

ANNEX

RECOMMENDATION	SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT RESPONSE
Access to food	
<p>In its Guidance to local authorities the Scottish Government sets out guiding principles on financial support. The Committee has received evidence that cash based approaches should be prioritised to respect people’s dignity, but also to help take account of factors such as lack of transport and rurality. The Committee asks the Scottish Government to strengthen its guidance to address these concerns. (Para. 78)</p>	<p>We welcome the Committee’s acknowledgment of the substantial investment made in tackling food insecurity since the onset of the pandemic, which now sits at over £140 million, and their recognition of our cash-first and dignified approach as further articulated in the Scottish Government’s position statement of food insecurity and poverty.</p> <p>In addition to this investment, targeted specifically at promoting food security, we have also committed £40 million of funding for local authorities to tackle financial insecurity. This funding was allocated to local authorities in December 2020 and encourages a cash first approach – including the allocation of discretionary payments, top-ups to existing funds such as the Scottish Welfare Fund, and improving access to welfare rights advice. Guidance on this funding is published here.</p> <p>The Scottish Government has provided a strong steer in favour of cash first approaches through Guidance whilst acknowledging that local authorities and other local partners require flexibility and discretion to best respond to whole household needs. For example, a cash first response may not be the most appropriate form of support for those who have unmanageable debt or for people who are experiencing barriers to food and other essentials for reasons other than income, such as difficulties getting to shops or placing online orders – barriers that are known to disproportionately affect older and disabled people. This is recognised in the latest iteration of guidance on tackling financial insecurity. By providing a strong steer in favour of cash with flexibility, local support has been adapted to best meet the variety of needs in their area.</p>

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<p>It is important to ensure food provided in an emergency is suitable and meets people's needs as far as is practical, including their cultural needs. The Committee asks what monitoring the Scottish Government is undertaking to ensure the emergency provision of food meets people's needs. (Para. 79)</p>	<p>The guiding principles within the national guidance that accompanied the allocation of funding to financial insecurity highlighted the importance of appropriate food provision. This was also recognised in the equality analysis of who is at risk.</p> <p>Recognising the particular cultural and religious needs of some groups in relation to food, several third sector organisations were provided with funding to support food provision for those who may have struggled to access appropriate food through mainstream routes during the pandemic. This included support to organisations reaching Jewish and Muslim communities during Passover and Ramadan. Funding was also provided to a range of local community groups in the Minority Ethnic Older People's Network to provide culturally appropriate food and support to vulnerable minority ethnic communities across Scotland.</p> <p>Monitoring was light-touch in recognition of the crisis response context. Officials met regularly with local authorities and third sector representatives to understand pressures, collectively problem solve and improve practice. By strongly encouraging income based responses people were able to make their own choices about the food that they accessed.</p> <p>We are no longer advising people on the highest risk list (previously referred to as the shielding list) who are at highest clinical risk from COVID-19, to stop going to shops, and there are now a wide range of ways to shop. We have offered everyone on the highest risk list priority supermarket delivery slots. We have also provided information about the measures supermarkets have put in place to make them safer for those at a clinically highest or higher risk, including older people or disabled people, as well as information on how to shop more safely through a wide range of options such as home delivery, click and collect, phone ordering, and gift cards so others can do the shopping. We have provided local authorities with £30 million flexible funding to strengthen their local response to anyone without support who needs help, including to access food. This is in addition to help for those who need financial help to access food. We have set up the free National Assistance Helpline to access this support and it is for local authorities to deliver this to meet local needs.</p>

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<p>The Committee notes the British Red Cross' vulnerability mapping which it has used to identify those most at risk [of food insecurity]. We ask the Scottish Government, in conjunction with its partners, what work has been undertaken to identify high risk groups. (Para. 81)</p>	<p>The Scottish Government has drawn on a range of evidence to identify groups that are likely to be most at risk and in what ways. The range of impacts identified, including food insecurity, are summarised in the COVID-19 Health and Social Impact Assessment and the COVID-19 Impact on Equality Research. The Scottish Government has also commissioned independent research to understand the impact of the pandemic on groups who have been disproportionately affected. This includes a nationally representative survey to identify groups facing particular hardship during the pandemic, and qualitative follow-up research with groups including women, younger people, disabled people and those living in the most deprived areas. Based on the available evidence, groups likely to be most at risk of food insecurity were identified in our Guidance to local authorities, including: younger people, disabled people, lone parents, minority ethnic households, people living in households with children, larger families, people living in households on low incomes, and people living in the most deprived areas. The Guidance outlines the possible needs of each group and suggests ways in which support can be tailored, drawing on good practice models and encouraging an intersectional approach.</p> <p>At the start of the pandemic the four UK nations' Chief Medical Officers identified six categories of people at highest risk of severe illness from Covid-19. This was known as the Shielding List. An additional 7th category made provision for additions to be made to the shielding list on the advice of a GP or clinician. Following the review of scientific evidence, further conditions have been included on the list, within the existing seven groups. As new clinical evidence emerges we continue to assess and refine the highest risk list criteria where appropriate. Following the review of scientific evidence from QCovid, UK CMOs recommended the addition of people with chronic kidney disease (CKD) stage 5 and adults with Down's Syndrome to the list. More recently, people with severe liver cirrhosis were added. These people were advised to follow shielding guidance and were offered additional advice and practical and practical support to access food and shop safely. We continue to maintain this list, now referred to as the highest risk list, and continue to provide advice and practical support to those on it. Full details of who is included on the list, and how people in each groups have been identified can be found on the on the Scottish Government website: Highest risk classification.</p>

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<p>It is understood from the Coronavirus (COVID-19): Food Fund guidance for local authorities that monitoring information is being requested monthly. We ask the Scottish Government what use is being made of this information and whether it is being used to target high risk groups, for example, those with No Recourse to Public Funds in Scotland. (Para. 82)</p>	<p>From April to September 2020, the Scottish Government gathered monthly monitoring data from local authorities on their delivery of activities supported by the Food Fund and the Food & Other Essentials Grant. Monthly monitoring data included a description of activities in place to meet groups identified as being most at risk, including those with protected characteristics, and a summary of any barriers faced in reaching these groups. This allowed the Scottish Government to identify the needs of high risk groups and work with local authorities and other stakeholder organisations to fill any gaps in available provision.</p> <p>From September 2020, in recognition of the ongoing pressure on local authorities to respond to needs across a number of funds, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and COSLA Resources Spokesperson agreed to streamlined monitoring and reporting processes in November 2020. Local authorities are not required to provide formal monitoring returns at this time. An engagement programme to support knowledge exchange and practice development has continued throughout the pandemic, which has included discussion on how to best support groups that are at higher risk.</p> <p>In December 2020, the Scottish Government published Guidance to local authorities that outlines possible needs by at risk groups and provides examples of ways in which local authorities were effectively tailoring support to meeting the needs of these groups, based on information gathered through monthly monitoring reports gathered from July to September. This included suggestions on supporting Gypsy/Travellers and people with no recourse to public funds. In addition, funding has been provided to the British Red Cross to support their Hardship Fund, providing crisis grants to people facing destitution during the pandemic, including those with no recourse to public funds.</p>

