



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Natalie Don MSP
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Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice
Committee
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Dear Minister

Pre-Budget scrutiny 2024-25: Citizens Panel questions

At its meeting on [Tuesday 24 October 2023](#), as part of its pre-budget scrutiny, the Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee held an evidence session with a citizens panel from the Whole Family Equality Project.

The purpose of the session was to understand their concerns and questions about the budget process. Committee members then put these questions to the Minister for Equalities, Migration and Refugees and the Committee is writing separately to her with our conclusions from the pre-budget scrutiny.

What came through very clearly during our session with the citizens panel, however, is that members of the public do not see government or ministerial portfolios in silos: they want to understand how the different portfolios and departments work together to produce a budget that is relevant and accessible to them.

In that context, the Committee – and the citizens – would welcome your response to the following comments and questions which arose during our session on 24 October. You will note the text is taken verbatim from the citizens panel, with the questions in bold redirected to you as Minister for Children, Young People and Keeping the Promise.

- The panel think it's important that Scottish Government ministers work together to find ways to close the poverty gap without people having to rely on charities and social security payments. Keeping the Promise is one way that children and families can be supported, but it must be delivered by a diverse workforce. **How will you, as Minister for**

Children, Young People and Keeping the Promise, work with the Minister for Equalities, Migration and Refugees to ensure that the Promise considers, reflects and supports the cultural and ethnic diversity of all of Scotland's children?

- The citizens panel has concerns that, even though diversity education in personal, social, health and economic classes has a lot of detail on issues such as sexuality, race and gender, there is little reflection on or understanding of cultural differences. **How are you, as Minister for Children, Young People and Keeping the Promise working with the Minister for Equalities, Migration and Refugees to ensure that teachers have the appropriate equalities and diversity training to fully support the teaching of cultural diversity and delivery of PSHE in a culturally sensitive way?**
- The panel think that the universal bus pass policy has been a great way to tackle inequality and poverty, and that a similar approach should be used for free school meals, including removing stigma and barriers by taking away token schemes and raising the age of free meals to 18. **What work have you done alongside the Minister for Equalities, Migration and Refugees to understand the equalities impacts of the current approach to free school meals, and will she commit to carrying out work on understanding how cross-cutting successes like the universal bus pass can be replicated in other policy areas to alleviate inequality?**

Yours sincerely

Kaukab Stewart
Convener
Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee