












## The National Schools Programme - Review

### Introduction

1. The National Schools Programme (NSP) was established after the Scottish Funding Council's (SFC)'s [Review of Coherent Provision and Sustainability](#), published in 2021, which recommended that;

'SFC develops a National Schools Programme for Scotland to enhance access to the tertiary system for pupils in the Senior Phase of school, working closely with experts across university, colleges and school, and taking account of recent reviews.'

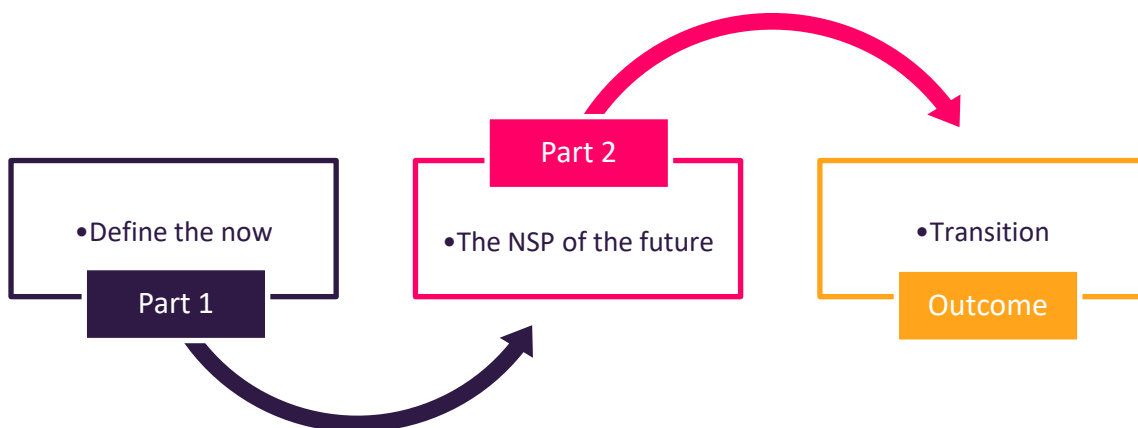
	North	Fife & Tayside	West	South-East
SHEP				
Reach		 		
ACES				
Transitions				
Advanced Higher Hub				

2. The NSP was created by bringing together existing SFC funded activity taking place throughout Scotland into four regional hubs. More information about these activities can be found [here](#).
3. The work of the NSP includes:
  - the provision of impartial advice, guidance, and support (IAG)
  - visits to a campus or residential experience
  - recognised Higher Education skills development courses
  - Specialist support regarding access to high-demand professions like medicine

4. The NSP's development took place over the 2021-22 academic year and has been operating since 2022-23 with a budget of £4.2 million to support around 50,000 senior phase pupils across Scotland.

## The Review

5. In January 2024 a review of the programme began, which will consider:
  - How the NSP aligns with the goals set out in the SFC Review,
  - the programme's impact and value for money,
  - any lessons we can learn from the first year or so of delivery and
  - the future needs and context for the programme.
6. The review is being led by the Scottish Funding Council. The review will provide a range of opportunities for input from those with experience of the NSP, including staff from schools, colleges, and universities; pupils, students and graduates who have experience of the NSP; and their families and carers.
7. The review will be underpinned by the following core principles:
  - We will work in **collaboration** and **partnership**.
  - We will be **student centred** and include their lived experience.
  - We will be **grounded in the latest research**, ensuring that recommendations and decisions about the future of the NSP are based on sound foundations.
  - We will take an **open and equal approach**, ensuring individuals can participate in ways that enable them to contribute their experience and expertise.
  - We will **act at a system level**; the review will focus on how SFC can support access to tertiary education across Scotland in the future.
8. The Review will take place in two parts with the first working to 'define the now' and the second developing options for the future direction of the NSP.



9. Defining the now, or Part 1, will build a comprehensive picture of the NSP as it has operated over the past two years, and will evaluate this against the original aims set out in the 2021

SFC Review.

10. Part 2 of the Review will consider and evaluate the information gathered in Part 1, identifying lessons to be learnt, gaps in activity and practice, and elements that are examples of best practice that may be developed into the future. Part 2 will set out the future direction for the NSP and make recommendations for next steps, its development and/or reform.
11. Recommendations for the NSP going forward will focus on areas including, but not limited to:
  - The **future role** of the NSP or tertiary access activities funded by the SFC
  - The **purpose** of the NSP
  - **Who** the NSP is for
  - **How** the NSP would be delivered
  - How **success** would be measured
  - **Transition** Planning (where required)
12. The review commenced in January 2024 with the intention to conclude in Autumn 2024 with a report and recommendations.

## How to get involved

13. A Review Steering Group will include external stakeholders from across the sector. The first meeting will take place in May 2024. Membership will be shared on [SFC's website](#) once finalised.
14. Where most people will engage with the review is through the Engagement Group. This group will have a wide membership of those with expertise and experience of the NSP including staff from schools, colleges, universities and the NSP delivery partners; pupils, students, and graduates who have experience of the NSP; and their families and carers. Membership of the Engagement Group will ensure representation from across all regions of Scotland and will support engagement from different types of partners, institutions and schools ensuring a breadth of expertise and experience is included.
15. The Review Engagement Group will be a forum for discussion, exchanging and generating ideas as well as testing ideas and proposals. Importantly, the Review Engagement Group will also provide a forum to learn from those who use or have used the NSP, those who work with the NSP through the School and Tertiary sectors, and those who contribute to admissions, widening access and transitions practice through their work and research.
16. Engagement Group members may be invited to participate in specific activities such as focus groups or surveys. The Review Team will work to ensure that members are not overburdened, and all have an opportunity to contribute.
17. More information about how to be part of the review will be shared later in the Spring, you can also see updates on [SFC's website](#).