



# Scotland Conference 2025

4–5 September, 2025  
Strathclyde Country Park, Motherwell





# Building the foundations for a **Smarter Scotland**

Partnering with Scotland's local government and healthcare providers to deliver transformation



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# WELCOME



## Des Murray,

Chief Executive,  
North Lanarkshire Council  
and Solace Scotland  
Branch Chair

On behalf of all of Solace, can I welcome everyone to this year's seminar here in Strathclyde Park. My thanks to all speakers, exhibitors, sponsors, delegates, the venue and the team behind the organisation of the event itself. Now, on to business...Scotland is a small country with big ambition.

However, years of constant conflict over resources and prioritisation have undermined standards and outcomes. Services people depend on every day—housing, education, health, the economy, the environment, safety, and wellbeing—have all come under incredible strain so clearly change is required. At this year's event, reform tops the agenda so what kind do we want?

- Shift resources upstream and tackle causes? Of course, but from where and at what immediate cost to the public?
- Improve efficiency? Always, but the scale of the challenge and its cumulative impact is
- damaging our ability to innovate, with managed decline potentially a more likely outcome than improvement for many.
- Digital transformation? A whole new world, however, our collective understanding of its potential and our capacity to adapt at pace may be the biggest risk of all.
- Better integration of public services? Possibly but replacing one set of organisations with a "better-integrated" new entity risks creating yet another structure that ultimately fails.

We all imagine there must have been more resources in the past, yet here we are today. So, while resource is important it cannot be the answer. Perhaps what matters most is behaviour—mine, yours, everyone's. From those responsible for strategy, to those charged with implementing it and those for whom its targeted. And the need for it to change.

We need to progress a shared ambition and equally, have an honest conversation about the reality of living within our means, now and in the future. We must be willing to change behaviours. To sacrifice, organisationally and individually, to leave institutional thinking behind, to become whole place and whole system (and not just talk about it). To avoid language that divides, that prioritises without an honest understanding of wider system harm, to engage with all people about what the future truly looks like, for communities, families, children.

These are the challenges we must address—not the endless language of reform nor the well-worn arguments about needing more resources or redistributing less. That requires difficult conversations about a range of issues such as: Single-authority models, where health, council, community, and third-sector services are genuinely integrated. Hugely complex to achieve, but worth considering.

- Single-authority models, where health, council, community, and third-sector services are genuinely integrated. Hugely complex to achieve, but worth considering.
- Real preventative expenditure, based on evidence from across the country and beyond, with honesty about its impact on existing red lines.
- A legislative approach to empower and embed greater flexibility: pooling resources and tackling the whole system.
- An honest conversation about what that means for the shape of services and, more importantly, for the people who receive them—and about our ask that they, too, change as we must.

Ultimately, the goal is a sustainable public sector, supporting sustainable communities. So, yes, reform. Not the language of reform but the real thing.

# THURSDAY, 4 SEPTEMBER

07:30 - 08:30  
Strathclyde Country Park

## Mindful Activities at Strathclyde Country Park

Outside of the main conference schedule, delegates are invited to take part in a range of physical and wellbeing activities designed to foster reflection, connection, and relaxation. These optional sessions held in the early morning, or in the evening, offer a chance to engage with fellow attendees or enjoy the natural surroundings.

Available Activities:

- Walk
- Run
- Cycle

07:50 - 08:45  
Room: Taylor

## Solace Scotland Springboard Arrival and Module 1

This session is for the current Solace Scotland Springboard Cohort only.



08:15 - 09:00  
Room: Marquee

## Registration & Refreshments

Meet Our Exhibitors and Partners.

09:00 - 09:15  
Room: Marquee

## The Future of Public Services in Scotland

**Des Murray**, Chief Executive at North Lanarkshire Council and Solace Scotland Branch Chair, opens the first day of the Solace Scotland Conference, welcoming you all for a fantastic two days of networking and searching knowledge across public sector specialisms.



# THURSDAY, 4 SEPTEMBER

09:15 - 10:40

Room: Marquee

## The Shape of Transformational Reform—Perspectives

Speakers:

- **Joe Griffin**, Permanent Secretary, Scottish Government
- **Jo Farrell**, Chief Constable, Police Scotland
- **Sarah O'Donnell**, Deputy Chief Officer (Corporate Services), Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
- **Jane O'Donnell**, Chief Executive, COSLA
- **Louise Long MBE**, Chief Executive, NHS Lanarkshire
- **Dr Sarah Gadsden**, Chief Executive, Improvement Services

A high-level panel bringing together senior leaders from across Scotland's public service to share their insights on driving transformational reform.



Scottish Government  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba



# THURSDAY, 4 SEPTEMBER

10:30 - 12:45

## Scotland: A Place to Thrive

Your pre-booked study tour is waiting for you! We're excited to have you join us. Each tour offers a unique opportunity to explore, learn, and connect with others in your field.



