

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & SKILLS COMMITTEE

ADDENDUM 2

4.00PM, MONDAY, 11 JANUARY 2021

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

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ADDENDUM

ITEM		Page
56	MEMBER INVOLVEMENT	5 - 6
	NOTICE OF MOTION: SUPPORTING SCHOOLS THROUGH THE PANDEMIC	
67A	COUNCIL NURSERIES ONLY OPEN TO CRITICAL WORKERS AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN	7 - 14

NOTICE OF MOTION

GREEN AND LABOUR GROUPS

SUPPORTING SCHOOLS THROUGH THE PANDEMIC

This committee welcomes the Government's

- announcement on Monday 4 January that schools would move to remote learning for a further lockdown period, for all except vulnerable children and the children of critical workers
- decision to cancel SATs, GCSEs and A Level examinations this year and commitment to a different method of assessment from last year's widely criticised algorithm

The committee notes the:

- Government have allowed individual providers to make decisions on how they will assess BTECs
- impact of moving education online which brings significant challenges for learning and the wellbeing of pupils

Therefore this committee requests:

- A report at the March committee detailing how the Council, schools and other providers are responding to the pandemic, including through supporting home learning, and access to food and devices
- That the Director of Families, Children and Learning writes to the Secretary of State and the Shadow Secretary of State for Education requesting that:
 - School and nursery staff are prioritised for vaccination , along with critical workers who support children and young people, such as social workers and youth workers
 - Schools receive additional funding to address increased costs from the pandemic such as increased cleaning costs, which they can currently only claim under strict criteria for the last lockdown period and increased use of supply staff
 - BTEC exams are cancelled in line with GCSE and A-Levels, and other forms of safe and fair assessment are considered
 - Additional funding is issued to NHS trusts to increase mental health and wellbeing support

Proposed by: Cllr Nield

Seconded by: Cllr Allcock

Notes:

Subject:	Council nurseries only open to critical worker and vulnerable children		
Date of Meeting:	11 January 2021		
Report of:	Interim Director for Families, Children and Learning		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Caroline Parker	Tel: 01273 293587
	Email:	Caroline.parker@brighton-hove.gov.uk	
Ward(s) affected:	All		

By reason of the special circumstances, and in accordance with section 100B(4)(b) of the 1972 Act, the Chair of the meeting has been consulted and is of the opinion that this item should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency because it has been subject to an urgent decision by the Executive Director Families Children & Learning

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT

- 1.1 The paper outlines the use of officer urgency powers by the Interim Executive Director, Families, Children & Learning to agree to only open Council nurseries for critical worker and vulnerable children.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Committee notes the use of officer urgency powers by the Interim Executive Director, Families, Children & Learning to agree that Council nurseries should only be open to critical worker and vulnerable children from 7 January 2021.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The context and background information are set out in the attached paper. It was not possible to delay this decision until a full committee meeting because of the the rapidly raising rates of Covid in the city.
- 3.2 The Council's decision to limit attendance at Council nurseries to vulnerable children and the children of critical workers, does not suggest nurseries are no longer safe places. Instead, limiting attendance at our council nurseries is one way in which the Council can reduce the number of contacts between people and reduce the transmission of Covid.

4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

4.1 This is included in the attached record of urgent decision.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

5.1 Private, voluntary and independent early years providers were informed of the Council's decision.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 This is included in the attached record of urgent decision.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

7.1 This is included in the attached record of urgent decision.

Finance Officer Consulted: Name: Steve Williams Date: 06/01/2021

Legal Implications:

7.2 This is included in the attached record of urgent decision.

Lawyer Consulted: Name: Elizabeth Culbert Date: 07/01/2021

Equalities Implications:

7.3 Nurseries are working to prioritise as many places as possible for vulnerable children including SEND children receiving additional support funding, funded places for two-year olds and Early Years Pupil Premium children.

Sustainability Implications:

7.4 None.

Brexit Implications:

7.5 None.

Any Other Significant Implications:

7.6 Public Health Implications:

The aim of the decision was to reduce the number of contacts between people to help reduce the transmission of Covid in the city.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

Record of urgent decision to only open Council nurseries to critical worker and vulnerable children.

This record relates to urgent decisions taken by Chief Officers under the Scheme of Delegation to Officers Paragraph 7(2).

