



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Education Children and Young People Committee

Graeme Dey
Minister for Higher and Further Education; and Minister for Veterans
Scottish Government

9 September 2024 – via e-mail

Dear Minister

Pre-Budget Scrutiny 2025 to 2026 - supplementary evidence

Thank you for giving evidence on our Pre-Budget Scrutiny 2025 to 2026 at our meeting on 4 September. You can now [read the Official Report](#) from that meeting. During evidence, you agreed to provide the Committee with further evidence on a number of areas which I have set out below.

VAT/Shared Services

The Committee heard of potential impediments surrounding VAT in relation to shared services within the college and university sectors on which you said you would provide further information. (Col 9)

Student numbers/widening access

The Committee considered the issue of widening access to colleges and universities particularly for those from areas of deprivation and the measures used to improve student numbers from those backgrounds. You highlighted a pilot in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire where there is an existing data-sharing arrangement that allows them to share information on free school meals. The Committee requests further information in relation to this pilot and further information on alternative approaches used by universities and colleges, including the Open university, to widen access to their institutions. (Cols 14-15)

Staffing

The Committee was interested in the long-term sustainability of the Scottish Government's funding for universities impacted by the increases to employer contributions to the Scottish Teachers Superannuation Scheme. You highlighted that the UK Government had made a commitment around consequential pension schemes for college and teacher pension schemes and that the Scottish Government is

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Email ecyp.committee@parliament.scot. We welcome calls through Relay UK and in BSL through Contact Scotland BSL.

'sympathetic to the possibility of utilising that funding to assist the universities.' You said you would provide an update on the Scottish Government's funding plans in this area. (Col 24)

Student mental health funding

The Committee discussed the [recent announcement](#) regarding the £18.8m reduction in the mental health service budget, with savings coming from mainstreaming elements of the Distress Brief Interventions programme and student mental health measures. You committed to providing further information on how this will impact directly on student mental health funding initiatives in colleges and universities. (Col 30)

YouthLink Scotland funding settlement

You agreed to provide further details on the YouthLink Scotland funding settlement for 2024-25. (Col 30)

The Committee would be grateful if you could provide this information by **24 September 2024**.

Yours sincerely,

Sue Webber MSP
Convener