

PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL

30 July 2020

COVID-19 DELIVERY PLAN FOR RETURN TO SCHOOLS AND EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE (ELC)

**Report by Executive Director (Education and Children's Services)
(Report No. 20/126)**

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to outline the planning which has taken place to ensure that a full time return to schools and ELC will be achieved from August 2020 If it is deemed safe to do so.

It also sets out how Education and Children's Services is further developing its contingency plan for a phased return to schools and ELC should it be required.

1. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

- 1.1 In response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Scottish Government announced the closure of all schools and early learning and childcare provision from Friday 20 March 2020.
- 1.2 On 21 May 2020, the Scottish Government published the document 'Coronavirus (COVID-19): framework for decision making – Scotland's route map through and out of the crisis'. The route map gave an indication of the order in which the current restrictions would be changed once it was deemed safe to do so.
- 1.3 'Excellence and Equity During the COVID-19 Pandemic – A strategic framework for reopening schools, early learning and childcare provision in Scotland' and subsequent documents provided guidance for local authorities to plan for a phased return to schools and ELC through the development of a Local Phasing Delivery Plan (LPDP) (Appendix 1).
- 1.4 Education and Children's Services (ECS) developed a plan and operational guidance which followed the national route map. The Scottish Government asked for all LPDPs to be shared with Education Scotland (HMle) in order that they could carry out a review of the plans and provide feedback to each local authority. HMle provided a report (Appendix 3) on 9 July with no recommendations for amendment.
- 1.5 On 23 June 2020, the Deputy First Minister announced that the aim of the Scottish Government was that schools return full time in August 2020. It was acknowledged that this was conditional and dependent on ongoing scientific and health advice.

- 1.6 ECS provided the LPDP report and plan to Council on 24 June 2020, ([Report 20/108 refers](#)) and stated that this was now the contingency plan should it not be possible to implement a full time return to school in August 2020, as directed by the Scottish Government.
- 1.7 Since the announcement on 23 June 2020, ECS has been working to develop a Local Delivery Plan (Appendix 1) to support the implementation of a full time return to schools and ELC in August 2020, subject to Scottish Government advice.
- 1.8 The LPDP presented to Council on 24 June 2020 is being further developed should it be necessary to move to a phased return to schools and ELC in August, or at some point in the future.

2. Principles for Reopening Schools and ELC Provision

- 2.1 Planning for the opening of schools and ELC provision follows national guidance, and reflects the agreed aims set out within the National Improvement Framework, including the shared vision of excellence and equity for education.
- 2.2 Local authorities are now required to plan for children and young people to return to full-time education and ELC from 12 August 2020, as safely as possible, following the updated guidance.
- 2.3 This means that almost all children and young people will return on that basis, if it is safe to do so. There may be some children and young people for whom this will not be possible, because they are shielding, have underlying health conditions, or require a phased approach to return because of additional support needs. Planning is underway for those pupils to experience either a combination of in-school and home learning from the start of the new school session, or in some cases, full time learning at home for a period of time.

2.4 Delivery of Critical Childcare Provision

- 2.4.1 During the period of lockdown, critical childcare was provided for essential keyworkers and vulnerable children and young people.
- 2.4.2 The strategic framework detailed that critical childcare should continue throughout the summer holiday to ensure ongoing provision. In PKC, in line with Dundee and Angus Councils, childcare will continue in the current settings and in partnership with 3rd sector organisations until 4 August 2020. Critical childcare will then either pause or cease depending on the instruction provided in the Deputy First Minister's statement on 30 July 2020.
- 2.4.3 Should a full time return to school and ELC be possible, then free critical childcare will cease to be provided by the local authority and normal childcare arrangements will then be available to parents, including access to nurseries, childminders, 3rd sector organisations and Out of School Care (OOSC). Planning is underway to ensure the safe opening of Local Authority Breakfast Clubs and OOSC at the same time as schools reopen.

2.4.4 If a part-time return to schools and ELC is necessary, plans are being put in place to continue with critical childcare should it be required. From August 2020, childcare will then be provided in every school where it is possible to do so, or in nearby hubs where space and/or staffing prohibit this taking place in schools. This work is ongoing, and plans will be progressed as a contingency measure.

2.4.5 Staff who are required to support schools opening in August, including teachers, school support staff, Tayside Contracts and Mitie staff, will be considered as keyworkers and may be eligible for childcare if schools do not return full-time. The current application process has been completed for applications received to date and will resume if it is necessary to do so.

