

## Education Bill Consultation Response

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The Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance believe that it is important to improve educational attainment and to break the link between attainment and socio economic disadvantage. We also agree with the plan to extend a number of the rights Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 to include children (as defined by the 2004 act). However more needs to be done in order to ensure that children's voices are heard and that they have a say over the support they receive.

We believe that it is vital that that the child's views should be heard and acknowledged at all times. We are therefore concerned about the lack of provision for independent advocacy to support references to ASNTS. We do not agree with the position that existing provisions for independent advocacy should not be extended to children. All children should have access to independent advocacy to help them gather all relevant information, understand their rights, consider options, understand potential consequences of choices and ensure that their views and wishes are heard and taken account of.

The independent nature of this is of particular importance in ensuring that no barriers can arise to the child's views and wishes being clearly heard and taken account of. We believe that the proposed statutory support service could not provide a truly independent service. If such a service was to be provided by Local Authorities it is hard to see how conflicts of interest could be avoided. Furthermore if it were provided by the Local Authority the child's perception of this being also part of the system in itself could create barriers to the child's voice being heard.

We are also concerned with the set up and implementation of any proposed new support service and how it will be monitored.

In conclusion the Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance think that it important to improve educational attainment and strengthen Additional Support for Learning legislation by extending the rights offered in the legislation to children. It is of particular importance that children have access to independent advocacy to support these rights to be upheld.