



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## **Devolution (Further Powers) Committee**

Rt. Hon Priti Patel MP  
Minister of State for Employment  
Department of Work and Pensions

c/o Clerk to the Committee  
Room T3.40  
The Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP

By email

Tel: 0131 348 5000  
devolutioncommittee@scottish.parliament.uk

11 February 2016

Dear Minister,

### **Devolution of Employment Programmes**

As you will be aware, the Devolution (Further Powers) Committee is the lead Committee in the Scottish Parliament responsible for scrutiny of proposals for further devolution contained in the UK Government's Scotland Bill. As a consequence, the Committee has responsibility for making a recommendation to the Scottish Parliament as to whether or not the Scottish Parliament should provide legislative consent to the Scotland Bill.

I am writing to you regarding the proposals for devolution relating to the Work Programme and Work Choice. In particular, the Committee noted the announcement by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Autumn Statement that the Work Programme and Work Choice schemes are to be replaced by a new 'Work and Health Programme'. The Committee seeks clarification regarding what the implications of this change of programme will be for the proposed transfer of employment support responsibilities currently contained in the Scotland Bill. The Committee notes that the current contracts for these programmes will expire in March 2017. The Committee seeks clarification on what the impact of this policy change will be for procurement arrangements and whether this will place any limitation on the ability of the Scottish Government to decide the mode of delivery for the programmes proposed for devolution.

In addition, the Scottish Parliament's research service has recently received information that the funding associated with this new programme will be substantially reduced at the point of transfer to the Scottish Parliament from the current funding levels associated in 2016-17 with the Work Programme and Work Choice. Again, we seek clarification on exactly what the budget will be and the justification for any reduction in the level of financial support arising from this change in terms of the funding of employment support which will be devolved to the Scottish Parliament.

As I am sure you are aware the Smith Commission recommended that all employment programmes currently contracted by DWP should be devolved. The Committee has previously stated unanimously in its Interim Report that the Scotland Bill does not fully deliver the Smith Commission recommendation in this area at present due to the restriction that only employment support schemes which relate to individuals that have been unemployed for one year or more will be devolved. This has not been agreed to by the UK Government with a more limited devolution of employment programmes currently proposed in the Scotland Bill.

Accordingly, any proposal to significantly reduce the funding for the more limited employment support programmes that are currently intended to be devolved would be of serious concern.

In order to assist us in making an informed assessment of the Scotland Bill provisions with regard to employment support, ahead of the dissolution of the Scottish Parliament on 23 March, we would appreciate early clarification from you, if at all possible by 22 February, of both the financial and policy consequences for the proposals for devolution of employment support associated with the announcement made by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Autumn Statement. The reason for this date is because we expect to take final evidence from the Secretary of State for Scotland on the Scotland Bill on 23 February. I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State for Scotland, the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Communities and Pensioner's Rights.

Yours sincerely,

Bruce Crawford MSP  
Convener