2.5. Preparation for Full-Time Return to School and ELC Provision

2.5.1 The LPDP (contingency plan) presented on 24 June 2020 for the return to schools and ELC on a part-time basis took account of the range of guidance produced by the Scottish Government, Health Protection Scotland and other national organisations. ECS also developed local guidance which was issued to schools and early years provisions to plan for:

- Health and safety guidance for each setting
- Risk assessments for the safe return of staff and pupils
- Determining capacity of school buildings
- Planning for the safe movement in and around the buildings
- Catering and cleaning protocols
- Appropriate signage inside and outside
- Transport provision
- Workforce management

2.5.2 This national and local guidance is now considered to be contingency and will remain in place should a part-time return to schools be required. However, the national COVID-19 Education Recovery Group is producing updated guidance to support local authorities to plan for a full-time return to schools and ELC. ECS local guidance will be amended and adapted to reflect the requirements for all health and safety measures to be in place for a full-time return to schools and ELC.

2.6 Consultation and Engagement of Stakeholders

2.6.1 The Deputy First Minister made a statement to Parliament signalling a change to the plan for pupils return to school and ELC on 23 June 2020, and discussions took place immediately with Headteachers and ELC providers to consider the issues they needed to address. The ECS Education Recovery Group is in place to implement the actions required to ensure that all arrangements are in place for a full-time return. Communications have been issued to parents and carers, staff and trade unions and professional associations and effective use has been made of social media to provide updates of relevant information. Further engagement meetings are planned with stakeholders after 30 July 2020 when the final decision on how schools and ELC provision will return is confirmed.

2.7 Early Learning and Childcare Provision

- 2.7.1 On 15 June 2020 the Scottish Government published non-statutory guidance for ELC providers in the private and third sectors to support a safe reopening of these settings during Phase 3 on 15 July 2020.
- 2.7.2 Under the principles of this guidance ELC settings were able to reopen from 15 July 2020. Local authority nursery settings will coincide with school term time and reopen on 12 August 2020. ECS has been working with partner nurseries and childminders to support them opening from 15 July 2020 onwards. On 15 July, 7 Partner Providers Nurseries opened, 11 intend to open between this date and the date schools reopen and 19 plan to reopen at the same time as schools.

2.8 Implementation of 1140 Hours of ELC

- 2.8.1 The Scottish Government has confirmed that the requirement to deliver 1140 hours from August 2020 has been relaxed. ECS plan to continue to offer 1140 hours wherever possible, following the appropriate guidance, risk assessments and hygiene protocols. Due to the requirement to keep cohorts of children apart, some settings will be unable to offer full 1140 places in August due to the physical space available, however these settings will be offering 600 hours or more of ELC. Gazebos have been purchased to allow for more children to access outdoor provision.
- 2.8.2 All of PKC settings will be able to deliver the legal requirement of 600 hours or more of funded ELC. Over 74% of settings should be able to deliver 1140 hours from August 2020. The table below provides an overview of funded provider plans to deliver 1140 hours during session 2020/21.

Early Learning and Childcare 1140 Overview

Funded Provider	Offering 600 hours	Offering 1140 hours	Before 12 August	By 12 August
Local Authority ELC	10	40		50
Partner Provider ELC	2	31	21	12
Childminder		2	2	
It is hoped that all funded providers will offer 1140 hours of free funded childcare as soon a covid-19 restrictions ease.				

2.9 Schools

- 2.9.1 A full-time return to schools with no physical distancing required between pupils, negates the need for many of the measures put in place regarding capacity of buildings. Pupils will return to their classes and have access to a broad and balanced curriculum.
- 2.9.2 It is recognised that a full-time return to schools and ELC after a period of almost 5 months will require careful planning for pupils. ECS has acknowledged the importance of a phased approach to return during the first

week. It was agreed with trade unions that two In-service days would take place to allow staff time together to prepare for pupils' return, including participating in an induction on health and safety measures within their contexts. These days are scheduled for 10 and 11 August 2020. Schools and ELC have planned a phased return for all pupils on the following three days, to allow pupils to return safely, to ensure that they are familiar with the protocols in place for entering, moving around and exiting the building, and to engage in transition activities. All pupils who can do so will thereafter return full-time on Monday 17 August 2020.

2.10 Health and Safety Arrangements

2.10.1 Physical distancing measures will be required between adults, and between adults and pupils whilst indoors, and so additional guidance and health safety measures are being put in place to ensure safe practices. The importance of good hygiene measures is crucial, therefore a range of risk assessments around classroom activities, cleaning regimes, signage to manage flow around buildings and use of school spaces are being developed. Clear guidance is available to schools and ELC provisions to adapt these assessments for their individual contexts.

