



Qualifications and
Curriculum Authority

QCA

futures
MEETING THE CHALLENGE

1,000 words to shape the future



A CURRICULUM FOR THE FUTURE: ORGANISATIONS CONSIDER THE CHALLENGE

First published in 2006

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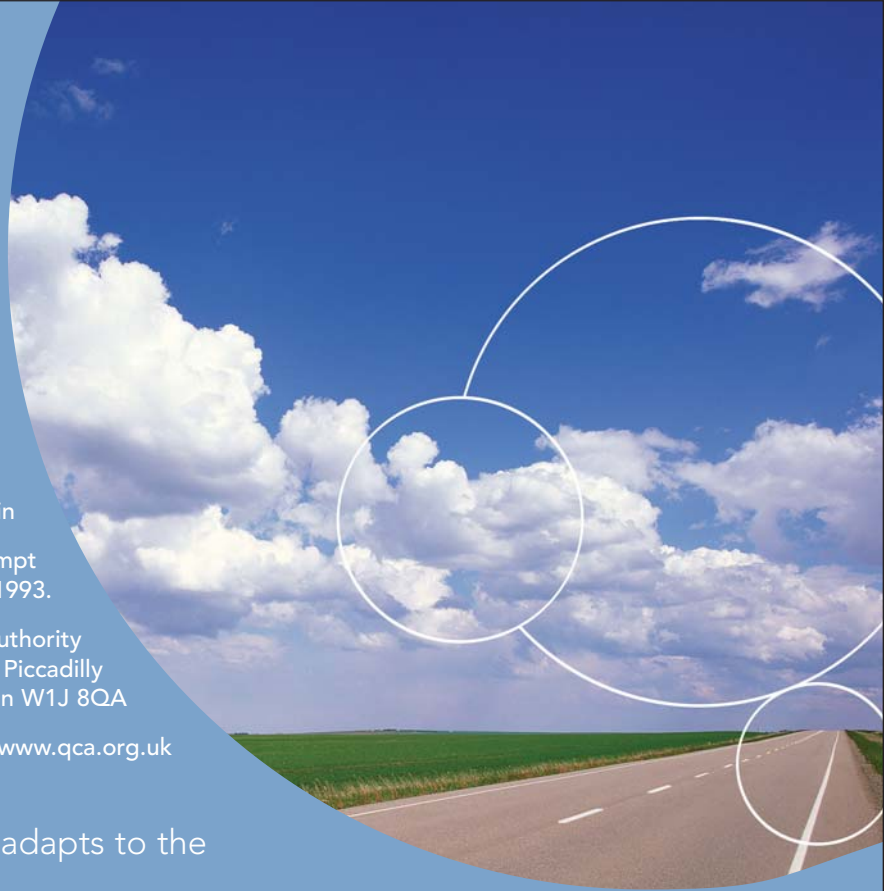
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'Education only flourishes if it successfully adapts to the demands and needs of the time.'

'The curriculum cannot remain static. It must be responsive to changes in society and the economy, and changes in the nature of schooling itself.'

National curriculum



Foreword

Now more than ever, organisations with an interest in education need to work together to develop a curriculum that truly meets the needs of young people. The Every Child Matters agenda compels us to share vision and knowledge to work towards a future where every young person is able to reach his or her full potential.

When we asked other organisations to tell us in 1,000 words what the future of education should be like, we were encouraged by the contributors' enthusiasm for creating a truly modern, world-class curriculum and the amount of shared agreement about how this might be achieved. This booklet summarises the views that emerged.

Everybody's effort mattered and helped shape the views expressed in this booklet. We have quoted from many.

These views will help shape thinking and decision making about curriculum development. I encourage all readers to think about the issues raised and join in the debate.

The curriculum that young people experience should be a source of national pride. We look forward to hearing your views and using them as we work to make our curriculum the very best it can be.

Mick Waters
Director of Curriculum
Qualifications and Curriculum Authority

You'll see these yellow notes throughout this booklet. They contain questions that we hope will stimulate further debate.

We look forward to hearing your views.



QCA Futures aims to promote broad debate about the future of learning. In 2006 QCA gave an open invitation to organisations with an interest in education to share their views on the curriculum. We asked them what is working well and what might need to change.

We asked organisations to put across their views in any structure that they wished. In addition we asked some stimulating questions.

- What is education for in the 21st century?
- What is a well-educated 11-year-old, 14-year-old or 19-year-old like?
- How can we help young people to enjoy and value the curriculum they experience?
- What changes should be made to the curriculum to better prepare young people for life in the 21st century?

The contributions summarised in this booklet will be valuable in shaping thinking and decision making about curriculum development.

We invite you to think about the views in this booklet and put forward your own ideas by joining the online debate about the future curriculum at www.qca.org.uk/futures/.

Architects of the curriculum need to be brave enough to think of a different curriculum, organised in a way that makes sense to the learner.

Ofsted

Many of the organisations that contributed 1,000 words shared similar views about the curriculum. These views are summarised here.

What is education for in the 21st century?

Education in the 21st century should help young people to:

- see connections between aspects of knowledge
- have the confidence and skills to take control of their own life and to influence and shape the communities in which they live and work
- understand how they learn so that they can adapt and thrive in a rapidly changing world
- be literate, numerate and confident in the use of technology and media
- be creative
- develop a sense of identity and belonging as well as empathy with the diverse range of people in the world
- appreciate the interconnectedness and interdependence of individuals and society
- make healthy and ethical choices to ensure their emotional, physical and social well-being
- have curious minds and be critically aware
- work towards a sustainable future
- develop a propensity for action, enterprise and active citizenship.

