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To:
Council Leaders
Chief Executives
ADES
Social Work Scotland
Directors of Finance

24 March 2020

Dear Colleague,

We are writing to provide a further update on recent discussions surrounding coronavirus (COVID-19).

COVID-19 represents an unprecedented challenge across Education, Early Learning and Childcare, Childrens services and supporting provisions. The Scottish Government and Local Government are sharing leadership to ensure system wide joint working in order to optimise the impact on community wellbeing and best support these services during this period.

Guidance for Commissioned Services

In light of the current emergency there is an immediate requirement to appropriately support education and childcare settings, to provide continuity of care to our most vulnerable children and ensure adequate staffing support and resourcing to allow this to occur.

A guidance document for Local Authority commissioners is being circulated with this letter to give advice on the areas of pressure being faced by Children Services (including residential, care at home, secure care, foster care, kinship care and support services provided by an agency), as well as what support should be given to Early Learning and Childcare (ELC)

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providers affected by the closure of schools and childcare settings. In particular, where private or third sector ELC settings (including childminders) are closed or children are unable to attend due to the pandemic, local authorities should continue payments for funded places for the duration of the closure, to ensure that local ELC capacity is retained and to support sustainability for the future delivery of ELC.

The implications of COVID-19 on the workforce are recognised, not only as a result of increased demand for services, but due to the additional pressures that will be caused by staff absence – particularly if staff are unwell or self-isolating with their households.

It is also recognised that services will be subject to demands which will require different approaches to the use of staffing and other resources, and that additional measures may be required to increase the available workforce. This will require significant levels of flexibility in a number of areas, such as the redeployment of staff and the relaxation of staff registration requirements.

More detailed advice and practical guidance will be issued shortly for care settings that may require use of volunteers and redeployed workers due to staffing challenges as a result of the spread of Covid-19. It will set out what employers need to think about and put in place to support the safe delivery of services.

It will also include resources available to induct new workers into different care settings and provide guidance on the minimum training required to equip people with the knowledge, skills and behaviours to support our most vulnerable. This will include signposting to an online portal for training.

School Transport

Following the Scottish Government's advice to local authority Chief Executives and Directors of Education to close schools and childcare settings, there have been a number of discussions about the impact on the sustainability of home-school transport providers.

Following engagement with SOLACE, and ADES on Friday 20th March COSLA Group Leaders agreed that, in the interest of supporting local businesses and ensuring available capacity when schools return, local authorities will continue to pay home to school transport providers through to the end of the summer term. Whilst the key aim is to ensure that staff get paid and that businesses remain solvent, more detail will be required on costs which can and cannot be met by local authorities in light of the changing policy landscape at the Scottish and UK Government level in relation to national reliefs and support, such as the 80% pay guarantee.

COSLA is also involved in discussions with Directors of Finance to develop key assumptions and principles for dealing with suppliers and partner providers across a range of sectors. This work will aim to not only ensure that there is local flexibility to deploy resources to respond to local need but to also ensure that the use of national reliefs and supports are maximised in our collective response to this pandemic.

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We recognise the collective work being undertaken across the sector to respond to what is a uniquely challenging situation and want to take this opportunity to thank you for everything you are doing at this time.

Kind regards,



MAREE TODD



COUNCILLOR Stephen McCabe

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