



## **Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee: Inquiry into Committee Effectiveness**

**Children in Scotland**

**18 April 2025**

### Background

Giving all children in Scotland an equal chance to flourish is at the heart of everything we do.

By bringing together a network of people working with and for children, alongside children and young people themselves, we offer a broad, balanced, and independent voice. We create solutions, provide support, and develop positive change across all areas affecting children in Scotland.

We do this by listening, gathering evidence, and applying and sharing learning, while always working to uphold children's rights. Our range of knowledge and expertise mean we can provide trusted support on issues as diverse as the people we work with and the varied lives of children and families in Scotland.

### Our response

**Q9. Which activities have you undertaken in the context of work of Scottish Parliament committees? (tick as many as apply)**

- Responding to calls for views or surveys.
- Writing to committees outside of calls for views
- Writing to or engaging with individual MSPs about committee scrutiny
- Engaging with committees at events or visits, including focus groups.
- Giving oral evidence to committees.

- Supporting service users/communities/organisation members to engage directly with committees by acting as an intermediary or facilitator.
- Following up to see how the Scottish Government has responded to committee work/recommendations.
- Other (free text)

**Q10. – How long have you been engaging in committee scrutiny? (tick one)**

- Six months or less
- 6-12 months
- 1-2 years
- 2-5 years
- 5-10 years
- More than 10 years

**Q11. – Which do you think is the most important thing for committees to spend their time on? (choose you top 3 priorities, in order)**

- Investigating current or topical issues.
- Examining proposed laws presented by the Scottish Government. **(Choice 3)**
- Examining proposed laws presented by non-Government members (private members bills, such as the Period Products (Scotland) Bill).
- Examining the Scottish Government's proposed spending plans (the Budget). **(Choice 1)**
- Examining the work of public bodies and commissioners.
- Reviewing existing laws and how well they work. **(Choice 2)**
- Examining petitions made by the public.

**Q12. – Can you highlight any pieces of committee scrutiny or work which have stood out to you as effective scrutiny, and can you briefly say why it was effective?**

Children in Scotland regularly engage in committee scrutiny in several ways indicated above, particularly in response to issues impacting children and young people. In our responses, we draw on evidence from our members and advocate for children's rights to be upheld and protected. The views and experiences of children and young people are kept at the centre of our approach to engagement in any form of committee scrutiny. In some cases, this has involved us engaging with members of our young advisory groups, Changing Our World and the Inclusion Ambassadors, to inform written consultation responses, sharing evidence from participants in our project and service work, or even supporting young people to engage directly with committee members.

As outlined in Children in Scotland's Principles and Guidelines to Meaningful Participation of Children and Young People<sup>1</sup>, our approach is grounded in the child rights model of participation developed by Professor Laura Lundy at Queens University, Belfast<sup>2</sup>. The Lundy Model provides a pathway to realising article 12 of the UNCRC<sup>3</sup>, which establishes children's right to express their views and be heard. There are four elements of the Lundy Model demonstrating the conditions for this right to be realised:

- Space – children and young people must be given safe, inclusive opportunities to form and express their views.
- Voice – children and young people must be facilitated to express their views.
- Audience – The views must be listened to.
- Influence – The views must be acted upon, as appropriate.

To ensure that children and young people have adequate opportunity to participate in committee scrutiny, we believe that committees should use the Lundy Model to inform their approach to consulting with children and young people. We wish to draw attention to a particularly positive experience with the Committee for Education, Children and Young People<sup>4</sup> in their inquiry into

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<sup>1</sup> [Children in Scotland \(2022\). Meaningful Participation of Children and Young People: Children in Scotland's Principles and Guidelines.](#)

<sup>2</sup> [The Lundy Model](#)

<sup>3</sup> [United Nations \(1989\). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.](#)

<sup>4</sup> [The Education, Children and Young People Committee](#)

Additional Support for Learning<sup>5</sup>, which we will explore through the four elements of the Lundy model.

### Space

We were contacted by the Committee, who requested to have a meeting with the Inclusion Ambassadors<sup>6</sup>, a group of secondary school aged children and young people who are entitled to additional support for learning and attend a variety of school provisions in Scotland. The Committee also offered the group the opportunity to give oral evidence at the Scottish Parliament. Reflecting on our work with the Inclusion Ambassadors and the conditions which create the best space to support their participation, we worked with the Scottish Parliament's Participation and Communities Team to arrange a meeting with the group. We communicated the importance of creating a space that felt safe for the group, which relied on making the environment and structure of the session follow a familiar format which the group were already comfortable with. The Committee understood this and agreed for Children in Scotland staff to make arrangements, plan the format for discussion, and lead communication with the Inclusion Ambassadors.

