



T: 0300 244 4000  
E: scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Rt Hon Damian Hinds MP  
Minister of State for Employment  
Caxton House  
Tithill Street  
London  
SW1H 9NA

25<sup>th</sup> January 2017

It was good to meet you last Thursday, and thank you for such a constructive discussion. I also confirm receipt of your letter of today confirming the DWP position on voluntary referrals to devolved employability services. I thought it would be helpful to set out the main points from our meeting and related further actions.

### **Jobcentre Plus (JCP)**

We discussed the DWP's current proposals on rationalisation of the JCP estate, including potential closure of some offices in Glasgow. As discussed, I would encourage you to meet with benefit recipients and other stakeholders affected by these proposals to understand their perspective on the potential impacts of these proposals. Also, as mentioned, my officials will be happy to facilitate such through our well-established network of organisations who work with those likely to be impacted by these proposed closures. I confirmed that I will respond on behalf of the Scottish Government to this consultation, and asked that the Scottish Government is fully engaged by the DWP in advance of similar proposals in future.

### **Joint Working**

Collectively, we recognised and welcomed the effective joint working across both Governments in relation to the devolution of employment support. This is supported by progress across a number of areas. This provides a strong platform for further discussion on paragraph 58 of Smith Commission recommendation which called for more effective links between JCP and devolved employment support in Scotland. I am keen that we make further progress on this agenda in time for the next meeting of the Joint Ministerial Working Group on Welfare.



## Devolved services

We welcomed the good progress being made ahead of the launch of transitional employment services in April 2017. Within this context, you re-iterated the UK Government's commitment that all clients would be referred to both our transitional services and the following 2018 service on a voluntary basis. I made it clear that I was keen to formalise that helpful position so I was pleased, as mentioned earlier, to receive your letter today confirming that position.

Finally, I understand that DWP are in the process of 'impacting' key elements and proposals within the 2018 devolved service. The Scottish Government had expected a final response from DWP to this process by today, however this now appears to be slightly delayed. I would be grateful if you could ensure we receive a final response quickly to enable the Scottish Government to forward its plans to issue an Invitation to Tender for the 2018 service in early March.

I hope the above is in line with your views on our helpful discussion, and I look forward to meeting you again soon.



JAMIE HEPBURN