

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee
Wednesday 19 March 2025
5th Meeting, 2025 (Session 6)

PE1953: Review Education Support staff roles

Introduction

Petitioner Roisin Taylor-Young

Petition summary Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to review Education Support (ES) staff roles in order to consider:

- Urgently raising wages for Education Support Staff across primary and secondary sectors to £26K p/a
- Increasing the hours of the working day for ES staff from 27.5 to 35 hours
- Allowing ESS to work on Personal Learning Plans with teachers/ take part in multiagency meetings.
- Requiring ESS to register with Scottish Social Services Council
- Paying ES staff monthly

Webpage <https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE1953>

1. [The Committee last considered this petition at its meeting on 20 March 2024](#). At that meeting, the Committee agreed to write to the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills.
2. The petition summary is included in **Annexe A** and the Official Report of the Committee's last consideration of this petition is at **Annexe B**.
3. The Committee has received new written submissions from the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, the Scottish Government, and the Petitioner, which are set out in **Annexe C**.
4. [On 11 March 2025, Alexander Stewart MSP held a Members' Business debate – S6M-15955: Additional Support Needs in Scotland](#).
5. [Written submissions received prior to the Committee's last consideration can be found on the petition's webpage](#).
6. [Further background information about this petition can be found in the SPICe briefing](#) for this petition.
7. [The Scottish Government gave its initial response to the petition on 28 July 2022](#).

CPPP/S6/25/5/3

8. Every petition collects signatures while it remains under consideration. At the time of writing, 40 signatures have been received on this petition.

Action

9. The Committee is invited to consider what action it wishes to take.

Clerks to the Committee
March 2025

Annexe A: Summary of petition

PE1953: Review Education Support staff roles

Petitioner

Roisin Taylor-Young

Date Lodged

18 August 2022

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to review Education Support (ES) staff roles in order to consider:

- Urgently raising wages for Education Support Staff across primary and secondary sectors to £26K p/a
- Increasing the hours of the working day for ES staff from 27.5 to 35 hours
- Allowing ESS to work on Personal Learning Plans with teachers/ take part in multiagency meetings.
- Requiring ESS to register with Scottish Social Services Council
- Paying ES staff monthly

Previous action

In my capacity working in Education, I have raised my concerns with various Scottish Ministers and my local MSP.

I have also written to various politicians including, Shirley Anne-Somerville MSP, Clare Haughey MSP, Maree Todd MSP, Carol Mochan MSP, Michael Marra MSP, Paul Sweeney MSP, Alison Thewliss MP and Susan Aitken (leader of Glasgow City Council)

I have so far not heard anything back from any of those I contacted.

Background information

ESS work with children and YP (CYP) with Autism, Dyspraxia, Dyscalculia, Down Syndrome, visually impaired, Hearing impairments, Mosaic Downs Syndrome, trauma, care experienced, EAL, asylum seekers, unaccompanied refugees, Social, Emotional and Behavioural Needs, CYP at risk of self-harm/ suicide, CYP with risk assessments.

- ESS are not involved in ASN Plans/multiagency work

- No SSSC registration deprives ESS of basic working standards
- ESS are not paid remuneration based on qualifications. In comparison to 5.5% wage rise for teachers in 2020 starting £27-32K whereas, ESS are paid est. £14K. Low wages mean Universal Credit dependency
- Many ESS are paid on a four-weekly basis, meaning sanctions 2/3 p/a by UC
- Many ESS are female and this affects women, including their children
- ESS roles are left unfilled. The wages are not attracting talent. People are leaving jobs facing a wage crisis.
- The Scottish Government has a legal duty to comply with (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act (2004), Inclusion, GIRFEC, UNCRC.

Annexe B: Extract from Official Report of last consideration of PE1953 on 20 March 2024

The Deputy Convener: Our next continued petition, PE1953, which was lodged by Roisin Taylor-Young, calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to review education support staff roles in order to consider urgently raising wages for education support staff across the primary and secondary sector to £26,000 per annum; to increase the hours of the working week for educational support staff from 27.5 to 35 hours; to allow educational support staff to work on personal learning plans, with teachers taking part in multi-agency meetings; to require educational support staff to register with the Scottish Social Services Council; and to pay educational support staff monthly.

We last considered the petition at our meeting on 31 May 2023, when we agreed to seek an update on the Bute house agreement commitment to explore options

“for the development of an accredited qualification and registration programme for Additional Support Needs assistants”.

In her recent response, the cabinet secretary stated that the intention had been for ministers to consider a report in autumn 2023 but that the work had been delayed due to competing priorities in the portfolio. The report is now due to be published in the first quarter of 2024.

