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Education, Children and Young People Committee

Annual Report 2022 - 2023



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Education, Children and Young People Committee

To consider and report on matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills and matters relating to the Historical Abuse Inquiry within the responsibility of the Deputy First Minister.



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Committee Membership



Convener
Sue Webber
Scottish Conservative
and Unionist Party



Deputy Convener
Ben Macpherson
Scottish National Party



Stephanie Callaghan
Scottish National Party



Bob Doris
Scottish National Party



Pam Duncan-Glancy
Scottish Labour



Ross Greer
Scottish Green Party



Stephen Kerr
Scottish Conservative
and Unionist Party



Bill Kidd
Scottish National Party



Ruth Maguire
Scottish National Party



Willie Rennie
Scottish Liberal
Democrats

Scope of this Report

1. This annual report covers the period of 13 May 2022 to 12 May 2023

At a Glance



32

Committee meetings



Inquiries held



135

Number of people
who gave evidence



Bills scrutinised

Source: Scottish Parliament

At a Glance

Education, Children and Young People Committee annual report graphics



Source: Source Scottish Parliament

Introduction

2. In the last year, the Committee has looked at a wide range of issues affecting children and young people in Scotland, including the Scottish Attainment Challenge, College Regionalisation and the expansion of Early Learning and Childcare.
3. The Committee always tries to ensure that its work is informed by stakeholders. During this parliamentary year, the Committee has used different approaches to support its engagement including—
 - call for views, which ask people to respond to questions in writing;
 - virtual meetings, allowing people to speak to us from their homes or offices,
 - getting out and about again to meet people in locations to suit them.
4. This report provides a summary of the key activities undertaken by the Committee since May 2022. Full details of the Committee's work, including copies of Committee papers, reports and focus group notes, can all be found on our Committee [web-page](#).

Membership Changes

5. The following members left the Committee during this reporting period—
Stephen Kerr MSP (Committee Member 17 June 2021 – 26 May 2022)
Oliver Mundell MSP (Committee Member 17 June 2021 – 22 September 2022)
Kaukab Stewart MSP (Committee Member 17 June 2021 – 18 April 2023)
Graeme Dey MSP (Committee Member 29 March 2022 - 18 April 2023)
Michael Marra MSP (Committee Member 17 June 2021– 25 April 2023)
6. The following members joined the Committee during this reporting period—
Sue Webber MSP from 26 May 2022
Stephen Kerr MSP from 22 September 2022
Ben Macpherson MSP from 18 April 2023
Bill Kidd MSP from 18 April 2023
Pam Duncan-Glancy MSP from 25 April 2023

Key Statistics

7. In the period covered by this report, the Committee met 32 times and considered items in private 48 times over 30 meetings.
8. The Committee produced a [Stage one report](#) for the National Care Service (Scotland) Bill and is currently considering the [Children \(Care and Justice\) \(Scotland\) Bill](#) and the [Disabled Children and Young People \(Transitions to Adulthood\) \(Scotland\) Bill](#).

Inquiries

Scottish Attainment Challenge

9. A key aspect of the Committee's work during the first half of 2022 has been scrutiny of the Scottish Attainment Challenge. The Committee carried out an inquiry into the Scottish Government's policy commitment to close the poverty-related attainment gap.

A report on the Committee's findings can be found [here](#).

The Committee has heard evidence over six meetings and held six engagement sessions with parents, young people and teaching staff.

The Committee received 29 responses to its call for views and took formal oral evidence at the following meetings—

[9 February 2022 \(video\)](#)

[23 February 2022 \(video\)](#)

[20 April 2022 \(video\)](#)

[4 May 2022 \(video\)](#)

[11 May 2022 \(video\)](#)

[18 May 2022 \(video\)](#)

College Regionalisation Inquiry

10. In February 2012, Scottish Ministers announced their intention to introduce structural change to the college sector as part of wider reforms. Ten years on, the Committee was keen to examine how regionalisation has been working in practice.

