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Education, Children and Young People
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Scottish Parliament
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21 December, 2023

Dear Convener

Following a 20-month review, “*Hearings for Children: The report of the Hearings System Working Group*” was published on 25 May 2023. The independent report set out an ambitious redesign package of over 100 recommendations.

The work was led by Sheriff David Mackie alongside members of the Hearings System Working Group (HSWG): officers from the Promise Scotland, the Scottish Children’s Reporter Administration (SCRA) and Children’s Hearings Scotland (CHS). Scottish Government officials were able to act as group observers but did not contribute to the report or its recommendations.

I gave a commitment at the time of publication that the Scottish Government would publish a response by the end of the calendar year. I’m pleased to be able to inform the Committee that our response and forward plans are scheduled to be published today (Thursday 21 December.) We have arranged for a copy of the response documents to be transmitted to the committee Clerk.

As I said when the report was published, I am deeply grateful for the work of Sheriff Mackie and the wider Hearings System Working Group and I am pleased I have had the opportunity, prior to publication to discuss with Sheriff Mackie the route forward.

At the forefront of our thinking as we look ahead to taking that important activity forward will be the positive impacts we can have on children and their families.

Should Members have any immediate questions, then please arrange for the Clerk to contact my office, using ministercypkp@gov.scot.

(cont)

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I hope that update is helpful. I will close by sending my very best wishes to Committee Members, Parliamentary staff and their families for the festive season.

Natalie Don

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