I wrote to you on 17 July following my opportunity to give evidence to the Equal Opportunities Committee Inquiry into Preventing Homelessness amongst Young People on 26 June and in that correspondence I indicated that I had written to Michael Russell MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning to follow up some of the questions raised by Committee members.

I am now writing to you with Mr Russell’s response, which I have included below the questions asked by Committee members:

**Stuart McMillan MSP**

Is there any way that the financial element of Curriculum for Excellence can be extended to include homelessness?

Learning about social, emotional and economic wellbeing and issues that relate to homelessness permeate throughout many of the experiences and outcomes, but especially in the curricular areas of health and wellbeing, literacy and social subjects.

As one of our priority areas, the Government is supporting young people in an effort to help them develop better money management skills, including budgeting and understanding credit and debt. In line with Curriculum for Excellence, Financial Education provides a relevant context for the development of skills for learning, life and work. Education Scotland supports a range of activities designed to ensure that teachers have access to up-to-date resources and guidance about the place of Financial Education in the curriculum. These include Tackling Debt: a resource to aid discussion of debt in the classroom and Talk Money, and Talk Solutions: a collection of practical problem solving activities for primary school. And some resources such as 'Tackling Debt' 'Small Change' deal with issues around housing.

Education Scotland host Financial Learning Online Scotland (FLO). FLO provides support to people involved in financial capability and financial learning. They have close working links with the Scottish Council for Single Homeless who have a wealth of resources for practitioners to use with young people around the pro-s and con-s of leaving home:

[www.leavinghome.info](http://www.leavinghome.info)
Education Scotland has also worked in partnership with the Scottish Book Trust to develop SKINT, a resource for practitioners to use as a starting point to promote aspects of financial capability (making ends meet, keeping track of finances, planning ahead, choosing financial products and staying informed about financial matters). This builds on the success of 'On the Money' which also links to a wide range of social issues starting in primary schools. The experiences and outcomes across all areas that are the 'responsibility for all' allows for teachers to address issues around independent living. A wider focus on 'economic wellbeing' may also give opportunities to discuss specific issues, like homelessness, young people in schools are being encouraged to develop a greater sense of self-determination as they deal with daily life, face financial 'shocks' and plan to achieve positive outcomes.

Annabel Goldie MSP
Whether young people at school are taught how to cook?

Curriculum for Excellence sets out a package of experiences and outcomes that all pupils should have the opportunity to undertake during their studies. There is an expectation that all pupils would be involved in lessons around cooking skills unless certain circumstances such as religion or allergies made it inappropriate.

Many of the experiences and outcomes refer to learners participating in practical food activities as well as exploring wider experiences relating to nutritional and consumer awareness, safety and hygiene. Many schools, including early years, grow and cook their own snacks; ensuring learners acquire knowledge and skills to make healthy food choices and we hope, help to establish lifelong healthy eating habits.

Primary school teachers have a responsibility to teach practical food skills in the classroom. Learners develop their understanding of a healthy diet; they develop an appreciation that eating can be an enjoyable activity and understand the role of food within social and cultural contexts.

As learners progress through their secondary education they will have opportunities to participate in practical Home Economics lessons which they can continue with through to Higher Level, as well as options for courses in hospitality. 'Food Cooking Buses' travel across the UK visiting schools and communities. Sessions cover key aspects of food education from food preparation skills to nutrition, food safety and hygiene. All ingredients and equipment are provided, and a session on the bus leaves behind expertise, enthusiasm and skills.

The 'Cooking Bus' supports the continued implementation of the experiences and outcomes within the health and wellbeing framework of Curriculum for Excellence. This month the 'Cooking Bus' will be delivering a two hour practical CPD session for 80 nursery and primary practitioners:

[http://www.focusonfood.org/cookingbuses.htm]

Education Scotland has recently published 'Food for Thought: exploring curriculum for excellence through food and drink'. This resource looks at ideas for food as a context for interdisciplinary learning, and how Curriculum for Excellence supports learning about food and health.

The Committee may also be interested in a letter I signed jointly with Richard Lochhead MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Environment on School Food and Food Education. In it we outlined the excellent work currently taking place around school food provision and food education.

