



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## Education Children and Young People Committee

Collette Stevenson  
Convener  
Social Justice and Social Security Committee

24 January 2025

Thank you for your letter dated 2 December 2024, providing follow up on your “addressing child poverty through parental employment” inquiry report.

The Education, Children and Young People Committee recognises that our remit covers many policy areas which are important to tackling this issue.

As requested, I have set out below, the current – and future – work our Committee is doing in relevant policy areas.

### Current work

#### Pre-Budget scrutiny 2025-26

As you set out in both your inquiry report and letter, childcare, education and training need to be accessible to parents seeking employment. Universities and colleges are critical to offering appropriate opportunities for study and training. The sustainability of institutions is therefore key.

The Committee agreed to focus its pre-budget scrutiny on college and university funding, looking at the current funding settlement but also considering the sustainability of funding in the years ahead, taking into account the impact of tightening public spending and potential upcoming reforms.

The Committee took evidence at its meetings on [5 June 2024](#) and [12 June 2024](#) before taking evidence from the Minister for Higher and Further Education; and Minister for Veterans on [4 September 2024](#).

The Committee sent its [pre-budget scrutiny letter](#) to the Minister for Higher and Further Education; and Minister for Veterans on 9 October 2024. The Minister [responded on 31 October 2024](#).

Contact: Education Children and Young People Committee, The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP.

Email [ecyp.committee@parliament.scot](mailto:ecyp.committee@parliament.scot). We welcome calls through Relay UK and in BSL through Contact Scotland BSL.

Following the announcement of the 2025-26 Budget in December 2024, the Committee took evidence from the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills and the Minister for Higher and Further Education; and Minister for Veterans at its meeting on [8 January 2025](#).

It may be helpful to know that the Committee has also focused on college and university funding as part of its pre-budget scrutiny in other years, [2023-24](#) and [2024-25](#).

## **Upcoming work**

### **Inquiry on widening access**

At its meeting on 27 November 2004, the Committee agreed to undertake an inquiry on widening access.

In its [college regionalisation inquiry report](#), published in March 2023, the Committee recognised that colleges play a critical role in ensuring higher education is truly accessible to all. However, the Committee was concerned about the stress on the college system, post-pandemic. It was concerned about the capacity of colleges to continue delivering the level of support required by learners despite significant financial challenges.

In its report, the Committee acknowledged the limitations of the SIMD20 metric as a tool for identifying disadvantage, given it is based purely on geographic area rather than on individual circumstances. It also noted the view of the then Commissioner for Fair Access, Sir Peter Scott, that other factors should be considered alongside SIMD20 to ensure that students with the greatest need are identified. The Committee therefore recommended that the Scottish Government revisit the current widening access framework, with a view to ensuring these additional factors are included, and that support measures are targeted appropriately across Scotland.

It is likely that issues pertaining to measures which could help support parents, and others, to study or train their way out of poverty, will be raised during this inquiry.

### **Post-school education and skills reform legislation**

Last year, the Scottish Government consulted on proposals for legislation to change what public bodies do in the post-school system in order to simplify responsibilities for apprenticeships and student support.

The Scottish Government has considered the responses to that consultation and will be introducing a Bill to effect those changes, before the summer recess. The Education, Children and Young People Committee is expected to be designated the lead committee to look at the Bill.

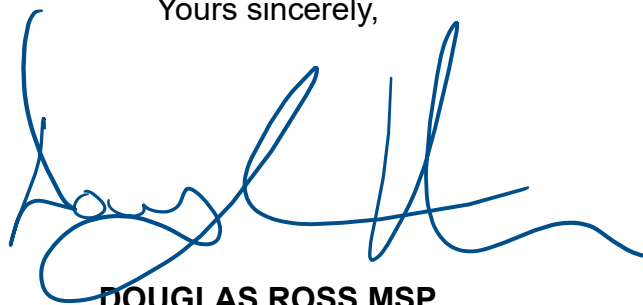
## Early Learning and Childcare

The Committee focused on Early Learning and Childcare as part of its pre-budget scrutiny in [2023-24](#).

Given the critical importance that access to affordable, flexible childcare plays in parents' ability to access employment, and in the educational outcomes for children, the Committee has agreed to focus on Early Learning and Childcare for its pre-budget scrutiny for 2026-27.

I hope that the above is helpful. The Committee will be happy to keep you updated on our progress on this work and to share our findings.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Douglas Ross', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

**DOUGLAS ROSS MSP  
CONVENER**