

The background of the slide features a large, light blue watermark of the City of Edinburgh's coat of arms. It includes a crown at the top with four thistles, a shield divided into four quarters (ship, castle, lion, and eagle), and a motto scroll at the bottom.

Agenda Item 7

Children's Services – Local Phased Education Delivery Plan (COVID-19 Recovery)

Falkirk Council

Title: Children's Services – Local Phased Education Delivery Plan
(COVID-19 Recovery)
Meeting: Emergency Executive
Date: 25 June 2020
Submitted By: Director Of Children's Services

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 This report seeks to provide the Emergency Executive with:

- an overview of the key plans and strategic aims associated with Children's Service's Local Phased Education Delivery Plan.
- some details and context around the current challenges and limiting factors that exist in progressing with certain workstreams associated with the Plan.

2. Recommendation

2.1 It is recommended that the Emergency Executive:

- i. note the changing national position as outlined in Section 3.1 and the challenges faced as summarised in Section 4.1;
- ii. agree the proposals set out in Sections 4.2, 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5 as being Children's Services first phase in their Local Phased Education Delivery Plan;
- iii. note the changes already agreed and the further work required to finalise the Term Dates for 2020/21 as outlines in Section 4.6;
- iv. agree to progress recruitment of 65 early years staff as outlined in Section 4.7;
- v. note the additional costs for other areas of service deliver as outlined in Section 4.8; and
- vi. request that the Director of Children's Services keep the Emergency Executive updated on Children's Services progress on the Local Phased Education Delivery Plan.

3. Background

3.1 National Context

- The Scottish Government made the decision to close all educational establishments from Monday 23 March 2020.
- The Scottish Government "route map through and out of the crisis" was published in May and confirmed the schools would be re-opened for pupils in Phase 3. It confirmed the re-opening date for schools would be 11 August 2020, although the date for Early Learning Childcare (ELC) establishments was not confirmed.

- The Scottish Government “Strategic Framework for re-opening Schools” was published on 28 May 2020 and their “guidance for re-opening early learning and childcare services” was published on 15 June 2020.
- The Scottish Government agreed to revoke its plans to implement 1140 hours of Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) from August 2010, in light of the challenges faced as a result of the Covid situation.
- Recognising the unprecedented financial challenges that local authorities face in dealing with and responding to the ongoing Covid situation, the Scottish Government on 15 May 2020 confirmed to local authorities that they could flexibly monies from a number of ‘ring fenced’ funding streams to support Covid related costs. This flexibility included Early Years expansion monies.

3.2 Local Context

- Officers have been working with Headteachers to consider the various options that were available to re-open schools in a phased basis.
- All options considered reflect the current guidance, in particular the physical distancing specification.
- Liaison with parental groups, professional associations and trade unions also has taken place.
- Recognising the Covid flexibility offered to Early Years expansion monies, Children’s Services remain fully committed to delivering 1140 hours of ELC. Progress to this must however be phased in a proportionate and realistic manner that is aligned to both the availability of resources and ensuring the necessary infrastructure capacity is in place.

4. **Considerations**

4.1 Current Limiting Factors

There are a number of significant internal and external factors that will influence Children’s Services ability to progress delivery within the timescales given within the Local Phased Delivery Plan. Some of the critical areas are:

- Transport Operators Capacity;
- Digital access at homes (to support home learning);
- Risk Assessments being undertaken and agreed);
- Absence levels amongst current workforce to be available for work;
- Planned recruitment of new staff;
- Volunteers to support Critical Childcare Hubs over summer holidays;
- Physical distancing rules;
- Increased cleaning regimes;
- Provision of school meals;
- Pre-school opening building security and health and safety checks; and
- Amendments to 20/21 Terms Dates.

Early Years Plans

(i) Aim

- To create and provide resources to initially provide 15 hours 50 minutes of ELC to all children each week within all of our ELC settings including our private partner nurseries. This equates to the current statutory entitlement of 600 hours per annum.
- To ensure that all ELC establishments provide ELC through “bubbles” of up to 8 children in line with the recently issued Guidance.
- Avoid the risk of cross contamination by ensuring that all children remain within their allocated “bubble” throughout all of their time in establishments, both indoor and outdoor.

(ii) Proposed Delivery Model

- All Nursery Classes would be open 8:30 – 16:10 4 days per week and children would be allocated their 15 hours 50 minutes provision over 2 days : Monday/Tuesday or Thursday/Friday
- All ELC Centres would be open 8:00 – 18:00 and offer parents 15 hours 50 minutes of provision each week.
- Each “bubble” will require an estimated 2.25FTE core staff to meet the needs from, toileting, breaks, cover and absence.

