Skills Development Scotland (SDS) is Scotland’s skills body, focused on contributing to the delivery of the Scottish Government’s Economic and Skills Strategies. We set out our vision and future development and delivery plans in our Corporate Strategy (2012-15) and annual Operating Plan (2012-13).1

SDS’ key aim is to deliver support to those who need it most, particularly young people. SDS is working collaboratively with partners across Scotland to enable young people to move more successfully between learning and work opportunities. This submission provides an overview of the work we are doing in relation to data sharing between partners to support this ambition. SDS welcomes the data sharing elements of the Post 16 Reform Bill as being clearly supportive of this.

Data Sharing

Young people, especially those with disadvantages in life chances, benefit from the best support they can get at transition points such as leaving school and entering college. The Scottish Government and 16+ Learning Choices/More Choices More Chances (MCMC) delivery partners recognise the value that data sharing brings to successful delivery for young people and, to enable this, SDS is tasked by the Scottish Government with developing and sustaining the 16+ Learning Choices data hub for the benefit of all involved partners. At this point the main data sharing partners are SDS, all local authorities and colleges in Scotland, the Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS) and Jobcentre Plus. SDS approaches the 16+ Learning Choices data hub as a joint endeavour between data sharing partners and focuses on the key success factor of embedding data sharing in the robust legal, governance and technical framework which make up the 16+ Learning Choices data hub.

The intended benefits from the data hub are:

- a more effective and personalised service for young people, leading to more young people in positive destinations;
- removal of data gaps and duplication to provide more effective and easier working for front-line service delivery staff;
- more comprehensive and robust management information that supports well-informed strategy decisions;
- more accurate and complete reporting to Scottish Government, particularly in relation to Opportunities for All.

The aim of the 16+ Learning Choices data hub is to achieve these benefits and support young people from S3 onwards by providing the central mechanism in Scotland for bringing together and sharing the information available on young people and their learning choices. Effective, straightforward data sharing between partners will support 16+ Learning Choices and Opportunities for All by achieving a more complete and reliable data set for all partners, allowing them to quickly identify and engage with any young person dropping out or failing to complete their learning choice, with a view to re-engaging them in the system.

At the time of writing, the core legal, governance and technical frameworks are in place, and SDS current activity is centred on sustaining and enhancing the data hub so that it can progressively better meet the needs of all partners and respond to evolving service delivery and management of reporting needs.

**Finance**

Given that the majority of the technical (i.e. Information Technology) work to enable multi-partner data sharing through the data hub is already in place, and also bearing in mind that all partners already own and sustain substantial customer data recoding systems, the figure of £52,000 quoted in the Financial Memorandum to the Bill represents a likely estimate of incremental costs to make small modifications to partners’ systems, to increase or enhance their ability to share data through the 16+ Learning Choices data hub as the latter adapts to partners’ evolving business needs in relation to Post-16 Reform, particularly Opportunities for All.

**Conclusion**

SDS welcomes the data sharing elements of the Post 16 Reform Bill. These complement the ongoing work that partners are undertaking to enable multi-partner data sharing for the benefit of young people. Thorough parliamentary scrutiny of both primary and secondary legislation and the effective implementation of the legislation will help to provide clarity and shared understanding for the legal framework within which this work takes place.