

Department of Corporate and Community Services

Deputy Chief Executive: Caroline Innes BSc (Hons)

Council Headquarters, Eastwood Park, Giffnock, East Renfrewshire, G46 6UG

Phone: 0141 577 3000 Fax: 0141 577 3834

website: www.eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk

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When calling please ask for: Ron Leitch or Jennifer Graham, 0141 577 3016

E-mail: ron.leitch@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk or jennifer.graham@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk

TO: Councillors P. O’Kane (Chair), C. Merrick (Vice Chair), C. Bamforth, T. Buchanan, D. Devlin, C Gilbert, A. Lafferty, J. McLean and G. Wallace; Dr F. Angell, Ms D. Graham, Ms M McIntyre and Mr D Morris.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Education Committee will be held on **Thursday, 11 June 2020 at 10.00am.**

The agenda of business is as listed below.

CAROLINE INNES

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DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

AGENDA

1. **Apologies for Absence.**
2. **Declarations of Interest.**
3. **COVID-19 Local Phasing Delivery Plan – Report by Director of Education (copy attached, pages 3 - 14).**
4. **Progress on providing Scottish Qualifications Authority with estimates as part of the 2020 certification process – Report by Director of Education (copy attached, pages 15 - 18).**
5. **Early Learning and Childcare Provision from August 2020 – Report by Director of Education (copy attached, pages 19 - 30).**

- 6. School Excursions Impacted by COVID-19 Pandemic – Report by Director of Education (copy attached, pages 31 - 36).**

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EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

11 June 2020

Report by Director of Education

COVID-19 LOCAL DELIVERY PHASING PLAN

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to seek elected member endorsement for the Education Department's COVID-19 Local Delivery Phasing Plan following publication of the Scottish Government's [Route Map](#) on 21 May 2020 and [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): re-opening of schools guidance](#).

RECOMMENDATION

2. Elected members are asked to endorse the Local Delivery Phasing Plan and the production of individual recovery plans for each school and early years setting.

BACKGROUND

3. On Friday 20 March 2020 all schools and early years settings across Scotland closed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. As set out in Scottish Government guidance, education provision was required to continue for specific pupil groups, including the children of certain identified key workers and those children deemed to be vulnerable, or at risk of becoming so. From Monday 23 March 2020, East Renfrewshire Council has continued to provide this emergency provision through 6 geographical hubs in communities across the authority which pupils have been able to access. In addition, Isobel Mair School has continued to support pupils and families throughout this period.

4. Detailed information about the provision and support offered throughout this time was presented to the Emergencies Committee on 21 May 2020.

5. The publication of the Scottish Government's Route Map on 21 May 2020 outlines the potential next steps for recovery across a range of different sectors, including education provision. Further to the Route Map, [a strategic framework](#) has been produced to support local authorities with their own approaches to a phased reopening of schools and early years settings. More detailed [guidance](#) from the Scottish Government was published on Friday 29 May and this will support the department and schools to prepare our recovery and action plans, detail which will support the re-opening of schools, completing risk assessments, etc. The guidance is subject to change and as such our own and school plans will also be considered and reconsidered as we move through the phases of the relaxation of lockdown.

6. As part of the department's robust approach to business continuity planning, work has been underway for some weeks on the potential opportunities and challenges resulting from the Scottish Government's likely announcements. It has been prudent to

consider the various iterations of any recovery and this has informed the development of the Local Delivery Phasing Plan.

REPORT

7. The Local Delivery Phasing Plan (the 'plan') is appended to this paper and sets out the department's approach to recovery planning to support schools and early years settings in developing their own bespoke plans.

8. The plan sets out the agreed principles underpinning East Renfrewshire's approach to recovery and the establishment of a local Education Recovery Group, comprising of senior officers and head teachers from all sectors, as well as Trade Union representatives, to support the department's scenario planning and considerations for recovery. Importantly, the plan outlines the key considerations and assumptions which will inform any recovery planning, both at a departmental and individual school or setting level.

9. The plan sets out the phased recovery approach being adopted in East Renfrewshire:

- **Phase 1** – Schools and centres reopen in June 2020 to an increased number of children and young people for transition purposes;
- **Phase 2** – Schools and centres reopen on 11 August 2020 to all staff with pupils attending on a part-time basis with a blended model of in-school and out of school learning;
- **Phase 3** – Schools and centres incrementally increase the number of hours pupils spend in schools while reducing out of school learning;
- **Phase 4** – Schools and centres reopen fully to all pupils.

10. Elected members will be aware that we are currently in Phase 1 of the plan with a partial reopening of schools and early years centres, with staff physically coming to work only when required and if they are able to do so. This is an important first step in our recovery helping to support the more detailed planning required for subsequent phases and build the confidence of staff to re-enter the workplace.

11. A detailed action plan has been issued to schools and further action plans will be prepared for each of the following three phases following the national guidance available at the time. It should be noted that while Phase 2 has a confirmed start date, at present Phase 3 and Phase 4 will remain under review and be implemented when it is safe to do so as informed by the Scottish Government. Furthermore, we will continue to adhere closely to national guidance and all plans will remain subject to ongoing review should the situation require us to do so.

12. Work is currently being undertaken to support schools and early years centres in returning all pupils from August 2020. As we continue to consider the detailed national guidance, changes to the school day and the location of certain classes or year groups may have to be considered to ensure all pupils can access education provision. In addition, given the requirements for smaller class sizes due to social distancing requirements, further detailed planning will be required to overcome the staffing and accommodation challenges this is likely to present.

13. Throughout this period, free school meal provision has continued through the delivery of food bags to families entitled to this benefit. This model has been well received by recipients, with approximately 1,350 parcels being delivered on a weekly basis. It is proposed that this scheme will continue to support families across East Renfrewshire for the foreseeable future and we are working closely with the Scottish Government to secure this.

14. The unprecedented nature of the pandemic has understandably caused a degree of anxiety and concern amongst parents and carers. As future phases progress, it will be very important to ensure we continue to engage closely with families and other stakeholders to keep them updated on any changes but also to ensure that any concerns can be addressed. This remains an uncertain time for everyone and so it is crucial that this is recognised in our approach to ongoing communication.

CONSULTATION

15. As indicated above and in the Local Delivery Phasing Plan attached, we have worked closely with our school senior leaders and Trade Union partners through our Education Recovery Group.

16. The Director has written to all parents and the Convener will chair a meeting of Parent Council Chairs on Monday 8 June to consult on our Local Delivery Phasing Plan. This will be the first of our normal pattern of meetings with Parent Council Chairs where the Local Delivery Phasing Plan and its progress will be discussed.

17. Many schools have been continuing to meet with Parent Councils remotely throughout the pandemic and will be expected to consult with staff, pupils and parents on their individual recovery plans.

FINANCE AND EFFICIENCY IMPLICATIONS

18. Elected members will be aware that the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a significant financial cost being borne by East Renfrewshire Council in ensuring key services can continue to be provided. There have been additional costs and loss of income for the Education Department and these will likely continue through the department's recovery phase. The department will continue to work closely with colleagues in Finance to ensure these are accurately recorded.

19. As set out in the plan, it is likely that Phase 3 in particular will require significant additional resources to ensure appropriate education provision across all sectors. In addition to the likely pressures on staffing as schools adhere to social distancing, many schools will be under extreme pressure in seeking to accommodate all pupils and it may be necessary to consider alternative additional accommodation.