2.10.2 The Scottish Government has published a series of directions in relation to the Coronavirus Act 2020 pertaining to the reopening of schools and ELC. The most recent educational continuity direction published on 22 July 2020 continues to restrict access to schools ELC settings and out of school care provision managed by the education authority other than for the purposes of supporting educational provisions.

2.10.3 Further advice has been published in "COVID Sub-Group Advice Note 1- Distancing in Schools". The Advice note states that a package of measures must be put in place to reduce the risk of transmission of the virus. These include:

- An increased emphasis on hand hygiene and surface cleaning. Hand washing/sanitising should be required for everyone on every entry to the school.
- As close as possible to zero tolerance of symptoms should be in place, and strict compliance with the Test and Protect system.
- In both primary and secondary settings, avoid large gatherings and crowded spaces and, as much as possible, to keep pupils within the same groups for the duration of the school day.
- Sharing of equipment/utensils/toys/books should be minimised; and smaller groups and more outdoor activities put in place.
- Movement between schools - of children, and of temporary/supply/peripatetic staff etc. - should be kept to an absolute minimum.

2.10.4 In order to ensure that the risk of the virus spreading is kept to a minimum, the advice note states that transmission between adults is a critical area of focus, and pertains to all adults in the school estate, including parents at the school gates.

2.11 Curriculum

2.11.1 It is recognised that a period of reconnection is required as staff and pupils return to school and ELC. Wellbeing is of paramount importance, and the curriculum offer will consider that children and young people need time to reconnect with their peers, with staff and to get used to new ways of working. The curriculum will reflect that, and careful consideration will be given to the balance of time for subject areas, and methods of delivery. Levels of engagement in learning at home during the closure period will have varied, and therefore a process of contextual assessment of progress will take place to determine progress, and to identify any gaps in learning.

2.12 Support for Children and Young People with Additional Support Needs

2.12.1 Throughout lockdown and into each phase of delivery, GIRFEC approaches to planning have continued for children and young people who require support to address barriers to their learning. The LDP ensures that children who require targeted and specific support will receive it to ensure equity, and to address the difficulties which some children and young people have faced by not being in school. It is recognised that for some pupils, learning at home in some respects has been a positive experience, and where it is assessed that this would be beneficial, an element of home learning may be provided for those pupils to support transition back into full time attendance.

2.12.2 Specialist provisions within primary and secondary schools and Fairview (Special) School have developed plans to enable a full-time return to school for pupils as safely as possible. Their approaches take account of the individual needs of and include specific actions needed to maintain safety for all. Guidance for staff working in this area has been developed to support them in key areas, such as managing intimate personal care and behaviours.

2.13 Learning at Home

2.13.1 Some pupils will not be able to return to school full-time from the outset of the new session. This may be because they are shielding, have an underlying medical condition or because of their additional support needs. It is expected that a small number of pupils may return on a phased basis, and a very few may access learning at home as part of a transition back to school full time. Each pupil who is not able to return to school full time will have their needs assessed, and their Child's Plan adapted to ensure a clear pathway for their learning.

2.13.2 ECS developed clear guidance for online and remote learning during lockdown, and this will continue to be adhered to and improved to ensure that pupils who cannot return to school on a full-time basis in August access high quality learning and appropriate support.

2.14 Workforce Planning

2.14.1 Work is well underway to ensure that the staffing required to ensure a full time return of pupils is available. The staffing exercise and "normal" recruitment for the coming academic session has been concluded. Schools have already

determined, based on current health guidance, how many teachers may still be required to work from home due to shielding, or because of serious underlying health conditions. Based on the returns, a headcount figure of 69 teachers (43 primary and 26 secondary) is required to cover those who are not able to attend school. The numbers of actual teachers are likely to be less than this as many schools are using existing part time staff, supply and other staff who could be deployed, such as outreach, peripatetic or support staff.

2.14.2 There is a need to ensure that additional staffing can be deployed so that the local education delivery plan can be fully implemented. Additional teaching staffing has been secured through the engagement, of 1-year contracts, of 10 probationer teachers who have just finished their induction year and who had not yet secured a post. It is estimated that 5 additional teachers are required to support online learning. The total number of teachers therefore required, based on current data, is 84 FTE. Further contracts may be offered to support recovery. The numbers of supply teaching staff have expanded, with applications from teachers returning to the profession after a break, for example, following retirement. The numbers of support staff required is still currently being assessed.

