Dear Bill,

Thank you again for your letter of 12 December 2018 regarding the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee’s consideration of the Commission on Parliamentary Reform’s recommendation 24 and specifically provision to ensure that Members with childcare responsibilities, including nursing mothers, are able to participate in Chamber business.

In my initial response of 18 December, I indicated that, although the situation has yet to arise, I would always support any mother who wished to breastfeed in the Chamber. I also said that I would be happy to raise the issue of flexibility around the creche with the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, which is responsible for these matters. I am now pleased to update you on the discussions I have since had with my SPCB colleagues.

The creche was set up primarily to support members of the public to participate in parliamentary business and is part of the engagement strategy to ensure the Parliament is accessible to all. It can take children for up to four hours at a time. As expected, the majority of bookings are made by visitors, however we are mindful that there may be occasions when a Member needs or wishes, to bring their child in to the building, including during parliamentary business, and I am happy to confirm that our booking arrangements are flexible to meet those needs.

The creche is open Monday to Friday from 08:00 to 18:00. On the few occasions when the Parliament sits beyond 18:00, we would be happy to extend the creche opening hours until 20:00 if there was demand to do so. Our creche provider would need around a week’s notice to put in place the necessary staffing arrangements.

I hope this reassures the Committee that there is sufficient flexibility around the creche to support nursing mothers in addition to nursing mothers being welcome to breast feed in the chamber should the need arise.

I hope this is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

Rt Hon Ken Macintosh MSP
Presiding Officer

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