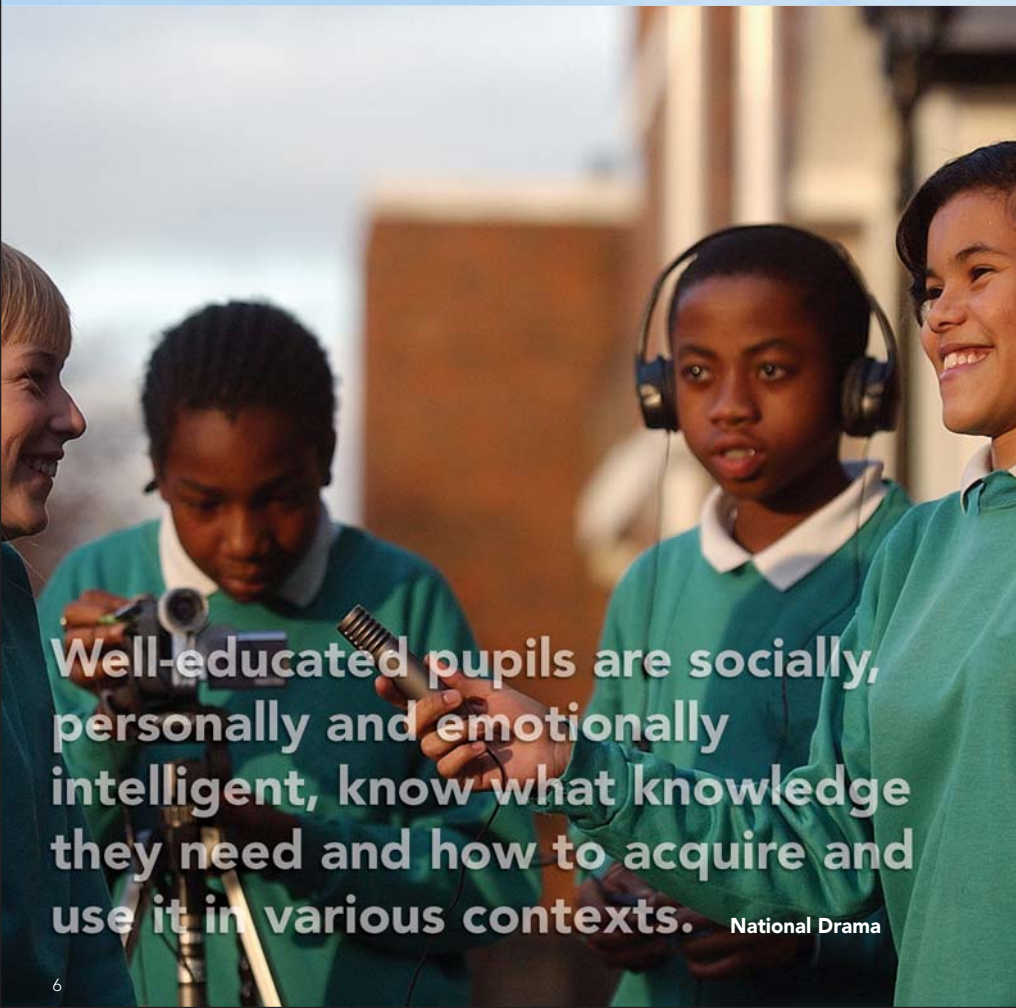
What should education *be like* in the 21st century?

Education in the 21st century should:

- be able to be organised in a range of ways, appropriate to the needs of the learner
- focus on developing transferable skills and competencies as well as knowledge
- be flexible enough to allow schools to adapt it locally to meet the needs of their own learners
- be relevant to young people in the 21st century and take account of their views
- have a personalised approach to learning at its heart
- recognise learning that takes place outside of school and in a variety of ways
- reconsider the use of time and resources and the role of teachers and learners, to better reflect new understandings about learning
- use assessment to improve learning first and foremost
- recognise and reward all young people's achievements
- value all learning – vocational and academic – equally, giving learners plenty of qualification choices
- consider using the foundation stage model as a starting point for all curriculum planning
- contain a commitment to planned, continuous improvement rather than quick fixes
- be underpinned by clear values as the basis for ethical decision making, developing principles to distinguish between right and wrong.



What is education for in the 21st century?



Well-educated pupils are socially, personally and emotionally intelligent, know what knowledge they need and how to acquire and use it in various contexts.

National Drama

Whatever their focus, organisations tend to agree about the main purposes of education. Some organisations point out that the difficulty we face is not *defining* the aims of education, but *achieving* them.

There is probably very little difference in the purpose of education for the 21st century and its purpose at any other time. Society at any time needs people who understand and care about the world in which they live; people who are able to make a positive contribution and who are equipped to face challenges and change.

National Dance Teachers Association

For the individual or for society?

In listing what they think education is for, most contributors include 'two key facets, one social as part of a community and one personal recognising the life of the individual'. Association for Advice and Support in Art and Design (A4)

Education has a purpose and value for its own sake. It enriches the individual in many ways.

[Young people need] experiences, studies and processes of learning that will help them ... develop themselves as individuals in ways which will contribute to their health, safety, personal achievement, enjoyment and peace of mind. Association for Science Education

Education should also play a role in transmitting values, identities and cultures from one generation to the next. 'Like a good parent, education should foster independence, self-esteem and positive attitudes, and further, a mind nimble and supple to meet unknowable futures'.

(National Association of Advisers in English)

The organisations that contributed have no doubts that education should prepare individuals for participation in society.

[There should be] a greater role for schools in the development of the whole person and ... a move away from the traditional academic model towards a personalised development model in which young people are nurtured towards socialisation and citizenship. Youth Justice Board

The increasingly global nature of 'community' is described by many contributors. Young people should be active and informed citizens in their local community but also citizens of the world. Their knowledge in areas such as human rights and environmental issues and their interpersonal skills like conflict resolution are important locally and globally.

What in your view is education for in the 21st century?

Contribute to the debate at www.qca.org.uk/futures/.

[The curriculum] nurtures body, spirit and mind and develops each individual's unique talents to the full.



Young people need 'intercultural competence' if they are to 'recognise different perspectives, understand how cultural diversity impacts on people's behaviour, deal with culturally sensitive issues, develop strategies to solve potential conflicts and learn to co-operate'.

(Commission for Racial Equality)

Children need to relate to the people they meet day in and day out, and to understand that different people have different ideas, ideals, customs and practices.

Ofsted

What is education *for* in the 21st century?

What should young people know and be able to do?

The skills young people need are often the ones needed for handling complexity or rapid change and dealing with difficult or unpredictable situations. Good communication skills are paramount in all these contexts.

