

Sally Loudon
COSLA Chief Executive
Verity House
19 Haymarket Yards
Edinburgh
EH12 5BH

7 September 22

Dear Ms Loudon

The Setting the Bar report published in June outlined numerous serious challenges facing social workers in Scotland. These include:

- 82% have experienced significant stress because of work and 57% say their mental health has got worse.
- 36% say that cannot do their job to the standard they would like to.
- 46% have raised concerns about a child where they felt that appropriate action was not taken.
- 57% believe they have put their own health at risk as a result of working in the pandemic and 39% said they had been unable to reach the most vulnerable people.
- 68% expect to see an increase in referrals to social services and required assessments in the next year and 50% describing their current caseload as 'not at all' manageable.
- 43% stated that they are considering leaving social work based on their experiences during the pandemic.

The report found that most problems stem from lack of workforce capacity and resource. Covid-19 and the cost-of-living crisis are increasing demand on services further. This has resulted in a deflated profession that is struggling to provide the necessary levels of care and support to people who need to use services.

Several parliamentary questions have been submitted to Scottish Ministers on this issue. The response we have received from the government states:

“Social workers are primarily employed by local authorities. It is the responsibility of local authorities to plan their workforce and ensure they have the appropriate levels of staff in place to provide social services for their residents. To aid with this, the Scottish Government provided additional funding of £25m, announced as part of the 2022-23 Budget, to relieve pressure on the adult social care sector to ensure care can be delivered safely to those who need it. As agreed by COSLA Leaders, £22m of funding was distributed based on grant aided expenditure for adult social work for

2022-23. It will be used to employ additional social workers or associated social work assistants or support staff- with the clear purpose of adding to the capacity of the social work workforce to respond to the current pressures.”

I would welcome clarification from COSLA around how the £22m funding allocated by the Scottish Government is being spent by local authorities to increase staffing capacity. Particularly, what impact is being made by the funding and in which local authority areas.

Additionally, our members have expressed concern to us about the mileage rate social workers can claim. You will be aware most local authorities set the rate at the maximum non-taxable allowance of 45p per mile. However, with cost of fuel rising, this is proving inadequate to cover the travel expenditure necessary for social workers to do their jobs.

Our members would like to know if COSLA is working with local authorities to lift the mileage allowance rate to take account of rising fuel costs.

If you or colleagues at COSLA would like a discussion on the issues in this letter, please get in contact with me. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

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