

**Scottish Government’s MHO Capacity-building (training) Grant Scheme**

**Round 3 2021 - 2022**

**Application for Funding with Guidance**

##### **Deadline for applications: 18 December 2021**

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| **Local Authority** |  |
| **MHO Programme Region** |  |

**4 November 2020**

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| **About the MHO Capacity-building (training) Grant Scheme** |

**1. PURPOSE**

The aim of the funding scheme is to help address the shortfall in the number of qualified MHOs, in order to support Local Authorities (LAs) across Scotland to meet their statutory obligations.

Attainment of the MHO Award is a significant investment for social workers and their employing LA. The scheme has been developed with a holistic consideration of the costs of training, and aims to enable recipient LAs to train additional staff with minimal additional pressure on their workforce. While the scheme does not aim to directly support employment of additional MHOs, it aims to increase and/or support available capacity to deliver MHO functions. It is acknowledged that local issues and deployment practice will ultimately determine the availability of MHO qualified social workers to undertake statutory MHO duties.

It is our intention that the scheme allow flexibility in how the funding is used to reflect local situations, while being clear about the outcome required. Examples of possible uses for the award include the backfill of posts occupied by trainees, training costs, as well as supporting practice assessment activity including dedicated Practice Assessor posts. If multiple LAs want to pool resources through a local partnership, to support practice assessors for example, they can submit a joint application. All LAs involved in the application need to provide individual evidence of the current shortfall in their area, action being taken to address it and the additional number of MHOs they expect to train under the application.

LAs are responsible for identifying staff to be trained and ensuring they have the appropriate requirements in terms of skills, experience and qualifications for the MHO training.

**2. OUTCOME SOUGHT FROM FUNDING**

Funding is available for Local Authorities in Scotland to support the training of Social Workers as qualified Mental Health Officers. The policy objective of the grant scheme is to enable LAs ability to train additional MHOs, supplementary to the training they would normally expect to be supporting, in order to help them address shortfalls in MHO capacity.

Applications will need to indicate clearly the number of additional social workers who will be trained as MHOs with support from the funding.

**3. ELIGIBILITY**

The scheme is open to all LAs in Scotland.

**4. CRITERIA**

Assessment of applications will focus on the contribution to the policy objective for this funding, of helping local authorities to address the shortfall in Mental Health Officer capacity across Scotland. Because of local variation the assessment approach will be primarily qualitative and discretionary, rather than quantitative. The discretionary criteria for making awards will include:

* assessment of to what extent the application demonstrates a current or anticipated shortfall in MHO capacity. This shortfall might arise for a variety of reasons.
* assessment of to what extent the application demonstrates there is activity and/or policies in place to help address that shortfall.
* assessment of to what extent the application demonstrates that the funding will be used to enable the training of additional MHOs beyond the ‘normal rate of training’, and that once qualified, the new MHOs’ functions will include MHO responsibilities.

Due to Coronavirus, the application and assessment process for this Grant Scheme was not formally reviewed after the first round of Awards. Informal discussions with local authorities and SSSC however led to some changes in this application form (minimal) and guidance which is identical to the application and guidance used for Round 2.

The latest SSSC [MHO report](https://news.sssc.uk.com/news/2020-mho-report) shows an increased overall shortfall in MHO numbers, revealing the shortfall has increased to 53 full time equivalent MHOs from 49 in the 2019 Report.

To that end Scottish Government alongside this Grant Scheme is committing £2.5m this year (November 21 –March 2022) and £3.43m in each of the following 2 years to support the creation of new MHO posts. The total resourcing we are investing takes account of the increased shortfall. The resource is being allocated by Scottish Government using COSLA’s standard distribution formula to LAs across Scotland. We are also increasing the funding available this year for the MHO Capacity Building (Training) Grant Scheme. All of this investment is to be used as flexibly as possible but with the sole purpose of building MHO capacity and addressing the MHO shortfall identified in the latest SSSC Report and acute issues on the ground. This investment sits alongside the fact that some LAs have carried forward funding made in Round 2 of this grant scheme due to the challenges of training MHOs during the pandemic. At the same time we know that the pandemic has placed additional pressures on MHOs. We encourage LAs to bid for funding in this Round if they feel it would assist them in addressing current shortages/MHO issues.