20. In following the latest guidance from the Scottish Government, there will also likely be an ongoing cost of increased childcare provision to supplement the time that pupils attend school, whether through breakfast club or after school provision. Given the potential shifts in the school day, this may look different to what has previously been provided or may become an increasing part of some pupils' days. This will be particularly true for those children of key workers or those deemed to be vulnerable or requiring extra support. The department is working closely with out of school care providers and partners to explore the options for enhanced provision and the potential future costs.

21. In addition, as noted above, East Renfrewshire Council continues to provide free school meals through home deliveries to eligible families. Discussions are ongoing with the Scottish Government about the future provision of this service; however, it is anticipated that there will be an ongoing cost to the Council for this to continue.

CONCLUSION

22. The Education Department's Local Delivery Phasing Plan sets out the phased approach by which schools and early years settings across the authority will seek to reopen and deliver education provision in the months ahead as we recover from the global COVID-19 pandemic.

23. Through a blended model of in-school and out of school learning, staff will support pupils to re-engage with their education provision, ensuring that the health, wellbeing and safety of everyone is prioritised at all times.

24. Given the unpredictability of the pandemic, it should be emphasised that the planning assumptions and considerations set out above, as well as the timing of any future phasing, will remain under review and will be subject to any future changes in the national guidance issued by the Scottish Government, Public Health or other relevant national body.

RECOMMENDATION

25. Elected members are asked to endorse the Local Delivery Phasing Plan and the production of individual recovery plans for each school and early years setting.

Mhairi Shaw
Director of Education
May 2020

Report Author

Graeme Hay, Education Senior Manager (Leading Business Change)
Tel: 0141 577 3217
Graeme.Hay@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk

Convener Contact Details

Councillor Paul O'Kane, Convener for Education and Equalities

Tel: Mobile 07718 697115

East Renfrewshire Council: Education Department COVID-19: Local Delivery Phasing Plan

Introduction

The Scottish Government published [A Framework for Decision Making](#) related to COVID-19 on Thursday 23 April 2020, outlining its approach and considerations as we plan as a country to come out of lock down. On Wednesday 21 May it published [Scotland's route map through and out of the crisis](#) and with it a specific [strategic framework](#) for reopening of schools and ELC settings and on Friday 29 May published [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): re-opening schools guidance](#). It is clear from these documents that there will be a gradual and phased approach over the rest of the calendar year, which the Scottish Government will lead taking key decisions based on evidence which will ensure we take steps to stay safe and continue to control the spread of Covid-19. In East Renfrewshire we will follow this guidance closely and align our plans with the phases set out in the national route map.

From the Strategic Framework for education settings it is clear there are key principles on which we will base our local decision making, but it is also clear there is room for local flexibility, including at a school level. As such we must think through our own recovery plans to best meet the needs of our own communities and settings.

We can also continue to learn from other countries as they recover from lock down before Scotland, and while devising our own plans we will learn from what has worked and what has not with others. We must continue to contribute to the national efforts to contain the virus, follow Public Health and NHS guidance to try to ensure it does not flair out of control; but we must also be ready to adjust our plans should scientific evidence show we can move more quickly. As such we will set out timelines where we can be definite and phases which we can move into at a pace determined by national advice.

The Council is devising its own recovery plan, which will inform those of the department, schools, ELC settings and services. As we plan it will be important to consider the Council's values: Kindness, Trust and Ambition, and ensure that as we plan we keep these uppermost in our thinking as well as those for each establishment / service and our collective endeavour to realise our vision: *Everyone Attaining, Everyone Achieving through Excellent Experiences*.

Key Principles

Directors and Chief Education Officers across the West Partnership have agreed the following key principles to guide our recovery planning. These are very well aligned to those of the Scottish Government:

Safety: The safety of our staff and service users will be our top priority throughout the recovery phase and beyond. We must ensure we take steps to continue to socially distance in schools, ELC settings and the workplace to contain and prevent further outbreaks of the virus

Fairness: The virus will have had a disproportionate impact on some families and communities and our recovery must consider how we redress this.

Transparency: We must be clear and open about the decisions we take and why, based on those

core values and the key principles set out in the Scottish Government, Council and department's recovery plans.

Collegiate: We will work with our Trade Union partners, our stakeholders and those who support the delivery of education in East Renfrewshire, including those in the HSCP and Partner Providers in ELC.

Learning: We will consider the steps we have all taken throughout this crisis and learn from what we could have done better, especially if there is a need or a decision to re-establish lock down procedures in the future.

Aims & Objectives

The recovery planning framework aims to set out the department's overarching approach to service recovery stemming from the lockdown due to the COVID-19 outbreak in March 2019. While setting out a number of milestones and considerations, it will provide an overall phased framework, enabling individual schools, early years settings and services to devise their own individual recovery plans, based on the specific circumstances they operate within.

The overall aims that the framework will seek to achieve are:

- Supporting education establishments across East Renfrewshire to devise a phased return to full capacity;
- Prioritising the health and safety of all children, young people and staff working in our early years settings and schools; and,
- Delivery of business support services across education establishments and offices, in line with the Council's recovery plan.

Education Recovery Group

We have established a sub-group of the Education Resilience Leadership Team (ERLT) which has met and agreed the principles, aims and objectives, role and remit and the milestones set out in this document. This will provide the basis for the development of the working group set out below to take forward the next steps.

The group has met digitally over the last few weeks, drawing from expertise across the department, early years and schools to ensure that the framework best supports all establishments to meet the aims set out above, and will continue to meet as we plan subsequent recovery phases and of course to keep our plans under review.

The membership of the group is:

- Education Senior Manager (Leading Business Change), Chair
- Education Leadership Team (attending based on requirement)
- Education Provision Manager
- 4x Primary/Early Years Head Teachers
- 2x Secondary Head Teachers
- 2x TU Representatives
- 2 x Quality Improvement Officers
- 1x Educational Psychologist

Role & Remit

The working group has been tasked with developing the department's approach to recovery planning, bringing in the expertise from within and across establishments and services to ensure that we are well placed to respond to future developments and national advice and guidance as we move out of lockdown and towards resuming service delivery in the weeks and months ahead.

More specifically, the group will continue to:

- Support the development of our Recovery Planning Strategy;
- Contribute to departmental prioritisation of functions to support recovery;
- Consider the implications in meeting agreed milestones; and,
- Scenario Plan and in doing so evaluate options for recovery.

Key Considerations

1. Scottish Government

We are conscious that any decisions on the relaxation of restrictions and the phased reopening of early years settings and schools will be advised by the Scottish Government. To ensure a successful recovery, it is essential that Education is well placed to respond to a rapidly changing situation and has a phased approach in place to support a swift deployment of plans, including the need to close schools and ELC facilities and re-establish school hubs should there be a need for lockdown procedures to be re-invoked.

In addition to the Scottish Government, how we respond to any future guidance will also be influenced by a number of organisations, including Public Health, COSLA, ADES, East Renfrewshire Council and the West Partnership.

2. Phased Approach

As set out in the Scottish Government documentation any reopening will be undertaken on a phased approach, given the need for continued adherence to social distancing. This paper sets out the department's phased approach to reopening schools to all staff and some pupils; initially to support key transitions and particular groups of children and young people for whom we consider the closure of schools has had the most impact. This includes vulnerable children and young people for whom re-engagement in school before the summer holidays will be vital.

This phased approach will be based on the need for a blended approach for in-school and out of school learning, increasing the amount of time in school while proportionately decreasing out of school learning.

