Education Committee
11th Meeting, 2006
Wednesday 10 May 2006

The Committee will meet at 10.00 am in Committee Room 1

1. **Subordinate legislation:** The Committee will take evidence on the draft Joint Inspections (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2006 from—

   - Robert Brown MSP, Deputy Minister for Education and Young People
   - Jackie Brock, Children and Families Division, Scottish Executive, Education Department
   - Douglas Tullis, Office of the Solicitor to the Scottish Executive

2. **Subordinate legislation:** Robert Brown (Deputy Minister for Education and Young People) to move S2M-4299—

   **Peter Peacock: The Draft Joint Inspections (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2006**—That the Education Committee recommends that the draft Joint Inspections (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2006 be approved.

3. **Adoption and Children (Scotland) Bill:** The Committee will take evidence at Stage 1 from—

   - Barbara Hudson, Director, British Association for Adoption and Fostering Scotland
   - Lexy Plumtree, Legal Consultant, British Association for Adoption and Fostering Scotland

   and then from—

   - Eddie Follan, Head of Policy, Children in Scotland
   - Maggie Mellon, Director of Children and Family Services, Children 1st
   - Tam Baillie, Assistant Director (Policy and Influencing), Barnado’s Scotland
   - Joan Atherton, Service Manager, Scottish Adoption Advisory Service

4. **Annual report:** The Committee will consider a draft annual report for the parliamentary year 2005-06
The following papers are enclosed for the meeting:

**Agenda items 1 and 2**  
Clerk’s note and copy of SSI 2006/draft  
ED/S2/06/11/1  

**Agenda item 3**  
Submission from British Association for Adoption and Fostering  
ED/S2/06/11/2  
Submission from Children in Scotland  
ED/S2/06/11/3  
Submission from Children 1st  
ED/S2/06/11/4  
Submission from Barnado’s Scotland  
ED/S2/06/11/5  

**Agenda item 4**  
Draft annual report  
ED/S2/06/11/6
EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Subordinate legislation

The Joint Inspections (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2006, (SSI 2006/draft)

1. The Committee’s consideration of the above regulations is to be taken as agenda items 1 and 2.
   
i. Agenda item 1 gives the members the opportunity to take oral evidence on the instrument from the Deputy Minister for Education and Young People and Scottish Executive officials.

   ii. Agenda item 2 enables the Deputy Minister for Education and Young People to move a motion for approval of the regulations and for members to debate the motion. No Scottish Executive officials may speak during this debate.

2. Members will recall that the Committee recommended approval of the Joint Inspections (Scotland) Regulations 2006 at its meeting on 19 April, pending the laying of this amending instrument.

3. The Education Committee is the lead committee for this instrument and should report to the Parliament by 22 May 2006. The Minister responsible is Robert Brown, Deputy Minister for Education and Young People.

4. A copy of the SSI, an explanatory note which is not part of the Regulations, and the Executive Note are attached.

5. A note on procedure for considering SSIs is attached overleaf. This is an affirmative instrument.

6. The Subordinate Legislation Committee considered the SSI at its meeting on 25 April and in its 17th report stated that it did not wish to draw the attention of the Parliament to any aspect of the instrument.

Action

7. The Committee is invited to CONSIDER whether it wishes to recommend approval of the motion:

   Peter Peacock: The Draft Joint Inspections (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2006 (S2M-4299)—That the Education Committee recommends that the draft Joint Inspections (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2006 be approved.

   Eugene Windsor
   Clerk
   Education Committee
Procedural Note

Standing Orders

1. The procedures for dealing with Scottish Statutory Instruments (SSIs) are covered by Chapter 10 of Standing Orders. SSIs are laid by being lodged with the chamber clerks, and are published in the Business Bulletin. They are referred to the Subordinate Legislation Committee, the appropriate subject committee (the ‘lead committee’), and, where relevant, any other committee.

SSIs subject to approval: ‘affirmative instruments’

2. Where an SSI is subject to approval, it cannot come into force unless the parliament by resolution approves the instrument, the lead committee shall decide whether to recommend that the instrument be approved.

3. Any member of the Scottish Executive or junior Scottish Minister (whether or not a member of the lead committee) may by motion propose to the lead committee that the committee recommend that the instrument be approved.

4. The lead committee debates such a motion for no more than 90 minutes.

5. The lead committee shall report to the Parliament, setting out its recommendations. If the lead committee recommends that the instrument be approved, the Parliamentary Bureau shall by motion propose that the Parliament approve the instrument.