# **5. FUNDING AVAILABLE FOR THE SCHEME**

Total grant funding of up to £720,000is available for Round 3 (2021 – 2022).

**As before applications can be for up to £34,000 per intended trainee (i.e for a commitment to train an MHO)**. This figure has been estimated on the basis of the anticipated full costs for MHO training and has been developed in consultation with Mental Health Officer leads through the Social Work Scotland MHO Sub-Group and the MHO Training Providers Forum (hosted by the SSSC). Costs considered in developing the estimate included:

* reducing casework and duty (50%) for a social worker for the duration of the MHO Award and the need for additional capacity to cover that reduction;
* employing a practice assessor to supervise and teach each trainee; and
* average course delivery fees.

The amount applied for per commitment to train an MHO can be lower than £34,000. Under exceptional circumstances an application for a higher amount would be considered, subject to appropriate justification being provided.

Funding shall only be used for the purpose of enabling the outcome identified above, and as specified in the application. Funding will normally be paid in the financial year in which the application is received and the awards made. Given lead in times for training courses and for preparatory work, there is not a requirement for training to be completed in the same financial year as the award. The expectation will be for training to be commenced within a 12 month period of the award (an extra period would be considered in exceptional circumstances in agreement with the funder).

In the eventuality of applications exceeding the funding available, the evidence provided against the criteria identified below will be assessed to determine how to award funding. Applications that do not receive an award that year, can be resubmitted and reconsidered in the following year.

The scheme priority shall be to first support LAs where the MHO shortage is acute and also to support as many LAs as possible to maximise the number of social workers that can be helped to train as MHOs, while ensuring best value for money. There is no set limit to the overall amount of funding that could be awarded to any one applying LA. Any decisions to partially fund applications would aim to fully support a specific number of trainees.

**6. POSSIBLE USES OF THE FUNDING**

The awards will be made on the basis of a commitment by the local authority to train one or more MHOs in addition to previously planned training. Given the variable application deadlines for courses, there is no requirement to have a confirmed, named trainee in place when making an application. However there is an expectation that it will be possible for a successful applicant local authority to identify a trainee and for that trainee to successfully obtain a place on a MHO award programme.

If an award is made to a Local Authority but it is not possible for the Local Authority to identify a trainee, or if a trainee identified by the LA is unable to obtain a place on a MHO award programme, then the Scottish Government may award the funding to one or more alternative LAs who have submitted applications. The Scottish Government may also, at its discretion, consider alternative/revised proposals by the initially successful applicant local authority that will contribute to the desired policy outcome.

Funding provided from the scheme can be used flexibly to reflect local situations. Possible uses include the following examples, which are not intended to be a comprehensive list:

* Backfill or partial backfill of Social Work posts to allow staff to be released for training;
* Training costs (which may or may not include backfill costs depending on local need/demand);
* Support for Practice Assessors (PA), such as payments to encourage uptake of the role, and mechanisms such as backfill to relieve work pressures on Practice Assessors undertaking the role;
* Support for appointment of an MHO to act as a Practice Assessor;
* Support developed in partnership with other LAs, for example shared employment of a Practice Assessor;
* Support for ‘conversion’ type training for social workers who have previously trained as an MHO but require refresher training to return to MHO practice;
* Support for a secondment arrangement to allow training in circumstances where potential trainees are employed in a Lead Agency which is not a LA.

**7. ASSESSMENT OF APPLICATIONS**

The Scottish Government will oversee the application process and assess applications with input from the SSSC, as the regulatory body for the approval and quality assurance of MHO programmes. The Scottish Government will manage the scheme, including issuing formal award letters and making payments to successful applicants. The final decisions on awards are at the discretion of the Scottish Government.

