

# Elected Members Briefing



14 July 2020

## Introduction

Welcome to the latest Elected Members Bulletin, your weekly update from COSLA covering issues related to COVID-19. Information and resources can also be found on COSLA's social media accounts, with the **Facebook account** and **Twitter account** updated on a regular basis. The COSLA website can be found at **cosla.gov.uk** and the **KHub** for Elected Members is also regularly updated.

The current number of COVID-19 cases and the risk level can be found on the **Scottish Government Website**. **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

The First Minister has confirmed that Scotland will officially move to **Phase 3 of the route map out of lockdown**.

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## Finance

The UK Chancellor presented his 'Summer Economic Update' on Wednesday, July 8, the next phase of the response to COVID.

Some of the measures announced will apply across the UK e.g. the Job Retention Bonus Scheme and cut in VAT for accommodation, hospitality and visitor attractions.

The position in relation to consequentials for Scotland has been updated and is now just over £4.6bn.

**An update is available on SPICe website.**

Officers continue discussions with Scottish Government on fiscal flexibilities, seeking a range of options for councils to deal with the financial pressure faced this year.

COSLA's Resources Spokesperson, Councillor Gail Macgregor, has requested a call with the Cabinet Secretary for Finance to discuss these flexibilities, the UK Government's recent announcements and the consequentials for Local Government.

We are awaiting a response to Councillor Macgregor's letter to the UK Chancellor requesting a year-long break for Local Authority Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) repayments and temporary flexibility on borrowing for revenue and transfer of capital to revenue.

A letter has been sent to the Chancellor on behalf of the three Local Government associations for Scotland, Wales and North of Ireland, highlighting the financial pressures for councils across the UK and the need for support for the devolved administrations / governments.

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## **Education**

COSLA officers continue to work with Local Government partners, the Scottish Government and other stakeholders on the development of guidance to support a return to school for all pupils in August. There are challenging issues to address including school transport and of course the additional resources that will be required as a result of enhanced cleaning and other mitigations to ensure a safe return.

We are working closely with colleagues in Local Government finance in COSLA to understand the additional costs.

This work is taking place through the Education Resources Recovery Group. COSLA's Children and Young People Spokesperson, Councillor Stephen McCabe, continues to co-chair the COVID-19 Education Recovery Group with the Deputy First Minister and the group continues to provide advice to Ministers and COSLA Leaders.

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## **Sport & Leisure**

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Scottish Government guidance has recognised the importance to physical and mental health of the population staying active.

During lockdown, Local Authorities played a vital role in ensuring that roads, parks and other green spaces were safe and available for exercise.

Phases 1 to 3 of the Routemap have included a welcome easing of restrictions on outdoor sport and physical activity. However, Government guidance requires that all indoor sport and leisure facilities remain closed.

Where outdoor facilities are allowed to open, some Local Authority and leisure trust facilities have remained closed as ongoing restrictions on permitted sports activity and other operational challenges has meant that it has not been economically viable to operate.

We recognise that Local Authorities leisure services and leisure trusts are facing significant financial pressures, with loss of income and ongoing costs.

COSLA is currently in discussions with Scottish Government, sportscotland, Community Leisure UK and others to understand the pressures on Local Authority and leisure trust leisure provision and the steps needed to ensure their facilities and services can come through the pandemic.

This will require financial support to leisure trusts and local provision to ensure that they can play this role.

Local sport and leisure provision can make an important health, economic and social contribution to the post-COVID recovery of our communities.

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## **Death in Service Benefit**

The scheme is to provide a death in service benefit payable to the dependent of any health and social care workers whose deaths may reasonably be attributed to COVID-19.

This benefit has retrospective effect and is applicable from March 17, 2020, onwards.

The scheme aims to pay £60,000 to a dependent, regardless of any other benefits they may be entitled to, for example if the worker had been a member of the Local Government Pension Scheme.

It applies to all social care workers including those employed by council as well as those working in the independent and third sectors.

Scottish Government officials state that the number of people eligible for the scheme are likely to be very low. A very small administrative overhead for councils may be associated with implementing the scheme if one of our employees is affected, for example, with information collection and verification.

Group Leaders endorsed the scheme on July 7, agreeing that COSLA should assist with its administration.

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## **Health and Social Care Recovery and Renewal**

Community-based health and social care services have responded to COVID-19 by bringing in innovations on an unprecedented scale.

This is something which should be fostered as we move into the recovery phase which brings an opportunity to renew and reform the whole health and social care system, to build on the collaboration and innovation which we have seen since the beginning of the pandemic.

On June 29, the first meeting of the Mobilisation Recovery Group was held, chaired by the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport, and COSLA's Health and Social Care Spokesperson, Councillor Stuart Currie, is a member.

The role of the group is to provide advice on health and social care policy and delivery in the context of the response to COVID-19.

The initial focus will be to generate system wide input into decisions around resuming paused services and supporting continuing services for which activity has been intense throughout the pandemic, such as care homes and care at home services for older people.

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## **Business Gateway**

With the First Minister relaxing lockdown measures in the last couple of weeks, businesses throughout Scotland have been busy planning for restarting and adapting in order to do so safely in the new post COVID-19 environment.

Operating while social distancing measures are in place may be a challenge for businesses when it comes to profitability, particularly following several months of no revenue at all.

So, for many, 'restarting' may involve restructuring to make business sustainable amidst the 'new normal'.

Business Gateway's advisers and specialist consultants have been on hand to support businesses through this process and supporting online resources have been developed to provide guidance on some of the most pressing issues, including guides on **Getting Back to Business** and **HR guidance for employers**.

The new Business Gateway Connections podcast series also addresses HR considerations for businesses and can be accessed **here**.

Meanwhile, with the closure of the small business grant fund last week, Business Gateway has been working collaboratively with Scottish Enterprise to signpost eligible businesses to the Early Stage Growth Challenge fund, open for applications from July 20.

This new fund is designed for early-stage, high-growth, Scottish companies working on unique products or services in new or niche markets.

Our local advisers are also on hand to coach business owners through this difficult transition and signpost to additional resources and support.

Connect with us at **[www.bgateway.com](http://www.bgateway.com)**

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## Care Home Day 2020

Care Home Day 2020 is being celebrated on Wednesday, July 15.

The day aims to share good news stories to recognise the role which care homes play in communities. This year, with the impact of COVID-19, it is even more important than normal to shine a light on social care, the care home sector and the work which staff have been doing throughout this difficult time across our communities.

The theme of this year's Care Home Day is 'Care Community'. If you would like to get involved with this on social media by sharing good news stories, resources, local examples of innovative work then you can get involved on social media with the hashtag #carehomeday20

## Trading Standards

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.

There is some very useful information for local communities, covering issues such as misleading energy marketing and prize draw / competition scams.

The bulletin **[can be viewed here](#)**.



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## **Summary**

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](mailto:membersupport@cosla.gov.uk)

Thank you all for your efforts during this challenging time.

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## Local Authority Delivery of Services

During the Covid-19 Pandemic

STATISTICS TO DATE

STATISTICS LAST WEEK

### Shielding

174,000

shielding individuals  
in contact with their  
council



### Business Grants

99,000

Business Grant  
applications made  
to date



£

£921M

of Business Grants  
awarded by Councils  
in total

### Free School Meals

159,000

free school meals  
provided for children



around 140%  
of those eligible

### Child Protection

2,425

children with Child Protection plans  
had face-to-face contact with a  
social worker over the last 2 weeks



### Adult Protection

1,357

Wellbeing referrals  
made over the last  
week



562

Risk referrals made  
over the last week

  
COSLA



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