

Report

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| Report to: | Education Resources Committee |
| Date of Meeting: | 27 October 2020 |
| Report by: | Executive Director (Education Resources) |

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| Subject: | COVID19 – Education Resources Update |
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ♦ provide an update on the Education Resources response to COVID-19 by schools and educational settings since the beginning of the new term in August 2020.

2. Recommendation(s)

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

- (1) that the efforts of staff in schools and educational settings to adapt to the changing guidance and in being agile to respond to these changes whilst ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children, young people and staff be noted; and
- (2) that the partnership arrangements and protocols in place with NHS Public Health Lanarkshire who lead on the incident management of cases, is operating on a daily basis to ensure the wellbeing of individuals is at the heart of the assessment process for each case, is noted and
- (3) that a summary of 'lessons learned' following initial engagement with schools, educational settings, pupils and parents at Appendix 1, be noted.

3. Background

- 3.1. Schools and educational settings across South Lanarkshire re-opened to all learners on Wednesday 12 August 2020.
- 3.2. Ongoing communication and consultation with stakeholders, including headteachers of primary, secondary and additional support needs schools, representatives of the professional associations and unions, took place and detailed advice was provided to schools and education establishments enabling them to complete their individual and detailed plans for reopening.
- 3.3. All schools and nurseries have from the beginning of the new term in August been open for all learners and staff. This is testament to the work of all staff in schools in adhering to safe systems of work, infection control measures, the personal hygiene arrangements, maintaining physical distancing, PPE and the cleaning regimes which are in place to keep staff and all learners safe. We also recognise and acknowledge the significant challenges that occur each day for school and educational settings in complying with Covid19 safe practices.

- 3.4 To-date, it is worth highlighting that of all the positive cases which impact on a school or educational setting and involving a member of staff or young person have been subject to a rigorous self-assessment by NHS Lanarkshire Public Health. Based on the evidence presented at the daily Problem Assessment Groups which are hosted by, and led by a health professional where the information from Test and Protect and that from the school/nursery is presented and assessed to determine the next steps on a case by case basis. This may conclude that some people who have been identified as close contacts will have to self-isolate, the extent of the communication required for parents/carers, families and staff, and if necessary, a further clean as an additional precaution or that no further action is required.
- 3.5. So far, NHS Lanarkshire Public Health have deemed, based on the evidence presented at the daily assessments meetings that in almost all have been community-based transmissions. To-date, no assessments have been identified as being in-school transmissions.
- 3.6 It is recognised that the arrangements on safe systems of work, risk assessments, classroom organisation and in most cases, consistency of physical distancing, our cleaning regimes and the knowledge presented by heads of establishments on the arrangements in place for their respective establishment, has been the bedrock for presenting clear and concise information to help inform the NHS Lanarkshire Public Health assessment process which investigates positive cases (adult, child or young person).
- 3.6 A jointly agreed protocol is in place with NHS Lanarkshire Public Health for reporting on and acting quickly to assess any reported positive case involving a young person or adult which may impact on a school or educational setting.
- 3.7 This 7 a day week process of reporting has enabled NHS Lanarkshire Public Health, Education Resources, schools and services to work together to provide clear and coherent outcomes in a timeous matter and in the context of a global pandemic which by its very nature is dynamic and challenging.

4. **Information update and new guidance**

- 4.1 The national guidance on the re-opening of schools highlighted, that *we do not expect the return to school in August to be a return to normality*. It was important that both staff and pupils had the opportunity to become familiar with the new layouts in their school, introduce hygiene practice of washing or sanitising, implement arrangements for entering and exiting, lunch and interval breaks and new routines. The Local Phasing Delivery Plan was reviewed to consider the implications of this change.
- 4.2. By working together we have been able to be agile to the changes, such as the wearing of masks in secondary schools settings and when using transport, as well as having to comply with the new restrictions which came into place across the NHS Lanarkshire area.
- 4.3. On 30 September 2020 one of the most significant changes affecting household members who were asked to self-isolate if they were identified as a close contact came into effect. This means that no longer is there a requirement for all household members of those identified as close contacts to self-isolate, which is warmly welcomed by families.
- 4.4. On 23 September 2020 further advice was provided to schools and educational settings on the arrangements around the restrictions in place for visitors which takes account of the national directive which still includes the exclusion of parents/carers

from entering school premises, except for a specific and agreed purpose and as well as other potential visitors.

