Carers (Scotland) Bill

Scottish Council of Independent School (SCIS)

The Scottish Council of Independent School (SCIS) is providing views on behalf of our members as opposed to the impact on the organisation itself. SCIS feels that at present the degree to which it is able to comment is limited, as it remains unclear what the full impact the Carers (Scotland) Bill will have prior to more detailed individual data being gathered before the Bill being enacted.

1. Do you support the Bill?

2. What do you feel would be the benefits of the provisions set out in the Bill?

- SCIS recognises that independent school pupils who are young carers may benefit from the provisions of extra support set out in the Bill

- However, SCIS remains uncertain of the impact it will have, positive or negative, at present. There is insufficient data on the number and range of young carers in the independent school sector in Scotland

3. How do you feel the Bill could be amended or strengthened?

- If independent school staff are expected to undertake training to carry out their new duties then their right and access to nationwide training needs to be strengthened (along with clarity as to who is expected to provide the training and meet the costs for it)

- There is a need for further clarification of how pupils at independent schools are to be able to access the information and advice service local authorities must provide under this Bill. Links between local authorities and independent schools are not uniform or consistent at present, despite the requirements of GIRFEC. SCIS would be concerned if a pupil at an independent school was unable to access a service solely on the basis of their attending an independent school

- This Bill places a duty on local authorities to prepare a local carer strategy. It would be essential that independent schools and Named Persons therein could contribute to, and have a voice in, this process to ensure the needs of their pupils are considered and met

- There are potential concerns that an independent school could identify a young carer and the local authority could contest that young person’s eligibility meaning the individual could potentially miss out on access to advice, information and services available to young carers

4. Is there anything that you would add to the Bill?
• Guidance on the Bill must ensure that when local carer strategies are prepared independent schools are consulted (if duties relevant to independent schools are to be included in these strategies/if they will affect pupils at independent schools)

• Clarity would be helpful as to whether or not independent schools will be expected to provide ‘general services’ under point .13 in the Explanatory Notes

• SCIS hopes that confirmation could be provided that independent schools will not be expected to provide information and advice to pupils who are young carers under point 16 of the Explanatory Notes. Under the GIRFEC approach it is clear that all children should be able to access these services, regardless of where they attend school. SCIS hopes this service can be provided by the local authority to all children and young people within their area. Moreover, it may be that those within local authorities have greater expertise in relation to young carers and more experience of working with this group than staff within independent schools

• Further information is required about how independent schools are expected to identify pupils who are young carers (and may therefore wish for, and be entitled to, some additional support as a result of the Bill) within their school roll. The Scottish Government no longer collects any comprehensive data, via a census, on the independent school sector. SCIS is aware that several independent schools will already have detailed plans in place to assist young carers on their school roll. However, SCIS does not have comprehensive information regarding this

• SCIS would welcome information about how a young carer’s statement prepared by an independent school will be shared in order for approval by a local authority. As highlighted above this is dependent on local relationships and there needs to be clear links between local authorities and local authorities

• If independent schools are expected to produce young carer statements detail is required as to how will staff be trained in this area and who is expected to provide this training

• Further information is required about whose responsibility it would be to undertake awareness-raising with young carers in independent schools would be welcomed

5. Is there anything that you would remove from the Bill?

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