**8. APPLICATION PROCESS AND SUPPORT**

In addition to the guidance, applicants can obtain support by email at; [morag.robertson@gov.uk](mailto:morag.robertson@gov.uk)

**DEADLINE FOR APPLICATIONS: 18 December 2021**

**Please email completed applications to:** [morag.robertson@gov.uk](mailto:morag.robertson@gov.uk)

Award decisions will be communicated to applicants by end January 2022 and early February 2022 at the very latest.

**9. CRITERIA FOR ASSESSMENT OF APPLICATIONS**

The assessment process looks for evidence of a shortfall, also using available information to assess the shortfall’s severity and impact. It then looks to see evidence of activity to address the shortfall (including over time when there is an ongoing shortfall). It looks to assess the strength of the commitment to address the shortfall including through the allocation of financial resources to support MHO training. It looks for and considers supporting evidence on what might be impacting on an authority’s ability to address the shortfall. For example there may be evidence of activity and investment but that is not translating into trained MHOs. This can mean that additionality is not straightforward to achieve over the 3 or 5 years we are asking to see evidence for.  Additionality is still important but, as described above, it is not the only evidence we will consider in the assessment process.

Three types of evidence will be assessed for funding, including shortfall data submitted to the SSSC for their annual publication of official statistics on Mental Health Officers. We acknowledge that estimation of a shortfall is complex and that the context can be useful to consider in addition to the data requested in order to allow assessment of the applications. There is therefore an opportunity for applications to include some narrative to provide this context, particularly in the light of COVID-19 and its implications for MHO workloads and MHO training.

LAs are asked to submit an application that includes the following three types of evidence:

(A) *historic evidence* to demonstrate the existence of a shortfall;

(B) *evidence of a strategic approach to managing a shortfall*, including policies or action already taken to address the shortfall. This means we are looking to see how the authority has sought to address the shortfall, what resources including financial have been committed to that, what has been delivered and if relevant the reasons why this might not have delivered improvement.

(C) *evidence of additionality*, i.e. evidence to demonstrate that the award will be used to train additional MHOs beyond the ‘normal rate’ of MHO training.

We are aware that the numbers requiring to be trained may fluctuate annually and that there are challenges for both smaller and larger authorities in securing nominations for training but we are looking to see that authorities are committed over a sustained period to improving MHO capacity including a continued financial investment in MHO training. We appreciate that individuals nominated by authorities may not be accepted onto training, places may fall through, and that people might not have been able to complete training for whatever reason and particularly due to the pandemic. We will therefore take into consideration the number of people nominated for training even if they didn’t all get selected. **We do, however, still need evidence that this grant will enable extra staff to be supported for training and to address a current MHO shortfall.**

The evidence provided will be assessed to determine:

1. Is there a historic shortfall and/or are there additional pressures anticipated due to workforce changes in the coming year for example recent workforce issues that may have arisen from COVID.
2. To what extent action is/has been taken and policies put in place to address the shortfall?
3. How severe and what is the trend in the shortfall in proportion to the level & trends in demand/activity and the size of the MHO workforce?
4. Applications will be ranked according to the strength of the evidence submitted and awards made up to the limit of the funding available.

It may be necessary in assessing the grants to consider capacity issues for training providers, depending on numbers of applications from particular regions. Every effort will be made to take a balanced approach over the life time of the grant scheme. Training providers have provided assurance that they are able to deliver the increased capacity anticipated of approximately an additional 15 places per year.

**(A) Evidence for demonstrating a shortfall:**

1. Previous 3 year shortfall figures from the SSSC MHO workforce data submissions.
2. How many practising MHOs employed in the LA who are doing some/ i.e. >50% MHO work
3. Projected MHO workforce pressures over the next year (2022-2023) – including known retirals and other particular pressures anticipated. This section should provide scope for capturing pressures potentially unique to the LA. This information will be considered in light of the size of the LA population and MHO workforce
4. Any reduction in MHO staffing over previous 2 years and reasons for this/details about this.

The evidence above will be considered in relation to the presence of a shortfall in capacity; whether this is improving or deteriorating and currently anticipated pressures. The evidence provided under section (A) will be considered in the light of the evidence provided under the sections below.

