

# Report

Report to:	<b>Education Resources Committee</b>
Date:	<b>19 May 2020</b>
Report by:	<b>Executive Director (Education Resources)</b>

Subject:	<b>Covid-19 – Update on Impact on Schools and Educational Settings</b>
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## 1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ♦ provide an update on the response and key activities of Education Resources during the Covid-19 pandemic
- ♦ advise of the Scottish Government's guidance to local education authorities following the closure of schools and nurseries
- ♦ advise of decisions taken by the Scottish Government in relation to:-
  - ♦ the delivery of 1140 hours of early learning and childcare
  - ♦ the relaxation of restrictions in respect of Pupil Equity and Scottish Attainment Challenge Funding
  - ♦ an amendment to the Placing Request Regulations
  - ♦ an extension to the consultation on the draft statutory guidance for the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006

## 2. Recommendation(s)

The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) that the response by Education Resources and key activities undertaken, as detailed in the report, be noted
- (2) that the decision by the Scottish Government to put on hold the legislative requirement to deliver 1140 hours of early learning and childcare by August 2020 (as per para 3.5) and the subsequent action by Education Resources to communicate the revised position and further updates with parents, carers and early years partner providers, be approved;
- (3) that the decision to continue to provide emergency childcare for key workers in our 20 schools and 6 early years establishments continue until necessary during the period of the Covid-19 pandemic be approved;
- (4) that the arrangements for supporting vulnerable children and the payment of £15 per week for each child in eligible families in lieu of free school meals be approved
- (5) that the notification from the Scottish Government to advise local education authorities that they have relaxed the restrictions with regards to Pupil Equity and Scottish Attainment Challenge funding to enable councils to offset some of the costs which are arising as are a result of the pandemic, be noted; and
- (6) that the contents of the report along with the fact that there is no indication as yet, as to when schools and educational settings will re-open, be noted.

### **3. Background/Current Context**

- 3.1. The First Minister announced on Wednesday 18 March that schools and nurseries would close to children and pupils from Friday 20 March.
- 3.2. The Scottish Government in its guidance to local education authorities stated that initial activity following the closure should be on the following three key areas:-
  - ◆ to ensure the children of key workers have continuing access to childcare and learning
  - ◆ to maintain protections and support for children who may be particularly vulnerable in the current circumstances
  - ◆ to provide educational continuity for children and young people learning from home
- 3.3. The Scottish Government also intimated to local authorities and families that learning and teaching will be undertaken remotely, supported by teachers working from home on an ongoing basis.
- 3.4. In the elected member briefings on school closures information has been provided on each of the three areas above along with confirmation of the Scottish Government's decision to put on hold the legislative requirement to deliver 1140 hours of early learning and childcare by August 2020. This holding position does not change the policy intent of the Scottish Government to deliver on 1140 hours early learning and childcare when the coronavirus pandemic is over and we move into what will be an economic recovery period. The Council is currently reviewing the admissions process and has put plans in place for communication to parents and funded providers about any changes that may be required.

### **4. Emergency Childcare Hubs**

- 4.1. Education Resources first step was to set up 20 school hubs and 6 early years hubs to provide childcare for health and care workers and those in our emergency services who are working at the frontline to keep us all safe as well as putting in support for our most vulnerable children.
- 4.2. The hubs are being staffed by volunteers from our nurseries, schools and services, including South Lanarkshire Leisure and Culture active school employees who have all gone the extra-mile to provide this essential service. The response to the request for volunteers has been excellent, to the extent that there is a substantial pool of volunteers who are available allowing for flexibility and manageability in terms of the deployment of individual staff members.
- 4.3. The Council continues to liaise with the NHS and other critical key worker groups on the service provided and the feedback continues to be very positive. Feedback from the staff involved and from parents and families has also been tremendously positive.
- 4.4. A list showing the location of the hubs throughout South Lanarkshire is attached as Appendix 1.