6. All the above must take place within 40 days of the instrument being laid, excluding recesses of more than 4 days.
1. The British Association for Adoption and Fostering is the leading UK membership organisation and charity for all those concerned with adoption, fostering and childcare social work, and operates on an inter-disciplinary basis. In Scotland, all adoption and fostering agencies are members and BAAF Scotland works closely with member agencies and other voluntary organisations, groups and individuals to:
   - promote and develop high standards in adoption, fostering and child placement services;
   - promote public and professional understanding of adoption, fostering, and the life-long needs of children separated from their birth families;
   - ensure that the developmental and identity needs of looked after children are respected and addressed by social work, health, legal and educational services;
   - inform and influence policy makers and legislators, and all those responsible for the welfare of children and young people.

2. BAAF Scotland welcomes the general provisions in the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Bill, and the carrying forward of the Adoption Policy Review Group’s (APRG) recommendations. We recognise that many of the details will be in regulations, court rules and guidance, including the provisions to extend who may foster.

3. In particular, BAAF Scotland welcomes the:
   - introduction of local authority adoption plans, s.2;
   - extension of adoption support provisions;
   - modernisation of adoption;
• extension of the pool of adopters;
• re-statement of intercountry adoption provisions;
• provision for regulations about disclosure of medical information, s.78;
• introduction of Permanence Orders; and
• provision for regulations about fostering allowances, s.103.

4. However, BAAF Scotland has concerns about:
• some of the provisions in the Bill and what they say or leave out; and
• omissions from the Bill.

Comments on the provisions of the Bill

5. Adoption support. BAAF Scotland strongly supports the comments and recommendations of APRG about this matter. However, we are not happy with the terminology used in the Bill or with the details of some of the provisions.

• The division in s.1(2) into pre-adoption services, adoption support services and post-adoption services does not reflect the realities of practice or the recommendations. Adoption is ‘life long’ and the term ‘adoption support’ better reflects the continuing albeit changing forms of support which need to be made available to all those involved in adoption throughout their lives. ‘Adoption support’ is the term used in the APRG Report. If ‘post’ must be used, it should at least be ‘post-placement’ as it is from placement that the need for services arises.

• Section 14 does not allow lump sum payments as part of support services.

• Section 47 does not include adopted adults as ‘relevant persons entitled to assessments and services.

• Care plans in s.51 may only extend for 3 years. This is far too short for some families.

• In addition, the term ‘care plan’ is confusing because it is used for children’s plans. ‘Support plan’ or placement support plan’ would be preferable.

• Adoption allowances regulations. Section 77 does not have the same provisions as for fostering allowance in s.103.

• There is no provision for local authorities to have adoption support officers, rec 38, para 6.16 of the APRG Report.

• There is no provision for continuing into adoption the reward element in fostering allowances, to allow and encourage foster carers to adopt children in their care.
6. **Intercountry adoption, ss.64 – 76.** There is no provision to allow applications for Convention adoption orders under the Hague Convention, to replace s.17 of the 1978 Act. We understand this may be the subject of a future Executive amendment.

7. **Permanence Orders.** As indicated, BAAF Scotland is in favour of these but we are unhappy with the provisions as they currently appear in the Bill.
   - They should be applied for by local authorities as such, not by adoption agencies, s.84. They are an option for all children who cannot return home, not just for children for whom adoption is the plan.
   - It is not clear that local authorities will have the controlling responsibilities for children on POs. This must be clear to avoid damaging disputes and court cases.
   - Section 84(5)(a) is unhelpful because it continues with a provision from freeing, s.18(3) of the 1978 Act and POs are not intended to be the same or a replacement for freeing.
   - The word ‘representations’ in ss.86 and 91 will cause confusion. People and agencies should have rights to be parties to applications rather than to make ‘representations’.
   - Orders should not revoke adoption as suggested in s.87(1)(a)(i). Birth parents’ rights will not be revoked. And revocation of adoption is contrary to established public policy.
   - Using variation and amendment for different types of change to orders is confusing and ss.89 – 91 should provide for variations or amendments, not both.
   - There are no provisions about the effect of POs on children in the hearing system and no restrictions on the reporter in taking children on POs to hearings, although these were recommended by APRG.

8. **Amendment of s.11 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995.** BAAF Scotland welcomes the amendment to s.11 in s.100, but this does not include any provision for leave to apply, to restrict inappropriate applications after adoption orders, as recommended by APRG.

