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Rt Hon Damian Green MP
Secretary of State for Work and Pensions
Caxton House
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7th December 2016

Dear Damien,

I felt compelled to write to you following reports today that the DWP plan Jobcentre Plus office closures in Glasgow.

I understand this was announced to DWP staff this morning. However, I have to say I am hugely disappointed that there was no communication with the SG on this matter until it was requested as a matter of urgency by my officials today as this news broke. I believe this to be wholly contrary to the spirit of the Smith Agreement, and in particular paragraph 58, which while recognising Jobcentre Plus would remain reserved, calls for our Governments to *“identify ways to further link services through methods such as co-location wherever possible and establish more formal mechanisms to govern the Jobcentre Plus network in Scotland.”*

I believe there is great potential and opportunity to support the integration and alignment of employment services in Scotland in a devolved context through those means. However, this will require a more collaborative approach than has been demonstrated today.

We have been made aware through the press of the planned closure of eight offices in Glasgow alone, but there will clearly be others planned for Scotland and it should not be the case that such information is relayed to the Scottish Government after it becomes public in the press.

Over and above my very obvious disappointment at the lack of communication on this matter I have a number of very practical questions on this large scale change to the Jobcentre Plus Office network in Scotland. There will clearly be a significant impact on staff and customers and I would be grateful for a response to these questions as quickly as possible.

1. When was the consultation on closures planned and why wasn't the SG informed of timing?
2. Briefing from your department indicates that a journey of between 10 and 40 minutes by public transport is acceptable for customers. Will additional costs be met and what assessment has been carried out with regard to the impact on those who are unable to use public transport?
3. To what extent has DWP impacted the proposed changes emerging through its people and location programme against the Department's ambitions to support all those who can to find and sustain employment, and does this impacting reflect the devolved nature of employment support in Scotland?
4. What assurance can you provide that those offices remaining open can absorb the significantly increased service demand/ footfall these changes will require and at very least provide continuity in support, if not enhanced performance and what will the impact on staff be?

It would be helpful and more in the spirit of our commitment on closer working, to hear from you directly by the end of this week, rather than hearing such news via the media.

I am copying this letter to all Glasgow-based MPs and MSPs, for their constituency interests.



JAMIE HEPBURN