

Richard Leonard MSP
Convener
Public Audit Committee
Scottish Parliament

2 March 2022
By email

Dear Convener

Planning for skills

I welcomed the opportunity to participate in the committee's consideration on 10 February 2022 of my audit report on [Planning for skills](#).

I committed to provide further information on two topics:

- Craig Hoy asked what factors contributed to the success of the pilot project on **early learning and childcare** – covered on page 11 of the report – and what lessons were learned from it.
- You asked about the membership of the **Skills Alignment Joint Programme Board**, noted in paragraph 15 on page 12 of the report.

Early learning and childcare (ELC) pilot project

An evaluation by consultants in April 2020 found the following factors contributed to the success of the pilot:

- The pilot built on existing joint work between Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) in this area.
- A collective understanding of the objective of the project was underpinned by the Scottish Government's policy commitment to expand ELC provision, and an existing evidence base in the ELC Skills Investment Plan.
- Collaboration improved between SDS and the SFC, as they worked towards shared goals and a common objective.
- Data on further and higher education provision and apprenticeships was available and shared between partners, with joint working between SDS and the SFC on data analysis and insights.
- ELC is a well-defined sector, with clear entry points and a clear qualification framework.

The evaluation of the pilot also identified lessons learned, including:

- Strong leadership is essential to achieving improved collaboration, communication and information flows, with a need for clarity on who takes ownership of the process.
- Drawing on a range of datasets and developing new insights can be impactful.
- The work done needs to lead to medium to long-term planning and impact.

Skills Alignment Joint Programme Board

Membership of the Board comprised a range of Directors and staff in senior roles within SDS and the SFC, together with the Director of Skills Alignment. The Board last met in March 2020.

I hope that committee members find this information helpful. SDS and the SFC would be best placed to provide additional detail should this be required by the committee.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stephen Boyle', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Stephen Boyle
Auditor General for Scotland