

## **Education and Culture Committee**

### **Attainment of pupils with a sensory impairment**

Submission from Scottish Council on Visual Impairment

On behalf of the Scottish Council on Visual Impairment (SCOVI), am writing to you as the Convener of the Education and Culture Committee in relation to the Committee's report on the attainment of pupils with a sensory impairment.

We had a detailed discussion around the content of the committee's report at our most recent Member's Forum, and then at our Trustee's' meeting last month.

As the umbrella body for organisations working in the field of visual impairment in Scotland we believe that the report is comprehensive, whilst also being concise, and makes a range of sensible and pragmatic recommendations that will all support the Government's strategic objectives of a fairer, smarter, healthier, safer and stronger Scotland, particularly as it applies to children (and then subsequently adults) with a sensory impairment. We welcome the opportunity this gives to address a number of pressing issues for young people living with sight loss.

We are pleased that attention is being given by the Scottish Government to the issue raised by the report around relevant qualifications for teachers who work with pupils with a sensory impairment. We therefore welcome the work now set in hand to scope the available information in relation to the numbers of teachers qualified to teach pupils with hearing and sight loss. However this of itself can only be the first step in determining what further recommendations and actions will be required. We therefore look forward to this work progressing, and to hearing what further steps will then be taken to address the relevant recommendations in the report that relate to numbers and qualifications of teachers, with all that this then implies for other recommendations relating to models of provision.

We understand that a group has been established to take forward the teacher related issues, but the report does of course address many other important issues other than teacher numbers and qualifications, and it is a matter of some disappointment to us that it is not clear what action the Scottish Government will be taking on the other recommendations made in the report.

Your letter to the Minister for Learning, Science & Scotland's Languages of 17 February identifies those areas and recommendations where you are seeking further information on proposed actions and responses, and again we fully support the matters that you have raised in this letter.

One of SCOVI's current campaigning areas is specifically focussed on addressing the shortage of resourcing and provision of habilitation and rehabilitation services. In this regard, we are particularly interested to hear what actions will be forthcoming in respect of the Committee's recommendation that local authorities should place a greater emphasis on ensuring that habilitation lessons be included in the curriculum

for pupils with a visual impairment. Strong and persuasive arguments for the benefits of habilitation training were made during the preparation of the committee's report, and the committee concluded that such training was fundamental to a pupil's ability to then take maximum benefit from other more formal learning opportunities.

The provision of habilitation services can be a complex area, coming as it can through education, social work and voluntary sector services. Within this, SCOVl's members employ a range of habilitation officers, and play a strong part in the provision of habilitation services across Scotland. SCOVl would therefore be pleased to offer whatever assistance it can to taking forward the discussions and actions around the development of these services across all areas of Scotland.

We would be very pleased if you were able to agree to meet with SCOVl representatives for initial discussion and then consideration of how we can then assist in progressing the argument for, and development of, habilitation services. SCOVl would of course we very willing to contribute to any work taking forward the recommendations of the report.

Please do let me know if you think this would be of assistance to you, and if so whether there would be an appropriate time for us to meet in the coming months.

Yours sincerely

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