

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee
Wednesday 29 October 2025
16th Meeting, 2025 (Session 6)

PE1953: Review Education Support staff roles

Introduction

Petitioner Roisin Taylor-Young

Petition summary Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to review Education Support (ES) staff roles in order to consider:

- Urgently raising wages for Education Support Staff across primary and secondary sectors to £26K p/a
- Increasing the hours of the working day for ES staff from 27.5 to 35 hours
- Allowing ESS to work on Personal Learning Plans with teachers/ take part in multiagency meetings.
- Requiring ESS to register with Scottish Social Services Council
- Paying ES staff monthly

Webpage <https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE1953>

1. [The Committee last considered this petition at its meeting on 19 March 2025](#). At that meeting, the Committee agreed to write to the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills.
2. The petition summary is included in **Annexe A** and the Official Report of the Committee's last consideration of this petition is at **Annexe B**.
3. The Committee has received a new written submission from the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, which is set out in **Annexe C**.
4. Since the last consideration of this petition, the Public Audit Committee took evidence from the Auditor General, Scottish Government and COSLA on the [Audit Scotland report 'Additional support for learning'](#). [Details of the Public Audit Committee's work can be found on its webpages](#).
5. [Written submissions received prior to the Committee's last consideration can be found on the petition's webpage](#).
6. [Further background information about this petition can be found in the SPICe briefing](#) for this petition.

7. [The Scottish Government gave its initial response to the petition on 28 July 2022.](#)
8. Every petition collects signatures while it remains under consideration. At the time of writing, 40 signatures have been received on this petition.

Action

9. The Committee is invited to consider what action it wishes to take.

Clerks to the Committee
October 2025

Annexe A: Summary of petition

PE1953: Review Education Support staff roles

Petitioner

Roisin Taylor-Young

Date Lodged

18 August 2022

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to review Education Support (ES) staff roles in order to consider:

- Urgently raising wages for Education Support Staff across primary and secondary sectors to £26K p/a
- Increasing the hours of the working day for ES staff from 27.5 to 35 hours
- Allowing ESS to work on Personal Learning Plans with teachers/ take part in multiagency meetings.
- Requiring ESS to register with Scottish Social Services Council
- Paying ES staff monthly

Previous action

In my capacity working in Education, I have raised my concerns with various Scottish Ministers and my local MSP.

I have also written to various politicians including, Shirley Anne-Somerville MSP, Clare Haughey MSP, Maree Todd MSP, Carol Mochan MSP, Michael Marra MSP, Paul Sweeney MSP, Alison Thewliss MP and Susan Aitken (leader of Glasgow City Council)

I have so far not heard anything back from any of those I contacted.

Background information

ESS work with children and YP (CYP) with Autism, Dyspraxia, Dyscalculia, Down Syndrome, visually impaired, Hearing impairments, Mosaic Downs Syndrome, trauma, care experienced, EAL, asylum seekers, unaccompanied refugees, Social, Emotional and Behavioural Needs, CYP at risk of self-harm/ suicide, CYP with risk assessments.

- ESS are not involved in ASN Plans/multiagency work

- No SSSC registration deprives ESS of basic working standards
- ESS are not paid remuneration based on qualifications. In comparison to 5.5% wage rise for teachers in 2020 starting £27-32K whereas, ESS are paid est. £14K. Low wages mean Universal Credit dependency
- Many ESS are paid on a four-weekly basis, meaning sanctions 2/3 p/a by UC
- Many ESS are female and this affects women, including their children
- ESS roles are left unfilled. The wages are not attracting talent. People are leaving jobs facing a wage crisis.
- The Scottish Government has a legal duty to comply with (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act (2004), Inclusion, GIRFEC, UNCRC.

Annexe B: Extract from Official Report of last consideration of PE1953 on 19 March 2025

The Convener: PE1953, which was lodged by Roisin Taylor-Young, calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to review education support staff—ESS—roles in order to consider urgently raising wages for education support staff across the primary and secondary sectors to £26,000 per annum; increasing the hours of the working day for ESS from 27.5 to 35 hours; allowing ESS to work on personal learning plans with teachers and take part in multi-agency meetings; requiring ESS to register with the Scottish Social Services Council; and paying ESS monthly.

