

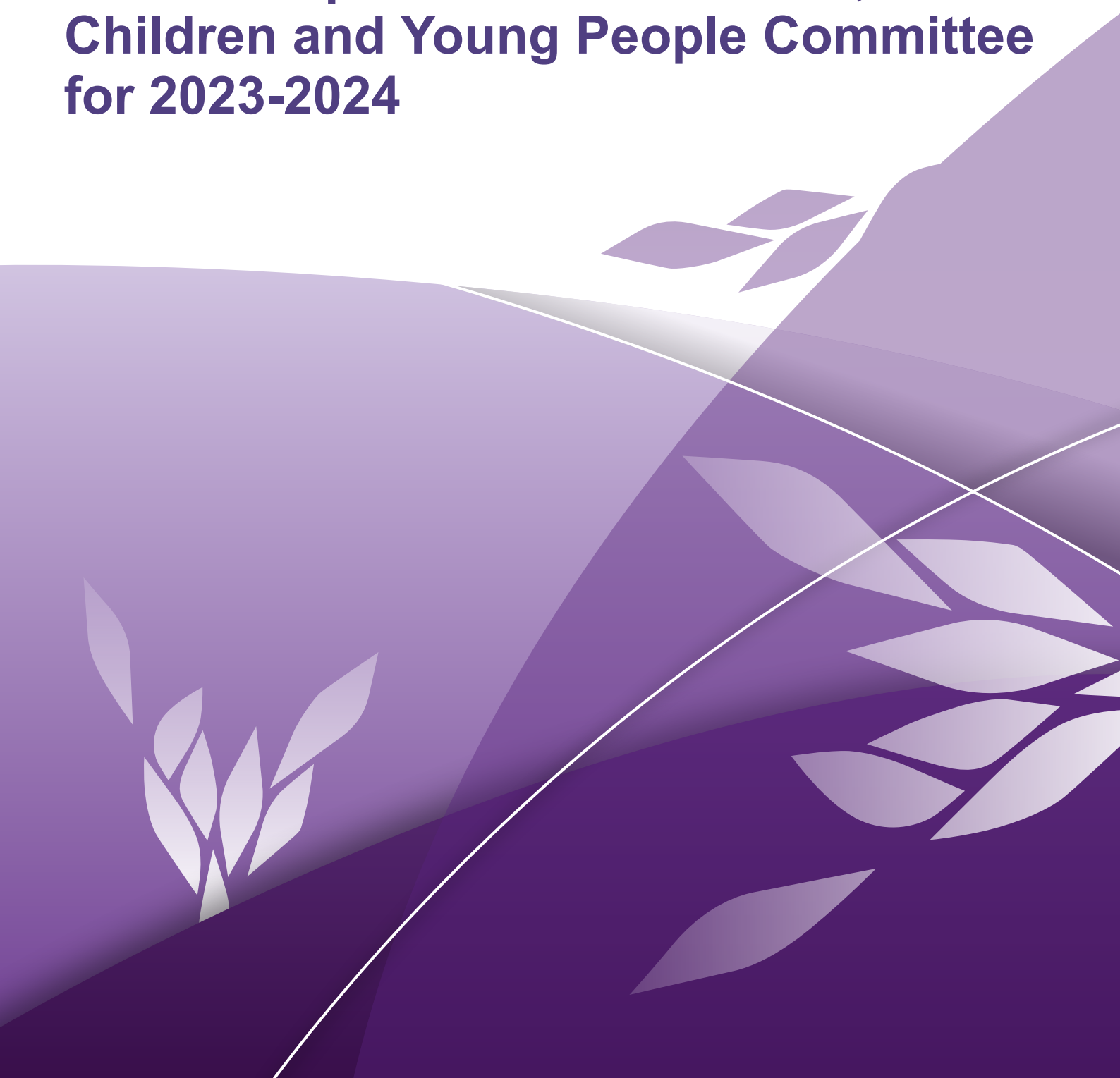


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Education, Children and Young People Committee

Annual Report of the Education, Children and Young People Committee for 2023-2024



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Education, Children and Young People Committee

To consider and report on matters falling within the responsibility of the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills and matters relating to the Historical Abuse Inquiry and redress falling within the responsibility of the Deputy First Minister.



