



PUBLIC PETITION NO.

PE01507

Name of petitioner

Alex Orr and Sophie Pilgrim on behalf of Scottish Children's Services Coalition and Kindred

Petition title

Funding for Additional Support for Learning in Scotland

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to ensure that local authorities fulfil their statutory duties with regard to the delivery of Additional Support for Learning.

We are calling upon the Public Petitions Committee to write to the Scottish Government requesting it write to all of Scotland's local authorities reminding them of their statutory requirement under Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) approach, and also the Education (Additional Support for Learning) Scotland Act 2009, urging them to protect vital children's services when setting their future budgets.

Action taken to resolve issues of concern before submitting the petition

Prior to submitting our petition, the Scottish Children's Services Coalition (SCSC), along with charity Kindred, has launched a Scotland-wide campaign regarding the threat of potential cuts to children's services highlighting our concerns to all 32 local authorities in Scotland, as well as using national and local media to urge individuals and organisations to contact their local council, councillors and MSP in order to bring both our campaign and the potential implications of such cuts to their attention.

The campaign has so far consisted of:

- A letter to all council leaders and chief executives as well as members of COSLA
- Coverage in national and local press on the back of two news releases, comment articles and letters to editors
- Social media activity via Twitter and Facebook sites

To date we have received responses from only 13 of the 32 local authorities, half of which are acknowledgement letters. Only seven authorities even attempt to allay our fears by explaining how they are combatting these cuts in their budget setting. Most of those who did not respond to us have already acknowledged the savings that they need to make, with many proposing to cut frontline services like the provision of Additional Support for Learning (ASL) teachers in order to make savings.

Petition background information

Statistics published by the Scottish Government (Summary Statistics for Schools in Scotland, No.4: 2013 - 11th December), show an 89% increase in pupils with Additional Support Needs over 3 years.

This represents a huge increase in numbers of pupils requiring Additional Support for Learning from 69,587 in 2010 to 131,621 in 2013, 10% to 19% of the school population – the Scottish Children’s Services Coalition has called for urgent action by the Scottish Government to address the requirements of these children and young people. The Coalition is calling for a reversal of council cuts affecting children’s services and for the Scottish Government and Councils to work together to increase funding to address those with Additional Support Needs.

Such a dramatic increase in numbers of pupils requiring additional support has led to increased pressure on resources, yet teacher numbers are decreasing - down almost 1,000 since 2010, with too few with the adequate training qualifications necessary to deal with those with additional support needs. Only a handful of councils have mandatory training to assist those in this category.

Pupils who have additional support needs, such as autism and ADHD, have a considerably higher exclusion rate than the rest of the pupil population and require greater support. Recent statistics published by the Scottish Government note that the exclusion rate for pupils with additional support needs is almost four times greater than those without, highlighting an undisputable link between lack of appropriate provision and exclusion rates, with the young person losing out because authorities are unable to meet their needs.

The Doran Review makes 21 key recommendations with regards to children and young people with additional support needs, 19 of which were accepted by the Scottish Government. Two of which are recommendations 15 and 16 that note:

“The Scottish Government should take action to address the concern that all authorities are held to account for implementing national policies and legislation and thereby ensure that all parents, carers and children and young people can expect similar responses to meeting their needs regardless of where they live in the country.”

“The Scottish Government working with local authority services, the health board and the voluntary sector should provide detailed guidance and support for the application of the GIRFEC approach and specifically the practice model to meeting the needs of all children and young people and specifically those with complex additional support needs from the earliest stages to transition to adult life.”

In order to achieve these recommendations effectively, authorities need more budget for children’s services not less, and in this context we would warn councils of the dangers of cutting the budget for those with additional support needs and care, thereby leaving themselves open to a flood of tribunals for failing to provide adequate support under additional support needs legislation.

In another example, Scotland’s young care leavers already languish at the bottom of the leagues when it comes to health, education, crime and employment outcomes. They are more likely to die prematurely, be unemployed, be addicted to drugs or alcohol and be imprisoned. These vulnerable young people rely upon the stability and trust offered by children’s services during the transition from young person to adult and we must protect this fundamental right in order to prevent them from becoming yet another statistic.

Local authorities are having to achieve more with less, and this serves only to increase the barriers that children’s services departments face in delivering the best outcomes for children and young people. Our members are dealing with the most vulnerable in these categories in our society and are certain that without adequate resourcing, we face a lost generation of young people whose cost to society in the longer-terms will far outweigh any potential public sector cuts.

Children’s services are often the lifeline for some of Scotland’s most vulnerable families and young people, and the looming danger of further cuts to an already overstretched budget is simply not an option.

We are calling upon the committee to write to the Scottish Government asking them to write to all of Scotland's local authorities reminding them of their statutory requirement under Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) approach and also the Education (Additional Support for Learning) Scotland Act 2009, urging them to protect vital children's services when setting their future budgets.

Summary Statistics for Schools in Scotland, No.4: 2013 - 11th December

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/12/4199/0>

Doran Review - <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2012/11/7084>

Additional Support for Learning and Carers – Report to Parliament, February 2013

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0041/00414450.pdf>

Unique web address

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/GettingInvolved/Petitions/ASNfunding>

Related information for petition

www.thescsc.org.uk

www.kindred-scotland.org

Do you wish your petition to be hosted on the Parliament's website to collect signatures online?

YES

How many signatures have you collected so far?

0

Closing date for collecting signatures online

14 / 02 / 2014

Comments to stimulate online discussion

Scottish Government funding for Scotland's 32 Councils is set to be slashed for the next two years, with a real terms reduction of £624 million by 2015-16. Demand for children's services is at its highest since 1981, with the latest figures highlighting that 16,248 children are currently looked after by local authorities, a figure that has increased each year since 2001. In addition, there has been an 89% increase of those with additional support needs in Scotland since 2010, now standing at 131,621. At the same time local authorities are having to achieve more with less, and this serves only to increase the barriers that children's services departments face in delivering the best outcomes for children and young people.