

## Parent Council COVID-19 panel meeting

Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2020, 13.30-15.00

### Panel

<b>Lesley Simpson – chair</b>	<b>Shona Thompson</b>
<b>Robin Calder</b>	<b>Rhonda Simpson</b>
<b>George Smith – councillor</b>	<b>Leanne Paton – minutes</b>

George noted how important this meeting was. He is aware at the amount of work that is going on just now and the new way of working. He said it is very important for everyone to work together. He thanked Lesley for enabling him to attend today's meeting.

Lesley thanked the Parent Council Chairs present for their help in consulting their Parent Forums and sending in such a high number of questions. She explained that she had gone through the lists of questions and pulled out the most frequently asked for this meeting today. She said there were some questions that were specific to the schools and so the questions from each school's Parent Council would be passed on to the relevant school. These questions and answers would form a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document that would be added to the Shetland Islands Council (SIC) website.

### **TRANSPORT - SHONA**

#### **1. How will children get to school, will they still be bussed?**

- Pupils who use transport to get to school will still be bused. Transport planning colleagues are working through each vehicle at the moment; this includes calculating how many seats are available, they are doing this both diagonally and front to back to maintain 2m distance.

#### **2. How will this be managed while waiting and when the children get on/off the bus/taxi with social distancing?**

- The pupil who boards the bus first will be allocated the seat at the back and so forth. Pupils will leave the vehicle from the front. Pupils will use the same seats. The normal annual letter to parents, enclosing their child's bus pass, has been prepared; a separate email will be issued with the updated transport arrangements using the emails that have registered with schools for receiving the home learning packs. Transport staff will be contacting head teachers next week to start putting pupil lists together for bus operators. For children who are entitled to school transport and who normally travel to school on service buses, we are looking into dedicated school transport for those pupils. For those non-entitled pupils they will still have access to service buses, or parents will have to transport them. From the 17<sup>th</sup> of August, new contracts will come in to place, in particular, a better and more frequent service to and from the south mainland.

### **3. If parents are to individually drive, where will all the cars go?**

There may be double runs of school transport vehicles each day, this is happening currently with public service. All contact points will be wiped down between each run. There will also be deep cleaning of vehicles at the end of the day/overnight. Feeder buses are also being looked at. Feeder buses may take pupils all the way; this is a work in progress. We are not expecting parents to drive pupils who are entitled transport but they may choose to do so. I cannot answer where individual cars are going to go, this will have to be managed by individual settings.

## **FLEXIBILITY BETWEEN SCHOOLS - ROBIN**

### **1. Will schools all work to the same model with certain groups being in school for the same amount of time or will there be variations between schools?**

The Scottish Government guidance is when children return there has to be a 2m physical distance as far as possible. This is leading to the development of time in school and time accessing remote learning. Within that blended model, there is a scope for flexibility between schools. The Scottish Government are quite clear on that and we should be taking in to account that our schools have different sizes, different spaces, and different numbers of pupils on the school role. There will be flexibility between schools. We are preparing as a local authority frameworks and parameters for blended learning. Each school is currently developing there model of blending learning and will be communicating this with parents.

### **2. Do the children have to go back or can we choose to continue with 100% home learning?**

We understand that many parents are anxious about their children returning to school and how safe it will be. I can reassure you that all the appropriate health and safety procedures, risk assessments, physical distance markings will be in place to support the safety of your children returning. There still will be many children learning at home. Any parents who are still uncomfortable come August with their children returning to school will be directed to the Home Education Policy. This was prepared many years before this pandemic. Parents can make a request to home educate their children, that request is considerate by the local authority.

### **3. Will primary and secondary children go back at the same times?**

All children will return on Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> August. The schools are currently looking how they are going to organise their school day. The schools are

trying as far as possible to make things straightforward as they can. There will be flexibility.

## **EMOTIONAL WELLBEING AND PREPARING CHILDREN FOR RETURNING – RHONDA**

### **1. What measures will be taken to minimise the emotional/psychological impact on children and young people?**

- Everybody within Childrens Services is very aware of the potential impact of children returning to school. This is a very challenging and uncertain time. One of the biggest things we can do is prepare our bairns by giving them age appropriate information that helps explain what school will be like on their return. It is important that they know what the changes are likely to be and how they might affect them. We are working hard to strengthen our nurturing approach across our schools to help promote feelings of safety and security and to emphasise the importance of positive relationships in supporting children, young people and staff. Staff will have access to appropriate training. We will seek to identify early children and young people who are experiencing difficulty and will provide extra help and support.