During our inquiry the Committee heard evidence at meetings and held engagement sessions on:

[1 June 2022 \(video\)](#)

[8 June 2022 \(video\)](#)

[15 June 2022 \(video\)](#)

[21 September 2022 \(video\)](#)

[5 October 2022 \(video\)](#)

[2 November 2022 \(video\)](#)

Stand-alone Evidence Sessions

Bòrd na Gàidhlig

11. The Committee heard evidence from representatives from the Bòrd na Gàidhlig, who are undertaking a consultation on the Draft National Gaelic Plan 2023-28. The Bòrd is required to consult the Parliament on a National Gaelic Plan under section 2 of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005. You can access the draft National plan [here](#).

Links to the official report of the evidence session is noted below both in English and Gaelic.

In Gaelic: [29 June 2022](#)

In English: [29 June 2022](#)

Budget 2023-2024 Scrutiny

12. The Committee held an evidence session on Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) and the implementation of the 1140 hours expansion, as part of its pre-budget scrutiny. The Official Report from this session is below.

[26 October 2022 \(video\)](#)

This followed on from an earlier session on [25 May 2022](#). Correspondence from the Scottish Government on the inquiries web page [here](#).

The Committee heard evidence from the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills and the Minister for Children and Young People on the Scottish Government's Budget 2023 - 2024 on the 18 January 2023 and again from the Cabinet Secretary on the 22 February 2023 . The Official Report for these evidence sessions are below.

[18 January 2023 \(video\)](#)

[22 February 2023 \(video\)](#)

Redress Scheme

13. The Committee heard evidence from the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for COVID Recovery as part of the Committee's ongoing scrutiny.

In Session 5, the Education and Skills Committee was designated as the lead committee for scrutiny of the Redress for Survivors (Historical Child Abuse in Care) (Scotland) Bill. The Bill passed at Stage 3 on 11 March 2021, becoming an Act on 23 April 2021.

As part of its post-legislative scrutiny work, the Committee has considered regular written updates from the Scottish Government on the operation of the redress scheme.

A link to the official report from the session is below.

[12 January 2022 \(video\)](#)

Scottish Qualifications Authority

14. The Committee heard evidence on a range of issues including the 2022 exam diet and education reform from the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA). A link to the official report of the meeting is noted below

[7 September 2022 \(video\)](#)

Universities

15. The Committee agreed to hold a one-off evidence session on Universities in September 2022. The committee subsequently agreed to expand this session to include pre-budget scrutiny.

This evidence session included the following topics:

- University finances, including the resource spending review;
- The Research Excellence Framework (REF);
- Horizon funding
- Student support for mental health and well-being,
- International students and student housing;
- Staff pay and conditions and the industrial disputes;
- Widening access.

A link to the official report of this meeting is noted below.

[28 September 2022 \(video\)](#)

The Committee then had an evidence session with the Minister for Higher and Further Education, Youth Employment and Training to follow up on some of the issues raised during the session in September, including student housing, mental health and well-being, and student places.

A link to the official report from this meeting is below.

[2 November 2022 \(video\)](#)

Legislative work

16. The Committee has carried out work on three Bills this year.
- The National Care Service (Scotland) Bill
 - The Disabled Children and Young People (Transitions to Adulthood) (Scotland) Bill
 - The Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Bill

The National Care Service (Scotland) Bill

17. The Health, Social Care and Sport Committee were designated the lead Committee on this Bill. However, given the range of Committee remits engaged by the Bill's provisions, several other Committees were also involved in Stage 1 scrutiny of the Bill including the Education, Children and Young People Committee.

Whilst the Bill itself primarily relates to the creation of a National Care Service (NCS) for adults, section 27 of the Bill also makes provision for children's services to be brought under the NCS in future.

