



REPORT TO: EMERGENCY CABINET 24 JUNE 2020

SUBJECT: EDUCATION RECOVERY PLANNING

BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (EDUCATION, COMMUNITIES AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT)

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To report progress on the planning for the return of schools and early learning childcare services in August 2020.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to the Emergency Cabinet following decisions of the Moray Council on 25 March 2020 to temporarily suspend all delegations to committees as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic (para 2 of the minute refers) and on 17 June that the Emergency Cabinet continues to meet until the simplified committee structure is put in place from 2 September 2020.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that the Emergency Cabinet:-

- i) notes the progress made in preparing for return of schools and early learning childcare services in August 2020;**
- ii) endorses the local delivery phasing plan (version 1.0) Appendix A, which is the overarching document in a suite of plans and guidance for the resumption of education, including individual school delivery plans;**
- iii) notes that a range of operational decisions and actions will be taken over the coming weeks following the Guidance that is part of the delivery plan in order to enable a smooth return for pupils; and**
- iv) notes that schools and Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) in Moray will re-open in August with in service days on 10 and 11 and pupils returning from 12 August 2020.**

3. BACKGROUND

National Position

- 3.1 The Scottish Government made the decision to close schools on 19 March 2020 with effect from close of play on Friday 20 March. Reports to the Emergency Cabinet meeting on 21 May (paragraph 4 of the minute refers) set out the arrangements that the council made in response to this announcement and the Cabinet agreed a revised Covid-19 Education Service Plan which reflected the requirement to develop and implement new plans to be able to establish a new childcare service and provide remote learning. This new plan is intended as a working document to bridge the previous Schools and Curriculum Development Plan and a new Education Plan taking account of the Covid-19 actions and priorities.
- 3.2 On 21 May 2020 the Scottish Government issued a new Direction and Guidance to local authorities requiring the commencement of planning and preparation for the re-opening of schools (including ELC) and for staff and children to resume attendance.
- 3.3 The Direction provided for teachers and other staff to access schools from June 2020 and asked authorities to prioritise support for children at key transition points. The provision of learning and teaching to children on school premises and remotely and early learning and childcare are to be in place from August 2020. In covering guidance, Authorities were asked to plan for a new blended model of learning involving in-school and in-home learning with the new term commencing on standardised date of 11 August for all schools in Scotland.
- 3.4 There is further provision within the Direction for continuation of childcare for children of key workers and vulnerable children, providing a continued statutory instruction for these new services. Guidance clarifies that this is to continue throughout the summer break and into the new August term.
- 3.5 There is a strong focus in the guidance on public health measures to support the re-opening of schools and early years settings, with particular regard to these being age appropriate. This has been taken into account in our local planning and risk assessments, physical distancing and hygiene measures will all be in place prior to return. Following the government advice, arrangements will be different for younger children in early years and where appropriate this may also be considered for P1 pupils.
- 3.6 There are extensive practical and educational considerations for the return of schools and ELC in a society adjusting to living with Covid-19. To ensure that these preparations are made, local authorities are expected to prepare a Local Phasing Delivery Plan in relation to school re-opening and considerations include:
 - The needs of pupils with additional support needs and vulnerable children;
 - The emotional, physical and mental health and wellbeing of learners;

- The speed and ease with which phasing could be reversed if the situation deteriorates and health requirements suggest it is necessary;
- Increased in-school learning time for all, working towards the resumption of full-time in school provision when possible;
- Provision of critical childcare for key workers (including wraparound and out of school care);
- The blend of in-school and in-home learning and physical distancing and enhanced hygiene procedures.

3.7 All of the above is predicated on the public health advice and is contingent on scientific and medical advice that it is safe to proceed and on implementation of complementary public health measures.

Moray Local Delivery Phasing Plan (Appendix A)

3.8 As reported to the Cabinet previously (21 May 2020), extensive arrangements have been made to adapt to a remote learning model in a very short period of time, to introduce new services and new ways of working to ensure that the needs of all learners are addressed and that systems were in place to support vulnerable children.

3.9 In preparing for the return of schools and ELC in Moray consideration has had to be given to a further adaptation of the model of education taking account of the health and safety considerations associated with adapting to an ongoing presence of Covid-19.

