

PE1979/LL: Establish an independent inquiry and an independent national whistleblowing officer to investigate concerns about the alleged mishandling of child safeguarding enquiries by public bodies

Scottish Government written submission, 14 November 2025

Thank you for your letter dated 20 October 2025 in relation to the submission dated 16 September 2025 regarding Petition PE1979.

I would like to begin by underlining Scottish Government's commitment to ensuring children and young people in Scotland are protected from all forms of harm and are supported to reach their full potential.

The updated [National Child Protection Guidance](#) supports local areas to develop effective, evidence-based responses to all forms of child abuse and neglect. We are working with partners across Scotland to implement the guidance and support consistent and robust child protection practices across Scotland.

Scottish Government Responses

In the petitioners submission, it is highlighted that the offer to meet with the Deputy First Minister was not accepted. As portfolio responsibility for the safeguarding of children, including within an education setting, sits with the Minister for Children, Young People and the Promise, it was therefore more appropriate for this Minister to meet with petitioners. In this meeting, the Minister welcomed discussions around the concerns raised by petitioners and highlighted ongoing work being taken forward by officials. It is important to note that Scottish Government's Chief Social Work Adviser was also in attendance at this meeting.

In relation to the committee's recommendation of an independent national whistleblowing office, Scottish Government maintains the view that there are already a set of bodies and processes in place (such as the Care Inspectorate or the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman) in Scotland to provide independent inspections and investigations into specific incidents.

Work in this space remains a key priority for Scottish Government. Officials are actively considering the concerns raised by the petitioners and Ministers have also responded to the Petition to note that the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry is undertaking an extensive review of child protection policy and practice in Scotland and will report with recommendations for further development in due course.

Engagement and analysis is ongoing to understand complaints and whistleblowing processes across organisations (including those within education). This issue has been discussed by the National Public Protection Leadership Group (NPPLG) who acknowledged the complexities associated with whistleblowing procedures, especially in terms of clarity and confidence among staff to raise concerns, and agreed to support further work at its upcoming January meeting.

This builds on the previous work of an information sharing working group – established in 2022 with the aim of clarifying how information flows between various bodies once a child protection concern is raised, or when allegations are made against a professional which would impact their suitability to work in a role that involves responsibility for children - and has involved engaging with a range of relevant stakeholders including local authorities, the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS), COSLA, Education Scotland and the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES).

These issues were also discussed at the Education and Childcare Assurance Board (ECAB) in September 2025. The ECAB, established in April 2025, is a time-limited group to enable both the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills and the COSLA Children and Young People spokesperson to consider key national and local level data, discuss and set strategic priorities, and build a shared understanding and joint approach to those priorities, in line with Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC).

It was a helpful discussion where the Cabinet Secretary underlined the assurance she requires about the robustness of these important processes, and the key role that local authorities, COSLA and ADES have in providing this assurance.

General Teaching Council Scotland - Fitness to Teach Review

The submission also sets out several concerns in relation to GTCS and the Fitness to Teach (FTT) process. Robust regulation of the teaching profession is essential to safeguarding children and young people—ensuring that only those who are safe, skilled, and accountable are entrusted with their care and education.

We acknowledge the important report by the Professional Standards Authority, commissioned by the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS), in their role as the independent regulator for teachers in Scotland. Scottish Government will consider the findings of this report, and the summary of GTCS's call for views, carefully.

Scottish Government officials are staying in close communication with GTCS while it implements the recommendations of the PSA Report. The GTCS is an independent regulator and, therefore, it is within their remit to take forward improvement work of their processes.

Impact of Delays on Child Safeguarding

In response to concerns around safeguarding issues that have arisen since the petition launched in 2022, Scottish Government remains live to specific concerns with child protection practice and we use all experiences shared with us to inform our ongoing review and improvement of child protection policies in Scotland. We would also highlight that there has been a significant amount of work that has been done since 2022 to improve child protection practice in Scotland, including the implementation of the updated National Child Protection Guidance. If new concerns regarding individual cases have emerged then we would strongly urge that these are reported to the appropriate authorities, particularly Police Scotland, so that they can be properly investigated.

In relation to the child safeguarding allegations in Edinburgh, highlighted in the submission, the Minister for Children, Young People and the Promise wrote to the

Care Inspectorate in July 2025, asking it to carry out an urgent inspection in relation to the leadership of Children's Social Work Services in Edinburgh. The report of this inspection is expected to publish before the end of the year and we will be considering the findings very closely.

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

In response to concerns raised in the submission in relation to the role of civil servants supporting both Ministers and the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry (SCAI), the Inquiry staff are entirely focused on supporting the Inquiry, and do not support Scottish Government Ministers.

Scottish Government has a small number of staff who manage sponsorship of the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry, including managing the requirements of the Government's role under the Inquiries Act 2005 in relation to the Inquiry, such as Chair appointment and remuneration and funding the Inquiry, and also managing Government response to questions and correspondence from the Parliament and the public to Government and to Ministers in relation to the Inquiry.

I hope the information set out above provides reassurance that Scottish Government is taking these concerns seriously. As work continues in this space, we remain committed to engaging with relevant stakeholders including COSLA, ADES, Education Scotland, ECAB and the NPPLG to ensure views are represented and captured.

Children's Rights, Protection and Justice

Directorate for Children and Families