

People with Disabilities

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what plans it has to evaluate access to justice for disabled people including the operation of the Appropriate Adult Scheme and the effectiveness of the Vulnerable Witnesses (Scotland) Act 2004. (S3W-17922)

Kenny MacAskill: The Scottish Government is committed to securing equal access to justice for disabled people. Through the multi-agency Justice Disability Steering Group we are working with key partners to ensure more effective engagement with disabled people. As part of this work the group is planning an event to be held next year that will involve disabled people in identifying how to improve the operation of the justice system in ways that promote better access and tackle discrimination.

We are supporting the Scottish Appropriate Adults Network in raising awareness and promoting consistency in the delivery of the Appropriate Adult Scheme across the country to better meet the needs of disabled people. We will also continue to facilitate the work of the multi-agency Witness Issues Group in monitoring, reporting and evaluating the impact of the Vulnerable Witness (Scotland) Act 2004 especially with regard to providing improved opportunities for all vulnerable witnesses, including disabled people, to give their best evidence.

Concessionary Travel

George Foulkes (Lothians) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive how many concessionary bus passes were issued by each local authority in each year since 2005. (S3W-17826)

Stewart Stevenson: The issuing of national entitlement cards is the responsibility of each local authority. Any available information relating to card issue statistics by year may be held by them. Transport Scotland does not hold this level of information but I can advise you that based on information supplied the following number of valid national entitlement cards were in circulation giving access to Scotland-wide free bus travel for older and disabled people as of 23 October 2008.

Local Authority	Eligibility Type					Totals
	60 Years and Over	Disabled	Disabled Plus Companion	Visually Impaired	Visually Impaired Plus Companion	
Aberdeen City	51,808	6,929	4,042	33	1,409	64,221
Aberdeenshire	39,670	2,083	1,466	79	400	43,698
Angus	23,409	781	604	240	117	25,151
Argyll and Bute	20,340	828	1,244	114	195	22,721
City of Edinburgh	79,775	3,969	8,998	597	1,180	94,519
Clackmannanshire	8,913	596	520	45	64	10,138
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar	6,327	199	141	22	19	6,708
Dumfries and Galloway	30,415	1,649	1,123	102	423	33,712
Dundee City	29,630	1,265	2,302	287	407	33,891
East Ayrshire	22,697	1,573	2,416	107	219	27,012
East Dunbartonshire	21,510	611	1,078	71	133	23,403
East Lothian	18,931	853	1,654	69	232	21,739

East Renfrewshire	16,624	560	913	71	101	18,269
Falkirk	27,452	2,008	1,290	125	284	31,159
Fife	67,184	2,911	12,987	60	944	84,086
Glasgow	89,317	8,616	17,415	681	1,411	117,440
Highland	41,539	2,588	1,803	260	540	46,730
Inverclyde	15,944	1,168	2,203	117	200	19,632
Midlothian	15,404	826	1,607	24	232	18,093
Moray	15,348	986	690	62	201	17,287
North Ayrshire	28,254	1,716	2,877	192	344	33,383
North Lanarkshire	51,152	4,250	6,552	277	506	62,737
Orkney Islands	4,368	188	191	12	20	4,779
Perth and Kinross	29,039	914	898	201	240	31,292
Renfrewshire	32,237	2,051	3,519	215	355	38,377
Scottish Borders	23,443	1,260	819	209	219	25,950
Shetland Islands	4,271	147	217	20	17	4,672
South Ayrshire	25,256	1,421	1,989	150	253	29,069
South Lanarkshire	54,329	3,334	5,675	260	577	64,175
Stirling	15,509	984	563	116	132	17,304
West Dunbartonshire	16,083	1,073	2,252	94	234	19,736
West Lothian	25,999	1,269	2,948	55	335	30,606
Totals	952,177	59,606	92,996	4,967	11,943	1,121,689

Access for People with Disabilities

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what plans it has to review its support for the provision of accessible information. (S3W-17924)

Stewart Maxwell: The Scottish Government is committed to making its information available to all, including disabled people. We take our duties under the Disability Discrimination Act seriously, and expect other organisations to do so too.

Both the Scottish Government website (www.scotland.gov.uk) and Intranet (Saltire) aim to ensure all content meets a minimum web accessibility initiative "AA" rating. All official publications are made available online in both html and PDF format. In addition www.scotland.gov.uk uses Dextert text to speech software for official publications and news releases.

We will supply Scottish Government published documents in alternative formats where appropriate or on request to increase public accessibility. These will include other languages, audio, Braille and large type formats and will include availability in electronic as well as printed formats.

We currently have no plans to review this provision.

Questions and Answers

Period ending: 21st Nov

Mental Health

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive, following publication of the report of the recent investigation by the Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland, Wrong place, Wrong time, whether it will urgently review the operation of adolescent mental health services across

Scotland to ensure a consistent approach to the care and treatment of 16 and 17-year-olds. (S3W-17186)

Shona Robison: I welcome the commission's continued attention to child and young people's mental health services and share the ambition for consistency of approach.

