

Elected Members Briefing



19 May 2020

Introduction

Welcome to the latest Elected Members Bulletin, your weekly update from COSLA covering issues related to COVID-19. Information and resources via COSLA's social media platforms, with the **COSLA Facebook** page and **COSLA Twitter** feed updated on a regular basis. The **KHub** for Elected Members is also added to daily, as is the **COSLA website**.

The number of cases and the risk level is updated regularly on the **Scottish Government Website** and **NHS Inform** continues to be the source of up to date public health information. All Scottish Government COVID-19 related guidance can be found on **their website**.

Help and support for those experiencing domestic abuse is available at **<https://sdafmh.org.uk>** The helpline number is **0800 027 1234**.

Key Messages

Leaders agreed on Friday (May 15) that Local Authorities will **plan for the reopening of Household Waste Recycling Centres** on June 1.

New arrangements to strengthen oversight of Scotland's care homes have been **published by the Scottish Government**. An **initial £50 million** to help the social care sector deal with the financial implications of COVID-19 has been confirmed.

NHS Scotland Contact tracing technology will be tested in NHS Fife, NHS Lanarkshire and NHS Highland from this week. The pilot, launched on Monday (May 18), is expected to last two weeks.

Over £60,000 is being invested by the Scottish Government to **provide additional support to women involved in prostitution** during the pandemic.

A quarter of a million free packages containing essential supplies have been delivered to people across Scotland who are shielding.

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Finance

On Friday (May 15), Leaders decided to distribute the £155 million consequentials using a well-established formula - Grant Aided Expenditure (GAE) + Special Islands Needs Allowance (SINA). This recognises not only the vast range of issues the COVID-19 response presents for Councils, but also the differences in population, geography and deprivation.

The first cost collection exercise estimates a net additional cost of around £95m to Councils for the period March to end June.

Loss of income due to facility closures, fees and charges, etc, has been identified as the most significant cost pressure.

Leaders agreed that COSLA will work on a joint letter for the Chancellor, focused on the impact of loss of income.

Meetings are now planned with SOLACE and Directors of Finance to start discussions on medium to long-term financial strategies that address the needs of Local Government, and this work will underpin the work of COSLA's Recovery Special Interest Group.

Health and Social Care

Guidance for Direct Payments during COVID-19 has been developed by Scottish Government and Social Work Scotland, in consultation with COSLA. It relates to both adult and child services and is aimed at supporting staff who assess, approve and administer social work and social care support (including carer support), and approve self-directed support budgets. More information is on the **Scottish Government website**.

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Mental Health Awareness Week

This week is Mental Health Awareness week. In light of COVID-19 and its impacts on mental health and wellbeing, the theme of the week is 'kindness'. Activities across the week will focus on the power and potential of kindness, with protecting our mental health being central to at this time. The psychological and social impacts are likely to outlast any physical symptoms and impacts of the pandemic. Moving forward it will be important to think about how we create the conditions to enhance social connectedness and think about what kindness means in our role as elected representatives.

The Mental Health Foundation who host the week, hope to explore the sort of society we would like to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The **Scottish Mental Health Arts Festival** also takes place virtually this month. Additionally, Scottish Government are adding to the **Clear Your Head** campaign this week. COSLA will support the week through highlighting resources via social media.

Framework to support people with No Recourse to Public Funds

A framework to help Local Authorities and their partners to support people with no recourse to public funds (NRPF) during the COVID-19 pandemic has been produced by COSLA. It sets out the legal basis and other considerations for providing support, with a specific focus on people with NRPF who are rough sleeping or vulnerable from a safeguarding perspective. More information available on the **COSLA website**.



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Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls

Councils will get more support to mitigate the increased levels of domestic abuse and gender-based violence during the COVID-19 outbreak. New joint **guidance developed by COSLA and the Scottish Government**, in partnership with Public Health Scotland and the Improvement Service, will help local authorities continue to give women and children the very best support that they deserve, both during this immediate crisis period and in the longer term. A **summary version** has also been produced.

The guidance is part of a range of measures introduced to tackle the higher levels of abuse and violence, including a £1.5 million funding package for the Women's Aid and Rape Crisis network.

Business Gateway

In the coming weeks, advice from the Scottish Government on the relaxation of some lockdown measures may leave businesses looking for guidance on how they can return to trading safely. Business Gateway is engaging with Government and other partners on the necessary guidance for various sectors so support is available for businesses when they need it. Business Gateway has created a **suite of free guides, articles and checklists** to help businesses apply for the job retention scheme. A toolkit of marketing assets has also been created to help local areas promote the support on offer to businesses at this challenging time, including an infographic which can be utilised on social media channels, online and via email communication with clients.

Trading Standards Scotland

Trading Standards Scotland is part of COSLA. In the latest edition of their **Scam Share bulletin**, they outline scams which have been reported by consumers across Scotland, including those related to the COVID-19 outbreak. It contains useful information for local communities, covering issues such as charity scams, travel advice and staying safe online.

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Thank You

The Local Government workforce and partners across sectors are working hard to support our communities.

We continue to highlight this across our social media channels using **#CouncilsCare** and it is heartening to see communities working together to look after each other. Retweets and follows would be greatly appreciated.

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

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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