

Council Leader Newsletter



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

The purpose of this newsletter is to update Council Leaders on key decisions made by the IS Board at its meeting in March 2021 and key business plan developments.

IS Board Update

New Board Member

Joyce White stepped down from the IS Board and Lorraine McMillan has now joined the Board, replacing Joyce. Lorraine will be a great addition to the Board, especially in relation to the IS' contribution to Scotland's Digital Strategy.

Local Government Digital Office (LGDO)

Lorraine McMillan and Martyn Wallace provided a presentation on the LGDO, showing the original set up and providing an overview of the work of the LGDO.

Finance Update

The Board noted that total income secured for the year to 31st December 2020 is £9.7M. Of this, £2.25M has been brokered from outwith the Local Government sector. Scottish Government confirmed grant funding of £3.66M for 2021/22 to deliver our portfolio of Digital Public Services.

HR Update

The Board approved a new Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy and Procedure.

Business Plan, Budget and Corporate Communication Plan 2021/11

The Board approved the [IS Business Plan 2021/22](#), Budget and Corporate Communications Plan for 2021/22. The Board agreed a target of £2.5M for 2021/22 for income brokered from outwith the Local Government sector.

Governance Improvement Plan

The Board agreed the improvement plan which was developed following the independent review of IS governance arrangements. The Board also approved a number of key improvement actions, including agreeing revised wording for the Conflict of Interest declaration in the Articles of Association and Members Agreement, and agreeing to pass an ordinary resolution in order for directors to be able to authorise conflicts of interest of directors. Board Members also agreed to introduce a new approach for the appointment and reappointment of Directors from 2022, with Board Members standing for re-election on an annual basis (if they choose to do so) and the maximum term they can serve will be 5 years. Revised wording for the clause in the Articles of Association and Directors Consent on Directors' remuneration was also agreed, to clarify that COSLA and SOLACE nominated Board members are not remunerated. The company lawyers are now updating our governance documentation and advising on the approach we need to take to get the updated documentation considered and approved by our members.

Strategic Alliance between the Accounts Commission and IS

The Board approved a Joint Statement of Intent for the Strategic Alliance between the Accounts Commission and the IS, which includes joint priorities for the next 12 months. This will be publicised following the Scottish Parliament elections.

Review of Account Management Service

The Board agreed an improved approach to our account management service. This new approach includes developing a dashboard of key information to help account managers develop their understanding of a Council, to enable them to consider how best the IS can provide support and to identify the types of knowledge, information and research that might be of most interest to a Council. We are currently reviewing who our account managers are and will shortly be in touch with Chief Executives with further details.

IS Future Premises

The Board agreed to continue with our current lease of the iHub, Livingston and the SLA arrangements with West Lothian Council from August 2021 to August 2022. We will then keep the lease under review as it becomes clearer what life will be like post-Covid and what this means for the way in which the IS operates.

Review of Adult Social Care

The Board agreed that the IS supports COSLA to progress relevant recommendations in the Review of Adult Social Care and endorsed the ongoing involvement of the IS in delivering self-assessment and improvement support to IJBs, working collaboratively with other national improvement bodies.

Climate Change - Deep Dive Workshop

The Board agreed to participate in a deep dive workshop on 21st May 2021 on how the IS can support the delivery of the Net Zero future.

Elected Member Development Update

Local Councillor website

The IS and COSLA will be promoting our website for candidates after the Scottish Parliament elections. The website contains useful information and resources for candidates, and we will update the content regularly. Please signpost potential candidates to www.localcouncillor.scot

The Role of the Elected Member in a Participatory Democracy

We published a short thought piece on the [Role of the Elected Member in a Participatory Democracy](#), as part of our Thought Leadership series.