I hope this is helpful to the Committee. I have also attached the letter referred to in Mr Russell's last paragraph. I look forward to continuing to work with you and reading your report on this important issue.

Kind regards

KEITH BROWN

Victoria Quay, Edinburgh EH6 6QQ
www.scotland.gov.uk
Dear Colleague

As we are now half way through 2012, we thought it would be timely to highlight the excellent work currently taking place around school food provision and food education, and to outline work being developed to move the agenda forward in the coming months.

Since the introduction of the Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2007 and the subsequent School Food nutrition legislation, we have been working with a range of partners to build on the excellent work Local Authorities and schools have done. Guidance documents were produced at the time to help with the implementation the legislation. Additionally, Scottish Government recently published ‘Catering for Change’ guidance which highlights the importance of sustainable procurement of food for use in schools.

We have seen many excellent examples of good practice in several areas across Scotland with some enjoying particular success with their model of school food delivery. We will continue to be proactive in working with Local Authorities to support change towards a more sustainable food system.

You may also be interested to learn that we have received international attention recently from the USA government who are keen to learn from our groundbreaking model of school nutrition and the implementation of our school health promotion and nutrition legislation.

Taigh Naomh Anndrais, Rathad Regent, Dùn Èideann EH1 3DG
St Andrew’s House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG
www.scotland.gov.uk
In March, Dr Janey Thornton, USDA Deputy Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services, spoke at Scotland’s National Food and Drink Conference and was quoted in the press as saying: “I was impressed by Scotland’s passion and understanding for the importance of food and food preparation at all levels of the community and government – from the grassroots level to Parliament. I was also impressed by the engagement of school faculty and staff in the whole food and nutrition arena, from classroom to cafeteria”. A comment we should all be proud of as we have only been able to achieve this kind of success through the hard work of all those involved in delivering balanced, tasty school food and innovative food education in Scotland.

As many of you will be aware Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) was introduced in Scotland’s schools in 2010. This has proved to be a positive vehicle to help ensure that food education is properly embedded in schools, primarily through health and wellbeing across the Curriculum. In our view, interdisciplinary learning about food within school will help ensure that every child understands the broad spectrum of issues from where their food comes from to how their food choices impact on their future health and the environment.

To support this, a mind map titled ‘Food for Thought; exploring food and drink through Curriculum for Excellence’ has been produced and distributed to all Local Authorities and their schools. The resources are designed to support learning about food and drink through well planned interdisciplinary learning. The mind map is available on the Education Scotland website and will continue to be developed over the next 12 months by adding appropriate links, making it an interactive resource.

At our National Food and Drink Conference in March we announced a further £2 million food education investment package. This builds on a previous package of around £600,000 of pilot projects. Where between 2009 and 2011 at least 40,500 children have been involved in specific food projects; there have been 74 site visits to food related establishments and at least 252 visits of industry/farmers into schools. As this funding package continues to be delivered through a range of partners even more children across Scotland will have even more opportunity to learn about food; from fishing and farming, to the food and drink industry and, in the context of science as well as the environment through our world leading Ecoschools programme.

At the Royal Highland Show in June we announced £772,064 of funding for the Soil Association to promote and support the uptake of the Food for Life Catering Mark. Among other things this will help secure new contracts for suppliers and increase children’s and young people’s understanding of the connections between food, health, the economy and the environment.

Children will also have even more opportunity to learn about food within Scottish Studies and the new web site on this contains links to food resources which we will expand throughout this year in collaboration with Education Scotland. In addition to the website, we have a health and wellbeing development officer within Education Scotland whose role it is to create closer links between food education and the curriculum.
It is not just Government's role to help our young to learn more about food. We strongly believe that everyone should play a part. That is why I am delighted that individuals, parents, communities and businesses across Scotland are getting involved doing a huge number of activities too numerous to detail but ranging from growing your own, visiting food manufacturers and holding farmers markets. We are also aware that many Chefs are helping their local schools and we want to build on this by developing an 'Adopt A Chef' initiative to encourage more people to get involved. We have been in discussion with a number of Chefs since the middle of last year and we hope to announce more details on this in the autumn.

I hope this gives you an overview of the good work happening, and being developed, on school food provision and food education. I am sure we have your continued support on this vital element of our children's health and education and I look forward to hearing your ideas in the coming months.