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Dear Convener,

UPDATE ON POST SCHOOL REFORM

I am writing to update the Committee on reforms to the Post-School education, research and skills landscape ahead of my statement to Parliament this afternoon.

As the Committee is aware James Withers made a number of recommendations on the case for change to ensure our post school system is fit for the many challenges of the future. The Initial Priorities paper, published as part of the Purpose and Principles in the summer, accepted the premise of many of the recommendations in James' review and set out the action that the Scottish Government would take to set the foundations for change. Since then, I have engaged extensively with people, practitioners and opposition parties, listening closely to views. I have been greatly encouraged by the collective desire to rise to the challenges of reform.

This afternoon I will update on the progress made to date and set out the next steps for the reform programme. The substantive policy elements of my statement are set out below.

Skills Planning

As I have already confirmed, the Scottish Government will take on responsibility for national skills planning, recognising the need to be clear about national strategic skills requirements.

Funding Landscape

Recent reviews have all demonstrated that our current Post-School system is overly complex with three public bodies responsible for funding different parts of the system.

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My statement will indicate that as an initial step I am committed, in principle, to bringing together learner support funding into one place, and funding for provision, including apprenticeship provision, into one place. Understandably this will take some time but I will work closely with SFC, SAAS and SDS to make this happen. As part of this work, I will also be considering how apprenticeships can better reflect economic and learner needs. I have asked Scottish Government policy officials to lead this work.

CLD Review

Recent reviews linked to education and skills reform have highlighted the important role for Community Learning and Development (CLD) in delivering learning to some of the most marginalised and vulnerable people living in Scotland. Nevertheless, there is more we need to know about the way and extent to which this is happening across the country, particularly if we are to ensure CLD continues to be an integral part of our life-long learning offer in a reformed education system. In recognising this, today I will announce a short and focused independent review of the current approach to CLD provision, and how it will fit within a reformed education and skills landscape. The review will be led by Kate Still who will bring extensive relevant experience to bear on this issue and who will report her findings to Ministers by June 2024.

Careers Services

Between the careers services provided by SDS, the Developing the Young Workforce network and third sector initiatives like Career Ready I believe the foundations for a strong offer that enables learners to make informed choices about their future are in place. I am delighted that Grahame Smith has agreed to stay on to help develop this work through his work as Chair of the Careers Collaborative. I am keen that this work's immediate focus is to develop a clearer, more coherent focus for our national careers services to the benefit of learners and employers.

Taken together the areas I have outlined demonstrate commitment and direction from the Scottish Government to deliver real and substantial reform in the Post-School landscape. I am committed to working closely with you and the Committee in the reform process to ensure that our services deliver the highest possible standard for those who use them.

I would be happy to discuss the above should this be of interest to the committee.



GRAEME DEY MSP

Minister for Higher Education, Further Education; and Minister for Veterans

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