Credit: Holmes Millar, Architects

### Tour A: Strathclyde Park

A low carbon high activity place for health and wellbeing. Cycle or travel by bus through Strathclyde Park to explore wildflower meadows, solar-lit paths, and the Commonwealth Games watersports centre. Visit the future site of a net zero transformation project turning a 1970s building into a low carbon hub for health, wellbeing, and events. Hear from the project team about sustainability goals and community impact.



### Tour B: Whole Family Support in North Lanarkshire

Discover how North Lanarkshire is delivering early and intensive whole family support through its Resilient People programme. This tour highlights collaborative efforts across sectors, rooted in The Promise, to tackle poverty and improve outcomes for families.



### Tour C: Regenerating Ravenscraig – from the ashes, a changing landscape

Explore one of Europe's largest brownfield regeneration projects. Learn about Ravenscraig's industrial legacy, current investments, and future plans including housing, commercial space, and community infrastructure. Visit key sites like the Regional Sports Facility and see how the area is being reimagined as a thriving, connected community.



### Tour D: Where the Wild Meadows Grow – bringing communities into the park

Join a walking tour through Strathclyde Country Park with rangers and stewards. Discover biodiversity projects, community-led planning, and the park's transformation into a wellbeing resource. Visit the Bellshill Gateway to see new wheeled sports facilities, play trails, and gardens developed with local input.

# THURSDAY, 4 SEPTEMBER

12:45 - 13:45

Room: Marquee

## Exhibition & Lunch

Meet Our Exhibitors and Partners

13:45 - 14:30

Room: Marquee

## Integrated Public Services

Speakers:

- **Trevor Holden**, Managing Director, South Norfolk Council & Broadland District Council
- **Dr Jonathan Carr-West**, Chief Executive, LGiU

Explore innovative approaches to integrated public service delivery, drawing on successful models from across the UK and beyond.



14:30 - 15:00

Room: Marquee

## Exhibition & Refreshments

Meet Our Exhibitors & Partners

# THURSDAY, 4 SEPTEMBER

**Breakout Sessions and Roundtables:** You have a choice of attending one series of workshops and roundtables.

Room: Atrium  
15:00 - 16:00  
Roundtable

## The Future of Public Sector Leisure: Challenges, Opportunities, Action

Speakers:

- **Heather Liddle**, Active & Creative Communities Manager, North Lanarkshire Council
- **Jonny Curley**, Director for Scotland, Alliance Leisure

Local authorities are grappling with a multitude of pressures, in particular financial, that threaten to impact the delivery of essential services, including leisure services.

However, local leisure provision offers huge social value and benefits to our communities, including the reduction of health inequalities and more bespoke localised health services, as well as the chance to provide a commercial return via diversification.

The roundtable will be hosted by colleagues from North Lanarkshire Council and Solace business partner Alliance Leisure, with North Lanarkshire offering insight into their delivery model and successful health and wellbeing programme.

With Wes Streeting suggesting the creation of “neighbourhood health services closer to people’s homes”, can Councils lean into the Government’s agenda and place leisure facilities at the heart of a preventative health service?

Infrastructure is needed to delivery this place-based model and with 112 Scottish public leisure facilities built more than 40 years ago, capital investment is needed at scale. If we only replace those 40yrs+ facilities (representing 34% of the leisure estate) investment of around £3bn is required. Whilst some investment is being made – around £260m of capital leisure projects are currently in construction or various stages of design and planning – more is needed to fulfil the requirement.

A final discussion point in this debate surrounds a leisure service’s contribution to carbon emissions (up to 40% of a council’s total emissions in some cases). With all council’s declaring climate emergencies and aiming for net zero targets, the pressure is on to delivery carbon savings whilst managing a stretched non-statutory service.

To continue this debate, we would like to invite you to join us for an exclusive roundtable discussion on the future of public sector leisure.



# THURSDAY, 4 SEPTEMBER

15:00 - 16:00

Room: Marquee  
Workshop

## **Specialist Employment Support – Driving progress through inclusive practice**

Speakers:

**Lianne Williams**, Director of Development, Enable Works

**Briony Williamson**, Head of Operations, Enable Works

The session will focus on the importance of specialist employment support services, the role of qualified staffing in delivering effective interventions, and the significant return on investment for local authorities and government when these services are implemented with fidelity and care.

The session will also include reflections on the role of education and transition planning for individuals with learning challenges, and how early, integrated support across education and employment services is vital to ensuring long-term success in the world of work.

- Specialist Employment Support
- Importance of Support and Staffing
- Return on Investment

Specialist employment support is a central driver of economic participation, health equity, and social inclusion. As local leaders, ensuring quality delivery through investment in services which provide model fidelity and skilled staffing will deliver long-term, transformative impact.



# THURSDAY, 4 SEPTEMBER

Room: Marquee  
15:00 - 16:00  
Workshop

## Meeting the Social Housing Demand: Closing the Gap with Proactive Approaches

Speaker:

**Chris Hornung**, Managing Director- Public Sector, Totalmobile

The provision of high-quality social housing is key to improving health, education, and life outcomes, but meeting demand requires more than just increasing supply. This session explores how proactive strategies can help close the housing gap by anticipating future demand, improving property standards, and maximising capacity. We'll examine how improving quality can reduce voids, how to do more with constrained budgets, and how technology can support smarter, more sustainable decision-making across the sector.