3. Continued Attendance of Key Worker Children/Equity Groups

As we move to a phased re-opening, involving part time attendance, we need to continue to make provision for key worker and vulnerable children. There is the likelihood of families seeking increased hours for their children, particularly if more parents are required to return to work and we will need a flexible approach in place which may be restricted by the availability of school staff. Therefore, we will work to ensure provision is available working with partners such as Out of School Care to contribute to the need for some children and young people to have full

time provision whilst COVID-19 restrictions remain. We will introduce an application process for the provision for key workers.

4. Staffing

Given the scale of the outbreak and the likelihood and timing of a vaccine becoming available, it is likely that we will see above average rates of absence amongst staff in the months ahead. We will address the need to support the confidence and health and wellbeing of staff while ensuring continuity of teaching and learning throughout this time. School plans will be guided by the need to continue to apply national agreements on teacher contractual duties, while making efforts to deliver these in as efficient a way as possible. School and departmental plans will also need to be able to adjust should groups of staff need to self-isolate for up to 14 days as a result of Test and Protect (Test, Trace, Isolate and Support).

5. Safety

At all times staff and pupils will be encouraged to maintain social distancing and hand hygiene advice and guidance. This includes in the class / play room, playgrounds, social areas, corridors, transport, dining facilities and so on. All class / play rooms will have hand sanitisers where no hand washing facilities are available, and resources to keep work stations and desks clean after use. PPE will be available for staff should they wish or need to use it and for pupils, especially those using public / school transport to get to and from school.

Phased Planning

To ensure the department is best prepared and schools are supported for the recovery, it is suggested that a phased approach is taken to recovery planning:

- Phase 1: Schools and centres reopen in June 2020 to staff and an increased number of children and young people for transition purposes (children of key workers and vulnerable groups will continue to attend). All other children and young people continue to receive out of school learning.
- Phase 2: Schools and centres reopen on 11 August 2020 to all staff with pupils attending on a part-time basis with a blended model of in-school and out of school learning.
- Phase 3: Schools and centres incrementally increase the number of hours spent in school while reducing out of school learning.
- Phase 4: Schools and services reopen fully to all pupils.

Leaders and managers will consider the restrictions which will remain in place for some time and depending on Scottish Government guidance, plan to increase incrementally the amount of time children and young people will spend in school. Communication with staff, pupils, parents and partners will need to be well planned and timeous, making sure stakeholders are consulted and informed to give pupils, staff and parents notice of attendance as learning time in school increases. There will be a need to be flexible in our thinking and planning, including with our School Improvement and Service Plans.

We must also accept that there may be decisions taken to re-invoke lockdown procedures and as such the considerations set out below may change dependent on the progress made in

continuing to contain the virus.

Phase 1: June 2020

The Scottish Government's strategic framework suggests that June could see an increase in pupil attendance for particular groups of children:

This will include both keyworker children and children whom teachers, ELC professionals and other partners, in consultation with the local authority, think would benefit most from early direct contact with education and care staff. There should be a particular focus on supporting children at key transition points (e.g. due to start P1 or S1) which may include some in-school experience in late June, so that they are fully supported to make the next steps in their education.

The timeline below has been agreed with all Head Teachers and the Recovery Group:

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| 1.6.20 | Facilities Management back into schools;
Leadership Teams back into own school;
Risk Assessments complete for each building;
Plans drafted for consultation, including plans for transition activities |
| 5.6.20 | School Hubs close |
| From 8.6.20 | Key worker and vulnerable children back to own schools;
School staff return to own schools (in groups to be determined by HT) to consult on and firm up recovery plans, roles and responsibilities and for August redesign own classrooms and prepare in school and out of school learning. |
| From 15.6.20 | Targeted groups of children and young people (group size to be determined by HT) attend: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ELC / Primary <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key worker and vulnerable young people (probably in increased numbers) • Pre-school children () for transition • Primary 7 children () purposes • Any other children who would benefit from transition activities • Secondary <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key worker and vulnerable young people (probably in increased numbers) • Others who would benefit from some face to face / transition activities as determined by the school. This will include new S1 pupils. |
| 29.6.20 | Summer Programme begins for key worker and vulnerable children, delivered by ERLCT in three secondary school sites (to be confirmed), Cart Mill and Arthurlie family centres |

In Phase 1 school meals will not be available in secondary schools. Those attending primary schools will be asked to bring in a packed lunch should they be attending over the lunch period. Children entitled to free school meals (poverty related) will continue to be provided with free school meal bags. At lunch periods classrooms and the dining area will be used to maximise opportunity for social distancing. Snacks will be available in ELC settings for those entitled to free meals. School meals for those not attending school and entitled to free meals will continue to be delivered as they have been since lock down procedures were invoked. It is envisaged that

provision for free school meals will continue over the summer period with delivery to homes, although this will be subject to available resources and ongoing discussions with Scottish Government.

School transport arrangements for those who currently receive it will be made by the department and will consider the need to adhere to social distancing and the need for face coverings on buses and trains. Schools will make arrangements for staggered starting and finishing of the school day in all sectors, taking school transport arrangements into consideration. ELC settings will continue to operate from 08.00 – 18.00, although staggering arrangements will also be put in place.

Phase 2: August 2020

As set out in the national strategic framework all schools will return 11 August 2020. At the point of writing it is not clear whether 11th and 12th August will be in-service days, but until clarified this is what will be planned for, with pupils returning on the 13th August. This phase starting in August will last until the Scottish Government indicates that it is safe to relax lock down procedures further.

From August, schools will work on the basis that all children and young people will be accessing their school or early years setting every week as a minimum. This could mean primary schools, in particular, amending the timing of their school day to ensure they manage efficiently what may be restricted staffing, while continuing to meet responsibilities related to teacher contracts. For instance, half the school roll may attend two full days per week, say Monday and Tuesday from 9.00 – 3.00, with the remainder attending for the same pattern on Thursdays and Fridays. Schools will plan for siblings to attend on the same days to support families. This will allow teaching staff non-class contact time, as per their contractual rights and duties, time on Wednesdays to continue to plan for their class for both in and out of school learning. This example of this sort of approach is likely to be adopted and adapted across the West Partnership, but the detail of such considerations are for head teachers to determine in consultation with cluster colleagues and other stakeholders.

To ensure pupils enter and leave school buildings safely, there will be staggered start and finishing times to the school day, which we will ask parents to respect when dropping off and picking up, especially in ELC settings and primary schools. Access to the school building by anyone other than staff and pupils will be restricted.

Provision will continue to be made for key worker and vulnerable children to access childcare on a full time basis including before and after school through Out of School Care Providers (primary schools); ELC settings will continue to make provision from 8.00 am to 6.00 pm.

During Phase 2 pupils will continue to learn both in and out of school with a blended approach of face to face and remote learning. It is important to note that it is not envisaged that all remote activities will be digital, but there will be a balance of experiences planned to ensure learning is progressive, continuous and high quality. As soon as is practicably possible and as stated earlier dependent on the availability of staff and accommodation, we will look to increase pupil hours in schools. It should be noted, however, that whatever schools are able to provide, we will not be able to match to all parents' working needs and as such will continue to work in partnership with them throughout Phases 2 and 3.

School meals will be made available in all sectors, but options will be limited and will be planned on the basis that children and young people will have staggered lunch times to ensure the need for social distancing. This will be planned on a school-by-school basis through a partnership

between senior leaders and Facilities Management. School transport arrangements for those who currently receive it will be made by the department, as far as possible and based on availability from suppliers.

Phase 3

We do not know when Phase 2 will end and Phase 3 will begin, but as stated earlier, it will be informed by the Scottish Government advice and decisions to relax lock down type procedures further and we will look to increase the number of hours children and young people spend in school as quickly as possible, depending on the availability of staff and accommodation.