The cabinet secretary’s response also reported that officials have engaged with counterparts in England and Wales on their approaches to its work, and that they hosted two online workshops in September 2023.

Do members have any comments or suggestions?

Maurice Golden: I think that we should write to the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills seeking an update on the Bute House Agreement exploration group’s recommendations and information about what she expects the next steps will be.

The Deputy Convener: Are members agreed?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Annexe C: Written submissions

Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills written submission, 29 May 2024

PE1953/I: Review Education Support staff roles

I am writing in response to your correspondence dated 30 April 2024, in relation to petition PE1953, calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to review Education Support (ES) staff roles.

You asked for an update on the Bute House Agreement commitment to: Explore in collaboration with trade unions and other key stakeholders options for the development of an accredited qualification and registration programme for Additional Support Needs assistants, with final proposals being brought forward by Autumn 2023. I am currently considering the outcome of this work and would be happy to write to the Committee with an update shortly.

JENNY GILRUTH MSP

Scottish Government written submission, 19 February 2025

PE1953/J: Review Education Support staff roles

A draft report on the outcomes of the commitment to 'Explore in collaboration with trade unions and other key stakeholders options for the development of an accredited qualification and registration programme for Additional Support Needs assistants.' is currently being considered by the Cabinet Secretary. This work has taken longer than anticipated due to required engagement with a range of stakeholders. The Scottish Government intends to publish a final report on this work and we anticipate this will be in March / April 2025.

Petitioner written submission, 1 March 2025

PE1953/K: Review Education Support staff roles

Since my last submission in March 2023, I am still awaiting an update on the Bute House Agreement: Explore in collaboration with trade unions and other key stakeholders options for the development of an accredited qualification and registration programme for Additional Support Needs Assistants.

This specific report on these outcomes comes from the Scottish Government and Scottish Green Party – Shared Policy Programme, Public Services Recovery and Reform in 2021.

According to an article published by The Scotsman on the 27th of February this year, the Scottish Government were urged to 'hold a major review of staffing and funding after a 768% rise in pupils with ASN.' Audit Scotland's recent report on the number of pupils with Additional Support Needs in Scottish schools found that it has increased by eight-fold since 2004; it states that now over 40% of children attending

Scottish schools have additional support needs or disabilities. Whilst the exponential rise of Autism and ADHD in children and young people is a concerning issue, the root cause is unknown. Both teachers and support staff in schools are not adequately equipped to deal with this. Support staff in particular still require no training upon entering and working with the most vulnerable children.

I recently dealt with a case in which an Education Support Staff employee in an ASL school had been employed with no induction, training on risk assessments, knowledge of health and safety, de-escalation training, BSL certification, Makaton certification, or any specialist knowledge of complex disabilities and CALMS-intervention training. This member of staff within the first year of employment suffered serious workplace injuries that prevented them from working and financially suffered as a result. Education Support Staff in ASL schools often carry out medical duties including oxygen tanks, insertion of catheters, administration of medications and hoisting or lifting for intimate care. If the same member of staff were employed by the NHS they would be paid double and required to register as a trained paediatric nurse for children with disabilities.

I was told final proposals for the exploration in collaboration with trade unions and other key stakeholders options for the development of an accredited qualification and registration programme for Additional Support Needs Assistant would be brought forward in Autumn 2023, we are now in 2025.

According to the Additional Support for Learning: Action Plan, published in 2020, 4.1.1: Recommendation 'assessing spending on additional support for learning across services...outcomes for children and young people... highlighting good practice and gaps.' Good practice starts with regulation and certificated training. However, this is not required in our roles. Recommendation 1.2.4, 'The investment in Pupil Support Assistants must be measured for impact and improvement on children and young people.' How can Pupil Support Assistants educate and support children with complex and additional needs if they do not have required training in BSL or Makaton? How are these children expected to learn when these staff have no required qualifications or training to communicate with children who are nonverbal and have extremely complex medical and physical disabilities?

There are already qualifications in place for education support staff such as Higher National Certificate and Diploma in Additional Support Needs. This could allow pupil support staff to register with GTCS and offer a career pathway.

I would ask the Committee to liaise with the Cabinet Secretary to provide an update on what action will be taken from the upcoming draft report from Bute House Agreement: Explore in collaboration with trade unions and other key stakeholders options for the development of an accredited qualification and registration programme for Additional Support Needs Assistants.

It is time to put all these policies and action plans into place. Councils are crying out for support staff in schools and are unable to recruit or retain these staff due to workplace violence, lack of training, low pay and no career pathways.