

Scottish Government Programme 2015-16

September 2015

The Scottish Government has published its [programme](#) for the final session of this parliament before next year's election. As this is a short session, and there is already significant legislation in progress, there is a limited programme of new legislation. The new bills of most interest to UNISON members include:

Abusive Behaviour and Sexual Harm Bill. Creates a new statutory domestic abuse aggravator and a new offence of sharing private intimate material. It will also enhance protections for victims of harassment.

Budget Bill. The spending review will be truncated this year as the Scottish Government awaits the UK autumn statement.

Burial and Cremation Bill. This will implement the Bonomy Commission recommendations on the cremation of infants and children with new regulation and inspection arrangements for crematoria, burial authorities and the funeral industry.

Lobbying Bill. Aims to improve public awareness of lobbying activity and will introduce a register of lobbying activity.

Private Tenancies Bill. Introduces a Scottish Private Rented Tenancy and removes the 'no-fault' ground for repossession, meaning a landlord can no longer ask a tenant to leave simply because the fixed-term has ended. There will be some protection for tenants against excessive rent increases, including the ability to introduce local rent controls for rent pressure areas.

Not all government action requires legislation and the programme includes administrative action.

A National Improvement Framework for Scottish Education is the Government's response to the education debate on attainment. The key proposal is a new system of national, standardised assessment of children in P1, P4, P7 and S3, covering literacy and numeracy. The childcare hours entitlement is to be increased to 1140 hours a year by 2020.

The challenges facing Police Scotland are to be addressed through a review of national and local police governance. In addition they will implement the recommendations of the HMICS review of call handling and statutory guidance on police stop and search.

There will be a new National Clinical Strategy for the NHS following the current national debate. Establishing an independent national officer to review the handling of whistleblowing cases aims to strengthen the whistleblowing arrangements for NHS Scotland staff. New investment is to be targeted on child and adolescent mental health services in response to recent concerns.

When further powers are devolved the Government will introduce a Social Security Bill to mitigate the impact of UK Government welfare cuts and abolish the bedroom tax. There is also a welcome commitment to abolish Employment Tribunal fees. While there is nothing specific on the Trade Union Bill, ministers have said that facility time and check off is the prerogative of Scottish Ministers. The Scottish Labour leader supported this view and urged the government to demand a Legislative Consent Motion on these aspects of the Bill.

For more information please contact UNISON's Bargaining and Campaigns team on 0141 342 2811, or email d.watson@unison.co.uk



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team

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