In this phase the amount of time spent in school by pupils will increase incrementally with the balance of out of school learning decreasing. The department will support both primary and secondary schools to plan for an incremental increase in pupil attendance, with accommodation in schools coming under increased pressure as more groups of children will need to attend more often. As such schools will work with the department to maximise the use of school accommodation, such as making sure all PE takes place outdoors to free up gym halls, and, where necessary, consider extending the school estate by using facilities in the wider community, such as community halls, libraries, sports centres, etc. It may mean, for instance that where a school has unused surplus accommodation and staff resource, it may need to be shared with cluster schools.

Careful timetabling for both accommodation, pupils and staff will be necessary and as such, careful communication will also be necessary. At this point it is likely that the uniformity of approaches across all sectors will diverge, since not all schools will have the same hurdles to overcome, depending on the availability of accommodation and staff. It will be unlikely that primary schools will be able to continue to allocate one full day for non-class contact time and as such, pupil attendance patterns will adjust. Again, communications with parents will be paramount.

Full time provision will continue to be made for key worker and vulnerable children.

School transport and meal provision will also need to flex in agreement with services in Phase 3 to reflect pupil attendance, the detail of which will be communicated to stakeholders timeously.

Phase 4

As indicated above with other phases we do not know and cannot plan for when this phase will be reached, but it will be when the Scottish Government relaxes all lock down procedures as well as the need for social distancing. At this point all children and young people will return to and attend school as usual, with all other extraordinary measures reverting back to what previously was the normal school day.

Action Planning

This overarching plan will be accompanied by specific guidance and action plans for schools and centres for each phase. These are designed to support and guide recovery plans at school level which will be devised by Head Teachers in consultation with all key stakeholders.

Clarity and Transparency

Schools, ELC settings and services should be prepared to share their plans with stakeholders, to

seek views and to ensure clarity and transparency. Communication will be key during the recovery phase and it will be important that our service users know what is planned and why. As such the department will liaise closely with the Council's Communications team, LNCT, SCC, Parent Council Chairs and elected members to ensure key messages are shared. Schools and ELC settings should be prepared to share their plans with their staff, pupils, Parent Councils / parent committees on an ongoing basis as we enter into and out of the phases set out above.

Review

As with the Scottish Government's Road Map through and out of the crisis, this plan is not set in stone and as such will be kept under review by the Education Leadership Team, informed by the Scottish Government, senior leaders in schools and our partner Trade Union colleagues. Regular reports will be taken to Education Committee to keep elected members abreast of its progress and success in cautiously, carefully and timeously returning East Renfrewshire's pupils to schools. To do so we will report on the following measures:

- Percentage of pupils returning to school in Phase 1
- Percentage of pupils returning to school in Phase 2
- Balance of in school and out of school learning in Phases 1 – 3
- Pupil engagement in out of school learning in Phases 1 - 3

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILEDUCATION COMMITTEE11 June 2020Report by Director of EducationPROGRESS REPORT ON PROVIDING SCOTTISH QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY WITH ESTIMATES AS PART OF THE 2020 CERTIFICATION PROCESS**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. The purpose of the report is to update elected members on the progress made with providing Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) with estimates as part of the 2020 certification process.

RECOMMENDATION

2. Elected members are asked to note and comment on the Education Department's progress in providing the SQA with estimates as part of the 2020 certification process.

BACKGROUND

3. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Scottish Government took the decision that all schools and Early Learning and Childcare settings should close on 20 March 2020. Subsequently the Cabinet Minister for Education and Skills and Deputy First Minister, John Swinney, MSP, made an announcement to the Scottish Parliament on 10 March that for the first time in history, there would be no examination diet in 2020. He indicated that the SQA would put a model of assessment in place which would ensure that young people in schools and colleges who were unable to sit exams would not be disadvantaged in any way.

4. The SQA has since set out arrangements for an alternative certification model. This is based on teachers providing refined estimated bands and ranking for each learner entered for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher.

5. The SQA model for certification is based on three broad principles:

- Fairness to all learners;
- Safe and secure certification of qualifications, following the latest public health advice; and,
- Maintaining the integrity and credibility of the qualification system, ensuring that standards are maintained over time, in the interests of learners.

6. To support the development of the SQA approach nationally, officers have been liaising with local authority colleagues across Scotland via the Association of Directors of Education Scotland (ADES) and have been supported well by our SQA Liaison Manager.

7. Within ERC, schools are working closely with the Education Department to ensure that the hard work of all our young people is rightly and fairly recognised. This paper provides more detail on the arrangements that have been put in place.

REPORT

8. From the outset, East Renfrewshire Education Department adopted a very strategic approach in taking forward thinking and planning within the context of Curriculum for Excellence. This included the introduction of the 33 period-week from August 2006, which was undertaken with the long term aim of supporting the design principles of CfE, and the introduction of new qualifications and vocational courses.

9. As a result of the change from Standard Grades to Intermediate qualifications in 2005, ERC schools have focused on ensuring that young people are presented at the most appropriate level in S4-S6 for many years. Schools in East Renfrewshire adopt a genuinely ambitious approach to presentation levels which is based on reliable assessment data from the Broad General Education and senior phase.

10. Elected members will recall from the annual SQA presentation, that since the introduction of Intermediate 1 and 2 in 2007, we have seen improvements in the proportion of S4 pupils presented successfully at the highest possible level. The table below summarises the changes from 2007 to 2019 in S4 presentations and awards; overall the proportion of S4 pupils successfully achieving at the highest level has increased from 61% of the S4 roll to 78%. These improvements have then led to increases in the proportion of S5 or S6 pupils achieving at Higher and Advanced Higher.

	Intermediate 2/National 5 Presentations		Intermediate 2/National 5 A-C Awards	
	2007	2019	2007	2019
ERC	67%	86%	90.4%	90.5%

	Intermediate 1/National 4 Awards		Access 3/National 4 Awards	
	2007	2019	2007	2019
ERC	82%	98%	93%	96%

11. In addition, elected members will be aware that schools in East Renfrewshire collaborate within clusters (associated early years, primary and secondary schools), planning together to design and assess a curriculum which is cohesive across sectors, hence ensuring continuity and progression for children and young people at key points of transition. Clusters have been supported to map out curricular progression from 3-18, taking account of the most appropriate pace of learning for pupils and based on reliable teacher judgements of pupil progress. The collaborative approach supports transition across sectors and ensures attainment, achievement and experiences are progressive and continuous. The ongoing focus on moderation and assessment and rigorous tracking within the Broad General Education means that ERC schools are well placed to provide teacher estimates for the 2020 certification process.

12. For 2020, the SQA has defined a refined estimated band as not just the result of one prelim or one project, but as an overall judgement based on all activity across the year; estimates reflect both demonstrated and inferred attainment of the required skills, knowledge and understanding for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses.

13. By Friday 29 May, schools and colleges were required to provide the SQA with their estimates of the refined bands and rank order for each learner, for each course at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher. The SQA provided detailed guidance on how to produce refined estimates for 2019-20. The refined estimates are an active part of the awarding process and

cannot be shared with young people or their parents before SQA have made their final decisions in August.

14. To support schools with producing refined estimates the SQA provided schools with their estimates for the last 3 years. In ERC, this data is analysed each year and forms part of the annual discussion with schools on their SQA results.

15. SQA have provided schools with online professional learning designed to support the production and submission of refined estimate bands. Within East Renfrewshire this approach has been enhanced with schools also being supported by the Quality Improvement Team to analyse their estimates in advance of submission to the SQA on 29 May 2020. This has included making use of the very effective systems that are in place for analysing attainment, benchmarking, target setting and tracking of pupil progress. This is crucial in ensuring the integrity and credibility of the qualification system.