9. **Court rules for adoption and permanence orders, ss.106 and 97.** These sections include obligations to notify birth parents etc of hearings. However, APRG’s detailed recommendations in Ch. 7 and Annex D propose that adoption court rules should be brought into line with those in other family cases, so that applications are notified at the
application stage, not just at the hearing stage. It would be helpful to have these sections amended to reflect the recommendations.

**Omissions from the Bill**

10. **Contact in adoption.** This has been an area of dispute under the existing system. APRG recommended that there should only be contact for the benefit of children and for a clear purpose. However, it would be helpful to have a provision on the face of the Bill, specifically allowing contact where it is beneficial and for a clear purpose. The provision in s.30(3) is too general. A provision like s.46(6) of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 would be helpful.

11. **Step-parents agreements.** BAAF Scotland is disappointed that the Bill does not contain any provision for step-parent agreements. APRG recommended that these should be introduced, rec 9, para 3.53. The Scottish Executive rejected this. However, we believe that the Bill should be amended to include these agreements, despite the difficulties about ensuring that children’s views are properly considered. We are happy to provide further details about our proposals.

12. **Regulations for curators.** Section 101 provides for court rules for curators etc but there is no provision for regulations about them. There needs to be regulation about curators whatever administration system is decided upon by the Scottish Executive.

13. **Amendment of s.44 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995.** This is needed to make it clear that details may be published about children for whom permanence is being planned. This is rec 73, paras 9.33 – 35 of the APRG Report.

14. **Definition of parent.** There is no general definition. The one in s.90(5) would be helpful.

15. **Transitional provisions and consequential amendments.** Transitional provisions are needed, particularly about the arrangements for existing freeings and PROs under s.86 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995. Consequential amendments need to be extended. We understand these may be the subject of future Executive amendments.

*Barbara J Hudson, Director, BAAF Scotland, May 2006.*
Written Submission from Children in Scotland. Scottish Parliament Education Committee May 2006:

Adoption and Children (Scotland) Bill

Children in Scotland welcomes this Bill as a positive and well thought out approach to modernising the adoption system in Scotland. The need for reform has been well documented and it is hoped that the Bill when implemented will improve the situation and life chances of all of the 1 per cent of children and young people who are looked after and accommodated.

There are a number of specific points Children in Scotland would like to raise in this short submission. A more detailed response will be given in our written evidence to the Committee.

Children’s Rights

Children in Scotland is concerned that the Bill gives no recognition to the rights and views of children under the age of 12 years. Children age 12 years or over will have the option of not consenting to an adoption order and, where this is the case, no order will be made. Whilst recognising the difficulty in law of not having an age ‘bar’ Children in Scotland believes that this is too important and sensitive an issue to place an overemphasis on the age of the child. The Age of Legal Capacity Act 1991 and the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 both have 12 as the age at which children are to be considered mature enough to give an opinion. The 1995 Act also provides that a local authority must have regard to a child’s views. We are concerned that the Bill is too rigid in using 12 years or over as the age which children can refuse to consent to an adoption order. The maturity of the child must be taken into consideration. Many 10 or 11 year olds will be more mature than some 12 year olds. Whilst we are aware of the often rigid nature of legislation Children in Scotland believes that the issue of age and access to rights for children needs to be addressed particularly in relation to looked after children.

Advocacy for Children

A great deal of good work goes into supporting children and young people who are looked after and accommodated. Professionals from both the statutory and voluntary sector have a strong record of working to safeguard children and young people’s rights. The provisions of the Bill, including the creation of permanence orders and allowing more people from different backgrounds to adopt, will inevitably mean that there will be an increase in the number of children and young people who go through the adoption process. The main policy objectives of the Bill reflect this and we agree that its provisions will go a long way to creating greater long term stability and permanence for children who cannot live with their original families. We are however concerned that with an increase in the numbers of children and young people going through the adoption process current services that provide support around representing children and young people’s views will
be stretched. The Executive has placed an emphasis on advocacy for children in recent legislation. The Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2002 gives children the right to an advocate if they suffer from a mental disorder and Health Boards must provide this service. It is worth remembering that of the 11,000 children who are looked after over 40 per cent have emotional or mental health problems. There is currently a dearth of advocacy services for children in Scotland. We would welcome further discussion on how this situation could be addressed through this legislation to ensure that all children who go through the adoption process are fully supported and their views reflected in any decisions taken.