- 4.5 On 26 August 2020 the Scottish Government issued guidance on the mandatory wearing of face masks for staff and pupils in secondary schools when entering and leaving the building and when moving around in corridors, communal areas and on school transport. Also on the 7 October 2020 the Scottish Government announced further details on the wearing of face masks in the workplace and at the time of writing this report we await further details on the implications for primary school and other settings.



- 4.6 On 7 October 2020 the Scottish Government announced that the national 5 exams will not take place in 2020/21.
5. **Lessons learned and keeping connected**
- 5.1 A series of meetings with Head Teachers has taken place along with some focus groups of pupils and parents and the trades unions to hear what has gone well and if there are any changes or improvements people would like to see being made.
- 5.2 Notably, the views of senior pupils who have been affected by self-isolation and the impact on and disruption to their learning and assessment activities have been sought via a focus group which will be used to influence and shape further guidance.
- 5.3 A summary of some of the key learning points is attached as Appendix 1. These will be kept under review and dialogue will continue with schools, educational settings and stakeholders to continually to listen to what people have to say and to use this as our basis for further guidance or targeted actions.
- 5.4 Regular information bulletins have been issued from the Executive Director to acknowledge the work and commitment of staff in the front-line in our schools and services as well as keeping them up to date on changes to national guidance. A key

aspect being to provide as much clarity as possible to schools and educational settings and other stakeholders on national and health related guidance.

5.5 Focus groups with staff, parents/carers and pupils have taken place and these will continue as they provide a forum for hearing what is working well and what are current concerns. These views are used to help and shape our guidance, procedures and communication themes.

5.6 A further survey of staff is also planned prior to the end of 2020.

6. Employee Implications

6.1. There are no pending employee implications arising from the recommendations in this report. However, Education Resources continues to monitor the impact of staff absences related to Covid19 as well as other absences as part of our workforce planning arrangements with weekly review meetings taking place. This enables Education Resources in partnership with Personnel Services to look at trends and to manage any potential cover requirements required to help keep schools and educational settings open.

7. Financial Implications

7.1. There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

8. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications

8.1. There are no implications for climate change, sustainability or the environment in terms of the information contained in this report.

9. Other Implications

9.1 The requirement to update risk assessments is set out in the Scottish Government guidance and steps have been taken to do this as the safety and wellbeing of all adults, children and young people is paramount.

10. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

10.1. This report does not present a new strategy, policy or plan and is therefore not subject to equality impact assessment.

10.2. Consultation has taken place with a wide range of stakeholders on a variety during the period of school Closure including children and young people, parents, staff and unions in a range of areas such as digital access, safe return to school, emergency childcare, access to free school meals.

Tony McDaid

Executive Director (Education Resources)

12 October 2020

Link(s) to Council Values/Ambitions/Objectives

- Increase achievement, raise educational attainment and support lifelong learning
- Protect vulnerable children, young people and adults

Previous References

Education Committee – August 2020

List of Background Papers

- Education Resources Local Phasing Delivery Plan
- Scottish Government Guidance on preparing for the start of the new school term in August 2020.

Contact for Further Information

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

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A summary of 'lessons learned' on the management of Covid-19 in Schools and Educational Settings (ERC October 2020)

Introduction

Joint working between public health, schools and local authorities is imperative for a quick response to any cases of COVID-19 in educational settings.

This summary guidance takes account of relevant experiences and lessons learned, and provides practical information which may help schools and educational settings, and Head of Establishments in particular, anticipate what is expected and how they will be supported if a positive case is identified within their establishment.

Step 1: Reporting Protocol

The steps to be taken on being advised of a positive case and who to immediately inform

Initial actions

If the establishment is notified of a case of COVID-19 in a child, young person or any staff member, the following information is sought on a confidential basis. Taking cognisance that the NHS Test & Protect team has the responsibility for liaising directly with the individual and in gathering information to determine 'close contacts'.

- Clarify that this is a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19 by asking:
 - Where and when was the test carried out?
 - When was the test confirmed positive?
 - When did the individual start to develop symptoms/feel unwell?
 - When were they last in school/nursery?
- **Immediately call the Health Protection Team (HPT)** to share the information and advise that the case is school/nursery related. This is on the basis the individual has a positive test result.
- Then make **telephone contact with Education HQ (Head of Service), or if out of hours call the Education Emergency number.**
- A Head of Service will support the Head through this process and will attend the daily arranged NHS MS Teams meetings known as a Problem Assessment Group (PAG).
- The Health Protection Team will assign a contact tracer who should make contact with you and the case person. In the interim the Head of Establishment will be required to assist with this process by gathering information and should begin doing so as soon as possible.
- For facilities staff in schools and educational settings who test positive, a process is in place to inform the Head of Establishment immediately that this is confirmed and that Community Resources will be the lead service and liaise with NHS Lanarkshire Public Health.