Working with NHS boards and other partners we continue to address and progress the recommendations made in The Mental Health of Children and Young People Framework for Promotion, Prevention and Care (Bib. number 38415). Full delivery will ensure equity of access across Scotland to services designed to meet the particular prevention, care, transition and recovery needs of children and adolescents.

Questions and Answers

Period ending: 14th Nov

Audiology

Cathie Craigie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive what importance it places on ensuring the best outcomes for deaf babies following diagnosis of hearing loss as a result of newborn hearing screening tests. (S3W-17158)

Shona Robison: Any child, following diagnosis of hearing loss, identified as a result of newborn hearing screening tests, will be referred to the paediatric department for a paediatric audiology diagnosis. Following the release of the Quality Standards for Adult Hearing Rehabilitation Services in October 2008, the Scottish Government is currently developing paediatric quality standards to insure quality improvement within the paediatric audiology services. The Audiology Services Advisory Group now has a clinical champion role for universal newborn hearing screening and paediatric audiology to support the quality improvement agenda.

Deaf and Hearing Impaired People

Cathie Craigie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it considers that deaf children require specialist support from the moment of diagnosis of hearing loss to facilitate access to language and communication. (S3W-17159)

Adam Ingram: Research shows that the earlier a child's needs are identified and met, the more successful results will be. This has particular implications for the support required by young children with language and communication difficulties. The Early Years Framework, which we are developing with COSLA, is about moving from intervention when a crisis happens, towards prevention, building resilience and providing the right level of support before problems materialise. We are looking to publish the Early Years Framework later this year.

Cathie Craigie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive which multi-agency professionals it believes should deliver interventions in the early years of a deaf child's life to ensure the acquisition of age-appropriate language and communication skills. (S3W-17160)

Adam Ingram: The Additional Support for Learning Act 2004 (ASL Act) emphasises the importance of effective multi-agency working. Appropriate agencies are required to respond to an education authority's request for help in the exercise of any of the authority's functions under the act, except under very limited circumstances. Appropriate agencies include, but are not limited to, social work services and NHS boards.

The ASL Act requires that support provision matches the need of every individual child or young person. Education authorities are best placed to identify the multi-agency professionals required to deliver effective interventions for individual deaf children.

Cathie Craigie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it acknowledges that there is an attainment gap between deaf pupils and their hearing peers. (S3W-17161)

Adam Ingram: The Scottish Government notes the national survey, *The Achievements of Deaf Pupils in Scotland*, which tracked the progress of deaf pupils from 2000 to 2004 and found that the attainment of deaf pupils was lower than that of their hearing peers.

The HM Inspectorate of Education and National Deaf Children's Society 2007 publication, *Count us in: Achieving success for deaf pupils*, signposts actions education authorities and schools can take to improve the experiences, outcomes and achievements of all deaf pupils.

In addition, by putting the learner at the centre, Curriculum for Excellence aims to increase attainment and achievement levels for all children and young people. Curriculum for Excellence will ensure a greater focus on personal support to enable deaf pupils to have access to the same range of learning opportunities as other pupils, whilst having their specific needs met through a curriculum designed to address and meet those needs. This should enable deaf pupils to progress well in school and to achieve and attain in line with national expectations.

Cathie Craigie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive whether it will consider introducing minimum professional standards for the delivery of early interventions and support to deaf children and their families following diagnosis of hearing loss. (S3W-17162)

Adam Ingram: Ensuring those working with deaf pre-school children have the appropriate experience and skills set is a matter for local authority employers. The Scottish Government has no plans to introduce minimum professional standards for the delivery of early interventions and support to deaf children and their families following diagnoses of hearing loss.

Teachers employed wholly or mainly to teach hearing impaired pupils are required to possess an appropriate qualification as laid out in *The Requirements for Teachers (Scotland) Regulations 2005*.

Cathie Craigie (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive, following introduction of universal newborn hearing screening in 2005, what measures have been taken to ensure that education professionals working with deaf babies and their families in the home environment have the training necessary to deliver this support effectively. (S3W-17163)

Adam Ingram: Within the context of the concordat and the National Performance Framework, the design of local services, including the employment and training of education professionals working with deaf babies and their families in the home environment, is a matter for local authority employers.

The Scottish Government is absolutely committed to early intervention. The Early Years Framework, which we are developing with COSLA, is about moving from intervention when a crisis happens towards prevention, building resilience and providing the right level of support before problems materialise. We are looking to publish the Early Years Framework later this year.

The Additional Support for Learning Act 2004 requires education authorities to provide additional support to disabled children in their area, who have been brought to their attention by an NHS board as having, or appearing to have, additional support needs arising from a disability within the meaning of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

Questions and Answers**Period ending: 7th Nov****Blood Transfusion Service**

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): To ask the Scottish Executive, further to the answer to question S3W-15488 by Shona Robison on 3 September 2008, whether the results of the recent consultation on the Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service strategy for the next five years and beyond have been published. (S3W-17026)

Shona Robison: The response to the recent public consultation on the Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service's strategy for the next five years is now available on their website www.scotblood.co.uk. On 31 October 2008, printed copies were forwarded to each MSP and anyone wishing a printed copy should contact the Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service directly.