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Finance and Public Administration Committee
The Scottish Parliament

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23rd of March 2023

Dear Kenneth

Thank you for your letter of 9 March 2023 in relation to the National Care Service (Scotland) Bill.

As I said in my previous letter, it is important to me that the Scottish Government's response to the Finance and Public Administration Committee's report takes full account of all the evidence and all Committee reports on the Bill, as well as any changes Scottish Ministers may make as a result of that evidence. I will provide a response to all the recommendations in your Committee's report and an update to the Financial Memorandum once we have received and considered the final report from the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee. I can confirm that I and my officials will subsequently be available to give evidence to the Committee.

I apologise that I was not able to advise your Committee sooner of the request for additional time ahead of the Stage 1 debate for the Bill. The matter was raised privately with the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee on the morning of 28 February. As it is for Parliament to agree any such change, I did not want to pre-empt Parliament's decision by making it public before the Bureau motion was published.

In response to your specific questions, delaying progress of the Bill for 3 months has no financial implications for the NCS programme. The programme is broader than just the Bill itself, and work is continuing with co-design where that will support improvements in the delivery of social care support.

Costs relating to the NCS programme during 2021/22 were £1.6 million. The expected cost for 2022/23 is between £10 to £15 million and will be finalised during the year end process. As you know, a Financial Memorandum is not a budgeting document, and the current financial circumstances have led to changes from the predicted costs set out in the Financial

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Memorandum in June 2022 . The published 2023-24 Scottish Budget includes funding for the NCS and Social Care investment; there is no unspent funding in relation to the NCS for 2023/24 which would be considered for reallocation at this time. Please see table 4.02 on page 50 of the 2023-24 budget.

Future financial forecasts will be reprofiled in the revised Financial Memorandum once all evidence has been considered. Actual expenditure in 23/24 will depend partly on the passage of the Bill but also on the pace of co-design to develop the detail of improvements to social care now and design decisions about how the NCS will be implemented.

Kevin Stewart
Minister for Mental Wellbeing and Social Care

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