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Social care	
<p>The Committee welcomes the intention to hold a public inquiry into care homes. The inquiry should take a human rights-based approach and we ask the Scottish Government to ensure the inquiry specifically gives consideration as to whether human rights standards and principles have been met. (Para. 119)</p>	<p>The Scottish Government is committed to a Scottish public inquiry, including into what has happened in care homes, that will begin work this year and consider matters relating to Scotland's handling of the pandemic and will learn lessons for future pandemics. The Scottish Government expects the inquiry to take a human rights based approach. We will be engaging with stakeholders in Scotland in order to aid us in developing the terms of reference for the inquiry. We are also considering how the Scottish inquiry will interact with the inquiry announced by the UK Government.</p>
<p>The Committee asks the Scottish Government and COSLA what progress has been made in relation to the 24 recommendations made in the Scottish Human Rights Commission's Social Care and Human Rights: Impact Monitoring Report. (Para. 131)</p>	<p>A human rights based approach will be central to the reform of social care and establishment of a National Care Service. The Scottish Government is committed to engaging extensively with people and organisations across Scotland as we build a better system. The consultation on the legislation for a National Care Service which will be published soon, will be an opportunity to hear a wide range of views.</p> <p>We will engage with the Equality and Human Rights Commission as we seek to put human rights at the centre of social care delivery and listen carefully to their views. The organisation made a helpful contribution to the Independent Review of Adult Social Care, through its submission and its reports on the impact of the pandemic on social care.</p> <p>The COVID-19 crisis has demanded that we act resolutely to protect the right to health – and, above all, the right to life – whilst ensuring that impacts on other rights are no more than is necessary and proportionate in order to deal with the COVID-19 threat. We have required, throughout the pandemic to respond appropriately as set out in our Strategic Framework - the Coronavirus (COVID-19): Strategic Framework update - February 2021 - gov.scot (www.gov.scot).</p> <p>We recognise that the pandemic has been incredibly difficult for both those receiving and providing adult social care. That is why the Scottish Government have been clear throughout the pandemic that it is critical that social care support is maintained as far as possible, recognising the</p>

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safety, dignity and human rights of people who already receive support, and that of their unpaid carers, is of huge importance.

Building on lessons learned during this pandemic so far the Scottish Government has put in place multiple measures across the adult social care sector to support the sector during this challenging time.

Winter Plan

The Scottish Government published the first Social Care Winter Preparedness Plan on 3 November 2020 which is rooted in learning gathered from the pandemic to date. It seeks to offer maximum protection for those who use social care support, whether within residential, community settings and people's own homes, and to those who provide that care, including unpaid carers.

We are taking forward all the recommendations in November's report Coronavirus (COVID-19): care home outbreaks - root cause analysis, commissioned by this Government, on outbreaks in care homes. This report identified a range of actions to support the care home sector in preventing COVID outbreaks.

Workforce planning

We are hugely grateful for the efforts over the last year of the many social care workers across Scotland as they have risen to the challenge of responding to the pandemic. We have a longstanding commitment to Fair Work principles for the sector, and in line with the findings of the Independent Review of Adult Social Care which was published in February 2021 we have started to implement its key recommendations.

Work through the Fair Work in Social Care Implementation Group has now developed a set of recommendations that will continue to improve and encourage Fair Work practice in the sector, including improved Terms and Conditions, more opportunities for local engagement and the ongoing commitment to ensure all direct care staff receive at least the Real Living Wage without delay. The Scottish Government continues to work in partnership with sector stakeholders to progress this work.

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By implementing these recommendations we hope that the social care workforce will receive better terms and conditions, improved training and development opportunities, better recognition and representation, and more rewarding roles.

PPE

The Scottish Government has worked with NHS NSS, the social care sector and HSCPs to ensure providers have access to PPE throughout the pandemic. Social care providers can currently claim back PPE costs over and above their usual amount. They can also access local PPE Hubs for emergency PPE supply if their existing supply routes fail. This support is available to social care providers across the sector, including unpaid carers and personal assistants. The Scottish Government has confirmed that the provision of PPE via the PPE Hubs should remain in place until end March 2022, with the current model to remain in place until end September 2021. Discussions are underway with the sector to ensure that arrangements will be in place so that social care providers will continue to have full access to PPE from October onwards.

Testing

It is crucial that social care workers are able to access testing when needed, with results provided in a timely manner.

As set out in our [Testing Strategy](#), we recognise that regular testing of people who do not have symptoms has a role to play in protecting the vulnerable and preventing outbreaks in high risk settings. That is why we have in place a comprehensive programme of asymptomatic staff testing in our care homes and across social care.

Legislative powers

The Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020 and the Coronavirus (Scotland) (No.2) Act 2020 were introduced to respond to the emergency pandemic and to protect lives. The potential impacts on equality and human rights were assessed during the development of the legislation, taking into account stakeholder views, and are summarised in the published Policy Memorandums accompanying the Bills. There is regular reporting to the Scottish Parliament on the use of the powers contained within the Coronavirus Act 2020, Coronavirus (Scotland) Act 2020 and Coronavirus (Scotland) (No.2) Act 2020. In case it is helpful please find links to the impact

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	<p>assessments: www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-scotland-bill-equality-impact-assessment/ and www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-scotland-no-2-bill-equality-impact-assessment/.</p>
<p>The Committee reiterates the importance of a human rights and equality approach to social care and asks when the Scottish Government will respond to the independent review. Also, the Committee asks the Scottish Government how the findings from the inquiry into care homes will be taken into account when developing its approach to adult care services, particularly as there has been a gap between the policy intention and people's experiences of social care. (Para. 149)</p>	<p>As noted above, the Independent Review of Adult Social Care was published in February 2021.</p> <p>The Review found many aspects of our adult social care system that are worthy of celebration and the review brings with it an important opportunity to be bold in reshaping how social care is planned, funded and delivered - changing the narrative of social care and putting human rights at its' heart. It is up to us to ensure a social care system that consistently delivers high quality services across Scotland – a system that is founded in fairness, equality, and human rights, and that puts lived experience at the heart of its redesign and delivery.</p> <p>The report makes 53 recommendations that cover the creation of a National Care Service; establishing a human rights approach to social care; better support for and representation of unpaid carers; the introduction of a National Improvement Programme; changes to commissioning and procurement practices; delivering Fair Work; and greater investment.</p> <p>Ministers accepted the recommendations in the review report. The Scottish Government made a commitment to publish the legislation consultation within its first 100 days in office to ensure we make an early start on improving our system of social care in Scotland.</p> <p>The consultation, which will be open and broad, will run until late October. In addition, we are arranging a number of consultation events to lead discussion with individuals throughout late August, September and October</p> <p>A social covenant steering group has been established, comprised of people with experience of social care to help develop the values and principles which will underpin how we deliver social care.</p>

