



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

**FINANCE COMMITTEE**  
**Convener: Kenneth Gibson MSP**

John Swinney MSP  
Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth  
The Scottish Government  
Edinburgh

7 August 2012

*Dear Cabinet Secretary,*

**DATA COLLECTION**

At the Committee's meeting on 20 June 2012, we held an interesting evidence session on data collection with a number of witnesses including Roger Halliday, the Scottish Government Chief Statistician (see [Official Report for this meeting](#)). There are a number of points we should like to follow up with you as this is a topic which will likely feature in many aspects of our work programme over this parliamentary session. These points are set out below.

- Mr Halliday (col.1395) highlighted the Scottish exchange of education data programme and the “possibilities” which this might offer. The Committee would welcome further information on what these possibilities are and how consideration will be taken forward.
- Audit Scotland (col.1397) made points about the “significant gaps in performance, cost and activity data across the public sector”. This issue was also made to us during our evidence gathering on preventative spend. The Committee would be interested to learn what the Scottish Government's strategy is to ‘plug’ any such “gaps”. The issue was again highlighted in further discussion (col.1406) when the point was made about Scotland having a “relatively underdeveloped set of approaches for benchmarking in the public sector”. However, Audit Scotland (col.1398) did note, with “cautious optimism” that there could be improvements in this area. Perhaps you could outline whether the Scottish Government is similarly optimistic and whether you share the concerns expressed about the inability to properly measure outcomes equitably and consistently across public sector groups (the example of free personal and nursing care was given (col.1407) while Mark McDonald also gave an example (col.1411)).
- Roger Halliday (col.1401) made a point about improving the “capacity and capability” of public bodies to improve their data collection (we recently [took oral evidence from you on the Official Statistics SSI](#)). Perhaps you could

Room T3.60, The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP  
Direct Tel: (0131) 348 5215 (RNID Typetalk calls welcome)  
[finance.committee@scottish.parliament.uk](mailto:finance.committee@scottish.parliament.uk)

outline whether we are now seeing such improvements and what these are, and what plans the Scottish Government has to roll this out across more public sector bodies e.g. every NHS board? A similar point was made by Jenny Stewart of KPMG (col.1405) on the publication of statistics by local authorities and NHS boards.

- There was discussion (col.1404) around income levels and SIMD in which the welfare reform agenda was highlighted. Could the Scottish Government provide further information on the regime for measuring deprivation in the light of this reform and what scope there will be to utilise data from DWP.
- Roger Halliday (col.1410) highlighted the data linkage project which the Scottish Government has recently consulted on. The Committee would welcome an update from the Scottish Government on what emerges from this consultation and what happens next. We will be interested to learn in what way this framework will address points made during the discussion e.g. the need to properly evaluate outcomes.

The Committee looks forward to your response. Should there be any other issues which you wish you think the Committee will be interested in then perhaps your officials could discuss these with our clerks ([fergus.cochrane@scottish.parliament.uk](mailto:fergus.cochrane@scottish.parliament.uk), x85205).

Yours sincerely



**Kenneth Gibson MSP**  
**Convener**