The Committee heard evidence over several meetings from a variety of stakeholders. The Official Reports from these evidence sessions are noted below;

- [9 November 2022 \(video\)](#)
- [16 November 2022 \(video\)](#)
- [23 November 2022 \(video\)](#)

The Committee published its [Stage one report](#) on 19 December 2022

The Disabled Children and Young People (Transitions to Adulthood) (Scotland) Bill

18. The Bill as introduced aims to improve opportunities for disabled children and young people as they grow up. This Bill considers children to be under 18 and young people to be between 18 and 26. The Bill was introduced as a Member's Bill on 20 April 2022 by Pam Duncan-Glancy MSP. The details of the Disabled Children and Young People (Transitions to Adulthood) Bill can be found [here](#).

This Bill was first introduced in Session 5 by Johann Lamont, but due to timing restraints the Bill fell at the end of the session.

The purpose of the Bill is to have a national transitions strategy explaining how the Scottish Government is going to improve opportunities for disabled children and young people; to have a Scottish Government Minister in charge of improving opportunities for disabled children and young people going through transitions; and for transitions plans to be created for each disabled child and young person as they move into adulthood.

The Committee issued a call for views which ran from 1 September 2022 to 27 October 2022, with [47 responses](#) received to the call for views, 31 to a survey and 1

response to British Sign Language consultation. The analysis of the survey can be found [here](#)

Four formal evidence sessions were held at which the Committee heard from health professionals, representative of the Scottish Transitions Forum, academics, and representatives of organisations who work with young people. Links to the official report of these meetings are noted below.

- [1 February 2023 \(video\)](#)
- [8 February 2023 \(video\)](#)
- [22 February 2023 \(video\)](#)
- [1 March 2023 \(video\)](#)

In addition, the Committee held informal private engagement sessions which were organised by the Scottish Parliament's Participation and Communities Team with support from ARC Scotland. These sessions covered young people, parents and carers and practitioners. Members of the Committee also visited Buchanan High School in Coatbridge.

Links to the anonymised notes from these sessions are listed below.

- [Session with Parents / Carers, ARC Scotland](#)
- [Note of Session with young people \(Divergent Influencers\) hosted and supported by ARC Scotland](#)
- [Note of session at Buchanan High School.](#)

The Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Bill

19. The purpose of the Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Bill is to make changes to the law in relation to the care of children and the involvement of children in the criminal justice system.

The changes relate to the children's hearings system and several parts of the criminal justice system. This includes courts that hear cases relating to children and the places where children can be detained.

The Committee issued a call for views which ran from February 2023 to 17 March 2023, with [47 responses](#) received, with a further [18 responses](#) to a survey and [3 responses](#) to the British Sign Language survey.

Four formal evidence sessions were held at which the Committee heard from health professionals, representatives of the Scottish Transitions Forum, academics, and representatives of organisations who work with young people. Links to the Official Report of these meetings are noted below.

- [22 March 2023 \(video\)](#)
- [29 March 2023 \(video\)](#)

- [26 April 2023 \(video\)](#)
- [3 May 2023 \(video\)](#)

Subordinate Legislation

20. This year, the Committee considered the following pieces of subordinate legislation—

21. **Affirmative**

- The Cross-border Placements (Effect of Deprivation of Liberty Orders) (Scotland) Regulations 2022
- The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exclusions and Exceptions) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 2) Order 2022.
- The Police Act 1997 (Offences in Schedules 8A and 8B) Amendment (Scotland) Regulations 2022.
- Provision of Early Learning and Childcare (Specified Children) (Scotland) Amendment Order 2023

22. **Negative**

The Committee considered the following negative instruments—

- SSI 2022/156 Education (Fees) (Scotland) Regulations 2022
- SSI 2022/157 Student Support (Scotland) Regulations 2022
- SSI 2022/172 St Mary's Music School (Aided Places) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2022
- SSI 2022/173 Education (Scotland) Act 1980 (Modification) Regulations 2022
- SSI 2022/164 Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011 (Rules of Procedure in Children's Hearings) Amendment Rules 2022
- SSI 2022/294 Education (Listed Bodies) (Scotland) Amendment Order 2022
- SSI 2022/362 Education (Fees and Student Support) (Miscellaneous Amendment) (Scotland) Regulations 2022
- SSI 2022/377 St Mary's Music School (Aided Places) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 2) Regulations 2022
- SSI 2023/18 Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Independent Child Trafficking Guardians) (Scotland) Regulations 2023
- SSI 2023/37 Education (Scotland) Act 1980 (Modification) Regulations 2023
- SSI 2023/66 Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011 (Safeguarders Panel) Amendment Regulations 2023

