



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Social Justice and Social Security Committee

Sally Louden
Chief Executive
COSLA

Via email only

Social Justice and Social Security
Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
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06 February 2023

Dear Sally Louden,

Robbing Peter to pay Paul: low income and the debt trap

Thank you for responding to the conclusions and recommendations made in the Committee's [report](#) on low income and debt.

As part of the Committee's strategic aims, we intend to monitor and track progress against these recommendations throughout the session and we look forward to discussing these with you again in future.

The Committee had an opportunity to consider all three responses ([Scottish Government](#), [COSLA](#) and the [UK Government](#)) collectively at its meeting on [2 February](#). Amid the cost crisis there are some areas where the Committee considers quicker progress could be made to help people on low incomes.

Council Tax

In relation to collection of council tax debt, the Committee notes the reasoning as to why COSLA is not supportive of legislating for national standards for council tax collection. The Committee would find it helpful to know what steps

it is taking to encourage councils to use the Improvement Service's "Collaborative Council Tax Collection Guide".

Free school meals

The Committee notes that COSLA is consulting with local authorities "to enable a better understanding of the national picture of school meal debt, and the context and challenges surrounding this issue" and its agreement to develop a set of good practice principles for the management of school meal debt, which will be progressed in the coming months. We would be grateful if you could share the information you have gathered on how many local authorities have chosen to write-off school meal debt.

The Committee would find it helpful to receive a response by 27 February 2023.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. Don', written in a cursive style.

Natalie Don MSP
Convener
Social Justice and Social Security Committee