



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

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Committee

By email

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Dear Sue,

Disabled Children and Young People (Transitions to Adulthood) (Scotland) Bill

As you are aware, the Finance and Public Administration Committee (the Committee) is responsible for scrutinising Financial Memorandums (FMs) to Bills. The Committee ran a call for views on the FM for the Disabled Children and Young People (Transitions to Adulthood) (Scotland) Bill between August and October 2022 and received six responses, all of which have been published on the Committee's call for views website¹.

To help inform your Stage 1 scrutiny of the Bill, the Committee has set out some of the key issues highlighted in written evidence from Perth and Kinross Council, Stirling Council, West Lothian Council, Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership, East Lothian Council and South Lanarkshire Council. We also note that COSLA's submission² to the ECYP Committee includes significant comments on the FM for the Bill, some of which we have summarised below.

¹ [Disabled Children and Young People \(Transitions to Adulthood\) \(Scotland\) Bill: Financial Memorandum - Scottish Parliament - Citizen Space](#)

² [Response 784018393 to Disabled Children and Young People \(Transitions to Adulthood\) \(Scotland\) Bill – detailed call for views - Scottish Parliament - Citizen Space](#)

The written submissions received by the Committee all consider that the FM understates the cost of implementing changes proposed by the Bill. They suggest that the Bill has significant financial implications for local authorities, particularly for children's and adult's social work services and that the expectation that some of the costs could be accommodated within existing resources is unrealistic".³

East Lothian Council note in their submission that the FM provides costings related to attending transition meetings only, however "meetings alone will not achieve the Bill's aim of improving outcomes for disabled children and young people in the transition to adulthood". They explain that implementing the plan is what will make a difference and this requires significantly more time and resources than is outlined in the financial memorandum."³ Implementing transition plans would, they contend, also likely include "phone calls and home visits, information gathering, provision of support and advice, referrals to other agencies, liaising with partner agencies, monitoring progress of plans, supporting during a crisis, etc. None of this can realistically be carried out in the 1-hour preparation for the meeting and 1 hour follow-up." This view is echoed by South Lanarkshire Council, who highlighted their current approach whereby young people being supported through transition planning will often, for a period of planning, have an allocated worker from children's services and adult services concurrently. Continuing this approach will therefore increase the estimated costs in the Bill.

The FM states that, based on census figures, there are on average 125 disabled young people per local authority leaving school each year and assess that approximately 60 disabled children per year per local authority will require support with their transition plans. As East Lothian Council highlight this is significantly more than their current provision of 25 children per year who are supported to transition from children's services to adult services. As such they consider that it is therefore unrealistic to expect that support for all eligible children and young people can be met within existing resources. Perth and Kinross Council, whilst supportive of the principles of the Bill, also consider that the additional responsibilities arising from Bill cannot be met by current resources and that "the FM does not detail funding the support that maybe required in the transition process to increase independence, accessing future resource and develop links between the school environment and adult life".⁴

Both East Lothian Council and Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership note that the absence of a definition of 'disabled child and young person' and the criteria used for eligibility for a transition plan could also significantly increase the numbers eligible, for example children and young people with autism or those with a

³ [Response 1044288704 to Disabled Children and Young People \(Transitions to Adulthood\) \(Scotland\) Bill: Financial Memorandum - Scottish Parliament - Citizen Space](#)

⁴ [Response 584135334 to Disabled Children and Young People \(Transitions to Adulthood\) \(Scotland\) Bill: Financial Memorandum - Scottish Parliament - Citizen Space](#)

mental health issue who are not necessarily involved with social work services under current provision could now be eligible under this Bill.

A number of the submissions question the accuracy of the costs of £27,197 attributed to supporting transitions in year one of the Bill's implementation (rising to £139,605 per year for each authority). Based on reviews of their budgets, East Lothian Council suggest that the costs identified to support young people moving from children's services to adult services is approximately £350,000 to £400,000 per young person per year. As such they estimate that, based on current costs, increasing provision from 25 children to 60 per year will incur costs between £12,250,000 and £14,000,000 per year. Similarly, South Lanarkshire Council notes that although a process is currently in place, transitions are met within generic caseloads. Providing support to approximately 60 young people would equate to a minimum of 3 full caseloads. The authority does not have dedicated 3 transition workers, nor could this be met within the estimated cost of £27,197 per year.

Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership (Glasgow HSCP) raises concerns regarding the use in the FM of £36,000 to indicate the salary of the local authority officer preparing the transitions plan. They argue this understates the potential costs, given current salary scales for a qualified Social Worker in Glasgow HSCP are between £36,599 - £42,637. Whilst they recognise that this figure has been used as an average, "the number of young people will vary across the 32 LA's with Glasgow having a significant share". They also highlight that the FM does not take into account pay inflation or management oversight of such staff. Similar concerns around salary rates were noted by West Lothian Council, as well as in relation to the additional financial implications arising from an increase in transition plans for those cases that did not previously have social work involvement.

In COSLA's submission to the ECYP Committee several concerns regarding the assumptions for demand and implementation that underpin the figures in the FM are raised "some of which we believe result in an underestimation of the likely costs". COSLA highlight the work they have undertaken with Social Work Scotland and Directors of Finance to estimate the true costs of the Bill which was then subsequently provided to the Member in charge of the Bill. They explain that "though they were based on estimates and at a point in time, the figures we shared came to over £9.5M per annum from year one of implementation of the Bill."

The FM states that "...not every young disabled school leaver will want, or will require, ongoing support through a transitions plan, e.g. those who enter employment (approximately 40%) or Higher Education (11%). In addition there will be an attrition rate of those seeking support. For example over time other young disabled people may become discouraged from seeking further support if it makes no positive difference to their lives whilst others may lose contact with the local authority due to unreported changes of address etc." In their submission, COSLA

argue that, whilst it's reasonable to assume less than 100% take up, in reality under this Bill local authorities will have a duty to provide a plan for every Disabled Child and Young Person by their 16th birthday. Based on the FM estimate of "4,000 disabled children and young people completing their time in school per year, and all such children and young people from 14 to their 26th birthday having a Transition Plan there will be 48,000 children and young people entitled to a Transition Plan at any one time".

Alongside highlighting some of the same concerns raised in written evidence with us by individual local authorities, COSLA also considers that the FM does not take into account requirements such as advocacy and translation, or the need for guidance, training and support in the initial stages of implementation. They note the potential for additional costs arising from how the phased introduction of transition plans is undertaken. COSLA's submission also highlights that "local authority professional advisors including representatives of Social Work Scotland, Association of Directors of Education, Local Authority Directors of Finance and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives [...] reflected that the FM failed to fully account for "compounding": the fact plans would be in place and managed over many years."

The Committee invites you to consider the issues raised in this letter, and the written responses we have received, as part of your scrutiny of the Bill.

Yours sincerely,

Kenneth Gibson MSP
Convener
Finance and Public Administration Committee