RECORD OF URGENT DECISION TAKEN BY

SUBJECT: Council nurseries only open to critical worker and vulnerable children

CONTACT OFFICER: Caroline Parker, Head of Early Years 01273 293587

REASONS FOR URGENCY AND WHY NOT PRACTICABLE TO HOLD A SPECIAL MEETING OR URGENCY SUB-COMMITTEE:

The Prime Minister announced that a [new national lockdown](#) came into force on Wednesday 6 January. During the period of national lockdown, schools, alternative provision, special schools, and colleges will remain open to vulnerable children and young people and the children of [critical workers](#) only.

However, the Government advice is that all early years providers can remain open during this period of national lockdown.

There are fast rising rates of Covid within the city. The latest published data shows that the rate in Brighton & Hove has increased by more than 500% since we came out of lockdown at the beginning of December. This rapid increase is mirrored in the rates in our children and young people and the city's all ages pattern is similar to that previously seen in urban areas of Kent and East Sussex. The most up to date information, available publicly, can be found [here](#).

This decision had to be made quickly because of the rapidly raising rates in the city and the risk of Covid infection for council staff.

DETAILS AND OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION WITH THE CHAIR/DEPUTY CHAIR OF RELEVANT COMMITTEE AND OPPOSITION SPOKES:

The Government guidance, the rising rates of Covid in the city and the concerns raised by staff were discussed with the Chair of the Children, Young People and Skills Committee, who in turn discussed this with Opposition Spokespersons.

In the discussion the impact of the decision for our most disadvantaged children was considered. It was agreed to broaden our definition of 'vulnerable' to include SEND children receiving additional support funding, funded places for two year olds and Early

Years Pupil Premium children, where there is space to include them safely in each nursery.

DATE OF CONSULTATION WITH CHAIR/DEPUTY CHAIR AND OPPOSITION SPOKES:

5 January 2021

THE DECISION:

To note the use of officer urgency powers by the Interim Executive Director Families, Children & Learning under delegations provided to the Interim Executive Director Families, Children & Learning to make the decision to adopt the same position with our council nurseries that government has with schools. Council nurseries will only be open for critical worker and vulnerable children from 7 January

REASONS FOR DECISION:

The reasons for the decision were:

- The rapidly rising rates of Covid within the city
- Concerns raised by staff at the risk of infection if nurseries continued to be open for all children
- The Council's duty as an employer to ensure the health and safety of staff
- The lack of consistency between the approach the Government is taking to schools and early years providers.
- The risk of children attending council nurseries spreading Covid to their families.

DETAILS OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED:

The alternative considered was to keep the nurseries open for all children.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

As the employer and service provider in relation to Council nurseries it is for the Council to determine whether to maintain the service at this time. This is a proportionate and lawful decision for the Council to take, taking into account the risks that have been weighed up, the scientific data and the mitigations that have been put in place for vulnerable children.

Lawyer Consulted: Elizabeth Culbert Date: 060121

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The next early years census will take place on 21 January 2021. The January census will be used to determine the amount of early years funding paid to local authorities by government for the 2021/22 financial year. The decision to only open council nurseries for critical worker and vulnerable children may lead to a significant under representation of children being recorded on the early years census and consequently there is a risk

that funding allocations for 2021/22 will be detrimentally affected. It is difficult to quantify the impact of this as there are several unknown factors at this stage. These include:


- *whether the government will allow adjustments to be made to the January 2021 census to reflect a 'virtual headcount' – i.e. what provision levels would have been prior to the decision to limit attendance*
- *whether government amend their existing wider guidance relating to early years funding arrangements. The situation is rapidly evolving, and government may have no option other than to review funding arrangements, particularly if other LAs are taking a similar approach to Brighton and Hove*
- *whether non-council early years settings adopt the same approach being taken for council nurseries and choose to limit attendance in the spring term. In this scenario there would be a greater impact to the overall early years census numbers reported for Brighton and Hove and would potentially exacerbate the funding implications for 2021/22*

This decision will also have financial implications on the council nursery budgets in 2020/21 in terms of lower free entitlement funding and reductions in fee income.

Finance Office Consulted: Steve Williams Date: 06/01/21

DATE OF NEXT COMMITTEE MEETING TO WHICH THE DECISION WILL BE REPORTED:

11 January 2021

<p>Date: 06.01.21</p>	
<p>Signed:</p> <p>Interim Executive Director Families Children & Learning</p>	
<p>Logged by Democratic Services Officer for Annual Report:</p> <p>Name:</p>	<p>Date:</p>

