

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE – 25 MAY 2004

RESPONSE TO “A CONSULTATION ON THE FUTURE OF AGE AND STAGE REGULATIONS”

Report by Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the Education Committee of the Authority’s response to a consultation paper entitled “A Consultation on the Future of Age and Stage Regulations” (Scottish Executive, March 2004).

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The National Debate on Education provided the people of Scotland with the opportunity to put forward their views, ideas and priorities for their education system. This consultation paper fulfils one of the commitments to consult on the future of Age and Stage regulations, which determine the age at which the young people in Scotland may be entered for examinations and assessments and receive external certification for National Units and Courses managed by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA).
- 2.2 The consultation paper provides background information about the regulations, sets out some general points for consideration, and sets out five options.

3. CONSULTATION QUESTIONS AND RESPONSE

- 3.1 The consultation paper set out five options for discussion. These options covered a full range of situations and were as follows:

Option 1

Revert to the regulations as operated prior to session 2003-04. This would mean that applications for exceptional entry would be made on an individual candidate by candidate basis.

Option 2

Maintain the regulations as operated during session 2003-04. This means that applications for exceptional entry can be made in a group, class or year basis, with the request being made via the Director of Educational and Social Services.

Option 3

Relax the regulations to allow Intermediate level national Courses from S3. This would mean a relaxation by one year to allow candidates to be presented for intermediate level national course certification from S3 onwards.

Option 4

Replace the Age and Stage regulations with guidance. This would replace the current national system with discretionary guidance provided by the Scottish Executive, although this guidance was not made explicit in the consultation document.

Option 5

Abolish the Age and Stage regulations entirely. This would mean that Educational authorities and individual head teachers would be left to decide on policy relating to examination ages and stages.

- 3.2** The authority convened a focus group to consider the response to the consultation paper. The group met and fully discussed the proposals and have agreed that Option 4 is the preferred response. However, it is important to note that additional guidance will be required from the SQA in order to clarify the position. In parallel with this, current regulations should be maintained until such explicit guidance provides adequate structures and safeguards for all pupils and schools.

4. LEGAL/POLICY/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1** Nil

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1** The Education Committee is recommended to:

- (i) approve the response to consultation;
- (ii) note the contents of this report.

John Mulgrew
Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

JMcC/EO'N
5/5/04

Background Papers

A Consultation on the Future of Age and Stage Regulations, (Scottish Executive, March 2004)

Members requiring further information should contact John McCarney, Head of Service: School Support (01563 555631), or David Farrow, Quality Improvement Officer (01563 555650).

Implementation Officer: John McCarney, Head Of Service: Schools Support