



At the beginning of September, the Scottish Government set out the actions they will take in the coming year and beyond in their Programme for Government (PfG) '[Protecting Scotland, Renewing Scotland](#)', which includes the legislative programme for the next parliamentary year.

By the Government's own admission, this is not a 'normal' PfG due to the massive impact Covid-19 has made and continues to make on everyday life. Indeed, the crisis and the desire to 'build back better' permeates through the ambition for next year.

We thought it would be useful to have a look at what proposals for the coming year will have a particular impact or relevance for Community Safety.

**Children and young people:** This year, the Scottish Government will put renewed focus on young people with the revolutionary move to incorporate the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child into Scots law to the maximum extent possible. This move to a 'right's-based approach' has been well received, especially by those working with children and young people and youth justice. This bold move from the government chimes with the intentions in the Age of Criminal Responsibility (Scotland) Act 2019 and the Children (Equal Protection from Assault) (Scotland) Act 2019, which both to come into force later this year, as well as a spate of efforts in policy and legislation calling for increases in the age at which an individual is considered a young person.

The Government also plans to tackle child poverty through the introduction of the Scottish Child Payment and the new Child Winter Heating Assistance in winter 2020. The PfG in addition, lays out plans for £3 million to support young people to engage with youth work, and £4 million to 'keep their promise to care-experienced young-people' to deliver holistic family support and establish an independent oversight Board and a 'New Youth Guarantee' in employment.

**Homelessness:** The pandemic showed that rapid and radical progress in tackling homelessness can be done, so the Scottish Government have made a pledge to continue with the same determination to ensure no one returns to the streets and no one has to sleep rough. This puts even more emphasis on achieving the goals of the 2018 Ending Homelessness Together ambition and reiterates it as a national priority. Plans to take radical action to end homelessness includes, modifying and actively ending the use of night shelter and dormitory style provision in future, effectively scaling down hotel

accommodation and night shelter provision and scaling up rapid rehousing and Housing First.

On that note, in terms of housing, the Scottish Government plan to strengthen guidance on discretionary housing payments, continue to take action to minimise the risk of evictions into homelessness in the private and social rented sectors, establish a new £10 million Tenant Hardship Loan Fund and increase the Discretionary Housing Payments funding by a further £3 million.

Finally, recognising that some groups are at higher risk of homelessness than others, The Scottish Government pledge to continue to implement homelessness prevention pathways so that people leaving prison, care leavers and victims of domestic abuse have positive housing pathways.

**Communities:** Ambitions for the '20 minute neighbourhood' where people can live, work and learn in communities close to home will continue in this year's PfG adding 'pace and focus to (their) place-based agenda', which is heartening to see. Indeed, Covid-19 has also forced the government to 'look local' in other areas such as Community Wealth Building, a wellbeing economy and issues around the climate emergency. In addition, aligning with the 'town centre first approach' they have launched a Review of the Town Centre Action Plan and pledge to establish a Place Based Investment Programme, part of which is to invest £275 million to support community-led regeneration and town-centre revitalisation. A pleasing consequence of 'building back better' is the government's aim to strengthen support for community anchor organisations by using their Empowering Communities Programme to build on the learning from the COVID-19 response, strengthen the community anchor model and support its wider take up.

**Environment and Infrastructure:** Again, in light of recent events, the Scottish Government plan to 'lock in the positive changes in active travel by committing £500 million for transformational infrastructure' over five years including access to bikes, road infrastructure and behavioural change projects to promote walking, cycling and wheeling. Local authorities now have the opportunity to review the temporary infrastructure projects that were put in place for Covid-19 lockdown – turning many of them into permanent schemes.

Alongside these substantial efforts to increase active travel, the Scotland's Road Safety Framework to 2030 will be published with its ambitious and compelling long-term vision for road safety where there are zero fatalities or serious injuries on Scotland's roads by 2050.

The PfG plans to identify vacant and derelict sites for green infrastructure initiatives and work with local government to rethink how they can build-in quality of life, and health enhancing improvements to the communities we live in. In line with the Community Empowerment Act, continued funding for

the Scottish Land Fund will provide £10 million per year to help communities purchase assets.

Lastly, a £70 million fund to improve local authority refuse collection infrastructure and develop a new route map to reduce waste and meet our waste and recycling targets for 2025 will be introduced.

**Community Justice:** The delay and backlog of court cases due to the pandemic has created a difficult and concerning situation in terms of the impacts for those accused of crime, victims and witnesses, and the potential for the prison population to increase. With this in mind, the Scottish Government aim to continue to work hard to find solutions to ease these pressures on all mentioned above as well as justice bodies, the legal profession and third sector organisations. To ensure they have a strong response and to plan for longer term reform, they have established a Recover, Renew, Transform programme, overseen by a newly established Criminal Justice Board which will consider proposals for the reform of the justice system.

Part of finding solutions will be continuing to focus on community justice and alternatives for prison. Building on the presumption against short custodial sentences, they will promote and expand the availability of effective community interventions, including bringing forward regulations for the use of electronic monitoring on bail, supporting increased accessibility to supervised bail services and publishing guidance on structured deferred sentences.

Finally, as part of their preventative approach to violence, they will continue to work with Scotland's Violence Reduction Unit and Medics Against Violence to support the development of the Navigator programme in hospital emergency departments across Scotland.

**Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG):** With the Covid –19 crisis reiterating the importance of work against VAWG, a £1.5 million funding package for the women's aid and rape crisis network, both during the immediate crisis period and in the longer term continues to be delivered.

In addition, further legislation on domestic abuse protection orders, which protects victims against perpetrators accessing their homes, is being progressed. Other legislation to improve forensic medical examinations for victims of sexual assault, a consultation on challenging men's demand in relation to prostitution, and the implementation our new Female Genital Mutilation (Protection and Guidance) Act also continues to progress the anti-VAWG agenda.

The Scottish Government will continue to implement the Equally Safe strategy with a particular focus on supporting women and children at risk of violence and abuse. By the end of 2020, they pledge to launch a £13 million Delivering Equally Safe Fund to support greater prevention and early intervention for women and children at risk.

**Fireworks:** The government plan to take forward the actions outlined in the Fireworks Action Plan, and run a public awareness campaign to promote the safe and appropriate use of fireworks ahead of bonfire night this year. The recommendations of the Fireworks Review Group on tightening legislation on fireworks will be also be considered.

**Dangerous Dogs:** There are plans to consult further on the law on dangerous dogs, including the offence of a dog being dangerously out of control contained within the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991.

SCSN are actively involved in the Fireworks Review Group and Dangerous Dogs Working Group and look forward to progress in this area over the coming year of government.

**Other areas we are pleased to see highlighted in the PfG this year are:**

- A focus on 'closing the gap' in digital exclusion with £23 million committed to the Connecting Scotland scheme to give training and devices to get the most vulnerable online.
- In light of the Black Lives Matter awakening this year, we are pleased to see the Scottish Government undertaking an audit of past and current initiatives to tackle systemic racism. They are also committing to enabling better collection and use of minority ethnic health data, which in time we hope will expand to all forms of data, especially within crime and community safety. They also have bold ambitions to take action to tackle the barriers faced by all minority communities in work, education, health, and housing.
- Continued work to promote an evidence-based suicide prevention response delivering the ten actions in the Suicide Prevention Plan, with a new public awareness campaign to be launched. Commitment to a longer term suicide prevention strategy, especially in light of Covid-19 and the impact on mental health.

Finally, at SCSN we were very heartened to see community safety services and community organisations particularly highlighted and thanked in their response to the pandemic. This echoes with our experience and showcases the invaluable work of the sector.