

MINISTERIAL ENGAGEMENT BRIEFING: JOHN SWINNEY
Document 10 c) and d) Briefing for DFM meeting - 30 August 2017

<i>Engagement Title</i>	MEETING WITH [Redacted - s.38(1)(b)]
<i>Timing</i>	Normal
<i>Organisation/Venue and full address including postcode</i>	Clyde Suite Hilton Hotel 1 William Street GLASGOW G3 8HT
<i>Date and Time of Engagement</i>	Date(s): 30 August 2017 Time(s): 16:00 to 16:30
<i>Relevance to Core Script</i>	We want all children and young people to get the support that they need to reach their full potential.
<i>Greeting Party and specific meeting point on arrival (if event is at a non SE Building</i>	DFM will already be at the venue.
<i>Specific entrance for Ministerial Car/parking arrangements</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> None DFM will already be at the venue.
<i>Venue contact Number</i>	DFM will already be at the venue.
<i>Special Dress Requirements</i>	No special requirements
<i>Summary Page (key issues, lines to take if pressed and issues to avoid)</i>	Annex: A
<i>Speech/Speaking Points</i>	Annex: No Annex
<i>Guest List or Meeting Attendees</i>	[Redacted - s.38(1)(b)] will be the only attendee.
<i>Background</i>	Annex: B
<i>Supplementary Info:</i>	[Redacted - s.38(1)(b)] chairs the Commission for Developing the Young Workforce (DYW). DYW is a shared interest of [Redacted - s.38(1)(b)] and DFM.
<i>Media Handling</i>	Non Media Event
<i>Official Support</i>	Official Names: [Redacted - s.38(1)(b)] [Redacted - s.38(1)(b)]

SUMMARY PAGE

Purpose of meeting:

- [Redacted - s.38(1)(b)] has asked to meet DFM to discuss:
 - STEP initiative;
 - [Redacted - Out of scope]; and,
 - [Redacted - Out of scope].
- DFM last met with [Redacted - s.38(1)(b)] on 23 February 2017 to discuss [Redacted - Out of scope].

Key Issues:

- [Redacted - Out of scope].
- [Redacted - Out of scope].
- [Redacted - Out of scope].

Sensitivities:

- [Redacted - Out of scope].
- [Redacted - Out of scope].

Lines to Take:

- **I would like to be completely clear about the benefits of the Step Programme before I make any further commitment.**
- **Previous and similar initiatives, while helpful for some, have not proven to be sound business initiatives and have closed. I am not willing to risk the future of Scotland's children and young people.**
- **The Step Programme did not receive an overly positive response from the Working Group of the Parliament's Cross-Party Group on Dyslexia.**
- [Redacted - Out of scope].
- [Redacted - Out of scope].

Issues to Avoid:

- **Committing to funding or further roll out of the Step Programme until it has been fully researched and the research independently verified.**

BACKGROUND, LINES TO TAKE AND BRIEFING ON THE STEP PROGRAMME AND THE SCOTTISH ATTAINMENT CHALLENGE

Lines to take:

- It is for local authorities and schools to decide how to deliver the curriculum based on local needs and circumstances.
- While individual initiatives can and do work for many schools, there are many examples of how physical activity and physical literacy can be embedded into the daily life of a school that can be explored.
- We are clear that we want to see the poverty-related attainment gap close wherever, whenever and however it is measured.
- We will allocate £750m during the course of this Parliament through the Attainment Scotland Fund to tackle the poverty related attainment gap, targeting resources at the children, schools and communities most in need.
- From April, £120m will be allocated directly to Headteachers on the basis of the numbers of pupils in P1-S3 known to be eligible and registered for free school meals, at a rate of £1,200 per pupil.
- This is on top of the existing £50m Attainment Scotland funding that will continue to provide targeted support for those authorities and schools supporting children and young people in greatest need.
- These two funding streams – a total of £170m for 2017-18 – will contribute to our commitment to allocate £750m during the course of this Parliament through the Attainment Scotland Fund to tackle the attainment gap, targeting resources at the children, schools and communities most in need
- Our funding to date has already supported the recruitment of 160 full time teachers across the Scottish Attainment Challenge Local Authorities and Schools Programme.

