

26 March 2020

SNCT 20/75

SNCT School Closures

CORONAVIRUS (COVID – 19)

In response to the escalating COVID -19 outbreak, the Scottish Government has announced that all schools and ELC premises would close from 17.00 on 20 March for an indefinite period with the exception of any **critical provision** to protect the following key interests and groups:

- **Key workers:** to ensure that children of key workers, for example NHS and social care staff, have continuing access to all-age learning and childcare, potentially beyond the normal school day, that allows their parents/carers to participate in the national response to COVID-19. Teachers providing education for these pupils are also in the key workers category if no alternative provision can be made for their own children at home. Further advice can be found at:
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus---school-and-elc-closures-guidance-on-critical-childcare-provision-for-key-workers/>
- **Vulnerable children:** to maintain protections and support for children who may be particularly vulnerable in the current circumstances, particularly in respect of free school meals, children with additional support needs and at-risk children.

This presents practical challenges for teachers and associated professionals who will almost all be working from home to provide continuity of education remotely for pupils or called upon to provide cover in schools or educational establishments that remain open to vulnerable children or those of key workers.

For the duration of this emergency the SNCT recognises that teachers and associated professionals may be asked to volunteer to undertake duties not defined in contracts of employment while engaged in schools or educational establishments that remain open to vulnerable children or those of key workers. SNCT 20/74 published on 16 March 2020 provides flexibility for relaxation of teachers working time/ class sizes and relocation in these circumstances where not all schools are closed.

Pay

COSLA have already stated that there should be no detriment in pay arrangements for all staff. This also applies to teachers on acting appointments and in receipt of temporary responsibility allowance and for those supply teachers on temporary fixed term appointments.

Teachers on temporary fixed term contracts will continue to be paid for the duration of their contract, or the return to work of an absent post holder due to sickness or maternity leave. Where there is no defined end date on that contract this should be until the end of the school summer term.

Where a teacher had been appointed prior to 20 March 2020 on a temporary basis to carry out the duties of a promoted post holder in a school, education establishment or education team, Councils shall continue to increase the teacher's salary to the salary for the post for the duration of their contract.

The SNCT is giving further consideration to the issue of payment for supply teachers not currently in contract.

Wellbeing of Teachers and Associated Professionals

The wellbeing of all staff is paramount. Every effort should be made to accommodate working from home for any teacher or associated professional who has caring duties for, or in their household, anyone in the vulnerable groups referred to below or at higher risk of severe illness.

Teachers and associated professionals should ensure that they are taking steps to look after their wellbeing during their period of working from home. This includes:

- maintaining regular contact with their manager and colleagues
- taking regular breaks
- avoiding being 'always on' by ensuring that they identify non-working time
- contacting the employee assistance programme if they need support, for example, in relation to heightened feelings of anxiety. Teachers and associated professionals should be made aware of such programmes.
- being aware of the things that can cause them poor wellbeing and the activities and resources that can help to address this.

Vulnerable groups

Pregnant and vulnerable teachers should follow government advice on self-isolation and social distancing on <https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/infections-and-poisoning/coronavirus-covid-19#social-distancing-and-protecting-older-and-vulnerable-people>

This group currently includes those who are:

- aged 70 or older (regardless of medical conditions)
- under 70 with an underlying health condition

- those who are pregnant

Underlying health conditions include:

- chronic (long-term) respiratory diseases, such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), emphysema or bronchitis
- chronic heart disease, such as heart failure
- chronic kidney disease
- chronic liver disease, such as hepatitis
- chronic neurological conditions, such as Parkinson's disease, motor neurone disease,
- multiple sclerosis (MS), a learning disability or cerebral palsy
- diabetes
- problems with your spleen – for example, sickle cell disease or if you have had your spleen removed.
- a weakened immune system as the result of conditions such as HIV and AIDS, or medicines such as steroid tablets or chemotherapy
- being seriously overweight (a BMI of 40 or above)

Higher risk of severe illness

There are some clinical conditions which put people at even higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19. If you are in this category, further advice will be issued. For now, you should rigorously follow the social distancing advice in full, outlined below.

People falling into this higher risk group are those who may be at particular risk due to complex health problems such as:

- People who have received an organ transplant and remain on ongoing immunosuppression medication
- People with cancer who are undergoing active chemotherapy or radiotherapy
- People with cancers of the blood or bone marrow such as leukaemia who are at any stage of treatment
- People with severe chest conditions such as cystic fibrosis or severe asthma (requiring hospital admissions or courses of steroid tablets)
- People with severe diseases of body systems, such as severe kidney disease (dialysis)

Spring Break

Community Hubs will be open over Spring Break for vulnerable children and for children of key workers who cannot make their own childcare arrangements. The Community Hubs should be staffed on a volunteer basis and any holiday time worked will be paid back (*either as pay or a time off in lieu to be taken during the normal summer term of session 2019-20.) Specific arrangements will be determined locally across each of the 32 Councils. Teachers on supply lists should also be given the opportunity to provide cover for Spring Break.

The SNCT Joint Chairs will continue to monitor the situation on an ongoing basis and revisions will be made as necessary.

Yours sincerely

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Louise Wilson (Teachers' Panel)
Stephanie Walsh (Scottish Government)

Joint Secretaries