



### **British Sign Language (Scotland) Bill Update**

#### **The Education and Culture Committee**

The Committee published its Stage 1 report on the 27<sup>th</sup> April. To read the report, go to <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/88810.aspx> . The executive summary is available in BSL - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y8B1m576D4Y&app=desktop>

The Stage 1 debate will take place on Tuesday 5th May 2015.

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

The **Education and Culture Committee** is holding a short inquiry to consider how the attainment levels of school pupils with a hearing and/or a visual impairment can be improved. The Committee recognises that children with a sensory impairment may have other disabilities, which may have a significant effect on education and can require complex additional support. Therefore, the Committee's inquiry focuses solely on children with a sensory impairment and no other disabilities. These children may refer to themselves as Deaf, deaf, hearing impaired, dual sensory impaired, Deaf/blind, blind or visually impaired.

The call for evidence is now closed. To read the evidence submitted, go to <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/CurrentCommittees/89076.aspx>

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**S4W-24948: Mary Scanlon, Highlands and Islands, Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party, To ask the Scottish Government what baseline date has been used to measure progress and performance against the recommendations made in the 2009 report, *The Long and Winding Road: A Roadmap to British Sign Language and Linguistic Access in Scotland*.**

#### **Minister Alasdair Allan:**

The Scottish Council on Deafness (SCoD), which chairs the British Sign Language and Linguistic Access Working Group has recently completed a report setting out progress in key areas and concludes that "since 2009, many of the desired outcomes in the roadmap have been achieved, if not in their entirety, then at least in part". While some progress has been made towards gathering data on deaf people, for example the inclusion of a question on British Sign Language in the 2011 census, there is currently no baseline and no performance indicators in place to measure performance in most areas highlighted in the roadmap.

However, the Equality and Access for Deaf People project funded by the Scottish Government and hosted by SCOD since 2012 has started to build a picture of current need and provision for deaf and deafblind people across the public sector. This work will be further developed through Scottish Government funding in 2015-16.

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx?SearchType=Advance&ReferenceNumbers=S4W-24948&ResultsPerPage=10>

The **Roadmap Review** will be available on the SCoD website shortly.

### **Early Years Education**

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**S4O-04208 Cara Hilton (Dunfermline) (Lab):**

**To ask the Scottish Government how successful it has been in implementing the extension of 600 hours of free early education to eligible two-year-olds.**

**The Minister for Children and Young People (Fiona McLeod):**

The Scottish Government worked closely with local authorities to ensure that places for the estimated number of additional two-year-olds were available from autumn 2014. In the annual census in September 2014, which reported in December 2014, 5,774 two-year-olds were registered for a funded early learning and childcare place.

**Cara Hilton:**

Is the minister aware that a recent freedom of information request to all local authorities in Scotland found that around 40 per cent of places for eligible two-year-olds were not taken up in term 1? Given that this is a flagship policy and given the importance of intervening early to ensure that the most vulnerable children get the best start, what further action will be taken to ensure that the policy is delivered effectively?

Furthermore, given that that comes on top of the thousands of three and four-year-olds who have missed out on their 600 hours, can the minister say whether Nicola Sturgeon has met the fair funding for our kids campaign group yet? For the thousands of parents who are missing out on free childcare, the clock is ticking and we have seen little action to sort the mess out.

**Fiona McLeod:**

I am afraid that I do not quite understand where Cara Hilton gets her statistics from. [Interruption.]

**Fiona McLeod:**

In the September census, 10 per cent of all two-year-olds had taken up the provision within the first month of eligibility. That is 10 per cent against a target of 15 per cent. Therefore, within the first month, two thirds had taken up their eligibility.

We are not happy to stop there. We have been doing marketing and working with health visitors and the Department for Work and Pensions to ensure that the final third of our vulnerable two-year-olds take up their funded places.

The First Minister has already met the fair funding for our kids campaign group, and I know that she has offered to meet it again.

**Liz Smith (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con):**

A parliamentary answer that I received on 20 March, which I have here, tells me that the details of the funding model by which the Scottish Government predicted a cost of £881 million for the 30 hours of nursery care per week have not yet been published. When will those details be published?

**Fiona McLeod:**

The eligibility relates to work and benefits. It has also been extended to those who are looked after, under a kinship care order or under guardianship. Those are the criteria that we are using.

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/28862.aspx?r=9894&i=90590>

**Meningitis B (Babies)****S4F-02727 Jim Eadie (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP):**

**To ask the First Minister what steps the Scottish Government is taking to protect babies from meningitis B.**

**The First Minister (Nicola Sturgeon):**

Meningitis B can be devastating for children and for families. The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation has recommended that babies from two months old should be vaccinated against the disease. I am very pleased to confirm that Scotland will be one of the first countries in the world to offer a meningitis B vaccine as part of our routine childhood vaccination programme.

**Jim Eadie:**

I thank the First Minister for that answer. Does she agree with the World Health Organization that immunisation is a proven, safe and cost-effective tool for controlling and eliminating life-threatening infectious diseases, thereby saving millions of lives every year? Given that meningitis B is life threatening and is most common in babies and young children, does she agree that the roll-out of the vaccine is a significant step in making meningitis B a disease of the past, along with polio and tetanus? Can she provide more detail on what specific age groups will be covered by that vaccination in order to save lives and tackle the effects of meningitis B?

**The First Minister:**

A total of three doses of the meningitis B vaccine will be given. They will be given at two, four and 12 months of age. All babies who are aged two months at the point of the programme's introduction will be eligible for the vaccine and, as advised by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation, there will also be a one-off catch-up programme for babies aged three and four months when the programme begins.

