***Disabled Children and Young People (Transitions)(Scotland) Bill***

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| **SECTION 6. QUESTIONS** | |
| **ABOUT YOU**  *(Note: Information entered in the “About you” section may be published as part of your response except where indicated in italics.)* | |
| **1. Are you responding as:** | |
|  | An individual – in which case go to Q2A |
| **x** | On behalf of an organisation? – in which case go to Q2B |
| **2A. Which of the following best describes you?** *(If you are a professional or academic, but not in a subject relevant to the consultation, please choose “Member of the public”.)* | |
|  | Politician (MSP/MP/Peer/MEP/Councillor) |
|  | Professional with experience in a relevant subject |
|  | Academic with expertise in a relevant subject |
|  | Child or young person with a disability |
|  | Parent or other carer of a child or young person with a disability |
|  | Member of the public |
| **2B. Please select the category which best describes your organisation:** | |
|  | Public sector body (Scottish/UK Government or agency, Local Authority, NDPB) |
|  | Commercial organisation (company, business) |
| **x** | Representative organisation (trade union, professional association, membership organisation) |
|  | Third sector (charitable, campaigning, social enterprise, voluntary, not for profit organisation) |
|  | Other (e.g. clubs, local groups, groups of individuals, etc.) |
| **Please explain briefly below what the organisation does, its experience and expertise in the subject-matter of the consultation, and how the views expressed in its response were reached (e.g. whether it is the view of particular office-holders, or has been approved by the membership as a whole).** | |
| We are the Scottish Association of Social Work, part of the British Association of Social Workers (BASW UK). We are the independent voice of the social work in Scotland. | |
| **3. Please choose one of the following:** | |
| **x** | I am content for this response to be published, and attributed to me or my organisation |
|  | I would like this response to be published anonymously |
|  | I would like this response to be considered, but not published (“Not for Publication”) |
| **If you have requested anonymity, or asked for your response not to be published, please give a reason.** *(Please note your reason will not be published).* | |
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| **Please provide your name or the name of your organisation.** *(Please note that the name will not be published if you have asked for the response to be anonymous, or to be considered as “Not for Publication”. Otherwise, this is the name which will be published with your response.)* | |
| **Name: Scottish Association of Social Work (SASW)** | |
| **Please provide a way in which we can contact you if there are any queries regarding your response.** *(Email is preferred but you can also provide a postal address or phone number. Please note that we will not publish these details.)* | |
| **Contact details: Emily.galloway@basw.co.uk** | |
| **5. Data protection declaration** | |
| **x** | I confirm that I have read and understood the Privacy Notice attached to this consultation which explains how my personal data will be used. |
| **YOUR VIEWS ON THE PROPOSAL** | |
| *(Please note that the Information entered in the “Your views on the proposal” section may be published, unless you have confirmed that your response to the consultation is “Not for Publication”.)* | |
| **1. What challenges do you think children with a disability face in the transition to adulthood?** | |
| The Scottish Association of Social Work (SASW) – part of BASW UK – is the professional association of social work in Scotland. We’re here to promote the best possible social work services for all people who may need them, while also securing the well-being of social workers. Many of our members include social work practitioners supporting and protecting children and adults with a disability.  SASW wish to outline that different disabilities bring different challenges, for example, someone with a learning disability will have different needs to someone with a physical disability, a developmental disability or a disability as a result of a chronic illness etc, and it is important that this is taken into consideration.  As the consultation document outlines, the transitionary stage between child and adulthood - and consequently child and adult services - is problematic, with many children and young people feeling at a loss or abandoned when Children’s Services cease to support them.  SASW acknowledges insufficient communication between children and adult services, which is a key contributing factor to this, as well as inconsistency in thresholds and levels of support which a transition plan would address.  Furthermore, the transition into adulthood coincides with gaining sexual maturity. Women with a learning disability are often provided with insufficient information and advice regarding menstruation and pregnancy. Both men and women are also often given insufficient information on bodily changes, sex education and healthy relationships.  The transition into adulthood comes with a gain of greater choices and desire for independence. However, gaining relevant and required skills is often more challenging for young people with a disability.  