A few organisations define skills for life and skills for work separately but most see an overlap between the two, for example creative thinking and problem solving are important at home, at school and in the workplace. Most of all, contributors emphasise that skills '**should be transferable to different contexts, so that what pupils learn in school is reinforced and made relevant at home and elsewhere**'. (Royal National Institute for the Blind)



[We should be] helping young people to value themselves and value others. Youth Justice Board

Although many contributors describe some form of 'basic knowledge base' as an entitlement for all, the most important things in this information-rich age are wanting to know more, knowing how to find information and then being able to use it wisely and effectively. In other words '**learning how to think, not what to think**'. (University of Liverpool)

How can we help young people prepare for the world of work?

Most organisations also list one or more aspects of readiness for employment as an aim but acknowledge the swiftly changing nature of the workplace and the workforce. Designing a curriculum for a future that cannot be predicted will not be a straightforward task.

[Students should develop] ... core personal attributes, in parallel with the development of an ability to acquire specific skills in a more flexible way as they are required to meet the changing demands of the working environment.

Youth Justice Board

Work-related learning is also important in the primary sector. Work-related elements of the curriculum should have a higher profile and not be undervalued.

National Association of Head Teachers

What is a well-educated 11-year-old, 14-year-old or 19-year-old like?

When they describe a well-educated young person, different organisations tend to list many of the same characteristics. Some of the aspects they list are skills, some are attitudes or personal qualities and some are areas of knowledge and understanding.

[They should be] able to make decisions, identify questions to answer and problems to resolve. They should be able to generate ideas, ask questions to extend their thinking, challenge conventions and adapt their ideas as circumstances change. They should also be able to recognise their achievements, deal positively with praise and criticism in order to evaluate their learning and make changes to achieve success.

British Association of Advisers and Lecturers in Physical Education

Whatever their individual strengths, all young people need to know how to be flexible if they are to cope with the changes that take place around them.

Flexibility, resilience and the ability to cope with and react positively to change are key requirements for 21st-century life and these should be developed throughout the curriculum.

Financial Services Skills Council

They also need to develop important core values. The most common values described are those associated with being socially and personally responsible as a citizen.

The need for transferable skills is paramount. University of Wales Institute



Most organisations think it is important to acknowledge that there has already been some success, but they believe that significant changes are still needed to achieve the aims we share.

What is education for in the 21st century?

... someone who wants to know more and has the 'tools' with which to do so. British Dyslexia Association

A well-educated 11-year-old is

Inspired, enthusiastic, open-minded, imaginative, curious, creative, tolerant, caring, with a working mastery of the basic skills, an awareness and appreciation of the wider world, confidence in research and study skills, an ability to probe, question, reason logically and solve problems, an understanding of their personal rights and responsibilities ...

National Primary Headteachers' Association

How would you describe a well-educated 11-year-old?



What do you think a well-educated 14-year-old should be like?

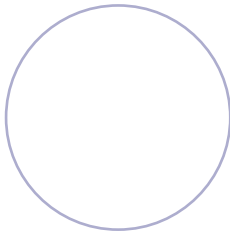
Well-educated 14-year-olds are

... strong and confident communicators, able to articulate informed opinions on a range of subjects. Their knowledge will span a wide range of areas, including the sciences, humanities, the arts, mathematics, foreign languages and cultures. They will have extended their skills in key areas, such as entrepreneurship, technology, financial literacy, craft, music and sports. Their ICT literacy and capability will enable them to take full advantage of the learning media available to them. Financially capable, they will be confident in their ability to take and retain control of their own finances. Their extended sense of social responsibility will enable them to begin to use their capabilities for the good of the community and local economy.

Financial Services Skills Council

A well-educated 19-year-old has

... an ability to question their own preconceptions, attitudes and current knowledge; the ability to learn independently; a commitment to explore and master new or advanced methods of scholarship; and the courage to risk making mistakes in the attempt of exceptional achievement. **University of Manchester**



As young people enter adulthood, what qualities and skills do they need to be successful?



The aims of the curriculum

Many contributors recognised the need to have clear aims underpinning the design of the curriculum. These needed to be simple and accessible to schools and teachers and have greater influence on the way learning experiences are planned. The chart below summarises the aims of the national curriculum.

We want the curriculum to enable all young people to become:

- **successful learners** who enjoy learning, make progress and achieve
- **confident individuals** who are able to live safe, healthy and fulfilling lives
- **responsible citizens** who make a positive contribution to society.

Successful learners who ...

- are able to employ the essential learning skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology
- are creative, resourceful and able to solve problems
- have enquiring minds and think for themselves to process information, reason, critique and make judgements
- communicate well in a range of ways
- understand how they learn and learn from their mistakes
- are able to learn independently and with others
- know about big ideas and events that shape our world
- enjoy learning and are motivated to achieve the best they can now and in the future.

Confident individuals who ...

- have a sense of self-worth and personal identity
- relate well to others and form good relationships
- are self-aware and deal well with their emotions
- have secure values and beliefs and have principles to distinguish between right and wrong
- become increasingly independent, are able to take the initiative and organise themselves
- make healthy lifestyle choices
- are physically competent and confident
- take managed risks and stay safe
- recognise their talents and have ambitions
- are willing to try new things and make the most of opportunities
- are open to the excitement and inspiration offered by the natural world and human achievements.

Responsible citizens who ...

- are well prepared for life and work
- are enterprising
- are able to work cooperatively with others
- respect others and act with integrity
- understand their own and others' cultures and traditions and have a strong sense of their own place in the world
- appreciate the benefits of diversity
- challenge injustice, are committed to human rights and strive to live peaceably with others
- sustain and improve the environment, locally and globally
- take account of the needs of present and future generations in the choices they make
- can change things for the better.



Let us finish with the traditional school curriculum in which subjects are served up as ends in themselves. Let us dig deeper and use subjects as the vast and inspiring resources they are for serving the educational goals we value.

Geographical Association

What should education *be like* in the 21st century?

The same themes, such as relevance and flexibility, are evident in many responses but there are some differences in the specific nature of the changes proposed to achieve these aims.