Room: Davis  
15:00 - 16:00  
Workshop

## Workshop: Delivered by Oracle

Speakers:

**Leatham Green**, Executive Director of Transformation, Oracle

**Graeme McMillan**, Transformation Programme Manager, Argyll & Bute Council

**Claire Ferguson**, Team Leader, Climate Change Strategy, Shetland Islands Council

Digital Transformation Unlocked: Leadership, Culture & the Power of Collaboration

As local councils across Scotland face unprecedented pressure—from rising public demand to shrinking budgets—the call for meaningful transformation has never been louder. But what does real transformation actually look like? It's more than the latest tech or big strategies. It's about people, purpose, and a seismic shift in how leadership shows up.

Based on in-depth interviews with Chief Executives and insights from Executive Vision Workshops across Scottish local authorities, this session brings you front-row access to a ground-breaking study on what truly drives—or derails—public sector transformation in a high-pressure environment and have the opportunity to hear from the CEOs of tomorrow. Join us for an energising and candid exploration of the mindsets, behaviours, and cultural ingredients that separate successful transformation efforts from stalled initiatives.

**ORACLE**

# THURSDAY, 4 SEPTEMBER

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Room: Taylor  
15:00 - 16:00  
Workshop

## Risk, Resilience and Reform

Speakers:

**Alix Bedford**, Customer and Partnerships Manager, Zurich Municipal

**Neil Collington**, Regional Manager Scotland, Zurich Municipal

As public sector organisations face increasing financial pressures and greater demands for reform, it is more important than ever to take a strategic, long-term view of decision-making. Evaluating the lasting consequences of today's actions—beyond immediate needs—can help ensure sustainable, positive outcomes for communities.

How can leaders effectively assess the total cost of risk when making critical decisions? By prioritising prevention, embracing proactive mitigation strategies, and investing in resilience, organisations can reduce both short- and long-term risks and create enduring value.

In this session, Zurich Municipal will explore the evolving risk landscape and its unique implications for the Scottish public sector. Together, we will examine whether current risk and insurance programmes are sufficiently robust to meet future challenges, and discuss practical approaches to building greater resilience for lasting public benefit.



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16:30 - 17:30  
Strathclyde Country Park

## Mindful Activities at Strathclyde Country Park

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Available Activities:

- Walk
- Run
- Cycle

# THURSDAY, 4 SEPTEMBER

19:00 -19:45

Room: Marquee

## Informal Drinks Reception with Young Musicians

You're warmly invited to join us for an evening of relaxed networking and conversation.

Kindly Sponsored by CGI.



19:45 - Late

Room: Marquee

## Informal Evening Meal & Table Discussions

Unwind and enjoy a laid-back evening of fantastic live music, good vibes, and a welcoming atmosphere for all. This is the perfect opportunity to relax, connect, and continue meaningful conversations with peers well into the night. Whether you're winding down or diving deeper into discussions, the evening promises a warm and engaging setting to round off the day.



# Oracle is proud to enable Local Government to drive innovation in service delivery for the benefit of its local communities and residents.

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Join today to unlock your team's potential. Visit [solace.org.uk](http://solace.org.uk) or contact Kay Nyamande at [kay.nyamande@solace.org.uk](mailto:kay.nyamande@solace.org.uk) / 0207 233 0081

### Ongoing Support

Our commitment to your development extends beyond a single course or event. We offer ongoing support for your long-term success.

Empower your team to thrive in times of change with Solace's learning and membership offerings.

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# FRIDAY, 5 SEPTEMBER

07:30 - 08:30  
Strathclyde Country  
Park

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- Walk
- Run
- Cycle

09:00 - 09:40  
Room: Marquee

## Arrival, Registration & Refreshments

Meet Our Exhibitors and Partners

09:40 - 09:45  
Room: Marquee

## Welcome Address

Speaker:

**David Bagwell**, Senior Public Partnerships Manager, Believ



09:45 - 10:40  
Room: Marquee

## Our Perspective – The View of Communities & Partners on Future Reform

Panel Speakers:

- The Third Sector Perspective with **Anna Fowlie**, Chief Executive, Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO)
- The Third Sector Perspective with **Fraser McKinlay**, Chief Executive, The Promise
- Homes at the Heart of Everything with **Alison Watson**, Director, Shelter Scotland

Join us for a thought-provoking panel featuring voices from across sectors, each offering unique insights into the challenges and opportunities shaping our future.



# FRIDAY, 5 SEPTEMBER

10:40 -11:30

Room: Marquee

## The Transformational Impact of Public Services

Speakers:

- **Dr Kristy Docherty**, Director of Public Services, Edinburgh Futures Institute
- **Clair Thomson**, Prevention Lead, Police Scotland
- **Dr Diane Stockton**, Prevention Lead, Public Health Scotland

A cross-sector conversation on embedding prevention at the heart of public service delivery.



