

**PE1545/G**

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Ms Sigrid Robinson  
Assistant Clerk  
Public Petitions Committee  
Scottish Parliament  
T3.40  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP



Your ref:  
Our ref: Your letter of 27 May 2015

30 July 2015

Dear Sigrid

## **CONSIDERATION OF PETITION [PE1545](#)**

*Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to recognise residential care as a way severely learning disabled children, young people and adults can lead happy and fulfilled lives and provide the resources to local authorities to establish residential care options for families in Scotland.*

Following the Committee's consideration of the above petition on 26 May 2015, you wrote seeking my views on:

*"the concerns raised in the submissions received regarding the existing guidance for social workers on the assessment of people with profound and multiple learning disabilities and the impact of the Care Manager Model".*

I have checked the [Official Report](#) of the Committee meeting and as there was no comment on the submissions by Committee members, I have read the submissions which were made available to the Committee in order to get an understanding of the issue on which you have sought my views. My understanding is that the query relates to one of a number of points made in the submission by the Learning Disability Alliance Scotland (2 April 2015) and also commented on in the submission by Ms Maxwell (19 May 2015).

As my previous response indicated, the employers of social workers, in the main local authorities, have the primary responsibility for ensuring that social workers have the training and guidance they need in order to be effective in carrying out all aspects of their work – including the key responsibility of assessment. The submissions express concern about

guidance on assessment but I would suggest, from my direct experience, that assessment activity is an activity which is regularly looked at and subject to reflective practice and continuous improvement. Assessment is not a discrete activity but part of an on-going cycle of assessment, planning, intervention and review. The approach on deployment of social workers and changes in approach to delivery of social work functions is also an area which has seen a number of changes since the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968, but assessment as a responsibility of social workers is very much aimed at ensuring that people have access to the services and support which they need.

Recent approaches to guidance in Scotland is increasingly focussing on person centred approaches, looking at the best outcomes for people through effective approaches to support and enablement. Many of the submissions to the Committee make reference to current policy developments and related guidance which demonstrate this approach, recognising that they are still in the early days of implementation – examples mentioned include Self-Directed Support (legislation in force since April 2014) and the Carers (Scotland) Bill currently in Parliament.

A key, and very relevant, tool is relatively new and will take time to embed. This is the Keys to Life Strategy published in June 2013. See: <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2013/06/1123> The strategy reaffirms a set of key principles about how services and support should be commissioned and delivered and sets a strong message about the way in which people should undertake their work, including assessment activity, as follows:

- People have choice and control in their daily lives and are supported to live as independently as they can;
- People enjoy the best possible health and emotional wellbeing;
- People have good things to do that help them achieve their full potential;
- Carers are supported;
- People are safe, respected and included in their communities;
- People are involved in the planning, development, design and delivery of services that help them to achieve the outcomes they want;
- People are satisfied with their experience of health and social care services;
- Statutory bodies fulfil their statutory legal responsibilities, adhere to meeting quality standards, services are safe and continually improving;
- People working in services are positive about their role and supported to improve the care and treatment they provide;
- Services are efficient and responsive to local people's needs

On 30 June 2015 the Keys To Life Implementation Framework And Priorities, 2015-17 was published. See :

<http://keystolife.info/updates/the-keys-to-life-implementation-framework-and-priorities-2015-17/>

The Framework very much reflects the key messages received from people with learning disabilities about what is most important to them in implementing The Keys to Life recommendations. Working to implement the strategy and framework will be a key driver in continuing improvement to a range of activities, including assessment approaches. The Committee may wish to meet directly with some people from local authorities and their partners in other agencies who are working to take this forward.

Bodies such as the Care Inspectorate also have a role in helping to identify good practice and improvement in this area and in social work practice more generally. The Care Inspectorate Inspection Focus Area (IFA) for adult inspections this year focuses on services for adults with a learning disability. The IFA aims to identify the experiences of people

receiving support by assessing what positive outcomes have been achieved. Information on a range of good practice documents and useful links for support in regard to adults with learning disabilities is also available through the Care Inspectorate website.

In conclusion, I would like to confirm, as highlighted in the submission to the Committee by the Care, Support and Rights Division (11 May 2015), that the Scottish Government is very committed to improving the lives of people with learning disabilities and recognises that additional effort in this area at national level is required. Having a knowledgeable and skilled workforce to deliver services to people with learning disabilities improves their lives and supports them to have a healthy life and live independently. That is why the CSR Division is working with NHS Education Scotland, the Scottish Social Services Council and other relevant stakeholders to scope work that will further develop the skills and competency of the health and social care workforce in this particular area. This work is in the early stages of development and will be implemented over several years.

I hope this response is of assistance to the Committee in its consideration of the Petition.

Yours sincerely

Alan Baird  
**Chief Social Work Adviser**