With increasing diversity of types of school, there should also be diversity of curriculum, teaching and learning options and qualifications. The idea of a typical school day being spent on the school premises, in a classroom with a teacher, may well need to change.

If diversity and choice are to be substantive, there is also a case for greater freedom for schools with respect to the curriculum that they follow and the qualifications that they teach towards.

Institute of Directors

The current direction of the extended school with its notions of flexible timetabling and multi-agency working seems to provide some of the answers.

National Association of Advisers in English

How do schools create more relevance and flexibility within an already crowded day?

Tell us your views at
www.qca.org.uk/futures/.

The purpose of some aspects of the curriculum may be to prepare the young person to engage in learning itself. ⁴⁴



Teaching and learning

Learning is more effective if it is interactive and participatory. Amnesty International

Which skills do learners need?

Contributors generally focus on the learning experience for an individual pupil. They commonly begin by stating the central importance of motivation and helping young people understand how they learn.

The educational experience must be designed to develop in young people a love of learning that they carry into later life.

Association of School and College Leaders

Learning how to learn should be a concept which runs through all educational provision.

British Dyslexia Association



Are different teaching and learning approaches needed?

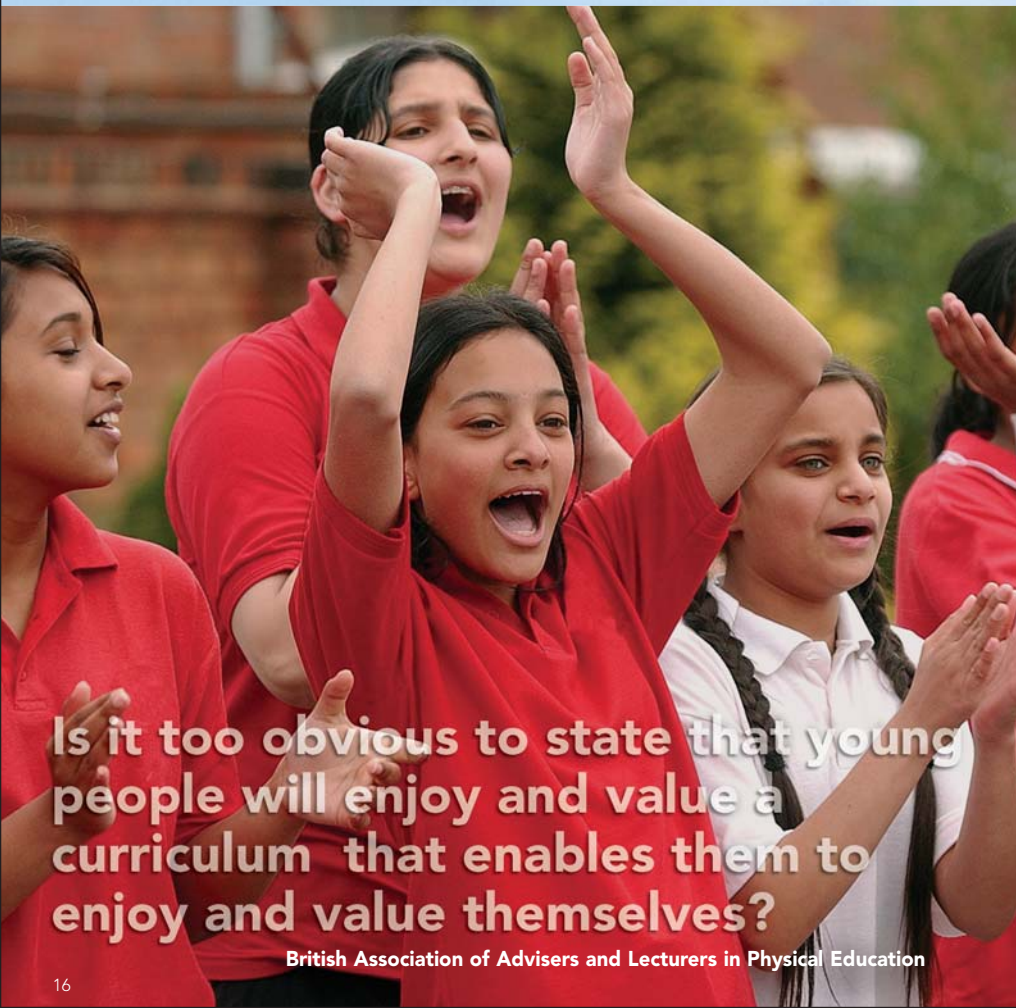
When they describe in more detail what education should be like, organisations often mention the importance of actively taking part in lessons and including a variety of teaching and learning approaches as ingredients that motivate young people. Most learners enjoy getting stuck into something practical and are able to stay on task for longer if they don't always have to learn in the same way.

Creative, innovative ideas and perceptions are actively constructed, and never passively acquired. National Association of Able, Gifted and Talented Children

The variety of teaching and learning approaches should include play as a natural and motivating way for young people of all ages to learn.

Play needs to be reinstated as a form of creative expression across the primary age range; its erosion has diminished learning opportunities. Creativity is the springboard for innovation.

Leeds Metropolitan University



Is it too obvious to state that young people will enjoy and value a curriculum that enables them to enjoy and value themselves?

British Association of Advisers and Lecturers in Physical Education

How can we help young people to enjoy and value the curriculum?

Not surprisingly, many organisations make reference to the central role of a good teacher. Even the best curriculum can't be effective without teachers who have the skills to motivate learners and the in-depth knowledge to teach content in an interesting way.

The most effective teaching is not just knowledgeable but also flexible and motivating. Teachers need subject knowledge but they also need to know how young people develop and learn. This may mean changes in practice for some. It may also mean an increased focus on the ways that young people think and learn, for example in professional development programmes.

Many contributors recognise that the ideal balance between a broad curriculum and an in-depth one is not easy to achieve. Where the content is broad, there is a lot to cover and this can impact on the time available for aspirations like 'more one-to-one teaching'. Detailed curricula and new developments also mean that teachers need to devote time to update their own skills and knowledge.



