

Dear Colleague

Response to the COVID19 Outbreak

I wanted to write an open letter to all South Lanarkshire Council staff involved in the council's response to the COVID-19 outbreak and in continuing to deliver vital services to our residents and communities.

Three months ago, reports on the news of a virus outbreak in Asia seemed very distant – something that was unlikely to impact on us here in South Lanarkshire significantly. None of us could really predict the nature or the scale of the COVID-19 strain of the coronavirus and the speed of its spread across the world. We knew little about this virus and some of the early predictions seemed to vary from country to country and sometimes from region to region. The measures to try to control the spread of the virus and to protect our vital health and social care services are unprecedented and will have a long-lasting impact on all of us, our economy and our wider society.

In the middle of this response, however, have been staff from South Lanarkshire Council, working with other responder agencies and colleagues in community and voluntary groups, to protect individuals and keep our communities safe. I returned to South Lanarkshire Council only 13 weeks ago and have been humbled by the selfless, hard-working and committed approach you have all given to this response. Many council staff roles will not hit the news headlines like some of the other responders, but let me be clear - without your contribution, our families, neighbours, friends and businesses would be in even greater difficulty, and some might not survive. I know that the impact of the virus has touched many of us directly and that it generates a level of fear but, despite this, day in day out you continue to support our most vulnerable and keep services running. From our magnificent carers and other frontline operational staff, to those ensuring we make contact with persons needing help, and the countless back office jobs that keep the council's engine running – I want to thank you for everything you are doing and ensure you know how much you are valued and appreciated.

The feedback from our residents and our elected representatives and parliamentarians has also been overwhelmingly positive – you may not see of all of these comments, but please know that they appreciate everything you are doing for them.

Many of you will have been advised to self-isolate and where possible work from home. It is a different way to work for many but is a valuable contribution. Some of you have taken on unfamiliar tasks – to do whatever is necessary. For others, who may have been unwell or who are self-isolating because a loved one is unwell, our thoughts are with you and we hope you recover soon. We are not through this yet, but I have confidence that we will overcome this challenge through your shared contributions, and that we have the opportunity to forge a kinder and more caring society built on the relationships being built now.

Best Regards
Celand

Celand Sneddon, Chief Executive