Step 2: Gathering of information - completion of assessment form

Completion of an assessment form

- Schools are asked to complete the assessment form as quickly as possible and email to both the NHS and Education HQ as this will be used to inform the NHS Lanarkshire led Problem Assessment Group.

Currently there is one daily PAG meeting around 2pm.

Estimating the infectious period of COVID-19

When an individual has COVID-19 it is understood that they may pass the virus on during the 48 hours before they start to develop symptoms, and up to 10 days after the symptoms start. Where there are no symptoms the date of the test is used instead, i.e. contact period is 2 days before the date of the test until 10 days after.

Where the case (pupil or staff) has attended the school during their infectious period a risk assessment led by NHS Lanarkshire will therefore be required and supporting data collected by Education Resource

Step 3 Identifying close contacts ie which pupils, staff and visitors were in close contact with the case:

Definition of a contact;

- People who are within 1m and face to face with the case for any length of time
- People who are within 1m for one minute or longer without face-to-face contact
- People who are within 1-2m of the infected individual for any more than 15 minutes cumulatively.
- People who have shared travel either in a small vehicle or have been close within a larger vehicle.

Types of things that will be considered:

- Social distancing – are staff socially distancing from pupils and staff, how this works around the school, e.g. movements around the class, dining hall, corridors, breaks etc.
- School transport – does pupil in question travel on school transport
- Does the staff member car share
- Are secondary pupils and staff wearing face coverings in busy areas
- Provision at breaks and lunchtime to keep groups separate
- CCC teacher/support staff covering breaks or working between group/classes
- Entering and leaving school – movement and procedures
- Proximity to anyone who is classed as “vulnerable”, e.g. previously shielding, pregnant
- Use of PPE in ASN sector
- Details of other staff/visitors, e.g. SSA, PEF teacher, Head of Year, DHT/PT, etc

Need to have to hand:

- Timetable information for pupils and/or staff – classes attended.
- Primary School class register
- Staff timetables
- Seating plans for classes, especially for secondary schools.
- Bubbles in Early Years / Class Groups
- School transport - pupil lists
- Attendance during the days being traced
- Absence levels for affected class(es)/for school:

Step 4: The risk assessment and attendance at PAG meeting

Depending on the case there will normally be a PAG meeting held vis MS Teams led by NHS Lanarkshire Public Health professional.

The outcomes of each assessment will be dependent on the extent of the information presented including that provide by the contact tracer. Actions will be agreed including confirming names of any staff or pupils that require to self-isolate.

Step 5: Actions Agreed

Following decisions on any identified 'close contacts', those individuals will be phoned and advised to self-isolate which will be followed by an email containing an NHS letter on advice when self-isolating.

A letter will also normally be prepared for parents highlighting that contact tracing is taking place and to keep them informed. This communication is from NHS Lanarkshire Public Health and Education Resources supports the prompt circulation via schools/educational settings.

Step 6: Arrangement for a Clean of the Building

Depending on the last day the positive person was in the building there may be a requirement for a spray cleaning. Any requests for cleaning will be made to Community Resources and this will be treated this as a priority.

Step 7: Other Aspects of Being Prepared

Challenges you may face:

- Social media stories or comments – On occasions pupils, parents/families or staff, including the person who has tested positive have posted information on social media prior to an assessment of their case.
- Confidentiality must be maintained as we are dealing with the personal medical condition of an individual so names cannot be released.
- NHS Public Health work with test and protect and will determine any communication updates required on a case by case basis.
- Pupils and staff going for testing. A test is only required where someone is showing symptoms, including a person has been identified as a close contact (unless advised otherwise by Health).
- Having to prepare for continuity of learning for those being asked to self-isolate.

Top Tips from Heads who have “been there”:

- Stay calm and reassure everyone – refer to risk assessments and SSOW, etc.
- Be available to answer questions and reassure
- Be aware of the social media storm and any negative comments.
- Discuss matters of concern with your Head of Education/EMT link and/or QLO
- Talk to the pupils about what is happening- reassure them/encourage them to ask questions.
- Keep staff, learners and parents/carers informed – and be aware of those who be 'worried well'
- Be aware that the team at the centre will guide and support you all the way. QLOs are also on-hand to provide pastoral support throughout.

In all of this, the safety and wellbeing of children, young people and members of staff in a school or educational setting is our priority and is at the centre of the assessment process.