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Scottish Parliament

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27 February 2026

Dear Karen,

I am writing following the 3rd of February committee session on post-budget scrutiny.

I was pleased to appear jointly at the committee's session, alongside the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government, and wanted to take this opportunity to provide additional information by responding to points raised during the session.

I look forward to continued engagement with the committee on these matters and trust that you will find this information helpful.

Strategic Integrated Impact Assessment (SIIA) evaluation

As set out in the Equalities and Human Rights Mainstreaming Action Plan, we remain committed to publishing a full process evaluation of the new Strategic Integrated Impact Assessment (SIIA) approach. As part of this evaluation, we are engaging with stakeholders on the improvements made to date and their priorities for future iterations of the SIIA. We expect the evaluation to conclude in the spring, with plans for publication to be confirmed following the election. We will share this evaluation with the Committee once it is available.

As part of this work, we will reflect upon the Committee's constructive feedback and review the language used in the budget-tagging pilot. This will include clarifying that budget tagging assesses the relative importance of spending lines rather than the outcomes they deliver. Describing lines as "exceptionally important" is intended to support the prioritisation of funding to advance key equality objectives.

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Preventing and eradicating all violence against women and girls

We remain steadfast in our commitment to preventing and eradicating all violence against women and girls and addressing the underlying attitudes and systems that perpetuate it.

Our Delivering Equally Safe Fund funds 107 organisations providing support to survivors of rape and sexual abuse, other forms of violence against women, and undertaking prevention activity. This includes funding to Rape Crisis Centres, other third sector organisations specifically supporting rape survivors, and specialist organisations working with women with particular needs (such as minority ethnic women, deaf women and women with learning disabilities) on issue of various forms of violence against women, including rape and sexual assault. It is also important to note that many Women's Aid groups (also supported through the fund) will be supporting victims of rape and sexual assault given the amount of this form of violence experienced by women in the context of their intimate partner relationships.

In 2025/26 we provided these organisations with £21.6 million, and the full list of recipients (including rape crisis centres) can be found here:

[Funding boost to tackle gender-based violence - gov.scot](#)

Letters of comfort were issued to Delivering Equally Safe funded organisations in January 2026 letting recipients know that they would be receiving at least the same level of funding as 2025/26. Final grant offer letters will be issued as soon as possible following finalisation of the Budget at Bill Stage 3 on 25 February 2026.

On 10 February 2026 the Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice announced multi-year funding for the Delivering Equally Safe Fund. The Government recognises the challenges organisations are operating within and this approach aims to protect the sector's future by providing the certainty organisations need to plan ahead, retain specialist staff, and sustain their vital services, as we work towards a new funding model for Violence Against Women and Girls services. The announcement is intended to provide greater certainty about our commitment to supporting specialist services that provide crucial support to survivors of violence against women and girls.

On 25 February 2025 the Finance Secretary announced that the Scottish Budget 2026-27 will provide a 5% uplift to the Delivering Equally Safe Fund – equating to almost £1.1 million additional funding per year for work to prevent and eradicate violence against women and girls. The 5% uplift to the Delivering Equally Safe Fund for 2026/27 is in addition to the multi-year extension we announced on 10 February, for 2026-2028, and will allow all fund recipients to continue the vital work they undertake to prevent violence and support survivors. This takes the fund total to nearly £23m in 2026/27 and 2027/28.

Through the Victim Centred Approach Fund (VCAF - Fairer Funding pilot) for the 2025/26 financial year, we fund the Rape Crisis Scotland (RCS) National Advocacy Project (£2,017,872) which was set up to support survivors of rape, sexual assault, and abuse to engage with and navigate the justice process.

In addition, we provided RCS with £384,026 in 2025/26 in relation to the Scottish Women's Rights Centre to enable free, specialist legal advice, representation, and advocacy to promote access to justice for women aged 16+ who are survivors of [gender based violence](#) including domestic abuse, honour-based abuse, rape and sexual violence. In

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common with VCAF, and subject to the ratification of the draft budget, funding at the same level will continue for 2026/2027.

With support from Inspiring Scotland, we also fund the Survivors of Childhood Abuse Support (SOCAS) 2024 Fund, which provides funding for 22 third sector organisations supporting adult survivors of childhood abuse: [Survivors of Childhood Abuse Support Fund - Inspiring Scotland](#).

Social security

I wanted to provide further evidence following claims that benefits in Scotland were a disincentive to work.

[Independent analysis](#) published in December 2025 (by researchers at the University of York and London School of Economics) found no evidence that the Scottish Child Payment creates meaningful work disincentives, and that the evidence suggests concerns around work disincentives are overplayed. The report concludes “the SCP has not in practice disincentivised work among recipient families in Scotland. At the same time, wider evidence indicates that the policy is reducing poverty, material deprivation and food insecurity”.

An [evaluation of the Five Family Payments](#), published in September 2025, also showed the majority of respondents reported that the Scottish Child Payment had no impact on their labour market choices.

This followed [analysis](#) published by the Scottish Government, in July 2024, which concluded that the payment is not negatively affecting labour market outcomes at scale at current rates.

Yours sincerely,

KAUKAB STEWART

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