Post Adoption Services

The provisions in the Bill for local authorities to establish adoption services are welcome. Of particular significance is that post adoption services should form part of this. The early stages of a child’s life with a new family are crucial and it is essential that the level of support the adopted child and family receive is appropriate and efficient. Many adopted children may have significant additional support needs and these should be recognised and support provided. Section 51(3) gives a comprehensive list of what a care plan must record and specify. Although there is a general requirement to record any details of any previous assessment of the needs of a child, adoptive parents, or others, there is no mention of the plan containing details of any assessment carried out under the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004. This is of particular relevance for those children and young people who may have a co-ordinated support plan (CSP).

Children in Scotland welcome the duty on local authorities in sections 48 and 49 to carry out an assessment of need and where support needs are identified to provide for them. We believe, however, that the link between this statutory duty to provide and what is contained in the care plan outlined in section 51 is unclear. As the Bill stands the requirement to provide what is contained in an initial care plan is reliant on the statutory duty in section 49. There is no direct duty in section 51 to provide what is contained in the plan. Moreover, there is a legal duty to provide, s55(4), if an existing plan is reassessed. We believe that to achieve consistency in law there is merit in including a specific duty to provide what is contained in the care plan.

For further information contact Eddie Follan, Head of Policy on 0131 222 2437 or efollan@childreninscotland.org.uk

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Adoption and Children (Scotland) Bill

CHILDREN 1ST welcomes the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Bill. Many of the Bill’s provisions will help to increase stability of placement which is so desperately needed by Scotland’s most vulnerable children and young people.

Family alternatives should be considered

CHILDREN 1ST is concerned that the Bill does not fully include the importance of considering alternative arrangements with, and from within, the child’s own extended family.

We recognise that it is not always possible for children to live with, or be in contact with, extended family. However, it is imperative that options for care of the child are fully explored with members of their extended family. Sometimes these alternative arrangements may not mean full-time care by a family member – there may be situations for example, where a child stays with one family member, but other family members help to provide support and respite.

There are many reasons for greater consideration of the family alternatives, including:

- **The positive benefits for children of kinship care**
  Kinship care has been found to have many benefits for children: it can reduce the trauma the child can experience from being placed with strangers, can help reinforce the child’s identity, and can help them keep in closer contact with siblings. Research in Northern Ireland suggests that children in kinship care are more likely to live with their siblings (51% compared to 42%) and more likely to retain weekly contact with their birth mothers (43% to 9%).

- **A child’s rights**
  Article 8 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that governments should respect the right of the child to preserve family relations, whilst Article 21 further states that an adoption of a child can only take place when the adoption is permissible in view of the child’s status concerning his/her relatives. Article 8 of ECHR states that everyone has the right to respect for his family life.
• **Children’s future**
It is important for children’s future well-being to know that family-based options were fully considered before they were placed with strangers.

• **Increasing kinship care in Scotland where appropriate**
The proportion of children in kinship care in Scotland, as compared to stranger care, is less than in many other countries. For example, in 1999, the proportion of children in kinship care was New Zealand 75%, USA 33%, Belgium 33%, Sweden 25%, whilst the UK was only 12%.

• **Positive benefits of extended family involvement**
Where, after full consideration, a child is to be adopted by non-family members, involvement of the extended family can help with future contact agreements and provide ways to help build the child’s sense of identity.

**Recommendation:** that the Committee amends the Bill so that it specifically requires adoption agencies to consider alternative arrangements with the extended family before a child can be placed for adoption.

**Family Group Conferencing: a model that works**
The Family Group Conference (FGC) is an approach eminently suitable for use in all aspects of, and with all participants involved in, the adoption process. The FGC process brings together parents, aunts, uncles, grandparents, and other concerned family members in a family meeting to decide on the best arrangements for care and protection of the child. FGCs are child-centred, blame free and future-focused. They are about family being empowered to focus on the best interests of the child, deciding together how best to ensure that the child’s future is one of stability, well-being and a strong sense of identity.

FGCs are already used widely in many other countries such as New Zealand, Ireland, and the USA. CHILDREN 1ST has pioneered the use of FGCs in Scotland and now provides a successful FGC services in 14 local authority areas. FGCs are a tried and tested model that could be used very effectively in helping involve the wider family in decision-making around adoption, and in ensuring that family based alternatives are fully explored.

