



National Carer Organisations response to: A Consultation on the provisions of the Education Bill

Introduction

The National Carer Organisations welcome the opportunity to submit a response to Scottish Government's *A Consultation on the provisions of the Education Bill*.

The National Carer Organisations are Carers Trust Scotland, Carers Scotland, the Coalition of Carers in Scotland, MECOPP, Shared Care Scotland, and the Scottish Young Carers Services Alliance.

Together we have a shared vision that all of Scotland's unpaid carers will feel valued, included and supported as equal partners in the provision of care. The National Carer Organisations aim to achieve this through the representation of unpaid carers and amplifying their voices at a national level.

We believe we can deliver more for unpaid carers by working together to share our knowledge and experience, and by focusing our collective efforts on achieving improvements in areas of policy and practice that are of greatest concern to unpaid carers.

Consultation questions and response

Question 1: *What changes should we consider in terms of how qualifications are developed and delivered that you think would improve outcomes for Scotland's pupils and students?*

The Scottish Government recognises that there are at least 30,000 young carers in Scotland. Further extensive survey work by young carers services and Carers Trust shows that 1 in 5 children in every class has a caring role. However, the number of young carers recorded across schools in Scotland is significantly lower, just 5,107 young carers were recorded on SEEMiS (Scottish Educational Management Information Software) in school year 2022-2023. Many young carers struggle to juggle their education and caring responsibilities which can cause pressure and stress. However, with the right support in place, being at school can feel like respite for a pupil who is a young carer. Without support, young carers find attending school difficult. Carers Trust Scotland's 2023, [*Being a young carer is not a choice: It's just*](#)

[what we do](#). report found that 49% of young carer respondents said they 'never' or 'not often' get help in school to balance caring with their education.

Young carers in Scotland have highlighted the extra stress and burn out that caring responsibilities and studying for exams causes them. They often don't have time for any rest or play, 43% of young carers stated in Carers Trust Scotland's 2023 survey that caring 'always' or 'usually' affects how much time they can spend with their friends. As part of the National Discussion on Education consultation, young carer participants stated that they would prefer to be assessed on work completed throughout the year by teachers, rather than a final exam at the end.

"Like if you are having a really bad time with caring and are really worried about them, you are not going to be able to concentrate on an exam that could decide your future."

Young Carer, Focus Group, October 2022.

There should be a focus on flexible choice around exams, with support to all positive destinations and not only academic futures.

Question 2: *How best can we ensure that the views of our teaching professionals are taken into account appropriately within the new qualifications body, and do these proposals enable this?*

Not applicable.

Question 3: *How best can we ensure that the views of pupils, students and other learners are appropriately represented within the new qualifications body, and do these proposals enable this?*

It is vital that young carer and student carer voices are represented and understood at the proposed Board, Committee and Charter levels.

However, young carers and student carers are often not identified or supported within different education institutions. It is also important that we also take into account the voices of young carers with protected characteristics who might not necessarily be heard.

As highlighted in the Morgan Review: *"there have been significant increases in pupils receiving additional support as a result of; communication support needs (293% increase), **young carers (636% increase)**, bereavement (300% increase), family issues (353% increase).*

Whilst the young carers figures have increased significantly, the number of pupils identified as young carers is likely to be a underreporting of those who are young carers, due to the stigma and reluctance of young carers to identify themselves, or to be identified as a young carer."

It is therefore paramount that all education professionals, including those within the new qualifications body, undertake Young Carer Awareness Training. This could

result in more young carers being identified and supported within education and given the option to have their voices heard at the proposed Board, Committee and Charter levels.

