

C-19 Education Recovery Group
Minutes of meeting, Thursday 26 November 2020

Attendees

- John Swinney MSP, *Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills (Chair)*
- Councillor Stephen McCabe, *Children and Young People spokesperson, Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA)*
- Sam Anson, *Deputy Director, Scottish Government*
- Alison Cumming, *Deputy Director, Scottish Government*
- Greg Dempster, *General Secretary, Association of Headteachers and Deputies in Scotland (AHDS)*
- Sheena Devlin, *Executive Director, Perth & Kinross Council (ADES)*
- Andrew Drought, *Deputy Director, Scottish Government*
- Larry Flanagan, *General Secretary, Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS)*
- Eddie Follan, *Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA)*
- Liam Fowley, *Vice Chair, Scottish Youth Parliament*
- John Gallacher, *Regional Manager (UNISON)*
- Gayle Gorman, *Chief Executive and Chief Inspector, Education Scotland*
- Gillian Hamilton, *Strategic Director, Education Scotland*
- Carrie Lindsay, *President, Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES)*
- Graeme Logan, *Director of Learning, Scottish Government*
- Ben McKendrick, *Scottish Youth Parliament*
- Janie McManus, *Deputy Director, Scottish Government*
- Elizabeth Morrison, *Deputy Director, Scottish Government*
- Fiona Robertson, *Chief Executive, SQA*
- Diane Stockton, *Public Health Scotland*
- Matthew Sweeney, *Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA)*
- Jim Thewliss, *General Secretary, School Leaders Scotland (SLS)*
- Maree Todd MSP, *Minister for Children and Young People*
- Maria Walker, *Strategic Director, Education Scotland*
- Margaret Wilson, *Chair, National Parent Forum of Scotland (NPFS)*
- Imme Jones, *Policy Lead in Digital Health and Care, Registers of Scotland*
- Alistair Hodgson, *Interim Head of Policy & Strategy, Health & Social Care, Scottish Government*

Weekly feedback

Officials provided an update on the latest data, which included noting that the number of cases of COVID-19 in 2-17 year olds had fallen for the second consecutive week. Similarly, the weekly rate of positive COVID-19 cases across Scotland had also fallen over the last couple of weeks. Overall pupil attendance rates were just below 90%, however, it was noted that the majority of covid-related

absences were because of the number of pupils who were self-isolating, due to being symptomatic or having tested positive for the virus.

The young person's view

Liam Fowley, Vice Chair of Scottish Youth Parliament, presented a paper to the group on young people's views across Scotland on COVID-19 education recovery. It was highlighted that young people should have a strong voice and meaningful participation in education matters. DFM stressed the importance of ensuring that communication from all our young people is key and we should capture that through all possible channels.

There was some discussion on ways in which we can communicate with young people to ensure they are aware of any educational decisions made on a national level and how that can be filtered down to them in various ways, i.e. social media platforms.

There was also agreement from the SQA and DFM for a young person to sit on the National Qualifications group.

Members were keen for Liam to highlight any issues at future CERG meetings to address the perspective of young people.

Protect Scotland app

Officials provided an update on the Protect Scotland app. It was launched on 10 September, available to those aged 16 and over. Since the launch, there have been 1.7m downloads and around a third of those who have tested positive are app users. From that perspective, the app is doing as intended.

It was noted that there has been a lot of stakeholder engagement to gain the views of parents and young people to understand the main concerns and challenges in lowering the age of app accessibility. To date, organisations that have been engaging with officials have been supportive of lowering the age to give access to those aged 11 and over and the First Minister has also recently given her support for the proposal. Ongoing work is being done to develop the app, including engagement with the Scottish Youth Parliament to look at the purpose, language and content to ensure it is suitable for younger users.

Officials were keen to engage with members following the meeting to air any issues and/or to discuss this further with their organisations.

Christmas/New Year holidays

DFM aired the issue of potentially extending the festive school holidays, prior to and after Christmas, to lessen the risk of virus transmission in schools due to the relaxation of national measures between 23-27 December.

Members highlighted that any decisions must be made on this as soon as possible, to allow local authorities, schools and parents to put plans in place.

Supporting parental engagement

A paper was presented to the group for approval from members to publish a document on reporting to parents and involving/engaging with parent councils during Covid-19. Greg Dempster (AHDS) was keen to have an offline discussion to refine some elements of the paper prior to publication. DFM was keen to have this available online as a reference point for schools and parents as soon as possible.

Next meeting: Wednesday 2 December 2020