Further to our submission to the Committee at the beginning of its consideration of the Education Scotland Bill, we would like to take this opportunity to provide clarification of the issues raised throughout the Bill process to date with regard to the 16+ Learning Choices Data Hub (“the hub”).

We have been following the evidence sessions on the scrutiny of the Bill with interest and ahead of our appearance before the Committee on 16 February thought it helpful to focus on two main issues in this submission.

- Compatibility of IT systems
- Recording of SDS interventions

**Compatibility of IT systems**

SDS is working with a range of partners on pooling relevant data in the hub in order to support young people aged 16-24. Questions have been raised as to the compatibility of the data hub with partners’ existing IT systems. Organisations record and hold different data on young people and their participation at various points in time, generally based on the specific business needs of each organisation. Existing records held by different bodies across Scotland are therefore not currently compatible and partners who input information to the hub do not have the same systems and therefore cannot share data (all Local Authorities do not share the same IT systems for example) between them. The hub is the solution to the problem of partners’ systems being incompatible with each other.

It is widely acknowledged that there have previously been problems with voluntary data sharing activity, and as a result, questions as to whether the hub might serve to over-complicate the system rather than simplify it. SDS welcomes the data sharing provisions of the Bill. There has previously been no comprehensive framework for sharing appropriate data between organisations, to provide an integrated picture of the young person’s transition or journey through learning. It will enable SDS to engage with any young person dropping out or failing to complete their learning choice, with a view to re-engaging them and ensuring that young people benefit from a more personalised service. The end objective is to support more young people along a positive path into employment.

A Data Hub Reference Group already exists to provide oversight for data governance and coordinates the work around the hub; the first tranche of activity has included information sharing between schools and Local Authority Education Boards. The Reference Group has agreed what information these partners will input to the hub, and, importantly, their reporting requirements from the hub.

Local Authorities are regularly uploading information and, going forward, will do so on a fortnightly basis. No major issues have been reported with data quality. Reports are already being generated for Local Authorities and shared. These
include, for example, data on support being provided by SDS to individuals in schools.

Forty of Scotland’s Colleges have signed data sharing agreements (DSAs) with SDS and have begun to supply enrolment and withdrawal data to SDS on a monthly basis. We can indicate the likelihood of revisiting these DSAs post-regionalisation to ensure appropriate controls are in place over which data take precedent. The Reference Group is currently being refreshed to include all Colleges so that their further reporting requirements from the hub can be finalised.

SDS is currently working with its strategic IT partner, Atos, to identify and address any residual technical issues. All technical Issues will be addressed as part of the normal business development and maintenance of the data hub.

**Interventions**

A specific question concerns how SDS will record interventions in school on each individual pupil’s file. Careers “interventions” are the term SDS specifically uses to express the record of an individual’s time spent with an SDS adviser. The aim of the 16+ Learning Choices data hub is to 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. The focus is to ensure that data uploads by all schools take place regularly to assist in forward planning, targeting support and monitoring of those young people who were winter leavers or will be upcoming summer leavers. All local authorities and SDS Operations staff have access to data hub reports.

**Further information**

We will be happy to provide further information on these and other issues raised in our opening statement and in our detailed evidence.

**Conclusion**

The key factor for success is embedding data sharing in the core work that we do with partners to support young people, underpinned by a robust, legal governance and technical framework, which this Bill provides. SDS is committed to working closely with partners to ensure the data hub is a success and has approached the hub as a joint endeavour between data sharing partners, closely supported by the Scottish Government Youth Employability and Skills Division and Scotland’s Colleges. The hub has been created to ensure that our young people make the best possible use of the services available to them across Scotland. It is anticipated the hub will as of the beginning of the financial year 2013/14 operate as a normal component of business activity amongst the key partners involved in the delivery of learning and training opportunities for young people.

Skills Development Scotland

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