

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee

7th Meeting, 2023 (Session 6), Wednesday 3
May 2023

PE2005: Formal response to the annual Adoption Barometer Report in Scotland

Petitioner	Johnathan Patrick
Petition summary	Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to formally respond to the annual Adoption Barometer Report undertaken by Adoption UK.
Webpage	https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE2005

Introduction

1. This is a new petition that was lodged on 28 March 2023.
2. A full summary of this petition and its aims can be found at **Annexe A**.
3. A SPICe briefing has been prepared to inform the Committee's consideration of the petition and can be found at **Annexe B**.
4. While not a formal requirement, petitioners have the option to collect signatures on their petition. On this occasion, the petitioner elected to collect this information. 110 signatures have been received.
5. The Committee seeks views from the Scottish Government on all new petitions before they are formally considered. A response has been received from the Scottish Government and is included at **Annexe C** of this paper.
6. A submission has been provided by the petitioner. This is included at **Annexe D**.

Action

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

Clerk to the Committee

Annexe A

PE2005: Formal response to the annual Adoption Barometer Report in Scotland

Petitioner

Jonathan Patrick

Date Lodged

28/03/2023

Petition Summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to formally respond to the annual Adoption Barometer Report undertaken by Adoption UK.

Previous Action

I have engaged with my MSP Paul Sweeney who has been very supportive of a petition.

I have also spoken with Minister for Children and Young People, Clare Haughey, to advocate for the Scottish Government to prepare a formal written response to the Adoption Barometer.

Background information

The Adoption Barometer is an annual snapshot of the state of adoption in the UK and is the only comprehensive account of the lives of adoptive families across the UK and the policies and practices that affect adopted people and their families.

It contains invaluable findings and recommendations for the Scottish Government which, if implemented, could significantly improve the lives of adoptive families and children waiting to be adopted.

It shows the resilience and determination of adoptive families to reach for the very best for their children, but also details the challenges and barriers they face along the way.

The Adoption Barometer report (<https://www.adoptionuk.org/the-adoption-barometer>) contains invaluable insights and recommendations for national governments in a range of areas pertinent to adoption including the approvals and matching process; support for newly placed and established adoptive families; and relationships with birth parents.

The Adoption Barometer is professionally designed, delivered and presented and is the only report of its kind.

It warrants a formal written response from the Scottish Government detailing whether they accept the findings and recommendations and their policy response.

Annexe B

The logo for SPICe, featuring the text 'SPICe' in white on a dark purple background.

The Information Centre
An t-Ionad Fiosrachaidh

Briefing for the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee on petition [PE2005](#): Formal response to the annual Adoption Barometer Report in Scotland, lodged by Jonathan Patrick

Brief overview of issues raised by the petition

The petition calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to formally respond to the annual Adoption Barometer Report undertaken by Adoption UK.

The Adoption Barometer is an annual snapshot of the state of adoption in the UK and provides an overview of adoptive families across the UK and the policies and practices that affect adopted people and their families.

The Scottish specific data had 227 respondents. Respondents in Scotland were:

- more likely than in any other nation to be experiencing significant or severe difficulties when contacting adoption support services in 2021
- considerably more likely to be offered universal services (support groups, general training courses) or to be signposted to other statutory services, including mental health services.

7% of respondents said that a child had left the family home prematurely during the year.

Of those who said they had received support from adoption support services, another social work team, mental health services, education

services or a family support worker, 40% said the support had no positive impact.

Respondents agreed that adverse early experiences had negatively impacted their child's ability to cope academically and emotionally in education; and 80% said that their child needed more support in school than their peers. However, they were more positive about how well their child's school was working with them to support their child.

The UK-wide data found that more than four out of five children (81%) represented in the survey were reported to need more support in education than their peers, rising to 85% of secondary school children.

The report recommendations are outlined below:

- Create and implement quality standards for the journey of prospective adopters through preparation, approvals and matching, for use by all adoption agencies.
- Introduce ringfenced, multi-year government funding for adoption support across all nations of the UK.
- Produce clear, specific support plans for every child to be placed for adoption, distinct from the placement plan, agreed with their adopters and reviewed at least once a year.
- Adoption agencies to have a duty to provide the adoption support set out in a child's assessment of support needs.
- Train education and health professionals in early childhood trauma and associated conditions, including Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and Attachment Disorder.
- Provide free, expert, lifelong support for establishing and maintaining birth family relationships including during childhood and when tracing birth relatives in adulthood.

The Scottish Government commissioned an [Independent Care Review \(Care Review\)](#) in 2017 which was reported on in 2020. This was a root and branch review of the care system which listened to the voices of over 5,500 people with experience of the care system or who work within it. The Promise makes a series of recommendations in relation to adoption.

The review findings were published in February 2020, setting out the steps toward significant reform to the care system for children and young people. The main findings were set out in the main report [The Promise](#). It highlighted the importance of finding the best place for a child, avoiding adoption breakdown and supporting families who adopt.

Adoption in Scotland

There were 209 children approved for adoption; 199 children placed with their new adoptive families; and 189 children legally adopted in 2021. All of these figures are down from the previous years.

Almost half (49%) of children approved for adoption were in the two to five age bracket and 45% were infants (children under two years old). Prior to this there were more infants than two to five-year-olds being approved.

More adoptions broke down in 2021 than in any of the four preceding years, with 37 adoptions breaking down.

The number of households waiting for a child to be placed was higher in 2021 than in each of the three preceding years, with 205 households waiting for a child to be placed.

At the same time there were 134 children approved for adoption and waiting to be matched to an adoptive household (fewer than in each of the four preceding years).

Nicole Beattie
Senior Researcher
28 March 2023

The purpose of this briefing is to provide a brief overview of issues raised by the petition. SPICe research specialists are not able to discuss the content of petition briefings with petitioners or other members of the public. However, if you have any comments on any petition briefing you can email us at spice@parliament.scot

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in petition briefings is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware however that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.

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Annexe C

Scottish Government submission of 28 March 2023

PE2005/A: Formal response to the annual Adoption Barometer Report in Scotland

The Scottish Government would like to begin by acknowledging the ongoing engagement the petitioner has had with the Minister for Children and Young People, Clare Haughey MSP, and Scottish Government officials in relation to the Adoption Barometer Report.

Ms Haughey attended the formal launch of the Adoption Barometer 2022 report at the Scottish Parliament in June 2022. Whilst attending this event, Ms Haughey gave a speech where she recognised the report's findings and highlighted the Scottish Government's ongoing adoption policy work.

Further to this, the Adoption Barometer 2022 report was recently referred to in a Members' Debate in the Scottish Parliament on 9 March 2023, in which Ms Haughey acknowledged the findings of the report and spoke in further detail on the topic of adoption support. The official record of the debate can be viewed online here: [Members' Business — S6M-07728 Roz McCall: Scotland's Forgotten Children | Scottish Parliament TV](#).

Whilst the Scottish Government has welcomed the findings of the report, there are no plans to publish a formal written response. This is in line with our acknowledgement of previous publications of the annual Adoption Barometer reports. This is also consistent with the approach taken by other Governments across the UK.

We hope that the petitioners can understand that governments cannot respond formally to all publications. However, we appreciate the importance of the findings of this report, which will continue to inform ongoing policy development.