**Recommendation:** that the Committee recommend that Scottish Executive guidance encourages Local Authorities to adopt an FGC approach to finding permanent care options for children who can no longer live with their parents.
At an FGC, 15 family members were involved in planning for a child, none of whom could offer the child a permanent home. The social worker hoped that the child would understand both at the time and in the future that placement within the family network had been fully explored and that this would aid the child settling and attaching to non-family members. Photographs of family members were taken at the meeting for the child. The family group also agreed to work together on a family tree and family scrapbook for the child.

Julie (14) was living with a short-term carer and at risk of being in care on a permanent basis as no-one in her family seemed willing to look after her. Mum had a drug habit and couldn’t care for her; Dad had a new family and did not want to be involved. She had little contact with the rest of her family. Julie accepted that she could not live with Mum or Dad but she did want to stay in contact with her family.

With help from the FGC Co-ordinator, and information from professionals attending, the family were able to come together to discuss and plan for Julie’s care. As a result of the meeting Julie re-established contact with Grandparents and an Aunt who offered to care for Julie on a long-term basis. Julie stood a foot taller after her meeting, pleased and relieved that there is another chance for her to remain within her family.

For more information about this response, contact:

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Barnardo’s Scotland Written Evidence to the Education Committee on the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Bill:

April 2006

Background:

Barnardo’s Scotland provides 62 children’s services throughout Scotland, employing 600 staff and assisting nearly 10,000 children, young people and families. The services provided are diverse, covering all age groups from early years through to young adults. Services include working with children’s behavioural difficulties, providing educational support, providing family support, assisting families affected by disabilities, HIV, youth offending and homelessness and working with looked after children and those leaving care.

Barnardo’s Scottish Adoption Advice Service (SAAS) has for 25 years promoted understanding of the lifetime issues in adoption and encouraged openness and reconciliation amongst the parties to adoption through helping:

- adopted children and adults to gain an understanding of their adoption and background.
- birth parents to grieve for the loss of their child and to move on in their lives.
- adoptive parents with the unique aspects of adoptive parenting in the best interest of the child.
- professionals in their understanding and practice.

There are also three fostering services run by Barnardo’s Scotland which focus on finding permanent places for children and several others around the country that arrange short term breaks. Barnardo’s offers a specialist service finding carers for some of the hardest to place children. We currently support around 150 foster carers in Scotland.

Overview:

Barnardo’s Scotland welcomes the introduction of the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Bill. We give general support to the proposals contained therein and believe that this Bill will make a positive contribution to the aim to “improve, modernise and extend adoption in Scotland and to provide greater stability for children who cannot live with their original families”.

We welcome the proposal to retain adoption as an option where it is in the child’s best interests and the acceptance that the provision of appropriate support services is a necessary part of the adoption process. One major concern is the lack of resources to fund this support. We are also concerned at the assumption in the Financial Memorandum that money saved by increasing the number of adoptions will be available to offset the anticipated costs of improved support services. In our experience the financial pressures under which local authorities are operating could result in any savings from children moved on to adoption being immediately absorbed by other demands.

The number of children adopted is relatively small compared with those in foster care, and it is not expected that any increase in adoptions following the Bill will make much impact on this. The consultation process began in 2001 as “a comprehensive review of adoption and fostering legislation” but we now see a Bill largely focused on the adoption element. While we appreciate that most of the proposed changes to fostering can be made through regulation and guidance, we wish to make the strongest representation that such changes represent a necessary but not sufficient condition for sustaining the foster care system and will need to be supported by further measures and resources.
Specific Comments:

We welcome the various proposals to update and clarify the legal situation around adoption, including the duty to provide adoption support services, the widening of those eligible for support services and the move to ensure certain key groups are entitled to have their support needs assessed.

We believe that support will not meet the identified needs if not properly resourced. In our experience post adoption support, which is already a statutory responsibility of local authorities, is not prioritised and in some cases not provided. There needs to be consideration of how any new money will be targeted appropriately.

Whereas we welcome consideration of the needs of birth families, the defining characteristic of adoption remains the full transfer of legal rights to the adoptive parents. While it is good that birth parents be notified and encouraged to give their consent, their views should not be allowed to be prescriptive. We welcome moves to simplify what can be a complex process and the streamlining of the grounds for dispensing with parental agreement will be helpful.

The new Permanence Order does have the potential to be more flexible than the existing orders and can provide a more appropriate setting for children moving to long-term foster care rather than adoption.

Barnardo’s agrees that joint adoption should be extended to all unmarried couples, same and opposite sex. Although not included in the face of the Bill we hope that we will not have to wait long for a similar provision for foster carers to follow through a change to regulations. We reiterate that the welfare of the child must be paramount and that the child’s welfare is best served by the availability of secure, nurturing homes.

