

Elected Members Briefing



6 May 2020

Introduction

Welcome to your latest Elected Members Bulletin covering issues relating to COVID-19 which have required national and local responses over the past week.

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** 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**.

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. Although there is a UK wide review of the current restrictions on 7 May, the First Minister was clear it was unlikely there would be any substantial change in approach at this point. Plans were set out on Monday for a **"test, trace, isolate, support" approach**. This will involve testing people in the community who have symptoms consistent with COVID-19, tracing those they have had contact with, asking them to self-isolate and providing support so they can do this effectively. COSLA and SOLACE are working to ensure Councils and related local services are actively involved in the this work as it progresses and regular updates will be provided.

COSLA Leaders met on 1 May 2020, International Workers Day, and the meeting was opened by COSLA President, Cllr Alison Evison, recognising and thanking the local government workforce at this challenging time. Leaders then went on to discuss and take decisions on a number of issues including relating to finance, education, social care, digital exclusion, housing and data gathering.

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Finance

On 29 April the Cabinet Secretary for Finance wrote to COSLA's Resources Spokesperson Cllr Gail Macgregor regarding the consequential of the UK's funding announcement for Local Government in Scotland (£155m). The letter indicated that she wished to wait for the outcome of the cost collection exercise COSLA is currently coordinating and to understand how those costs are being mitigated by the funding measures which have already been committed. This letter was circulated ahead of Friday (1 May) Leaders meeting, at which COSLA Leaders rejected the contents of the letter and called for the £155m consequential to be passed straight to Local Government without delay, recognising that costs are being incurred on a daily basis as essential services are delivered to the most vulnerable during the pandemic.

In a positive step yesterday (5 May), the Scottish Government announced they would pass the full £155 million of consequential from the UK Government to Local Government. Cllr McGregor will work with the Cabinet Secretary for Finance to ensure the funding is distributed to councils quickly and can be used flexibly to meet local need.

In relation to the cost collection exercise, Finance templates have now been received from all 32 Councils and are being reviewed. The intention is to repeat the exercise as the situation develops and to facilitate an ongoing dialogue with Scottish Government around the additional costs to Local Government in relation to the pandemic response.

COSLA's Health and Social Care Spokesperson met with the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport on 30 April and as part of that meeting discussed funding associated with health and social care mobilisation plans. Work is underway to release a proportion of funding w/c 1 May to ensure priority areas of spend can be progressed, with the remaining portion of the funding to be released once other areas have been discussed and agreed.

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Finance continued

Additional support for business announced was on 15 April and work continues through the COSLA/ Local Government/ Scottish Government project group. The newly self-employed (£34m) funding went live on 30 April. Phase 2 of the business grant scheme (£120m, relating to those with multiple properties) is to be implemented by 5 May. Work continues to ensure that the current business grant scheme is being delivered and that council queries on eligibility are dealt with as quickly and consistently as possible.

Public Health Scotland

COSLA and Scottish Local Government continues to be central to the reform of Public Health in Scotland. At the 1 May COSLA Leaders meeting, it was agreed that COSLA nominate Councillor Jacqueline Cameron (Renfrewshire Council) and Councillor Julie Bell (Angus Council) to the Board of Public Health Scotland following a competitive process. Their appointments were announced today and will provide a strong Local Government voice in Scotland's new national public health body. This is a significant milestone in the reform of public health. The contribution of Local Government to the health and wellbeing of the nation is clearly evident given the work underway with partners across Scotland in protecting communities in response to the current pandemic and will be vital in planning for the future.

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Workforce

The Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) together with Scottish Government, COSLA, the Care Inspectorate and other partners have established a system to help social care services in Scotland to recruit and deploy staff during this time. This system is for social care services and does not include day care of children services at this time. The recruitment portal was opened on the 17 April for employers in social care in the statutory, independent and third sectors to direct access additional staff as an interim measure to respond to the critical need, particularly in the care home sector. SSSC have also circulated **guidance to services** for its use.

The Myjobscotland team at COSLA have worked with Society of Personnel Development Scotland (SPDS) to develop **a process for Local Government** to ensure the portal can align with current recruitment processes in local authorities if utilised.

Adult Support and Protection

COSLA'S Health and Social Care Spokesperson Cllr Stuart Currie has issued a joint letter with the Minister for Mental Health Clare Haughey MSP highlighting the publication of **COVID-19 Adult Support and Protection Guidance**.

The duties placed on statutory bodies have not changed or been affected by the response to COVID-19. Adult Support and Protection principles still apply. Councils and those named in the Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007 should continue to offer the same level of oversight regarding these duties and their application. However, it is also important that staff are proportionate in their responses and mindful of the pressure care providers may be under. The aim of this guidance is to support these decisions and the development of local guidance around safe, effective and proportionate adult support and protection activity at this time.

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Education

A Covid-19 Education Recovery Group has been established to provide advice on education policy and delivery to ministers and COSLA Leaders in the context of the response to COVID-19, chaired jointly by the Deputy First Minister and COSLA's Children and Young People Spokesperson, Cllr Stephen McCabe. A series of workstreams will operate to generate system-wide input into decisions around the reopening of schools, focusing on how this happens, rather than when (which will be led separately by the ongoing scientific analysis COVID-19).

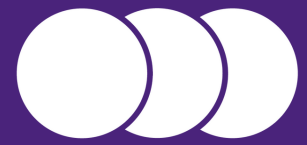
Data Dashboard

A Local Government data dashboard has been developed, based on existing data returns, through which important aspects of Councils' response can be monitored. COSLA will also work with SOLACE to develop a screening protocol to support future requests for data.

Business Gateway

Supporting Small and medium-sized enterprises in Scotland as they navigate the current pandemic continues to be the priority of Business Gateway, been working at pace to adapt and deliver service virtually. Highlights of work in recent weeks include developing Business Gateway online platforms for virtual delivery of its services by each local authority, launch of a campaign to promote Business Gateway services highlighting the support available locally and online, and a number of national and local webinars on relevant COVID-19 themes. A **COVID-19 hub** is being updated daily with funding information and support related to the challenges facing businesses. The continued delivery of this work will be crucial in supporting economic recovery in the coming months. COSLA's Environment and Economy Spokesperson, Cllr Steven Heddle, chaired the second fortnightly Business Gateway Board Q&A session on Monday. These virtual meetings keep members up to speed and allow sharing of local and national developments.

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Thank You

As Leaders noted at their meeting on 1 May, 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.

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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