16. Following submission of the estimates, the SQA will check and validate the information. They will moderate it, if necessary, to ensure consistency across schools and colleges and with results from previous years. To do this, the SQA will use the information from the refined estimates, in addition to prior learner attainment, where this is available. For example, if learners achieved National 5 or Higher courses, in a previous year.

17. The SQA will also look at schools' and colleges' previous history of estimating and attainment in each subject and level. As a result, they may moderate estimates, up or down, if that is required. This process will produce the results for learners.

18. Each year, the SQA hold Awarding Meetings that bring together a range of people with subject expertise and people with experience of standard setting across different subjects and qualification levels. The SQA will maintain this approach this year, as far as possible.

19. The SQA will then process the results to allow them to issue them individually to learners by 4 August.

20. After 4 August, a free appeals service will be available to schools and colleges, to allow them to request a review of the grade awarded for a learner or a group of learners. It is important that such a service is in place in this exceptional year. Schools will require to have assessment evidence available to support an appeal and the evidence will be reviewed by senior examiners.

21. Elected members will be aware through the 2018-19 Standards and Quality Report, Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) and the presentations on SQA performance of the very high levels of attainment across ERC schools. In 2019, 78% of young people in S4 achieved 5 or more qualifications at National 5, this was the highest performance to date. The Higher results for S5 pupils were very strong across all measures. The proportion of the S4 roll that achieved 5 or more Highers was 44%, the second highest result to date. As such, the Education Department would anticipate very strong attainment in S5 and S6 across a wide range of measures.

CONSULTATION

22. Secondary Head Teachers and the Education Department continue to review and develop the senior phase curriculum and attainment through the regular Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) meetings. This has included discussion of the SQA estimate and appeals process for 2020.

FINANCIAL AND EFFICIENCY IMPLICATIONS

23. There are no financial and efficiency implications associated with the amended certification process for 2020. The 2020 arrangements will be covered by the agreed SQA budget.

RECOMMENDATION

24. Elected members are asked to note and comment on the Education Department's progress in providing the SQA with estimates as part of the 2020 certification process.

Mhairi Shaw
Director of Education
11 June 2020

Convener Contact Details

Councillor P O'Kane, Convener for Education and Equalities

Tel: Home 07718 697115

Local Government Access to Information Act 1985

Report Author

Mark Ratter, Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance)

Tel: 0141 577 3103

Mark.Ratter@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILEDUCATION COMMITTEE11 JUNE 2020Report by Director of EducationEARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE PROVISION FROM AUGUST 2020**PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1. The purpose of this report is to seek elected member approval of the statutory offer of Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) in all East Renfrewshire settings from August 2020 in light of the impact of the COVID19 pandemic.

RECOMMENDATION

2. Elected members are asked to:

- a) homologate the Director of Education's decision to continue to progress with plans to deliver 1140 hours of early learning and childcare for all eligible 2, 3 and 4 year old children from August 2020; and
- b) approve the allocation of ELC places based on 1140 hours, recognising however that whilst social distancing remains children and families will not be able to access this full amount given the impact of COVID-19 on nursery attendance patterns.

BACKGROUND

3. The Scottish Government set a transformational agenda for Early Learning and Childcare by 2020 which was published in March 2017. The vision was to almost double the entitlement to free ELC from 600 hours to 1140 hours per year by 2020 for all 3 and 4 year olds and eligible 2 year olds and is underpinned by the key principles of Quality, Flexibility, Accessibility and Affordability.

4. In September 2017 Education Committee approved East Renfrewshire's expansion plan including the 1140 hours models of delivery for early learning and childcare. The Council has a reputation for providing high quality early learning and childcare, which is flexible, affordable and accessible to all families in their local community. Families have valued such over the years and our expansion plan built upon these principles.

5. Elected members will recall that East Renfrewshire's early years provision is organised into 4 communities: Barrhead/Neilston/Uplawmoor; Busby/Clarkston/Eaglesham; Giffnock/Thornliebank; and Newton Mearns with the

agreed planned delivery model offering choice and flexibility within the community area.

6. Subsequent reports have been taken to Education Committee outlining progress, the most recent of which was on January 2020. This report detailed the very good progress

East Renfrewshire had made towards full implementation of 1140 hours of early learning and childcare with all 4 key work streams; Quality, Workforce, Delivery Models and Infrastructure being on track to deliver this transformational agenda for East Renfrewshire's children and families from August 2020.

7. The Scottish Government announced on Tuesday 31 March 2020 that as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic they have taken the decision to remove the statutory duty on education authorities to make 1140 hours of early learning and childcare (ELC) available to each eligible child from August 2020.

8. The Education Department has considered the implications of this decision, in particular the delay to our planned infrastructure programme and the impact on our 'grow our own' workforce completing their necessary qualifications.

9. This committee report details what provision can be made from August 2020 and the proposed plan moving forward.

REPORT

10. In assessing the impact of the pandemic on operations, the key considerations at this stage are workforce and infrastructure which are considered below.

11. Other work streams have continued to make progress during the lockdown period with for example the Quality Work Stream comprising officers from Education, School Staff, HSCP, Further and Higher Education partners and Funded Providers assessing that our settings are well prepared to provide all children with a high quality early learning and childcare experience over 1140 hours. In addition our educators have been utilising a suite of online training materials as part of their Career Long Professional Learning (CLPL) while schools and ELC settings have been closed in preparation for the return of children, keeping quality at the forefront.

Workforce

12. A key strategy of our recruitment process was to 'grow our own' workforce within East Renfrewshire Council.

13. Our final recruitment exercise took place in March 2020, with us successfully recruiting the child development officer element of the workforce. Other key posts including the head teacher post at Overlee Family Centre and play worker posts have been recruited too. Recruitment of facilities management staff now required for our August plans is underway. The remaining posts will be recruited on a needs basis as plans progress.

14. Many of our successful candidates were working towards their qualifications with a June 2020 graduation date. The impact of Covid-19 has interrupted their learning and the planned completion date of their qualification. We are in discussions with the Further Education establishments to re-establish their training as part of a remote learning model.

15. The Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) allow staff working in care settings to take up permanent positions with the understanding that their qualification will be gained within an agreed time period. This arrangement will allow us to deploy our new recruits and support them whilst in employment to complete their relevant qualification.

16. Our workforce is therefore in position to deliver 1140 hours from August 2020.

Infrastructure

17. Members will recall that a fundamental part of East Renfrewshire's expansion plan was the provision of additional physical places for early learning and childcare. New and extended facilities are required to meet the increase in entitled hours for eligible children and to address population growth and the flexibility in models to suit parental needs. Investment of circa £25 million is included in the Council's Capital Plan of which £12.27 million is funded by the Scottish Government.

18. To date we have opened two new nursery classes at Maidenhill and St Cadoc's primary schools and have extended the nursery class at Braidbar Primary School. These facilities are all operating successfully.

19. The main phase of our early year's expansion is dependent on the construction of new facilities that were planned to be available for August 2020. This comprises a new family centre within the grounds of Eastwood Park to replace the existing Glenwood Family Centre building as well as providing more places; two new build larger replacements for Busby and Eaglesham primary school nursery classes; two new build family centres in the sites of Crookfur and Overlee pavilions; and a new extension at Cross Arthurlie Primary School to establish a nursery class. These projects were all well underway having commenced construction in summer 2019 and were on schedule to open for August 2020.

