Questions to be raised about when children are taken into care

The decisions made about when or if a child should be removed from the family home are to be examined by the Scottish Parliament's Education and Culture Committee.

During the committee’s recent inquiry into the educational attainment of looked after children, it became clear that many of these children, particularly those looked after at home, are being left behind in the education system. Following on from this inquiry, the committee will examine in detail whether the decisions currently made on care are delivering the best possible future for some of Scotland's most vulnerable children.

Launching the inquiry during a visit to the Barnardo’s Scotland Fostering Service, Committee Convener Stewart Maxwell MSP said:

“This inquiry is not about rushing to make judgements about the systems currently in place. It is about asking the difficult questions to make sure that these systems really are working for children and their families.

"Our committee will examine the processes involved in deciding whether to remove a child from the family home and consider whether these are consistent across the country. Only by doing this can we really be sure that we are making the best decisions for children who may be abused or neglected."

The committee is hoping to hear from those who work in this area as well as those who have first-hand experience of Scotland's care system.

Key questions that will be asked during the inquiry include:

- Whether there is consistency in decision-making processes across the country;
- Whether there are any particular parental risk factors, for example drug or alcohol misuse, that would create a presumption that a child should be removed;
- The extent to which decisions on whether to remove children are influenced by resource constraints and other barriers;
• Whether the speed of decision making in cases is appropriate.

**Background**

The remit for the committee’s new inquiry is to understand:

• the decision-making processes involved in determining whether a child should be removed from the family home and taken into care;
• whether these decision-making processes are delivering the best outcomes for children and their families.

During its previous inquiry into the educational attainment of looked after children the committee found that while 56% of school leavers gained five or more qualifications, only 4.7% of children looked after away from home and 0.5% of children looked after at home achieved the same results. A copy of that report can be found at:


The closing date for submissions is 28 August 2012.

Responses should be sent, wherever possible, electronically and in MS Word format to ec.committee@scottish.parliament.uk

Hard copy responses may be sent to:

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More information on the Committee’s inquiry can be found at:


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