We welcome the release of birth family medical information for adopters/children, regardless of their wishes, and believe this meets the criteria of the welfare of the child being paramount.

Whilst the passage of the Bill will necessarily focus on changes to primary legislation, we hope that the Committee’s Stage 1 discussion will provide an opportunity to understand the role of foster care and the growing pressure being experienced by the sector. The regulatory changes proposed alongside the Bill will be useful but we need to know for certain that they will happen.

Barnardo’s Scotland welcomes the proposal for a national allowance rate for foster carers, but would query the uncertain phrasing which makes it unclear whether the Executive will use the power to do so. We note concerns from England as to the low level being proposed for their national allowance rate and would seek assurances that only a minimum rate should be set, with providers retaining the freedom to offer more. There is already a national scale produced by the Fostering Network. This scale is higher than the average level of allowances currently paid by local authorities but we believe it provides the most accurate depiction of the real costs incurred in fostering.
The Committee reports to the Parliament as follows—

**Introduction**

1. This Report covers the Committee’s work during the Parliamentary year from 8 May 2005 to 7 May 2006. The Committee agreed its autumn work timetable for 2005 and held preliminary discussions about the content of its 2006 work programme at its meeting of 22 June 2005. The Committee held a planning seminar on 31 August 2005 to develop further its work programme.

**Inquiries and Reports**

**Early Years**

2. The Committee continued began its Early years inquiry and appointed Professor Kathy Sylva as its adviser. During autumn 2005, delegations from the Committee visited the Jeely Piece Club in Castlemilk, Glasgow and the Whitdale Early Years Centre in Whitburn, West Lothian. During October recess 2005, delegations visited Sweden and Finland to find out about early years provision in these countries. A roundtable event for private sector early years operators was also held in January 2006. The report is expected to be published before summer recess 2006.

**Pupil Motivation**

3. The Committee also continued its Pupil Motivation inquiry. As part of the inquiry, delegations from the Committee visited schools in the Glasgow and North Lanarkshire and Perth schools participating in the YMCA led SMART Young People Project. The Committee published an interim report in October 2005. This report formed the basis of a stakeholder event held at Our Dynamic Earth in February 2006. The Committee’s final report was published in April 2006.

**Additional Support for Learning code of practice**

4. The Committee considered the draft code of practice laid before the Parliament on 12 May 2005, under the Additional Support for Learning (Scotland) Act 2004, and reported in June 2005.

**Budget Report**

5. The Committee considered, with the help of adviser Nicola Rankin, the Scottish Executive’s budget 2006-07.
Bills

Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Bill
6. The Committee considered this Bill at stage 1 during autumn 2005, and at stage 2 in spring 2006. The Bill was passed on 10 May 2006.

Joint Inspection of Children’s Services and Inspection of Social Work Services (Scotland) Bill
7. This Bill was introduced by the Scottish Executive in October 2005, and an accelerated timetable for its parliamentary passage was sought by the Executive. The Committee agreed to the proposed timetable, and all three stages of the Bill were completed by January 2006.

Adoption and Children (Scotland) Bill
8. This Bill was introduced on 27 March 2006, and stage 1 consideration began in Committee in May 2006.

Subordinate Legislation

9. The Committee considered 20 items of subordinate legislation this year and took evidence from the Scottish Executive on 16 of the instruments.

10. Ten of the instruments considered were laid under the Additional Support for Learning code of practice and the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act.

Petitions

11. The Committee agreed to continue its consideration of two petitions, from Mr Ken Venters on behalf of the Carronhill action team and from Mr Alexander Longmuir. Both petitions were on the subject of school closures.

Miscellaneous

12. The Committee has an ongoing commitment to consider annually the Scottish Executive’s progress in relation to Child protection, School closures and School transport. These issues were all considered at the Committee’s meeting on 26 October 2005.

Meetings

13. The Education Committee met, generally weekly, throughout the year. It met 28 times from 8 May 2005 to 7 May 2006. Of these meetings, 12 were held predominantly in public, 14 were wholly in public and 2 meetings were wholly in private. Of the 94 items of business taken, 19 items of business were taken in private of which 12 were to consider draft reports, 3 were to appoint committee advisers and agree a remit, 3 were to agree the Committee’s approach to Stage 1 scrutiny of a Bill and 1 was to agree a work programme.

14. All of the meetings of the Committee were held in Edinburgh.