

PE1683/G

Minister for Children and Young People submission of 2 August 2018

Thank you for your letter of 4 July about Petition PE1683, calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to provide better support for multiple birth families. You have asked me to respond to the following:

Issues highlighted by the petitioner and other stakeholders relating to personal, practical and emotional support;

How the Scottish Government sees its role in supporting third sector organisations such as Home-Start to deliver support to families with multiple births;

The Committee has also asked for my thoughts on the petitioner's suggestion in relation to the re-usable items in the Baby Box.

I am aware that the Committee has also written separately to the Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People on issues related to funding and social security in the context of the petition, including further information on the Best Start Grant. The responses to those issues have been included in a separate letter to you from Ms Somerville.

Best Start Grant and Best Start Foods

I note the petitioner's comments on TAMBA's recommendations on these points. As explained in the first response to the Committee, the Best Start Grant will increase provision for low income families for the first child from £500 under the UK Sure Start Maternity Grant up to a total of £1,100 over 3 payments in a child's early years. Subsequent children, who receive nothing from the UK Government, will receive a total of up to £800.

Information was provided on how the additional costs of a multiple birth have been acknowledged and, in addition to the normal BSG award, a supplement will also be made.

As a further update to the information provided in the first response I have provided below an example of how these payments would be made:

	BSG Payment	SSMG Payment
Multiple Births – Twins	£1200 (£600 for first child in family, £300 for second child plus £300 additional payment for multiple birth)	£1000
Multiple Births – Triplets	£1500 (£600 for first child, £300 each for 2 nd and 3 rd children plus £300 additional payment for multiple birth)	£1500
You have 1 or more children and then have Twins	£900 (£300 for each child + £300 additional payment for multiple birth)	£500 (only if the other children were not from a multiple birth)

There will be no supplement for the nursery and school payments as each child will receive a payment of £250 at each stage.

The letter you will have received from Ms Somerville as a response to issues related to social security states that we have consulted on further regulations related to our Best Start Grant – which will take account of, and provide additional payments for, multiple births – and these are in the process of being analysed. Additional support for multiple births will also be

provided for through Best Start Foods, with increased weekly payments. The first response to this petition mentioned a consultation on proposals to deliver Best Start Foods through a smartcard system. The consultation has now closed and responses are being analysed.

Childcare

The Deposit Guarantee Scheme is now being trialled until 21 December 2019, with the application window being open until 21 December 2018. Eligible parents are those with a child aged 0-2 years of age, in receipt of Tax Credits/Universal Credit - this includes eligible parents with children aged 0-2 who wish to access extra hours for their children at ELC providers and are required to pay a deposit for this. Once this trial concludes all the information will be gathered and analysed to further inform how the scheme will be rolled out in the future.

Men's and women's roles in relation to work and childcare

Whilst Employment law remains reserved to the UK Parliament and is the responsibility of the UK Government, we are funding the Family Friendly Working Scotland Partnership to promote family friendly and inclusive workplaces to employers and employees in Scotland. Additional devolved powers in relation to employment would provide the Scottish Parliament with the ability to strengthen employment rights which work for Scotland.

We are working with the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) to tackle pregnancy and maternity discrimination. The Pregnancy and Maternity Discrimination Working Group is chaired by the Minister for Business, Fair Work and Skills and has a remit to create guidelines for employers to ensure best practice, as well as improving access to guidance for pregnant women and new mothers. The group held its first meeting in December 2016 and six meetings have now been held with the seventh meeting planned for September 2018.

Neonatal Expenses Fund

As mentioned in the first response to this petition, The Neonatal Expenses Fund has been made available to parents of premature and sick new-born babies to support families during these early days, which includes provision within the scheme for families with multiples being cared for in separate neonatal units. Full details of the scheme are available in the full terms and conditions document which is available at <https://www.mygov.scot/neonatal-expenses-fund/>. We have reviewed the text on the website to ensure the provision for twins in separate units is made clearer within the main text.

Baby Box

At its heart, Scotland's Baby Box strongly signals our determination that every child, regardless of their circumstances, should get the best start in life by ensuring that every family with a new-born has access to essential items needed in the first six months of a child's life. Scotland's Baby Box is a universal initiative and all boxes and contents are identical.

We believe that every child born and living in Scotland should get an equal start in life, the Baby Box helps to achieve this aim by ensuring every child is eligible for their own Baby Box and contents. If Baby Boxes for subsequent births contain a smaller amount of contents then we are failing in our aim to give every child an equal start. We benefit from economies of scale by buying contents in bulk every 1- 2 years, Baby Boxes are then packed and stored in advance at a central location prior to dispatch. Due to logistical, administration and procurement challenges it would not be cost effective to have Baby Boxes with different contents for families in different situations.

Emotional support

We have acknowledged the invaluable work TAMBA has been doing with multiple families over the years, and we continue to do so. This work has been supported by the Scottish Government through grant funding and we have recently invited TAMBA to submit an application for grant funding for the year 2018/19. Also mentioned in the first response is the funding support by the Scottish Government for an event for health professionals later this year, which will look at promoting good practice and increase positive outcomes in the clinical treatment of multiples. We look forward to the event and more opportunities to work with TAMBA in the future.

The Scottish Government has been supporting the great work done by Home-Start UK throughout Scotland over the years, providing grant funding for a period of three years for 2013-2016. From 2016 onwards Home-Start UK has been receiving funding through the Children, Families and Young People Early Intervention Fund (CYPFEIF). Funding has also been confirmed for 2019-2020.

I trust this will provide you with further reassurance that this government is committed to ensuring that all children in Scotland get the best start in life; and that we strive to provide the best possible care for all women, babies and their families at all stages of their journey, regardless of their circumstances.