### Voice

As highlighted in our approach to participation<sup>1</sup>, developing positive relationships are essential to supporting children and young people to share their views. In discussions with Scottish Parliament's Participation and Communities Team, we expressed the importance of maintaining a relationships-based approach. The Committee understood this and agreed to limit the number of Committee members in attendance and for Children in Scotland staff to facilitate discussion, to ensure that the Inclusion Ambassadors were able to share their views primarily with those they had an existing participatory relationship with. This meant that the group were able to express their hopes for the future of additional support for learning without having to contextualise their views by sharing details of their experiences.

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<sup>5</sup> [Additional Support for Learning inquiry](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Inclusion Ambassadors](#)

## Audience

During the session, notes were taken by the Children in Scotland team and Scottish Parliament staff. This meant that notes could be cross-referenced to ensure that the Inclusion Ambassadors' views were accurately represented and ensure their voices were listened to. A note of the discussion was then published alongside evidence from parents, carers, and members of the education workforce, giving due weight to the views expressed by the Inclusion Ambassadors. The Committee concluded all evidence in their report on the Additional Support for Learning inquiry in May 2024<sup>7</sup>, in which the views and experiences of the Inclusion Ambassadors were acknowledged throughout. This was particularly clear where the Committee made reference to young people stressing the importance of positive relationships with support staff, and how challenges with recruitment of staff directly impacts young people's experiences of additional support for learning.

## Influence

Following publication of the report, the Scottish Government responded to the recommendations and asks made by the Committee<sup>8</sup>, with the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills expressing their continued commitment to improve the outcomes and experiences of children and young people with additional support needs and their families in Scotland. In November 2024, the third Progress Report on the Additional Support for Learning Action Plan<sup>9</sup> was published. Although this did not reflect the recommendations outlined by the Committee or any progress that could have been made on them, the Additional Support for Learning Project Board shared that they did take the recommendations into consideration to strengthen the content of the updated Action Plan. While it may not be clear at this stage how far the recommendations of the Committee will influence the future of additional support for learning, it is evident that the Inclusion Ambassadors' views were given due weight in the inquiry.

This experience stands out as a strong example of a Scottish Parliament Committee demonstrating willingness to hear the views of children and young people with lived experience. This was supported by the Participation and Communities Team, who worked in partnership with Children in Scotland

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<sup>7</sup> [Education, Children and Young People Committee \(2024\). Additional Support for Learning inquiry.](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Additional Support for Learning - Response from the Scottish Government](#)

<sup>9</sup> [Scottish Government \(2024\). Additional Support for Learning Action Plan: 3<sup>rd</sup> Progress Report.](#)

staff and understood the need for a relationship-based approach. We recommend that Committees consider how the Lundy Model can be used as a framework for meaningful participation and engagement with children and young people.

**Q13. – Can you describe any pieces of committee work which have been less effective or have not achieved what you expected, and briefly explain why?**

While the example given above outlines the effectiveness of the Education, Children and Young People Committee's approach to consulting with children and young people in their inquiry into Additional Support for Learning, it is also important to highlight how this could be built upon.

It should be noted that outside of members of the Inclusion Ambassadors, the Committee did not consult with any other children and young people. Whilst the Inclusion Ambassadors' group have a range of experiences and attend a variety of school provisions across Scotland, the group is made up of young people who are secondary school aged. While some members of the group may have recalled and considered their experiences from primary school during the session, the Committee may have benefitted from hearing the experiences of children who are currently in primary school. When gathering evidence about an issue as broad as additional support for learning, it is critical to consider a wide range of perspectives from a wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds and circumstances. Children with 'complex additional support needs' did not have their views and experiences heard and we know through our services work that this is possible to achieve given the appropriate amount of planning and time to engage with them.

The Inclusion Ambassadors appreciated the time taken by the Committee to attend the session and hear their views and experiences. However, as indicated above, additional support for learning is a broad term which can encompass some young peoples' entire experience of school and conversely exclude some experiences. We acknowledge that time constraints did not allow for further engagement, and in this case, we also submitted a written response providing detail reflecting on the group's contributions over a longer period. In future, we recommend that Committees dedicate more time for repeat engagement with children and young people, using the Lundy Model and fully incorporating a rights-based model of engagement.

We understand the limitations that Scottish Parliament Committees face, such as time and resource to effectively engage with children and young people at scale. Even so, we recommend that Committees work in partnership with organisations in a similar way that the Education, Children and Young People Committee did with Children in Scotland to support the facilitation of meaningful participation and engagement with children and young people.

**Q14. – If there's anything else you'd like to say about your experience of committee scrutiny, please do so here.**

No comment.

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