3.10 Planning in Moray has been undertaken taking account of the Scottish Government [route map](#) for moving Scotland out of lockdown and of the [Strategic Framework for Re-opening Schools](#) and associated [Guidance](#) to support a safe, phased re-opening of schools. This sets a consistent context for the development of local arrangements to reflect particular circumstances. As a result, our plan reflects both the national position and the vision and aims of the developing corporate strategic framework for recovery, which is the subject of a separate report on the agenda. In terms of the framework, which is currently still a draft and is subject to community engagement and discussion with our community planning partners and others; the aims are:

- **Understand** the impact of Covid-19 in Moray
- **Support** the ongoing impact of living with Covid-19 as far as possible
- **Learn** from the positive changes so that they are captured and built upon for the future
- **Re-engineer** the strategic policies and actions needed to ensure we will deliver our outcomes in the new environment

3.11 The Moray Local Delivery Phasing Plan (**Appendix A**) is the over-arching plan that draws together a suite of documents to support the re-opening of schools and ELC with a blended model of remote and in-school learning. The programme of work to implement the plan has seven workstream as set out in the Covid-19 Service Plan (**Appendix 1** to the Moray Local Delivery Phasing Plan) and each of which have detailed Action Plans. As noted above, the Service Plan was approved as an evolving document by the

Cabinet on 21 May 2020 and as such it has been updated to remove actions that have already been completed.

- 3.12 A summary of the current position against each workstream as at the time of writing is noted below although it should be noted that this is a fast moving and dynamic situation which will have moved on by the date of the Cabinet meeting.

<u>Workstream</u>	<u>Current Position</u>
1. Well-being (including vulnerable learners, ASN and workforce)	Plan drafted showing current arrangements and future plans in stages (Now to July /Aug - Dec/Jan on). Includes Connect team and engagement with partners. ASN hours allocated to schools, arrangements to implement to proceed with HTs.
2. Emergency Childcare	Proposal in preparation. Considering hours it is feasible to offer with staff and cost implications. Increasing demand from mainly Category 3 workers. Concern about capacity to meet demand. Survey underway to gauge demand more accurately.
3. Workforce	Plan of actions to be delivered before the end of term and for new academic term. Currently 2 weeks behind normal timeline but this is not a major concern. Vacancy adverts are out with aim to recruit by the summer. Good response to date. Will plan workforce arrangements to maximise in-school learning and manage costs as far as possible.
4. Curriculum Learning and Teaching	Based on school return model and all schools are working on plans. Digital: work is progressing although some specific areas to be addressed e.g. Music Instruction. Schools are clear on blended learning approach being taken and are planning for this. Collaborating on e-sgoil offer within Northern Alliance and nationally.
5. Re-opening Schools for Staff and Learners	Plan identified with key areas of work. Supplies: Procurement support in place and normal procurement/ordering process in place. Planning underway for range of issues by recently appointed project lead. Preparations in place for buildings to be made ready for return. Considering lunch provisions from August to October - to allow for cleaning and catering provisions

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| 6. Finance/Legislation and Closing the Gap | Agreed guidance issued to schools (approved by LNCT).
Paper being prepared on FSM vouchers over summer. |
| 7. Early Learning and Childcare | Plan has been drafted for return and liaising with partner providers.
Finance: Using own staff and providers staff continuing to honour ELC contract payments -. |

3.13 In order to provide oversight and monitoring of progress, an Education Governance Board has been established and progress monitoring overviews proceed to the Response and Renewal Management Team chaired by the Chief Executive.

