Briefing for the Public Petitions Committee

**Petition Number:** PE1409

**Main Petitioner:** Linda Whitmore on behalf of ENABLE Scotland

**Subject:** Mandatory training for education staff on ASL

Calls on the Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to ensure that all teachers and support staff are fully trained to provide the right additional support for children and young people with learning disabilities and/or autistic spectrum disorders.

**Background**

The General Teaching Council for Scotland sets out what a newly qualified teacher is expected to know. The *Standard for Initial Teacher Education* requires that newly qualified teachers:

> “Have knowledge and understanding of, for example, sustainable development, equal opportunities, additional support needs, citizenship, international education, education for work, enterprise.”

There are no mandatory qualifications for learning support staff in schools, although individual local authorities may ask for particular skills/experience or qualifications depending on the particular post. Staff in pre-school education are required to register with the Scottish Social Services Council. Managers and practitioners must have, or be working towards, certain qualifications in order to register. (Compulsory registration for support workers starts in December 2013).

**The Donaldson Review**

The Donaldson Review of teacher training does not list required content, but focuses rather on the approach and structure of teacher training. In terms of what initial teacher education should contain, the review states (p.34) that:

> “…any expectation that initial teacher education, will cover all that a new teacher needs to know and do is clearly unrealistic. [university staff] indicated that they had regularly tried to respond to a multitude of external demands and expectations and that there was a risk that the depth of study could suffer when there is significant pressure to increase breadth of study.”
In response to a questionnaire about what they found most useful in their ITE course, teachers did not rate their training on additional support needs to have been particularly useful. On a score of 1 to 12, with 1 being most useful, ASL training scored 8.32 (1,796 responses). The report stated that:

“…many new teachers also expressed a lack of confidence in dealing with some of the most challenging aspects of the professional role of the teacher. These include positive behaviour management and ways of supporting learning including for pupils with significant additional support needs.”

The review recommended that all new teachers should be confident in their ability to address additional support needs (especially dyslexia and autistic spectrum disorders).

Donaldson suggested that it is necessary to be explicit about the core knowledge, skills and competencies that teachers could update and refresh through CPD. The review suggested that this core content might include:

“Supporting learners, including the latest legislative and research based advice on meeting the needs of all learners including those with additional support needs such as dyslexia or autism.” (p. 68)

Current CPD provision

The petitioner mentions a survey by ENABLE which showed that 21 local authorities offer general ASL/equalities training to teachers, but the training is only mandatory in five authorities¹.

Seventeen local authorities offer general ASN/equalities training to support for learning staff but this is only mandatory in four areas.

Scottish Government Action

The Scottish Government commissioned the Donaldson Review on teacher training mentioned above. A working group is currently looking at how to implement the recommendations of the Review. The Government has also recently consulted on a common core set of skills for all children’s services workers.

Scottish Parliament Action

The Petitioner’s issue was raised by Joan McAlpine in parliamentary debate on 27th October.

Camilla Kidner
Senior Researcher
25th November 2011

¹ Bridging the Training Gap
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