



Planning improvements for disabled pupils' access to education

A Response to the Scottish Government's consultation on the Guidance for education authorities, independent and grant-aided schools

Scottish Youth Parliament

Background to SYP

Our vision is of a stronger, more inclusive Scotland that empowers young people by truly involving them in the decision-making process.

The Scottish Youth Parliament (SYP) is democratically elected to represent Scotland's young people. We listen to young people, recognise the issues that are most important to them, and ensure that their voices are heard.

In working towards our aims, we support the following values:

Democracy - All of our plans and activities are youth-led, and we are accountable to young people aged 14-25. Our democratic structure, and the scale of direct participation across Scotland, gives us strength and sets us apart from other organisations.

Inclusion - We are committed to being truly inclusive. The Scottish Youth Parliament believes that all young people have a right to a voice, it doesn't matter who we are or where we come from. We celebrate our diversity.

Political independence - We are independent from political parties. Only by working with all legitimate political parties can we make progress on the policies that are important to young people.

Passion - We believe that drive and energy are key to successful campaigning. We are passionate about the key issues and believe that young people are part of the solution, not the problem.



Methodology

The Scottish Youth Parliament is committed to a completely youth led structure. Our strategic policy direction is set by our elected MSYPs through manifesto development, Members Motions at our National Sittings, and through consultation with constituents and other young people.

Therefore, our responses to public consultations are fundamentally shaped by the genuine views of young people.

The response to this consultation is based on a focus group session with the Scottish Youth Parliament's Equalities Subject Committee at our March National Sitting. The Committee based their response on a number of existing SYP manifesto statements from our 2010 youth manifesto, "Change the Picture."¹

Existing SYP Policy

The response from the Equalities Subject Committee is based on existing SYP policy.

The consultation with young people for our most recent youth manifesto, Change the Picture, which received almost 43,000 responses, produced the following manifesto statements:

89% of respondents agreed that "Disabled children and young people should have the same rights and opportunities as other young people. More support should be available so disabled young people can do more independently."

89% of respondents agreed that "Disabled young people should have the opportunity to have a say about the services which affect them. Employers need to support disabled people in the workplace."

88% of respondents agreed that "Providing suitable disabled access to all that require it and making them safe while using it is very important."

¹ For more information about the Scottish Youth Parliament's policy structures, visit our website: www.syp.org.uk



The Scottish Youth Parliament's Response

The Scottish Youth Parliament's response to this consultation is based on existing Scottish Youth Parliament policy from our 2010 youth manifesto, "Change the Picture" and the views of the Scottish Youth Parliament's Equalities Subject Committee, who participated in a focus group about this consultation at our March National Sitting.

1. Is the draft guidance clear and does it contain enough detail?

Broadly speaking, the Scottish Youth Parliament's Equalities Committee believes the guidance is clear and contains sufficient detail.

However, the young people on the Committee felt that a number of areas required more detail. The areas requiring more detail include: the responsibilities of "Responsible Bodies" to make their accessibility strategies publicly available and promoting their existence; more detail on the responsibilities of "responsible bodies" to involve young people and young people with disabilities in the preparation, implementation, and reviewing of accessibility strategies; and, how exactly local authorities should monitor compliance with their accessibility strategies.

2. Is the structure of the guidance appropriate?

The young people on the Equalities Committee felt that the guidance is not very young person friendly. The Committee agreed that this would act as a barrier for young people who wanted to find out what responsibilities local authorities and other responsible bodies had in terms of developing accessibility strategies.

The Committee agreed that it is important for young people to be aware of these responsibilities in order to hold decision makers to account based on their implementation. The Committee suggested that an easy read, or more youth friendly, version of the guidance should be developed and publicised.

3. Are there any areas which you feel need clarification? (Please include chapter and paragraph number where possible)



There are a number of areas in which the young people in the Committee thought further clarification was required.

In Chapter 4, Paragraph 8, details are provided in relation to who should be involved in the planning group. In this section, disabled young people are mentioned as being possible participants. However, there is a disconnect between the language used in this passage in relation to the involvement of young people and the much stronger language contained in Chapter 2, Paragraph 8. There is need for clarification in the guidance about to what extent young people should be involved in planning, delivery and review.

4. Is there information missing? Or is the guidance comprehensive enough?

Broadly speaking, the Equalities Committee believe that the guidance is quite comprehensive. However, the young people on the Committee felt that the responsibilities of “responsible bodies” in terms of involving young people in the planning, delivery and reviewing of accessibility strategies could be more clearly defined, more detailed and more explicit. The Committee unanimously agreed that in order to ensure that responsible bodies take their obligations in this regard seriously, the language in this guidance should be significantly strengthened.

The Scottish Youth Parliament believes that the need to involve young people, not just through consultation, but in the very earliest stages should be more apparent throughout the guidance.

5. Any other comments?

We have no additional comments.

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