### **2. How can we as parents help prepare our children for the return to school?**

- There are many things that we can do. Firstly we should recognise that we as adults may feel stressed and anxious about the return to school too. We should be aware that that children and young people will pick up on these anxieties and worries. We should look to talk to children and young people in a calm and reassuring way about returning to school. Parents should make sure their child has opportunity to speak about going back to school, what they can expect when they return and a chance to talk through any questions, worries or fears they might have. It will also be important to keep routines going at home, particularly around meal times and bed times as this will make things easier in August for everybody. While at home, learning should be kept as part of the routine and children encouraged to engage with school activity. Children should also be encouraged where possible to connect with and keep in contact with their teachers, friends and peers.

### **3. What support will be available in schools?**

- Children and young people will have access to a nurturing environment with responsive and supportive staff. They will be given time and support to settle in to their classes, to become familiar with new routines and to re-connect and build relationships. There will be support available take part in

activities that promote their emotional health and wellbeing. All staff and pupils will have input using elements of the Seasons For Growth Programme which promotes resilience, the capacity to cope with change and uncertainty and provides opportunity to discuss and normalise difficult feelings and emotions. Where pupils are struggling, we will seek to identify appropriate support in a timely manner.

**4. Will there be more of an emphasis on mental health and wellbeing when the children return?**

- Yes there will be. We know that when children and young people feel stressed and anxious they find it difficult to learn. It is therefore vital that we seek to reduce stress and anxiety and focus on health and wellbeing first to make sure they are ready and able for learning and engagement with the more formal curriculum.

**SUMMER HOLIDAYS - Robin**

**1. Schools are going back a week early, will they close a week early too?**

- The Scottish Government says schools are to go back on Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> August this is for all children across Scotland. We will follow instructions from them. This will require juggling around holidays. We are awaiting further guidance from Scottish Government and COSLA. We need to discuss this with teaching union colleagues. It will be added to either this or next year's summer holidays 2021. We will share this as soon as possible.

**2. Will there be any consultation with staff, pupils and parents about this week and when it will be taken?**

- No formal consultation with staff, pupils and parents due to the situation. It is important to share information with parents and carers as soon as possible.

**Additional Support Needs (ASN) - Lesley**

**1. What about children with ASN – what is the thinking for these children?**

- Some children will have the same arrangements as the others in their class as this would be the best arrangement for them. Each child with more complex needs will be assessed on an individual case as each child is different and will need different types of support depending on their needs.

**2. Some pupils have specific care plans/additional support needs that require physical contact. Will this be risk assessed on an individual basis?**

- A number of children with individual health care plans have been attending our ASN and critical childcare hubs throughout the lockdown and many of

these children do require physical contact for personal care needs and other interventions. Everyone who needs one has a person focused risk assessment to ensure everything has been thought through and safety is paramount.

### **3. How will you ensure these children socially distance?**

- We cannot do that for some of our children and we need to accept that and make sure that all other precautions possible are taken. One of the most important ways to ensure safety is that anyone who has cold-like symptoms does not come into the hub or school and is asked to go home. Also keeping a high level of hygiene constantly and making sure children and staff are washing hands frequently as well as wearing PPE when delivering personal care.

## **CLEANING, HANDWASHING AND PPE - Shona**

### **1. Will there be additional cleaning and cleaners to keep the school clean during the day and after school for the next day?**

- Yes, our plan is to have additional cleaners in throughout day. We have developed a robust cleaning schedule. There will also be a deep clean in the summer holidays.

### **2. Will children have to clean their desks?**

- Some senior pupils may be asked to clean their desks. Younger pupils will not.

### **3. Some children had sore hands using the soap provided before lockdown, can they bring their own?**

- Yes, that will be fine. We will also have sanitizer in each classroom.

### **4. Will teachers and children have to wear masks or other PPE?**

- It is not our intention that teachers/staff will wear masks. The only time this would be required is if a child were to become symptomatic. We will have an isolation room in each setting, which would require the use of PPE by staff. This, only until the child was collected from school.

## **TRANSITIONS – Robin and Sam**

### **1. What are the plans for transitions? Will children be able to have time with their current teacher before moving to the next in August?**

Some in school experience may happen in late June. P7-S1 within their clusters are arranging and planning for transition activity. It will be no more than x2 half days. It will be optional. Risk assessments/ hygiene and cleaning will be in place.

Schools will be safe for children engaging in this transition activity. There will be school transport, which is currently being looked at. There will be more communication from schools in the coming week.

## **2. What is the arrangements for children in ELC going into P1?**

- ELC team have been working with school managers who are developing a transition offer, which has a number of phases. We recognise that young children who have been away from early learning and childcare settings have been away for up to 12 weeks now. It will be quite challenging for them. Phase one –offering two stay and play sessions each week during June for maximum 1.5 hours. These stay and play sessions are for parents and carers to come with their children and this will be carefully organised. Children will be grouped in to small bubbles of no more as six. This is to provide an opportunity for children to start reconnecting.

