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Dear Cathie

**INQUIRY INTO SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS PROVISION IN EDUCATION,
EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING FOR THOSE WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES**

Thank you for your letter dated 5 November 2015. I will respond to each point in turn.

1. Bamford Action Plan 2012-2015

a) Action No. 22

The electronic transfer of Year 10 pupil data from the C2k system to DEL's Careers Service has been in place since 2012. Encrypted data is sent via a secure electronic transfer from C2k's data centre to the DEL Client Management System.

The fields of data transferred are the school name, DE's School Reference Number, child's name, date of birth, Special Educational Needs (SEN), disability and full postal address.

This data sharing arrangement enables DEL's Careers Service to facilitate the provision of appropriate careers advice and guidance on future pathway options and focused support to young people, including SEN pupils, moving into further or higher education, training and/or employment.

b) Action No. 52

There is already a well-embedded statutory education transitions process in our schools for pupils aged 14+ with statements of special educational needs (SEN). An Education Transition Service operates in each sub-region of the Education Authority (EA) which helps young people with statements of SEN, and their parents/carers, to access appropriate information, guidance and support to allow them to make informed choices for the future.

The Service is supported by Education Transition Co-ordinators who provide advice and support to these pupils, and their parents/carers, in preparation for adult life. They work in conjunction with DEL's Careers Service, Health and Social Care Trust professionals and Health transition officers to ensure the provision of comprehensive and co-ordinated information about the range of post-school options available. Additionally, they provide advice and support through liaison with service providers to facilitate the transition of young people to post-school provision, e.g. voluntary organisations and further education colleges.

The Department (DE) recognises, however, that there is always room for improvement and is working with the EA, DEL, DHSSPS and other key agencies to take forward actions to improve the education transitions process.

In terms of actions to date, DE is making good progress, in consultation with the EA and other relevant Departments, on revisions to the SEN Code of Practice that aim to strengthen the transition planning process. It is the intention to include in the revised Code, "Models of Best Practice" in relation to the Transition Planning process.

In terms of monitoring and research, DE has contributed questions on transitions for inclusion in DHSSPS' Bamford Evaluation Questionnaire.

DE is also working with the EA to progress the Education actions in the cross-Departmental Post-19 Transitions Focus Group Action Plan and will liaise with other Departments as necessary. As part of the actions being taken forward, DE is considering, in conjunction with the EA and relevant Departments, the development of a cross-Departmental questionnaire which would issue to young people within special schools and their parents/carers to determine the level of awareness of transition planning services.

Some of the other issues identified in the Post-19 Transitions Action Plan, such as involvement of young people and their parents/carers in agreeing a future transition/pathway plan; and mechanisms for the transfer of young people's information to adult service providers, are already provided for under the SEN Code of Practice and are considered good practice by the EA and schools

2. ETI Survey Report on Transition Arrangements

The ETI Transitions report highlights that the majority of parents are content with the current transition arrangements and the efforts of schools to ensure that post-school placement is secured at an early stage and is appropriate.

However, a small minority of parents of pupils with complex needs are concerned about the lack of post-school provision for their children transferring to adult health and social services provision. Whilst the report recognises that it will be for DHSSPS to address the quality and availability of post-19 provision for these pupils, the EA's Education Transition Service has indicated that it will continue to work collaboratively with Health to progress this area of work.

The EA has reported that it is already taking actions to improve the education transitions process on foot of the ETI's recommendations and the Department is awaiting further detail on these from the Authority. DE continues to engage with the Education Transition Service to take forward the recommendations and will engage with DHSSPS and DEL as necessary to progress actions arising from the recommendations.

3. CYPSP Regional Sub Group on Transition

The CYPSP Sub Group has advised that work is ongoing in relation to the development of an Integrated Plan. As outlined above, links between DE and DEL to track young people through education/further education have already been successfully established as a result of Action 22 of the Bamford Action Plan.

Yours sincerely

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Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer