21 May 2013

Dear Kenneth,

EMPLOYABILITY QUERIES ARISING FROM MEETING ON 13 MARCH

During my appearance at Committee on 13 March, I agreed to come back to members on a couple of points once the information was available. The first was concerning the Bus for Jobs scheme, which ran in January 2013 and covered about 70% of all bus routes in Britain. You asked about the remaining 30% of bus routes not covered by the scheme.

A full report\(^1\) of the scheme was published in February by Greener Journeys. In terms of geography, this indicates that the north and north-east of England showed the highest level of take-up while the south east of England showed the lowest. There was also decent take-up in Scotland and Wales, as well as in other parts of northern England.

The scheme did not operate on bus services in London where an existing ongoing scheme provides a 50% discount on public transport for unemployed people. Longer-distance coach services and airport shuttle services were also not part of the scheme including: megabus, Oxford tube, Scottish Citylink, Tyne Tees Xpress (X9/X10), Greenline, TGM Coaches and airport services, Greyhound, and the long-distance coaches of National Express.

The report concludes that the scheme was a success, although no plans have as yet been announced for it to be repeated.

Secondly, I agreed to come back to Committee after 28 March on the youth employment plans which we asked all Scottish Government public bodies to submit. As noted at Committee, this does not include local authorities as my preference is for Committee to seek that information directly.

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I am, however, pleased to report that the Chief Executive of NHS Scotland, Derek Feeley has confirmed that all NHS Scotland Boards have replied to his letter of 23 January. Early indications are that NHS Scotland Boards are working hard to embrace this important employability commitment and there is some evidence emerging of the good work being done by them.

As part of the corporate expectations work, Public Bodies have also set out their plans to provide opportunities for young people. The returns demonstrate serious commitment and action from most of the public bodies covered by this exercise. All of them are fully committed to the Youth Employment strategy and a further update is planned for June 2013.

From June this year the Quarterly Public Sector Employment Statistics collection will be expanded to measure number of young people in employment to provide a more complete picture of in the devolved public sector. By developing this collection we will be able to track progress on employment of young people in the public bodies NHS and Local Authorities.

I hope the above information is helpful and would be happy to provide any further clarification as required.

JOHN SWINNEY