Public Petitions

23. The Committee considered two public petitions—

- [PE1548: National Guidance on Seclusion and Restraint in Schools;](#)
- [PE1692: Inquiry into the human rights impact of GIRFEC policy and data processing.](#)

PE1548: The Committee agreed to close the petition under Rule 15.7 of Standing Orders on the basis that national guidance has now been developed to minimise the use of physical intervention and seclusion in Scottish schools.

The Committee also agreed to highlight the petition in its Session 6 legacy paper, with a view to suggesting its successor committee review the effectiveness of the guidance in the next Parliamentary session.

PE1692: The Committee agreed to close the petition under rule 15.7 of Standing Orders on the basis that the Committee does not agree that a public inquiry into issues raised by the petitioner is required.

The link to the official report is noted below.

[26 October 2022 \(video\)](#)

Informal engagement

24. Hearing from those with direct, lived experience is vital to form a picture of how a law, policy or practice is affecting different groups. The Committee recognises that, for some people, a formal Committee meeting is not the most suitable way to share their experience. As a result, informal engagement is a crucial part of the Committee's work. This year has been no different.
25. Over the last year, informal evidence sessions have allowed the Committee to hear directly from:
 - Children and young people
 - Parents and carers
 - Teachers and teaching unions
 - Third sector organisations
 - Young People in secure accommodation
26. This work has underpinned the Committee Bill work, with informal in person and virtual engagement sessions being held for two of our bills—

Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Bill

- Visits to secure accommodation at St Mary's Kenmure and Rossie Young People's Trust, and to YOI Polmont.

The Disabled Children and Young People (Transitions to Adulthood) (Scotland) Bill

- [Visit to Buchanan High School](#) to speak to young people with additional support needs regarding what support the school is giving them in respect of transitioning from school.
 - Three online meetings held with [young people \(Divergent Influencers\)](#), [parents/carers](#) and practitioners.
27. The Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Bill proposes that young people aged under 18 are no longer sent to prison or a young offenders institutions. Should they need to be detained, this would happen at a secure accommodation centre. The Committee therefore undertook visits to two secure accommodation centres and to YOI Polmont so that they could more fully understand the different environments and what they provide for the young people in their care.
 28. The Disabled Children and Young People (Transitions to Adulthood) (Scotland) Bill would put a duty on local authorities to provide a transition plan for each disabled child and young person as they move into adulthood. We spoke to young people, parents/carers and practitioners including transitions co-ordinators, teachers and social workers to ask how transitions work now, and to hear directly from them as to what they thought could be improved about the ways things currently work and whether the proposals in the Bill would achieve that.

Web and Social Media

29. The Committee's Twitter account increased its use of short clips taken from Committee business and of the convener, highlighting key contributors and allowing the convener to share key findings, or ask for views with a wide audience.

38 such clips were shared on Twitter.

Six of these clips were also shared on Facebook, two were shared on Instagram and three were shared on LinkedIn. Our presence on Twitter generated more than 1,000 engagements. Tweets issued by the Committee were seen more than 190,000 times over the year. The Committee's work on the Attainment Challenge performed particularly well, with one tweet receiving 22 retweets and 40 likes.

Equal Opportunities

30. The Committee is keen to ensure that hears from a diverse range of people and lived experiences when taking evidence. It therefore asks organisations to consider this when identifying people giving evidence to the Committee.
31. An increased ability to connect virtually, has allowed the Committee to hear more easily from people spread across the country..
32. The Committee has been able to connect with the following groups:
 - Children and Young People with additional support needs
 - Children and Young People who have neuro-divergent influencers
 - Parent and Carers of Children and Young People with additional support needs
 - Third sector organisations with hands on experience of working with Children and Young People with additional support needs.

