

Council Leader Newsletter



The Improvement Service is the 'go to' organisation for Local Government improvement in Scotland.

We'd like to update you, as a Council Leader, on key decisions made by the IS Board at its meeting in September 2020 and key business plan developments.

COVID-19

The Board noted the range of work being delivered by the IS to support Councils and partners to respond to Covid-19. We continue to keep the Covid-19 section of our website updated with [new developments](#). We have a Covid-19 web page for [elected members](#). We are building up a collection of [case studies](#) showing how councils have rapidly redesigned services, created innovative solutions to new problems and collaborated with communities and other organisations throughout the pandemic.

Finance Update

Both the IS and Local Government Digital Office finances were reviewed and no issues were reported. To date, the IS has secured £1.9M of funding in 2020/21 from outwith the Local Government sector.

Statutory Financial Statements

The Statutory Financial Statements 2019/20 were approved and will be presented to all Council Chief Executives and Leaders at the IS Annual General Meeting (AGM), planned to take place following the November COSLA Leaders meeting. The Audit Management report for 2019/20 is unqualified.

Strategic Framework 2020 - 2022

The draft 2-year Strategic Framework was discussed and will be updated to reflect comments from IS Board Members. The [IS Business Plan 2020/21](#) will be updated to reflect the Strategic Framework. The Strategic Framework will be presented for endorsement at our AGM.

Business Development and Growth

The IS Board approved a Business Development and Growth strategy and Delivery Plan, and agreed to set a target of £2M for 2020/21 for income generated from outwith the Local Government sector. Over the next six months we will: develop an advertising and sponsorship policy for our digital platforms; undertake market analysis to identify the types of improvement support councils procure, to help us identify how we could address any gaps through the IS Associates Framework; and develop a prospectus which outlines our core offer to Local Authorities and details of additional services they can purchase and the associated costs, based on consultation with Local Authorities, stakeholders and market analysis.

Roads Collaboration Programme (RCP)

Following discussions at both the RCP Board and the IS Board, it has been agreed that the IS will disengage from hosting the RCP from 30th November 2020. Our Head of Transformation, Performance and Improvement is working with colleagues from SCOTS, Transport Scotland and the RCP Board to assist them in moving towards a new hosting mechanism from 1st December 2020.

IS Board Skills Framework

The IS Board Members agreed to participate in a skills analysis and self-assessment exercise, and the results will be discussed at an IS Board workshop in November. The outputs of this workshop will feed into a review of IS governance which will be reported to the Board at its meeting in December.

Accounts Commission

Elma Murray, Interim Chair of the Accounts Commission, has been invited to attend the December IS Board Meeting to discuss partnership working with the IS. Other audit and inspection bodies will be invited to attend future Board meetings.

Key Business Plan Updates

Thought Leadership

In August, we started the release of our videos on data quality and standards - the videos are part of our new [Thought Leadership series](#), where experts explore a topic, thinking about new ways of working and potential innovations. This was followed up by a video from Professor Abigail Marks (Stirling University) that presented the findings of a national survey into homeworking combined with the effects of the pandemic lockdown. A video on Participatory Democracy is due to be released in the near future. Discussions are taking place with Professor Kevin Orr (St Andrews University) with a view to kicking off a research project, working with a number of Council Chief Executives and elected members to explore the effects of the pandemic on governance and decision-making and what this means for the future.

Transformation, Performance and Improvement

Economic Development

Ongoing discussions are taking place between SOLACE, SLAED, Scottish Government, COSLA, Scottish Enterprise and the IS to ensure better partnership working on supporting businesses. The annual SLAED Indicators Report will be published in late December/early January due to delays in being able to get some of the data as a result of Covid. The [supplement report](#) has now been published.

Employability Partnership - No One Left Behind (NOLB)

Progressing the Scottish and Local Governments' shared ambition to establish an employability system in Scotland which is flexible, person-centred and more straightforward for citizens to

navigate, particularly the most vulnerable, has been slower than anticipated as we collectively respond to the need to offer continuity of support to individuals most affected and protect the stability of the system.

The transformational change in how funding for employability is structured and the move away from nationally designed and commissioned programmes to local governance arrangements commenced in April 2019 when £7 million was allocated to Local Authorities to flexibly respond to local needs and circumstances. Phase 2 investment due to the impact of Covid 19 is expected to transition to local governance arrangements in April 2022 confirmed in a recent [communication to Stakeholders](#).

However, ongoing partnership support is being provided and there are regular meetings with local authority employability leads, Scottish Government and COSLA to deliver:

- The existing No One Left Behind phase one funding of £7 million for 2020/21 rolling into 2021/22.
- An immediate £2.35million boost to the Parental Employability Support Fund (PESF) to take funding for this year to £7.35 million. This is a Local Government led programme targeted at low income families as part of the measures to address child poverty. The extra funding this year is for supporting disabled families, young parents and to support early leading and childcare employment. It is anticipated that there will be a continuation of the PESF boost funding into 2021/22 to add to the base PESF funding.
- New funding of £30 million to support Local Government led activity on the Young Person's Guarantee.
- £3.5 million to Local Government to support the local contribution to the Partnership Action on Continuous Employment (PACE), to support individuals due to the rising levels of redundancy;
- Wrap around support through local authorities engaging with the UK Government's Kickstart programme supporting young people and local employers.

