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Sue Webber MSP  
Convener  
Education, Children and Young  
People Committee  
The Scottish Parliament  
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17 February 2022

Dear Convener

I attended Committee on 18 January to provide evidence on the Education and Skills portfolio draft Budget allocation. During that session I undertook to follow up in writing on a number of points. Annex A below responds to the points raised by Committee members, and to your letter of 9 February 2023. I hope this response is helpful and I am happy to provide further updates over the coming months should you and the Committee members find that helpful.

Yours sincerely

**SHIRLEY-ANNE SOMERVILLE**

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## **ANNEX A - FOLLOW-UP TO DRAFT BUDGET EVIDENCE SESSION 18 JANUARY 2023 + RESPONSE TO COMMITTEE CONVENOR LETTER OF 9 FEBRUARY 2023**

### **UPDATE ON EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE, PVI AND PUBLIC SECTOR PROVIDER RATES AND THE SSSC MAPPING EXERCISE**

The Scottish Government published [Overview of local authority funding and support for early learning and childcare providers: 2022-23](#) on 22 December 2022. The report sets out information provided by local authorities regarding the sustainable rates that they pay to childcare providers in the private, third and childminding sectors for the delivery of funded Early Learning and Childcare (ELC).

In addition to the sustainable rates in each local authority, the report sets out:

- local authorities' approach to setting sustainable rates in line with the supporting guidance
- the payments to funded providers for delivery of the free meal commitment
- details of the additional support package local authorities are offering to their funded providers.

With regards to the Scottish Social Services Council's mapping exercise, I can confirm that our SSSC colleagues are undertaking a piece of work to provide data on the movement of staff across different parts of the Day Care of Children workforce. We are on course to have that data by the end of March 2023.

We also anticipate further information arising from our Financial Sustainability Health Check that will provide further insight to this work.

### **UPDATE ON SECTOR SUSTAINABILITY AND THE REVIEW OF RATE SETTING PROCESSES WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES**

The Scottish Government and COSLA are currently undertaking a review of the process for setting sustainable rates in 2022-23 to identify where this can be improved further to ensure that rates reflect the costs of delivering funded ELC and payment of the real Living Wage to staff, as set out in the Sustainable Rates guidance.

The Review will be an evidence-based approach that captures views from both local authorities and from funded ELC providers. The Review will inform what further action may need to be taken ahead of August 2023, and the wider approach to rate setting over the rest of this Parliament. More information on the outcome of the Review will be set out in Spring 2023.

The Scottish Government is also currently undertaking an update of the [Financial Sustainability Health Check](#) exercise, which was previously published in August 2021. To support this, a survey for registered **day care of children services and childminding services** to complete was launched on 20 January 2023 and was open until 15 February 2023. The survey asks providers for a range of information including on costs of delivery, income, capacity, charging and staffing.

The previous Financial Sustainability Health Check has been a vital source of evidence and has helped the Scottish Government to tailor support for childcare providers. However, since Summer 2021 there have been substantial economic impacts as a result of the pandemic and the costs crisis.

This update will help provide detailed information as to how these events are impacting on the childcare sector, as well as allowing for analysis of any changes in underlying trends in the sector. This includes understanding where there may be disproportionate impacts across different types of providers.

The information provided in response to these surveys will be reflected in an updated report to be published in Spring 2023.

### **UPDATE ON HOW £15 MILLION ASN FUNDING ALLOCATED AND ON PROGRESS OF INCREASING NUMBER OF CLASSROOM ASSISTANTS**

Since 2019-20, we have invested an additional £15 million per year to help local authorities respond to the individual support needs of children and young people. The distribution is based on the number of pupils in each local authority. We monitor the impact of this funding through numbers of pupil support assistants. In 2021, 1,036 extra pupil support assistants were recruited. This builds on the increase of 1,354 from the previous year and again exceeds our Programme for Government commitment to deliver 1,000 new support assistants. This brings the total number of pupil support staff in Scotland to 16,299.

### **UPDATE ON ADDITIONAL ANNUAL FUNDING - £145.5 MILLION TO SUPPORT THE RECRUITMENT OF ADDITIONAL TEACHERS AND SUPPORT STAFF.**

Following my discussion with COSLA where I expressed my concerns that there has been a decrease in teacher numbers as published in the Summary Statistics for Schools in December 2022, I set out in a statement to Parliament on 7 January, the actions I have taken to:

- maintain teacher numbers, and the number of pupil support assistants, at their current levels in the year ahead as we continue to work towards our aim to increase teacher numbers by 3,500 and support staff by 500 by the end of this Parliament.
- Ensure places remain available for probationer teachers who need them through the Teacher Induction Scheme.

Historically local authorities have received £88m per annum to protect the pupil-teacher ratio, teacher numbers and to provide places on the Teacher Induction Scheme for all probationers who need one. Additional annual funding of £145.5m per annum is also being provided to maintain increased teacher numbers and support staff.

In the year ahead (2023/24), if this is not delivered by a local authority, the Scottish Government will withhold or recoup funding allocated for these purposes.

A copy of my letter of 7 February to CoSLA spokespeople is attached.

### **UPDATE ON LAST MEETING OF SAGRABIS**

The Scottish Advisory Group on Relationships and Behaviour in Schools (SAGRABIS) met on 7 December 2022. The group discussed the Behaviour in Scottish Schools Research (BISSR) which is underway, with a final report due at the end of 2023. The group also received an update on the recent consultation on restraint and seclusion in schools. I will be chairing the next SAGRABIS meeting which has been arranged for Thursday 30 March.

### **UPDATE ON USE OF THE £30 MILLION CAPITAL FOR FREE SCHOOL MEALS IN 2022-23 FOR ESTATE/INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS**

The allocation of £30 million of capital funding was provided in October 2022. Education authorities are in the process of utilising this funding to support their understanding of infrastructure needs and have begun to invest in infrastructure improvements in catering and dining facilities. This funding is due to be used by the end of this financial year and some authorities may require to carry over funding in order to support wider projects. This funding will be accounted for as part of the local government finance statistics in due course and the delivery capacity which has been established will be taken into account in our delivery plans for future expansion to primary 6 and 7 pupils.

### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON HOW THE ADDITIONAL £26 MILLION FOR FE WILL BE ALLOCATED**

The additional resource funding for FE is intended to help our colleges transition to future provision ensuring that the offer to learners is rooted in a robust understanding of local, regional and national priorities and is fiscally sustainable. The SFC is working with Scottish Government officials and colleges to identify the best use of the available resources, taking into account Government priorities and the sector's needs with a view to providing indicative institution allocations in Spring 2023.

### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN FUNDING RATES FOR PLACES IN FE AND HE**

All our education institutions make a crucial and unique contribution to Scotland. There are variations and unique considerations for schools, colleges and universities that means funding per student is not directly comparable as it is not comparing like-for-like provision. Work has started between the SFC and Scottish Government officials to determine the most appropriate model for funding colleges and the outcomes that we seek from our public investment in them.

### **UPDATE ON INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION STRATEGY**

My officials are engaging closely with key stakeholders as we develop an International Education Strategy that promotes Scotland's education offer globally

and attracts a diversity of students to our institutions. The strategy is currently in the drafting stages and we expect to publish it in late Spring 2023.