School Recovery Guidance and Practical Arrangements

- 3.14 The Delivery Phasing Plan also contains School Recovery Guidance. This sets out the practical considerations for the return of schools and ELC settings. The guidance covers issues such as social (physical) distancing, meetings and assemblies, handwashing and hygiene, cleaning, catering, school transport, blended learning, timetabling and risk assessment. It is supplemented by school level guidance and a template school recovery plan which each head teacher is completing.
- 3.15 In order to support the vast amount of practical work required to enable the re-opening of schools and ELC a Project Manager has been seconded to support the education and school management teams and a dedicated procurement officer is in place. Human resources and health and safety are also providing advice and assisting in ensuring any necessary workforce adjustments are implemented for the return.
- 3.16 Return Date: The Strategic Framework for the re-opening of schools confirms the start date of the new term as 11 August with 12 August 2020 as the latest date for the return of pupils, enabling local discretion on in-service days in order to be prepared for the return to school. Taking account of the circumstances in Moray, including the adjustments required to school buildings and the delivery of learning, it is considered that 2 in service days at the start of term would be appropriate. Therefore, it has been agreed with the Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers (LNCT) that teaching staff will return on Monday 10 August 2020 with 10 and 11 August 2020 as in services days and pupils will return on 12 August 2020.
- 3.17 Attendance: A phased return to school will be in place from 12 August 2020 with a blended approach of in school and in home learning. This will vary for each establishment based on roll, school buildings, available staffing and support services. The aim will be to offer maximum face to face education within school whilst ensuring physical distancing and minimising interaction between groups of pupils. A risk assessment will be completed for each establishment and appropriate adjustments will be made prior to return and communicated to everyone when they come to school.

- 3.18 School arrival and exit will be carefully controlled to avoid congestion. Entry and exit points will be managed to support social distancing. Parents/carers will be asked to avoid coming onto the school grounds where possible and to use drop off points, with “park and stride” as a possible option to aid this.
- 3.19 In ELC settings, social distancing is extremely difficult with young children. Therefore, a “bubble” approach will be used where children and staff attend in a consistent group and are not required to remain 2m apart from each other but maintain social distancing from other adults and children in attendance. Where possible, each bubble would have their own dedicated space.
- 3.20 For primary schools, it is proposed to have reduced class sizes and a regular rota system in place within each school for return as a full school, half or third of school roll. This recognises the difficulties of maintaining 2m distancing for primary pupils. Most schools in Moray have identified a rotation over a part week as most suitable for them and information is in the process of being issued to parents on what is planned for their school before the end of term.
- 3.21 Secondary schools are planning the return of pupils taking account of the requirements for Broad General Education and Senior phase, including pupils studying for SQA qualifications. There will be modification of normal timetabling and movement around schools so that pupil movement is reduced, including for example using “home rooms” for S1 and 2. Adjustments will also be made to the S3-6 delivery to minimise changeovers, for example using fewer longer teaching periods in a day. Where necessary additional cleaning arrangements will be in place to use spaces vacated by another group. This may particularly be the case for any specialised equipment or facilities.
- 3.22 ASN – arrangements for children and young people with additional support needs (ASN) and social emotional and behavioural needs (SEBN) will be dependent upon the needs of each individual. Pupils with severe and complex needs will be looked after within an enhanced provision ‘bubble’, with no through traffic allowed. All schools, with or without an enhanced provision are likely to require a designated space for a ‘transitions’ bubble for some pupils, in particular those with autism or SEBN needs. These pupils will continue to access their class through remote learning until they are ready to join their in school class. Additional supports to meet individual wellbeing needs are also under development.
- 3.23 School Transport will be in place for those pupils entitled to this provision. Arrangements are being reviewed to take account of social distancing and the revised rota attendance of pupils.
- 3.24 Catering also requires to take account of social distancing being maintained throughout the school day. Schools are making full use of their buildings in order to enable as many pupils to return to school as possible and so normal dining facilities will not be available in many schools. A number of options are being considered for catering arrangements, however, the most viable is likely to be for pupils to bring packed lunches. If this option goes ahead, it

would be proposed to maintain the current arrangements for free school meal vouchers to those families who qualify on financial grounds.

- 3.25 Cleaning will be based on current national guidance for non-healthcare settings and will include routine cleaning of frequently touched objects and surfaces, routine toilet cleaning. Arrangements are currently under consideration as there are likely to be changes required to the existing cleaning regime.

Developing Situation

- 3.26 As noted above, the planning undertaken has been based on the agreed, published national Guidance. However, as this report was being finalised, a new expectation has emerged of securing 50% in-school learning as part of the new blended model.
- 3.27 There are a number of constraints that have influenced the planning and options prepared for the return of schools and which make a 50% in-school model challenging. These are mentioned elsewhere in the report and supporting documents but include 2m physical distancing, the nature of many of our school buildings, school rolls, workforce, continuing childcare and costs. Changes to any of these would impact on what it is possible to achieve, however, funding is the major fundamental barrier that would require to be addressed even if all other issues could be resolved.
- 3.28 Recognising this new demand for 50% in school learning, further urgent work is being undertaken to identify and cost measures that might enable a greater number of learners to attend school if finance was to be made available. This is obviously a significant ask with such a short time before the end of term and of a workforce what has been strained to meet the demands outlined in this and previous reports to the Cabinet and it is not clear at this time what adjustments might be possible to plans to re-open schools.
- 3.29 It is expected that this situation will develop and be clarified over the next few days and it may be possible to provide a verbal update to the Cabinet at the meeting.