20. Of particular note is the new family centre at Crookfur Pavilion which extends and replaces the existing nursery class at Crookfur Primary School and comes under the leadership and management of the head teacher of Crookfur Primary School. Members will recall that there is pressure on primary school places in Crookfur Primary and with the relocation of the nursery from August this year provides much needed additional space for primary children. This arrangement must still stand to meet the demand for non-denominational primary children.

21. Also under construction was the small extension at Carolside Primary School Nursery Class which commenced on site at the beginning of February this year and was also on progress for August 2020.

22. The decision by the Scottish Government to close all building sites has necessarily impacted on all projects under construction. The Council has been working with all parties to review the impact of the downtime on our programme and planning for recommencement on site once it is appropriate and safe to do so taking national advice and guidance, social distancing in terms of working practices and other matters into account. What is definite is that the buildings will not be ready for August 2020 and at the time of writing there are no proposed dates for completion and there will be significant delays before we can occupy and operate them. We are seeking to open the facilities as soon as practically possible realising they are a key part of our original intended delivery model.

23. In addition to the new and extended facilities, a programme of minor works at existing ELC centres to provide meals to children during their sessions was also underway. A number have already been completed and those in progress / not yet scheduled to commence could be delayed; however officers are also looking at when these works can (re)commence and if they will not be ready for August 2020 what alternative measures can be made to ensure children receive snacks / meals.

24. The delay to the infrastructure programme has had significant impact on our ability to deliver 1140 hours of early learning and childcare as planned. However as noted above, we do have sufficient staffing to take forward 1140 hours.

Offer for August 2020

25. In contrast to primary schools, which have one intake of new P1 children in August, the applications in early learning and childcare are spread across the school year. Elected members will be aware that children's entitlement to early learning and childcare is from the term after their 3rd birthday, however in East Renfrewshire we provide a place for the child the day after their 3rd birthday. This means at the beginning of each term we have some capacity as we wait for the children to turn 3 and take up their place at their allocated early learning and childcare setting.

26. Those suspended construction projects are essential to meet the accumulating demand throughout the school year, in addition to delivering our planned delivery model offering choice and flexibility within geographical communities and as our nursery roll increases.

27. It is widely recognised there is benefit for children receiving good quality early learning and childcare and the increase from 600 to 1140 hours will help our youngest children develop strong foundations for their future success in learning and life.

28. The Education Department is aware that families will have been depending on the offer of 1140 hours from August 2020 both in terms of childcare needs and reducing family expenses. We are mindful that during this period of unexpected financial stress and concern for many families, it is ever more important that they are able to plan ahead with knowledge of how their early learning and childcare needs will be met and without additional financial concerns.

29. The department had considered contingencies in the event of a delay to infrastructure. Whilst contingency did not envisage the whole scale cessation of the full programme that is a consequence of the pandemic, our plans included a change to our operating models (i.e. radically reducing choice and flexibility given fewer physical places available) and registering additional outdoor space where possible.

30. Members may recall that in preparation of East Renfrewshire models of delivery, the department surveyed parents in July 2017. This showed that almost all families said they did not want an outdoor provision as their choice of early learning and childcare provision; however they were keen for their children to experience regular outdoor learning experiences. In response to this our new settings are located in areas with the potential for excellent outdoor learning.

31. The department is now looking at existing settings with considerable outdoor areas and temporarily seek permission to register this.

32. Whilst we will now have less physical capacity than planned for, and given that there is adequate staffing, it is still possible to offer 1140 hours from August 2020 to all

33. families across East Renfrewshire within our available resources, but there will necessarily be a change of the models on offer in each setting and geographical community.

34. The following points should be noted in this regard:

- The department will move forward with its plans to introduce 1140 hours to all children.
- The existing workforce will be able to support this revised model.
- Parents will receive the equivalent of 30 hours of early learning and childcare per week (term time). Family centres will offer 1140 hours over a 48 week period.
- Parents will benefit financially from the increased offer of ELC and will also support their own learning / work.
- Most children will have increased access to ELC with the opportunity to attend for almost double the hours they attend at present.
- When new facilities are open, parents will be provided with the opportunity to select a model of ELC which offers more flexibility and choice in line with the department's original planned model and their own needs.
- There are concerns regarding capacity with 1140 hours, with only some of our settings able to support the revised model for all residents; therefore parents and children will be allocated different models and potentially displaced to other settings and communities to access their early learning and childcare.
- A number of places will be dependent on outdoor registration.
- There will be very limited capacity for families to purchase additional hours over and above their 1140 hours entitlement, especially for those children who are not eligible (under 3s).

35. When construction work resumes at each of the sites, the department will consider carefully transitioning children to their original choice of early learning and childcare setting.

36. It is possible to provide our families 1140 hours with the caveat that early learning and childcare settings will be open and allowed to operate at full capacity from August 2020. Any national advice linked to social distancing will impact on operating capacity and attendance patterns for children and families; therefore it is highly unlikely that any family will receive their full allocation of 1140 hours next school session, but they will receive more than the 600 hours to which they are entitled.

Allocation of 1140 Places for August 2020

37. Elected members approved the priority criteria for allocation of 1140 places at Education Committee on 31 January 2020 (Appendix 1). To ensure fairness and consistency, this criteria will be used to prioritise application forms during the allocation process. In addition to the approved criteria, the following principles will be adopted to respond to the uniqueness of this situation:

- All allocations for returning children, who were previously informed of their 1140 hour place, will be honoured (although some settings may change as they are not complete).
- All new applications where families are requesting term time experiences for their children will be honoured (although the model may alter).
- All new applications where families are requesting all year round experiences will be honoured (although the days requested may alter).
- All new applications where the chosen nursery cannot be offered will be looked at sensitively, with alternative offers taking into account second & third choices as

well as geography, but we will make strenuous efforts to place children within their ELC communities, thus supporting the continuity of learning in the early years.

38. We have analysed the number of applications, the nurseries and models of choice and who will be displaced to another setting within their own community. This will affect 12% of applicants and the department will seek to engage with those families.

39. Allocation letters have been issued to families in the week beginning 25 May, with parents / carers asked to accept or decline their early learning and childcare offer within a 2 week period.

40. Allocations will be made for the whole academic year, however if buildings are complete for occupation later in the year, we will begin to plan the process of transition for children to access their new setting and for parents to increase the flexibility and choice they require.

Private and Voluntary Providers

41. The annual commissioning exercise was carried out in December 2019 to determine which funded providers would receive partnership status to provide early learning and childcare in session 2020/21. All applications were scrutinised alongside the Scottish Government's National Standard for Quality in Early Learning and Childcare. Evidence was gathered and partnership status granted to 14 providers.

42. In January 2020 an additional scrutiny exercise took place with our childminding community to determine who would gain partnership status to provide funded early learning and childcare in session 2020/2021. Evidence was scrutinised with 20 childminders receiving partnership status.

43. For those children who access their entitlement to preschool education through one of our private or voluntary partner providers, the authority will continue to fund 1140 hours of early learning and childcare. This will be funded at a rate of £5.31 per hour.

44. Funded providers have indicated that they are ready to deliver 1140 hours from August 2020, however as a direct consequence of Covid-19, all but one provider is currently closed for business. We therefore will plan further work with those providers working in partnership to understand the exact position prior to August 2020.

FINANCE AND EFFICIENCY IMPLICATIONS

45. As noted in paragraph 17 capital investment of some £25m has been approved to take forward the infrastructure requirements of the expansion programme.

