

The background of the slide features a large, light blue watermark of the Coat of Arms of the Isle of Man. The crest includes a crown with four fleurs-de-lis, a shield divided into four quarters (a castle, a ship, a lion, and a unicorn), and a ribbon at the bottom with the motto 'ANNE FOR A'.

Agenda Item 3(a)

**Children's Services – School and
Early Years Establishments
Re-opening Plans
(COVID-19 Recovery)**

Falkirk Council

**Title: Children's Services – School and Early Years Establishments
Re-opening Plans (COVID-19 Recovery)**

Meeting: Emergency Executive

Date: 7 July 2020

Submitted By: Director Of Children's Services

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 This report provides the Emergency Executive with an update following its consideration of this item at its meeting on 25 June. At that stage further time was needed to consider the implications of the Deputy First Minister's announcement that schools should open on a full time basis after the summer holiday. The report provides further information, in light of that announcement, on:-

- Children's Services proposals and plans for the re-opening schools and early years establishments across the Falkirk Council area
- some details and context around the current challenges, limiting factors and costs that exist in progressing with certain workstreams associated with those plans.

1.2 It seeks the agreement of the Emergency Executive to the proposal for a soft start approach to the first two weeks of the academic year and that proposals for return to schools and early years provision submitted to the Emergency Executive on 26 June will form the Council's contingency plan in the event that the national guidelines or directions in force at the time do not allow for a full time return. That report appears on the agenda for this meeting but the decisions that the Emergency Executive are asked to take are found in the recommendations below.

2. Recommendations

2.1 **It is recommended that the Emergency Executive:**

- i. **agrees the proposal for a soft start for the first two weeks of the return to school and children and young people will return to school full time on 26 August;**
- ii. **agrees that if due to the national guidelines or directions in force at the time it is not possible to return to full time school attendance on 26 August, the contingency arrangement will be the plan set out in the earlier report;**
- iii. **note the changes already agreed to the Term Dates for 2020/21 as outlined in Section 4.7;**
- iv. **agrees the plan for the phased return in early years centres to allow provision of 1140hrs from 26 August in all early centres where this is physically achievable with 736.25hrs provided at the remainder;**

- v. agrees that if due to national guidelines or directions in force at the time it is not possible to return to this provision that the contingency arrangement will be the plan set out in the earlier report;
- vi. agrees to progress recruitment of early years staff as outlined in Section 4.8 and to the expansion of capacity at the early learning centre at Deanburn Primary School;
- vii. notes the additional costs for other areas of service deliver as outlined in Section 4.9; and
- viii. requests that the Director of Children's Services keep the Emergency Executive updated on Children's Services progress on the re-opening plans.

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 on 21 May and confirmed that schools would be re-opened for pupils in Phase 3. It also 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.
- An announcement from the Depute First Minister (DFM) on the 23 June 2020 indicated that the Scottish Government updated plan was to fully re-open schools from 11 August, one week earlier than previously planned in Falkirk.
- These plans will be kept under review and updated by the Scottish Government at their 3 weekly reviews of their "Recovery Route Map" plans on 9 July 2020 and 30 July 2020.

3.2 Local Context

- Officers have been working with Headteachers to consider the various options that were available to re-open schools on 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 has also taken place.
- Children's Services remain fully committed to delivering 1140 hours of ELC. Progress towards this is detailed in Section 4.3 of this report.

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 in line with current Delivery Plans. Some of the critical areas are:

- Transport Operators Capacity;
- Digital access for children in their home environment;
- Timeous and critical Risk Assessments being undertaken;
- Recruitment of new teaching and early years staff;
- Social distancing rules;
- Increased cleaning regimes;
- Provision of school meals;
- Pre-school opening building security and health and safety checks;
- Trade Union views: and
- Availability and absence levels of staff.