## **3. How can you have young children adhere to social distancing rules and is this the right thing to do?**

- It will be difficult for young children to understand social distancing. We can do this by taking other measures to reduce the risk of transmission. We can do this by having children in smaller groups, looking at hygiene, check and clean surfaces which are around (move them if necessary), minimising risk at all times. It is possible to help bairns to achieve social distancing if they are taught new routines clearly. We have to be mindful of their age and capable for their capacity. We must make sure information is clear and concise.

## **SOCIAL DISTANCING AND HUMAN CONTACT - Lesley**

### **1. How will you enforce social distancing?**

- Social distancing will be possible and work well with some groups of children but it will not be appropriate for some of our younger children and for those with more complex additional support needs. Therefore there will be other ways to limit contact such as children staying together in smaller groups or 'bubbles' and limiting the number of different staff members working with each bubble. Again, looking at what is already happening in the hubs and childcare settings, hygiene is first class and kept up at all times. Staff come in thinking about their own hygiene such as wearing fresh clothes, hair tied up, etc. to try to minimise risk.

### **2. How will teachers deal with close contact for, e.g. administering first aid?**

### **3. What about children who need help with the toilet?**

All of these things will continue to happen according to what the individual children will need. First aid will still be administered, as you would expect. If necessary PPE

will be worn according to the risk assessments drawn up. Currently in hubs, and as we return to school, we have particular members of staff that will be working with groups of children and this is to minimise the number of adults the children are in contact with. So, for example, if a bairn required help going to the toilet or with personal care, we try to keep the same members of staff with them both for their dignity and for safety.

### **SCHOOL MEALS - Shona**

#### **1. Will the children stay for lunch?**

- Yes, they will stay for lunch. We will provide a packed lunch for every pupil, and will try to make that as interesting as possible. We can cater for all dietary needs. Alternatively, pack lunches can be brought in from home they just cannot come in to contact with the lunches of other pupils.

#### **2. Will there be contactless payments, packed lunches, tuck shop, etc.?**

Tuck shops will not be something that we would encourage at the moment. Contactless payments are currently available in all primary and some secondary settings. We are currently exploring whether we can broaden that out to cover all secondary settings.

#### **3. If children are expected to bring packed lunches, how will this work for those who get free school meals?**

- Pupils who receive payments for school meals will either have their lunch in school and if they are not in school, those payments will continue.

### **BLENDED LEARNING, ARRANGEMENTS FOR BEING IN SCHOOL OR AT HOME - Robin**

#### **1. What is the blended model of learning?**

The blended model of learning means a combination of learning in school and learning at home. The reason for the blended model of learning is because the social distancing requirements. This means that there needs to be a smaller number of children in the majority of schools. Which means not all children can come in to the schools at one time.

#### **2. How much time will be spent in school or at home?**

We are looking at each school across Shetland and how blended modelling will work. Schools are looking at their school rolls and their capacity. They are looking at the size of their classrooms and how many children can safely be in a class at one time? They are looking at the resources within their schools trying to maximise space and the possibility using other locations such as their community halls or recreation trust facilities. School head teachers have been asked to prepare a plan with their staff for blended learning; we are still not clear how this will look as it is still being worked on. We will be writing to all parents at the end of this week with some initial information.

**3. Will there be any thought as to having family groups in at the same time to help parents get back to work?**

- Family groupings is central to school planning but there is no guarantees. The bigger the school the more complicated things become in terms of how it is organised and how many children can be in a class at one time. There is advantages of family groups such as hygiene and health and safety.

**4. How will this work for practical subjects?**

- The main thing is the importance of health and safety. We are planning to clear obsolete resources from classes to support children being in the classrooms taking in to account the physical distancing. Practical subjects require very important equipment and health and safety resources, which need to stay. We are providing parameters and structures that will include further guidance for practical subjects. This will be shared.

**5. How much support will there be for those who choose not to send their children back but want to continue with the home learning?**

- This was already covered earlier. Refer to home schooling policy.

**BREAK TIMES - Shona**

**1. How will break times work, especially in terms of social distancing?**

- We are looking at possibly having shorter breaks for lunch. This will depend on transport as we may have staggered start and finish times; this may also mean shorter days. Some head teachers are looking at allocated areas throughout their outdoor space and keeping pupils in their class groups.

**2. What about in bad weather?**

- It is likely children will have to stay inside which mean they stay in their classrooms, or other available spaces.

**3. Will there be more playground supervision?**

- This will be dealt with once we have this all fitted together. It is hard to know until it is planned and organised.