IF PRESSED:

- I would like to see a copy of the full pilot study report before I consider further.
- It would not be appropriate to commit to any funding or further roll out until then.

Background on the Step Programme and previous meetings

1. [Redacted - s.38(1)(b)] and his fellow Step representatives explained the benefits of the Step programme to the Deputy First Minister during a meeting on 25 January 2017. At a further meeting on 15 March, the Deputy First Minister was invited to view Step in action and to consider writing to all local authorities.

2. The Step Programme is a programme of exercises performed twice a day for 10 minutes. The Step view is children who take part learn more efficiently, socialise more easily and participate more positively both inside and outside the classroom. This programme is used as an additional support needs intervention in over 150 schools across the UK and US.

3. The programme was also raised at the Parliamentary Cross Party Dyslexia working group by the chair who attended the Step launch event. It did not receive an overly positive response from the group members, predominately due to concerns highlighted with the associated costs and reflections from the Dore programme (previously known as DDAT (Dyslexia Dyspraxia Attention Treatment)) in the 2000's, which Step has a connection. Although it was highlighted, the programme delivery method for Step was not the same.

4. The theory behind the Dore method is that skills such as reading and writing are learned through practice and become automatic because the cerebellum allows the learning process to occur at the maximum rate of efficiency. The Dore method alleges that, as skills become more automatic, the working memory required to perform a task decreases. The Dore Programme aims to stimulate the development of the cerebellum and hence to strengthen the communications between the cerebrum and cerebellum. The Dore Programme stipulates that clients must be 7 years of age or older; younger clients would be more difficult to accurately assess. [Redacted s.30(b)(i) and (b)(ii)].

5. [Redacted s.30(b)(i) and (b)(ii)].

6. [Redacted s.30(b)(i) and (b)(ii)].

7. [Redacted s.30(b)(i) and (b)(ii)].

8. [Redacted s.30(b)(i) and (b)(ii)].

9. [Redacted - s.38(1)(b)] lodged the following motion which was debated in Parliament on 11 January 2017. The motion read: *"That the Parliament is impressed by the STEP physical literacy programme; understands that its results have demonstrated that the children who take part in it have been proven to learn more efficiently, socialise more easily and participate more positively both inside and outside the classroom; is encouraged that local authorities and schools throughout Scotland are showing an interest in the programme; considers that introducing it would be of benefit to all state primary schools in Mid Scotland and Fife and across the country, and notes the view that the Scottish Government, local authorities, teachers and parents should consider the merits of the programme for primary school children as a valuable contribution to pupils' education and self-esteem and to help close the attainment gap."*

10. The Scottish Conservatives also led a debate in the Scottish Parliament, on 18 January 2017, focusing on their new healthy lifestyle strategy which they launched on 11 January 2017. [Redacted - Out of Scope].

11. There have also been several pieces of written correspondence to the Deputy First Minister from parents and grandparents seeking Government intervention in providing the Step Programme for their child or grandchild.

Education Scotland view on the Step Programme

12. The Step definition of 'physical literacy' differs to the one used in Scotland, 'fundamental movement skills' is a very old, traditional definition that has not served well in the past. The costs for the Step programme are significant, with no reimbursement if a pupil drops out. Education Scotland therefore advise they would not endorse this programme due to its costs. The resource costs £360 per child, per year, with a minimum of six children required to be signed up (a total of £2,160).

13. Learning assistants need to be trained at a cost of about £600+ and the programme requires delivery of two, 10 minute sessions daily which will be a key barrier for a variety of reasons. Learning assistants get two and a half hours workshop training. They have limited back up support. There are concerns about Learning assistants ensuring adoption of correct posture and execution of exercises.

14. There are few statistics available but from Step's 2015 pilot study, they reported that from 106 students enrolled on the study, 60 remained at its completion. This made for a potential dropout rate of 43 per cent. There is no endeavour to pursue 'missing data' to understand why pupils drop out or what happens to them. There is little robust evidence on the benefits of the programme. Poor teaching is often cited as the reason for pupils disengaging from the programme. No evidence is available on the allegation of poor teaching.