

PE1418/C

Scottish Parliament
Public Petitions Committee
EDINBURGH

4 April 2012

CONSIDERATION OF PETITION PE1418

Petition by Katherine Alexander calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to compel all local authorities to ensure that all social work management posts are held by professionally trained and accountable registered social workers.

The Public Petitions Committee considered the above new petition at its meeting on 20 March 2012.

You have asked COSLA to respond to the following questions by 19 April 2012.

- What is your response to what the petitioner seeks and the issues raised in her petition?
- How many social work departments in Scotland have heads of service or executive directors who do not hold a social work qualification or are not registered as a social worker?

COSLA's response

Although we have not surveyed our member local authorities on this matter, it would be our position that local authorities should be empowered to appoint managerial staff, for social work services or indeed any other local authority service, in accordance with the practices and policy of the local authority.

While some local authorities have retained a single social work department, this is not so across local government in Scotland. Our most recent information indicates that there are:-

- 11 Social Work Departments
- 5 Social Work and Education Departments
- 4 Social Work and Housing Departments
- 2 Social Work, Education and Housing Departments
- 6 Children's Services Departments
- 3 Adult Social Work services, Housing and Community Services
- 6 Community Health and Care Partnerships
- 1 Shared Service model¹

¹ Clearly, the sum of this list adds up to more than 32. This is because some councils will have both a children's services department and adult social work services.

These managerial structures have evolved in response to the corporate objectives of local authorities. All Directors of the 'stand alone' Social Work' Departments are qualified social workers. We understand that there are 16 officers at Director or Executive Director level who are qualified social workers. We do not hold information on the head of service level.

Were the Scottish Government to compel local authorities to ensure that all social work management posts are held by professionally trained and accountable registered social workers, it would represent a significant challenge in respect of the employment of existing post-holders who are not qualified social workers and would be problematic in creating integrated management structures for health and social care services, as per the Scottish Government's proposed Bill.

While the social work profession is hugely important to local government and to the delivery of positive outcomes for people with social care needs in Scotland, and while the Chief Social Work Officer continues to be an important statutory role, we are not aware of any evidence which correlates a manager's professional background with the improvement of outcomes for people who use services. As such, we would not support the petitioner's position.

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COSLA