**(B) Evidence to demonstrate action to address a reported shortfall and the existence of a coherent strategy to address it.**

The evidence in this section aims to allow LAs to demonstrate they have sought to address a known or forecast shortfall in MHO capacity through strategic planning and action

1. Numbers of MHOs trained in each of the last five years. Provide separately the number of practitioners nominated who did not successfully complete the MHO programme.
2. Measures introduced in the last three years to address MHO capacity shortfalls.

**(C) Evidence to demonstrate additionality**

Evidence under this section is requested to assess to what extent the funding will facilitate the training of additional MHOs, beyond the ‘normal rate of training’. The numbers to be trained as MHOs identified in this section will be considered the minimum outcome sought from the grant funding. The figure should show that the numbers proposed (including grant funded training) are additional to the average trained over the last five years.

We recognise that local complexities, including individuals giving up MHO responsibilities, can mean that MHO numbers, and the numbers of those being trained, can therefore be lower for some local authorities, particularly for those with a small pool of staff to draw from. In such instances in assessing applications we will look more closely at the evidence on activity to address the MHO shortfall.

1. Numbers to be entered onto MHO training courses to commence over the next 12 months. This should identify separately the number(s) to be supported through any funding sought in this application. It is acknowledged that there will be regional variation in the level of certainty possible in entering this information, given the variation in application deadlines for different MHO award courses. Applications should include the best possible estimate of training intentions.
2. Contextual information: This section allows any additional context to be provided for consideration in assessing the application. This should include any specific circumstances that increase MHO workload for the LA, such as the presence of specialist establishments, or any other evidence in support of the application that has not been presented already. Contextual information provided throughout the application will be considered in the application assessment, particularly in assessing how the application meets the grant criteria.
3. There is a range of historical data available on Mental Health Officer activities delivered under relevant legislation that is reported by LAs, and published by the Mental Welfare Commission.

Use of this data for assessment of applications and of a shortfall in MHO capacity has been explored in developing this application process. Complexities identified include the different approaches to MHO employment and deployment across LAs, meaning data might not be directly comparable in all instances and some figures may be affected by local practice. There is also a possibility that historical data could provide a temporary distorted account of the situation rather than reflect a long term trend. Data might not necessarily account for fluctuations due to factors, such as: staff changes/reductions; savings in training budgets resulting from austerity and organisational changes caused among other things by integration of health and social care services.

Use of historic activity data will be explored for future rounds of funding, but will not directly contribute to assessment of applications for this funding round.

Feedback from earlier Rounds of the Grant Scheme indicates that the main reasons for not being awarded grant include:

* the application did not provide any evidence of an actual shortfall, its scale and the impact of that
* there was little or no evidence of any action to address an existing shortfall.
* there was no evidence of an action plan/strategic approach to managing the shortfall
* the application showed limited action had been taken to address the shortfall and did not compare favourably with other applications where more action had been taken
* there was no evidence of additionality – i.e. no additional MHOs being trained over and above the average number being trained in the last 5 years.
* more work needed to be done on the application to provide the full range of evidence prescribed

**10. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS AND DELIVERY OF MINIMUM OUTCOMES**

A final report on use of funds and achievement by the specified number of social workers of the identified qualifications is required 18 months after receipt of funding. We will be contacting Round 1 grant recipients shortly on the format of that Report.

LAs are responsible for ensuring that the minimum outcomes set out in their application are achieved. If at any time during the period of grant, a LA realises that they will not be able to achieve their minimum requirement they must inform the scheme administrator (the Scottish Government). Where a LA does not appear to have taken appropriate action to achieve the minimum outcomes for which the grant was awarded, the monies provided must be immediately returned, unless the LA can submit evidence that it has taken appropriate corrective action and the outcome will be reached within a reasonable period.

LAs are required to supply evidence of training completion, for example by submitting a copy of the relevant certificates within the 18 month time period. If there is a delay in completion for reasons out with the LA control (such as illness, parental leave, etc), this should be notified to the Scottish Government as soon as possible and agreement sought for an extension to completion.