## **5. Supporting vulnerable children**

- 5.1. For a very small number of children, attendance at school is a significant protective factor in their lives. The Council continues to offer protection to those most in need at this challenging time. Importantly, the duty of care to our most vulnerable children must be balanced carefully with the public health advice to reduce social contact.
- 5.2. Head Teachers and Heads of Establishment from every school and early years provision have identified those children whom they deem vulnerable, that is, those for whom they consider that family circumstances may become critical during a long break from school and whose home life is particularly challenging.
- 5.3. A telephone contact monitoring system has been established with assessment of need made by senior school managers and appropriate education and social work staff as appropriate. Measured and informed decisions are made about supports required by individual children and families.
- 5.4. In exceptional circumstances, some sessions may be offered in an emergency childcare hub provision. Weekly liaison between the Inclusive Education Service and locality based Social Work Fieldwork Managers enables sharing of information about vulnerability and decisions to be made about those children whose circumstances mean that they would benefit from time in a hub setting. Planning takes place between Head Teachers, Hub Managers, the Inclusive Education Team and parents to facilitate placement.
- 5.5. Additional Support Needs schools have also been keeping in touch with children and families which is also helping to inform us of some of their wellbeing needs and in particular around some of the practical challenges with regards to home learning which for some children is not practicable.
- 5.6. The Council continues to give priority to the needs of vulnerable children in respect of free school meals, children with complex additional support needs and at-risk children.
- 5.7. As well as direct contact with families, the Psychological Services Team have been operating a telephone helpline and information on keeping children safe at home and on-line is available on the Council's website under the Covid19 banner – schools and nurseries.
- 5.8. For those young people moving on from school, the Aspire team will continue to engage and provide support, in conjunction with school 16+ coordinators, until such time as positive destinations can be secured.

## **6. School Term 4 – spring to summer**

- 6.1. With the start of the summer term, Education Resources continue to work in partnership with our schools and the professional associations to provide further guidance and direction on learning at home, mindful that the level of support and interaction normally associated with new learning will not be available in all homes. The aim being to provide support and learning at an age and stage level and to keep in contact through the means of Glow, whilst also maintaining the arrangements we have in place to support our most vulnerable children.

6.2. Teachers having returned from their Spring/Easter holiday now enter Term 4 and, as well as the areas noted in 3.3 above the focus is now on:-

- ◆ The SQA awards process for the 2019/2020 session, following the cancellation of the exam diet.
- ◆ Progression to new courses and programmes for senior phase pupils.
- ◆ Supporting parents, pupils and teachers, in line with the SG publication, “Supporting Pupils, Parents And Teachers – Learning During Term 4” which can be found at:  
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/supporting-pupils-parents-teachers-learning-during-term-4/>

6.3. To begin Term 4, schools and educational settings have been provided with further supportive guidance which has also been shared with the professional associations:-

- ◆ 20 April 2020 – Welcome back message from the Executive Director to all staff.
- ◆ 20 April 2020- Information update on supporting hubs, volunteering, and supporting our most vulnerable pupils.
- ◆ 21 April 2020 – Maintaining continuity of learning while schools are closed. This focused on procedures in place for:-
  - ◆ Contact and communication with staff and pupils
  - ◆ Care and wellbeing of staff and pupils
  - ◆ Continuity of learning
  - ◆ Access to, and use of, ICT
  - ◆ Managing and monitoring
  - ◆ Equity

6.4. Following the postponement of the exam diet for pupils in the senior phase and in light of further clarification from the SQA about the move to an ‘assessment’ model, further information has been provided to schools.

## **7. Continuity of Learning**

7.1. Education Resources have established a ‘Continuity of Learning’ group which has developed a virtual staff learning centre which will signpost teachers and educators to learning resources, Career Long Professional Learning (CLPL) and advice and guidance around fostering a sense of belonging and connectedness. This builds upon the many excellent examples of work demonstrated across the authority.

## **8. Transitions**

8.1. Education Resources recognises the importance of transitions, not just as a management and planning process but also as an important element of the personal development of children and young people. As a result of school closures and lockdown, transition will be very different for many children and young people this year. Under normal circumstances there is a culmination of events to support transitions from nursery to primary, primary to secondary and secondary to life beyond school.

8.2. Head Teachers and school staff are experienced and skilled in leading transition arrangements. For Term 4, and looking ahead to the next session, schools and learning communities are considering new and innovative approaches to transition in relation to wellbeing and to the curriculum. Some examples of these approaches include:-

- ◆ Secondary schools organising remote transition activities and challenges, providing P7 pupils the opportunity to connect with key staff.
- ◆ Ongoing contact by schools and the Inclusion Service for children who require enhanced support for transition.
- ◆ Education Resources' Employability team (Aspire) working closely with schools to ensure that school leavers experiencing any change to their intended destination are supported appropriately.

8.3. To support local authorities and schools, Education Scotland is developing further bespoke Term 4 guidance to assist in planning for the many transitions that take place during Term 4. These materials will be available in early May.

## **9. Placing Requests**

9.1. The Coronavirus Act (2020) legislation contains wide ranging provisions relating to education and Early Learning and Childcare. COSLA has been working in partnership with the Scottish Government to consider the implications of the Act. Within the Act there is a formal Education Closure Direction, and this includes changes to some statutory duties and timelines, including placing requests.