Partnership work is ongoing to publish a joint delivery plan on No One Left Behind by mid November 2020 outlining the route map and key milestones to deliver Phase 2 transition of resources by April 2022. This also includes strengthening local partnerships, adopting a new collaborative approach to service design and agreeing a shared measurement service to ensure improved outcomes for the most vulnerable job seekers.

Child Poverty

We continue to engage with Child Poverty leads in each Local Authority area to identify progress and challenges, and to assist with the finalisation of their Local Child Poverty Action Reports (LCPARs). Around 5 reports have been submitted so far, and more will follow as they are approved at committees. The Scottish Government [Tackling child poverty: second year progress report \(2019 – 2020\)](#) has now been published. Webinars are planned to support the ongoing development and delivery of the LCPARs focussing on areas such as the UNCRC and Child Poverty and Protected Characteristics.

Violence Against Women

We have worked with COSLA, Scottish Government and Public Health Scotland to produce a refreshed version of the [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Supplementary National Violence Against Women \(VAWG\) Guidance](#) for Local Authorities and their strategic partners. This version updates the original

Supplementary Guidance published by COSLA and Scottish Government in May 2020 and reflects Scotland's current phase of Covid-19 recovery and renewal.

Trauma-informed approach for recovery, renewal and transformation

Following on from an event in September which focused on how a trauma-informed approach can support Scotland's roadmap for recovery, renewal and transformation, a joint letter was issued from the Deputy First Minister and the COSLA President to all local authorities and other community planning partners asking them to nominate trauma champions to the IS by Friday 6th November to help support this work across their local authority area. The Scottish Government will also soon be sharing further details of how local authorities and other community planning partners can publicly pledge their commitment to embedding a trauma-informed approach.

There are several events scheduled over the next six months to help stakeholders to adopt a trauma informed approach in their areas of work. This includes a series of 'deep dives' coordinated by the IS to explore how adopting a trauma-informed approach can help improve outcomes across different community planning priority areas, beginning with a Children and Families stakeholder event on the 19th November. A webinar has also been scheduled for early December to raise awareness of the National Trauma Training Programme as well as a further webinar in late December targeted at leaders and managers interested in learning more about how to lead trauma informed change in their organisations.

Fairer Scotland Duty

The IS has been participating in work to develop an impact assessment process for the flu vaccination programme. This will inform the Covid-19 vaccination programme, once a vaccine is available.

Change Management

A [scenario planning toolkit](#) has now been published on the IS website. The toolkit is designed to be flexible and to augment existing strategic planning tools and processes. It can be used at a strategic level and also at a service or team level, throughout the recovery and renewal phase. It contains a selection of tools that can be used at each step. Some of these will be familiar and may already be used as part of the strategic planning process. The IS can provide support where required.

Planning is underway to run a follow up webinar for Local Authority colleagues on Running Successful Workshops online. This will build on our experience to date and provide tips and tools we have used to get the most from virtual sessions.

PSIF

In order to support councils and other public sector bodies capture learning/innovation from the pandemic and feed into recovery and renewal planning, we have developed a number of [checklists](#) (click on the PSIF heading) to facilitate this process. Checklists have been developed to capture learning at a service level and corporate level, and for elected members, CPPs, HSCPs and IJBs.

The process takes no more than 3-5 weeks from start to finish, with the output being a New Ways of Working Plan to support those who engage in the process to embed the innovations identified. A [case study](#) was produced by South Lanarkshire Council Community Engagement Team, who used the Capturing Learning Checklist in July.

Elected Members Development

There has been a high demand for the [Political Mentoring Development Programme](#) and we have added new cohorts this year. This totals six cohorts we will have run between June and December 2020. Evaluations of the programme have been very positive so far and it is our intention to run further cohorts next year.

We published briefings and held online events on [Community Wealth Building](#) and [Child Poverty](#). We also published guidance on [Supporting Political Groups to Work Remotely](#).

We have been providing senior elected members support with [Executive Coaching](#).

We've also kicked off work to review the CPD Framework for elected members, with the aim of developing a fresh offer that is free for councils to use. This may include a Member Development Charter that councils can sign up to.

Covid-19 Lessons Learned

We are working with COSLA to gather intelligence from councils on the lessons learned from the pandemic to inform future service delivery and all future planning assumptions. A report will be submitted to the COSLA Recovery Special Interest Group.

