



## **Agenda Item 6**

**Children's Services – Update on Re-opening Plans for School and Early Years Establishments**

Falkirk Council

**Title:** Children's Services – Update on Re-opening Plans for School and Early Years Establishments  
**Meeting:** Emergency Executive  
**Date:** 6 August 2020  
**Submitted by:** Director of Children's Services

**1. Purpose of Report**

1.1 This report provides the Emergency Executive with:

- (i) an update on Children's Services re-opening plans taking account of the recently published Scottish Government guidance; and
- (ii) details of the key changes that have been made to the Scottish Government guidance since the previous report was agreed by the Emergency Executive on 7 July 2020.

**2. Recommendations**

2.1 It is recommended that the Emergency Executive:

- (i) notes the content of the report;
- (ii) notes the arrangements outlined in sections 4.2 and 4.3 regarding the re-opening plans for early learning and childcare establishments and all primary, secondary and additional support needs schools;
- (iii) notes the arrangements outlined in section 4.1 (iv) regarding school meal provision; and
- (iv) endorses the decision made by the Director of Children's Services regarding the cessation of emergency critical childcare on Wednesday 5 August 2020 as detailed in section 4.1 (v).

**3. Background**

3.1 Updated National Guidance

Since the previous report was agreed by the Emergency Executive on 7 July 2020 a number of updates have been announced by the Scottish Government which require Children's Services school and ELC establishments re-opening plans to be amended.

These changes are now reflected in the newly updated Scottish Government guidance that was published on 30 July 2020. The national guidance during the coronavirus period is supported by directions made by the Scottish Ministers under the Coronavirus Act 2020.

The key changes:

- Social Distancing
  - there is no requirement for physical distancing between any children and young people in primary and secondary settings.
  - the requirement for ELC settings to group children into “bubbles” of up to a maximum of 8 has also been removed.
- School Transport
  - there is no requirement for physical distancing between pupils whilst they are on school transport.
  - drivers will require appropriate PPE or to maintain physical distancing.
- School Re-opening Dates
  - from week commencing Monday 10 August 2020 flexibility will be allowed to facilitate “phased returns”, but all pupils should be able to resume full time education by **18 August 2020**.
- Cleaning & Personal Hygiene
  - an overall expectation that enhanced cleaning and personal hygiene arrangements are adopted in schools.
- Provision of Emergency / Critical Childcare for Key Workers
  - local authorities can cease providing this Service during week commencing Monday 3 August 2020.

### 3.2 Updated Local Context

Following the Scottish Government’s announcement on 30 July 2020 confirming the re-opening plans it was important that Children’s Services updated the Council website and confirmed to parents the final arrangements for the re-opening of schools and ELC establishments.

## 4. **Considerations**

### 4.1 Updates to Key Support Services Areas

- (i) Amendment to Return to full time School attendance

Following the publication of the updated guidance all primary and secondary school pupils will return between Wednesday 12 August and Friday 14 August 2020 on the agreed soft start basis, with a full return on Monday 17 August 2020. This has been communicated to parents and teachers.
- (ii) School Transport

Children’s Services and Transport Planning Officers will be liaising to ensure that all transport providers are aware of the new guidance and are fully geared up to start providing services from the start of the new term.

(iii) Cleaning

An enhanced cleaning regime will be implemented across all educational establishments. This will include the introduction of daytime cleaning resources being deployed across the school estate.

To deliver this an additional **c44** fte staff have been recruited on a temporary basis to initially provide an additional **1,620** weekly cleaning hours. These temporary arrangements will be reviewed on a monthly basis.

(iv) School Meal Provision

In order to reduce the risks associated with cross contamination and minimise large gatherings of pupils it is proposed to initially provide a slightly limited school meals offer via “grab bags” for pupils from the start of the new term. This service will be adopted by a number of local authorities and is recognised within the new national guidance. This will be reviewed in September 2020.

(v) Provision of Emergency Critical Childcare

In order to give parent sufficient notice of this service ending the Director of Children’s Services, under delegated authority, made the decision to end this Service on **Wednesday 5 August 2020**. This end date also ensures that Cleaning staff have 2 days to undertake a full clean of those establishments being used ahead of staff returning on Monday 10 August 2020.

#### 4.2 Early Learning and Childcare Plans

There is no change to the plan agreed by the Emergency Executive on 7 July 2020:-

- Wed 12 August 2020 Full return of all “returning children”.
- Wed 12 August 2020 All Private Provider Nurseries and child-minders can commence delivering 1140 hours provision.
- Mon 24 August 2020 All settings will start accepting all “new start” children in line with normal practice.

#### 4.3 Primary, Secondary and Additional Support Needs School Plans

It is proposed that primary, secondary and special schools re-opening is now:

- Phase 1 from Wednesday 12 August – Friday 14 August 2020  
Soft start in line with report agreed on 7 July 2020.
- Phase 2 from Monday 17 August 2020  
Full return of all children.

## **5 Implications**

### **5.1 Financial/Resources**

It is recognised locally and nationally that significant additional costs will be incurred in re-opening our schools and ELC establishments in line with the Scottish Government's (COVID) guidance.

Whilst the Scottish Government have already provided some additional funding towards the re-opening of schools the exact costs of this are currently not known. It is expected that these costs will form part of the wider financial report that will be presented to a later meeting.

### **5.2 Legal**

Children's Services updated re-opening plans are based on the Scottish Government's newly published guidance on 30 July 2020, but remain subject to a further "Educational Continuity Direction" Order being issued.

### **5.3 Risk**

All the re-opening plans remain subject of the normal pre-opening property checks and risk assessments being undertaken. Officers from Children's and Development Services are currently finalising these.

### **5.4 Equalities / Sustainability / Environmental Impact**

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

## **6. Conclusions**

- 6.1 It is recognised that the last few months have been extremely difficult and challenging for parents, pupils and staff, however the current school re-opening plans should be viewed as a major and positive step forward as we progress along the Scottish Government's COVID recovery route map. There is no doubt that further challenges will lie ahead of us but we will continue to work collectively, professionally and positively to overcome these.

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Appendix - None

List of Background Papers - None