Coaching for Senior Elected Members

Coaching for Senior Elected Members is available. Information about the offer can be found [here](#) or by contacting david.barr@improvementservice.org.uk

“I cannot recommend coaching highly enough to other senior councillors. We have hugely impactful roles and it is only right that we take time to take stock, challenge ourselves and to grow as individuals but also to grow in our roles as leaders.” (Senior Elected Member from a Scottish Council)

Upcoming Events

- [Local Authorities Organisational Development Network Meeting](#)
21 April 2021
- [Officer Workshop on a “Green Economic Recovery”](#)
12 May 2021
- [Local Authorities Organisational Development Network Meeting](#)
3 June 2021

Key Business Plan Updates

Transformation, Performance and Improvement

Shaping Places for Wellbeing Programme

As Scotland moves through the latest phase in managing the direct and indirect impacts of the Covid pandemic, the Improvement Service and Public Health Scotland are currently designing a Shaping Places for Wellbeing programme aiming to seed and drive recovery and renewal for Scotland’s people and places.

We aim to create the conditions to reduce inequalities in wellbeing and improve outcomes by

info@improvementservice.org.uk | www.improvementservice.org.uk |  follow us: @improvserv

enabling system-wide partnership action on the social determinants of health at a local level and to support local authorities, communities and their partners to achieve Scotland's Public Health Priorities and deliver the 20-minute neighbourhood ambition.

The objectives of the programme are rooted in the Christie Principles of partnership, prevention, people and performance. We will:

- work with communities and key actors to mobilise cross-sector action on the social determinants of health, using the place and wellbeing outcomes, to embed sustainable system change at a local level – framed by the question What are we doing that helps Scotland's people to thrive and flourish?
- support local authorities to engage with public health teams and facilitate and enable local partnerships for system change on the social determinants of health and place and wellbeing outcomes
- learn how to identify and make changes that impact on the social determinants of health, using the place and wellbeing outcomes, so that learning can be shared.

This three-year Programme will be supported by funding from the Health Foundation and Scottish Government. The IS will deliver the programme in partnership with Public Health Scotland (PHS). As a joint sponsor of Scotland's Public Health Reform, COSLA will support the programme on the role of Local Government learning and policy development.

The programme will provide a staff resource and support to a small number of projects to make sustainable changes to local systems. The number of sites will range between approximately 3-5 but will be subject to the current design work. Learning will be continuously captured and shared to allow these approaches to be applied in other areas and to wider health-related issues.

Employability Partnership

The [Local Employability Partnership Framework](#) provides a guide to help provide national coherence and local flexibility. All 32 Local Employability Partnerships will complete a self-assessment process by the end of April to review the current functionality and effectiveness of local employability partnerships. This will inform ongoing development actions, to ensure readiness for effective implementation of the next stage of No-One Left Behind from April 2022.

Economic Development/Scottish Local Authority Development Group (SLAED)

The most recent [SLAED newsletter](#) has now been published.

Climate Change

In partnership with SLAED and the Sustainable Scotland Network, we are hosting a [Green Economic Recovery workshop](#) on 12th May for council officers. It will focus on discussions which enable a practical understanding of what a sustainable recovery from Covid-19 could look like. The interactive session is designed as an opportunity to share ideas, projects and challenges, and explore ways to navigate and overcome barriers.

Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) Expansion

Legislation has now been passed in Parliament confirming that the duty to provide 1140 house funded ELC will be brought into effect in August 2021. To support this, Scottish Government has confirmed further grant funding for the IS ELC programme through to March 2022.

The updated [ELC Expansion Delivery Progress Report](#) has now been published. The report
info@improvementservice.org.uk | www.improvementservice.org.uk |  follow us: @improvserv

highlights positive movement in the delivery of the expansion, with c. 112,000 children now accessing funded ELC.

Violence Against Women (VAW)

The [Learning Report and accompanying videos](#) from the event that took place at the end of last year exploring what collective leadership looks like in tackling violence against women and girls has now been published.

Trauma Informed Policy and Practice

The Trauma Deep Dive Series concluded at the end of March and the [learning reports](#) from the first 2 events have now been published. An Action Learning programme with Trauma Champions from all 32 local authority areas is due to begin in late April, which will take the form of quarterly workshops with 1:1 support between sessions to implement actions locally to embed trauma informed policy and practice within and across organisations.

