

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee

2nd Meeting, 2023 (Session 6), Wednesday 8
February 2023

PE1907: Provide early learning & Childcare for all 2-year olds in Scotland

Lodged on	26 October 2021
Petitioner	Claire Beats
Petition summary	Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to provide funded early learning and childcare for all 2 year olds, removing eligibility criteria for access to services.
Webpage	https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE1907

Introduction

1. The Committee last considered this petition at its meeting on [26 October 2022](#). At that meeting, the Committee agreed to write to the Scottish Government
2. The petition summary is included in **Annexe A** and the Official Report of the Committee's last consideration of this petition is at **Annexe B**.
3. The Committee has received a new response from the Scottish Government which is set out in **Annexe C**.
4. Written submissions received prior to the Committee's last consideration can be found on the petition's webpage [petition's webpage](#).
5. Further background information about this petition can be found in the [SPICe briefing](#) for this petition.
6. The Scottish Government's initial position on this petition can be found on the [petition's webpage](#).

Action

The Committee is invited to consider what action it wishes to take.

Clerk to the Committee

Annexe A

PE1907: Provide funded early learning & childcare for all 2-year olds in Scotland

Petitioner

Claire Beats

Date lodged

26 October 2021

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to provide funded early learning and childcare for all 2 year olds, removing eligibility criteria for access to services.

Previous action

I have previously been in contact with Fergus Ewing MSP who advised me the idea was sound and to begin a petition for the matter.

Background information

Currently, the availability of early learning and childcare funding for 2-year-old children depends on certain eligibility criteria, such as their parents being in receipt of benefits or being vulnerable.

Lockdown babies especially have suffered from lack of play experiences, meeting peers, and opportunities that other children have always had. Enabling this new generation the chance to have funded nursery at 2 years old will greatly increase their potential. It will also help a lot of parents that are struggling financially as a result of Covid-19 job loss, for example.

As an early years practitioner I know what these babies have missed out on. Children have experienced facial expressions covered up in shops when normally they'd be smiled at, cancelled then limited baby groups, and soft play closed for 18 months. These kids need the chance to catch up on play and learning spaces they have missed out on.

https://www.midlothian.gov.uk/info/851/early_learning_nurseries_and_childcare/135/your_early_learning_and_childcare_options/3

Annexe B

Extract from Official Report of last consideration of PE1907 on 26 October 2022

The Convener: PE1907, on the provision of funded early learning and childcare for all two-year-olds in Scotland, was lodged by Claire Beats. The petition calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to provide funded early learning and childcare for all two-year-olds and remove the eligibility criteria for access to services.

The committee last considered the petition on 23 March, when we agreed to write to the Scottish Government for further information, including on its plans to address concerns about the impact of Covid-19 on the development of children born during the pandemic.

We have received a response from the Scottish Government, in which it refers to its “commitment to expand early learning and childcare to 1 and 2 year olds, starting in this Parliament with children from low income households.”

The response also states:

“the Scottish Government is funding a range of ... learning resources for ELC practitioners, which are directly relevant to supporting COVID-19 recovery”.

Do members have any comments or suggestions?

Alexander Stewart: Once again, this petition deals with a very live situation and set of circumstances. In its responses, the Scottish Government has indicated what it is trying to achieve, but it would be useful to get some further detail on the anticipated timescales for expanding early learning and childcare provision to one and two-year-olds. That will give us more clarity on where we stand and an idea of how to progress matters in the future.

The Convener: That seems sensible, Mr Stewart. Does the committee agree with that?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Annexe C

Scottish Government submission of 29 November 2022

PE1907/F: Provide funded early learning & childcare for all 2-year olds in Scotland

Thank you for your correspondence of 28th October, relating to Petition PE1907 in the name of Claire Beats, calling on:

“the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to provide funded early learning and childcare for all 2 year olds, removing eligibility criteria for access to services.”

We have previously provided a response to the Petition in written submissions of 4 November 2021 and 10 June 2022.

During consideration of the Petition at a meeting of the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee on 26 October 2022, the Committee requested further details from the Scottish Government on the anticipated timetable for expanding early learning and childcare to all 1 and 2 year olds.

On 6 October this year, we published ‘Best Start - Strategic Early Learning and School Age Childcare Plan 2022 to 2026’ which sets out our priorities over the period of the current Parliament, to 2026.

This includes a section on ‘*Progressing the expansion of our childcare offer, including ‘a new early learning and childcare offer for one and two year olds’*. More detail on this can be found here:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/best-start-strategic-early-learning-school-age-childcare-plan-scotland-2022-26/pages/5/>

I hope that you find this information helpful.