(iii) Other Notes

- To meet the requirements of the Guidance and to ensure the “bubble” model of delivery operates well meeting the ELC needs of children, 65 (50FTE) additional staff need to be recruited:
 - 20 Early Years Assistants/Officers on permanent term time contracts
 - 45 Early Years Assistants/Officers on temporary term time contracts (August to December 2020)
- These staff will also be able to support primary schools with their early stage cohort delivery plans.
- To meet the requirements of the Care Inspectorate and to ensure that the “bubbles” operate effectively, Officers are assessing how best to ensure that the outdoor space capacity is maximised and is “self-contained”.
- To meet these requirements it is expected that additional investment will be required over the summer on outdoor spaces.

4.2 Primary School Plans

(i) Aim

- To have all children returning to 2 x 50% cohorts that will deliver a blended model of in school/at home learning.

Proposed Delivery Model

- Is proposed to be a 2-1-2 model:

	In School Learning	At Home Learning
Cohort 1	Monday & Tuesday	Wednesday, Thursday & Friday
Cohort 2	Thursday & Friday	Monday, Tuesday & Wednesday

(ii) Other Notes

- Wednesday will be used by teachers for planning for in school and at home learning, re-organisation of class rooms and preparation/cleaning of all learning spaces/resources.
- As the first week of term for pupils starts on Wednesday 12 August 2020 both cohorts will only attend in school learning for 1 day that week.

4.3 Secondary Schools Plans

(i) Aim

- To operate initially at 33% capacity (5 days in school learning every 3 weeks) and move to 50% after 6 weeks (5 days in school learning every 2 weeks).
- To provide a more individualised model to meet the needs of each cohort of pupils.
- To allow Headteachers to make local decision as to what year group attend on which days.

(ii) Proposed Delivery Model

Week 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 10th/11th August – In service days for staff to ensure the new working environment and safety measures are clear and understood by all members of staff. Final preparations for the return to in school learning/remote learning.• 12th /13th August – New S1 return to school to be introduced to the school in its adapted form, meet their pastoral teams, learning will focus on wellbeing and in school operational business.• Friday 14th – S5 and S6 pupils.
Week 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Each day will see the return of a full cohort of each year group e.g. Mon S2, Tues S2...Fri S5/S6 etc. for at least 1 day per week.• For the purposes of the return S5/6 will be recognised as 1 cohort.• Again the focus here is to have pastoral check-ins and reinforce the in-school operational measures for pupils.
Week 3-5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Schools will operate at 33% capacity to continue to embed the in-school/online learning balance. Schools will have further opportunity to ensure the environment is adapted and safe and young people will become situationally aware of the essential measures. Note – this gives pupils 5 days in school time over the 3 weeks to re- establish learning, teachers time to assess potential ‘gaps’, and any operational issues will also be less impactful (e.g. test, track, trace).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people will experience a sound transition from what school was like, the wellbeing impact of the transitions will be reduced. • Teachers will also have a phasing of the new model to ensure wellbeing is truly considered and the balance of in-school and home learning can be established.
Week 6 onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For week 6 onwards (w/c Monday 14 September) we will review the arrangements with a view to achieving 50% of pupils being in school.

(iii) Other Notes

- Secondary Headteachers have worked collaboratively to design a model that has core consistencies but also allows for some local flexibility
- Cleaning in this model will be done outwith the school day to give schools further capacity to deliver learning to individual year cohorts across all 5 days.

4.4 Special Educational Establishment Plans

(i) Aim

- To offer a service provision that aligns directly to that of the mainstream primary and secondary sectors.

(ii) Proposed Delivery Model

- Secondary Additional Support Bases (3) – provision in line with secondary schools.
- Special Schools (except Windsor Park) – to align with primary proposed model:-

	In School Learning	At Home Learning
50% Pupils	Monday & Tuesday	Wednesday, Thursday & Friday
50% Pupils	Thursday & Friday	Monday, Tuesday & Wednesday

- Windsor Park – all children will receive **4** days of education. This could be **3** days in school and **1** day at college or **4** days in school.
- Inclusion & Wellbeing Service – the model will be tailored to meet the specific needs of individual children. Children will attend the Service for **2** days per week.

(iii) Other Notes

The above proposed models reflect the significant and wide range of challenges that Children's Services have to consider before developing provision that meet the needs of children with additional support needs.

4.5 Revised 2020/21 Term Dates

- Following the Scottish Government's decision to re-open schools on 11 August 2020, the Scottish Negotiation Committee for Teachers (SNCT) issued guidance confirming that 11 August should be an in-service day and that all pupils must return on 12 August.

- Early agreement has been reached via our LNCT that 10 August 2020 should also be an in-service day.
- Officers are currently liaising with Stirling and other local councils to assess how best to re-provision our current 2020/21 Term Dates to take account of the actual term now starting 5 days earlier than was previously planned.