Digital Public Services

Myaccount

26 councils are now using myaccount, a further 2 councils are currently in the onboarding process and 4 are waiting to onboard. Myaccount continues to see growth in both subscribers (1,146,417 users at 2nd November 2020) and usage as more councils continue to roll out digital services for their citizens. The rollout of both [parentsportal.scot](#) and [getyournec.scot](#), continues to contribute towards the increased trends in usage and adoption of myaccount.

Getyournec.scot

10 councils have made [getyournec.scot](#) available to their citizens to apply for over 60s concessionary travel, disabled concessionary travel and Young Scot cards online. A further 20 councils are either onboarding or have noted interest in adopting the service. Future phases will include the ability to request a card replacement or renewal.

Parentsportal.scot

[Parentsportal.scot](#) is live in 7 councils, and is contributing to the significant increase in usage of the myaccount service. A further 6 Councils are currently onboarding and 9 have noted interest with the view of moving towards onboarding in the future. Discussions are also ongoing with a further 9 councils who recently expressed an interest. Only one council is yet to register an interest.

Bisaccount.scot

The service was launched to support the facilitation of the Transitional Support Fund for Childcare Applications, by hosting the application process for all 32 councils.

ISO27001

The IS has achieved certification to the internationally recognised ISO27001:2017 standard, establishing it as one of the leaders in its field. ISO27001 is the internationally recognised Information Security Management Standard that proves an organisation's commitment to the security of their customer, employee and shareholder information. This independent assessment was conducted by the British Assessment Bureau, a leading Certification Body.

Data and Intelligence

Local Government Covid-19 Dashboard

We continue to produce a weekly Local Government Covid-19 Dashboard report for councils. The suite of dashboard indicators was revised in September following consultation, to provide a strengthened focus on recovery and the wider community impacts of Covid-19. We are continuing to work with the Local Government Digital Office (LGDO) and COSLA to progress plans for the development of a Local Government Data Platform. This aims to simplify data collection, improve quality assurance, and provide richer insight from data currently collected from councils. While the immediate focus for this development is in response to the multiple Covid-19 related returns, we hope this approach will offer longer term benefits in relation to the rationalisation of future data returns, including LGBF data. COSLA, IS and LGDO are working together to produce a business case to take this forward.

Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF)

We are currently working with LGBF Board members to agree priorities for the new LGBF Strategic Plan. This will provide an opportunity to reset the LGBF for the post Covid-19 world and to ensure the LGBF provides relevant intelligence for decision making around recovery and renewal, whilst preserving the continuity provided by 10 years of longitudinal data available within the benchmarking framework. We are also exploring how to augment this year's publication with more timely data from the current period to begin to capture the role of Local Government services in responding to the Covid-19 pandemic and to share practice and learning.

Community Planning Outcomes Profile

The [Community Planning Outcomes Profile \(CPOP\)](#) has been refreshed and relaunched with the latest available data. The CPOP is a tool to help partnerships assess if the lives of people in their local communities are improving by providing a set of core measures on important life outcomes and inequalities including children and young people, older people, safer/stronger communities, the environment, employment and economic growth, and health and wellbeing on a consistent basis and over a ten-year period.

Research

Working with the National Records of Scotland, we have developed and published a [national set of population projections for small areas within councils](#). These projections are primarily at multi-member ward level, with some local authorities opting to have projections produced for custom areas. We are currently gathering feedback on how these data are being used with a view to producing further analysis and tools.

We have continued to update our [dashboard showing the economic impact of Covid-19](#) on local authority areas with the most recent data. The dashboard summarises available data on the current

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uptake of government support including those furloughed through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, unemployment benefit claims, Business Support Grant Fund claims, and the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme. The dashboard will be refreshed with new data reflecting the changing circumstances, particularly as support schemes come to an end or change.

Data is currently being collected from local authorities for both the [Common Advice Performance Management Reporting Framework](#) and Instrumental Music Survey. These reports are expected to be published this quarter.

Daily provision of local authority data to the One Scotland Gazetteer

We have been working with local authorities to increase the frequency of data that is provided to the One Scotland Gazetteer (OSG). People and organisations across Scotland constantly use the OSG dataset. This ranges from consuming Council services, ordering online shopping, or most importantly in the current pandemic, when dealing with health or emergency services. For new homeowners, the interaction with OSG derived information increases significantly with requirements for utility and telecommunications installation. None of these services can be arranged for newly built properties without data in the OSG being updated timeously.

We have purchased a middleware software connector (IDOX Cloud Connector Framework) to directly link the OSG with back office systems in Local Authorities and automatically provide updates with a 24-hour frequency. Shetland Islands Council and Moray Council have recently implemented the Connector, with all other Scottish Local Authorities expected to follow suit before the end of the year.

Spatial Hub

The Spatial Hub is now being used to host important datasets for dealing with Covid-19, e.g. Care Homes for the Elderly data.

Further information

If you have any questions on this information update or would like further information, please contact Sarah Gadsden, Chief Executive at sarah.gadsden@improvementservice.org.uk or 07901 513186. We hope you find the update helpful and would welcome your feedback.