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH  
Edinburgh Futures Institute



Public Health  
Scotland

The Scottish  
Prevention Hub

11:30 - 12:00

Room: Marquee

## Lived Experience: Voices That Shape Change

Hear directly from individuals whose lived experiences are helping to inform and transform public services.

The many voices of lived experience highlighting the human impact of public services:

- Employability: Insights from apprenticeship programmes
- A Community that Cares: Housing and social care in action
- Breastfeeding: Supporting children and families

12:00 - 13:00

Room: Marquee

## Exhibition & Lunch

Meet Our Exhibitors and Partners

# FRIDAY, 5 SEPTEMBER

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13:00 - 14:00

Room: Marquee

## Final Panel & Delegate Discussion: Next Steps for Reform

### Panel Speakers:

- Island Authority Models with **Malcolm Burr**, Chief Executive, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
- One Ayrshire with **Craig Hatton**, Chief Executive, North Ayrshire Council
- The Future of Forth Valley with **Ross McGuffie**, Chief Executive, NHS Forth Valley

As the conference draws to a close, this session brings together key voices from across the event to reflect on shared insights, lived experiences, and bold ideas. Together, we'll explore what's needed to move forward on the journey of public service reform.

This interactive session invites all delegates to contribute to shaping the path ahead.



Comhairle nan Eilean Siar  
Ag Obair Còmhla Airson nan Eilean



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14:00 - 14:10

Room: Marquee

## Closing Remarks

**Pippa Milne**, Chief Executive at Argyll and Bute and Solace Scotland Branch Vice Chair will reflect on the conference highlights and discussions that will have taken place across the two days with your colleagues in the room.



# FRIDAY, 5 SEPTEMBER

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14:10 - 16:10  
Strathclyde Park

## Repeat of Study Visits | Scotland – A Place to Thrive

Study visits in and around Strathclyde Park

Here's your opportunity to join another study tour and take some time to reflect on the 2 Day conference before heading into the weekend.

Please note that you can only register to attend ONE of the four study tours available. Further information for each study tour can be found in Day 1 of the programme.

- Tour A: Strathclyde Park – A low carbon high activity place for health and wellbeing.
- Tour B: Whole family support in North Lanarkshire.
- Tour C: Regenerating Ravenscraig – from the ashes, a changing landscape
- Tour D: Where the wild meadows grow – bringing communities into the park. programme.

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16:30 - 17:30  
Strathclyde Country Park

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## Alliance Leisure



Alliance Leisure is the UK's leading leisure development specialist, working in partnership with local authorities and operators to develop engaging place-based active environments. Over the last 25 years, Alliance Leisure has delivered more than 285 projects, ranging from new build or significant remodelling of leisure sites to outdoor spaces.

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Totalmobile is a Field Service Management (FSM) provider passionate about making work and the lives of mobile workers better. An established market leader with 375 staff across the UK and Ireland, Totalmobile supports over 1,000 organisations and 500,000 workers to transform the delivery of field services and experience an exceptional return on investment.

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We are the Digital Office. Leaders of digital transformation and delivery across Scottish Local Government. Founded in 2016, we support Scottish local authorities with their digital transformation journeys. We translate and align the actions within the National Digital Strategy into collective and scalable initiatives.

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We understand the importance of everything you do. At Zurich Municipal, we are committed to protecting the public and voluntary sectors and to keeping our promises. As the only direct dealing insurer in the sector, we have worked in partnership with the public sector, community organisations, charities, educational institutions, the housing sector, health and non-profit organisations for over 30 years.

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We work for an equal society where everyone has the right to live, work and participate in the communities of their choice. We deliver this through high quality, person-centred social care, groundbreaking employability services and wider campaigning and impact for inclusion.

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## Policy in Practice



Policy in Practice empowers people via proactive, integrated support. Millions of families are missing out on £23 billion of support during a cost of living crisis. Ask us how much is unclaimed in your area and how we are helping one in four local authorities to boost resident's incomes and reduce their costs.

**Website:** [policyinpractice.co.uk](http://policyinpractice.co.uk)  
**LinkedIn:** [linkedin.com/company/policy-in-practice](https://www.linkedin.com/company/policy-in-practice)

## Soil Association Scotland



The Soil Association is a food and farming charity that works to transform the way we eat, farm and care for our natural world. We work closely with Scotland's public sector through our Scottish Government funded Food for Life Scotland programme.

**Website:** [soilassociation.org/our-work-in-scotland/](http://soilassociation.org/our-work-in-scotland/)  
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## The University of Edinburgh



The University of Edinburgh is a world-leading research institution committed to improving lives through innovation and collaboration. Through the Edinburgh Futures Institute's Real-World Data Skills pilot, Bayes Centre's Skills programmes, and Business School's AI and Generative AI for Leaders course, we partner with leaders to foster ethical, data-driven transformation – let's start the conversation.

**Website:** [www.ed.ac.uk/#lu](http://www.ed.ac.uk/#lu)  
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One partner integrating the power of insight, technology and operational knowledge to deliver unmatched value. We use our whole lifecycle expertise to make the nation's assets last longer and work smarter.

