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02 September 2026

Dear Colleagues,

We are pleased to update you that yesterday the First Minister announced our [Programme for Government](#), looking ahead to a 5 year term which is centred around people and making tangible improvements in their lives, where it matters most. Everything we do as a government will be centred around eradicating child poverty, strengthening public services, growing our economy and tackling the climate emergency.

We want to start by putting on record again our huge appreciation for the work that you and your members do each and every day in supporting Scotland's children and families. This plays a vital role in reducing inequalities, promoting children's development, tackling child poverty and supporting economic opportunities for parents. We have both welcomed the opportunities we've had to visit the services your members provide, and to experience first-hand the incredible dedication, skill and professionalism of our childcare professionals and activities providers.

Scotland's current early learning and childcare offer is already delivering many benefits to children and families. However, we want to reassure you that we fully appreciate the challenges that you highlight to us – we understand your concerns about recruitment, retention, sustainability and ensuring that every child receives the support they need to

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flourish. We will continue to work closely with the sector to address these challenges as we plan for the future.

Transforming Scotland's childcare offer

We believe the time is right to take the next step in Scotland's childcare journey.

That is why, over the course of this Parliament, we will transform Scotland's childcare offer to provide support for families with children from nine months through to the end of primary school. Our ambition is to create a more flexible childcare system that changes from a focus on 3- and 4-year olds to providing childcare support earlier in life and through to the end of primary school, reflecting the realities of family life. This recognises that access to high-quality childcare is not only essential for children's development, but is also critical to tackling child poverty, supporting household incomes, advancing gender equality and supporting economic growth.

Building on a decade of learning from childcare policy and delivery in Scotland, including from our 1140 expansion evaluation and our Early Adopter Communities, alongside the insights and expertise you have shared with us, we will next year publish and consult on a blueprint for a transformed childcare offer focussing on what matters most to families. Throughout this process we will continue to engage with providers, children and families to deliver change that meets the needs of all those who use and deliver childcare in Scotland.

Delivery will be phased across the Parliamentary term, with children in primary schools able to access breakfast clubs across Scotland from August 2027, and a new after school and holiday childcare offer for primary school children available from August 2029.

As we develop our blueprint for the future, we are already making significant new investments in 2026-27, improving the affordability and flexibility of childcare and supporting access to work, education and training. As well as £18 million to expand breakfast club provision, this includes up to £15 million of funding to support low income families with their childcare costs, and a further £2.5 million to test delivery of a wider term-time after school activities offer for primary school children. This builds on the success of the Extra Time Programme, delivered in partnership with the Scottish Football Association. In 26/27 we'll continue to invest in Extra Time, the Access to Childcare Fund and in our childcare Early Adopter Communities.

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Thank you again for all that you do for Scotland's children and families. We are proud to be working with you to improve Scotland's childcare offer and support our fantastic, diverse childcare and activities sectors.

Yours sincerely,



MÀIRI MCALLAN



SIOBHIAN BROWN

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