4.2 Supporting Children and Staff

(i) Aim

- We aim to ensure successful transition back to full time early learning and education by the 24 August. Foremost in our planning for the return of children, young people and staff in August is our capacity to allow them to return to establishments as confidently and safely as possible in line with national guidance.
- As early learning settings and schools plan to re-open, there is recognition that priority must be given to supporting the health and wellbeing of children, young people and staff. We have high levels of confidence and support from our workforce to move forward as we have placed wellbeing and safety at the centre of all plans and preparations. We have worked in partnership with our early learning and Childcare Centres (ELCCs), school leaders, and professional organisations to develop the plans for the return to ELCCs and schools.
- We have ensured that we have robust risk assessments, hygiene and infection control protocols in place.

(ii) Soft Start Approach

- The proposed “Soft Start” approach would be for weeks 1 and 2 of our existing Education Recovery Plan (as detailed in the report prepared for the Emergency Executive on 25 June). By Friday 21st August every child and young person will have had time in their ELC or school and will continue to access in-home learning. Following our existing plans for the weeks beginning the 10th and 17th August provides a well-planned and safe transition period which ensures that:
 - Children and young people are supported to return to their establishments in smaller cohorts as planned. This will help them to become familiar with new infection control and social interaction protocols and to take part in age appropriate learning about virus transmission and infection control.
 - Children and young people will have time to meet the key staff who will be working with them and to understand their timetable commitments prior to returning full time as of the 24th August.
 - Children’s Services can assess the availability and readiness of the workforce and make adjustments as are necessary for a full return.
 - Staff can assess the effectiveness of learning space management protocols, including the necessary quarantining of some resources to ensure that they and the children and young people they are responsible for feel confident and safe at being together full time.

- Staff teams can assess the effectiveness of recently identified additional indoor and outdoor learning spaces and adapt and change them as necessary in preparation for the full return.
- Parents and carers are supported through this approach to be confident that every necessary arrangement is in place to ensure the wellbeing and safety of their child(ren) and appropriate plans are in place for their return to full time learning.

4.3 Early Years Plans

(i) Aim

- Following the Scottish Government's recent announcements there are currently 2 key dates for ELC planning purposes:
 - a. 15 July 2020 – this is the indicative date given (subject to the criteria being met to move into Phase 3) when ELC settings are able to re-open. Unless the current guidance is changed then during this time all ELC settings must operate using the restricted capacity guidance which involves the creation of “bubbles” of no more than 8 children.
 - b. Full re-opening date – although no date has officially been set the guidance assumes this to be in relation to term time settings and our planning assumptions have been to align to the date children return to school on 12 August 2020
- To ensure all provision is delivered in accordance with the current Scottish Government and Care Inspectorate Guidance and capacity assessments.
- Taking the above announcements and guidance into account Children's Services are planning to re-open their ELC settings over 3 phases:

(ii) Phase 1 - Proposed Re-opening of ELC Full Year Establishments – From 15 July 2020

- Officers will be liaising with the private nursery providers to see if any wish to re-open from this date. Given almost all of our current providers are currently “furloughed” any decision to re-open will be made by them individually based on their own financial position.
- Over the summer Children's Services will also be continuing to offer critical ELC provision to support key workers and vulnerable families via our ELC hub settings.
- Those remaining ELCC's that are available to open on a Monday – Friday basis between 8:00 and 18:00 will open.
- Owing to the restricted capacities that will be in place priority would be given to recommencing contracted obligations that were in place with families prior to the “lockdown” to support them returning to work.

(iii) Phase 2 – Proposed Re-opening Delivery Model - From Wed 12 August to Friday 21 August 2020

- This “Soft-Start” period would allow all returning children to recommence their placements at their local establishments.
- All settings will offer 1140 hours per annum where the infrastructure and capacity is already in place to do so.
- There will be an increase from 600hrs to 736.25hrs in those settings where infrastructure works have been delayed by the Covid crisis.

(iv) Phase 3 - Proposed Re-opening Delivery Model – From Monday 24 August 2020

- All returning and new start children will return to either 1140hrs or 736.25hrs depending on the setting that they attend.

(v) Proposed Funded Delivery Model for Private and Partner Nurseries and Child-minders

- From 12 August 2020 all the private partners would be able to deliver 1140 hours of funded provision per annum in line with our original expansion plans.