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<p>Social isolation</p> <p>Embedding and delivering upon the Scottish Government’s national strategy to tackle loneliness “A Connected Scotland” has become more important than ever. The Committee recommends the Scottish Government reviews its strategy prior to 2022 to reflect the significant impact of COVID-19 on social isolation and loneliness. (Para. 160)</p>	<p>The Scottish Government made a commitment to “Start work to develop new five-year social isolation and loneliness plan backed by £10m over 5 years focused on reconnecting people” in the first 100 days of Parliament.</p> <p>The Minister for Equalities and Older People met with the Social Isolation and Loneliness National Implementation Group, and are in the process of developing a five year plan with the National Implementation Group for Social Isolation and Loneliness. We will invest £10 million in total to tackle Social isolation and Loneliness across this parliament.</p> <p>Our first step was taken on 29 July 2021 when we announced almost £1 million (£993,198) of funding to organisations tackling Social Isolation and Loneliness. This ‘Summer Fund’ is a continuation of the Winter Fund established to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on groups most likely to be impacted by Social Isolation and Loneliness.</p> <p>This is the first part of the £10 million funding for Social Isolation and Loneliness as promised in the 100 days commitment, and 5 year funding plan committed to in the Manifesto.</p>

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<p>Older people</p> <p>The Committee asks the Scottish Government what plans it has put in place to support older workers during the pandemic and in planning for the recovery period. (Para. 261)</p>	<p>The Scottish Government ran an in-house Workplace Equality Fund over January to March 2021. The fund aims to address labour market barriers for certain priority groups, including the over 50s workforce. The projects funded involved collaborations between charities and private business/public bodies. One such project involved Age Scotland providing unconscious bias training to highlight the issues facing the over 50s workforce. In total we funded 12 projects with a collective funding total of over £300,000. Following on from the short in-house model, officials are currently developing a longer term Workplace Equality Fund 2021-2024 that will run over an initial period of 3 years. Again, the fund will seek project applications that seek to remove labour market barriers for the over 50s workforce.</p> <p>This work is taken forward within the context of our Fair Work policy, which encourages employers to go beyond statutory requirements and to promote fair working practices for all workers. Such practices include payment of the real living wage to better support workers, including the over 50s workforce, and promotion of diverse and inclusive workplaces by challenging the barriers experienced by those disadvantaged in the labour market, such as disabled people, women, minority ethnic people and the over 50s workforce.</p> <p>Adopting a Fair Work approach is more important than ever. It sits at the heart of our ambition to move toward a wellbeing economy and is central to supporting economic recovery and renewal. This is why the former Cabinet Secretary for Economy issued a joint statement with the STUC, COSLA, SCVO, the IoD and SCDI outlining the shared commitment to Fair Work in Scotland. Central to our Fair Work approach is the expectation that employers, trades unions and workers work together to ensure workers are treated fairly and their concerns are taken seriously.</p> <p>While employment law remains reserved to the UK Government, we will use our Fair Work policy to promote fairer work practices across the labour market in Scotland.</p> <p>We continue to work with partners including Age Scotland, Business in the Community and Edinburgh University, to promote good practice to employers.</p>

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<p>Digital inclusion</p> <p>Asylum seekers and refugees are in a particularly vulnerable situation during the pandemic. The Committee recommends the Scottish Government widen its ‘vulnerability’ criteria on projects and funds tackling digital exclusion, to address barriers for people seeking asylum who need digital resources to stay connected, access support and continue education. (Para. 181)</p>	<p>Through the Connecting Scotland Programme, the Scottish Refugee Council received an ‘exceptional’ award in Phase 1, providing individuals with access to a device, internet connection and data, and training and support to be online for up to a year. The programme provided 100 laptops and 115 MiFi devices to support refugees and asylum seekers, acknowledging the impact of digital exclusion on this group including asylum seeking children.</p>
<p>The Committee asks the Scottish Government for an update on the number of devices provided since October 2020 and what groups they have been provided to. (Para. 179)</p>	<p>To date, the Connecting Scotland programme has delivered over 36,000 devices and is one of the most comprehensive national programmes aimed tackling digital exclusion in the world, unmatched elsewhere in the UK. A full list of successful projects in each of the previous phases is available here. A third phase is currently underway to deliver the target of reaching 60,000 users in total by end of December 2021.</p>
<p>Evidence to the Committee suggests there are still issues with connectivity, for example, with children and young people accessing online schooling in rural areas with poor broadband connection. The Committee asks the Scottish Government what guidance is in place for local authorities to address this situation. (Para. 180)</p>	<p>The Scottish Government recognises the ever-increasing importance of good quality digital connectivity in all aspects of our lives, and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have only served to reinforce that. This is why we made our commitment to extend superfast broadband access to 100% of premises in Scotland by the end of 2021, regardless of remoteness or rurality. The Reaching 100% (R100) programme will extend a future-proofed, accessible fibre network into remote rural areas, providing an essential platform for delivering superfast broadband for all and reflecting our view that public investment should be focused on rural Scotland. Our 100% commitment will be delivered through three strands of activity - the £600 million R100 contracts (North, Central and South), our Scottish Broadband Voucher Scheme (SBVS) and commercial coverage. People can check what R100 means for them by visiting our website: www.scotlandsuperfast.com.</p>

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Visual impairment and sight loss	
<p>The Committee asks the Scottish Government to write to COSLA to reinforce to local authorities that any scheme to introduce cycle lanes must be subject to an impact assessment, which should include consultation with Scottish Access Panel Network, local disability groups and with blind and partially sighted people. (Para. 219)</p>	<p>Transport Scotland recognise that there have been issues with consultation during the delivery of the temporary Spaces for People programme that allowed local authorities to quickly implement temporary infrastructure to facilitate physical distancing.</p> <p>These schemes were delivered by local authorities using a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order that allows for quick road changes without consultation to meet the emergency nature of the pandemic. No new schemes are now being delivered through Spaces for People.</p> <p>Transport Scotland also funds permanent active travel infrastructure through the Places for Everyone fund. We understand that Equality Impact Assessments are undertaken as a matter of course by local authorities for these schemes. We will write to COSLA to recommend that these are always undertaken as best practice, to ensure that a wide group of stakeholders as noted is engaged, and to jointly learn from the challenges that all have faced delivering the temporary infrastructure schemes.</p>

