

Cross-Party Group on Families Supporting Children's Learning

Wednesday 4 February 2026, 1pm to 2pm

Draft Minute

Present

MSPs

Fulton MacGregor MSP (Co-convener) (Chair)
Oliver Mundell MSP (Co-convener)

Invited Guests

Diane Delaney (Give Them Time)
Willie French (Upstart Scotland)

Non-MSP Group Members

Susan Doherty (Education Scotland)
Clair Halliday (Kindred)
Katie Hunter (University of Strathclyde)
Vicki Lavelle
Helena Macormac (AHDS)
Sara McFarlane (Connect)
Ross Wight (Govan Law Centre)
Gavin Yates (Connect)

Apologies

Beverley Ferguson (Education Scotland)
Denny Henderson (Connect)
Stephen Kerr MSP
Lydia McDonald (Connect)
John Stephens (Scottish Government)
Sarah Walker (NASUWT)
Annie Watson (Enquire)

Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting of 7 October 2025 were approved.

Review of previous work – overview and discussion of the work that the CPG carried out over the Parliament term.

The secretariat gave a presentation of the work carried out by the CPG over the Parliamentary term.

Previous Meeting Topics:

- Roundtable discussion: Scottish education reform and the involvement of parents and families
- Roundtable discussion: Parental involvement and engagement of parents of children with additional support needs
- Presentation on the Give Them Time successful campaign for a further year of nursery funding for all children legally deferring their primary one start in Scotland.
- Presentation of survey of CPG member views on the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006
- Presentation by Upstart Scotland on the case for raising the school starting age, and presentation on the Scottish Assembly of Parents and Carers
- Presentation by Parenting Across Scotland on its work and its campaign to increase young people's access to hobbies
- Presentation by Children in Scotland on school attendance of ASN pupils, and presentation by the Awards Network on youth awards

Reports and Letters:

- Report on parental involvement and engagement of parents of children with additional support needs –
 - wrote to local authorities, COSLA and ADES for more details on how local authorities responded to the action point in the Scottish Governments ASL Action Plan to encourage local authorities to establish parent groups to support enhanced collaboration and communication on additional support for learning
 - created a report of findings from this correspondence and shared with the Scottish Parliament Education, Children and Young People Committee and Scottish Government
 - also wrote to the Convenor of the Scottish Parliament Education, Children and Young People Committee to highlight discussion from the initial CPG meeting on this topic
- Report on CPG member views on the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006
 - wrote to Scottish Government to share findings

Following this presentation, the meeting heard from two previous speakers: Diane Delany of the Give Them Time campaign for a further year of nursery funding for all children legally deferring their primary one start in Scotland, and Willie French of Upstart Scotland on the campaign for a dedicated kindergarten stage.

Give Them Time: While the campaign's aims were met, they are still fielding queries from parents, particularly around deferral for children 5 years old, and children with additional support needs. The campaigns Facebook group is still running and

providing support to parents. They are starting to see a cultural change with people seeing the benefits of a later start to schooling, however there is still varied views, and local authorities are not very proactive in informing parents of their right to deferral. The meeting discussed the need to help parents access support available to them such as from Kindred and the Goven Law Centre

Upstart Scotland: The kindergarten stage campaign has raised its profile with exposure in the media and references in Parliament. Upstart submitted a Parliamentary Petition and while the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee did not take it forward due lack of time available before the elections they were encouraged to resubmit in the new term. Upstart also published a book 'Born to Play' and are holding a drop in event at Moray House School of Education and Sport at the University of Edinburgh: 'Festival of Early Learning and Realising the Ambition' on Tuesday 24 February, 5.30 to 8pm. They are also encouraging political parties to include the kindergarten stage in their election manifestos.

The meeting discussed the benefits of a kindergarten stage in supporting children's developmental levels and additional support needs, and how the campaign is currently in the aspirational stage and there's still work to be done in how it will work in practice. Discussed the possibility of replacing current Primary 1 as a first step, the importance of play based learning, and the possibility of introducing a Members Bill in the next Parliament.

Future work – discussion on potential topics for next Parliament term

Potential topics discussed were:

- further engagement with parents on kindergarten stage proposals
- look at Co-ordinated Support Plans and issues with lack of consistency across local authorities and how they can be improved
- consider hosting an in-person event in Parliament to encourage more MSPs to get involved with the CPG

Any Other Business

To re-establish the CPG in the new Parliament. The convenors thanked CPG members for their work over the term and thanks were also given to the convenors, with a special thanks to Oliver and wishing him well as he will not be re-standing for election.

The meeting closed 2pm