



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## **Education and Culture Committee**

**7th Report, 2012 (Session 4)**

**Annual Report 2011-12**

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## **Education and Culture Committee**

### **Remit and membership**

#### **Remit:**

The remit of the committee is to consider and report on further and higher education, lifelong learning, schools, pre-school care, skills and other matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning and matters relating to culture and the arts falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs.

#### **Membership:**

Clare Adamson  
Claire Baker (Deputy Convener) (until 22 December 2011)  
Marco Biagi  
Neil Bibby (from 22 December 2011)  
Neil Findlay (from 22 December 2011) (Deputy Convener from 10 January 2012)  
Jenny Marra (until 22 December 2011)  
Stewart Maxwell (Convener)  
Joan McAlpine  
Liam McArthur  
Liz Smith  
Jean Urquhart

#### **Committee Clerking Team:**

##### **Clerk to the Committee**

Terry Shevlin

##### **Assistant Clerk**

Neil Stewart

##### **Committee Assistant**

Jonas Rae



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## Education and Culture Committee

### 7th Report, 2012 (Session 4)

#### Annual Report 2011-12

The Committee reports to the Parliament as follows—

#### Introduction

1. This report covers the work of the Education and Culture Committee during the Parliamentary year from 11 May 2011 to 10 May 2012. In this period, the Committee has undertaken in-depth scrutiny of Scottish Government legislation and policies relevant to its remit.
2. In particular, the Committee scrutinised the Scottish Government's 2012-13 draft budget, focusing on further and higher education spending; launched an inquiry into the educational attainment of looked after children; reported on the National Library of Scotland Bill; and held evidence sessions on a wide variety of other topics. The Committee also considered a large volume of subordinate legislation and petitions.

#### Inquiries, other evidence sessions and reports

##### *Inquiry into education attainment of looked after children*

3. The Committee agreed to conduct an inquiry into the educational attainment of looked after children in September 2011. 32 written submissions were received in response to its call for written evidence, and the Committee took oral evidence from 10 organisations/stakeholders during November 2011. This culminated with evidence from Angela Constance MSP, the then Minister for Children and Young People.
4. The Committee has taken an innovative approach to conducting the inquiry, in line with the principles of the Presiding Officer's reform agenda. For example, members agreed to hold a chamber debate prior to the publication of the inquiry report, in order to allow other members to discuss the issues that had arisen in evidence.
5. Following the Chamber debate, the Committee also held an event in the Parliament on 20 April 2012, which brought together key individuals with a role to play in improving the educational attainment of looked after children. The purpose of the event was to discuss the key issues and challenges that

had arisen in evidence and, crucially, to identify possible improvements. The Committee fully expects that this discussion will help to inform its final report and recommendations to the Parliament, which will be published shortly after this report.

*Draft Budget 2012-2013 and Spending Review 2011 Scrutiny*

6. The Committee agreed to focus its scrutiny of the Draft Budget 2012-13 and Spending Review 2011 on the key issue of further and higher education spending. The Committee took evidence from stakeholders in the further and higher education sectors, university and college principals, and concluded by taking evidence from the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning. Focusing on a particular topic allowed the Committee to scrutinise the Government's spending plans in more depth, which helped it to influence the final allocations for further and higher education set out in the budget.
7. In recognition of the need to consider other spending commitments in a spending review year, the Committee also took evidence from the Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs on the Government's proposed culture budget.

*One-off evidence sessions*

8. The Committee held one-off evidence sessions on a wide variety of topics within its remit, to try to ensure that it scrutinised the Scottish Government as effectively as possible, and to ensure that stakeholders' views could be considered as part of that process. For example, the Committee considered the following topics:
  - **Youth employment** – the Committee took evidence on the Scottish Government's youth employment strategy, focussing on the Scottish Government's commitment to deliver 25,000 modern apprenticeships in each year of this session of the Parliament, and the "opportunities for all" guarantee.
  - **Early years** – the Committee took evidence on issues such as what counts as effective early intervention, what the definitions are of 'preventative spend', the early years' change fund, building capacity in families and communities. and the effectiveness of early intervention policies.
  - **Broadcasting** – the Committee held a round table evidence session to consider how effectively public service broadcasters in Scotland are meeting their public service broadcasting obligations, particularly in terms of news and current affairs output.
  - **Curriculum for excellence** – the Committee took evidence on the wider implications of a decision by East Renfrewshire Council to delay the introduction of the new National 4 and National 5 examinations as part of the roll-out of Curriculum for Excellence.