This is not simply about redefining new knowledge contents, but rather about the complexities of new forms of knowledge, including emerging knowledge, and the knowledge and learning needed to negotiate the challenges of the global age. **Leeds Metropolitan University**

New ways of organising and managing teaching and learning, both in and outside the classroom, are also seen as ways of ensuring that young people enjoy the curriculum.



Teachers need to feel ownership of what they are teaching and have opportunities to share their enthusiasm for learning about things they are interested in with young people.

Association for Science Education

The traditional roles of teachers and learners must essentially change as we realise that the single most powerful motivator of pupils' learning stems from their active participation in problem-solving activities that link learning with real life. **National Association of Able, Gifted and Talented Children**

Skilled, knowledgeable and enthusiastic teachers are essential if students are to enjoy and value their education. University College London

The curriculum

How should the curriculum be designed?

One of the main changes suggested is to increase the level of personalisation to provide a better match for groups of learners and individuals. One size does not fit all. More choices are needed in the curriculum offered, the courses available and the qualifications these can lead to.

A range of different ways is suggested to deal with curriculum overload and allow space for flexibility. A common suggestion is to create a framework curriculum that acts as a foundation of key skills and knowledge on which schools can build a localised and tailor-made learning programme with specialised options for individuals according to their interests, strengths and needs.

People are best equipped to deal with new opportunities and challenges if they have a strong breadth of experience and knowledge upon which to draw. Thus a broad curriculum should be offered. **University College London**

There should be a light national curriculum framework setting out the skills and attitudes which pupils need now and in the future for employment, caring roles and citizenship. These should be generic skills, rather than an attempt to 'second guess' the actual skills which will be required, for example, by employers.

Association of Teachers and Lecturers

The need for a common entitlement is recognised but this entitlement must not be so large that it leaves little or no room for anything else.

National Association of Head Teachers

Far greater value has to be placed on localised, teacher-led 'curriculum making'.
Geographical Association



Flexibility and choice need to be encouraged as part of the personalisation of the curriculum at all phases, as they promote motivation.

Ofsted

The curriculum should include enough flexibility for schools to make the most of local resources, interests and issues. This would allow teachers to design part of the curriculum specifically for their own learners and to have ownership of what they teach.

[The curriculum] should be based upon a needs analysis rooted in local circumstances. Local development should focus on the knowledge content through which the skills can be developed. This would enable teachers to provide curricula that are more relevant to their pupils' needs and interests, and promote greater spontaneity. **Association of Teachers**

and Lecturers



An effective curriculum would enable all pupils to feel that they are gifted and talented.

Education Bradford

The curriculum

How can the curriculum be made more relevant?

Although suggestions vary in their detail, contributors all mention ways that the curriculum must change if it is to be relevant to the young people it is designed for. Curriculum design must take into account what young people want from their education.

Engaging and motivating learners means building a curriculum that is relevant to their interests and their circumstances. Young people will be more motivated and learn more effectively if they can understand how their learning will be useful in everyday life, how it all fits together and where it is leading.

The curriculum needs to be made explicitly relevant to the communities, workplaces and the lives most young people are living. **Youth Justice Board**

Personalisation means equality of access to the curriculum for all learners. The personal relevance of the curriculum is particularly important for the large numbers of young people whose learning needs are very specific.

Value each and every individual. Give them a real, active and influential involvement in their whole learning experience, within the core curriculum and beyond. **National**

Primary Headteachers' Association

A relevant curriculum is one that takes into account the views of the whole school community and includes their contributions. It should 'engage with parents/guardians, so that the benefits of learning are embraced and promoted by the whole family, a task that is recognised as difficult in some situations'. **University of Hull**



The curriculum should also use all the skill, knowledge and experience that are available from sources in the wider community and the workplace.

Schools should continue to develop collaborative networks, with personalised and e-learning being at the centre.

British Association of Advisers and Lecturers in Physical Education

The benefits of these extended networks will be evident in the rich curriculum they build but they will also require some additional training for those involved.

QCA supports a network of schools developing the curriculum to better meet the learners' needs.

Find out more at
www.qca.org.uk/futures/.

A photograph of three young girls in a classroom. The girl in the center, wearing a teal shirt, is speaking into a silver microphone. The girl on the left is also speaking, and the girl on the right is looking on. The background shows a bulletin board with various papers.

We need to abandon the approach of designing progression routes for the 'ideal learner' and then differentiating the curriculum for young people who do not fit this mould.

Disability Rights Commission

The curriculum

What can we learn from experience?

A significant proportion of the contributions refers to the possibility of learning from the success of the foundation stage curriculum. One option would be to use that curriculum as a model for designing the whole curriculum.



The foundation stage emphasises choice and autonomy as well as developing social skills and the same is true of post-16 education but content and control are too much the reality in between, resulting in demotivation and a sense of failure for many.

Education Bradford

The six areas of learning from the foundation stage could be carried forward beyond the early years, to provide the balance with learning content, beginning from the children's starting point, including teaching and learning through play and first-hand experience. Social and emotional aspects of learning to develop citizens of the future would then be given parity with other areas of learning. **National**

Association of Head Teachers

The design of a new curriculum should be based on what we know about the way that young people develop and learn best. This would mean planning a progression in learning that mirrors individual development rather than beginning with aspirations for achievement at the end of schooling and working backwards.

[The curriculum] should be built from the foundations up, ie. from the Early Years foundation stage through successive key stages. **Association of Teachers**

and Lecturers

What should the curriculum promote?

Many organisations suggest a shift from what is seen as a knowledge-based curriculum to one with skills at its heart.

The existing knowledge-based curriculum should be replaced by a skills-based model, in which subject content is drawn in mainly as a resource to apply and refine these skills. **Royal National Institute**

for the Blind

It is what young people are able to do with the knowledge they have that counts.

For those who see the future of the curriculum as a skills-based model, the list of skills that young people need is a long one. 'Soft skills' are frequently at the top of the list.



A 21st-century curriculum cannot have the transfer of knowledge at its core, for the simple reason that selection of what is required has become more problematic in an information-rich age.

Association of Teachers and Lecturers

[A curriculum for the 21st century should] teach students the skills of empathy, managing emotions, designing options, negotiation and mediation. **Association of Educational Psychologists**

Association of Educational Psychologists

The complete range of skills needed for managing, using and communicating information is key to success. These include literacy, numeracy and using technology.

