



19 March 2020

Rt Hon Nicola Sturgeon MSP
First Minister
The Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Regent Road
EDINBURGH EH1 3DG

Dear First Minister

Social Care Planning and the Social Care Labour Force

Government has been clear that the present crisis requires coordinated national action to shield and care for our most vulnerable in the most challenging of times. As representatives of the social care workforce across both the public sector social and homecare functions but also private social and residential care, as well as of other workers who could perhaps be redeployed to support vital services, we consider that there is now a pressing and urgent need for coordination in the sector in an unprecedented way, and for a National Social Care Plan.

It is essential that private and public providers are brought together now to plan for the continued delivery of social care services and to coordinate the deployment of the whole, and potential, social care labour force. The Scottish Government should act immediately to establish, from existing public bodies, and representatives of the providers and the workforce, an authority which can take the decisions that will be necessary to ensure the continued delivery of social care and ultimately, if required, direct the labour force to where it is needed most. This will require effective regional as well as national planning and it must have the power to compel all providers to work to a common plan.

In return the labour force available for this task must also benefit from standardisation of minimum terms and that will need to mean an immediate uplift in pay for many of these workers. Everyone carrying on in care work, or joining the care labour force must feel that they will be secure throughout the period of this crisis, whilst other workers must have confidence that joining the national effort in the key services will also be their best chance at economic

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security. These workers must be valued, but they also must be safe. This new social care planning authority must also take responsibility for the provision and direction of PPE and, very importantly, testing, which is currently a key source of anxiety for our members. The labour force available to continue provision of social care must know that they will be as safe as they can possibly be and that they and their own families will be protected if they do fall ill.

I am copying this correspondence to the STUC and I will be advising our members in the sector of our proposals too. Much has been made by some in likening the national effort now needed to wartime, with similar levels of national planning required, and equally similar limitations on the freedoms of individuals and business. However, ministers today also have in their hands the same opportunity of those who during the Second World War took decisions which not only brought victory but reshaped the nation and laid the foundations for fairness and progress which we have come to take for granted, I believe that this is the scale of challenge and opportunity before us.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Gary Smith'.

GARY SMITH
GMB SCOTLAND SECRETARY

cc: Grahame Smith and Roz Foyer, STUC