



Abuse must not be tolerated

No one should have to suffer abuse under any circumstances. As a responsible employer, we work closely with partner agencies to investigate any concerns raised. However, we shouldn't naively believe that Edinburgh is immune to historic issues that have affected so many organisations across the UK.

Many people are now finding the courage to speak about historic or ongoing abuse they have suffered and it's vital that people feel able to come forward and are supported in doing so. Police Scotland actively encourage individuals to get in touch with them and, from speaking with Edinburgh's Chief Superintendent, I know they are committed to investigating any issues brought to their attention.

As a Council we have co-operated fully with the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry and have already provided significant amounts of information to them. The SCAI will be able to provide you with information, guidance and support at information@childabuseinquiry.scot or on 0300 244 8070.

Alternatively, if you wish to make a confidential or anonymous disclosure, or if you have any other information, please call our Whistleblowing Hot Line on 0800 58 78 770 or contact the Police directly.

Make your vote count

I'd like to welcome Rob Munn back to the Council Chambers following his success in the Leith Walk By-election on 12 April. Far from new to the role, Rob is an experienced councillor, having previously served as Deputy Lord Provost and Regulatory Committee Convenor, and I know he will bring that wealth of experience in helping to take our city forward.

I can't stress enough how important engagement in local democracy is when it comes to the matters that really affect the city – from bin collections to schools, social care or the economy – so thanks to all those in the Leith Walk ward who turned out to have their say. Thanks also to our Elections team, who worked hard to make sure the poll ran smoothly.

Now we set our sights on another vote, and a matter that has been dominating the news, as we prepare for the EU Parliamentary Election on 23 May. Whatever the future holds for the country, it's essential that we continue to exercise our vote, and I would encourage as many people as possible to [register by 7 May](#).

Expansion of music venues

I was delighted that planning permission was granted earlier this week for what will become Edinburgh's first purpose-built music and performance venue in over 100 years.

Formerly known as [IMPACT](#), the Dunard Centre will further reinvigorate St Andrew Square and provide an excellent new venue and home for the Scottish Chamber Orchestra. None of this would be possible without the ambitious City Region Deal and direct Council support. Together we're opening up a new chapter in Edinburgh's already thriving cultural scene, expanding access to more residents to taking part in and enjoying the arts.

This exciting news comes hot on the heels of the recent launch of [The Quaich Project](#) – the new name of the project to 'reimagine' West Princes Street Gardens. Together with the Ross Development Trust, we're aiming to create wonderful new public gardens and a world-class performance venue that will become home to a range of diverse cultural activities for residents here in the Capital.

The project aims to submit a planning application in early 2020. Keep your eyes peeled for further information – there will be many opportunities to get involved over the coming months.

Opening up our streets for everyone

On Sunday 5 May, we'll become the first city in the UK to join the [Open Streets](#) movement, when a number of roads in the heart of the Capital will be opened up for the enjoyment of the public on foot, bike or scooter by being closed to traffic.

Like similar events in Paris, New York and Brussels, Open Streets will let people experience a cleaner, quieter and calmer environment, where they can explore and appreciate Edinburgh's historic backdrop at leisure on the first Sunday of every month.

I'm really excited by some of the innovative, [game-changing proposals](#) being considered for how we could transform our city centre, and Open Streets is key to start rethinking how streets could be used and shared in the future.

Investment in Schools over Easter

Our pupils may not have been in school over the Easter holidays but many of their classrooms have been hives of activity as our repairs and maintenance programme continues apace.

As part of our first coalition budget, we committed to significantly invest in the Council's buildings to ensure they remain safe, sustainable and fit for the future. By implementing a planned preventative regime across all our operational buildings we will make sure all our young people learn in the best environment.

Work on roofs, lighting, ceilings, kitchen and dining halls has been taking place at 35 schools and nurseries as part of our five-year £118 million investment programme across the whole Council estate, with much of this addressing maintenance issues identified through our property team's proactive condition surveys.

At the end of the first year of the programme, there have already been significant improvements achieved with 83% of the Council's operational estate now assessed as being in either a good or satisfactory condition. This year we'll embark upon a further 45 projects, 35 of which are due to be completed by March 2020, with an additional £30m having been invested across the estate.

Working together to provide better care

I was pleased to see the Edinburgh Integration Joint Board publish its [latest performance report](#), demonstrating welcome progress in the way we are delivering and managing health and social care services across our city.

April marked the third year of the Board, which has now halved the length of time people are waiting for care assessments. The latest figures also show patients are getting home more quickly and, most importantly, safely with the right care in place. Further, a third less people are facing delays when leaving hospital compared to the same period three years previously.

Yes, there are ongoing challenges but we are putting the right systems in place to drive up performance and that work is now having an impact on the ground. We're absolutely committed to improving these vital services further, giving Edinburgh residents every opportunity to live healthier and happier lives.

Pockets, prospects, places

Helping everyone to achieve their potential is crucial to our vision for a more equal and inclusive Capital. In this vein, the second phase of the [Edinburgh Poverty Commission](#) work is about to get under way. Focussing on 'prospects', this will look at health and wellbeing, education, career progression and the skills that our citizens need to make sure they can share in our city's success.

Some of the key questions the Commission will be asking are: how does living on a low income affect the health and wellbeing of people in Edinburgh? How does poverty affect the ability of children in Edinburgh to have a good start in life? What are the barriers that make it difficult for people in poverty to get a job, work more hours, or progress to better paid jobs?

This latest phase complements other areas of poverty work taking place in the Capital, such as the launch of new [Hey Girls](#) period poverty education pack, which I attended with Cllr Dickie at Broughton High School last month, and the 1 in 5 Child Poverty conference taking place today (26 April).

The Commission's findings and recommendations from the first phase of work 'pockets', the pressures that keep incomes low and living costs high for people, will be published shortly.

Get involved

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