Fairer Scotland Duty (FSD)

The FSD draft guidance is currently out for consultation. We will publish a FSD and Protected Characteristics briefing on sex and gender, focussing mainly on inequality experienced by women, in early May. A data questionnaire has been circulated to all FSD leads to help identify what national data would be most useful to them.

Change Manager's Network

The next Council Change Manager's Network will take place on 29th April with a focus on "Approach to Recovery and Renewal (1 year review)".

PSIF

Work continues with various Councils on corporate self-assessments and reviewing how the IS can support Councils following their Best Value Assurance Report.

Organisational Development Local Authority Network

17 councils participated in the recent network meeting on 11th March. Colleagues shared updates about their current work and priorities, and there was a presentation from North Lanarkshire Council on their new Leadership Academy, with Q&A and general discussion.

Police Scotland and Local Government Leadership Programme

The new Collaborative Leadership Programme started in March in West Dunbartonshire Council, the first of three pilot sites. The programme is delivered by IS, Police Scotland and Collective Leadership for Scotland (Scottish Government) and aims to provide personal development for participants and to enhance local partnership working. Work starts in the other two pilot sites soon - Aberdeenshire Council later this month and West Lothian Council in May.

Digital Public Services

Myaccount

30 organisations are now using the myaccount service having secured Dumfries and Galloway Council as the 28th and latest Council (plus NHS and Young Scot). A further two Councils are onboarding, and a further three organisations are waiting to onboard. myaccount subscribers surpassed 1.268 million by 31 March 2021, a 29% year-on-year increase since 31 March 2020, and

a direct result of more Councils responding to strong demand from customers for digital service delivery in a lockdown environment. Other services such as [parentsportal.scot](#) and [GETYOURNEC.SCOT](#) are continuing to fuel the increase in myaccount's adoption and usage.

[GETYOURNEC.SCOT](#)

[GETYOURNEC.SCOT](#) is proving popular with Local Authorities and the public. Eighteen Local Authorities are now using the service and over 13,000 online applications have been received. Eligible members of the public can use [GETYOURNEC.SCOT](#) to apply online for a National Entitlement Card or a Young Scot National Entitlement Card. It will also be possible from 28 April 2021 to order a replacement card or renew expired cards online and Young Scots will be able to update their Young Scot Card photo.

[GETYOURNEC.SCOT](#) is offering customer choice and convenience, and it's helping remove demand from Local Authority offices in a lockdown environment. It's set to play an increasing role following Scottish Parliament approving [legislation](#) in January 2021 extending free bus travel to approximately 770,000 young people under the age of 19 residing in Scotland. Eligible young people will be able to access free bus travel scheme using their Young Scot Card. Free bus travel is expected to bring multiple benefits to young people, families and the environment. We are working with Transport Scotland and other delivery partners to operationalise the Under 19s Travel Scheme as early as practicable in 2021/22.

When we consulted with Local Authorities on the National Entitlement Card Scheme in February 2020, it revealed overwhelming support for an online channel being provided as the primary channel for applicants to apply for a card, report one as lost or stolen and to order a replacement. We responded by accelerating [GETYOURNEC.SCOT](#)'s development and launch.

An online survey by Transport Scotland in March 2021 of young people and parents of those aged 5-18 sought views on how people will apply for the under 19s Travel Scheme. The vast majority of the 2,000 respondents expressed a preference for applying through [GETYOURNEC.SCOT](#): 67.2% for young people and 64.1% for parents.

[Parentsportal.scot](#)

[Parentsportal.scot](#) is now available in 9 councils, with a further eight in the pipeline and discussions ongoing with other Councils expressing an interest. The service is now available to parents and guardians of children at over 25% of Scotland's local authority-run primary and secondary schools. New services are being developed within [Parentsportal.scot](#) to enable parents of primary school-age children to apply for a National Entitlement Card for young persons' free bus travel due to launch in 2021/22

[Bisaccount.scot](#)

We facilitated all Scotland's childcare settings in the private and not-for-profit sector obtain vital Scottish Government funding by providing a secure online application process through [bisaccount.scot](#). It helped them meet the extra costs incurred in complying with public health guidance in response to Covid-19 and, in the process, it expanded [bisaccount](#)'s adoption to all 32 Councils (for this purpose).

