

## **COSLA Response**

Dear Mr Dornan

Thank you for your letter of 12 July in relation to the report from the Education and Skills Committee inquiry into the attainment and achievement of school age children experiencing poverty.

In your letter you asked for an initial response to the report and I have set this out below.

You also asked for a response to the specific recommendations aimed at COSLA by the end of 2018 and I have asked officers to commence the work required to provide this response.

We very much welcome the Committee's report as a valuable contribution in all of our efforts to close the poverty related attainment gap. You will be aware from our written submission and from evidence from local government colleagues that local authorities are fully committed to reducing the gap in attainment between children from low income families and those from better off backgrounds. As we set out in our submission there is a significant amount of effort and investment every day in Scottish education aimed at reducing this gap.

Teachers, education professionals and all of those with the best interests of our children and young people at heart are acutely aware that for too many of our children and young people poverty is their daily reality and that this undoubtedly has an impact on their chances of getting the most from their education.

Given this, we very much welcome the Committee's recommendations aimed at COSLA and local government more widely.

Overall the report recognises that poverty is a complex and interrelated issue. It is however worth reiterating that the poverty related attainment gap will not be closed by work in schools alone, nor should it solely be the responsibility of those working in education. Local authorities work hard to ensure that all of those who can make an impact on the attainment and achievement of school children experiencing poverty are doing so in a cohesive and joined up way. This includes ensuring our own services work effectively together and with others in health and the third sector. Partnership is essential if we are to improve the lives of these children and young people.

At a national level you will be aware that we are working with the Scottish Government and Education Scotland to implement the Education Reform Joint Agreement. A key part of this agreement is that we have shared ambition to close the unacceptable gap in attainment between our least and most disadvantaged children and to raise attainment for all.

In addition, the agreement recognises that our vision of excellence and equity cannot be achieved by one part of the system alone: all partners must work together in a collegiate and collaborative way, keeping the

interests of children and young people front and centre.

We are grateful that the Committee has recognised that it will take some time to prepare a response to the specific recommendations for COSLA. We will work with our partners in the Association of Directors of Education (ADES) and the Scottish Government to ensure we give as full a response as possible. I note that the Committee has welcomed the agreement between local authorities and the Scottish Government on the minimum clothing allowance of £100 per year.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide this initial response to the Committee's report and I will write to you again by the end of 2018 with a fuller response in relation to the specific recommendations aimed at COSLA.

Your Sincerely

**Stephen McCabe**

**COSLA Children and Young People Spokesperson**