We previously considered the petition at our meeting on 20 March 2024, when we agreed to write to the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills and request an update on the Bute house agreement commitment to explore options for the development of an accredited qualification and registration programme for additional support needs assistants. The final proposals on that were due to be brought forward by autumn 2023.

The cabinet secretary's written response of May 2024 stated that she was considering the outcome of that work. We have since received an update from officials that states that a draft report has been considered by the cabinet secretary but that it has taken longer than anticipated, due to the required engagement with a range of stakeholders. The submission states that the intention is to publish a final report this month or next month.

The petitioner has provided a written submission, which highlights the increasing number of children with additional support needs and states that teachers and support staff are not adequately equipped to handle that.

10:00

The petitioner highlights a particular case in which a staff member in an additional support for learning school had been employed with no induction, training or risk assessments. The staff member was not provided with de-escalation training, British Sign Language certification or Makaton certification, and they did not have specialist knowledge of complex disabilities. The staff member went on to suffer serious workplace injuries that prevented them from working.

The petitioner's submission states:

"Education Support Staff in ASL schools often carry out medical duties including oxygen tanks, insertion of catheters, administration of medications and hoisting or lifting for intimate care."

The petitioner concludes her submission by stating:

"It is time to put all these policies and action plans into place. Councils are crying out for support staff in schools and are unable to recruit or retain these staff due to workplace violence, lack of training, low pay and no career pathways."

In the light of all that, do members have any comments or suggestions for action?

Maurice Golden (North East Scotland) (Con): I appreciate that a full answer might be forthcoming but, given that we do not have one to date, we should write to the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills to highlight the increasing requirement for additional support needs assistance and the pressures that staff face, as set out by the petitioner. We should also highlight the medical duties that are carried out by staff, as set out by the petitioner, and seek a view on whether that level of medical care should be provided without registration or training.

Furthermore, we should highlight the delay to the Scottish Government's publication of the report on the development of an accredited qualification and registration programme for additional support needs assistance. We should ask why there has been such a significant delay in publishing the report, although I appreciate the comments that you made on that point, convener.

Finally, we should seek information on how the Scottish Government intends to take action to address the issue during this parliamentary session.

The Convener: Thank you, Mr Golden. That was quite a comprehensive series of suggestions. Are colleagues content to keep the petition open and to proceed on that basis?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Annexe C: Written submission

Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills written submission, 25 April 2025

PE1953/L: Review Education Support staff roles

I am writing in response to your correspondence dated 22 March 2025, in relation to petition PE1953, calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to review Education Support (ES) staff roles.

I note that the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee considered the above petition at its meeting on 19 March 2025.

You asked for an update on the report on work looking at options for an accredited qualification and registration programme for Additional Support Needs Assistants and also asked why it has been delayed.

I anticipate the report will be published in the coming weeks.

I note the Committee's focus on the Petitioner's concerns regarding pupil support staff safety, and specifically, training for supporting children with additional support needs, including induction, risk assessments, de-escalation strategies, BSL, Makaton, and specialised disability knowledge. I also note that the Petitioner refers to an ESS member suffering workplace injuries. This is of course unacceptable, the health and safety of any employee is a priority and I hope the individual in question received the help and support they required.

I would like to reassure you that I take the wellbeing of our education workforce very seriously. While the recruitment, retention and terms and conditions of employment for ESS are matters for individual councils as employers, the Scottish Government is committed to supporting a high-quality education workforce which is empowered to deliver improved outcomes for all children and young people. The Petitioner's submission also highlighted medical care duties performed in ASL schools, and you asked for my views on the provision of such care by Education Support Staff.

We recognise that any child or young person may require additional support at some point during their time at school, sometimes this support will be required to manage short-term health conditions, but in some cases these health conditions may be longer-term.

We have published guidance on supporting children and young people with healthcare needs in schools, which sets out information on supporting healthcare needs at school. This guidance is available on the Scottish Government's website through the following link: [Supporting children and young people with healthcare needs in schools: guidance - gov.scot](https://www.gov.scot/publications/supporting-children-and-young-people-with-healthcare-needs-in-schools/guidance/pages/1_to_4.aspx).