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# SPEAKERS

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**Alison Watson**, Director, Shelter Scotland

Alison has been Director of Shelter Scotland since 2020, having joined the organization in 2002 and becoming Deputy Director in 2014. She is dedicated to addressing housing policy failures and driving structural changes to end homelessness, focusing on increasing social homes.

Alison has served on several strategic and policy groups, including the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group and the Homelessness Prevention Strategy Group. Before Shelter Scotland, she worked in health and social care, contributing to mental health services and involving people with mental health issues in service design. Alison is also a Trustee of Change Mental Health and a member of the Health Foundation's steering group on improving health and tackling inequalities in Scotland.



**Alix Bedford**, Customer and Partnerships Manager, Zurich Municipal

An enterprise risk professional with more than 20 years' experience working both with and within the public and private sectors, Alix is passionate about the value of risk management as an enabler and in driving improved resilience of organisations and communities.

Her current role involves looking at key emerging and evolving areas of risk now and in the future and leading Zurich's response to these, particularly through partnership, thought leadership and insight.



**Anna Fowlie**, Chief Executive, Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO)

Anna joined SCVO as Chief Executive at the end of April 2018. SCVO is the national membership body for the voluntary sector in Scotland, providing services such as payroll and IT as well as lobbying and policy work on behalf of the sector and publishing Third Force News. Before that, she was Chief Executive of the Scottish Social Services Council for nearly 9 years. The SSSC is the professional regulator for social workers and people working in adult and children's social care.

Her career started with 18 years working in HR in local government, after which Anna joined COSLA as part of the employers' function working on, for example, national pay negotiations.

She then became lead for all policy relating to children and young people which led to her being seconded into Scottish Government to lead on corporate parenting for children and young people in the care system before moving to the SSSC in 2009.

Anna was on the board of Who Cares? Scotland for 8 years, and joined the Oversight Board for The Promise. She is on the board of Dads Rock, and of Prosper (formerly SCDI). She has a degree in History of Art from Edinburgh University, a postgraduate qualification in HR and is a Chartered Member of the CIPD.

# SPEAKERS

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## **Briony Williamson**, Head of Operations, Enable Works

Briony Williamson is Head of Operations at Enable Works, the largest specialist provider of employability services in Scotland, focused on disability, health, and inclusion. With 15 years' experience leading supported employment services, she has a deep understanding of specialist employment provision and how to deliver impactful, person-centred support.

Briony oversees the operational delivery of Enable Works' programmes, driving quality, innovation, and continuous improvement. She is committed to inclusive leadership and building services that remove barriers, promote equality, and create meaningful opportunities for those furthest from the labour market.



## **Chris Hornung**, Managing Director Public Sector, Totalmobile

Chris is passionate about driving meaningful change across local government and housing services, helping local authorities enhance the quality, accessibility, and efficiency of their support for communities.

With over 15 years of experience in the public sector, Chris has worked closely with some of the UK's largest local authorities and social housing providers, delivering impactful solutions that improve service delivery and resident outcomes.



## **Clair Thomson**, Prevention Hub Lea, EFI Associate, Police Scotland

Clair has spent 12 years in Learning & Development, Transformation, and Change roles within policing. She has led strategic collaborations between Police Scotland and Public Health Scotland, focusing on building and embedding a public health approach across Scotland. Clair's leadership in collaborative programs has been recognized through successful evaluations by the Scottish Institute of Policing Research (SIPR). Clair is currently co-director of The Scottish Prevention Hub which is a national co-directed partnership with Public Health Scotland and Edinburgh Futures Institute. Clair led the development and the delivery of the first Strategic Collaboration Framework with Police Scotland and Public Health Scotland.

# SPEAKERS

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**Craig Hatton**, Chief Executive,  
North Ayrshire Council

Jack Tilson is a Technical Solutions Architect specialising in public sector digital transformation, with extensive experience partnering with local authorities across the UK. He has worked closely with numerous councils to modernise their service delivery, improve operational efficiency, and enhance citizen experiences through technology. Jack has helped local authorities navigate complex digital transformations, with particular expertise in security, compliance and building resilient systems that deliver value for money. His collaborative approach has supported councils in achieving significant improvements in service delivery whilst meeting their unique regulatory requirements. Join AWS' breakout session to explore practical insights and lessons learnt from successful council transformation programmes.



**David Bagwell**, Senior Public  
Partnerships Manager, Believ

David Bagwell is a seasoned leader in public sector collaboration, currently serving as Senior Public Partnerships Manager. With a career spanning over a decade in strategic partnership development, David has led transformative initiatives across local government, health, and community sectors—driving innovation, inclusion, and impact.

At the heart of David's work is a commitment to building resilient public services through cross-sector collaboration. He has championed integrated approaches and is known for his ability to navigate complex stakeholder environments with clarity and purpose.

