

**PE1545/A**

**Children and Families Directorate**  
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Ms Sigrid Robinson  
Assistant Clerk  
Public Petitions Committee  
Scottish Parliament  
T3.40  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP



Your ref:  
Our ref:  
2 April 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 03 March 2015; you wrote seeking my views on the issues raised by the Committee specifically:

- *The provision of training for social care workers on caring for the severely learning disabled in the context of issues raised by the petition and the petitioner's evidence to the Committee.*

The official report of the Committee hearing refers to "social workers" rather than "social care workers" and, in a telephone conversation with my office, you confirmed that my response should address training for social workers.

As the Committee members know, social workers provide a wide range of support to some of the most vulnerable in society, doing so within the context of a wide ranging Scottish Government policy agenda and rising needs and expectations. It is absolutely crucial, therefore, as the Committee recognises, that these workers are fully supported to have the skills and knowledge to carry out their role. The employers of social workers, in the main local authorities, have the primary responsibility for ensuring that social workers have the training they need in order to be effective in carrying out all aspects of their work.

In my current post, I have responsibility for the Scottish Government funded NDPB - the Scottish Social Services Council(SSSC) which is the regulator of social workers, and other

social services workers, in Scotland. The SSSC has been instrumental in supporting the up-skilling and competence of social workers and the quality of the education and training available to them. This includes:

**The SSSC's Codes of Practice** – setting out the standards and responsibilities of both employers and workers for ensuring that workers in social services have the skills and knowledge to carry out their roles. The Care Inspectorate has a role in ensuring that employers comply with this Code which specifically states that employers must *“Provide training and development opportunities to enable social service workers to strengthen and develop their skills and knowledge”*.

**Continuous Learning Framework** – setting out what workers need to be able to do in their jobs now and in the future and what employers must do to support them. This is supported by a suite of tools and resources.

**Post Registration Training and Learning (PRTL)** – All social workers must undertake a prescribed amount of PRTL. Evidence of PRTL, endorsed by employers, must be submitted to SSSC in order for social workers to maintain their registration.

**Approval of Social Work Degree Courses** – In Scotland social work is a degree-based profession. The SSSC approves all social work degree courses delivered in Scotland. Courses must meet the Standards in Social Work Education before they are approved.

Notwithstanding the above, and to ensure that approaches are refreshed and kept up-to-date, there is currently specific work being undertaken to consider the whole approach to the education of social workers in Scotland. This includes a review of the Social Work Degree (whether undertaken through the under-graduate or post-graduate route) and work to develop a post qualifying framework. The purpose of the review of the Social Work degree is to consider not only if it is still fit for purpose, but also the future needs of the sector in light of current policy changes and imperatives. The review is being led by the SSSC with input from universities, employers, social workers, services users and students. A report is due by the summer on the way forward and any recommendations will be prepared and presented to Ministers for consideration.

The Committee may also find it useful to note that a stakeholder partnership, including the Scottish Government, issued the **‘Social Services in Scotland – A Shared Vision and Strategy 2015/2020’** on 17 March 2015. Supporting this workforce is a major area of action in this Strategy and there are a number of actions relevant to workforce development that will be taken forward in the context of this strategy.

I hope that the Committee will be assured that work is being progressed with regard to the training needs of social workers across the wide range of their responsibilities and recognising the many people they support who have different experiences and abilities and, therefore, different needs of support.

I hope this response will be of assistance to the Committee in its continuing consideration of the Petition.

Yours sincerely

Alan Baird  
**Chief Social Work Adviser**