9.2. On 27 April 2020, the Depute First Minister issued a notice to all councils advising of an amendment to the Placing Request Regulations due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

This confirms the change to the timelines for processing and considering placing requests made by parents/carers as:-

- ◆ Placing request decisions received by 15 March for the next school session were legally required to be intimated to parents before 30 April, however due to the operational consequences for education authorities of Covid-19 the government has extended the deadline of 30 April to 31 May 2020.

9.3. This information was shared with elected members and posted on the Council's website on 28 April 2020 and it is intended now to notify parents/carers of decisions on or around 18 May 2020.

## **10. Communications and engagement with parents/carers**

10.1. Engaging and communicating with parents/carers and families following the closure of schools on Friday, 20 March 2020 has mainly been through social media and telephone. Telephone contact has been made with families deemed to be vulnerable to assess their wellbeing and where appropriate some support via their respective additional support needs school or through the emergency childcare hub has been offered on a phased basis. This continues to be assessed by the Inclusion team and the early years team in partnership with social work where necessary.

- 10.2. 'Keeping safe at home and on-line' has been an important area of focus over the last few weeks. A number of national helplines and resources to support children and families in this regard have been made available through the council's website as a signpost for assistance or to report concerns. This information has at its centre the safety, wellbeing and protection of children and young people. Some signposts for example, include links to, Parent Club and Parentzone plus handy hints list of resources to support families with children with additional support needs is also available.

[https://www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk/info/200228/health\\_and\\_medical\\_information/1863/coronavirus\\_covid-19\\_advice/10](https://www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk/info/200228/health_and_medical_information/1863/coronavirus_covid-19_advice/10)

- 10.3. Members are also asked to note that the Scottish Government has agreed to extend the deadline on the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement Act 2006) – consultation on the statutory guidance from the 30 April 2020 until the 30 June 2020.

## **11. Employee Implications**

- 11.1. Consultation and communication with Professional Associations/Trade Unions is ongoing. Regular meetings with representatives of both the JCC and the JNCC are taking place on a fortnightly basis or as when required.

## **12. Financial Implications**

- 12.1. A combination of existing resource funding and additional emergency funding will be used to cover any associated expenditure which may arise in the coming weeks.

## **13. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications**

- 13.1. There are no climate change, sustainability or environmental implications arising for the recommendations in this report.

## **14. Other Implications**

- 14.1. The Council continues to engage with Scottish Government, NHS Lanarkshire, other resources, partner agencies and other related bodies in order to monitor, assess and respond to the changing context and changing advice with regards to the pandemic in a dynamic way.

- 14.2. The wellbeing and the duty of care we have for staff, learners and our communities being paramount and a factor in our decision-making process with daily meetings of the education management team, chaired by the Executive Director taking place to assess the advice and guidance from the Scottish Government and NHS Public Health.

## **15. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements**

- 15.1. There is no requirement to undertake an equality impact assessment with regards to this report as its purpose is to provide an update and does not change policy.

- 15.2. A communication and engagement plan is in place with 'information updates' being provided on a regular basis as well as a pattern of agreed forums which provide a platform for dialogue with the trade unions and professional associations.

**Tony McDaid**  
**Executive Director (Education Resources)**

28 April 2020

**Link(s) to Council Values/Ambitions/Objectives**

- ◆ Increase achievement, raise educational attainment and support lifelong learning

**Previous References**

- None

**List of Background Papers**

- None

**Contact for Further Information**

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

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## List of SLC Hubs

Hub	Location
Blantyre Hub	Auchinraith PS
Biggar Hub A	Biggar PS
Bothwell Hub	Bothwell PS
Rutherglen Hub	Calderwood PS
Biggar Hub B	Carnwath PS
Cathkin Hub	Loch PS
Larkhall Hub	Machanhill PS
East Kilbride Hub B	Mossneuk PS
East Kilbride Hub A	Halfmerke PS
Halfway Hub	Newton Farm PS
Carluke Hub	St Athanathius' PS
Cambuslang Hub	St Bride's PS Cambuslang
Hamilton Hub A	St Cuthbert's PS
East Kilbride Hub C	St Hilary's PS
Uddingston Hub	Muireedge PS
Lanark Hub	St Mary;s PS Lanark
Strathaven Hub	St Patrick;s PS
Stonehouse Hub	Stonehouse PS
Lesmahagow Hub	Woodpark PS
Hamilton Hub B	Woodside PS