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To:

Chief Officers of Third Sector Organisations

26 March 2020

Dear Chief Officers

As you will be aware, the impact of COVID-19 on the economy, business and third sector is a fast moving situation. Coronavirus is affecting all our daily lives including our workplaces and communities. We recognise the very challenging position that many employers and workers are now facing. We need a partnership, working in the national interest, to get through the next few months - a partnership that involves the public sector, third sector organisations, unions, businesses, and all workers and managers – supported by the advice of the Fair Work Convention. We are hugely appreciative of the many cases where this is already in place.

My fellow Ministers and I are determined that the Scottish Government, our agencies and other public bodies will set an example, and we are encouraging other employers to do the same. We recognise the important role the third sector plays in supporting our communities during this crisis, and recognise the challenges your organisation will be facing.

On 25 March, the STUC General Secretary Grahame Smith and I issued a joint statement outlining the shared commitment to fair work practices in Scotland, calling on employers, trades unions and workers to work together to ensure workers are treated fairly. The statement is available at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-fair-work-statement/>. I urge you to reflect on this and act in the spirit of the statement.

Our top priority must be protecting people's safety, health and wellbeing and in these exceptional times, adopting a Fair Work approach is more important than ever.

Partnership with workers and unions in managing the Coronavirus is crucial to making the right decisions for protecting workers and public safety, and for helping to maintain effective public services and keep people in employment. Scotland's success as an economy is built on a partnership between workers and employers and this approach will help us get through the current economic crisis.

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The health of the public and workers must come first. Health protection advice is updated regularly including on working from home where possible. It is there for a reason - to help save lives - please do follow it.

I am proud of Scotland's reputation as a leader on Fair Work and remain committed to Scotland becoming a Fair Work nation. The Scottish Government will continue to lead the way in promoting best practice in fair work and in dealing fairly with employers.

The national endeavour to get us through this health crisis will require an unprecedented economic and social response shared collectively, deliberately and with purpose - by business, third sector, government, the wider public sector and the public.

I do appreciate that these are challenging circumstances and Ministers recognise the collective work being undertaken across the third sector to respond to this situation.

The Scottish Government has endeavoured to respond quickly to provide additional support to the sector at this time. Funding will be made available to local authorities, charities, businesses and community groups and will be designed to be flexible to enable them to respond swiftly to meet local needs for people impacted by the Coronavirus crisis. 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;
- a £40 million Supporting Communities Fund to support the community efforts at a local level which will be vital;
- £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

The Third Sector Resilience Fund is a £20m emergency fund for charities, community groups, social enterprises and voluntary organisations working in Scotland. The fund will support organisations that already deliver services and products but find themselves in financial difficulties directly as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. Applications for this Fund opened on 25th March; more information can be found at <https://scvo.org/support/coronavirus/funding/for-organisations/third-sector-resilience-fund/>

Should you require further information about the other funds, please contact: SocialJusticeMailbox@gov.scot.

Finally, I want to thank you and your organisation for all you are doing at this testing time.

*Kind regards
Fiona Hyslop*

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