



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Education Children and Young People Committee

Clare Haughey MSP
Minister for Children and Young People
Scottish Government

T3.60
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP
Direct Tel: 0131 348 6225
Fax: 0131 348 5600
ecyp.committee@parliament.scot

21 March 2023

Via E-mail

Dear Minister,

Subordinate legislation

Thank you for attending the Committee on [Wednesday 8 March 2023](#) to give evidence on the draft SSI: The Provision of Early Learning and Childcare (Specified Children) (Scotland) Amendment Order 2023.

As you will recall, in addition to approving the draft affirmative instrument, the Committee raised some related issues, including the uptake of funded early learning and childcare for eligible two-year-olds; and the membership of the deferral working group.

The Committee welcomed your commitment to provide information confirming—

- when the data sharing arrangements are in place;
- the number of families that the Scottish Government anticipates will be eligible for funded ELC; and
- the membership of the Scottish Government's Deferral Working Group and how often it has met.

During the meeting the Committee also discussed the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 (Modification) Regulations 2023, a negative instrument which will increase the eligibility threshold, from £7,920 to £8,717, to ensure that children of parents affected by the recent increase to the National Living Wage will still be entitled to free school meals.

The Committee welcomed the free school meals provision currently in place and supported this increase. However, one member asked whether, given the current cost of living crisis, the threshold for obtaining free school meals should be increased more substantially. The Committee therefore agreed to write to you to ask whether the Scottish Government has considered extending eligibility for free school meals.

During its discussions, the Committee also welcomed other support that is in place such as grants for school uniforms. However, it noted that take up of school uniform grants and free school meals could be higher.

It therefore agreed to write to you to ask what action the Scottish Government could take, in conjunction with COSLA, to enhance take up of this support. It further agreed to ask whether the Scottish Government had considered the use of automatic enrolment to ensure that families receive the support that they are entitled to.

While it appreciates that the information regarding data sharing and the number of families eligible for funded early learning and childcare for eligible two-year-olds may not be available until later into the financial year, it would welcome this information as soon as is practicable.

The Committee would welcome your response to the other points raised in this letter by **Tuesday 18 April 2023**.

Yours sincerely

Sue Webber MSP
Convener