2.14.2 Inclusion staffing has been realigned so that additional pupil support assistants can be allocated to settings or to children and young people who would benefit from their support. These plans will evolve as the return to schools progresses.

2.15 Individual School Plans

2.15.1 All schools submitted their model of attendance for a part-time return, and these will remain in place as contingency plans. A few schools required additional support to maximise attendance, and ECS are continuing to develop these plans with them. This includes the consideration of additional staffing, access to other buildings for additional learning spaces and transport requirements.

2.15.2 Schools and ELC provisions, with support from ECS, are now developing their individual school plans for a full time return to schools, amending their health and safety procedures to reflect the updated national guidance.

3.0 MAIN CHALLENGES

3.1 Very good progress has been made in producing the plans required to adapt to either a full time or part time return to school and ELC in August 2020. ECS has moved quickly to ensure that engagement with Headteachers and ELC providers took place before the end of this current session, and arrangements are in place to continue to implement the actions required over the summer period.

3.2 The following areas provide some further challenges and require additional focus if a part time return is implemented:

- Provision of Critical Childcare: If critical childcare is required from August, the demand will be significantly increased to accommodate school and

ELC staff. Additional staffing and accommodation are being planned for in order to meet these requirements.

- Planning for school transport has been progressed based on the scientific evidence published on 16 July 2020. If the Scottish Government Guidance does not reflect the evidence regarding no physical distancing on all dedicated school transport vehicles including taxis, there will be insufficient capacity of vehicles and drivers to provide transport for all pupils entitled to receive this service. It may be necessary to fulfil this statutory entitlement by alternative means such as parental contracts.
- Staffing: With a number of staff who may be unable to attend schools and ELC due to underlying health conditions, the need to provide additional staffing for some schools and the potential requirement for critical childcare, there is a need to recruit and deploy staff creatively.
- Further planning to ensure that all schools can deliver at least two days direct teaching as part of the contingency planning for a phased return if it is necessary to do so.

4.0 Financial Position

4.1 The expenditure to date in supporting learning at home and providing critical childcare were reported to Council on the 24 June 2020 (Report 20/108 refers). Appendix 2 provides the latest projected expenditure for financial year 2020/21.

4.1.2 The Scottish Government has since provided further funding to support education recovery and these are noted below:

- On 23 June 2020, the Deputy First Minister announced that the Scottish Government will provide £100m of additional funding to support the return to full time education from August 2020. No detail has been provided to date on Local Authority allocations or conditions of funding.
- Free School Meal payments during the summer holidays - (1/7/2020 to 10/8/2020) with a grant up to £214,000. Perth and Kinross Council will continue to make payments until all pupils return on 17 August 2020.
- Purchase of Digital Devices & Connectivity to Tackle Digital Exclusion amongst Children & Young People with a grant of up to £719,348.

4.1.3 A further announcement is that Home to School Transport should be included as an extension the school estate, and therefore pupils will not be required to physically distance on buses. Costs are likely to be incurred due to the advice that pupils from different schools should not travel on the same bus.

4.2 In returning to full time education in schools and ELC the following areas of expenditure will be Home to School Transport; cleaning; teachers and support staff; and digital devices and connectivity to support learning. These costs have been estimated within Appendix 2. These estimated costs will be kept under constant review and may change depending on the Deputy First Minister's announcement on the 30 July 2020.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 5.1 ECS now has planning in place for either a full-time or part-time return to schools from August, to be implemented after the Deputy First Minister's statement on 30 July 2020. Actions have been taken to minimise the disruption for schools and ELC. For example, minimising the movement of peripatetic staff between schools whether schools return full time or part time, and having appropriate signage in place to manage movement around the school. This means that any changes to the national guidance will be able to be actioned quickly and with less disruption to routines for staff and pupils.
- 5.2 It is acknowledged that the contingency plan may need to be implemented at some point in the future therefore this plan will be kept under review, amended and adapted as new practice and national advice evolves.

5.3 It is recommended that Council:

- (i) Notes and comments on the content of the report and LDP.

