

Comann nam Pàrant (Dùn Èideann is Lodainn) encourage all parents and carers of children in Gaelic Medium Education (GME) to respond to the Government's consultation on the Scottish Languages Bill. It is important to have as many responses from GME families as possible.

We welcome the Scottish Languages Bill and support steps which further the development of Gaelic language and Gaelic Medium Education.

Our guidance for responding to the Bill (based on the guidance shared by Comann nam Pàrant Nàiseanta with local groups) is below. We hope they are useful. If you do agree with them, please feel free to copy them over into your own response.

We encourage all parents and carers to take part in the process.

To submit comments on the bill go to [Stage 1 | Scottish Parliament Website](#)

The call for views closes at 11.59pm on 8 March 2024.

There are two options for responding – a short survey with one question asking if you agree with the proposals in the bill and also allows you to make a comment if you wish, or a slightly more detailed response paper with questions on the different sections of the bill.

Include personal experience in your response – for example, if you have used the request process or have had issues with transport or access to GME.

There is no finance associated with the bill and although it is an important legislative step, it can only go so far and the issue of adequate funding for Gaelic will still need to be addressed.

Some measures in the bill which we believe will support developments in GME include:

- **Duties on Scottish Ministers**

Scottish Ministers will have a duty to promote GE and the responsibility to produce standards¹ and guidance for GME. Scottish Ministers will have powers to give directions to education authorities about the performance of their functions relating to GE. We support this move and believe that a coordinated national response can help support GME in Local Authorities. We also believe that partnership working between the Scottish Government and Local Authorities is essential for funding opportunities to support GME development.

- **Transport**

Access to GME very often involves additional travel for pupils as provision most likely will not be in their own locality with often only one location for GME in a local authority area. We therefore particularly welcome the measures in the bill relating to

school transport and catchment areas. We are aware through our correspondence with parents and carers over the years that transport is essential in ensuring equity of access for all families who wish their child to participate in GME.

- **Early Learning and Childcare (ELC)**

Early learning is very important as most children now entering GME do not speak Gaelic as their first language. The inclusion of ELC in the request process is an important measure in the bill which will support families in the early stages of GME. We are acutely aware of the significance of early learning for GME and the ways this can then go on to strengthen GME at primary level.

There are some other measures which we feel could be included to strengthen the bill:

- **The request process for GME**

The process is currently overly complicated and could be streamlined by replacing the two-tiered assessment process with a requirement that local authorities have one full assessment. There have only been a very low number of requests since the process was introduced in 2016 – 4 successful requests. An appeal process should be introduced for parents should a request be refused.

- **Secondary education**

The measures detailed in the bill referring to education do include secondary education. We would welcome a clearer development strategy for secondary level GME so that pupils can continue to develop their Gaelic language skills across a range of subjects.

- **Dedicated schools**

There are no duties in the bill relating to the establishment of stand-alone GME schools. The current process generally relies on parents campaigning for provision to be made in a dedicated school rather than being delivered alongside English medium provision. We would like to see commitment to stand-alone GME schools rather than continual reliance of parental campaigns. We seek equity between EME and GME schooling. Comann nam Pàrant DE is more than aware of how much any steps towards the development of stand-alone schools has rested on the shoulders of campaigning groups and engaged parents and carers. We ask that we be supported by, and work in partnership with, Local Authorities and by Scottish Government.

Our main message is that we want equity for GME with EME. This does not necessarily mean equal treatment; Gaelic is a minority language and may require additional support to achieve equity.

¹Although we do not definitively know what will be included in regulations set by Scottish Ministers we are given an indication in the Policy Memorandum paper for the Bill-

“62. In preparing regulations, the Scottish Ministers must consult the various interest parties listed in subsection (4). Regulations may make different provision for different purposes and different areas (including different parts of an education authority’s area) and are subject to the negative procedure. Although good progress has been seen in Gaelic education, the provision of standards will address a number of the issues which are still viewed as obstacles in Gaelic medium education and will make clear to parents what can be expected when a young person commences Gaelic medium education. In general, the issues that would be considered as areas that need to be addressed in GME/GLE include the following. GME access to provision and local authority promotion of GME, GME as a 3-18 experience and GME continuity, GME subject choice, curriculum and assessment arrangements, GME teacher recruitment, placement, retention and professional learning, Teacher and pupil support and resources, O-3, early years provision and linguistic acquisition, Class sizes, language assistants, immersion and fluency, Taking account of GME when setting national expectations, Inclusion of GME in the planning for and reporting by schools where GME is provided, Gaelic learner education at all levels and establishing how national bodies and agencies can better work together to support GME and GLE. Some of these have been included in the Statutory Guidance on Gaelic education and will also be addressed in Standards and Strategy.”

The Education, Children and Young People Committee will be scrutinising the bill, and we would also encourage you to contact your MSP if they are a member of the committee. It would be useful to share your personal experience of GME in their area. If possible, give an example of how you believe this bill will support your GME experience, and ask that they support the measures proposed in the bill.

Education, Children and Young People Committee – Members

Sue Webber (Convenor) *Lothian (Region) SC*

Sue.Webber.msp@parliament.scot

Ruth Maguire (Depute Convenor) *Cunninghame South SNP*

Ruth.Maguire.msp@parliament.scot

Stephanie Callaghan *Uddingston and Bellshill SNP*

Stephanie.Callaghan.msp@parliament.scot

Pam Duncan-Glancy *Glasgow Labour* Pam.Duncan-Glancy.msp@parliament.scot

Ross Greer *West Scotland Green* Ross.Greer.msp@parliament.scot

Liam Kerr *North East Scotland SC* Liam.Kerr.msp@parliament.scot

Ben Macpherson *Edinburgh Northern and Leith* SNP

Ben.Macpherson.msp@parliament.scot

Willie Rennie *North East Fife* SLD Willie.Rennie.msp@parliament.scot

Bill Kidd *Glasgow Anniesland* SNP Bill.Kidd.msp@parliament.scot

Michelle Thomson *Falkirk East* SNP Michelle.Thomson.msp@parliament.scot

Substitute Committee members

Alex Cole-Hamilton *Edinburgh Western* SLD [Alex.Cole-](mailto:Alex.Cole-Hamilton.msp@parliament.scot)

[Hamilton.msp@parliament.scot](mailto:Alex.Cole-Hamilton.msp@parliament.scot)

Roz McCall *Mid Scotland and Fife* SC Roz.McCall.msp@parliament.scot

Gillian MacKay *Central Scotland* Green Gillian.Mackay.msp@parliament.scot

Stuart McMillan *Greenock and Inverclyde* SNP

Stuart.McMillan.msp@parliament.scot

Martin Whitfield *South Scotland* Labour Martin.Whitfield.msp@parliament.scot