(vi) Proposed Recruitment of Additional Staff

- In order to provide some “staffing flexibility” to support any potential short term resource and capacity challenges Children’s Services are proposing to recruit an additional **30** staff (15 x ELC Officers and 15 x ELC Assistants) on a temporary basis from August – December 2020.

(vii) Proposal – Windmill Playgroup, Bo’ness

- During the assessment work to extend the ELC capacity at Deanburn Primary School officers explored the possibility of a partnership arrangement with the Windmill Playgroup who operate from modular accommodation within the school grounds.
- During these discussions it was recognised that a possible and cost effective way forward would be for the Council to “take over” the modular unit (which is already owned by the Council) and use this as an ELC annexe at the school. To do this it would mean that the Playgroup itself would dissolve and that the staff would be TUPE transferred to the Council.
- As all parties are satisfied with this option it is therefore proposed that the due diligences around this are taken forward via the Legal and Asset Management Teams.
- If successful this would mean that ELC capacity within the school would increase from **48** to **72**, as the proposed annexe would offer capacity for a further 24 places.

(viii) Notes

- Owing to the construction industry “lockdown” there are several establishments where the planned infrastructure expansion work has not been completed.
- Appendix 1 provides a summary of the 1140 hour expansion deliverability position across the Early Years Estate. This confirms that current plans show that 1140 hours will be delivered across **38** of **51** establishments (**75%**) from August 2020. The remaining **13** settings will provide 736.25 hours per annum from August although there are plans to progress 3 of them to deliver 1140 hours from October 2020. In addition there is **1** further new setting that has still to “come on stream”.
- Children’s Services and Development Services officers will be liaising with contractors to progress any outstanding projects as soon as they can be undertaken.

4.4 Primary School Plans

(i) Aim

- To have all children returning to full time education by 24th August 2020 by implementing a three phase “Soft Start” plan for weeks 1 and 2 that will have all children returning to 2 x 50% cohorts that will deliver a short-term blended model of in school and in home learning.

(ii) Phase 1- Week beginning 10th August

- The 10th and 11th August remain in service days for staff to ensure new working environment protocols and safety measures are clear and understood by all members of staff and that robust planning is in place for pupils’ in school and in-home learning. Parents and carers received communication about their child’s pattern of attendance on Tuesday 23rd June.

	In School Learning	In Home Learning
Cohort 1	Wednesday 12 th	Thursday Friday
Cohort 2	Friday 14 th	Wednesday Thursday

(iii) Phase 2 - Week beginning 17th August

	In School Learning	In Home Learning
Cohort 1	Monday 17 th Tuesday 18 th	Wednesday, Thursday Friday
Cohort 2	Thursday 20 th Friday 21 st	Monday, Tuesday Wednesday

(iv) For Phase 1 and 2

- Wednesday will be used for the reorganising of learning spaces, planning and preparation of in-school and in-home learning, quarantining and cleaning of resources and all learning spaces.

(v) Phase 3 - Week beginning 24th August

- All pupils return to full time education.

4.5 Secondary Schools Plans

(i) Aim

- To have all young people returning to full time education by 24th August 2020 by implementing a three phase “Soft Start” plan for weeks 1 and 2 that will have all children returning in cohorts that will deliver a short-term blended model of in school and in home learning.

(ii) Phase 1 - Week beginning 10th August

	In School Learning	In Home Learning
Cohort 1	New S1 pupils Wednesday 12 th Thursday 13 th	Friday
Cohort 2	S5 and 6 Friday 14 th	Wednesday, Thursday

(iii) Phase 2 - Week beginning 17th August

	In School Learning	In Home Learning
Cohort1 Cohort3	Monday 17 th	Tuesday – Friday Wednesday - Friday
Cohort3 Cohort4	Tuesday 18 th	Wednesday - Friday Mon, Thursday, Friday
Cohort4 Cohort5	Wednesday 19 th	Mon, Thursday, Friday Mon, Tuesday, Friday
Cohort5 Cohort2	Thursday 20 th	Mon, Tuesday, Friday Monday - Wednesday
Cohort2 Cohort1	Friday 21 st	Monday – Wednesday Monday - Thursday

(iv) Phase 3 - Week beginning 24th August

- All pupils return to full time education.

