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Dear Colleagues

### **THIRD SECTOR SUPPORT TO CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES THROUGH COVID 19**

In these unprecedented times, we are all looking to do as much as we can to support individuals, families and communities in coping with the impact Covid 19 is having on their lives. As part of this, the Scottish Government recognises that the third sector has a critical role in supporting the needs of children, young people and their families during these challenging circumstances.

#### **Keeping us abreast of what is happening and what is needed**

Many organisations have already been in touch with us to let us know how they have been adapting their service delivery, what challenges they are seeing on the ground, and what additional support the Government can provide and co-ordinate with our public and third sector partners. We would like to encourage all organisations to keep in touch with us on these matters, so we can build a picture of how support for families is being sustained over this difficult period, and understand any emerging issues at both a local and national level.

In particular:

- Third sector organisations are uniquely well placed to help us to understand the nature of the challenges that children, young people and families are facing in their homes and communities at this time. Please feed back to us what you see happening within the communities you serve – positive development and areas of concern - and the issues on which you consider that action needs to be taken, especially in relation to any gaps that you see emerging.
- We are keen to hear about the action your organisation has taken to adapt its service delivery in response to Covid 19. For example, are you developing digital resources, providing support online, using more volunteers for fieldwork, or repurposing your resources in other ways? Let us know what you are finding is working best and how you are delivering it. Also is there anything we can do to help connect you up with others, share best practice and creative ideas etc?
- We are also keen to hear about how easily your organisation has been able to connect with other third sector and community-based organisations, the public sector



and other areas to make sure support and services for children and families are joined-up and planned effectively. Let us know examples of what is working well and what could help to make things work better.

Finally, we are acutely aware of the impact on the children's sector workforce who will be working hard to meet needs in this challenging time. While this is an opportunity for your knowledge, expertise and skills to come to the fore, many may feel that they need more information, training or reassurance to know they are responding well in new and changing circumstances. Let us know how your organisation is supporting your staff and volunteers, and where gaps may need to be considered more strategically across the sector.

Please contact your usual policy contact, copying the [DCAF.familyunit@gov.scot](mailto:DCAF.familyunit@gov.scot) mailbox.

### **Co-ordinating our messaging**

Your services may be an important route of information for many families over this period. Where this is the case, we would encourage you to direct people to our Parent Club website [www.parentclub.scot](http://www.parentclub.scot) which is the Scottish Government's first stop for information about support for children and families, and includes links to the latest health advice on NHS Inform. You may also find the Young Scot web resources helpful for those working with older children and young people: <https://young.scot/campaigns/national/coronavirus>. Where you are developing vital non-digital information for families who will have less digital access, we would ask that you replicate the advice on these sites as much as possible, so as to keep our collective messaging clear and joined up.

To support you in this, we have created a toolkit to serve as a digital bank for partners who engage with families and children across Scotland and need easy access to key messages, content and resources to support their efforts at this time. <https://bit.ly/ParentClubToolkit>

### **Support for the Third Sector**

As you provide support to others, Scottish Government is in no doubt about the challenges that your organisations and staff will also be facing during this uncertain period. There are a number of actions that we have taken with the aim of alleviating some of these pressures as much as possible.

### **Grant reporting and monitoring**

In recognition of the particular challenges that we know you are facing and the need to focus resources on delivery, and free up staff time, we propose to simplify our normal grant reporting mechanisms and ask you only for light-touch returns to comply with audit returns and allow us to understand what the impact of your activity has been.

For those organisations in receipt of CYPFEIF & ALEC funding, reporting for Q4 has been extended until September. These reports will only require minimal information to be completed by organisations, only the information required for audit purposes. Corra will issue further guidance in due course, as we continue to monitor the current situation.

### **Families and Communities (FAC) Fund**

In December 2019, as a result of the delay to the UK Budget, Ministers took the decision to delay final decisions on applications to the FAC Fund for 3 months to 31 March 2020. To maintain stability for the sector, the existing Children, Young People and Families Early Intervention and Adult Learning and Empowering Communities (CYPFEI & ALEC) fund, was extended for 3 months to 30 June 2020.

Due to the unprecedented challenges currently being faced by the third sector, Ministers have now taken the decision to delay any announcement of funding through the FAC Fund for a further three months, to the end of June. Instead, Scottish Government will further extend the CYPFEI & ALEC fund to 30 September 2020.

Ministers have made this decision to ensure there is as little, additional, disruption to the sector as possible, as it responds to the impact of COVID-19 and reshapes to deliver services, and support families and communities in a different way. Ministers are keen to support the third sector as much as possible in their response to this fast moving situation, and while we recognise the disappointed that this may have caused, we hope that organisations will understand these changes in the current climate. However, should you wish to raise any concerns or questions about this approach please do so via Corra, as the fund administrator: [facfund@corra.scot](mailto:facfund@corra.scot).

### ***New Funding***

On 18 March the Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Communities announced an additional £350 million which will be made available to those most affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

The funding will be made available to councils, charities, businesses and community groups and designed to be flexible, cutting down on red tape to enable them to respond swiftly and according to local need for people impacted economically or through reduced contact with society, including anyone struggling to access food.

This includes:

- a **£50 million Wellbeing Fund** to help charities and others who require additional capacity, to work with at-risk people who may be worst affected by the crisis, including homeless people and those experiencing fuel poverty
- a **£40 million Supporting Communities Fund** to be used to support the rapidly growing and inspiring community efforts at a local level which will be vital to national resilience, including supporting people at risk because of age, isolation, carers, homeless people and asylum seekers and signposting people to sources of help such as applying for benefits
- **£20 million** will be allocated to a **Third Sector Resilience Fund**, to help ensure the health and continued viability of the third sector organisations affected by cash flow and other problems, which have a key role to play in our national response

The Third Sector Resilience Fund (TSRF) is a £20m emergency fund for charities, community groups, social enterprises and voluntary organisations working in Scotland. The fund supports organisations that already deliver services and products but find themselves in

financial difficulties directly as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. The primary intention of the fund is to help third sector organisations to stabilise and manage cash flows over this difficult period.

The Fund is delivered by Firstport, Social Investment Scotland and the Corra Foundation and provides grants up to £100,000. In addition there is up to a further £5m available in fully flexible, 0% interest loans starting at £50,000. The fund will be complemented by specialist business advice from Just Enterprise to help grant recipients maximise the impact of the financial support.

Applications for the Third Sector Resilience Fund opened on Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> March. In order to apply, organisations must complete a short eligibility check to assess their suitability for the fund. More information can be found at:

<https://scvo.org/support/coronavirus/funding/for-organisations/third-sector-resilience-fund/>

Further information on the other funds can be found at:

<https://scvo.org.uk/support/coronavirus>

### **SCVO Support**

SCVO are co-ordinating information about support that is available for third sector organisations including emergency funding and you can find this information at

<https://scvo.org.uk/support/coronavirus>

This is a fast moving situation and our focus remains on working in partnership with the third sector to respond strategically across the children's sector to meet the needs of children and families. The information you provide in response to this letter is one part of that picture. The Children's Sector Strategic Forum, run by Children in Scotland will also be moving to monthly meetings, as another route for co-ordination and communication between SG and the third sector. Contact [mburt@childreninscotland.org.uk](mailto:mburt@childreninscotland.org.uk) for more information.

Partnership working has never been more important, and your collaboration in building a national and local picture of Scotland's response, and continuing to inform our collective priorities from that, will be invaluable.

Your work is much appreciated by Scottish Government, and by all the families, children and young people that you are supporting. Please do keep in touch.

Best wishes

**Iona Colvin**

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