David joins Solace Scotland to share insights on unlocking the potential of place-based partnerships, fostering leadership at all levels, and designing services that reflect the lived experiences of communities. He will help you explore practical strategies for sustainable transport that will help and support the delivery of cleaner air for all.



**Des Murray**, Chief Executive,  
North Lanarkshire Council and  
Solace Scotland Branch Chair

Des Murray carved out a career in local government after starting a Youth Training Scheme (YTS) as a school leaver in Airdrie, North Lanarkshire.

Starting with Strathclyde Region within the Finance service and then Building & Works, he then joined the newly-formed South Lanarkshire Council for several years before eventually making it home to Scotland's fourth largest local authority and the one in which he lives, North Lanarkshire Council in 2011, as a senior officer in housing property.

As Scotland's largest local authority landlord and as Head of Housing Property, he was responsible for a portfolio of 36,500 properties with a combined capital and revenue budget in excess of £100million per year.

After a period as Assistant Chief Executive of Enterprise and Housing Resources, he was named Chief Executive of North Lanarkshire Council in June 2018. He implemented The Plan for North Lanarkshire in 2019 which set the direction for the council and its partners, with a focus on economic regeneration and growth and improving the lives of people who live and work there.

Already under his leadership, significant progress has been made to positively impact on social and economic conditions from investment in infrastructure and improvements to education, employability, housing and family services. The next phase of The Plan has recently been agreed that will see a further £1.7bn of capital investment across North Lanarkshire over the next five years on programmes and projects that will make an enormous difference to towns, communities and people for many years.

Des is also the Chair of the Scottish branch of the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) where he has a key role in discussing the current and future role of local councils to deliver vital services to communities across the country.

# SPEAKERS

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**Dr Diane Stockton**, Prevention Hub Lead, EFI Associate, Public Health Scotland

Dr Diane Stockton is a Consultant in Public Health in Public Health Scotland.

Her national roles have included Director of Public Health Sciences in NHS Health Scotland, covering public health surveillance, evidence and evaluation aimed at improving health and reducing health inequalities, co-director (and co-founder) of the Scottish Public Health Observatory and principal investigator for the Scottish Burden of Disease Study. Earlier in her career she led the cancer surveillance team for Information Services (ISD) Scotland. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Diane led the Scottish public health response for children and young people (with a particular focus on education) and the national COVID-19 vaccine surveillance programme. She has a wide range of research interests, with around 100 scientific publications.

Diane is currently the Head of the Clinical, Health Intelligence and Research division in Public Health Scotland which provides scientific leadership around prevention, health improvement, healthcare public health and research.

She is also the Equity and Justice lead for Public Health Scotland, co-directing the Scottish Prevention Hub with Police Scotland and Edinburgh University, working to take whole-system public health approach focused on primary prevention for children and young people, to support the reduction of health and wellbeing inequalities in Scotland.



**Fraser McKinlay**, Chief Executive, The Promise Scotland

Fraser has been Chief Executive of The Promise Scotland since September 2022. Prior to that, he spent 16 years working for Audit Scotland, including ten years as Controller of Audit and Director of Performance Audit and Best Value.

Before joining Audit Scotland, Fraser was a public services consultant in Edinburgh and London. He specialised in leadership, change management, facilitation and process improvement.

Fraser is committed to systems change, focusing on how public money is spent more effectively to enable better lives for children, young people, care experienced adults, families, and communities.



**Heather Liddle**, Active & Creative Communities Manager, North Lanarkshire Council

Heather has worked in local government for 34 years, spending the first part of her career within human resources. Having led on the insourcing of culture and leisure services from ALEO status to North Lanarkshire Council in 2020, Heather took up the post of manager of the new Active & Creative Communities service when it returned to the council in 2021. Heather has been responsible for leading the team in its transformation to a key player in the public health agenda in North Lanarkshire.

# SPEAKERS

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**Jane O'Donnell**, Chief Executive, COSLA

Jane O'Donnell was appointed the Chief Executive of COSLA, the voice of local government in Scotland, in March 2023. COSLA is a councillor-led, cross-party organisation which champions councils' vital work to improve the lives of everyone in their communities. Jane has over 25 years' experience working in and with councils and, prior to her appointment, spent two years in senior roles in Scottish Government.

Jane has a particular interest in ensuring a whole system approach to public policy and public services. She has held senior trustee roles in several third sector organisations supporting women and girls. Jane was a founder member of the Suicide Prevention Leadership Group and is a strong advocate for the role of local government in wellbeing. In her spare time, Jane is an avid reader and film fan and enjoys taking her dog for long walks across the country. Jane lives in West Lothian with her family.



**Jo Farrell**, Chief Executive, Chief Constable, Police Scotland

Jo Farrell has overall command and responsibility for the Police Service of Scotland and leads 22,000 officers and staff serving communities across a third of the United Kingdom's landmass.

Chief Constable Farrell joined the police as a constable in Cambridge in 1991. In 2002, she joined Northumbria Police, initially as a Chief Inspector, and was promoted to Assistant Chief Constable, with responsibility for response and neighbourhood policing as well as the communications department.