**NURSERY AND PLAY BASED LEARNING - SAM**

**1. How are plans for the additional ELC hours going to go ahead in the pandemic?**



- Unfortunately, Sam could not attend today's meeting due to unforeseen circumstances but we will add these questions and answers to our FAQ once she has had a chance to add her answers.

**2. How will ELC help children who have not had much contact with adults during lockdown?**

As said previously, parents will be invited in to the settings with their children for Stay and Play sessions so this will be carried out sensitively in partnership with each child's parents. Sam will be able to give a much wider answer to this for us.

**3. Will parents be able to come into settings to comfort their children?**

- We want this to be a positive experience for children and parents to go back into their settings and have an enjoyable time. We will be looking at transition over a period of time and it will not be finished in June/July but will continue on through August. Parents will be part of this transition and further information will come out soon about arrangements for August.

**TEST AND PROTECT – Lesley**

**1. Will Test, Track and Trace be fully implemented?**

- Yes, Test and Protect will be carried out as part of normal procedures. We have in fact done exactly that this weekend in one of our hubs. A member of staff felt poorly and they were tested right away. The test was done very quickly, within the day, and thankfully it was a negative test. It was very positive how it was all dealt with so quickly and efficiently.

**2. What if a pupil in a class becomes ill and tests positive?**

- There will be guidance that we will follow from public health. Everyone's safety is paramount. The same guidance will be available across the authority to all settings and schools.

**3. Will there be guidelines about children attending with regards to cold symptoms, coughs, etc.?**

- Yes there will and currently is. If you attend one of our settings and have any symptoms or a member of your family does you do not come in. This will be everyone's responsibility and is our first and most important line of defence.

**4. What if a child becomes ill during the day?**

- We have policies in place already. The first thing is make sure they are isolated from others as soon as possible, in a caring and secure way. We make sure everyone else is safe. We then arrange for the child to be collected as soon as possible. Guidance still needs to be put in place for children who arrive on buses but that is in hand.

#### **5. Can we keep our child home if we hear about Coronavirus in the community?**

- It is the parent's responsibility if they want to keep their children home, the same as if it were a snowy day. If there was coronavirus in the community, we would probably already have knowledge about that. Parents are advised to inform head teachers should they be aware that the virus was back in the community.

#### **CHILDCARE - Lesley**

- Childcare for key workers will continue. This is an area that is going to become very stretched across June, summer holidays and August. We are looking at arrangements for children coming back in June and what we will be able to provide regarding childcare.

#### **Questions from parents**

- **Will parents be consulted on the days that their children will be taken in to school to see if fits in with work?**

We do not have a formal position on that. We are encouraging schools to develop their models and have engagement with parents/carers. It is very important that parents/carers are aware of the development plans and kept updated.

- **Is there a plan in place for if there is a second wave of coronavirus in Shetland?**

There is no plan yet but there will be. This features as part of our risk assessment. It will need to require a wider approach.

#### **The proposals and going back to school, will this come out before the summer holidays so parents can plan to go back to work or when will the time frame be?**

As far as possible, we would be looking to share that information before the summer holidays. Schools will be in touch with parents and sharing that information.

- **Will teachers and other staff be tested and will there be regular spot testing?**

The tests we are currently working with are for when someone presents with cold like symptoms as in the guidance from Public Health. It may be that we are advised to change this at some point but we will always follow advice from Public Health and Scottish Government. Test and Protect will be implemented.

- **Sandwick Early Learning Years were getting a physical expansion is that still going ahead and if so, when?**

Expansion is on hold at the moment, this is a national decision. Locally we made a huge amount of progress pre the pandemic on the expansion.

- **Any scope to involve any bairns and hear their anxieties?**

There has been engagement with children, particular older children, such as questionnaires, national and local surveys, support from youth services and the information collected through staff in schools as they work with their classes and individual pupils. There have been very mixed reviews. Some young people say they have got into a groove with remote learning, others are really missing face-to-face interacting with their teachers. We will continue to engage with our children and young people. Teachers have been in touch very regularly with some families.

- **Will all the bairns in Skeld come back at the same time?**

Robin emphasised that there will be flexibility.

- **Question from chat box**

Karen just asked a question on ELC, Robin said that the expansion is on hold, does that mean the new 1140 hours is on hold? Or just the work to the buildings?

There is a commitment to progress with the 1140 hours it will just take a little bit longer as a local authority to get there. Building works are on hold.

### **George Smith**

George noted that he thought this had been an excellent meeting. It is important to highlight that the first and foremost, which has come through, is the priority on health and safety and health and well-being. George thanked everyone for attending and all the work that has been done to hold today's meeting.

### **Lesley Simpson**

Lesley noted that this has been a very useful meeting and that she would like to do this again sometime. This will help with our planning for moving forward. We will be in touch with another meeting in the near future.