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Dear Dr Gričar,

Thank you for your email of the 27 January 2021 to the Minister for Older People and Equalities, making her aware of the special bulletin of the European Association of Professors Emeriti published for the 2020 World Day of Older People. The Minister is currently on a leave of absence and unable to respond to you. However, as the Cabinet Secretary for Social Security and Older People, I wanted to respond.

I noticed in your bulletin that you had a contribution from Age Scotland which talked about some of the work they are doing in Scotland during the pandemic. We work closely with, and indeed fund, some of Age Scotland's work and have collaborated with them for many years and in particular throughout the pandemic. Alongside other partners they are a valued member of the Scottish Government's Older People's Strategic Action Forum who work with the Scottish Government to ensure that older people's voices are heard and centred within policy development.

In 2019 the Scottish Government published a framework for action called [A Fairer Scotland for Older People](#). The aims of the framework remain both highly relevant and critical to tackling the barriers older people face and the stigma around ageing. Older people have been disproportionately affected by lockdown restrictions and many have experienced acute levels of isolation and loneliness. The Minister for Older People and Equalities has been meeting regularly with the Older People's Strategic Action Forum and the Social Isolation and Loneliness National Implementation Group to hear the views of older people's representatives and lived experience, to inform our direction of travel.

On the 18 March 2020 we announced £350 million of funding to support communities impacted by COVID-19. The funding was intended to support communities which were affected by the pandemic. As part of that funding we provided over £1.16 million in support for older people's organisations at a



national level, as well as supporting local community projects which help older people. Our Winter Plan then provided further support and over £6.5 million was targeted at actions focused on equalities, tackling isolation and loneliness and digital exclusion.

The Scottish Government has a responsibility to respect, protect and fulfil human rights and our response to the Covid-19 crisis is therefore directly informed by an understanding of the full spectrum of civil, political, economic and social human rights. Our ['Framework for Decision-making'](#) sets out seven core principles across all our work, one of which is 'fair and ethical', committing us to upholding the principles of human dignity, autonomy, respect and equality as we deal with the pandemic and its consequences.

As we continue to work through this crisis it will be important for all of us to keep working hard to ensure that older people's human rights are upheld and that inequalities that exist are tackled effectively. Your bulletin showcases the importance of hearing from older people and valuing their voices and expertise. Gathering together these reports from international contributors is a valuable contribution to spotlighting the issues older people face .

Thank you for making me aware of your ongoing work.

Yours sincerely



**SHIRLEY-ANNE SOMERVILLE**

