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Bruce Crawford
Convener
Finance and Constitution Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

Sent via email

11 September 2018

Dear Convener,

The Scottish Government has announced plans to introduce the first element of the Best Start Grant before Christmas this year. The Government's plans for the Pregnancy and Baby Grant were not firmly announced at the time we produced our last forecasts in May. We have produced a supplementary costing of this policy, published today to accompany the secondary legislation introduced in the Scottish Parliament. The report sets out the Commission's forecast of expenditure and the caseload for the benefit, and compares this to our forecasts under the current UK benefit, Sure Start Maternity Grant.

This is the Commission's second publication to accompany secondary legislation, but our first relating to social security. Our founding legislation allows us to produce forecasts on "other fiscal factors" and as set out in our Protocol with the Scottish Government we may choose to produce these forecasts when primary or secondary legislation is published in the Scottish Parliament which affects a tax or social security benefit within the Commission's remit.

The Commission seeks to operate in a transparent manner. We voluntarily comply, as much as possible, with the UK Statistic Authority's Code of Practice for Statistics. As part of our compliance we pre-announce our publications via a monthly news article on our website to ensure our stakeholders are aware when we will be publishing reports. It is not possible to follow this approach for supplementary costings accompanying secondary legislation. We need to respect the principle that the Parliament must be informed first of the plans to introduce legislation by the Scottish Government before we pre-announce our costing. We have therefore not pre-announced publication of this costing, and do not expect to be able to pre-announce future publications. We will continue to inform the relevant parliamentary committees when we publish any reports.

My colleagues and I on the Scottish Fiscal Commission, and our staff, would be very happy to discuss this report with the Committee, either informally or in a formal evidence session.

We will publish this correspondence and our costing on our website to accompany the introduction of the secondary legislation.

Sincerely,



Susan Rice DBE