

Monday 18 May 2015

SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT

Health and Social Care

Bob Doris (Glasgow) (Scottish National Party): To ask the Scottish Government how much funding it has allocated to the New Medicines Fund for 2015-16.

(S4W-25571)

Shona Robison: The Scottish Government has allocated £80 million to the New Medicines Fund in 2015-16.

Learning and Justice

Ken Macintosh (Eastwood) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government whether it plans to review childcare regulations in relation to the use of retainer fees.

(S4W-25438)

Fiona McLeod: The use of retainer fees by private childcare services are a matter for individual businesses. There are no specific childcare regulations on the purchasing of childcare from private and independent providers. The issue of any charging in relation to funded partnership providers will be considered for inclusion in the revised early learning and childcare statutory guidance, due for updating by August 2015.

Ken Macintosh (Eastwood) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government what its position is on funding less than a quarter of places in a partnership nursery where all children are eligible for free childcare.

(S4W-25441)

Fiona McLeod: Local authorities have a statutory duty to secure funded early learning and childcare places for all eligible children whose parents wish it, and they can provide this through their own settings or through contracts with private or third sector providers. It is for each local authority to take decisions on contracting with partners, ensuring there is adequate provision in their area.

Ken Macintosh (Eastwood) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government what further choice it can make available to parents in the provision of childcare places.

(S4W-25442)

Fiona McLeod: The Scottish Government has placed flexibility on a statutory footing for the first time, through the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. Local authorities now have a duty to consult at least once every two years with representative groups of local parents on patterns of hours which will best meet their needs. This will allow local authorities to plan how they reconfigure services to better meet the needs of working parents; and, introduce a greater level of flexibility and choice in to the system.

Flexibility means moving away from what has been the default model of provision of 2.5 hours a day to providing models of provision that support a wider range of needs of parents including supporting parents who are employed, training or studying. However, the Scottish Government recognises that this is best achieved through year on year incremental change. The estimated budget up to 2019 increased annually to meet an incremental increase in choice.

Local authorities are consulting and increasing their flexibility, including offering further models of provision from August 2016

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (Scottish Liberal Democrats): To ask the Scottish Government, further to the answer to question S4W-25348 by Angela Constance on 5 May 2015, whether it has established a timeframe for the Widening Access Commission to report back with its conclusions.

(S4W-25446)

Angela Constance: The commission has been asked to provide an interim report in the autumn, followed by a final report in spring 2016.

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (Scottish Liberal Democrats): To ask the Scottish Government, further to the answer to question S4W-25286 by Angela Constance on 6 May 2015, if there is a change in its position, whether it will inform the Parliament before any action is taken.

(S4W-25458)

Angela Constance: The Scottish Government has no plans to participate in any future sale of student loan debt. Should the Scottish Government's position change, the government would follow the appropriate consultation processes and consult with all relevant stakeholders.