Dear Ms Hutton,

**Gender pay gap inquiry**

We were grateful to you for appearing before the Economy, Jobs and Fair Work Committee regarding its inquiry into the gender pay gap. We have heard evidence from a range of organisations from the public and private sector and visited some relevant businesses and projects. More information about the inquiry can be found at the following link:


As you are aware, an emerging theme in the inquiry has been the role of the education system in informing the career path of both women and men and within that, the role of the careers service.

For example, Closing the Gap has said that “gender norms and stereotyping about girls’ and boys’ interests and capabilities result in their eventually studying different subjects at school, in further and higher education and in modern apprenticeships.”

Engender has said that “At the moment, we have women working outside their skill sets and being significantly underemployed, we have girls not pursuing their preferences in education.”

These quotes reflect evidence received that there is a role for schools, parents and further education organisations to play in encouraging pupils to consider and pursue a wider range of subjects and careers, particularly those in which women or men are currently under-represented.
The Committee agreed that I should write to SDS to seek further development of these issues. I would be keen to hear further reflections from SDS on the role of the careers service in addressing these issues; I would welcome an update from you on what specific actions are being taken by the careers service in this regard.

In addition, I would welcome any further comments SDS may have on the following questions:

- What more can be done to change the occupational segregation within Scotland’s different sectors? Evidence would suggest that career choices have a material effect on uptake of jobs in lower paid sectors and jobs:
  - How can this be addressed in Higher Education (HE)?
  - How can this be addressed in Further Education (FE)?
  - How can this be addressed in Modern Apprenticeships (MAs)?

- Has progress stalled or plateaued in improving diversity within FE, HE and in MAs?
- How do we encourage girls and women to study STEM subjects?
- How do we encourage men into roles such as early years childcare or other subjects such as law?
- What additional levers are there that could support greater female economic participation and ensure that women secure better paid roles?
- What options are available to encourage men in part-time employment to upskill and improve their job and pay prospects?
- Are there any specific actions that the Scottish Government could take to support the continued reduction and ultimately the elimination of the pay gap in Scotland?

These are key questions for the Committee to consider in reaching conclusions for its final report on the gender pay gap. Your input at this stage would be greatly appreciated. If you could respond to me by 25 May, that would be helpful.

Kind regards

Gordon Lindhurst MSP
Convener