

Minister for Higher and Further Education; and
Minister for Veterans
Graeme Dey MSP



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

Mike Cantlay, SFC
copy to: Francesca Osowska, SFC

(by email)

4 March 2025

Community Learning and Development (CLD)

Dear Mike,

I am writing to you regarding CLD and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). This letter should be read alongside my [Letter of Guidance 2025-26](#) which set out strategic priorities for the Scottish Funding Council (SFC).

In a [joint open letter](#) on 20 December 2024, Scottish Government and CoSLA welcomed the [independent review of CLD report](#) which recognised good practice and provided 20 recommendations for improvement varying in complexity and scope.

We accepted the first recommendation of the report to establish a joint CLD Strategic Leadership Group (SLG) who will play a central role in developing our detailed response to the remaining recommendations. I am grateful to the SFC for attending the first SLG meeting on 27 January 2025 and look forward to constructively working together.

I am optimistic that the action-focused SLG will strengthen CLD provision to support learners and communities. SFC can be instrumental in this space as you develop college funding allocations and priorities for the forthcoming academic year 2025-26.

The review report highlighted the vital role ESOL plays in equipping people whose first language isn't English with the communication skills necessary to contribute and integrate economically, culturally and socially in Scotland. The report also highlighted ESOL as requiring immediate action under recommendation 3.2. As mentioned, SLG will play a central role in developing our response to the recommendations. In the interim period, I am seeking assurance from SFC in two key priority areas.

Firstly, the '[Credit Guidance for Colleges AY 2024-25](#)' set out an expectation on colleges to engage with local authorities and community planning partnerships on local ESOL need. Joint delivery plans must then set out how need will be met, and the funding contribution from each partner. I am looking to SFC to ensure that colleges are fulfilling their role within their college regions as part of this process.

Secondly, unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) are amongst some of our most vulnerable learners and members of Scottish society, particularly where they have limited ability to speak and write in English. Therefore, I am looking to colleges to work with local authorities to identify and prioritise ESOL for UASC where college provision is an appropriate option.

A collective approach to these points, will help to ensure that ESOL remains a priority for colleges in the forthcoming academic year as progress is made on the CLD review report recommendations.

Thank you again for your engagement on CLD and if you have any questions, please contact the Scottish Government CLD team in the first instance.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Graeme Dey', is positioned above a thin horizontal line.

GRAEME DEY MSP

Minister for Higher and Further Education; and Minister for Veterans