

Rt Hon Nicola Sturgeon MSP
First Minister of Scotland



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
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St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG
T: 0300 244 4000

Stephen Kerr MSP Convener
Education Children and Young People Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

By e-mail: ECYP.committee@Parliament.Scot

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Thank you for your letter of 1 April regarding the Convener's Group on 2 March and information I agreed to provide on digital devices and connectivity in education.

You will be aware that alongside investment from the Scottish Government, many councils have undertaken their own device deployment programmes for school-aged children. The latest information we have indicates that almost 280,000 devices have been provided to children across Scotland. That figure includes 72,000 devices funded directly by Scottish Government as part of our emergency response to the pandemic.

In terms of internet connections, the Scottish Government directly funded 14,000 connections for disadvantaged children and young people as part of the COVID-19 response. I expect many more will have been issued by councils as part of their wider programmes, but we do not currently hold information which would enable me to confirm a figure.

The Scottish Government is also running a wider digital inclusion programme, Connecting Scotland, which seeks to support disadvantaged people across the country to get online. To date, 60,000 people have benefitted from support via this programme.

With regard to phasing of the programme to deliver a device for every child - a key commitment of this government - it is important to understand the complexity that is involved in a deployment at this scale. In addition to procurement of devices we must ensure that networking and connectivity in schools are of sufficient quality to support the use of devices in school.

Given the importance of local authorities in the success of this programme, we have convened a partnership board with COSLA and other local government partners which met for the first time on 22 March. The board will oversee this work and help to steer the programme going forward. Whilst we have not yet agreed all of the phasing details I can say that preparatory work will commence soon. More information on the programme will be made available in due course.

I hope this information is helpful.

NICOLA STURGEON