



Consultation Response

Inspection of early learning and childcare and school age childcare services: consultation

The Scottish Commission for
People with Learning Disabilities
October 2022



Introduction

The Scottish Commission for People with Learning Disabilities (SCLD) is an independent charitable organisation and partner to the Scottish Government in the delivery of Scotland's learning disability strategy, *The keys to life* and the Towards Transformation delivery plan.

SCLD is committed to creating an environment in Scotland in which systems and culture are changed to ensure people with learning disabilities have opportunities and are empowered to live the life they want in line with existing human rights conventions.

SCLD believes that the discrimination and barriers faced by people with learning disabilities and other disabled people are not inevitable. These barriers stop people with learning disabilities and other disabled people being included in society and participating on an equal basis.

Comments

SCLD welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Scottish Government's inspection of early learning and childcare and school age childcare services consultation.

Though SCLD as an organisation operates outwith the early learning and childcare sector, we are submitting a short response to this consultation, to highlight the importance of appropriate early learning and childcare provision for **all** children, including children with learning disabilities. If we can get early learning and childcare right for children with learning disabilities, then we can get it right for all children.

In March 2022, SCLD published our report 'Building Blocks: exploring the barriers and facilitators to ELC provision for children with learning disabilities in Scotland,'¹ based on a series of interviews with parents of children with learning disabilities about their experiences trying to access funded ELC provision. Among other things, the interviews overwhelmingly found that getting ELC provision that was appropriate for their child's needs was very difficult, and often impossible. All parents we spoke with had made compromises, and some had not managed to find provision that would work for their child.

The research found that good leadership around inclusion is a key ingredient where children with learning disabilities have a positive experience in mainstream ELC settings, but, sadly, that it is not a given.

Leadership is recognised as one of eight key elements which is critical in developing inclusive practice in schools and ELC settings.² And demonstrating a commitment to inclusion is the first benchmark for the Standard for Childhood Practice.³ However, SCLD understands the difficulties practitioners face demonstrating this benchmark, particularly where they may have had little experience of supporting children with additional support needs. Consideration must be given as to how this benchmark is assessed meaningfully, encouraging practitioners to consider how their own setting can work towards delivering key strategic drivers, such as 'wraparound' childcare, in an equal and inclusive manner.

¹ SCLD (2022) [Building Blocks: exploring the barriers and facilitators to ELC provision for children with learning disabilities in Scotland](#)

² Scottish Government (2019) [Guidance on the presumption to provide education in a mainstream setting](#)

³ Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) (2015) [The Standard for Childhood Practice Revised](#)

Relevant to this consultation is the need to consider how a revised inspection framework might meaningfully assess how well providers are meeting their duties in relation to equality and inclusion. While SCLD understands that the jurisdiction of inspections currently only covers the children who are accessing the provision that is being inspected, we know that many parents of children with learning disabilities are not accessing their funded entitlement because providers are not able to cater for them. If inspections only consider the children in front of them, then those who simply cannot access their entitlement will continue to remain invisible in this conversation.

While an inspection framework that is able to consider some measure of a provider's ability to include children with additional support needs would in no way be a 'silver bullet' in resolving this issue, it would undoubtedly be a useful tool to help build inclusion into early learning and childcare provision as we move toward universal childcare provision.

SCLD thanks the Scottish Government for the opportunity to respond to this consultation.



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