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Scottish National Party



Willie Rennie
Scottish Liberal
Democrats



Michelle Thomson
Scottish National Party

Introduction

1. This annual report covers the work of the Education, Children and Young People Committee during the Parliamentary year from 13 May 2023 to 12 May 2024.

Membership Changes

2. The following changes to Committee membership occurred during the course of this parliamentary year—
 - Bob Doris left the Committee on the 29th June 2023 and was replaced by Michelle Thomson.
 - Stephen Kerr left the Committee on the 29th June 2023 and was replaced by Liam Kerr.

Meetings

3. The Committee met a total of 31 times during the reporting period. Two of these meetings were held entirely in private and 29 meetings included private agenda items.
4. The reasons for taking business in private included:
 - consideration of the Committee's work programme
 - consideration of draft reports and
 - Consideration of evidence heard during meetings.
5. In addition, the Committee held a number of informal, private engagement sessions. These are reflected throughout this report.

Bills

The Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Bill

6. The Committee continued its work on the Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Bill. The purpose of the Bill was to make changes to the law in relation to the care of children and the involvement of children in the criminal justice system.
7. The changes relate to the children's hearings system and several parts of the criminal justice system. This includes courts that hear cases relating to children and the places where children can be detained.
8. The Committee published its [Stage 1 report on 13 June 2023](#) . Although supportive of the general principles of the Bill, the Committee stressed the need for more accurate and fuller costings.
9. To ensure that it had a better sense of how the Bill would be implemented, the Committee decided to take more evidence at two meetings ahead of Stage 2. This drew out updated costings from the Scottish Government, increasing the costs for the Bill by at least 50% compared to the original figures contained in the Financial Memorandum.
10. The Committee's scrutiny also led the Scottish Government to ask for Stage 2 of the Bill to be postponed, to allow it more time to engage with Committee Members, and develop amendments to the Bill. The Committee considered 221 amendments at Stage 2, over the course of the three meetings.

The Disabled Children and Young People (Transitions to Adulthood) (Scotland) Bill

11. The Committee considered the Disabled Children and Young People (Transitions to Adulthood) (Scotland) Bill at Stage 1. The Bill, which was introduced by Pam Duncan-Glancy MSP, aimed to improve opportunities for disabled children and young people as they grow up. The Committee published its Stage 1 report on [5 October 2024](#).

Scottish Languages Bill

12. The [Scottish Languages Bill](#) was referred to the Committee for Stage 1 scrutiny. The Bill gives the Gaelic and Scots languages official status in Scotland and makes changes to the support for the Gaelic and Scots languages in Scotland, including changes in relation to Gaelic and Scots education. The Committee has taken oral evidence over a number of meetings and will publish its Stage 1 report in summer 2024.

Subordinate legislation

13. The Committee considered 7 Scottish Statutory Instruments (SSIs)—
 - 2 SSIs subject to the affirmative procedure; and
 - 5 SSIs subject to the negative procedure.

Inquiries/case studies

The Promise

14. The Committee is responsible for scrutinising the ways in which the Scottish Government, and others, are working to implement The Promise, which sets out how [the findings of the Independent Care Review](#) should be implemented. The Committee held an evidence session with stakeholders on progress towards meeting The Promise on [22 November 2023](#).
15. The Committee agreed that it was important to speak to care experienced young people to gather their views. The Committee worked in partnership with Who Cares? Scotland to organise a meeting, on [27 March 2024](#), at which Members spoke with 37 care experienced young people. At the event, Members gained valuable insight into ongoing issues with the care system. This will inform further work which the Committee intends to do on this topic in the next reporting year. The Committee would like to thank Who Cares? Scotland and the young people who attended the event.

Education Reform

16. The Committee took evidence on education reform over a number of meetings. The Committee took evidence from:
 - Professor Louise Hayward and colleagues the Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment on [20 September 2023](#);
 - stakeholders on education reform on [8 November 2023](#);
 - James Withers on his report on the Independent Review of the Skills Delivery Landscape on [15 November 2023](#).
 - Graeme Dey, the then Minister for Higher Education and Further Education; and Minister for Veterans on [10 January 2024](#) on the Scottish Government's response to the Independent Review of the Skills Delivery Landscape; and
 - Jenny Gilruth, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills on education reform on [17 January 2024](#).

2024-25 Budget Scrutiny

17. The Committee held pre-budget scrutiny oral evidence sessions during September 2023. The focus included funding for the Scottish Attainment Challenge, further and higher education spending and local government funding for education. On [2 November 2023](#), the Committee wrote to the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills with its recommendations.