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<p>The Committee asks the Scottish Government what actions it has taken to assist blind and partially sighted people to assist them with social distancing, access to supermarkets and whether it has given consideration to running campaigns around disability and hidden disabilities. (Para. 227)</p>	<p>We enhanced the Scottish Government guidance on ‘support for people’ (Coronavirus (COVID-19) protection levels: what you can do - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)) to include advice on how to help support others – reminding people that some people may find physical distancing rules harder to follow than others, for example those with sight loss, autism, learning disabilities and dementia or other communication or mobility needs. The guidance asks that people help by being considerate and by keeping their distance – for example, if they see someone with a guide dog, long cane or with mobility difficulties, they can help them by making sure they keep 2 metres away and by being friendly and offering help – for example, by letting someone with sight loss know where a shopping queue starts or if there is a safer place to cross a road. We also worked with a wide range of third sector partners to produce cross sectorial guidance on supporting people with a sensory impairment – https://www.alliance-scotland.org.uk/blog/news/sensory-guidance-for-covid-19-lockdown/.</p> <p>Working with Disabled People’s Organisations to understand the problems some disabled people were experiencing, the Scottish Government produced guidance on guiding Partially Sighted and Blind People in the pandemic (Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance for those providing guide support). Information was also passed on to retailers through the Minister led retail working group.</p> <p>We launched our first national Autism Awareness campaign in October 2020 in response to our consultation on the Scottish strategy for Autism, which highlighted the stigma and discrimination that autistic people face. The Different Minds. One Scotland. campaign was developed with autistic people, and runs in conjunction with funded projects across Scotland. This is the first of a multi-stage campaign.</p>

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Women	
<p>The Committee recommends the Scottish Government carries out a detailed cumulative impact assessment of the measures taken to mitigate the pandemic and also in relation to its recovery planning to ensure women are not further impacted disproportionately. (Para. 299)</p>	<p>The Scottish Government recognises that the necessary steps taken to mitigate the pandemic and prevent transmission of the virus have had a disproportionate impact on women and that our recovery plans must take this into account to ensure that impacts on women are effectively addressed and not entrenched further.</p> <p>The Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions and Requirements) (Local Levels) (Scotland) Regulations 2020, and subsequent amending regulations, have been accompanied by impact assessments for the specific policies contained in each instrument.</p> <p>The Scottish Government has prepared a series of impact assessments to accompany the recent amending regulations which also include a cumulative assessment of the impact of the Levels measures. These can be found at the following link: The Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions and Requirements) (Local Levels) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 21) Regulations 2021 (legislation.gov.uk)</p>

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<p>Migrants, refugees and asylum seekers</p> <p>Asylum seekers and people with No Recourse to Public Funds are one of the most marginalised groups in Scotland. The Committee recommends the Scottish Government produces dedicated Public Health Scotland guidance on refugees and asylum seekers and migrant rights in the Covid-19 recovery phase. (Para. 334) In follow up to the Committee’s recommendation in its report, Hidden Lives - New Beginnings: Destitution, asylum and insecure immigration status in Scotland, we ask Scottish Ministers and COSLA to urgently publish and fund the forthcoming Anti-Destitution Strategy to prevent and mitigate the risk and reality of homelessness and marginalisation for those subject to No Recourse to Public Funds. (Para. 335)</p>	<p><i>Ending Destitution Together</i> – referred to as the ‘anti-destitution strategy’ during development – was published on 24 March. <i>Ending Destitution Together</i> was developed jointly by the Scottish Government and COSLA and sets out initial actions to work toward a vision for Scotland where “no one is forced into destitution and everyone has their human rights protected, regardless of their immigration status.”</p> <p>This includes specific actions to improve access to primary health services, working with Public Health Scotland and other partners; and access to mental health services, including informing forthcoming work on mental health service renewal. We will also review the Scottish guidance on Migrants’ Rights and Entitlements, which was published jointly with COSLA in 2019, and consider whether any additional content is needed, including in relation to health.</p> <p>The Scottish Government is clear that everyone who is resident in Scotland is entitled to access healthcare. The Charter of Patient Rights and Responsibilities summarises what people are entitled to when using NHS services and receiving NHS care. NHS Inform includes information on healthcare for overseas visitors (i.e. visa holders) and refugees and asylum seekers.</p> <p>The Scottish Government launched Health Access Cards in 2019 to support people to register with a GP, understand their rights to healthcare and access key health information. Health Access Cards were developed following engagement with refugees, people seeking asylum, Gypsy/Travellers and people experiencing homelessness.</p> <p>The Scottish Government is investing £500,000 to support delivery of the actions in the first year of the <i>Ending Destitution Together</i> strategy. As the strategy sets out, a wide range of Scottish Government programmes, public services, local authority statutory support and third sector projects already deliver support that is accessible for people subject to No Resource to Public Funds.</p>

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<p>Showpeople</p> <p>The Committee asks the Scottish Government to take dedicated action to support Showpeople during COVID-19 to ensure their heritage and culture is protected for the future. (Para. 345)</p>	<p>The Scottish Government announced £185 million for further Covid-19 business support on 9 December 2020 including £1.5 million for the Travelling Showpeople fund. The fund aimed to provide grant support to travelling showpeople who had been unable to operate due to the pandemic.</p> <p>The fund was not designed to compensate for all lost income, but to provide financial aid to those who had been unable to obtain other Covid-related grant support from Government schemes except from the Furlough Scheme or self-employment income support. This approach was consistent with other Scottish Government support funds such as the Creative, Tourism and Hospitality Enterprises Hardship Fund. Support was available to travelling showpeople who had a registered address in Scotland and who normally earned at least 50% of their annual income through their work attending established funfairs. Applications were managed through the CORRA Foundation and closed on 22 January 2021. 150 businesses were supported with grants of £10k.</p> <p>We are currently reviewing the fund and considering if an extension may be required for the period to June 2021 as current regulations state funfairs may not take place until Level 1 on the strategic framework.</p>

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RECOMMENDATION	SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT RESPONSE
<p>Black and minority ethnic people</p> <p>It is noted that the Scottish Government's response does not completely align with the Expert Reference Group on COVID-19 and Ethnicity: Recommendations to Scottish Government, but there is some overlap. The Committee asks the Scottish Government what work is being undertaken to pick up the gaps in approach. (Para. 321)</p>	<p>The Expert Reference Group on COVID-19 and Ethnicity provided the Scottish Government with a series of recommendations on how to respond to the pandemic in ways which better served minority ethnic communities. We accepted these recommendations in November 2020, noting that this response was not the final word.</p> <p>The ERG subsequently requested that the Scottish Government provide a timeline for implementing their recommendations. This timeline was shared with the ERG in January 2021. As of December 2020, the implementation of 25 of the 31 recommendations had begun, and the remaining 6 were being planned.</p> <p>A further update on implementation progress was requested in July 2021. At the time of writing, 3 of the 31 actions are complete and work is ongoing to progress the remaining actions.</p> <p>Following the conclusion of the Race Equality Action Plan (REAP) 2017-20, we will publish and implement an 18-month Immediate Priorities Plan to maintain the momentum of our race equality work, alongside planning for further long-term work. This 18-month plan is based on the ongoing work necessary to implement the ERG recommendations, and looks to capture ongoing race equality work across government. It prioritises addressing any gaps between the current approach and the recommendations of the ERG.</p> <p>We intend to publish this plan at the end of August. It was discussed at the final meeting of the Expert Reference Group on Ethnicity and COVID-19 on 4 August. We will also consult with race equality organisations prior to final publication.</p>

