

Government panel to decide on school closures



Candidates are being sought for a new independent panel to make final decisions on school closure proposals called in by Ministers.

Applications are now open and candidates from Edinburgh and the Lothians are being encouraged to apply for approximately 10 panel member positions. People from all backgrounds and communities can apply for the positions.

Currently, Scottish Ministers can 'call in' a local authority proposal to close a school and then make a final decision in relation to the closure.

The new panel will take over responsibility for reviewing the cases called in by Ministers and reaching a final determination. The panel will be able to give consent to the closure, with or without conditions, refer it back to the local authority to consider again, or refuse consent.

The Scottish Government is introducing the changes through the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 with responsibilities transferring from Ministers to the panel in spring 2015.

Cabinet Secretary for Education Michael Russell said:

"This is a welcome change to the legislation as it ensures the final decision on a school closure proposal which has been called in will be taken by an independent panel.

"I would encourage people from all professions and backgrounds to apply for these positions and, while knowledge of the education sector or regulatory systems would be of benefit,

full training will be given to all panel members.

“Clearly, local authorities are best placed to consider how to deliver services across their communities and sometimes it is necessary to close a school. However, the new legislation strengthens and increases transparency in these far-reaching decisions, and the School Closure Review Panel has a very important role to play.”

Background

Applications for panel members opened on November 7, 2014 and the closing date is December 5, 2014. More information about the roles and how to apply can be found [by clicking here.](#)