4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))

This report relates to the priority 'Provide opportunities where young people can achieve their potential to be the best they can be from the Corporate Plan and to 'Building a better future for our children and young people in Moray' from the LOIP.

(b) Policy and Legal

National policy guidance is being reviewed regularly as the Covid-19 pandemic continues to affect services including Education and planning for recovery has taken account of the recovery route map and latest guidance issued by the Scottish Government as it relates to local circumstances.

(c) Financial implications

Any financial implications are being recorded as Covid-19 costs and monitored regularly. Every effort is being made to adapt and design services without incurring additional costs. However, given the new services that are required and the measures that need to be put in place to adhere to public health advice and support a blended home/school model of learning this is unlikely to be possible.

As each stage of recovery is prepared, costings will be prepared for consideration against the available options. Additional costs will be recorded and reported through the financial monitoring reports prepared by the Chief Financial Officer.

Where appropriate consideration will be given to allocating funding from the flexibility allowed by the relaxation of criteria around the use of ELC expansion funding and the Pupil Equity Fund. This will be referred to the Cabinet or appropriate Council committee should the need arise.

(d) Risk Implications

Workforce: Efforts have been made to make arrangements for the return of schools within current budgets. Therefore, only very limited additional staffing arrangements will be possible. As the new model of learning develops, additional workforce requirements may emerge and have to be addressed at short notice. There has been a good response to recent teaching vacancies and it is hoped this might provide additional flexibility in the supply pool post August to assist with any emerging teaching workforce requirements.

Planning underway at present has some reliance on the flexibility of some employees to accept adjustment to their roles and normal working times and this has not yet been fully tested out. There is a risk that additional recruitment and costs will be unavoidable (e.g. cleaning, after school care).

The effects of report, trace and isolate may have an impact on staffing availability across services. Where possible contingency planning for a replacement workforce is being developed for critical services.

As noted in this and previous reports to the Cabinet, there has been a vast amount of work required in a pressured amount of time to respond to the demands of Covid-19. As a small authority, this is particularly concentrated for Moray and there is a risk that officers do not have the capacity to continue the pace and volume of work indefinitely.

Childcare Hubs: – there is a risk that it will not be possible to meet all of the demand from key workers in categories 1 to 3 as currently defined. To respond to this, priority will be given to families where all adults are keyworkers and places will be allocated to category 1, then 2 and then category 3 until capacity is reached. Provision is currently being made on the basis of containing costs as far as possible. This has included working on the basis of “one shift” so that a single full-time shift can cover the whole operational day. This means that 7 hours is the optimum that can be offered

per day. There is a risk that this will not meet the desired childcare hours of the keyworkers.

Impact on Well-being: – remote working and learning are largely untested. However, there has already been some evidence of variable engagement reported nationally and some report finding the new ways of working more challenging than others. Recognising the potential risk to wellbeing, a workstream has been added to the recovery plan to address this.

Impact on Learning and Attainment: – as with well-being, the possible long term impact on learning and attainment is not yet tested. A workstream has also been identified to support this key priority.

Financial: – as noted in this report, efforts have been made to contain costs within current budgets as far as possible but this is unlikely to be possible. There will be costs with many aspects of this recovery phasing plan, including cleaning, school transport, free school meal and alternative and additional staffing. Regular financial monitoring reports by the Chief Financial Officer are in place to ensure this risk is monitored.

Lockdown: – it may be that there is a future resurgence of Covid-19 which will require a roll back of education arrangements. The phasing identified in the local phasing plan makes provision for this and recent experience would be used for the arrangements required.

Pace and changing environment and guidance: – every effort has been made to plan for re-opening of schools and ELC and for the childcare arrangements taking account of the current situation as far as it is known. However, a feature of this pandemic has been the unknown and the speed with which change occurs and this is an ongoing risk.