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RECOMMENDATION	SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT RESPONSE
<p>Mental health – children and young people</p> <p>The Committee asks for assurances for the Scottish Youth Parliament’s Equalities and Human Rights Committee that the Scottish Government’s new plan will help ensure mental health and wellbeing remains at the heart of the Scottish Government’s response to coronavirus, and associated funding will deliver increased availability of mental health support and address any backlog of support to children and young people. (Para. 387)</p>	<p>Mental Health Transition and Recovery Plan</p> <p>On 8 October 2020 we published Scotland’s Mental Health Transition and Recovery Plan (T&R Plan) which outlines the Scottish Government’s response to the mental health effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The plan is comprehensive, containing over 100 actions and aiming to promote good mental health and wellbeing at a whole population level. The plan also outlines targeted actions for population groups who have been impacted the most by the pandemic, including children, young people and families. For example, the plan includes action to: improve Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) through the implementation of the CAMHS Services Specification and Standards; improve diagnosis and support for children and young people who have neurodevelopmental needs through the publication of the National Neurodevelopmental Standards and Principles of Care; and to increase community support services available to children and young people to support their mental health and wellbeing.</p> <p>Specific activities being supported through the Mental Health T&R plan include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work delivered in July 2021, in collaboration with the Mental Health in Schools Working Group, providing a new mental health training and learning resource available to all school staff. This resource includes learning for school staff to respond to the impact of Covid-19 on children and young people's mental wellbeing. • Investment in Educational Psychology services available in all local authorities including the delivery of access to a counselling service in all schools, delivered in 2020. • Resources being developed to be used across the Children and Families Workforce which will be delivered by autumn 2021. Ensuring support is available for children and young people's mental health and wellbeing in all sectors of the children and families workforce (including the third sector, social services etc.). • Ongoing work to ensure that university and college students have access to the right mental health support. This work is building on our existing investments such as our delivery of funding to provide 80 additional counsellors in colleges and universities, and the refocusing of the National Union of Students' Think Positive project to respond to the student Covid-19 mental health need.

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Recovery and Renewal Fund

In February 2021 we announced an additional £120 million for a Mental Health Recovery and Renewal Fund (MHR&R), which is the single largest investment in mental health in the history of devolution. This has resulted in mental health budgets doubling on the previous year. This MHR&R fund will promote the conditions for good mental health and wellbeing at population level by supporting the implementation of the Transition and Recovery Plan.

From this Recovery and Renewal Fund, dedicated resource has been allocated to support children and young people's mental health through prioritising work across a range of mental health needs, with particular focus on community support, improving specialist services, addressing long CAMHS waiting times and clearing waiting list backlogs.

Packages of support for children and young people provided through the MHR&R fund include:

- Support for the [Young Scot Aye Feel Hub](#) providing children and young people with a range of information and resources covering a number of topic which affect their mental health and wellbeing.
- Dedicated work being undertaken to tackle eating disorders and provide additional support on an issue which disproportionately affects young people and in particular young women and girls.
- Investment in the piloting of new services and approaches to early intervention in psychosis which disproportionately affects young people under the age of 25.
- Work undertaken with the Scottish Youth Parliament to provide advice and support to young people through the [mind yer time](#) resource, on the use of digital technology and the impact of screen time on their health and mental wellbeing.
- We will continue to work with and support local authorities to deliver new and enhanced community mental health and wellbeing services for children and young people across all 32 local authorities in 2021.

Mental Health Equality and Human Rights Forum

The Mental Health Equality and Human Rights Forum was established to ensure focus on equalities and Human Rights across the mental health portfolio. Stakeholders representing

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	<p>protected characteristics listed in the Equality Act 2010 are involved in the forum. This ensures mental health policy has a considered equality and human rights approach and the forum provides a space for knowledge exchange and engagement across protected characteristics. The Scottish Youth Parliament and Intercultural Youth Scotland are members on the Forum representing young people's interests.</p>
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RECOMMENDATION	SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT RESPONSE
<p>LGBTI</p> <p>The Committee asks the Scottish Government to undertake work to establish the impact of the pandemic on Scotland’s LGBT community. (Para. 412)</p>	<p>We are currently reviewing the evidence that is available on the impact of the pandemic on Scotland’s LGBTI community and are continuing to work closely with key Stakeholders in this area. Current available evidence suggests that the COVID-19 pandemic, and the response to it, has disproportionately affected certain groups of LGBTI people such as such as older LGBTI people, disabled LGBTI people and LGBTI asylum seekers and refugees.</p> <p>Evidence also suggests that the pandemic has made it difficult for LGBTI people to access healthcare for issues not related to COVID-19. This includes difficulty accessing gender identity, sexual health, and mental health services. In addition to this, we are aware that LGBTI people are likely to have felt isolated during the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes, in particular, LGBTI people living outside of cities in Scotland. Without community celebration, for example Pride events, and physical contact with others within the LGBTI community, many have felt more isolated than they had prior to COVID-19.</p> <p>National Rural Mental Health Forum – Marginalised Rural Communities Report</p> <p>During October to December 2020, Support in Mind Scotland and the National Rural Mental Health Forum undertook research for the Scottish Rural Network to explore and evidence the impact of Covid-19 on marginalised rural communities throughout Scotland. The research team identified three target groups to explore and build an evidence base around, comprising those who self-identify in rural Scotland as one or more of the following: LGBT+; young carers; and refugee and asylum seekers. The findings highlight the key issues that marginalised rural communities face in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic on a day-to-day basis and provide a voice for those whose mental health and wellbeing has been negatively impacted.</p> <p>Those who chose not to self-select with one of the three target categories (LGBT+, young carers, refugees and asylum seekers) but nonetheless took part in the survey indicated that long-standing rural challenges have had an impact on their mental health and wellbeing during Covid-19. It is interesting to note that, for this subsample, issues included more ‘macro’, structural rural issues, such as digital connectivity, physical infrastructure, services and financial/economic factors, as well</p>