4.6 Additional Staffing Requirement

(i) Early Years Requirements

- As referred to in Section 4.2 Children's Services proposed to recruit a further **65** staff to support the operation of the "bubble" model across all establishments.
- These posts will provide **20** (18FTE) permanent and **45** (32 FTE) temporary term time contracts equally between both Early Years Officers and Early Years Assistants.
- If approved it is hoped that these posts will attract applications from the newly qualified graduates from Forth Valley College's HNC in Childhood Practice course.
- The cost of this for current financial year is estimated at **c£563k**.
- This will be funded directly from Early Years Expansion monies, which as agreed by the Scottish Government can also be used to fund additional COVID related expenditure.

(ii) Primary & Secondary

- Children's Services as part of their annual recruitment exercise have offered 123 probationers contracts.
- As many of these probationers fill part vacancies the excess this creates provides additional flexibility within schools, which as well as addressing staff absences and maternity cover can also be used to support the COVID recovery plans.
- Although there are additional costs attached to this the Scottish Government provide grant funding towards some of this. As the grant funding has not been confirmed it is not possible at this point in time to say what the net cost would be but it will reflect practice adopted in previous years.

4.7 Other Additional Costs

There are several areas where it is expected that additional costs will be incurred. It is difficult at this point to be specific about what these additional costs would be in some areas:-

(i) Transport Costs

- Current physical distancing rules mean that buses will have to operate at approximately 20% capacity. In simple terms this means that to provide transport for 50% of children at any point then transport provision will require to be at least doubled until the physical distancing rules are relaxed.
- Taxi capacity will also be severely restricted.
- Current Annual Budget is **£4.2m**.

(ii) Cleaning Costs

- To meet the hygiene and safety requirements related to COVID, staff resources will need to be increased to enable delivery of the following:
 - classrooms cleaned daily (currently 3 days/week);
 - daytime cleaning to be available on site;
 - increased overall cleaning regime across our school estate;
 - ability to provide enhanced cleaning on a weekly basis; and
 - ability to provide deep cleans when infection is confirmed or directed by the Public Health Team.
- Officers are currently assessing the exact requirements of this for periods:
 - August to October 2020
 - October – December 2020
- Current Budget **£3.1m**

(iii) Critical Childcare Provision – Summer Holidays

- The Scottish Government have advised that they expect this provision to be maintained over the summer holidays.
- Officers are currently assessing where the Hubs will be located and it is expected that around 4 establishments will be open across the district.
- The hubs over the Easter period were mainly staffed through staff volunteering and it is hoped that the same can be applied for the summer, with Children's Services maximising the use of 52 week contracted staff to help reduce costs.
- Meals, Cleaning and Janitorial resources will also be required to facilitate this service.
- Estimated Costs : **£100 - £150k**

(iv) Critical Childcare Provision – From Start of New Term (August 2020)

- National guidance is awaited to specify what the exact expectation will be with regard to this provision
- Given the expected increase in demand from "key workers" as businesses re-open after "Lockdown" how and where such a provision is delivered is a challenge as it will reduce schools re-opening capacities if it is delivered within schools.
- Additional staff costs would be incurred delivering this depending on the guidance.

(v) Loss of Income

- Given the "Lockdown" phase and the current requirement to provide critical childcare Children's Services existing annual income budget will not be achieved.
- The full year effect of this will not be known until further decisions are made nationally in line with the phases outlined in the "Route Map".
- Affected budgets are:

- School Meal Income	£1.6m (includes Breakfast Clubs)
- Childcare Fees	£1.0m
- Lets	£0.1m
- Music Tuition	<u>£0.1m</u>
Total	<u>£2.8m</u>

5 Implications

5.1 Financial/Resources

There is no doubt that significant costs will be incurred in progressing with the Local Phased Delivery Plan against a continually changing landscape, which means that it is difficult to assess what the total costs will be.

Estimated costs are shown in the relevant parts in Section 4, where applicable

The use of early years funding, in line with the flexibility agreed by the Scottish Government, will be critical to support the Council meet these costs.

5.2 Legal

There are no implications arising from the recommendations contained within this report.

5.3 Risk

The Council could face external scrutiny if the Local Phased Delivery Plan is “out of step” with those of the majority of other Councils.

5.4 Equalities

The Local Phased Delivery Plan aims to provide an equitable education/learning offer across each of the education sectors.

5.5 Sustainability/Environmental Impact

There are no implications arising from the recommendations contained within this report.

6. Conclusions

6.1 As the national landscape and guidance has been constantly evolving and changing it has been extremely challenging to capture with significant certainty the estimated costs associated with a large number of the individual elements related to Children’s Services Plans.

6.2 Children’s Services Officers remain committed to ensuring that where plans are developed and proposed they are done so in a manner that takes cognisance of:

- what is best for “Falkirk Bairns” and local families;
- equality of provision;
- availability of resources;
- national expectations;
- potential costs, budget availability and best value; and
- national guidance.

Director of Children's Services

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Appendices

- None

List of Background Papers

The following papers were relied on in the preparation of this report in terms of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973:

- None