

Elected Members Briefing



14 April 2020

Introduction

This is the fifth weekly Elected Members Bulletin covering issues relating to COVID-19 which have required national and local responses over the past week. The bulletin should provide you with the information you need to support the Local Government workforce and your communities, in addition to the specific local guidance and information that will come to you from your local authority officers.

The **COSLA Facebook** page and **COSLA Twitter** feed are constantly updated with information and resources. The **COSLA Website** and **KHub** for Elected Members are added to daily.

The number of cases and the risk level is updated regularly on the **Scottish Government Website**.

Key Messages

The ongoing key public health messages continue to be that it is vital people stay at home apart from for essential shopping and collection of medicines, for exercise once a day, for medical/care needs and for work where essential.

A new national helpline has been launched to provide essential assistance to those who don't have a network of support but who are at high risk of contracting COVID-19. The number is **0800 111 4000** and it will initially operate during core working hours of **9am-5pm** while plans are developed and implemented to extend it to operate for a longer period each day. It will offer help to those who do not have family or existing community support and cannot get online and who are over 70, disabled, require the support of mental health services, are pregnant or receive a flu jab for health reasons. Anyone not in these categories but still looking for support should visit **readyscotland.org**.

NHS Inform continues to be the source of up to date public health information.

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Interim Governance Arrangements

After a successful call with COSLA Leaders via Microsoft Teams on 8th April 2020, Leaders meetings will be diarised every second Friday beginning on 17 April 2020. The formal agreement to do this will be sought at that first meeting. In the short-term, the Agenda for these will only consider COVID-19 issues and, to allow as much up to date written information as possible, papers will be issued by 12 noon on the Wednesday (two days before the meeting).

Workforce

The Scottish Government, COSLA and the SJC Unions agreed that the guidance jointly published by the Department of Health and Social Care, Health Protection Scotland (HPS), Public Health Wales, Public Health Agency Northern Ireland, Public Health England (PHE) and NHS England on 2 April 2020 is the official, fully comprehensive **guidance on the matter of the use of PPE in the context of COVID-19**. That guidance states that social and home care workers can wear a fluid resistant face mask along with other appropriate PPE where the person they are visiting or otherwise attending to is neither confirmed nor suspected of having COVID-19, if, in their professional judgement they consider doing so necessary to their own and the individual's safety.

Pay for Social Care Workforce

Scottish Government and COSLA agreed to **an immediate 3.3% pay rise for social care staff** backdated to 1st April. Social care support workers providing direct adult support will have their pay increased to at least the Real Living Wage rate of £9.30 an hour for all hours worked, including sleep-overs and hours worked by personal assistants. Scottish Government will also provide funding to third and independent sector providers to ensure staff receive sick pay if they are off work due to illness or are self isolating.



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Finance Update

A letter was sent from COSLA Resources Spokesperson to the sent to UK Treasury in relation to working with Scottish Government to ensure that it can provide Local Government the financial assurances it requires to deal with this emergency and we are awaiting a response. A meeting is being arranged between the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and COSLA Resources Spokesperson to discuss the emerging financial implications for Local Government.

The financial template was finalised and issued on Monday 6th to all councils to collect the net additional cost to councils of dealing with COVID-19. Initial returns are requested for 24th April and the exercise will be repeated as the situation develops to enable new and changing costs to be captured.

An agreement was reached through SOLACE that all Councils will move the registration of deaths to a seven day a week services, for the next 12 weeks, to ensure that data is as up to date as it can be for national reporting purposes. Scottish Government has formally agreed to underwrite costs up to £500k and suggested that any additional costs be monitored through our financial template. COSLA is seeking further assurances on this.

COSLA's Local Government Finance and Business Gateway National Unit Teams have worked closely with Directors of Finance and the Scottish Government to establish the roll out of the application process for the COVID-19 Business Support Fund. Applications for the fund are now live, and officers continue to work to help shape the application process, raise issues, and lobby the Scottish Government for clarity on eligibility criteria and decisions that will help Local Authorities deliver the funds effectively. As of 6th April, Local Authorities had received 49,214 applications, 9,592 had been processed with 7,650 applicants receiving a grant. Grants awarded as of 6th April amounted to £88.6m.



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Impact of Emergency Legislation on Social Work Practice

Key changes to social work practice as a result of the **Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020** are outlined in the guidance document which was uploaded to the **Knowledge Hub for elected members** on 7th April. Areas covered in the guidance include Children's Hearings (which are currently taking place remotely with only Panel Members and the Reporter present), foster carers, child protection and extended timescales for a number of interventions.

