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Dear Childminders

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for all that you are doing for Scotland's children, particularly at the moment. 2020 was a difficult year for all of us and as we enter 2021 the circumstances are equally challenging. I know that right now your focus will be on how to best support the children and families you care for under the new restrictions that we have unfortunately had to bring in.

That will not be easy, and many of you will also be considering what the restrictions mean for your own families. We will continue to work with childcare representative bodies to reflect on our approach and the guidance we give to the sector to do our best to support you. I am mindful of the particular demands this past year has placed on the childcare sector, and I want you to know how much we value the work that you do as childminders to support children and families.

My own family really appreciated the support of a childminder when the children were wee, and I have a huge amount of admiration and appreciation for the profession. I understand the unique qualities of a childminding setting and would like to see all families able and supported to make childminding their choice, if they feel it is the right one for them.

Childminders will be so important for the delivery of the expansion to 1140 hours of early learning and childcare (ELC), and in giving families the flexibility to choose the ELC setting that is right for their child.

In order for us to meet our ambitions for both early learning and childcare and school-aged childcare in Scotland, it is vital that we have a thriving and diverse childminding sector. I have therefore asked officials to work closely with the childminding representative bodies, to consider how best to support childminding in Scotland.

I am pleased to share with you today, '[Our Commitment to Childminding in Scotland](#)', an action plan for childminding in Scotland. This has been created in collaboration with the Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA), Early Years Scotland (EYS) and the Care and Learning Alliance (CALA), with input from Education Scotland and the Care Inspectorate. The plan sets out a number of actions that the Scottish Government and others will undertake in the short, medium

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and longer term. While the new strain of the COVID-19 virus has led unfortunately to new restrictions again, we want to continue to progress these important actions so will work closely with representative bodies and feedback from you to make sure that the timing and pace takes account of wider pressures.

One of the first actions from this will be to host a virtual discussion between myself and childminders, to discuss the content of the plan and how we can ensure childminders are central to thriving childcare sector in Scotland. Please look out for an invitation for that event soon.

I look forward to seeing the actions set out in the plan being taken forward, and I hope that you, as childminders, understand how much you are valued as a key part of the childcare sector in Scotland.

I know that the last 10 months or so have been difficult from a financial standpoint for many people. We have now made funding of £1 million available for childminders who have been financially impacted by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Grants of between £500 and £1,000 each will be made to eligible childminding providers and work is now underway with the Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA) to finalise the details of the scheme, and further information on how to apply will be published shortly.

Those of you who normally provide childcare to 12 or more children, should be open at present only to key worker and vulnerable children. Further information on the temporary restrictions is provided in the [supplementary guidance](#). As a result, most of these childminding services are open only for small numbers of children, and we are aware that this can create financial pressures.

That is why temporary financial support will be available to those services who are currently only permitted to operate for vulnerable children or those of key workers, to help mitigate the reduction in income resulting from operating below capacity and ensure these settings can remain open. Support will be provided through grants to services that are open to deliver childcare to key worker and vulnerable children during the temporary restrictions. The funding will be available for each four week period the current temporary restrictions are in place.

We will set out more information on the Scottish Government's [information pages](#) including details on the level of grants that will be available, and how providers can access this support, as soon as possible.

I hope that this letter provides you with some reassurance that we are doing our best to support childminders throughout these unprecedented times.

Yours sincerely



Maree Todd

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