- **Kinship care** – the Committee took evidence on the effectiveness of current support mechanisms for kinship carers, particularly the extent to which support varies across local authorities.
  - **The National Gaelic Language Plan 2012-17** – the Committee took evidence on the draft National Gaelic Language Plan 2012-17 from Bòrd na Gàidhlig as part of the Parliament's response to the consultation on the draft Plan.
  - **Review of teacher employment in Scotland** – the Committee held a round table evidence session on the review before taking evidence from Professor Gerry McCormac, chair of the review team.
9. The Committee highlights, in particular, its evidence sessions on curriculum for excellence where it moved quickly to discuss a topical issue of national interest first with stakeholders and then with the cabinet secretary. Again, such an approach is in keeping with the Presiding Officer's reform agenda.

## **Bills**

### *National Library of Scotland Bill*

10. The National Library of Scotland (NLS) Bill was introduced in the Scottish Parliament on 26 October 2011 by the Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs. The Bill was referred to the Committee, which reported to the Parliament on the general principles of the Bill on 8 March 2012. While the Committee broadly welcomed the approach set out in the legislation, it also highlighted areas where improvements could be made.
11. The Bill was subsequently referred back to the Committee for consideration at Stage 2. The Committee completed its Stage 2 scrutiny on 24 April 2012, when it supported amendments made by the cabinet secretary in response to concerns the Committee had raised in its Stage 1 report.

## **Subordinate legislation and UK legislation**

12. During the parliamentary year, the Committee considered 27 Scottish Statutory Instruments (SSIs): 6 under the affirmative procedure, 6 under no parliamentary procedure and the remaining 15 under the negative procedure.
13. The Committee also considered a legislative consent memorandum (LCM) on the UK Government's Finance (No. 4) Bill.

## **Petitions**

14. The Committee considered petition PE1391, which called for a legal requirement for qualified teachers to teach children for 25 hours in a normal school week, subject to existing local flexibility of school hours in primary 1 and 2. The Committee agreed to leave the petition open until the conclusion

of the negotiations on the McCormac review of teacher employment in Scotland.

15. The Committee also considered petition PE 1409 on the issue of training for education staff on learning disabilities and autistic spectrum disorders. The Committee agreed to consider the issues raised as part of a future evidence session on additional support for learning, and to highlight the petition to a relevant working group established by the Scottish Government.
16. The Committee agreed to close petition PE 1414 on the issue of proposed cuts to the further education sector, an issue it had already explored in the course of its budget scrutiny.
17. The Committee considered petition PE 1420, calling for kinship carers to have parity with foster carers across Scotland. The Committee agreed to consider the issues raised in the petition as part of a future evidence session on kinship carers.

### **Informal meetings/events**

18. As part of its inquiry into the educational attainment of looked after children, members of the Education and Culture Committee visited various schools and a children's unit in Glasgow in November 2011. The Committee also met the Executive Director of Education at Glasgow City Council.
19. Ahead of its formal scrutiny of the NLS Bill at Stage 1, a number of Committee members visited the national library in January in order to understand its role better and to have an informal discussion with members of staff about the implications of the Bill.
20. As noted, the Committee held an event on 20 April 2012 concerning its inquiry into the educational attainment of looked after children. 80 guests, including stakeholders, MSPs and Scottish Government officials, attended. 97% of those who provided feedback for the event, when asked to rate the event overall, said the event was either fairly or very useful (fairly: 17%, very: 80%).

### **Equalities**

21. In recognition of the Parliament's commitment to mainstreaming equalities issues throughout its work, there are various examples the Committee would like to highlight to demonstrate its support of this approach. For example, the remit set by the Committee for its scrutiny of the draft budget specifically invited views on how all types of learners could access further and higher education. The Committee's final report called on the Scottish Government to provide updates demonstrating that relevant equalities considerations were being taken into account in undertaking reform of the FE and HE sectors.

22. The Committee also ensured that equalities considerations were taken fully into account in the organisation of its event on looked after children.

**Meetings**

23. During the parliamentary year, the Committee met 30 times. Of these meetings, 2 were held entirely in private. 12 meetings were held partly in private. Meetings were held in private or partly in private in order to consider draft reports or work programme papers. All the Committee's meetings were held in Edinburgh.



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