To have the skills to communicate by electronic means is one thing, but without the necessary oracy and literacy skills the ICT skills are meaningless. **Assessment and Qualifications Alliance**

The importance of thinking skills and a creative approach to problem solving are covered in detail by some contributors.

Technological advances have totally transformed the manner and frequency of communication ... the skills associated with [this] encompass the management of the huge rise in information ... learners need to be able to respond critically and evaluatively. **University of Wales Institute, Cardiff**

It is important that children know that creativity is not just about art. It provides ways of thinking, acting and solving problems that go across all disciplines. Scientific development is as dependent on creativity as art or music. **Ofsted**

Many of the professional roles that will be undertaken by today's children are yet to be defined in modern society, so it is essential that young people are prepared to think creatively and cope with the unknown. **Arts Council England**

The list of essential skills that all learners need should be complemented by an additional entitlement for each individual to develop the skills they need personally, for example children who need to learn mobility and independent living skills.

Quality of knowledge and understanding is more important than quantity of information. **Ofsted**

Is schooling concerned with the whole person as a physical, moral, social, and intellectual being, or is it really about a tiny selection of human knowledge and a narrow range of skills which are evidenced in a particular form, the written word, with diversionary activities for those who cannot cope?

Association of Teachers and Lecturers

The design of the curriculum will need to make sure that the skills and aspirations of disabled young people are not undervalued. **Disability Rights Commission**



The curriculum

What is the place of subjects in a future curriculum?

Many contributors feel change is needed in the way that the curriculum is designed and delivered. Subjects provide boundaries that allow curriculum content to be managed but many people see them as restrictive. There is a call for increasing the emphasis on skills and competencies. Contributors recognise the value and power of specialist teaching but also feel that more thematic, problem-based approaches need to be promoted, others ask for more student initiated learning.

To suggest that any single curriculum will be of interest to all pupils is naive. However, if it caters for different types of learners and if it is constructed in a manner that encapsulates different learning styles, it is more likely to succeed. It may be that subject boundaries will need to be reduced in order to achieve this.

University of Wales Institute, Cardiff

There is not an all-out call to lose the content that we associate with subjects but there is a strong move towards reorganising the way that content is managed. The curriculum should be less rigid about what must be taught and should also leave room for new knowledge.

Most suggestions for change retain a place of subjects as a means of managing content but suggest that the spine of the curriculum should be skills development, taught using resources and situations that are locally and personally meaningful for young people.

Another reason for reviewing the way that subject content is organised is to promote coherence for learners

across the whole curriculum. It is helpful to see how one area of learning links with another but it can be demotivating for students to repeat the same things several times in different subject lessons, using up valuable time in an already crowded day.

Currently, how many subject areas aim to teach exactly the same skills of data collection and analysis for example? This is unhelpful and mechanistic and often results from existing subject boundaries.

University of Wales Institute, Cardiff

A few organisations go further, suggesting that the concept of 'subjects' should be abandoned as too restrictive to allow for the aims of education in the 21st century.

If the curriculum is to meet all the needs of the whole pupil, and without denying the importance of literacy and numeracy, it cannot be an 'academic' curriculum, one in which most pupils spend most of their time reading and writing in an attempt to learn facts which are organised in academic 'subjects'.

Association of Teachers and Lecturers

There needs to be sufficient agreed content to guard against duplication. [...] However, this content should be kept to a minimum to allow for local relevance to improve pupils' engagement.

Ofsted

Learning programmes should allow for individual progression regardless of age. Aspect



Others feel that there is still a place for subjects in a new curriculum because they allow pathways to be created through the huge body of knowledge available.

Subjects also reflect and reinforce particular areas of study that can become the focus, expertise and even passion for teachers and learners alike.

The combination of deep subject knowledge, passion, pedagogical expertise and a considerable understanding of how young people learn is key to helping them to enjoy and value both the curriculum they experience and their time in school. **National Dance Teachers Association**

Should curriculum content be organised by subject and delivered by age?

Tell us your views at www.qca.org.uk/futures/.

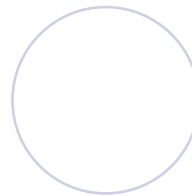
Should the curriculum be delivered according to age?

Some contributors express views about the way that the curriculum is currently organised by age into key stages. They would like to see curriculum and assessment that promote smooth progression in learning so that young people can move forward at their own pace according to their needs, not their ages.

[Therefore] if learning is going to be personalised it is essential that young people develop at their own rate, not as a key stage demands. **British Association of Advisers and Lecturers in Physical Education**

Removing the boundaries created by key stages could also improve continuity of experience for young people moving from one phase of education to the next.

A curriculum framework must improve progression at those stages of education hitherto planned as separate entities and at which unnecessary discontinuities have been created. **Association of School and College Leaders**



The learning environment

Where do young people learn?

From a learner's point of view, the curriculum is a world of experiences not a document. Learning extends beyond the classroom and beyond the school grounds.

The learning objectives for citizenship, for example, are essentially desirable, but they are not achieved by learning about citizenship, but by being engaged in activities that require living and behaving as an active member of the wider community. **National Association of Able, Gifted and Talented Children**

Talented Children

However the curriculum is organised, it must take into account the fact that young people aren't only learning when they are sitting in classrooms. The whole curriculum could be described as the sum of the experiences the student has within, or within the control of, the school.

Young people engage in a 'curriculum' which is much bigger and broader than anything they experience in an educational establishment. Therefore the 'formal' curriculum must be able to take this into account and allow young people opportunities to bring these experiences to their more structured learning.

Association for Science Education

The concept of a guaranteed funded entitlement for all students to a range of experiences and activities outside schools and colleges should be included in legislation. **National Union of Teachers**

In giving their views about the learning environment, many organisations offer ideas about changes to the very nature of 'school' itself.

There should be less focus on teaching institutions and structures (schools, colleges, etc) and more focus on building truly cross-regional, cross-national equitable learning opportunities and outcomes available to pupils regardless of their social and family background, geographical location and other social markers.