4.6 Special Educational Establishment Plans

(i) Aim

- To have all children returning to full time education by August 24th by offering a service provision that aligns directly to that of the mainstream primary and secondary sectors.

(ii) Phase 1 - Weeks beginning 10th – 17th August

- 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) Phase 2 – Week beginning 24th August

- All pupils return to full time education.

4.7 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.
- Agreement has been reached via our LNCT that 10 August 2020 should also be an in-service day and that an additional week can be added to the current October holiday to compensate for the term starting 5 days earlier than was planned.

4.8 Additional Staffing Requirement

(i) Early Years Sector

- As referred to in Section 4.3 Children's Services propose to recruit a further 30 temporary staff to provide short term (August to December) additional flexible resources. This will provide 15 x ELC and 15 ELC Assistant posts.
- 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£200k**.
- This will be funded directly from Early Years Expansion monies.

(ii) Primary & Secondary Sectors

- 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.

4.9 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 20-25% capacity. In simple terms this means that to provide transport for existing children it could require at least 4 times the number of buses unless the physical distancing rules are relaxed. The Transport Planning Team have confirmed that such additional capacity simply does not exist amongst operators.
- Taxi capacity will also be severely restricted.

(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

(iii) Critical Childcare Provision – Summer Holidays

- The Scottish Government have advised that they expect this provision to be maintained over the summer holidays.
- Hubs have been established across the district to provide this support.
- Similar to the staffing of the Hubs over the Easter period Children's Services have sought volunteers and have tried to maximise the use of 52 week contracted staff to help reduce costs.
- Meals, Cleaning and Janitorial resources are also being provided to facilitate this service.

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

- National guidance is awaited that is expected to confirm that critical childcare provision will end when schools re-open.

(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

We know from our planning that significant costs will be incurred in progressing with the Local 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.

Flexible and innovative use of finances will underpin the council approach to re-opening schools.

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 Delivery Plan is “out of step” with those of the majority of other Councils.

5.4 **Equalities**

The Local 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 Although there have been significant challenges that have flowed from the evolving national response to the Covid crisis and the consequent updates to guidance Falkirk Council is in a very positive position regarding our school re-opening plans. It is particularly worth noting that even with the construction industry “lockdown” that our Early Years Expansion Plans remain significantly well advanced so that we are able to provide 1140 hours of ELC provision in 75% of our establishments and across all of our private sector partners from August 2020

Director of Children’s Services

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Appendices

- Appendix 1

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

EARLY YEARS – SUMMARY OF ESTABLISHMENTS ABILITY TO DELIVER 1140 HOURS (AT 30/6/20)

WARD 1	Model	Provision from August 2020	Status			Notes
Establishment			Delivery of 1140	Work in Progress	Work Delayed	
St Mary's	1a	1140	COMPLETED			
Grange	1a	1140	COMPLETED			
Bo'ness Public	4a	736.25	Aug 21	•		
Deanburn	1a	1140	Aug 20	•		
Kinneil	1b/4b	736.25	TBC		•	Model TBC once infrastructure work finalised
Kinglass ELC Centre	3	n/a	TBC		•	Confirmation awaited as to when work will be completed

WARD 2	Model	Provision from August 2020	Status			Notes
Establishment			Delivery of 1140	Work in Progress	Work Delayed	
Bowhouse	1a	1140	COMPLETED			
Beancross	1a	1140	Aug 20	•		Work scheduled to be completed Aug20
Moray ELC Centre	3	736.25	TBC		•	Awaiting confirmation of building works.
Rannoch ELC Centre	3	1140	COMPLETED			
Sacred Heart	1a	1140	COMPLETED			

WARD 3	Model	Provision from August 2020	Status			Notes
Establishment			Delivery of 1140	Work in Progress	Work Delayed	
Nethermains	1a	1140	COMPLETED			
Bankier	1a	1140	COMPLETED			
St Patrick's	1a	1140	COMPLETED			
Denny ELC Centre	3	1140	COMPLETED			
Denny	4a	736.25	Aug 21		•	Work tied to school expansion plans
Dunipace	1a	1140	Aug 20	•		Work scheduled to be completed Aug20
Head of Muir	4a	736.25	Aug 21		•	Awaiting confirmation of planned building works

