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Dear Convener,

This afternoon I laid 'Best Start, Bright Futures' before the Scottish Parliament. This, our second Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan for the period 2022-26, sets out how we will, together with partners across Scotland, drive further progress in tackling child poverty over the next four years.

The Plan and the underpinning cumulative impact assessment can be read in full at [gov.scot](http://gov.scot), and for ease is also provided alongside this letter.

The Plan continues to focus on the three drivers of child poverty reduction and the six priority family types at greatest risk of poverty, so that our actions make the difference needed for parents, for families and for children and young people. The key commitments are summarised below.

The Plan sets out the immediate action we will take to put cash in the pockets of families now. This includes further increasing the Scottish Child Payment to £25 per eligible child, per week, by the end of 2022, uprating eight Scottish social security payments by 6% to ensure these payments keep their real-terms values for families, and mitigating the benefit cap, as fully as we can within the limits of devolved powers. I know you will agree that this has never been more important than now when families face the combined impacts of the cost of living crisis, the ongoing impact of Covid-19 and rising inflation.

The Plan also sets out the action we will take to drive progress in the medium to longer term to enable thousands of families to break the cycle of poverty. The Plan will provide the opportunities and integrated support that parents need to enter, sustain and progress in work; will maximise the support available for families to live dignified lives and meet their basic needs; and will support the next generation to thrive. This includes significantly strengthening our employment services to support parents, backed by up to £81 million in 2022-23 alone, and further strengthening our

support through a new £15 million Parental Transition Fund to tackle financial barriers parents face in entering the labour market.

In addition to our support for parents to increase their earnings from social security and employment, the plan also sets out our wider commitment to reshape a holistic package of support around families, improve access to mental health services, tackle fuel poverty and increase access to affordable housing for families who need it most. It also sets out how we will support children and young people to have the best start to life; to learn and grow and to achieve better lifelong outcomes following their transition from school.

In laying this Plan before Parliament I am clear that, whilst new investment is crucial, we must also work differently to improve the outcomes from this and wider investment and realise greater impact from our collective efforts.

To this end the Plan commits to identifying a small number of pathfinder areas in the coming year, to commence work on a new phased approach to whole system change. This will be supported by up to £5 million of investment from the Tackling Child Poverty Fund in 2022-23 and underpinned with evidence and learning to inform and improve our delivery approach, with the ambition to deliver at scale over the life of the plan.

'Best Start, Bright Futures' was informed by consultations with stakeholders across Scotland. I am grateful for the Committee's engagement to date, and I stand ready to discuss the Plan should members wish once they have considered it in detail.

Yours sincerely,

**SHONA ROBISON**