In the case of a failure to complete training, LAs will be required to provide Scottish Government with evidence that completion will take place within a reasonable period of time, so that an appropriate extension or exemption can be jointly agreed. Where an extension or exemption cannot be jointly agreed, LAs will be liable to repay the funding allocated, other than non-refundable items that have been necessarily incurred, such as course fees.

The evidence required should include an assurance from the Local Authority and relevant training provider that it will be possible for an interrupted/delayed course of training to be completed.

LAs must also submit evidence that additional social worker(s) trained as a MHO, in their new roles, are carrying out MHO specific duties, including information on how they are being deployed.

Failure to provide the reports required would affect consideration of any further applications for funding**.**

LAs are responsible for ensuring that these reports are done with the consent of all parties involved, namely academic institutions, as well as individual trainees, and that they are GDPR compliant.

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| **Section 1: Applicant Details** |

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| **Applicant Details** | |
| **Local Authority** |  |
| **Registered Office Address** |  |
| **Website** |  |
| **Name of Official Making Application** |  |
| **Job Title/Designation:** |  |
| **Full Address, including postcode** |  |
| **Telephone** |  |
| **Email** |  |

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| **Section 2: Funding applied for** |

Applications can be made for up to £34,000 per commitment to train an MHO. No specific details of costs are required if the application is for this amount or less per commitment.

In exceptional circumstances, an award for a greater amount would be considered. If you are submitting a requests for more than £34,000 per commitment to train an MHO, please include an appropriate justification, for the increased costs in your local situation that (e.g. such as costs of travel for rural areas).

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|  | **Funding applied for per commitment to train an MHO**  **£** | **Number of MHOs to be trained using the grant funding** |
| **Grant funding request** |  |  |
| **TOTAL FUNDING APPLIED FOR** |  |  |
| **If funding application exceeds £34,000 per commitment to train an MHO please provide justification below, showing how the additional amount in excess of £34,000 has been calculated** | | |
| Additional expenses – description & justification  Please separate types of additional expense and provide a justification for each type of expense (add further rows as required) | Estimated costs for this expense per commitment to train and MHO | Number of MHO trainees this additional expense will apply to |
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| **Section 3: Historical Data – Demonstrating the Existence of a Shortfall (A)** |

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|  | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/2020 | 2020/21 |
| MHO shortfall (hours) as reported to the SSSC for each relevant financial year |  |  |  |  |
| Number of practising MHOs employed in the Local doing some MHO work | | | |  |
| If known, expected change in MHO availability for 2022/23 due to retirement and/or changes to working hours (if possible express in reduction in hours of MHO activity expected over the year). | | | | |
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| Other information on MHO workforce availability changes anticipated in the next year not included above (no more than 300 words) | | | | |
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| **Section 4: Evidence of Actions Taken to Address an Existing Shortfall (B)** |

This section aims to allow Local Authorities to demonstrate they have sought to address a known or forecast shortfall in MHO capacity through strategic planning and action, including regular training of MHOs. This section also gives Local Authorities the opportunity to provide evidence that the numbers of MHOs in training may have been affected by external factors out with their control.

Assessment will consider to what extent there is evidence that the funding is likely to contribute to a coherent strategic approach to addressing a shortfall in capacity.

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|  | **2016/17** | **2017/18** | **2018/19** | **2019/20** | **2020/21** |
| ***Numbers of MHOs nominated for training in each of the last 5 years.***  Numbers of MHOs completing MHO training in each of the last 5 years |  |  |  |  |  |

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| Please provide details of any/all actions action undertaken over the last three years to address the reported MHO capacity shortfall. Include your strategic approach to MHO workforce planning and any circumstances outwith your control that have mitigated against your being able to successfully reduce shortfall. You might wish to consider including any arrangements or changes to deployment to address shortfalls and workforce planning activity to assess future demand and how it will be met (no more than 300 words) |
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| **Section 4: Evidence of Additionality (C)** |

Evidence sought in this section should show that the funding will facilitate the training of additional MHOs, beyond the ‘normal rate of training’.