Data and Intelligence

One Scotland Gazetteer

Scottish street data and intelligence was recently launched in Ordnance Survey's (OS) flagship roads and routing product, OS Highways, on 1st March. This follows the successful collaboration between the IS, OS and the Geospatial Commission. We delivered a series of regional seminars for local authorities, focussing on improving return on investment for the use of address and street information and highlighting the importance of authoritative location data in the health sector. We have commenced a joint project with Public Health Scotland to link the gazetteer Unique Property Reference Number (UPRN) with the Community Health Index (CHI) number. This will facilitate improved data sharing between Local Government and the NHS and allow the NHS to make its data spatially referenced.

Local Government Covid-19 Dashboard

We continue to produce a weekly Local Government Covid-19 Dashboard tracking key indicators to allow councils to monitor their response to the pandemic, and the impact on communities. The dashboard improves co-ordination of existing data reporting, bolsters data quality, and provides rich additional insight through time-series and family group comparative analysis. We continue to evolve the set of indicators to reflect the changing circumstances facing LG and communities.

Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF)

We recently published the 2019/20 LGBF data and overview report. This represents 10 years of Local Government time-series data and will play an important role in revealing the impact of the pandemic on core Local Government services and in helping to understand how Local Government responds. The LGBF Board and SOLACE recently endorsed a strategic plan for 2021-2024. The new strategic plan will provide an opportunity to evolve the LGBF for the post Covid-19 world, with a strengthened focus on key areas such as poverty and inequality, mental health and wellbeing, new ways of working and digital transformation. We will also continue to strengthen links between the LGBF and the National Performance Framework to support Local Government in its efforts to demonstrate how it is supporting progress in these areas. We will build on improvements achieved in data and intelligence during this period, to ensure the LGBF provides relevant and timely intelligence for decision making around recovery and renewal priorities. We will also continue to build momentum in the use of the LGBF to transform and improve council services.

Community Planning & Community Planning Improvement Board (CPIB)

We produced a summary of learning on the role Community Planning is playing in responding to Covid-19 and in contributing to recovery efforts in local areas. We are supporting the CPIB to build on and promote evidence of the hugely positive role Community Planning has played, and continue to champion this agenda across the period ahead to ensure the gains achieved during this period are not lost post-Covid. The summary of learning has been used to produce a future vision for Community Planning. The CPIB will disseminate this widely with stakeholders, including with the new Cabinet Secretary for Local Government in Communities, following consideration by the CPIB in May. We are also refreshing the purpose and strategic plan for the CPIB to set out the focus of work for the next two years. This will focus on undertaking 'deep dives' on key recovery priorities to gain a deeper understanding of key issues, their impact on communities and the role Community Planning can play in addressing these. Topics proposed include: inequalities; mental health and wellbeing; low income and fair work; climate change and sustainability; economic recovery; promoting children and young people's life chances; and place.

Research

The 6th annual [Common Advice Performance Management Reporting Framework](#) report was published. The report covers the period from April 2019 to March 2020, prior to the first lockdown, and demonstrates the major impact that local authority advice services had even before the economic downturn as a result of the pandemic. The data shows that local authorities invested approximately £28.2m in money and welfare rights advice services in this financial year, with services supporting an increasing volume of clients, including a large proportion of individuals experiencing the greatest social and economic inequality. Every £1 invested in money and welfare rights advice provision by Local Authorities in Scotland provides financial gains of £13 to £14 for clients.

We have continued to update our [dashboard showing the economic impact of Covid-19](#) on local authority areas with the most recent data covering February 2021. The dashboard summarises available data on the current 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. We also plan to add furlough data at Parliamentary Constituency level, which will add an additional level of granularity in the available information.

The team has recently completed a survey covering the full Scottish workforce, which explored self-assessed levels of confidence, knowledge, skills and understanding of psychological trauma and trauma-informed practice. Results varied significantly between sectors and services, although high numbers of respondents agreed that their well-being was supported and that they were encouraged to undertake training in relation to trauma-informed practice. A full report will be published following the Scottish elections in May.

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.