(e) Staffing Implications

There are no direct staffing implications from this report. Specific workforce issues will be considered as part of the detailed work being undertaken, for example in relation to the childcare provision. There may also workforce issues that could impact on school delivery, for example Covid related absence in a small school or public health advice to employees with health conditions or in particular situations (e.g. pregnancy) which will have to be addressed.

(f) Property

Property issues may arise as we implement return to schooling with strict adherence to social distancing as well as ensuring that schools are maintained to the correct levels of health and safety and cleaning requirements to keep staff and children safe.

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

Equity is a key consideration in the provision of education and will be an ongoing consideration as schools and ELCs plan to re-open. In support of this, provision of ICT equipment has already been put in place and head teachers will continue to monitor local situations.

In both the continuing provision of education during lockdown and the planning for re-opening of schools, consideration has been given to the circumstances of groups protected under the Equality Act 2010. For example, arrangements were made for young people with severe and complex needs based on individual assessment, consideration is being given to requirements of pupils with ASN as part of recovery. Families experiencing socio-economic hardship have had access to free school meal vouchers and ICT equipment has been provided to support those who may be digitally excluded. Contact was made proactively for a number of these supports based on existing information held by the council, was publicised in the media and has been raised with eligible individuals through contact with council officers, including head teachers and council benefits staff.

Given the pace of work during Covid-19, work on systematic equality impact assessment has yet to be completed and will be advanced as soon as possible before the start of the new term.

(h) Consultations

Head of Education, Head of Educational Resources and Communities, Quality Improvement Managers, Business Support Team Manager, Acting Early Years' Service Manager, Senior Project Manager (ELC), Environmental Protection Manager, Head Teacher / Moray SEBN Service, Chief Financial Officer, Principal Accountant, Tracey Sutherland, Committee Services Officer, Head of HR/ICT & OD and Equal Opportunities Officer have been consulted and are in agreement with the contents of this report as regards their respective responsibilities.

All head teachers have been consulted on the preparation of this plan and the approach to recovery.

There has been ongoing involvement and consultation with trade unions on the plans for re-opening schools and ELC and on the preparation of risk assessments for return. Their contribution and views have been reflected in the emerging documents. The trade union representatives have also found the volume and pace of work challenging. Their request for additional facility time is currently under consideration.

Arrangements are being made to meet with parent council representatives on 18 June 2020 to consult with them on the re-opening of schools. Many schools have already been in contact with their parents throughout the period of closure and so these meetings will give an opportunity for a Moray overview discussion.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 There is a vast range of complex considerations to be addressed in the re-opening of schools and ELC settings for August 2020. It has been extremely challenging to plan the necessary arrangements for recovery in the time available, especially as this is within a live operating environment delivering remote learning for the first time, supporting vulnerable children and families in a new social context and maintaining**

a growing a new childcare service. Added to this is the dynamic, fast paced changing nature of the Covid-19 situation.

- 5.2 In this environment, the Education team in Moray has pulled together, working with colleagues regionally and nationally to prepare a local delivery phasing plan to ensure the safe and smooth re-opening of schools and ELC in August as set out in this report. Given the scale of recovery work to be undertaken, the focus has been on re-opening existing school and ELC establishments and ensuring a quality educational experience for our learners in the transition to the new blended model of learning from 12 August 2020.**
- 5.3 There remain considerable uncertainties as to how the Covid-19 situation might develop, what further changes there may be and how long this current situation might be expected to continue for. Therefore, it is particularly difficult to plan how our education provision might be developed further. A recent development has suggested a new expectation of 50% in-school learning. This emerging situation is being monitored and officers are taking urgent steps to consider how it might be possible to respond to this if critical additional funding was to be available.**
- 5.4 The developing situation will be closely monitored as preparations continue in readiness for the new term, solutions for the blended learning model continue to be developed and implemented and experience of the new model builds from August 2020. As further stages of the Covid-19 experience emerge, it is likely that there will be further development of the renewal and recovery plans for Education that will be brought to future meetings for consideration and review to suit the emerging learning and circumstances including any new requirements in relation to school attendance.**

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Background Papers: Previous reports to Cabinet as noted in this report