



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## Michael Marra MSP

Sue Webber MSP  
Convener  
Education, Children & Young People's Committee  
Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP

2<sup>nd</sup> May 2023

Dear Sue,

I have hugely enjoyed my time with the Education, Children & Young People's Committee over the last two years and have learned a great deal from MSP and clerking colleagues. I would be grateful if you can extend my thanks to all colleagues. You have my best wishes in your ongoing work supporting Scotland's future.

In order that the information is not lost to the committee I intend here to set down some thoughts arising from the visits I have undertaken in preparation for the detailed scrutiny of the Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Bill. I expect much of what I have to say may be repeated by colleagues.

I recently undertook my own visit to Rossie Young People's Trust and participated in the Committee visit to HMYOI Polmont.

### Healthcare

When visiting HMYOI Polmont I was struck by the presence of comprehensive medical services on-site including general practice, dentistry, mental health and sexual health. This was in combination with what appeared to be specially defined working relationships with the local NHS board and defined resources.

I hope that colleagues will seek to ascertain whether similar facilities may be present in secure accommodation and what duties lie with NHS boards to ensure that this provision is suitably comprehensive. If services are not comparable it would risk a diminution in the physical and emotional wellbeing of children under the new laws.

### Inspections

Visits to Rossie Young People's Trust and HMYOI Polmont also triggered questions regarding inspection practices and how comparable these practices might be, in order to ensure continued standards of care. The Committee might also wish to consider how integral such services as health and education are to the inspection practices.

At HMYOI Polmont, it appeared that inspection was carried out by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons for Scotland, whilst Rossie Young People's Trust was subject to the Care Inspectorate and, separately, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Education.

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In both instances, the institutions raised questions regarding the suitability of current inspection practices in ensuring the best possible service for this cohort of young people. For clarity, colleagues were not highly critical of current inspection practices, but there were clearly some issues surrounding the specificity of those practices to the particularly challenging circumstances faced by both institutions, owing to the temporary or unpredictable nature of some young people's time in their care. The Committee may wish to take further evidence regarding inspection practices.

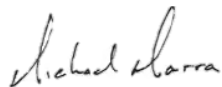
With regard to cross-border placements, I wish to highlight to the Committee that in evidence taken on 29th March 2023, Kevin Northcott of Rossie Young People's Trust said, "Approximately 50 per cent of our current cohort of young people... are cross-border placements". In written evidence to Committee, St Mary's Kenmure referred to cross-border placements subsidising the bed rate for young people in Scotland by "cross border authorities who are willing to pay more than the Scotland Excel rate". I would strongly encourage the Committee to consider the impact that a reduction in cross-border placements, as intended by the Bill, would have on the financial sustainability of the secure estate.

In addition, it would be worth Committee seeking evidence on any representations that have been made by the Scottish Government to the UK Government on the future of secure accommodation.

I also wish to draw to the Committee's attention the 'emergency bed' policy. In recent years, the Scottish Government has supplied funding to secure care providers to keep one bed free, to ensure capacity in the system should a young person suddenly need to be transferred to secure accommodation. Concerns have been raised regarding the ongoing funding of this policy. Moving forward, Committee may wish to investigate the status of this funding.

I hope that the Committee will take these points into consideration as it continues to scrutinise the Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Bill and I look forward to seeing the Committee's report in due course.

Yours sincerely,



Michael Marra MSP