

Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for
Education and Skills
Cabinet Secretary for the Economy, Fair Work and
Culture
Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy and Tourism
Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and
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By Email.

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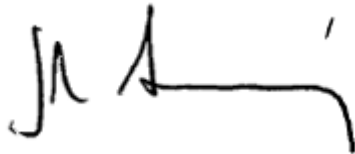
Dear Enterprise and Skills Agency Chairs

INTERIM LETTER OF GUIDANCE TO ENTERPRISE AND SKILLS AGENCIES

1. These are extraordinary times. Many of the challenges we faced just a few weeks ago have been overtaken by COVID-19. It is impacting on all aspects of our lives and there is disruption right across the economy. This is an unimaginably difficult time for organisations large and small, for employers and employees, for staff and students, and collectively we must do everything we can to help.
2. The importance of supporting those at risk of losing their jobs, retaining people in work, and providing the skills our businesses and economy needs, has never been greater. As one of the Enterprise and Skills agencies you are central to allowing us to help those in the country who require it most and, in time, planning for the recovery phase that will follow.
3. This means that all but the most critical 'business as usual' activity must be re-evaluated and halted, unless it is clearly making a contribution to the challenge of COVID-19. Your focus, moving forward, must move to meeting the emerging fiscal, economic and social challenge of COVID-19. We look to you to ensure that you reprioritise; continue to be flexible, to be responsive and to work collaboratively where possible. This will ensure that, whatever happens going forward, individuals and businesses are able to access the support they may need.
4. In light of this, we have decided to delay issuing the Strategic Letters of Guidance to all Enterprise and Skills agencies until later in 2020. This is in recognition that priorities will change and to allow the agencies to be able to be as responsive as possible to current events. We recognise that you will continue to deliver contracted commitments, and confirm that appropriate governance arrangements should continue to be followed at all times. You should work closely with your Sponsor Team to ensure that this is the case.

5. Finally, the partnership working across organisations has been exemplary and is allowing us all to respond in innovative ways to unprecedented challenges. We would like to take this opportunity to thank you and all your staff for the significant contribution you and your organisations have made, and continue to make, in supporting our response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Yours truly



Kind regards



John Swinney, Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
Fiona Hyslop, Cabinet Secretary for the Economy, Fair Work and Culture
Fergus Ewing, Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy and Tourism
Richard Lochhead, Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science