Leeds Metropolitan University

[Curriculum designers] must challenge the view that learning takes place in a special room, in a particular building, in 40-minute periods covering very disparate areas of work.

Ofsted



The curriculum should not be seen as something limited to school and formal education, but should be holistic and widespread.

Financial Services Skills Council

Most contributors feel that teachers should use day-to-day formative assessment to help personalise young people's learning and to provide helpful feedback that motivates and encourages. There is concern about the unintended consequences of the use of summative tests for institutional accountability. Many contributors feel that this narrows the curriculum, limits the nature and quality of learning experiences and constrains innovation. Many call for more rounded profiles of learners and wish to enhance the accountability framework.

Has assessment lost its way?

There is a common view that confusion about the purpose of assessment means it is used for things other than improving learning and, at its worst, narrows the curriculum to focus only on what will be assessed.

Do we need national tests?

The organisations who contributed are not against the notion of national tests, not least because 'parents have a right to expect that their children will be taught to minimum national standards' (Institute of Directors). However there is concern about the way national tests are used.

They do believe strongly that assessment and examinations 'should serve, not shape, teaching and learning'. (Girls' Schools Association and the Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference)

What is good assessment like?
Contribute your views at
www.qca.org.uk/futures/.

What should assessment be like?

The importance of logical and effective links between assessment, learning and progression was made explicit by many contributors.

Learners are engaged by feedback and a sense of understanding what they can do and what the next steps are. Assessment really is for learning.

Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin primary and secondary maths consultants

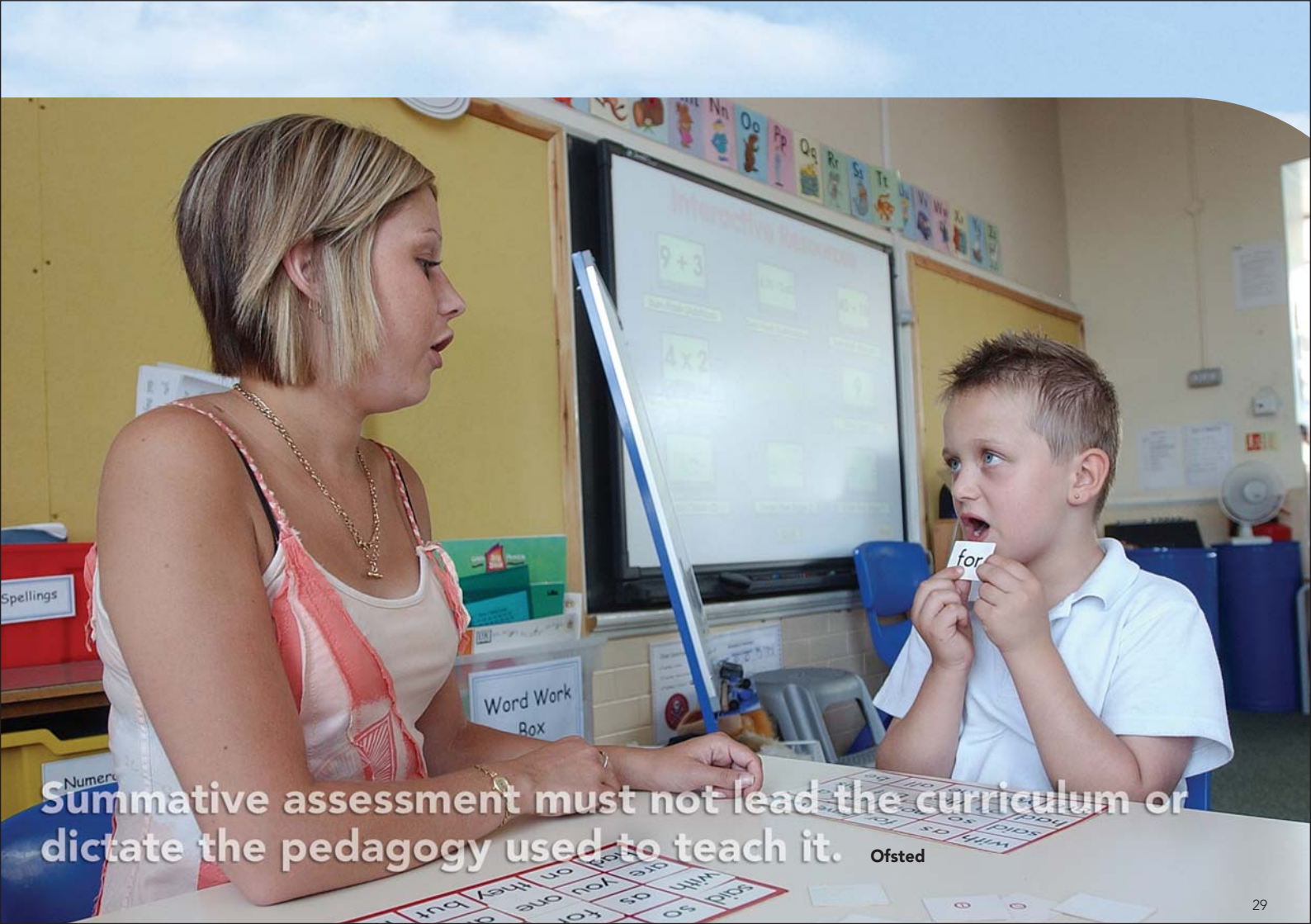
And just like the curriculum, assessment should be considered from the viewpoint of the learner. For a young person not undertaking a formal test, assessment means feedback that allows them to celebrate achievements and build on mistakes in a positive way. We need to 'praise and reward their achievements in ways that they value'. (National Primary Headteachers' Association)

The curriculum should be valued for its own sake and not merely as a means by which to prepare for assessment.

More consideration should be given to ongoing teacher and self-assessment and terminal tests should be rejected in favour of procedures that require students to engage in longer term, complex and challenging projects ...

National Society for Education
in Art and Design

Financial Services Skills Council



Summative assessment must not lead the curriculum or dictate the pedagogy used to teach it. Ofsted



Assessment should focus on identifying what learners can do rather than grading them according to what they cannot.