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	<p>as some of the more community-based, local themes of isolation and community, stigma, discrimination and awareness.</p> <p>Findings from those who self-identified as LGBT+, Refugee or Asylum Seeker or Young Carers focused on what is extremely local to them, or what is termed 'hyper-local'. Barriers impacting their mental health as defined by this group included language barriers, local access to services, community integration and isolation.</p>
<p>The Committee asks how the needs of LGBT people will be embedded in the work of the Scottish Government on tackling mental health at a national level, including measures to address the mental health impacts of COVID-19. (Para. 413)</p>	<p>The Mental Health Transition and Recovery Plan has a particular focus on equality and human rights. It recognises that the pandemic has exacerbated pre-existing structural inequality in society and has had a more adverse impact on the mental health of some groups of the population.</p> <p>The Plan commits to working with equalities and mental health organisations to look at the causes of mental health inequality at a structural and individual level, including specific consideration of the mental health impacts on LGBTI and minority ethnic groups, and acting on issues addressed. It also commits to working with NHS boards and Integration Joint Boards to improve data collection across protected characteristics, and use this to improve accessibility of services.</p> <p>As stated in the response to the recommendation at paragraph 387, we have established an Equality and Human Rights Forum to provide advice on the implementation of the Transition and Recovery Plan and wider equality and human rights work within mental health policy. This includes representation from LGBTI groups. The first meeting of the Equality and Human Rights Forum was held in February and we are now engaging with organisations to better understand and respond to the mental health inequalities that have been exacerbated by the Covid-19 outbreak.</p>

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RECOMMENDATION	SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT RESPONSE
<p>Inclusive communications</p> <p>The Committee asks when the Scottish Government will respond to the Social Renewal Advisory Board report and if this will be before the end of the Parliamentary session. (Para. 103)</p>	<p>The Scottish Government has welcomed the report of the Social Renewal Advisory Board which offers a bold roadmap to ensuring that reducing poverty and disadvantage, embedding a human-rights based approach and advancing equality is central to our rebuilding post-pandemic.</p> <p>The Scottish Government published its initial response to the Board's report on the 23 March 2021. The response is high level and sets out the government's support for the ambition shown in the report. It provided a brief overview of relevant work that was already underway and highlighted what the Scottish Government will do in the short term to take forward the recommendations. It made clear that, subject to the outcome of the 2021 Scottish Parliamentary elections, the Scottish Government intends to take forward a range of recommendations to build a fairer, more equal country. This includes initiating a full review of the Scottish Welfare Fund, increasing work to automate benefit entitlements, and investigating the possibility of a Minimum Income Guarantee. The response also outlined that the Scottish Government expects all of the recommendations in the Board's report to be revisited during the new Parliamentary session. The Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Housing and Local Government is scheduled to meet with the Board members on 2 September 2021 to discuss the recommendations.</p>

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RECOMMENDATION	SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT RESPONSE
<p>The Committee refers to its previous correspondence with the Scottish Government and again reiterates the need for inclusive communication and asks the Scottish Government what further action it will take on inclusive communication. (Para. 104)</p>	<p>The Scottish Government is committed to improving and embedding inclusive communication within Government and across public bodies. As per Regulation 4 of the Equality Act (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2021, on 24 March we published Scottish Government’s Equality Outcomes for the 2021-25 reporting period, focussed on tackling the biggest inequalities in society. One of these outcomes aims to improve and embed inclusive communication across public bodies in Scotland.</p> <p>The Equality Outcome states: ‘By 2025, inclusive communication will be embedded in the approaches of public bodies, with an increased proportion of people in Scotland reporting that their communications needs are being met when accessing public services.’</p> <p>The Scottish Government will undertake various actions to ensure this outcome is achieved. We will work in partnership with other public bodies, stakeholders and people with lived experience, to co-produce a set of common principles and national expectations with a long term plan of action. We will develop national standards, best practice guidance, and shared resources for public bodies on inclusive communication.</p> <p>The Scottish Government recognises that we must develop a strong approach to measuring the effectiveness of inclusive communication across the public sector. Building on the system progressing in Social Security Scotland, we will establish a robust monitoring framework to measure the success of this work based on the difference this makes to the lives of people in Scotland. Through our review of the operation of the Public Sector Equality Duty in Scotland, we will be revising the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012. We intend to explore the value of placing duties on the public sector in relation to inclusive communication; noting that the SNP manifesto committed to “placing a duty on those public bodies that communicate with the public to ensure they have accessible, inclusive communications.”</p>

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RECOMMENDATION	SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT RESPONSE
Do Not Attempt Cardio-pulmonary Resuscitation (DNACPR)	
<p>More recent information from Age Scotland suggests there is still an issue with DNACPR forms as recently as November 2020. It is of great concern to the Committee that there is continued poor practice in this area. As per the Minister for Older People and Equalities evidence on 25 June 2020, the Committee asks the Scottish Government what progress has been made with its inquiry. (Para. 202)</p>	<p>As the report reflects, the COVID-19 outbreak has brought about absolutely no change to the Scottish Government guidance on Do Not Attempt Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (DNACPR) decisions or the use of DNACPR forms in the Scottish NHS. Discussions relating to DNACPR can often be difficult, distressing, and confusing, but they are necessary to help ensure people get the care that is right for them. Ministers have been very clear that such conversations should always be handled with the upmost compassion, care and tact - and these are the same conversations which would have been occurring before the COVID-19 outbreak.</p> <p>We will be instigating a public inquiry into all aspects of the response to, and impact of, the Covid-19 pandemic. However, the Scottish Government's immediate priority remains tackling the ongoing pandemic. We are of course not waiting until an inquiry to enact the learning that has already taken place - since the outbreak of Covid-19 we have developed a range of tools and resources to support clinicians having these conversations in a more person centred, sensitive and holistic way, based on our experiences early in the pandemic. Officials also met with Age Scotland in November 2020 to discuss the specific issues they raised and provided advice and support about the DNACPR guidance in order to help ensure that people get the advice that is right for them as quickly as possible.</p>

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RECOMMENDATION	SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT RESPONSE
Public transport and disability during the pandemic	
<p>The Committee asks the Scottish Government what action it is taking to improve public transport and getting around for disabled people. In particular, the Committee would like to know what arrangements are being made to assist people with visual impairment on public transport. (Para. 212)</p>	<p>The actions that the Scottish Government are taking to improve public transport and getting around for disabled people falls under the existing Accessible Travel Framework. This includes the following actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ScotRail introduced a BSL app which has significantly helped ScotRail frontline staff communicate with BSL users during their journey. They also implemented a number of physical distancing measures, in consultation with a number of disabled people's organisations to ensure it could continue to deliver passenger assistance whilst adhering to social distancing measures. • NorthLink Ferries have introduced 'Ramble Tags' to enable continued assistance for visually impaired passengers. This permitted the provision of assistance whilst at a safe distance with no direct physical contact. • NorthLink Ferries are currently working on a project to develop a braille information system covering various items such as a general guide to areas on board, facilities and emergency procedures. They too have introduced a BSL solution allowing customers to video call an interpreter who in turn will contact the customer service team www.northlinkferries.co.uk/sign-language-interpreter-service/ • Disability Equality Scotland (DES) has been funded to engage with disabled people and pan-disability groups to gather first-hand experience and continue to provide information to disabled travellers via the Accessible Travel Hub https://accessibletravel.scot/. <p>Transport Scotland's accessible travel advisory body, the Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland (MACS) produced two specific pieces of Covid-19 guidance to assist disabled passengers, including those with visual impairments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidance for transport operators on assisting disabled passengers.

