

Final ministerial appointments announced



The Scottish Government will put opportunity for all at the heart of its agenda as First Minister Nicola Sturgeon completed her ministerial team with key appointments in childcare, education and employment.

New ministers will take responsibility for delivering key priorities in the Scottish Government's programme.

Mark McDonald will become the new Minister for Childcare and Early Years, supporting the new Cabinet Secretary for Education in implementing the Scottish Government's ambitious expansion plans for paid childcare.

Shirley-Anne Somerville, previously a Lothians MSP from 2007-11, and only just re-elected for Dunfermline, will complete the education team, with her appointment as Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science.

The government's renewed concentration on the economy will be supported by the appointment of Paul Wheelhouse as Minister for Business, Innovation and Energy.

New ministers will also work across portfolios with Jamie Hepburn as Minister for Employability and Training, linking up education and the economy and reporting to both Mr Swinney and Mr Brown.

Humza Yousaf will take up the significant responsibilities of Minister for Transport and the Islands, acting as junior minister to the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity and reporting to the Economy and Climate Change Secretaries as appropriate.

In recognition of the government's commitment to deliver a social security system based on dignity and respect, Jeane Freeman will become the Scottish Government's first dedicated Minister for Social Security. In the same portfolio, Kevin Stewart has been appointed the Minister for Local Government and Housing.

Mr Yousaf will be replaced as Minister for International Development and Europe by Alasdair Allan.

A new Minister for Mental Health – Maureen Watt – will assume responsibility for driving forward improvements in this crucial area, building on the achievements seen in the last parliamentary term. Elsewhere in the health portfolio, Aileen Campbell will become the Minister for Public Health and Sport.

Annabelle Ewing will support the Cabinet Secretary for Justice as Minister for Community Safety, and Joe Fitzpatrick will continue in his role as Minister for Parliamentary Business.

✘ The First Minister said: “The ministerial line-up I have appointed today brings a number of new faces and a huge amount of energy to taking forward the Scottish Government's programme.

“My focus on education will be supported by the appointment of Mark McDonald, who has a hugely important task in implementing our ambitious childcare plans, and Shirley-Anne Somerville, who will be responsible for further and higher education, and meeting our targets to widen access to universities.

“The economy portfolio will benefit from the hard work of Paul Wheelhouse as the new Minister for Business, Innovation and Energy and the drive of Jamie Hepburn, who as Minister for Employability and Training will play an important role maintaining the link across government between education and employment.

“Humza Yousaf will leave behind a strong legacy in the

external affairs portfolio as he takes up the significant responsibilities of Minister for Transport and the Islands and will work closely with the Cabinet Secretaries for the Economy, for Climate Change and for the Rural Economy. He will be replaced by Alasdair Allan who will have a vital role to play as we approach the EU referendum and deliver a new international development strategy.

“For the first time, I am appointing a dedicated Minister for Social Security, who will support work implementing the new welfare powers that are being devolved from Westminster. Jeane Freeman will bring her considerable experience outwith government to bear on that new role. She will be joined in that portfolio by Kevin Stewart who will serve as Minister for Local Government and Housing.

“I am also pleased to confirm the creation of a new Minister for Mental Health role, to be taken forward by Maureen Watt. We have made some positive advances in recent years on support for people with mental health issues, and this new role demonstrates how seriously I take this.

“Aileen Campbell will complete the strong health portfolio team as Minister for Public Health and Sport.

“The Cabinet Secretary for Justice will be supported by the new Minister for Community Safety – Annabelle Ewing – who will ensure that the great work being done in areas such as tackling anti-social behaviour and victim support will continue throughout the next term.

“Finally, Joe FitzPatrick will continue in the crucial position of Minister for Parliamentary Business, a role which will involve building consensus across parliament for our legislative and policy proposals.”