



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Social Justice and Social Security Committee

Shirley-Anne Somerville MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice
Scottish Government

3 February 2025

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

Scottish Welfare Fund

Thank you for your letter of 28 November 2024, in which you provide an update on the implementation of the Scottish Welfare Fund action plan.

At its meeting on [23 January 2025](#), the Committee considered [your response](#), as well as a response received from [COSLA](#).

Both replies make clear that the action plan is taking longer to complete than originally hoped.

In its reply, COSLA broadly welcomed the improvements that the implementation of the action plan will bring about, but raised the following concerns:

- The guidance needs a clearer definition of the ‘high and most compelling’ priority rating, as budgetary pressures have meant councils have increasingly been using this category in recent years.
- Changes to the guidance may increase decision-making time.
- There are continued budget pressures on the Fund – including from implementing the action plan.

The Committee agreed to monitor monthly administrative data on the Social Welfare Fund to track whether budget pressures on the Fund continue to increase.

In order to further inform our monitoring and our understanding of issues relating to the implementation of the plan, we would be grateful if you would please provide the following information:

- the timescales for the production of tables to help decision makers determine eligibility under low-income criteria where a qualifying benefit is not under payment, with rates for all local authorities;

Contact: Social Justice and Social Security Committee, The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP. Email SJSS.committee@parliament.scot. We welcome calls through Relay UK and in BSL through Contact Scotland BSL.

- the Scottish Government's response to the issue raised by COSLA about the provision of annual funding to cover additional costs for local authorities;
- the planned completion dates of each of the remaining actions; and
- any guidance provided to local authorities in relation to the use of the additional £20m added to the Fund for 2024-25.

We would appreciate a response by Friday, 28 February in order to inform the follow-up work of the Committee.

Yours sincerely,



Collette Stevenson MSP
Convener
Social Justice and Social Security Committee