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- Guidance for Local Authorities ensure the mobility needs of disabled people are fully considered in [temporary street infrastructure](#).
- We also worked with MACS to co-produce the section in the COVID-19 guidance on [safer public spaces](#) on wider accessibility and inclusion.

We recognise that lockdown and physical distancing measures brought in to tackle the spread of Covid-19 have brought challenges for disabled travellers across all transport modes, including walking, wheeling and cycling.

New challenges have emerged rapidly, and the priorities we identified with disabled people pre-pandemic in the context of our Accessible Travel Framework, while still important, are no longer the most pressing issues we are facing due to the impact of Covid. However, our vision that all disabled people can travel with the same freedom, choice, dignity and opportunity as other citizens remains the same.

We have therefore undertaken a series of extensive engagement with disabled people and transport operators over recent months. We held a session on 'returning to public transport' which focussed on those with sight impairment. This brought together those with visual impairments and others together with operators from across modes to discuss the safety measures in place, what people could expect when travelling and an opportunity for them to raise any issues.

As a result of the pandemic, we have established the Transport Scotland Transport Transition Plan Equality Network to engage and seek evidence on these impacts to inform the iterative Transport Transition Plan and the Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) process. Membership of the network includes the Poverty and Inequality Commission, Poverty Alliance, Equality and Human Rights Commission, MACS, Disability Equality Scotland, Young Scot, Engender, Age Scotland and Interfaith Scotland.

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RECOMMENDATION	SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT RESPONSE
Learning disabilities – disaggregated data	
<p>The Committee asks the Scottish Government what data the Scottish Government is collating in relation to people with learning disabilities regarding the impact of COVID-19. (Para. 233)</p>	<p>The pandemic has highlighted how those individuals and communities who already experience the greatest inequality in society are the ones who are most negatively affected, and there are nationwide gaps in terms of data quality and collection for many groups, including for people with Learning/Intellectual Disabilities.</p> <p>The Protecting Scotland, Renewing Scotland: 2020-2021 Programme for Government published in September 2020 makes a commitment to refresh our approach, by developing an equality and human rights mainstreaming strategy, which is underpinned by a comprehensive approach to improving data collation and analysis.</p> <p>The Scottish Government continues to work with the Scottish Commission for people with Learning Disabilities (SCLD), Public Health Scotland and partners to strengthen data and evidence to support equality analysis and assessment.</p> <p>Data from our partners collected over the pandemic period, including SCLD’s Impact of Coronavirus on people with Learning Disabilities survey and the Scottish Learning Disabilities Observatory’s report impact of COVID -19 on people with learning/intellectual disabilities in Scotland evidence the need for continued and better data collection.</p>

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RECOMMENDATION	SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT RESPONSE
<p>Babies and young children</p> <p>The Committee asks the Scottish Government what work has been undertaken into how the pandemic is affecting the delivery of universal services for babies and young children, for example in relation to health visiting and other routine health programmes, and what impact COVID-19 and the measures taken to mitigate its impact have had on babies and young children's development. (Para. 353)</p>	<p>The delivery of universal services for babies and young children</p> <p>National Clinical COVID-19 Guidance was prepared very early in the pandemic to ensure that the role of health visitors, family nurses and infant feeding advisors were largely protected, recognising their important role in reducing harm and supporting new mothers and families with young children in the early days, weeks and months following birth.</p> <p>This included providing guidance on prioritising home visits, where they were deemed safe to do so, to undertake relevant health assessments.</p> <p>The developmental reviews for the child health surveillance programme also largely continued, and were delivered at or near normal levels.</p> <p>Some developmental reviews under the Universal Health Visiting Pathway experienced a reduction during March and April 2020 however, by May 2020, early uptake rates had tended to have recovered to expected levels. Further detail on the coverage of child health reviews under the Universal Health Visiting Pathway can be found on Public Health Scotland's 'COVID-19 wider impacts on the health care system dashboard' - https://scotland.shinyapps.io/phs-covid-wider-impact/.</p> <p>Impact of COVID-19 on child development</p> <p>Efforts have been made to understand the impact of the pandemic on child development and wellbeing. For example, Public Health Scotland's Early Years Resilience and Impact Survey (CEYRIS) is not nationally representative but did provide an insight into the views of parents in relation to child emotional and behavioural concerns during the first lockdown. The survey found that almost half (46%) of 2 and 3 year olds and over a third (36%) of 4-7 year olds had a slightly raised, high, or very high total Strengths and Difficulties (SDQ) score during initial lockdown, indicating the presence of behavioural or emotional difficulties.</p> <p>Public Health Scotland's Early Years Resilience and Impact Survey 2 (CEYRIS 2) was carried out in November and December 2020 and found that 39% of 2 and 3 year olds and 31% of 4-7 year</p>

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olds had a slightly raised, high, or very high Strengths and Difficulties Score, indicating the presence of behavioural or emotional difficulties. This is slightly lower than during the initial lockdown but remains higher than in a nationally representative survey completed just before lockdown. However, given that this was not a representative survey such comparisons should be interpreted cautiously.

Conversely, a survey by the Royal Foundation of parents of children aged 0-5 years in the UK during October 2020 found that there is some evidence to suggest that the pandemic restrictions may be beneficial to some children and families. Just under two thirds (63%) of parents said they have been able to spend more quality time with their child during lockdown. The vast majority of these parents (83%) say that they are likely to continue to spend more quality time with their child in the future.

Key concerns related to the lack of socialisation with other children (88%) and adults (56%) and spending too much time inside (56%). Relatively few parents of children aged between 0 and 5 (11%) think that the COVID-19 pandemic will have a negative impact on the brain and mind development of their child.

Many felt that their child's progress had not been negatively impacted when it came to their language development (43% no impact, 37% positive impact) and physical development (48% no impact, 31% positive). In relation to social and emotional development and wellbeing, 45% of parents reported a negative impact and 27% no impact.