18. Following the publication of the budget in December 2023, the Committee heard evidence from the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills on [17 January 2024](#).

Other evidence sessions

19. Throughout the year, the Committee held focused evidence sessions on a range of issues including:
- [Scottish Qualifications Authority](#);
 - [AI and education](#); and
 - [violence in schools](#).
20. The Committee took evidence from stakeholders on the [International Learning Exchange Programmes](#) and from the [Minister for Higher and Further Education](#); and [Minister for Veterans](#) on work being carried out by the Scottish Government in this area.
21. The Committee took evidence from the [Children and Young People Commissioner for Scotland](#) along with colleagues on the Commissioner's strategic plan 2024-28, as part of ongoing scrutiny of the work of the Commissioner's office.

Post Legislative Scrutiny

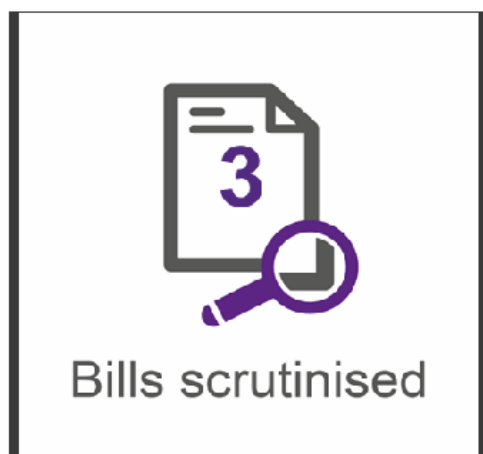
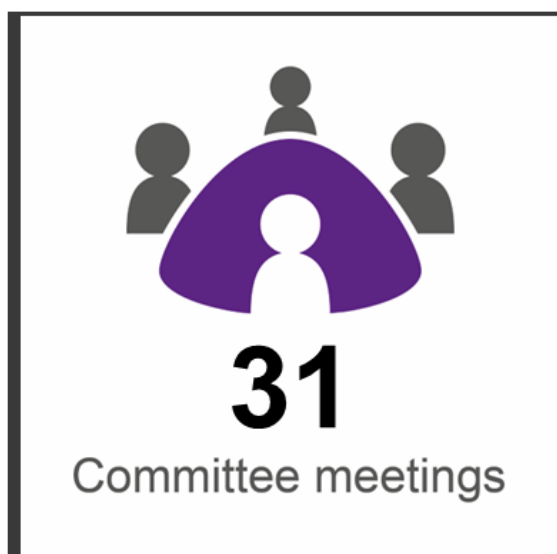
Additional Support for Learning

22. The Committee agreed to undertake an inquiry into Additional Support for Learning. The inquiry focused on the following themes:
- the implementation of presumption of mainstreaming, meaning that, where possible, children and young people with additional support needs should be educated in mainstream schools alongside other pupils, rather than in special schools;
 - the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on additional support for learning; and
 - the use of remedies as set out in the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 - these are dispute resolution options that are used when someone wants to dispute whether the provision put in place is adequate to support their child's additional support needs.
23. The Committee took evidence over a number of weeks. The Committee was also keen to speak with people with personal experience of additional support for learning to hear directly of the issues they faced and any areas where more could be done to support them. The Committee met with young people, Inclusion Ambassadors, parents and carers and teachers at three informal participation sessions.

Equalities and Engagement

24. The Committee is keen to ensure that it hears from a diverse range of people when taking evidence. It therefore asks organisations to consider this when identifying people to speak to the Committee.
25. At its business planning day in September 2023, the Committee agreed to hold informal sessions on [Equally Safe](#). This was part of the [16 Days of Activism](#), an annual international campaign against Gender-Based Violence which started on 25 November 2023.
26. The Scottish Government published its Equally Safe strategy in 2018 and a refresh the strategy was scheduled for early December 2023. To inform its view on the strategy, the Committee held two participation sessions with young people on 29 November 2023 on:
 - Equally Safe in relation to colleges and universities
 - Equally Safe in relation to school.
27. As set out above, the Committee spoke to care experienced young people regarding the care system and discussed whether there have been changes since The Promise was enacted. The Committee also spoke to young people and parents about their experiences of additional support for learning.

Infographics



Source: Committee statistics