Additionally the guidance outlines changes to assessments which will allow local authorities in Scotland not to comply with particular assessment duties in relation to social care for children, adults and carer support, to the extent that complying would not be practical or would cause unnecessary delay in providing support to people. This includes assessments in relation to child/adult support and protection. These changes are designed to allow Local Authorities to prioritise and provide urgent protection and care services without delay. One consequence is that Local Authorities will be prevented from charging under section 87 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 for services provided without complying with the full social care and financial assessment duties.

Supporting Gypsy/Traveller Communities

In recognition of additional pressures placed on services and issues specific to the Gypsy/Traveller community in keeping safe during COVID-19 we have been working with Scottish Government and third sector partners to produce a framework for Local Authorities, Health Services, the Police and other partners on supporting the Gypsy/Traveller community during the response to COVID-19. The framework 'COVID-19 Response Planning Supporting Gypsy/Traveller Communities' has gone live on 7th April 20 and can be found on both **COSLA** and **Scottish Government** websites. In recognition of the fast pace changes surrounding COVID-19 we anticipate reviewing the framework on a 4 weekly basis.

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Parking Guidance

COSLA has co-produced and jointly published parking operational guidance with the British Parking Association to assist local authorities to consider appropriate temporary measures in the unprecedented and very challenging circumstances around COVID-19. To help deal with enquiries about where concessions for critical health workers apply, the guidance also includes a link to an online search site that the BPA and some of its members have developed which councils can publicise on their own websites and use themselves if they are trying to identify additional free parking facilities in their area. **The guidance is available online** and will be updated as necessary throughout the COVID-19 emergency response.

Business Gateway

A new section of the **Business Gateway website** was launched on Monday 6th April to hold all of the COVID-19 content. This is being updated daily and includes support on HR, trading online, contingency planning, video tutorials, using webinars or live streaming for business and funding along with the links to all the official guidance. A media campaign is planned to promote the virtual services of Business Gateway offices (1:1 advice, webinars etc), national COVID-19 webinar series, and also the suite of COVID-19 content and support that is now available on the BG website. The National Unit is working with our COSLA spokesperson on a number of PR opportunities including a national press release to highlight the national webinar series and also the new COVID-19 content that is available on the website. Over the last three weeks the Business Gateway service has delivered over 40 regional and national webinars all related to the COVID-19 situation and supporting businesses. In addition, the National Unit developed material for seven new DigitalBoost webinars and have agreed a further 13 topics with the local Business Gateway teams so we can continue to meet business needs at this time.



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Support for Coastal Businesses

Agreement was reached between Scottish Government and COSLA on support for coastal businesses and third sector organisations affected by COVID-19. **A £7.2million Scottish Crown Estate fund** will be devolved to the 26 councils in Scotland who have coastlines so that they can offer direct support to struggling coastal enterprises and organisations.

Scottish Government Essential Workers Campaign

This week will see the launch of a campaign focused on celebrating essential workers. The campaign aims to help essential workers feel valued and appreciated for the important role they play in helping to keep the Homefront safe and allowing us to **#stayhometosavelives**. The campaign launches with a poem that has been written by Jackie Kay, Scots Makar, and is a rallying call to the nation to show our gratitude for essential workers. COSLA will work with Scottish Government to promote and highlight this campaign and we would encourage you to share through your networks.

Elected Members Survey

In order to learn how we can continue to best support you as our Members, a short survey has been developed by colleagues at the Improvement Service. Please take a couple of moments **to complete this survey** by 21 April in order that we can quickly act on your needs.

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Thank You

A highlight of last week was the learning from and overall success with hosting the meeting of COSLA Leaders online. Across Scotland, we have seen organisations build on and advance their use of technology. We look forward to hosting the first formal meeting of Leaders this Friday. Local Government continues to support communities across Scotland despite the challenges and anxieties at this time and we continue to be grateful to our workforce, and those in partner agencies and organisations, for the work they are doing.

Further briefings will be issued, however our social media channels, **KHub** and **website** will be continually updated.

Signing up to Knowledge Hub is easy. Go to <https://khub.net/sign-up> and complete the registration form, you will be sent an email verification. Click the link in the email you receive to verify your account, then go to <https://khub.net> and sign in with the password you created at registration. Once you've logged in, go to the group direct to request to join: <https://khub.net/group/scottish-elected-members-coronavirus-network>.

If you or your officers require any clarity from COSLA officers on policy matters, please contact the team in the usual way. If you are not sure who to direct your email to, please contact COSLA member support: membersupport@cosla.gov.uk

Thank you all for your efforts during this challenging time.



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