Royal National Institute for the Blind

How can e-assessment help?

Technology increasingly supports the desired changes, particularly in allowing teachers to increase levels of personalisation and to record and track learners' individual progress and achievement. Teachers can use detailed information to plan individual work programmes and adapt resources easily to match the needs of a particular learner or group. These opportunities should be grasped.

Data really must be used in an intelligent way to support ongoing curriculum development and personalised learning.

National Association of Head Teachers

The development of complex and accessible technology adds a real and very exciting possibility for personalising and extending learning.

National Association of Able, Gifted and Talented Children

The growth of e-assessment brings with it a greatly expanded potential for accuracy and precision in feedback and reports, allowing teachers to gain a more rounded picture of pupils' abilities. **National Foundation for Educational Research**

The very latest developments are redefining what is possible in teaching, learning and assessment. There are new ways for learners to show what they know and can do and new means of capturing and recording information about progress.

E-assessment ... will play a crucial part in the monitoring, tracking and mapping of individualised teaching and learning. **British**

Association of Teachers of the Deaf

It is ... important that approaches to assessment are developed which drive towards learning some of the more generic and transferable skills, as well as the underpinning basic skills ...

**Economic and Social
Research Council**

What should be assessed?

The competency-based curriculum described by many contributors would mean assessing skills as well as knowledge. One option would be to include proficiency tests in skills such as literacy and numeracy, to be taken at points suitable for the individual learner.

Whatever their views on assessment, a majority of contributors feel that young people's achievements should be recognised in the widest sense. Many learners achieve worthy goals and make notable progress by taking part in clubs and societies or by volunteering, but these things are not always taken into account when they are assessed or in the qualifications they are awarded.

[The challenge is to] ensure that all young people understand where their learning is leading, and get regular feedback on how they are progressing towards their goals and a qualifications system which is more immediate, innovative and flexible.

Learning and Skills Council





Academic or vocational qualifications?

There is wide agreement that a curriculum for the 21st century should value academic and vocational pathways equally. This would require a significant shift of attitude as well as changes in the courses and qualifications available.

Staff in schools and colleges also need to possess an underlying commitment to the value of vocational learning and not regard the vocational curriculum as a route for the less able. **Skills for Logistics**

More choice of well-supported vocational courses is needed so that learners can opt for their preferred qualifications at each stage whether in a subject, in the community or in skills related to the workplace.

We should be talking about a system of 'lifelong qualifications' where a range of achievements can be recognised and where we can link learning for social inclusion with skills for a competitive economy. **Learning and Skills Council**

As the world changes, it becomes increasingly important to value vocational skills and qualifications.

The dramatic changes taking place to the economic structures of developed countries means that young people will be required to adapt themselves to fit a range of job opportunities. The traditional concepts of 'skill' and vocational knowledge are being challenged. **University of Leicester**

We must value the knowledge that goes with vocational areas as well as the practical skills. Currently our most valued qualifications have substantial work-related elements (medicine, law, teaching, veterinary practice) as an integral part of the course of study.

**National Association
of Head Teachers**



New curriculum models must remove the academic / vocational divide that has beset British education for generations ...

Association of School and College Leaders

What else is important?

Learn from the past but look to the future

We must be bold and flexible in looking to the future and not bound by systems from the past. **National Association of Head Teachers**

Much work has gone into achieving the curriculum we have and there is a great deal that is valuable and should be retained.

The future should be as much about drawing upon the best of past practice as it is about inventing new ways of tackling issues. **University College London**

A long-term commitment is needed

There is a widely held view that a longer-term commitment to change is needed.

To ensure real improvements we need ... a commitment to long-term sustained development, rather than frequent superficial changes. **Mathematical Association**

Organisations feel that although action has been taken on curriculum and standards issues, we need clarity about what we are trying to achieve through education with a clear and sustained direction of travel towards achieving it.



What happens next?

The Futures debate is open to everyone. Your views will be used to encourage education professionals, young people, employers and parents to think about curriculum issues.

If you or your organisation has a view on the future of learning and wish to take part in the debate, please contribute to the Futures forum at www.qca.org.uk/futures/forum/.

Information available includes a pamphlet giving an overview of the Futures project and booklets explaining some of the other views that have emerged from the debate so far.

We look forward to hearing your views and using them as we work to make the curriculum the very best it can be.



Contributing organisations

QCA would like to thank the following organisations that contributed '1,000 words to shape the future'.

5x5x5 Creativity in the early years

Association for Advice and Support in Art and Design (A4)

Amnesty International

Arts Council England

The Association of Professionals in Education and Children's Trusts (Aspect)

Assessment and Qualifications Alliance

Association for Language Learning

Association for Science Education

Association of Educational Psychologists

Association of School and College Leaders

Association of Teachers and Lecturers

British Association of Advisers and Lecturers in Physical Education

British Association of Teachers of the Deaf

British Dyslexia Association

Commission for Racial Equality

De Montfort University

Development Education Association

Disability Rights Commission

Economic and Social Research Council

Education Bradford

Financial Services Skills Council

Geographical Association

Girls' Schools Association and the Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference

Institute for Mathematics and its Applications

Institute of Directors

Jazz Services

Learning and Skills Council

Leeds Metropolitan University

Mathematical Association

Music Education Council

National Association for Gifted Children

National Association of Able, Gifted and Talented Children

National Association of Advisers and Inspectors in Design and Technology

National Association of Advisers in English

National Association of Head Teachers

National Dance Teachers Association

National Drama

National Foundation for Educational Research

National Primary Headteachers' Association

National Society for Education in Art and Design

National Union of Teachers

Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted)

Personal Finance Education Group

Royal National Institute for the Blind

Royal Statistical Society

Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin primary and secondary maths consultants

Skills for Business network

Skills for Logistics

University College London

University of Hull

University of Leicester

University of Liverpool

University of Manchester

University of the West of England

University of Wales Institute, Cardiff

Youth Justice Board



About this report

This report sets out ways the curriculum might change to better equip young people for life and work in the 21st century. It is made up of views expressed by organisations that contributed to QCA's '1,000 words to shape the future' consultation of 2006. These views do not necessarily represent QCA's policy.

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