Chief Constable Farrell joined Durham Constabulary in November 2016 as Deputy Chief Constable before being appointed Chief Constable in June 2019. Chief Constable Farrell chairs the National Police Chiefs' Council's Digital Data and Technology Co-ordination Committee.

In October 2023, Chief Constable Farrell entered office at Police Scotland.



**Joe Griffin**, Permanent Secretary, Scottish Government

Joe has been working for the Scottish Government since 2004. His roles include being Director-General for Strategy and External Affairs and Director-General Education and Justice.

His experience includes:

- Director, Safer Communities
- Director, Early Learning and Childcare
- Acting Director for Fair Work
- Deputy Director, Creating Positive Futures (Children and Families)
- Head of Reducing Reoffending
- Principal Private Secretary to the First Minister

Earlier in his career, Joe was a diplomat at the UK Government Foreign and Commonwealth Office which included postings to New York and Paris.

Joe is married with three children and lives in Edinburgh. Joe believes deeply in the potential of government in Scotland to deliver good outcomes and improve people's lives.

# SPEAKERS

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**Dr Jonathan Carr-West**, Chief Executive, LGIU

Dr Jonathan Carr-West has been the Chief Executive of LGIU (Local Government Information Unit) since February 2013 having previously been Director of Policy. He leads on all aspects of policy, membership, and influencing work. Jonathan is a leading national expert on local government transformation, local democracy and public services. Some of his particular interests are participative democracy, the evolving nature of public services and devolution. With an extensive media profile and sector credibility, he has published on topics as diverse as localism and public service transformation, cognitive and behavioural science, and the politics of cultural memory.

Before joining the LGIU, he was Deputy Programme Director and Acting Head of Programme at the RSA (Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Commerce and Manufactures) where he developed and managed projects across a range of issues including environmental policy, water and sanitation infrastructure, offender learning and rehabilitation, community cohesion, education, arts and drugs treatment.



**Jonny Curley**, Director for Scotland, Alliance Leisure

Jonny has been working in sport and leisure for over 30 years and currently leads the Scottish development team at Alliance Leisure. Alliance have developed over 280 leisure construction projects with a value of £1.2billion of investment, so Jonny brings this wealth of experience to the conversation.



**Dr Kristy Docherty**, Director of Public Services, Edinburgh Futures Institute

Kristy is the Director of Public Services and Sector Engagement Lead at the Edinburgh Futures Institute. She is responsible for leading on strategy and engagement with public, private and third sector organisations involved in the delivery of public services. This specifically involves creating, brokering and building relationships and partnerships in order to create the conditions for effective collaboration and to facilitate data driven innovation – all in support of addressing intractable and systemic societal issues.

Prior to her role at the Futures Institute, Kristy was a Lecturer in Leadership, Strategy and Organisational Behaviour. Her higher education experience and PhD in Collaboration is underpinned by 20+ years' in practice, spanning the public, private and third sectors where she has held Consultancy and Director level positions for organisations in the Social Housing, Urban Regeneration and Renewable Energy fields.

Kristy is currently working with colleagues from Police Scotland and Public Health Scotland to develop the 'Scottish Prevention Hub', an innovative ecosystem focused on reducing inequalities through actions to improve health and wellbeing and establishing a Public Service Innovation Lab. The Hub and Lab will be situated at the Edinburgh Futures Institute.

# SPEAKERS

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**Leatham Green, Executive Director of Transformation, Oracle**

Leatham joined Oracle in 2021 having enjoyed a successful career in public service that spans over 30 years with roles as Programme Director: Orbis (shared service between East Sussex, Surrey and Brighton and Hove City Council) HR Director, East Sussex County Council, Surrey County Council and Head of Contracts at Kent County Council.

Leatham also ran his award-winning agency 'The Mindful HR Centre' and was Executive Director of the Public Service People Management Association and a PPMA National Policy Board member for over 20 years. Leatham created and facilitates PPMA's award winning talent development programmes which has now supported over 350 aspiring public sector leaders.

Leatham has received numerous awards for his work in the field of business transformation including HRO's HR International Influencer; HRO's European HRD; PPMA HRD and The Guardian's Public Servant Award for Innovation in HR 7 OD.

Leatham's real passion lies in creating opportunities to highlight the breadth and depth of youth talent in organisations and supporting them to gain in confidence and self-belief and enabling people to be in the driving seat of their wellbeing.

Leatham is a life long follower of Kate Bush and lives in Shoreham – by – Sea with his partner and they share a house with their whippet Luca.



**Lianne Williams, Director of Institute and past President, Socitm**

Lianne Williams is Director of Development at Enable Works, Scotland's largest specialist provider of employability services focused on disability, health, and inclusion. With over 13 years at Enable she brings extensive experience in strategic development, funding, and inclusive programme design.

Lianne leads the development and sustainability of Enable Works' national services, securing funding, building partnerships, and driving innovation to create inclusive employment and education pathways. She also oversees the expansion of Breaking Barriers, a pioneering programme supporting young people with learning disabilities to access university and meaningful careers.