All Learners in Scotland Matter; The National Discussion on Education highlighted:

*“We heard how being a **young carer** brings stress and worry as well as placing limitations on the ability to concentrate in class and to learn in school. There are simple things that can be done to alleviate this stress and worry which starts with engaging with young carers and the groups that support them.”*

*“It was also important for education professionals to be aware of, and understand, factors affecting their pupils’ mental health that may have an impact in school, for example, we heard of concerns that the experiences of **young carers** and of care experienced youth were not always recognised or understood.”*

This has been further echoed when young carers took part in a consultation with Scottish Parliament Health, Social Care and Sport Committee on Wellbeing of Children and Young People Inquiry. One of the Committee’s recommendations following this consultation was for:

“Young carers awareness training to be rolled out to all education professionals and health and social care staff.”

Question 4: *How can we ensure qualifications being offered in Scotland are reliable, of a high standard and fit for purpose?*

Not applicable.

Question 5: *How do you think the qualifications body can best work with others across the education and skills system to deliver better outcomes for all?*

As highlighted in our response on the National Discussion for Education, *“Every child and young persons’ individual needs are different. A lot of their informal learning happens away from school, including young carers who often develop other skills such as budgeting, resilience, and time management as a consequence of their caring responsibilities. Learning from outside of school based education should be given more weight and third sector organisations such as youth work, young carers services and sports should be consulted when looking at the needs of children and young people.*

Young carer services, including education workers, families and other organisations should be included in partnership working to support children and young people, including young carers to have their voices heard.”

Question 6: *Do you agree or disagree with the purposes set out? Is there anything in addition you would like to see included?*

The National Carer Organisations agree in principal, but we would like to see more weight given to training provided by third sector organisations, particularly those that work with young carers and other children and young people.

Question 7: *Do you agree or disagree with the range of establishments to be inspected by HM Inspectors of Education? Is there anything you would add or change?*

The National Carer Organisations agree with the range of establishments to be inspected by HM Inspectors of Education.

Question 8: *Do you have any specific comments on the role of the inspectorate of education in the inspection of publicly funded colleges, initial teacher education, early learning and childcare and / or modern apprenticeships?*

No.

Question 9: *Do you agree or disagree with the priorities set out? Is there anything in addition that you would like to see inspection cover?*

We agree in principal. As noted previously, it is paramount that young carer and student carer voices be heard as part of the inspection process. It should also be a priority for all inspections to include the identification and support being given to young carers and student carers within the education system.

Question 10: *Do you have a view on these options for establishing the new approach to inspection?*

No.

Question 11: *Do you have a view on how governance arrangements for the inspectorate could be developed to better involve providers, including teachers and other practitioners, pupils and students and parents / carers in inspection?*

The National Carer Organisations would support establishing an Advisory Council which would include representatives from teachers, practitioners, pupils, students and parents/guardians. We would also welcome the inclusion of representatives from additional support for learning practitioners and third sector organisations, especially those specially working with young carers and other children and young people nationally.

Question 12: *Do you have a view on how we make sure evidence from inspections is being used as fully as possible to drive improvement and inform policy and on who the inspectorate should report to?*

Article 17 of the UNCRC states that children have a right to information and they should be able to get this information in lots of ways. Evidence from inspections particularly from the pupil or student's education centre such as primary or secondary school should be made available to all children and young people and

given in different formats. They should be given time to process it and be given the choice to contribute or provide feedback.

This should also apply to any “documents, explaining how the inspectorate carry out their work, including inspection practices and findings. This could also include a specific requirement to report regularly on the overall performance of Scottish education, providing an overall view across the education system to inform Ministers, Parliament, providers and the wider public. Alternatively, the same requirement for reporting could be set out in legislation.”

Submitted by Kelly Munro and Paul Traynor, Carers Trust Scotland on behalf of the National Carer Organisations.

Contacts:

- Kelly Munro, Carers Trust Scotland: kmunro@carers.org
- Paul Traynor, Carers Trust Scotland: ptraynor@carers.org
- Claire Cairns, Coalition of Carers in Scotland: coalition@carersnet.org
- Fiona Collie, Carers Scotland: fiona.collie@carerscotland.org
- Kate Hogarth, Shared Care Scotland: kate.hogarth@sharedcarescotland.com
- James Calder, MECOPP: james@mecopp.org.uk