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Approved

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1. IMPLICATIONS, ASSESSMENTS, CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

Strategic Implications	Yes/None
Community Plan/Single Outcome Agreement	
Corporate Plan	
Resource Implications	
Financial	Yes
Workforce	Yes
Asset Management (land, property, IST)	
Assessments	
Equality Impact Assessment	Yes
Strategic Environmental Assessment	
Sustainability (community, economic, environmental)	
Legal and Governance	Yes
Risk	
Consultation	Yes
Internal	Yes
External	Yes
Communication	
Communications Plan	yes

1. Strategic Implications

Community Plan/Single Outcome Agreement

- 1.1 *This section should set out how the proposals relate to the delivery of the Perth and Kinross Community Plan/Single Outcome Agreement in terms of the following priorities:*

- (i) *Giving every child the best start in life;*
- (ii) *Developing educated, responsible and informed citizens;*
- (iii) *Promoting a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable economy;*
- (iv) *Supporting people to lead independent, healthy and active lives; and*
- (v) *Creating a safe and sustainable place for future generations.*

This report relates to Objective Nos (i) (ii)

Corporate Plan

- 1.2 *This section should set out how the proposals relate to the achievement of the Council's Corporate Plan Objectives.*

- (i) *Giving every child the best start in life;*
- (ii) *Developing educated, responsible and informed citizens;*
- (iii) *Promoting a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable economy;*
- (iv) *Supporting people to lead independent, healthy and active lives; and*
- (v) *Creating a safe and sustainable place for future generations.*

This report relates to Objective Nos ((i) (ii)).

2. Resource Implications

Financial

- 2.1 The estimated financial implications known to date are reflected within Appendix 2. Any updated financial implications that arise from the return to school and early learning and childcare will be reported to the Leaders and Service Sounding Boards as appropriate.

Workforce

- 2.2 Human Resources have been consulted, and HR colleagues are working with the service to deliver on the ambitions contained within the plan.

- 2.3 Asset Management (land, property, IT)

3. Assessments

- 3.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, the Council is required to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between equality groups. Carrying out Equality Impact Assessments for plans and policies allows the Council to demonstrate that it is meeting these duties. This Equality Impact Statement is currently being finalised.

This section should reflect that the proposals have been considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment process (EqIA) with the following outcome:

- (i) Assessed as **relevant** and actions taken to reduce or remove the following negative impacts: Reduce the impact of COVID-19 on the educational attainment and wellbeing of children and young people, particularly those for whom poverty or family circumstances have had a great effect.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 3.2 The Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 places a duty on the Council to identify and assess the environmental consequences of its proposals.

This section should reflect that the proposals have been considered under the Act and

Option 2 no further action is required as it does not qualify as a PPS as defined by the Act and is therefore exempt.

Legal and Governance

- 3.4 *Head of Legal and Governance Services has been consulted.*

- 3.5 A risk register is being compiled to support this plan

4. Consultation

Internal:

- 4.1 Consultation and engagement has taken place with head teachers, trade unions and professional associations, parents and carers. Their views have been sought. The full plan has still to be shared with key stakeholders.

External

5. Communication

- 1.1 A communication plan has been developed to support the consultation and engagement of key stakeholders, and to communicate key messages to the wider public. This plan includes a mix of consultation, network and parent forums, and the use of social media

2. BACKGROUND PAPERS (These should be hyperlinked where possible)

- [Framework for Decision Making – Scotland's Routemap Through and Out of the Crisis](#) (21/05/20)
- [Strategic Framework for Re-opening Schools and ELC Provisions](#) (21/05/20)
- [Non-Statutory Guidance for Re-opening Schools](#) (28/05/20)
- [Physical Distancing in Education & Childcare Settings](#) (15/5/20)
- [School & ELC Closure – Guidance about Key Workers & Vulnerable Children](#) (31/03/20)
- [Supporting Pupils, Parents and Teachers – Learning During Term Four](#) (20/04/20)
- [Test & Protect \(Summary\)](#) (26/05/20)
- [Test & Protect – Advice for Employers](#) (26/05/20)
- [Curriculum for Excellence in the Recovery Phase](#) (05/06/20)
- [Support for Continuity in Learning](#) (05/06/20)
- [ELC Note for all Childcare Providers](#) (28/05/20)
- [Covid-19: Scientific Evidence on Schools and ELC Settings](#) (27/05/20)
- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Phase 3: guidance on reopening early learning and childcare services](#)
- [Coronavirus Act 2020:educational continuity \(no 3\) direction](#) (1/07/20)
- COVID Sub Group Advice Note 1: Distancing in Schools (16/07/20)
- COVID Sub Group Advice Note 2: School Transport (16/07/20)

3. APPENDICES

Appendix 1: ECS Local Delivery Plan

Appendix 2: Financial Summary

Appendix 3: Education Scotland letter