WARD 4	Model	Provision from August 2020	Status			Notes
Establishment			Delivery of 1140	Work in Progress	Work Delayed	
Airth	1a	1140	COMPLETED			
St Bernadette's	1a	1140	COMPLETED			
Stenhousemuir	1a	1140	COMPLETED			
Carron	4a	736.25	Aug 21		•	Awaiting confirmation of planned building works
Carronshore	1a	1140	Aug 20	•		Work scheduled to be completed Aug20

Kinnaird Waters ELC Centre	3	1140	COMPLETED			
Inchclair ELC Centre	3	1140	Aug 20		•	Children will receive 1140 at Larbert ELC Centre until work completed

WARD 5	Model	Provision from August 2020	Status			Notes
Establishment			Delivery of 1140	Work in Progress	Work Delayed	
St Joseph's	1a	1140	COMPLETED			
Ladeside	1a	1140	COMPLETED			
Bonnypark ELC Centre	3	1140	COMPLETED			
Antonine	1a	1140	COMPLETED			
Larbert Village	4a	736.25	Aug 21		•	Awaiting confirmation of planned building works

WARD 6	Model	Provision from August 2020	Status			Notes
Establishment			Delivery of 1140	Work in Progress	Work Delayed	
Langlees ELC Centre	2	1140	COMPLETED			
Bainsford	1a	1140	COMPLETED			
Victoria	1a	1140	COMPLETED			
St Andrew's	1a	736.25	Oct 20	•		Work scheduled to be completed Oct20
St Francis	1a	736.25	Oct 20	•		Work scheduled to be completed Oct20
Camelon ELC Centre	3	1140	COMPLETED			
Woodburn ELC Centre	3	1140	TBC		•	Children will receive 1140 at Queen Street until work completed.

WARD 7	Model	Provision from August 2020	Status			Notes
Establishment			Delivery of 1140	Work in Progress	Work Delayed	
Carmuir's	1a	1140	COMPLETED			
Easter Carmuir's	1a	1140	COMPLETED			
Bantaskin	1a	1140	COMPLETED			
Glenburn ELC Centre	3	1140	COMPLETED			
Comely Park	4a	736.25	Aug 21	•		Awaiting confirmation of planned building works

WARD 8	Model	Provision from August 2020	Status			Notes
Establishment			Delivery of 1140	Work in Progress	Work Delayed	
Laurieston	1a	1140	Aug 20	•		Work scheduled to be completed Aug20
St Margaret's ELC Centre	3	736.25	Oct 20	•		Work scheduled to be completed Oct20
Westquarter	4a	736.25	Aug 21		•	Awaiting confirmation of planned building works

WARD 9	Model	Provision from August 2020	Status			Notes
Establishment			Delivery of 1140	Work in Progress	Work Delayed	
Avonbridge	1a	1140	COMPLETED			
California	1a	1140	COMPLETED			
Slamannan	1b	1140	COMPLETED			
Whitecross	1a	1140	COMPLETED			
Wallacestone	4a	736.25	Aug 21	•		Awaiting confirmation of planned building works
Maddiston ELC Centre	3	1140	Aug 20		•	ELCC build at design stage. Nursery class will deliver 1140.
Shieldhill	1a	1140	TBC		•	

Key – Models of Delivery

Model 1a	5 days per week - 6 hours per day – term time (1140 hours pa)
Model 1b	as 1a above with flexibility between 8am and 6pm
Model 2	8am-1pm OR 1pm-6pm – open 45.6 weeks (1140 hours pa)
Model 3	ELC Centre – 1140 flexibility 8am-6pm open 50 weeks per year
Model 4a	2/3 days per week (alternate weeks) 7 hrs 45 mins per day – term time (736 hours 15 mins pa)
Model 4b	as 4a above with additional options between 8am and 6pm - term time