There is a marked discrepancy between the risk perceived by young people with intellectual disabilities and that perceived by their carers/parents. It can be hard for parents/carers to find the balance between ensuring the young person is safe and protected, but also empowering them to live autonomously. Sadly, young people with a learning disability are at a higher risk of being taken advantage of by others, including exploitation or manipulation due to their vulnerability. This could be sexual exploitation or being manipulated or exploited into committing crime.  Lack of access to information about impairment and disability rights and limited opportunities for peer support can also have a negative impact on the emotional wellbeing of disabled young people. There is often not enough focus on identity-related needs and emotional wellbeing and a lack of opportunities for participation to build the resilience and capacity of young disabled people to exercise their rights and make a valued contribution to society.  Young people with a disability living in rural areas may find it difficult to socialise and retain independence, as their ability to use public transport might be limited due to their disability. There is also a lack of provision of opportunities in rural areas for young people in their area to socialise, often there are more opportunities in bigger cities.  Social workers often don’t have expertise regarding transitions into adulthood, or less complex disabilities, as not all children/young people have a social worker who is specialised in this.  Specialised teams for children with a disability only work with those with the most complex disabilities. Therefore, these young people are potentially under-supported both by the fact that little is known about the specific needs associated with transition, as they are stuck in limbo between children/adults services, as well as the unique needs they have as a result of their disability. | |
| **2. Do you think that children and young people with a disability should have a statutory right to a transitions plan?** | |
| SASW believes a statutory right to a transitions plan would ensure that each young person with a disability has their individual needs recognised and would put support in place. It would also potentially decrease the risk of a gap between services, which is clearly significant.  SASW wishes to stress that, given the already overwhelming financial strain placed on local authorities, it is essential that appropriate funding is put in place to support any added statutory duties. This will ensure that frontline workers supporting vulnerable young people are supported to do their job to the best of their ability, and that the young people get the service they deserve. Any discussion of additional responsibilities made in statute needs to be accompanied by an increase in funding as appropriate.  Furthermore, a commitment needs to be made to ensuring that all agencies and professionals with responsibility for putting a transition plan in place are given appropriate training. | |
| **3. Why do you think that a transitions plan would be helpful or unhelpful?** | |
| SASW believe that a transitions plan that attends to the medical, psychosocial and educational/vocational needs of young people with a disability would be helpful. It is important that the young person and their parents/carers are at the centre of the decision making. In order to ensure a smooth transition between services a transitions plan should be co-produced with children and adult services together. A transitions plan would also provide greater clarity and guidance to social workers supporting such young people with their individual needs. | |
| **4. Will a National Transitions Strategy assist disabled young people to achieve independent living?** | |
| SASW believes that this could assist disabled young people to achieve more independent living, but it must be resourced properly to ensure it is successful. | |
| **5. What do you think the advantages and disadvantages would be of a National Transitions Strategy?** | |
| There is a risk of provision of support becoming a postcode lottery because of discrepancies between different local authority areas. As outlined above, provision of opportunities for young people with a disability to contribute to their community, socialise and live more independently will differ greatly in Edinburgh, versus more rural areas such as the Scottish borders. This is because of cuts to funding, or lack of availability of charities who facilitate this, as well as differences in good public transport links.  Different sectors must work together to ensure that young people with a disability are provided with equal opportunities. Health and social care, housing, social work and education must all work collaboratively to ensure the best outcomes for children and young people with a disability.  A National Transitions Strategy must ensure that all relevant stakeholders are included and foster understanding that everyone has their own unique, but equally important, role to play. | |
| **6. Do you think it is necessary for there to be a Minister in the Scottish Government with special responsibility for ensuring that children and young people with a disability receive appropriate levels of care and support in the transition to adulthood?** | |
| SASW believes that, given the unique set of needs for young people with a disability, and the lack of equal opportunities for them, a Minister with such a responsibility would highlight the need for improvements and advocate appropriately for change where required. | |
| **7. Do you have any other comments?** | |
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