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15 September 2026

Dear Convener,

Thank you for the opportunity to give evidence on 8 September 2026 on the Scottish Government's Programme for Government priorities for the Education and Gaelic portfolio. I agreed to provide further information on the timescales for dyslexia assessments. I would also like to clarify a point from our discussion in relation to Whole Family Wellbeing funding.

Timescales for dyslexia assessments

Our national approach to dyslexia recognises that children and young people benefit from early identification. The school-based identification pathway is a staged process, which aims to assess dyslexia and ensure appropriate support is put in place. Timescales for identification can vary and depend on the individual needs identified, the length of agreed monitoring and local authority processes. While identification can take place within a single term, we know that for many children and young people the process can take longer, sometimes more than a year. This variance is often compared with the fixed timescales of shorter private dyslexia assessments, which have a different methodology.

As the Programme for Government confirms, we will progress a new dyslexia passport that school leavers can use to access support in their post-school destination. As part of this work, we will be engaging with teachers and partners to identify ways of strengthening school-based dyslexia assessments, inform the development of a leavers' passport and ensure it can be used effectively to access support in post-school destinations.

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In the meantime, we will continue to invest in our established professional learning programmes for teachers on Dyslexia and Inclusive Practice and promote the use of the Scottish working definition of dyslexia and Addressing Dyslexia Toolkit's Dyslexia Identification Pathway. The free Addressing Dyslexia Toolkit has a range of resources to support educators, children and young people and their families through the identification process.

Whole Family Wellbeing

I would also like to take the opportunity to offer a point of accuracy for the record. Duncan Dunlop raised a number of points with me about The Promise and Whole Family Wellbeing, including the suggestion that funding for Whole Family Wellbeing has been cut to £20 million in 2026-27. This is not the case. The budget for Whole Family Wellbeing funding in 2026-27 is £50 million, as it has been in previous years. The Scottish Government has however also established for the first time in 2026-27 a separate £20 million Whole Family Support Third Sector Delivery Fund. This funding, which sits in the Social Justice portfolio budget rather than my own, will enable third sector organisations to provide more support that wraps around families in their communities, making connections to public services and helping to break the cycle of poverty. It is possible Mr Dunlop may have inadvertently been referring to this fund in his intervention and I recognise there is some similarity in the labelling of the two funding streams.

I hope this information is helpful to the Committee.

Yours sincerely,

MÀIRI MCALLAN

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