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10 February 2022

Dear Colleagues

Childcare Sector Omicron Impacts Fund

On 10 February 2022 the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Economy announced a further round of financial support for sectors of the economy impacted by the Omicron variant. I am pleased to confirm that this package of support includes a new £6.5 million Childcare Sector Omicron Impacts Fund to provide one-off grants to the childcare sector this financial year.

Both the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills and I are acutely aware of the challenges childcare providers across Scotland have experienced throughout the pandemic, and we are enormously grateful for your continued efforts to provide vital, high quality services to children and families. Whilst as the First Minister has said, there are cautious grounds for optimism about the overall trend in case numbers and hospitalisation, we are conscious that the Omicron wave has placed significant pressures on your services and businesses, resulting in the highest staff and child absence levels we have seen during the pandemic.

The Childcare Sector Omicron Impacts Fund will make one-off grants available to all private and third sector day care of children providers and all childminding services who were registered with the Care Inspectorate on 31 December 2021. Those services will be able to apply for one-off grants in recognition of the challenging circumstances in which they are operating.

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The Scottish Government is working closely with CoSLA and other partners to develop plans for administering the Fund. Further details about grant levels, the application process and confirmation of the timelines for the application window will be provided later in February. As with previous COVID financial support schemes for the childcare sector the grant amounts will vary according to the registered size (Care Inspectorate registered places) of each service.

In the meantime if you have any questions regarding the Fund then please direct these to the ELCPartnershipForum@gov.scot.

I fully appreciate that these grants will not address the deeper sustainability challenges some of you are facing. We will continue to work closely with local government and the childcare sector representative bodies on these issues. I hope that the new Fund will provide some temporary support as demand and absence levels begin to return to a more normal level, and we move into a more positive position.

Thank you once again for all that you are doing for Scotland's children and families.

Best wishes



CLARE HAUGHEY

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