Colleagues in the Environment Department are working closely with contractors/project design teams and legal services to identify the additional costs associated with the delay due to the impact of COVID-19 lockdown measures on construction activity. Whilst at this stage it is too early to apprise the extent of additional expenditure required to complete the planned works, they have advised that it could be significant based on initial discussions. They have also advised that these additional costs will be logged and reported via COSLA as part of the wider ERC COVID-19 financial impact and we await details of the allocation of additional Scottish Government funding to support local authorities in this regard.

46. In terms of revenue expenditure, elected members will recall the report to Education Committee in June 2018 which noted an anticipated and annual shortfall in Scottish

Government funding from 2021/22 (i.e. the first full financial year of delivering 1140 hours). Since then the department has utilised the flexibility associated with this funding to maximise the amounts carried forward each year as well as continuing to lobby the Scottish Government and COSLA to review the distribution methodology. Whilst we await the outcome of any national review, we will continue to seek to manage the costs of expansion closely through the annual budget setting exercise.

47. In terms of the COVID-19 impact on revenue costs, the following points should be noted:

- Given most of the workforce has been recruited as planned for August 2020, there are no significant impacts in terms of costs/savings in staff costs; which is by far the biggest revenue cost. In terms of our 'grow your own' strategy, there may be some minor additional backfill costs if some of our staff who are in the earlier stages of training need longer to complete their studies.
- There will be some moderate savings in 2020/21 in property costs associated with those new establishments which are now delayed.
- As noted in paragraph 33, there will be very limited capacity for families to purchase additional hours over and above their entitlement to 1140 hours. The department had anticipated a significant reduction in wraparound income from August 2020 when setting the budget for 2020/21 given less demand/capacity, even with the new centres fully operational and under our originally planned delivery model. The loss of wraparound income in the current academic session is being captured as an additional COVID-19 cost and therefore not directly attributable to the revised 1140 hours delivery plan noted in this report. The projected loss of wraparound income as a result of COVID 19 is £380,000 and is included in COVID 19 reporting to COSLA and the Scottish Government.
- There is an expectation from Scottish Government that additional costs associated with the provision of emergency childcare for the children of key workers during the pandemic will be met from ring-fenced funds such as the ELC expansion resources. This would include, for example, the additional cost incurred for such provision over the recent Spring Break/Easter holidays as well as public holidays during May. At present we project this to be approximately £28,000, but this may rise.

48. Whilst the wider financial impact of COVID-19 continues to emerge and we await details of any potential additional funding to support this from the Scottish Government, the specific impact of the recommendations within this paper can, for revenue, be met from existing ELC expansion revenue resources, at least in financial year 2020/21.

CONSULTATION

49. The Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity) consulted with funded providers on their readiness to deliver 1140 hours from August 2020, who confirmed that they would be, depending on the country's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic which will naturally impact on the number of children who will be able to be accommodated in all ELC settings due to the need for social distancing.

50. The Director of Education consulted with the Emergencies Committee on Thursday 14 May prior to taking the decision to proceed with the proposals as set out in this paper.

CONCLUSION

51. The statutory duty for provision of early learning and childcare remains at 600 hours for all eligible 2, 3 and 4 year olds.

52. The revised model for August 2020 enables the department to not only fulfil its statutory duty to provide 600 hours of early learning and childcare, but go beyond that and support families financially by almost doubling the offer of early learning and childcare to 1140 hours.

53. The department will have to implement contingency measures to implement this and the initial offer to parents will provide limited flexibility and choice, however the financial benefit to families will be significant and could support additional learning/work.

54. It will allow the department to provide a limited offer of 1140 hours with a view to increasing flexibility and choice when the new nurseries are complete.

55. To ensure equity the department will, as planned, increase the funding of early learning and childcare for children who attend a funded provider working in partnership with East Renfrewshire Council from 600 hours to 1140 hours.

56. All offers of early learning and childcare will be dependent on the early learning and childcare settings highlighted above and funded providers re-opening and operating to full capacity from August 2020.

57. It should be noted that any national advice linked to social distancing will impact on operating capacity and attendance patterns for children and families. The impact of this would be subject of future communications with parents who have been allocated a place.

58. It should be stressed that because of the need to follow national advice linked to social distancing, it is highly unlikely that any school or ELC setting will be fully open throughout session 2020 – 2021, due to COVID-19. As such it is also highly unlikely than any child will receive a full 1140 hours next school session. However, and as stated above, they will receive a minimum of 600 hours, which it remains our duty to deliver and this approach will deliver more than that minimum entitlement.

RECOMMENDATION

59. Elected members are asked to:
- a) homologate the Director of Education's decision to continue to progress with plans to deliver 1140 hours of early learning and childcare for all eligible 2, 3 and 4 year old children from August 2020; and
 - b) approve the allocation of ELC places based on 1140 hours, recognising however that whilst social distancing remains children and families will not be able to access this full amount given the impact of COVID-19 on nursery attendance patterns.

Mhairi Shaw
Director of Education
May 2020

Report Authors

Janice Collins, Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity)
Tel: 0141 577 3204
Janice.Collins@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk

Fiona Morrison, Head of Education Services (Provision and Resources)
Tel: 0141 577 3229
Fiona.Morrison@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk

Convener Contact Details

Councillor Paul O'Kane, Convener for Education and Equalities

Tel: Mobile 07718 697115

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Appendix 1

Priority Criteria

A set of criteria is used to make sure that early learning and childcare places are allocated fairly. All places will be allocated using the priority criteria below:

Priority 1	Child Protection, Prevention, Looked After and Additional Support Needs.
Priority 2	Deferred Entry to Primary School granted by the local authority.* <i>*Where the local authority has granted funding for an additional year of early learning and childcare.</i>
Priority 3	Pre-school children within their allocated community as indicated by address.
Priority 4	Ante pre-school children within their allocated community as indicated by address and a) who have an older sibling attending the same nursery.
Priority 5	a) Pre-school children applying out with their community as indicated by address. b) Ante pre-school children applying out with their community as indicated by address.
Priority 6	Deferred Entry to Primary School where the local authority has not approved funding for an additional year of early learning and childcare and the costs will be met by parents.
Priority 7	Admission will be given to children resident out with East Renfrewshire whose parents make a request for: a) A pre-school place. b) An ante pre-school place. <i>Due to the high demand by residents of East Renfrewshire Council for nursery places, parents who fall into this priority band are advised to also apply for a nursery place within their own local authority.</i>

Priorities 1 - 3 will be allocated first. A ballot may be necessary if the number of applications received is greater than the number of places available. Likewise, a ballot will be held for any available places for ante pre-school children living in the nursery community.

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EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILEDUCATION COMMITTEE11 June 2020Report by Director of EducationSCHOOL EXCURSIONS IMPACTED BY COVID-19 PANDEMIC**PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1. The purpose of this report is to apprise elected members of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on school excursions and refunds to parents/carers from travel providers and/or the settlement of insurance claims.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2. Elected members are asked to:
- a) note and comment on the impact of COVID-19 on school excursions and refunds for parents;
 - b) endorse the proposal by the department to action full refunds to parents/carers for all school excursions cancelled as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic; and
 - c) remit the proposal to the Emergencies Committee for a decision on the financial aspects.

BACKGROUND

3. Children and young people within East Renfrewshire benefit from a wide range of school excursions/trips both within the UK and further afield to Europe/worldwide.

4. As well as the closure of all educational establishments, other than the Hub school provision for the most vulnerable pupils and children of key workers, the Scottish Government also advised that all school excursions should be postponed indefinitely from 20 March 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

5. Lockdown measures have necessarily meant all excursions planned between 20 March 2020 and the end of the academic session in June 2020 have effectively been cancelled. Indeed, given the expected ongoing restrictions around physical distancing and non-essential travel it is unclear when any school excursions/trips will be able to go ahead over the summer and during the forthcoming school session.

