

More delays for SNP's named person scheme

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The SNP's controversial plans to assign a named person to every young person in Scotland face further delays following an Education Committee vote today.

A majority of MSPs said scrutiny of elements of the policy would have to wait until certain details are sorted out.

It means the committee cannot produce a report on the information sharing elements until the Scottish Government improves the bill, which delays its overall progress through parliament.

Last year, the Supreme Court deemed those particular elements unlawful, and ordered ministers to change the legislation before it could be implemented.

Since then, critics have said the SNP has only succeeded in making the named person proposals even more confusing.

Experts said those expected to implement the policy have no idea what their legal responsibilities would be, and don't have sufficient guidance.

While five SNP MSPs voted against the move today, the six opposition politicians on the committee backed it.

Scottish Conservative shadow education secretary Liz Smith said:

"The majority of the committee were very clear that it would be inappropriate to proceed to stage 1 because it was not possible to determine whether the evidence taken supported the general principles of the bill.

"This is a very unusual step for any committee to take but it is the right one.

"If we had progressed to stage 1 we would have undermined the effective scrutiny of the committee system.

"The Information Commissioner was very clear that the illustrative code of practice was not fit for purpose and was unlikely to bear much resemblance to the final code of practice.

"The practitioners told us time and time again that their support for the bill was contingent upon them knowing exactly where they stood in relation to their responsibilities.

"The illustrative code did not give them that clarity and that is why committee members, irrespective of their views on named persons, came to the

conclusion that they did.

“Frankly, this whole parliamentary process is a mess and the responsibility for that lies solely with the Scottish Government.

“It is little wonder that so many members of the public are telling John Swinney to cut his losses, ditch the bill and start again with a different policy which supports our most vulnerable children.”

To see a copy of the minutes from today’s Education Committee, visit:
http://www.parliament.scot/S5_Education/Minutes/20171206_ES_Minutes.pdf