

Dear Parents and Carers,

I am sure that many of you have questions following the First Minister's announcement yesterday and I write to clarify the implications for schools across Aberdeen City.

There are currently significant concerns about the overall levels of community transmission of Covid-19 and uncertainty around the impact of the new variant on children and young people. As a result of this concern, a lengthened period of on-line learning is being proposed by the Scottish Government to help get levels of community transmission down to support the safe re-opening of early learning and childcare settings and schools.

The vast majority of children will now learn from home until the 1st February, but these provisional arrangements will be reviewed on 18th January by the Scottish Government. In the meantime, school buildings will only be open for the children of critical key workers and vulnerable children. All families who have been granted a place for tomorrow will have been advised of this placement.

Information for parents who are key workers

I received a high number of e-mails last night enquiring about key worker placements. The initial application process was open from 23rd December to the 3rd January with huge demand for placements. Places have been offered to families where the role of parents sits in the highest key worker categories in the first instance.

Category 1 – Health and Care workers directly supporting COVID-19 response, and associated staff; Health and Care workers supporting life threatening emergency work, as well as critical primary and community care provision; Energy suppliers; staff providing childcare/learning for other category 1 staff

Category 2 – All other Health and Care workers, and wider public sector workers providing emergency/critical welfare services (for example: fire, police, prisons, social workers), as well as those supporting our Critical National Infrastructure, without whom serious damage to the welfare of the people of Scotland could be caused.

This approach has allowed us to get a sense of the staffing available to us so that we can be confident in our ability to deliver an in-school childcare service.

Schools are spending time today reviewing staffing arrangements in light of the First Minister's statement in order to establish an 'in school' team. The size of this team will determine whether any additional placements can be offered on an individual school basis. All waiting lists for key worker childcare have now been passed to

schools and they will contact families directly if able to offer a placement. Please afford schools some time to work through this process as we want to avoid being in a position where we have to cancel in school provision at short notice due to insufficient staffing levels.

The First Minister's statement included an instruction for some to shield once again. I appreciate that this has changed the circumstances of some key worker families as family members may now be shielding and unable to offer informal childcare. If you would like to be considered for key worker childcare, I ask that you contact the Head Teacher directly with details of the key worker role of parent (s), the category you believe the role(s) to be in and the employer of both parents to support the decision-making process. Please note that childcare places are only available during school hours and only to children aged 3-14. Available places will be allocated to those who sit in the highest Key worker categories in the first instance. Parents who have already applied should not e-mail details as your information has already been passed to schools for consideration.

Key worker childcare is only available during school hours, but breakfast and afterschool services can still be purchased from partners or from council run services. If you need to access wrap around services, please contact Louise Beaton LBeaton@aberdeencity.gov.uk who will be happy to support.

Some key worker parents currently access Early Learning and Childcare from a Funded Provider. If your Funded Provider is not currently operating and you require childcare, please let us know and we will approach other Funded Providers on your behalf. Places may be limited but we will do what we can to help. Aberdeen City Council will meet the cost of your funded hours and you will be charged for any additional hours you require. If you require assistance to source a new Funded Provider for the next few weeks, please contact Carol Main carmain@aberdeencity.gov.uk

Information for parents who are not key workers

Many families have been enquiring about the provision of chromebooks. As a Council we are well placed to support you if your child requires a device in order to access their Google Classroom and I would ask that you contact your child's school directly to make this request. School staff will provide you with a pick-up time so that you can collect the device safely over the next few days.

Our Digital Hub proved a helpful point of reference for families during the previous lockdown and it has been refreshed to bring it up to date. [Aberdeen's Digital Learning Hub](#) for parents and carers is designed to build confidence and knowledge around supporting learning at home. There are helpful tips, links and ideas for learning, supporting parenting and family wellbeing. There are also links to wider supports such as our Educational Psychology Services Hub which provides advice and guidance on practical supports which may also support you and your child at this time.

Information for parents of Senior Phase pupils

Many of you will be concerned about the impact of a second period of lockdown on young people who are in the senior phase. Secondary Head Teachers and I plan to review our arrangements this week and will write with more information soon. Please be assured that our senior phase pupils are our priority group, and we will be working hard with staff to mitigate the impact of decisions on them.

I thank you for your on-going support and understanding at what is a challenging time. School leaders and I will do all we can to keep you updated over the coming weeks.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eleanor Sheppard". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped 'E' and 'S'.

Eleanor Sheppard

Chief Education Officer