

## COSLA submission of 27 October 2022

PE1937/D: To give children the respect they deserve by providing options for privacy when changing for P.E.

COSLA is the voice of Local Government in Scotland. We are a cross-party organisation which champions councils' vital work to secure the resources and powers they need. We work on councils' behalf to focus on the challenges and opportunities they face, and to engage positively with governments and others on policy, funding and legislation. We welcome the opportunity to respond to this petition.

Supporting children and young people of all backgrounds to engage fully in their education is a priority and key commitment of Local Government. This includes ensuring all children can engage in and benefit from physical education and activity. Local Government also supports the incorporation of the UNCRC, sharing the vision of a Scotland where children's human rights are embedded in all aspects of society and public services, including education. Extensive work is underway across councils and schools to take forward this commitment, with extensive progress being made in a challenging landscape. Against this background, we recognise the crucial importance of ensuring that children and young people are treated with dignity and respect, and that their right to privacy is fulfilled, including in all educational contexts.

Local Government believes that it would not be appropriate for the important matters raised in this petition to be subject to national-level policy or guidance. Rather, the design and delivery of policy around the wearing of P.E. kits and options for changing sits most appropriately at the school level. School staff, including school leaders and teachers, are best-placed to understand the unique needs, context and circumstances of their school community, and design approaches which reflect and meet these needs. It is our view that where children or parents/ carers have concerns around these issues, these should be raised directly with school staff who will be in the best position to consider appropriate responses.

We believe that such an approach aligns with the important principles of flexibility within Scottish education, which allow schools and local authorities to design and deliver services to meet the needs of their communities, as reflected within the school empowerment agenda.

We hope that this information is helpful to the Committee in their consideration of this petition.