The programme has the real potential to save lives, and I know that everybody across the chamber will welcome it.

**Elaine Smith (Coatbridge and Chryston) (Lab):**

Another life-threatening disease is meningitis W. Will the vaccine for that be offered in Scotland to teenagers?

**The First Minister:**

As Elaine Smith will be aware, we follow the advice of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation when it comes to the vaccines that are offered in Scotland. The decision around meningitis B flows from the recommendation that JCVI has made. We will continue, across a whole range of illnesses and diseases for which there are vaccinations, to follow that expert advice, and we will seek to apply it as quickly as possible.

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/28862.aspx?r=9894&i=90590>

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**Educational Attainment (North Ayrshire)**

**S40-04271 Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP):**

**To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to raise educational attainment in North Ayrshire.**

**The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning (Angela Constance):**

Ensuring that every child reaches their full potential, whatever their background, is at the heart of our ambition for education, which is why we launched the Scottish attainment challenge, backed up by the £100 million Scottish attainment fund. North Ayrshire is one of the seven local authority areas that have been identified as the first beneficiaries of the fund, which will allow for substantial financial support to put in place effective interventions.

North Ayrshire also benefits from the universal support that is provided to all authorities through a range of existing and new national programmes that are focused on raising attainment and reducing the equity gap. They include the raising attainment for all programme; attainment advisers in every authority; the read, write, count campaign and the £3 million access to education fund.

**Kenneth Gibson:**

I understand that North Ayrshire Council intends to focus on classroom practice, teaching and assisting parents in providing learning support for their children. What impact will that have on educational outcomes throughout North Ayrshire?

**Angela Constance:**

Mr Gibson will be pleased to know that on Monday I met representatives of North Ayrshire Council and other local authorities that are among the first to benefit from the Scottish attainment challenge and the Scottish attainment fund. All those local authorities are working hard to develop and implement the plans to take forward that ambitious programme. As Mr Gibson knows, tackling inequality is at the heart of the Government's agenda, so that every child can succeed in school and gain the skills that they need for life. All the evidence shows that good-quality teachers and teaching are crucial to making a difference, as are programmes that help parents to support their children's learning at home. I believe that, if North Ayrshire and the other local authorities pursue such evidence-based approaches, they will make a big difference to improving educational outcomes and reducing the attainment gap for children living in the most deprived communities. Given Mr Gibson's interest in those efforts on behalf of his constituents, I would be happy to share with him the details of the fund and the programme as it develops.

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/28862.aspx?r=9924>

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**Debate on the Living Wage****The Deputy Presiding Officer (Elaine Smith):**

The next item of business is a members' business debate on motion **S4M-12938**, in the name of **Neil Findlay**, on expanding coverage of the living wage. The debate will be concluded without any question being put.

Motion debated,

**That the Parliament understands that 427,000 Scots earn less than the living wage, which is currently set at £7.85 per hour, including 18% of workers across the Lothian region; considers that low pay and job insecurity are major factors contributing to in-work poverty, and notes calls for the Scottish Government to provide guidance to public sector organisations advising them that they can ensure that the living wage is paid by giving due consideration to pay rates while assessing a company's general approach to recruitment and staff engagement at the selection stage of any contract.**

**Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Lab):**

More than 414,000 Scots, many of them working in this city and 16,000 of them in my county of West Lothian, are paid below the living wage of £7.85 an hour. That represents 20 per cent of our workforce. For those workers, low pay and job insecurity act like a cancer, eating away at them and impacting on every aspect of their lives, including their health, diet, housing, relationships and general wellbeing, as well as the wellbeing of their family and their community.

When low pay is coupled with zero-hours job insecurity, the situation is made dramatically worse. If someone does not know how many hours they will be working and how much pay they will receive, how on earth can they plan their life and their budget, pay their bills and provide for their family? The combination of low pay, job insecurity and the attack on the benefits safety net has resulted in the growth in payday lenders, food banks and in-work poverty.

Low pay and job insecurity are bad not just for our people but for our economy and the cohesion of wider society. The huge concentration of wealth in so few hands across Scotland and the United Kingdom is even more galling. Only last week, The Sunday Times rich list showed how the very wealthiest in our country have doubled their wealth in the past 10 years while the rest of the people have experienced a real-terms cut in income. As policy makers, the challenge for us is what we do

about those things, because at all levels of government there are things that can and should be done. Yes, there are European Union rules, and yes, employment law is reserved, but we in this Parliament are not powerless to act, and we have a duty to act.

The Scottish Government said that it would produce statutory guidance on the living wage when the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Bill was passed in 2014, yet here we are a year later and no statutory guidance has been produced. The Scottish Government continues to hide behind EU advice and new EU directives as a reason to delay issuing that guidance. However, as with any EU advice, it is what we ask and how we ask it that determines what advice is given. If we ask whether we can force companies to pay the living wage in publicly procured contracts, we are likely to get a negative response, but if we ask how we can use public procurement to ensure that the living wage is paid in publicly procured contracts, we are likely to get a very different response. I think that that gets to the nub of the issue.

After eight years, it is my view that, rather than being inventive, enthusiastic and evangelical about extending the living wage, the Scottish Government has had to be forced to act on the issue at every stage.

To read the full debate, go to

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/28862.aspx?r=9924>



www.parliament.uk

UK Parliament

**There is no Westminster update as Parliament was dissolved on Monday 30 March 2015 until after the General Election.**