

Ms Roseanna Cunningham MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Fair Work, Skills and Training
Scottish Government
St Andrews House
Regent Road
Edinburgh EH1 3DG

15th May 2015

****Also by email****

Dear Ms Cunningham,

Supporting apprenticeship opportunities for under-represented groups

As a coalition whose members deliver specialist care and education services for children and young people with complex needs and care experience, we warmly welcome the Scottish Government announcement of £500,000 to support apprenticeship opportunities for under-represented groups.

We particularly welcome the introduction of marketing campaigns to raise awareness among the disabled, ethnic minorities and care leavers and was a suggestion that we put to then Minister for Youth Employment, Angela Constance MSP, during a meeting in March 2013.

Whilst this funding is very much a step in the right direction, we firmly believe that more can and should be done to help raise the numbers of those with a declared disability and care leavers in Modern Apprenticeships (MAs).

By the time they are 26, young disabled people are nearly four times more likely to be unemployed and up to one in three care leavers is unemployed nine months after leaving school. With only 0.4% of those with a declared disability in a MA in Scotland, the numbers are woefully low and disparate compared with England where figures from the Skills Agency indicate that 8.7% of those in a MA has a declared disability.

In addition, care leavers experience some of the poorest educational and employment outcomes of any group of young people. One in three is unemployed 9 months after leaving school.

As per a briefing note¹ we issued to MSPs in advance of the debate on 13th May on Scottish Apprenticeship Week 2015, we have a number of recommendations, in line with those suggested from the Wood Review, that we believe would help increase the numbers of these groups in MAs and therefore create better opportunities and outcomes for them.

¹ <http://www.thescsc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/20150513SGdebateapprenticeshipweek.pdf>

Specifically, we would like to see the introduction of Wood Review Recommendation 35 that *"...a realistic but stretching improvement target to increase the number of young disabled people. Progress against this should be reported on annually."*, and Recommendation 38 that *"Consideration should be given to incorporating specific targets relating to care leavers in Modern Apprenticeships."*

As you will be aware, the Scottish Government has committed to doing this for those from an ethnic minority background - increasing the number of MA starts from minority ethnic communities to equal the population share by 2021 - and we would welcome feedback from the Scottish Government as to whether it intends to set targets in this area for both young disabled people and care leavers.

We would also welcome an update on terms of Recommendation 34 of the Wood Review, which recommended that *"funding levels to colleges and MA training providers should be reviewed and adjusted to reflect the cost of providing additional support to young disabled people, and age restrictions should be relaxed for those whose transition may take longer."*

- Young disabled people should attract the highest level of Modern Apprenticeship or college funding for their chosen framework or subject until the age of 30.
- Where additional support is required, training providers and colleges should receive a higher level of funding for young people with disabilities on the Modern Apprenticeship programme and on mainstream college courses.

As well as Recommendation 38 as it relates to care leavers:

- Care leavers should receive a coherent package of support which goes from school into post-school education and training and into employment. This should include an automatic entitlement to discretionary learner support for those moving out of care and undertaking further education courses at college.
- Care leavers should attract the highest level of Modern Apprenticeship funding for their chosen framework until the age of 30.

We would also like to offer our assistance and knowledge as to the implementation of the marketing campaigns noted as part of yesterday morning's Scottish Government announcement. As mentioned above this was a suggestion that we first put to the Minister in 2013 and we would welcome an opportunity to assist the Scottish Government and SDS in any way can in this respect.

Yours sincerely



The Scottish Children's Services Coalition comprising:

Sophie Pilgrim, Director, Kindred
Christine Carlin, Chief Executive, Mindroom
Tom McGhee, Managing Director, Spark of Genius
Duncan Dunlop, Chief Executive, Who Cares? Scotland
Stuart Jacob, Director, Falkland House School
Niall Kelly, Managing Director, Young Foundations

cc. Angela Constance MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning and Annabelle Ewing MSP, Minister for Youth and Women's Employment