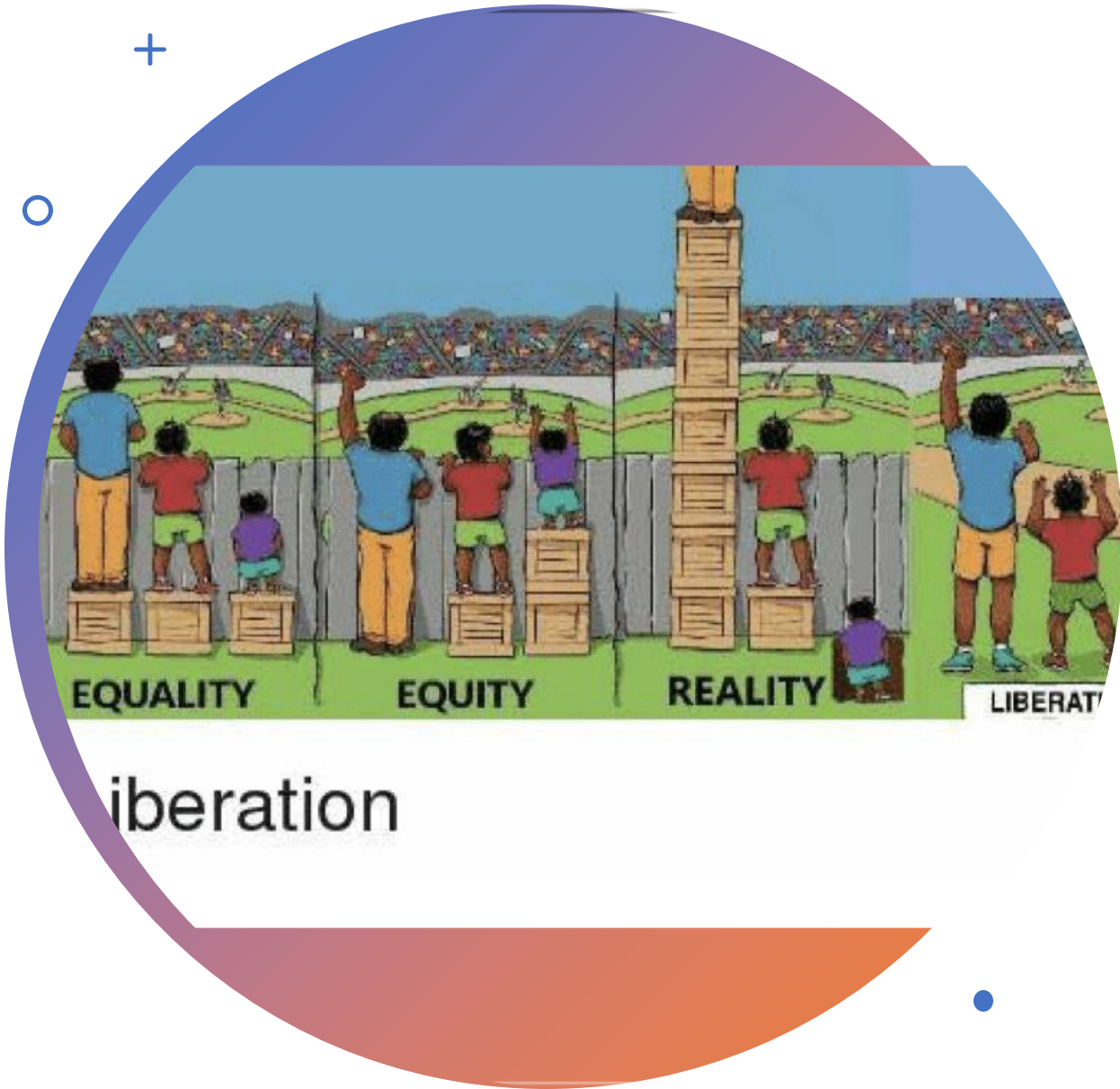
Nurture

Poverty and ACE

Getting  
It  
Right  
For  
Every  
Child







# EQUALITIES

- SCOTTISH CONTEXT
- EXCELLENCE AND EQUITY
- POVERTY LENS
- ANTI-RACISM
- LGBTI
- COLLABORATION



# Scottish Attainment Challenge

- POLITICAL CONTEXT
- STRUCTURE OF THE CHALLENGE
- CONTEXT OF AUSTERITY
- FROM SAC TO PEF
- THE ROLE OF DATA
- COVID AND SAC RELAUNCH
- UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES-  
CURRICULUM NARROWING?



# The covid landscape

- BIGGEST DISRUPTION TO EDUCATION PROVISION SINCE WW2
- TALE OF TWO LOCKDOWNS
- THE 'RECOVERY' PHASE
- CRISIS MANAGEMENT
- CENTRALISED CONTROL OF EDUCATION
- WELLBEING PERFECT STORM
- IMPACT ON ATTAINMENT
- DIGITAL LEARNING GAINS?
- REFORM TO QUALIFICATIONS?



# Horizon scanning-where next?

- CURRICULUM REFORM CYCLE
  - QUALIFICATIONS?
  - FUNDING
- COMMUNITY COHESION
  - WORKFORCE
  - WELLBEING
- FUTURE OF GIRFEC
- POLITICAL LANDSCAPE