



PE1548/G

20 April 2015

Clerk to Public Petitions Committee
Room T3.40
The Scottish Parliament

For the attention of Committee Members

Consideration of Petition PE1548 (National Guidance on Restraint and Seclusion in Schools)

COSLA welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Public Petitions Committee call for evidence.

The Committee should be aware that the timing of the call for evidence has not allowed us to present a paper to our Education, Children and Young People's Executive Group or to seek their views. We have based our response on knowledge of existing guidance and having held conversations with colleagues involved in the management of education services.

Existing Guidance

There is advice and guidance on encouraging positive behaviours in schools as well as specific guidance on the use of restraint including "Holding Safely". We support the current position where schools use existing resources to develop their own procedures. This provides the flexibility to take account of individual situations. Councils take their responsibility to ensure the care and protection of all staff and pupils extremely seriously. Complementing this Education Scotland currently inspects both mainstream and special schools not just for educational provision but also to make sure schools are safe and nurturing environments for all pupils. The Care Inspectorate also have a role in ensuring pupils with additional care needs are well looked after.

Appropriate Staff Training

It is our understanding that trainee teachers will have general training in behaviour management as part of their initial teacher education but would not have training in restraint or seclusion techniques. Specialist techniques for new teachers, working in particular sectors rather than in mainstream schools, may be delivered in house by more experienced staff members.

The petitioner calls for training to be provided by British Institute of Learning Disability accredited providers. We do have some reservations about the call to make this approach mandatory. Firstly we understand that this training can be more expensive than in house training. Secondly the setting of school policies on relationships, behaviour and restraint are the responsibility of the Head Teacher and the education authority who should take account of existing best practice and guidance. COSLA takes the view that schools having the flexibility to take varied approaches to staff training in behaviour management is desirable.

Scottish Advisory Group on Relationships and Behaviour in Schools (SAGRABIS)

COSLA's Spokesperson for Education, Children and Young People co-Chairs this group with the Minister, Dr Allan MSP. Generally a number of different approaches to behaviour and relationship management strategies are adopted by schools and SAGRABIS has seen various examples including the use of restorative practice which help young people reflect and can work towards reducing future incidents.

Nurture strategies are also used and are an early and effective intervention strategy which offers children and young people the opportunity to learn in a supportive environment supported by well trained staff. With nurture strategies children and young people develop attachments and relationships and can explore expectations of their behaviour including strategies to deal with anger issues.

Through our position of co-Chair we will raise the issue of restraint and seclusion as an agenda item at SAGRABIS in the near future.

Conclusion

Our initial view is that the existing guidance in Holding Safely is adequate and that schools need to have flexibility to manage individual situations within that guidance. However, we will discuss the use of restraint and seclusion and consider the petitioners request for specific guidance for schools at a future meeting of SAGRABIS.

We are of course happy to work with the Scottish Government and the Parliament.

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