Alongside her role, Lianne has completed an MBA and is preparing to begin a PhD focused on inclusive education practice and systems change. She is passionately committed to advancing Enable's mission and ensuring Enable Works remains a leader in person-centred, impactful support.



**Louise Long MBE, Chief Executive, NHS Lanarkshire**

Louise Long is the newly appointed Chief Executive of NHS Lanarkshire, bringing over 30 years' public sector experience across education, social work, and health and social care. Formerly Chief Executive of Inverclyde Council and Chief Officer of the Inverclyde IJB, Louise is known for her collaborative leadership and commitment to public service.

Awarded an MBE in 2023 for services to local government and the community, she has led transformative work across sectors. Louise is passionate about reducing inequalities and empowering communities, and now leads NHS Lanarkshire during a vital period of renewal, innovation, and health and social care reform.

# SPEAKERS

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**Malcolm Burr**, Chief Executive, Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar

Malcolm has been Chief Executive of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar since November 2005, having previously held posts with Orkney Islands Council as Assistant Chief Executive, and in Legal Services in Comhairle nan Eilean and Strathclyde Regional Council. He hails from Edinburgh and has degrees in Law from the Universities of Edinburgh and Cambridge.

Malcolm is Convener of the Electoral Management Board for Scotland, a member of the Court of the University of the Highlands and Islands and is Secretary and a former Chair of SOLACE Scotland, for which he currently looks after the Elections and Local Democracy portfolio.



**Neil Collington**, Regional Manager Scotland, Zurich Municipal

Neil has been a valued member of Zurich since 2012, when he joined as a Claims Inspector. With a wealth of experience in the industry dating back to 1999, he has held various roles, including that of a Counter Fraud Investigator.

Since 2018, Neil has been part of Zurich Municipal, initially focusing on our Charities and Social Organisations in Scotland. He later transitioned to our Public Services team, and now leads the team in Scotland, playing a crucial role in supporting Scottish public and voluntary sector organisations with their insurance and risk management programs.



**Ross McGuffie**, Director of Institute and past President, Socitm

Ross McGuffie is Chief Executive of NHS Forth Valley. He graduated in Physiology and Sports Sciences from the University of Glasgow before returning there to complete a Masters degree in Public Health. Ross commenced his working life in the area of Health Promotion, which developed his passion for public health and inequalities. Since then, he moved into numerous operational management posts in NHS Lanarkshire before becoming Head of Strategic Planning, Performance and Quality Assurance and then Chief Officer for the North Lanarkshire Health and Social Care Partnership. Ross was the Chair of Health and Social Care Scotland (national Chief Officers' group) before moving to become the Chief Executive of NHS Forth Valley in October 2024.

# SPEAKERS

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**Dr Sarah Gadsden**, Chief Executive, Improvement Services

After completing her PhD in public sector management, Sarah started working in Local Government in 1998 as a Training and Development Officer in South Ayrshire Council. She then joined Renfrewshire Council in 2001 as a Policy Officer and moved on to the roles of Policy Planning Manager and Customer Services Manager.

Sarah joined the Improvement Service in January 2009 as a Programme Manager and moved on to the roles of Head of Change and Development and Director of Strategic Development and Collaboration.

Sarah was appointed as Interim Chief Executive in March 2018 and as Chief Executive in April 2020.



**Sarah O'Donnell**, Deputy Chief Officer (Corporate Services), Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

Sarah O'Donnell was appointed as Deputy Chief Officer (Corporate Services) at the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service in April 2025, having previously held the role of Director of Finance and Contractual Services since the inception of the Service in 2013.

Sarah is a qualified accountant with over 30 years' experience within the public sector in Scotland across local government, public bodies, and the Scottish Government. She began her career with Strathclyde Regional Council as a trainee accountant. Shortly after qualifying she joined Strathclyde Police as a Management Accountant, before becoming Chief Accountant at Strathclyde Fire Brigade and then Head of Finance.

Sarah was a member of the first strategic leadership team of SFRS and led on various elements of reform, and the development of the new Service; including estate rationalisation, corporate systems and process rationalisation, and financial management, enabling the required reform savings to be delivered.

In 2021, Sarah joined the Scottish Government on secondment as Strategic Lead (Director) for Finance and Governance within DG Communities, working closely with the Director General and Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice Housing and Local Government.



**Trevor Holden**, Managing Director, South Norfolk Council & Broadland District Council

An experienced and dynamic senior leader of large and complex organisations, with a strong track record of delivery across the private and public sectors. A highly motivational, respected and established senior executive, having built and led high performing teams across national and local organisations.

Experienced at working within differing political and economic environments and within 'super-diverse' communities. Delivery is underpinned by a probing mind, a depth of understanding and pace of delivery, with a clear record of delivering high performance, improved productivity and innovation across a range of different environments, Local Government, at District and Unitary levels, a national housing provider and as an RAF officer.

Trevor has been a Local Authority Chief Executive for over 14 years. Currently the MD of the merged staff supporting the councils of Broadland and South Norfolk.