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RECOMMENDATION	SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT RESPONSE
Children and young people in vulnerable situations	
<p>It is understood that hub attendance figures increased to 2,000 in May 2020. The Committee asks the Scottish Government what the most recent figures are for hub attendance and what percentage of those children are classed as 'vulnerable'. (Para. 362)</p>	<p>During the first lockdown (March to June 2020), the number of vulnerable children and young people that attending hubs and childcare settings peaked at 4,338 (on 17 June 2020).</p> <p>We did not collect this breakdown during the 2020/21 school year as all pupils were expected to go to schools and childcare settings from the start of this school year. During the second lockdown, between the start of January and 19 February 2021, only pupils of keyworkers and those classed as vulnerable were to attend schools. We continued to collect information on the number of children and young people who were attending schools during this time, and this showed that between 6-8% of all local authority pupils were attending school. However, we did not collect this broken down by whether the pupil was attending because they were a child of a keyworker or because they were "vulnerable". Schools started to re-open from 22 February 2021 (starting with P1-P3 pupils), and then from 15 March 2021 (all P1-P7 pupils and some S4-S6 pupils). Schools then fully re-opened following their Easter break (i.e. from 12 April 2021).</p>

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RECOMMENDATION	SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT RESPONSE
<p>Poverty – 16 and 17 years</p> <p>The Committee asks the Scottish Government what financial support is available to assist 16 and 17 year olds that have left school, but have been unable to start work or training due to COVID-19, and are living with their parents, but neither them or their parents are eligible to claim benefits. (Para. 367)</p>	<p>There are several reasons why 16-17 year olds may have left school and different ways in which they can be supported. For example, students facing additional hardship as a result of Covid-19 should apply to their college or university for financial support from the FE/HE Discretionary Funds. The Scottish Government has also committed to review the future of summer support and the availability of funds will be monitored to ensure support remains available to students throughout summer. The support provided to students over the course of the pandemic has been substantial with now over £96 million being provided via hardship funding, digital access, mental health support and for student associations.</p> <p>For young people taking part in higher education, full-time HE students will be eligible to receive a guaranteed one off Covid-19 payment of up to a maximum of £1,600 for additional study of 16 weeks or less. Earlier this year, we also committed extra £25 million to help alleviate the financial burden and stress among students. International and EU students in FE and HE can also access hardship support from the Coronavirus Discretionary Funds.</p> <p>The Young Person’s Guarantee (the Guarantee) aims to provide individual employability support and training to 16-24 year olds. The Guarantee is delivered by local authorities who will look at the young person’s individual circumstances and work with them to provide support and training. Financial support is available for young people taking part in work placement activity and, those who have entered into an agreed Learning Agreement with their local authority, can continue to access Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) once they leave school. This is also available during the summer months as Learning Agreements are progressed.</p>

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RECOMMENDATION	SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT RESPONSE
Care and protection – children and young people	
<p>The Committee asks the Scottish Government what monitoring is being undertaken to scrutinise the numbers of children coming into care and the reasons for those numbers. (Para. 372)</p>	<p>The Scottish Government put in place the Children and Families Collective Leadership Group at the outset of the pandemic. The group's primary objective is to understand the impact of the pandemic on children and families in order to develop and focus appropriate interventions and support. In order to build the necessary picture, the Scottish Government has worked in partnership with local authorities and Chief Social Work Officers, in particular, to obtain real time data on matters, not restricted to, but including, the numbers of children and young people coming into care. This has provided the basis for further analysis to be undertaken collectively amongst the group on any areas it has been agreed require further exploration.</p>

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RECOMMENDATION	SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT RESPONSE
<p>Prisoners</p> <p>The Committee asks the Scottish Government to provide data to enable adequate monitoring of prison conditions and their compliance with human rights standards. (Para. 420)</p>	<p>The wellbeing, safety and human rights of all those who live and work in our prisons has and will remain a key priority for the duration of this pandemic and beyond. The now former Cabinet Secretary for Justice met previously with the Scottish Human Rights Commission (SHRC) and HM Chief Inspector of Prisons (HMCIPS) to discuss these matters directly. The Scottish Prison Service (SPS) wrote directly to SHRC in November 2020 in response to their concerns around the availability of monitoring data to provide the available information and clarify the operational reasons why some of the data requested is unavailable.</p> <p>While neither this government nor the SPS underestimate the impact restrictions have had on those in SPS's care, reducing the spread of the virus and mitigating the real threat it poses must remain the priority in order to protect those who live work and visit prisons. Decisions to restrict prison regime are never taken lightly but have been necessary and proportionate in order to ensure the safety and wellbeing of those that live, work and visit our prisons.</p> <p>The SPS always strive to strike the right balance between preventing the spread of the virus, protecting health and wellbeing and maintaining our commitment to upholding the fundamental human rights of those in SPS's care. Throughout this time, the prison service put in place a range of support and measures in order to mitigate the impact of regime restrictions as well as ensuring vital family contact has been maintained through authorise mobile phone and virtual visit provision across the estate.</p> <p>The SPS has produced its own COVID-19 Routemap, which aligns with Scottish Government guidance and public health advice. This internal Routemap details the series of connected, and carefully controlled steps which will be taken to ensure that SPS can move forward with recovery, whilst acknowledging the precautionary measures that will need to remain in place, such as physical distancing and hygiene measures, to help prevent the spread of the virus and minimise the risk of outbreaks occurring. Based on this approach, it may be the case that SPS will move at a different pace from wider society. All restrictions are subject to regular and ongoing review in order to ensure that they are proportionate and necessary. With recent announcements regarding</p>

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national restrictions being eased across Scotland, SPS is now cautiously planning the next phase of its pandemic response.

SPS has an asymptomatic PCR testing pathway for prison-based staff in place in the majority of our prisons and asymptomatic prisoner admission testing will be commenced in a first phase with five Health Boards over the coming months. Vaccination of both staff and prison population has been ongoing consistent with JCIV categorisation. Health Boards will now commence with bundling of vaccination for staff and the prison population aged 18+ in prison settings. The rates of vaccination deployment across the prison estate will continue to be monitored and this is likely to have a direct bearing on the measures in place in individual establishments.

The Scottish Prison Service maintain a dedicated and regularly updated web page which contains a range of information in relation to the SPS's response to Covid (COVID-19 Information Hub (sps.gov.uk). This includes a daily update of details of confirmed cases of Covid and the number of individuals who are self-isolating, and a weekly update with details of cases in each establishment. The SPS website also provides updated guidance for the families of prisoners and other individuals on the operation of visits and other contact.

Independent inspection and monitoring of conditions and treatment in our prisons has been maintained by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland during the pandemic. This has been enabled through a remote monitoring framework and on-site liaison visits, which is based on human rights principles consistent with Council of Europe's Committee for the Statement of Principles for COVID-19 in places of detention, and WHO guidance on scrutiny. On-site inspection liaison visits were temporarily paused on 5 January 2021 due to current national restrictions, but independent remote monitoring remained in place and a blended model that includes some on-site inspection liaison visits was adopted on 8 February 2021. Liaison visits have now been undertaken at all Scottish prison establishments and all the currently published reports are available on the HMIPS website. These reports provide an independent examination of the response to Covid, and the impact on prisoners and staff in each prison. HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for Scotland is expected to resume a full inspection regime from October 2021.

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