

Chair of the Poverty and Inequality Commission  
Bill Scott



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By email: Aileen Campbell  
Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local  
Government

Copy to:  
Members of the Scottish Cabinet

6 April 2020

Dear Aileen,

I am writing to offer the full support of the Poverty and Inequality Commission in responding to the current coronavirus crisis. We appreciate the sheer scale of the challenge which faces us all and believe that working together is the only way we can truly hope to mitigate the effect of coronavirus across Scotland. I am copying this letter to the members of the Scottish Cabinet as the impact of coronavirus is felt across all portfolios and there may be other areas where our support could be of value.

We have set up a Covid-19 Response Working Group, chaired by myself, and have identified three ways in which the working group and the full Commission can support you as you develop your response to this crisis.

### **1) Amplifying experience on the ground**

The Covid-19 Response Working Group will consider short term responses and look to learn from what we are hearing from those working on the ground. Initially we are focusing our efforts on food insecurity as this is an area of concern for us which we believe may require a more co-ordinated response. In the first instance we are gathering intelligence from community organisations to understand more about the pressures they face and will share this information with you. Social security is also an area we are likely to turn our attention to in the coming weeks. We would be keen to engage with officials over how we can best feed this type of information into the response effort.

### **2) A sounding board for ideas and to review actions**

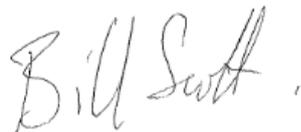
We would also like to offer the working group's expertise to the Scottish Government as a trusted and critical friend in order to test out potential policies and solutions. We could, for example, advise on the likely impact of actions the Scottish Government were thinking of taking, or review actions that have been taken and highlight any gaps that might need to be filled. We recognise that this a very fast moving policy environment and that you are best placed to identify the times when involving the working group or the Commission will be useful.

An example of how this could work would relate to the letter I received on 2 April from the Deputy First Minister. This detailed that officials were currently collating information on free school meal provision across the different local authorities. While I am sure you have your own plans in place for analysing this information, the working group would be ideally placed to consider the responses you receive from this and compare with other intelligence we have gathered. We would then be able to provide you with an independent view on the adequacy of the different approaches, any gaps and proposed solutions. I appreciate this offer may not be needed at this time but I hope it shows the type of assistance that we are able to offer.

### **3) Factoring the longer term implications into our work plan**

Meanwhile, the full Poverty and Inequality Commission will be considering the longer term impacts of this crisis on poverty, inequality and the economy and this will be reflected in our strategic plan which we aim to publish in the summer.

Finally, it is also worth saying that we wish to be of the most help possible and are therefore happy to discuss any adjustments or alternatives to these proposals that would ensure our expertise, commitment and networks are a support for the Scottish Government during these difficult times.



**Bill Scott**  
**Chair of Poverty and Inequality Commission**