This should include confirmed numbers accepted onto MHO training courses to commence over the next 12 months and the numbers who will be trained with this funding. This evidence should demonstrate that the numbers to be trained using the grant are additional to the average number trained over the last five years.

We are aware that the dates for course applications and acceptance vary and that all information may not be confirmed at the time of making this application. Please provide the most accurate information possible at the time of application.

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| **Year of commencement of training:** | **2022/23** | **2023/24** | **2024/25** |
| Current MHO training plans in absence of this grant funding, i.e. Number of training places to be applied for/already applied for irrespective of the outcome of this funding application. |  |  |  |
| Additional training to be supported by funding; i.e. number of training places to be supported by the funding applied for in this application. |  |  |  |
| Total number of MHO training places to be supported through courses commencing in the financial year indicated – *Successful completion by this number of trainees will be the minimum outcome sought from the grant funding award* |  |  |  |

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| Please provide any further contextual information not provided already in support of your application, for example presence of specialist institutions that affect workload, etc. *(no more than 300 words).* |
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| **Section 5: Legal Requirements and Conditions** |

**COMPLIANCE WITH INFORMATION REQUIREMENTS**

**Freedom of Information**

The Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 introduced important rights for all to access information held by Scottish public authorities - anyone asking for information will be entitled to receive it unless the information requested falls within an exempt category and even where information falls within an exempt category, there may be a public interest in the information being disclosed.

**Data Protection**

Should any information be provided as part of the application that is considered personal data for the purposes of the General Data Protection Regulation 2018 (GDPR) and in respect of which the Scottish Government is obliged to supply the following information:

* The data controller is the Scottish Government.
* The legal basis for collecting the information is Article 6(1) (c) and Article 6(1)(e) - of the GDPR.

The information you provide will be used for the following purposes:

1. Processing your application. Your application will be made available to Scottish Government officials, including those in the Office of the Chief Social Work Adviser and SSSC Officials as part of the assessment process.
2. If your application is successful, we may publish this application in hard copy or on the internet.
3. Data may be used for statistical and Scottish Government performance reporting and evaluation.

The application form will be stored securely and retained in order to ensure compliance with grant conditions that apply to projects that are successful in receiving funding. Apart from a) to c) above, the information you provide will not be disclosed to any other organisation for any purpose other than detecting or preventing fraud. For the purpose of detecting and preventing fraud, data may be disclosed to (i) subcontractors or sub-contractors employed by the Scottish Government for this purpose (ii) Audit Scotland and (iii) law enforcement agencies.

Your rights:

* You have the right to request information about how your personal data is processed and to request a copy of that personal data.
* You have the right to request that any inaccuracies in your personal data are rectified without delay and you can edit your contact details at any time. This should be done in the first instance by contacting the organisation providing you with support.
* Further information on The Scottish Government and its processing of personal data can be found here <https://beta.gov.scot/about/contact-information/personal-data/>

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| **Section 6: Declaration** |

**By signing this declaration I am confirming that I am an authorised signatory for the Local Authority applying for the Scottish Government’s MHO Capacity-building (training) Grant Scheme. I am also confirming that the statement below is accurate, and that my employing Local Authority has robust governance arrangements in place to ensure any funding awarded will be spent for the purposes outlined in this application.**

By signing this application form, I, hereby attest that as far as I know and believe, all the information in this application form is true, accurate and complete. I am authorised to allow this proposal to go ahead and to give my consent for the Scottish Government to:

* publish details of the financial support they have provided;
* give any details they have about our application, or from future assessments to Scottish Government officials, and other agencies;
* use any of these details in news releases, case studies, publications and other publicity materials; and
* publish information within this application in hard copy and on the internet, if successful.

I am also confirming that the organisation I represent complies with all current Data Protection and Privacy requirements, and has undertaken a Privacy Impact Assessment (if appropriate).

I agree the Scottish Government can undertake all the actions listed above without further asking for permission.

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| **Authorised Signatory Details** | | |
| **Full Name:** | | |
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| **Contact address:** | | |
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| **Telephone:** |  | **Email:** |
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