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Claire Baker MSP

Convener, Economy and Fair Work Committee

Scottish Parliament

Edinburgh,

EH99 1SP

Sent by email

Dear Claire,

**RE: Upskilling Scotland's Workforce**

We have today written to Kate Forbes MSP, Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Gaelic stating our disappointment that in the last budget the Scottish Government removed all funding for upskilling and reskilling. We recognise the difficult financial decisions facing Ministers, however we firmly believe that there is a strong economic development imperative to ensure that employees have access to some form of upskilling funding.


In the last round of the Upskilling Fund we received 2345 applications covering all 32 local authorities. Unfortunately, due to a lack of funding we had to decline 1136 of those applications. A common thread in the applications was that neither the applicant nor their employer could afford to pay for the training. A brief is attached with this correspondence.

We would very much welcome the opportunity to meet and discuss the challenges facing the economy in relation to upskilling the country's workforce. The Scottish Government will be publishing its priorities before summer recess and the pre-budget scrutiny process will commence quickly after recess. We want to see a budget line included in the next Scottish Government budget which reinstates funding for employees to upskill.

We want to work constructively across party lines to formulate solutions to the challenges and not just go to the Scottish Government 'cap in hand'. The hard truth however is that investment is required from the Scottish Government.

It is our hope that by working together we can find the solutions to the challenges facing the country.

Yours sincerely,



Keith Robson

**Senior Public Affairs Manager**

[keith.robson@open.ac.uk](mailto:keith.robson@open.ac.uk)

cc:

Colin Beattie MSP, Deputy Convener, Economy and Fair Work Committee

Clerk to Economy and Fair Work Committee

## Upskilling (AY23/24) Headline stats:

✓ Total applications:	<b>2,345</b>
✓ Total applications declined:	<b>1,136</b>
✓ Local authority areas covered:	<b>32</b>
✓ No of applicants from SIMD20/40:	<b>27%</b>
✓ No of applicants declaring	
○ Disability:	<b>11%</b>
○ Unemployed or at risk of redundancy:	<b>13%</b>
○ BAME background:	<b>15%</b>
○ Carer responsibilities:	<b>9.5%</b>
○ Care experienced:	<b>1.4%</b>

### **Selection of quotes from applicants who stated that they could either not afford to pay for the training themselves or their employer could not afford to pay:**

'I have two teenagers for whom I'm solely responsible for financially so must ensure I do everything to make this work and earn enough from these ventures. I have no further funds to invest in this career transition so this offering would be perfect if I could be granted a place.' – **a new business owner**

'Cyber Security is something i've been really interested in from being introduced to it within my role. However, there's not much room for development within the business and I don't have the funds to put myself through the course, so I feel this would benefit my skills and career.' – **someone working in TeleComms**

'This new course would allow me to move up to the next level in my career and give me the knowledge and confidence to pursue a management position...I am a single parent to a 18 month old baby boy and a 13 year old daughter. Funds are tight and without this opportunity I would be unable to afford to study a higher qualification.' – **Social Worker**

'I identified development of coaching and mentoring skills as key areas for my development within this role. Unfortunately at the present time there is no employer funding available to support this aspiration.' – **someone working in the NHS**

'Being a small charity, we don't often have funds available for training, so securing a place on this funded course would be of great benefit. I am also keen to grow my professional development. There is not a lot of money in the third sector at the moment, and building these skills for my CV will help ensure that I remain employable if my current role was to end.' – **someone working in the Third Sector**

## **Additional Stats**

### **1. Future subject areas**

<b>In the future, would there be any other subject areas you would consider upskilling in?</b>	
Artificial intelligence (AI);	<b>601</b>
Arts and culture	<b>97</b>
Climate change and sustainability	<b>282</b>
Coding languages	<b>407</b>
Data science	<b>493</b>
Digital transformation	<b>437</b>
Entrepreneurship	<b>283</b>
Health and social care	<b>254</b>
Leadership and management	<b>880</b>
Marketing and communications (including social media)	<b>291</b>
Voluntary sector leadership	<b>175</b>

## 2. Local authority breakdown

Local Authority area	
Aberdeen City	71
Aberdeenshire	56
Angus	25
Argyll and Bute	19
City of Edinburgh	208
Clackmannanshire	12
Dumfries and Galloway	30
Dundee City	33
East Ayrshire	29
East Dunbartonshire	36
East Lothian	41
East Renfrewshire	30
Falkirk	48
Fife	67
Glasgow City	182
Inverclyde	12
Midlothian	38
Moray	30
North Ayrshire	25
North Lanarkshire	63
Orkney	3
Perth and Kinross	41
Renfrewshire	45
Scottish Borders	34
Shetland Islands	9
South Ayrshire	26
South Lanarkshire	89
Stirling	35
Highland	46
West Dunbartonshire	13
West Lothian	63
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar	4