With regards to the specific issue of school staff taking on medical duties such as administering medication or providing intimate care, the guidance on supporting children and young people with healthcare needs in schools states, at paragraph 82 ,

‘NHS boards and education authorities should work collaboratively to ensure that all staff receive an appropriate level of training to understand and respond to both the educational and health needs of children and young people for whom they are responsible. Training requirements should be planned for and driven by the individual needs of children and young people in the schools in the area’. Information around training and development of staff to support healthcare needs in schools is also covered fully within paragraphs 82 to 85 of the guidance. Furthermore, paragraph 91 of the guidance notes that *‘both the school management team, and staff themselves, must be satisfied that training gives staff with sufficient knowledge, understanding, confidence and competence appropriate to their role’.*

Additionally, Education Authorities should ensure that their insurance/indemnification arrangements provide full cover for their staff who meet healthcare needs or administer medication within the scope of their employment.

Where a child or young person is diagnosed with a health condition, it is normally the role of parents/carers to notify the school that they require the school's input to support their child's needs. When this happens, staff in the school and the school health team should work closely with the child or young person concerned, and their parents or guardians, to ensure they have all the information required to help meet their needs.

If medication is required to be taken whilst at school, in order to manage a child or young person's health condition, parents or guardians are responsible for providing information to the school about any medication that needs to be taken. More detailed information about administering medication, and dealing medications safely, is set out at paragraph 106 through to paragraph 128 of the guidance. This includes detail on how any medication should be supplied to schools, by parents or guardians, in its original packaging and including any patient information leaflets.

With regards to intimate care, appropriate training should be put in place for staff who provide intimate care. Staff should protect the rights and dignity of the child or young person as far as possible, even in emergencies. Education authorities may have separate procedures in place for the management of intimate care and these must be adhered to at all times. Further information about intimate care is contained within paragraphs 129 and 130 of this guidance on supporting healthcare needs in schools.

Let me reassure you that the Scottish Government wants to see all children and young people receive the support they need to reach their full potential. Under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), all children have the right to an education and to have an opinion that is listened to and taken into account. This includes being listened to in decisions about their education and about their healthcare. This right is underpinned in Scottish law by the Education (Scotland) Act 1980.

Under the Additional Support for Learning Act 2004, education authorities have duties to identify, provide for and review the additional support needs of their pupils. They are responsible for determining the most appropriate provision for children and

young people with additional support needs, taking account of their legislative responsibilities and the individual circumstances and wishes of children, young people and their families. Education authorities are supported in implementing their duties under the 2004 Act through the [statutory code of practice](#) on additional support for learning.

I note that the Petition includes elements related to wages and working hours for ESS. The Scottish Government respects the independence of Local Government and has no formal role in setting the pay or terms and conditions of non-teaching school staff, including Pupil Support Assistants. Pay negotiations take place between COSLA and recognised trade unions to agree pay deals that apply across every local authority in Scotland. Decisions regarding terms and conditions, such as working hours, are the responsibility of individual local authorities and can vary across the country.

As part of the 2024/25 pay negotiations for the Scottish Joint Council (SJC) workforce, COSLA published a [factsheet](#) in August 2024 that detailed what the pay offer, which was later accepted by trade unions, would mean for different roles within Local Government. This factsheet outlined that a Pupil Support Assistant would earn around £14.76 per hour which is equivalent to £28,475 if working 37 hours per week.

You may be aware that spending on additional support for learning by local authorities has reached a record high of over £1 billion in 2023/24 – the latest figure available - an increase from £540m in 2012/13. The Scottish Government have continued to invest £15m per year since 2019-20 and provide over £11m of funding to directly support pupils with complex additional support needs and services to children and families. In addition, the 2025/26 budget sets out a further £29m of additional investment for ASN. This investment will include an allocation for local and national programmes to support the recruitment and retention of the ASN workforce and will enable us to build on the work being delivered through Scottish Government Additional Support for Learning Action Plan.

I am happy to provide the Committee with further updates on this work as needed, specifically regarding the report's publication and the progress of its contained actions.

Yours sincerely

JENNY GILRUTH