



Down's Syndrome Scotland

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PE1548/M

Public Petitions Committee
Scottish Parliament
EH99 1SP

Wednesday 20th May 2015

Dear Public Petitions Committee,

PE015648: National Guidance on Restraint and Seclusion in Schools

Down's Syndrome Scotland is the only Scottish charity focused solely on the needs of people with Down's syndrome and their family carers. We provide information, support and services for people with Down's syndrome, their families, carers and those with a professional interest. We also seek to improve public knowledge and understanding of Down's syndrome and to champion the rights of people with Down's syndrome. Our Family Support Service provides "all through life" support to families throughout Scotland, supported by local branches that hold activity groups for people with Ds and their families. We also conduct school consultation visits and training courses and offer a wide range of resources dealing with issues such as education and health.

As the petition above is currently being examined by the Public Petitions Committee, Down's Syndrome Scotland would like to take this opportunity to comment on some of the issues raised thus far.

As a charity which supports children with Down's syndrome and their families throughout the country, Down's Syndrome Scotland fully supports Beth Morrison's call on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to introduce National Guidance on the use of restraint and seclusion in all schools.

Similarly to the point raised by PAMIS on the lack of understanding of the needs of children with profound learning disabilities, we know that teaching and support staff throughout Scotland still lack knowledge of Down's syndrome, what it means for a child to have Down's syndrome and their specific learning profile/needs. Thus we would agree with the petitioner that staff training and supervision require to be

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addressed as part of the national guidance that is being called for. Children with Down's syndrome may in addition to their learning disability have limited communication skills and consequently use their behaviour as a method of communication. We know from experience that at times their behaviour can be perceived as negative and challenging, when they are in fact trying to communicate. This results in the children receiving negative responses from the adults around them and at times inappropriate or negative consequences for behaviour being set such as missing 'golden time', 'timeout', being kept in at playtimes to more serious consequences of being sent home, or temporary exclusions. Whilst we appreciate these consequences may not be perceived as serious as those mentioned by the petitioner, they relate back to the same core issue, that these happen often as a result of the adults not understanding the child's needs, the functions of their behaviour and not having the knowledge and skill set required to adequately support children with more complex needs.

Down's Syndrome Scotland believes that more attention and greater recognition should be given to the importance of Positive Behaviour Support approaches within education and beyond. As the British Institute of Learning Disabilities notes in its submission, 'PBS sits within a framework of person/child centred practice and human rights to ensure that improving the quality of life and wellbeing of the person is both an intervention and an outcome'. Focusing on teachers and support staff's training in Positive Behaviour Support should be a priority for every school in Scotland, along with training on learning disabilities like Down's syndrome.

As part of our services, we offer a variety of CPD accredited training for teaching, non-teaching, play staff, health professionals, health students and carers to meet the additional support needs of children with Down's syndrome. As an example, our 'Positive Behaviour Support & Management training' course is aimed at teachers and support staff to ensure they feel confident understanding and managing behaviour of children and young people with Down's syndrome. The course focuses on what causes difficult behaviour, a functional and positive approach to behaviour management as well as the importance of communication and visual supports.

Finally we fully support Ms Morrison's recommendation of a Short Life Working Group to look at these issues. Down's Syndrome Scotland would be keen to contribute to such group should it be established. We also believe that the remit of

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the Care Inspectorate should be reviewed to cover both the non-educational areas and the classroom as requested by the petitioner.

We trust these comments assist the Committee with its enquiry. Please do not hesitate to contact our office should you have any questions.

Yours sincerely,

Rachel Le Noan
Policy Officer

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