6. Given the various dates of travel of individual school excursions planned over the March-June period, all were at different stages in the payment process at the point of lockdown both in terms of payments made by parents/carers to ERC and also deposits/instalments paid out by ERC to travel providers. In addition, given the complexities of varying contractual terms and conditions and the understandable financial difficulties the travel industry now faces, it will take some time to finalise either full refunds from travel providers or the settlement of any necessary insurance claims.

7. A number of parents/carers have contacted schools requesting reimbursement of funds for cancelled excursions and/or for those excursions currently still planned but without confirmation that they will proceed since this depends on the situation nearer the time.

8. This report sets out a process for ensuring parent/carers can be refunded in full for any excursions cancelled as a result of the pandemic thus ensuring they are not financially disadvantaged by any lengthy delays at this time when many more families may be experiencing a degree of financial hardship due to the wider impacts of the COVID-19 restrictions. At the same time it is recognised that any financial risk to the council must be minimised.

REPORT

9. At the point of lockdown on 20 March 2020, there were 45 school excursions planned between then and the end of term in June 2020. A further 23 excursions are planned for academic year 2020/21. For those excursions scheduled to take place before the end of June 2020 approximately £365k has been collected from parents/carers by way of deposits/instalments towards the total cost of these excursions payable and approximately £218k (60%) of this total has been paid over to travel providers.

10. The cost to parents/carers for each excursion varies significantly with the overall financial impact obviously higher for families with a number of children scheduled to participate in an excursion over the lockdown period. For example, a P7 residential excursion could cost up to £350 per pupil whereas excursions within the secondary sector can cost up to £2,500 per pupil. Not surprisingly therefore, parents/carers are keen to know when payments they have made to date will be refunded.

11. The issuing of any refunds to parents/carers even for funds not yet paid to travel providers can only be actioned after careful checking of contractual terms and conditions with travel providers as in some cases failure to pay instalments by originally agreed dates may be deemed as the school/ERC cancelling the excursion and therefore cancellation penalties could apply.

Insurance Cover

12. All school excursions are covered by a blanket ERC school travel insurance policy. This policy provides cover of up to £5,000 per person up to a limit of £50,000 per trip. The advice from the council's insurers is that the cancellation of such excursions, as a result of government advice against all but essential travel, would be a valid trigger for an insurance claim and there is no policy excess meaning full costs can be recovered. However the following conditions need to be met and evidenced before submitting a claim :-

Only irrecoverable costs are covered by the insurance policy and schools will need to evidence that they have explored all avenues for obtaining a refund from the travel providers when submitting a claim.

13. Whether or not schools are entitled to a refund from the travel provider will depend on the terms and conditions of the contract for each trip. If the terms of the contract do not make the provider legally obliged to provide a refund then, all things being equal, it should be possible to add these costs to the insurance claim.

14. Given the potential complexities of this issue, professional advice is being provided both by the council's insurance officer and legal services.

15. In terms of timescales, the insurance officer advises that travel claims are normally settled within 1 month. However, given the likely scale of wider travel claims being submitted to all insurance companies it is expected that claims will take significantly longer to process.

Travel Providers Response

16. The difficulties experienced by travel companies as a result of the pandemic are well documented. In terms of responses so far from those companies involved in providing school excursions for ERC schools, the following are examples of options offered to schools :-

- Full refunds agreed but unable to process until end of July 2020 at the earliest.
- Facility to transfer deposits paid to future excursion.
- ABTA protected credit note given which can be redeemed in full if unable to re-schedule the excursion by say January 2021.

17. Given the ongoing uncertainty of when school excursions will be able take place, as well as the fact that many are targeted at specific year groups, the option to agree to some form of credit against future trips is not advisable. It must also be borne in mind that ultimately the funds involved have been received from parents/carers and the priority for ERC must be to seek to maximise the refunds to them at the earliest opportunity.

Proposals for Managing Refunds

18. As noted above there are likely be significant delays in ERC receiving refunds/insurance settlements initially for all 45 excursions impacted by the pandemic between late March and June 2020. The following process would allow parents/carers to be reimbursed as soon as possible whilst minimising the financial risk to ERC. For each excursion :-

- If no payments have been made to date, confirm that there are no contractual obligations around cancellation which could lead to a financial liability at a later date. Subject to such confirmation, verified if necessary by legal services, a full refund can be provided to parents/carers.
- If confirmation of a full refund at a later date has been received from the supplier, a full refund can be made to parents/carers pending ERC receiving funds back from the supplier.
- If sufficient evidence has been received from the supplier, indicating reasons as to why a full refund cannot be provided, thus allowing an insurance claim to be submitted, a full refund can be made to parents/carers. An insurance checklist has been provided to school Business Support Managers to ensure all necessary documentation is collated before submitting a claim. Refunds to parents/carers in these circumstance would only be approved once the council's insurance officer has confirmed satisfactory documentation has been provided by the relevant school.

19. Monies received from parents/carers for school excursions are collected via the ParentPay system so a full audit trail is available. The risk associated with this approach is also documented in appropriate risk registers.

20. An alternative option to that documented above would be to only refund amounts held by ERC at this time, with further refunds made to parents/carers as and when either supplier

refunds are received by ERC or insurance claims settled. Whilst this would ensure there is no financial risk to the council, it would undoubtedly financially disadvantage parents/carers at an already challenging time for many.

FINANCE AND EFFICIENCY IMPLICATIONS

21. The balance held overall by ERC for school excursions/events at 31 March 2020 was £495,277. This represents funds collected from parents/carers for all school excursions as well as other school activities/events, including those excursions referred to in paragraph 9 that were scheduled to take place before the end of the current school year. Whilst there will have been some movement in this balance since then the current net position continues to be a credit balance.

22. In terms of cashflow therefore, any decision to refund parents in full pending the settlement of insurance claims/refunds from travel providers is not anticipated to result in an overall deficit on this account. As already noted, some providers have indicated that refunds will be processed in July and a number of insurance claims are already being prepared.

23. The proposals for managing refunds set out in paragraphs 17-18, seek to minimise the financial risk to the council by ensuring no refunds are processed until the appropriate actions have been completed.

CONCLUSION

24. Government action to address the COVID-19 pandemic has led to all school excursions scheduled over the period late March to the end of the school session in June 2020 being cancelled. Uncertainty remains regarding the possibility of any excursions planned for school session 2020/21 will be able to go ahead.

25. For many families the costs already paid to ERC for these excursions will be significant and many have made enquiries about when they will be refunded. Any prolonged delay in refunding will be particularly difficult for those families already experiencing financial hardship due to the negative economic impact of COVID-19.

26. Proposals to manage refunds set out in this report seek to balance the timeous processing of refunds to parents/carers whilst minimising any financial risk to the council.

RECOMMENDATIONS

27. Elected members are asked to:

- a) note and comment on the impact of COVID-19 on school excursions and refunds for parents;
- b) endorse the proposal by the department to action full refunds to parents/carers for all school excursions cancelled as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic; and
- c) remit the proposal to the Emergencies Committee for a decision on the financial aspects.

Report Authors

Mary Docherty, Education Resources Senior Manager

Tel: 0141 577 3314

mary.docherty@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk

Fiona Morrison, Head of Education Services (Provision and Resources)

Tel: 01410 577 3229

Fiona.Morrison@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk

Convener Contact Details

Councillor Paul O'Kane, Convener for Education and Equalities

Tel: Mobile 07718 697115

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