

<b>Meeting: Governing Body (Virtual Meeting)</b>			
<b>Meeting Date</b>	27 May 2020	<b>Action</b>	Receive
<b>Item No.</b>	4.1	<b>Confidential</b>	No
<b>Title</b>	Covid-19 - Return Dates for Schools, Colleges and Centres		
<b>Presented By</b>	Dr Jeff Schryer, CCG Chair, Geoff Little, Chief Executive and Accountable Officer		
<b>Author</b>	Karen Dolton, Executive Director of Children and Young People, Bury Council		
<b>Clinical Lead</b>	-		

<b>Executive Summary</b>
<p>The attached report was submitted to the Council's Covid 19 - Emergency Powers Group on the 26<sup>th</sup> May 2020 and is being shared with the CCG Governing Body for information.</p> <p>In summary, the report sets out: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The substantial challenge of the Covid-19 pandemic which is being managed carefully, and as coherently as the situation allows.</li> <li>• The colleges, schools and centres will support the safe return of key groups of pupils and students in the early days and weeks of June 2020. This work has been done in close liaison with parent and carer groups, with the RSC and with partners in education including the diocesan authorities, unions and associations.</li> <li>• Whilst the service will have the required places available from either 1 June 2020, 8 June 2020 or 15 June 2020, it is unclear from the school survey returns from parents exactly how confident parents and carers will be in supporting the return of their children to schools and centres.</li> </ul>
<b>Recommendations</b>
<p>It is recommended that the Governing Body:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Note the report</li> </ul>

<b>Links to CCG Strategic Objectives</b>	
<p><b>SO1 People and Place</b> To enable the people of Bury to live in a place where they can co-create their own good health and well-being and to provide good quality care when it is needed to help people return to the best possible quality of life</p>	☒

Links to CCG Strategic Objectives	
<b>SO2 Inclusive Growth</b> To increase the productivity of Bury's economy by enabling all Bury people to contribute to and benefit from growth by accessing good jobs with good career prospects and through commissioning for social value	☒
<b>SO3 Budget</b> To deliver a balanced budget	☒
<b>SO4 Staff Wellbeing</b> To increase the involvement and wellbeing of all staff in scope of the OCO.	☒
Does this report seek to address any of the risks included on the Governing Body Assurance Framework? If yes, state which risk below:	
GBAF N/A	

Implications						
Are there any quality, safeguarding or patient experience implications?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	☒
Has any engagement (clinical, stakeholder or public/patient) been undertaken in relation to this report?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	☒
Have any departments/organisations who will be affected been consulted ?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	☒
Are there any conflicts of interest arising from the proposal or decision being requested?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	☒
Are there any financial Implications?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	☒
Has an Equality, Privacy or Quality Impact Assessment been completed?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	☒
Is an Equality, Privacy or Quality Impact Assessment required?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	☒
Are there any associated risks including Conflicts of Interest?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	☒
Are the risks on the CCG's risk register?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	☒

Governance and Reporting		
Meeting	Date	Outcome
N/A		

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Report to: **Emergency Powers Group**

Date: 26 May 2020

Author: Karen Dolton

## **1. Return Dates for Schools, Colleges and Centres.**

1.1 Considerable work has been undertaken to ensure that all education providers can support the government's return to education of certain groups of pupils, from 1 June. 2020. Current arrangements indicate the following:

- **Bury's two Colleges** are both ready to receive some students from 1 June 2020. Risk assessments have been completed and are being implemented.
- **Secondary Schools** will be ready to admit Year 10 pupils alongside the pupils of critical workers and vulnerable pupils from either week beginning 1 June 2020, or week beginning 8 June 2020. Risk assessments have been completed and are being implemented.
- **Special Schools** have plans to open the schools to a wider group from 1 June 2020 and 8 June 2020; this will be based on the complexity of their special needs and transport capacity. Risk assessments have been completed and are being implemented. Some highly clinically vulnerable pupils will continue to need to be shielded at home with education support from the school and other needs from the multi-disciplinary team will be provided. The schools are working on ensuring best endeavours for all children to have the delivery of their Education Health and care plan. There is daily and weekly tracking of pupils jointly with the Children's Disability Team.
- **Early Years centres** will be ready to admit some children from 1 June 2020; there will be some phasing of attendance, and a rota system approach may be applied. Having now received the toolkit from Central Government, we are working with Early Years providers to get ready for children to arrive.
- **Primary schools** will be ready to admit additional groups of pupils; early years and Year 1 with Year 6 from either 8 June 2020 or 15 June 2020. Risk assessments are being completed and are being implemented. It is likely that there will need to be both a rota system, and some phasing of pupils in

certain schools where social distancing proves challenging due to the constraints of individual school sites and buildings.

- 1.2 School surveys of parental views have indicated that irrespective of the school's offer there may still be a high level of anxiety about returning children to a group learning environment. It is therefore anticipated that some schools may see an initially low pupil attendance.

## **2. Process Issues.**

- 2.1 After the initial disruption of the Covid-19 pandemic, the majority of schools and centres in Bury have remained open and have provided support to the children of critical workers and with vulnerable children. Some schools have also been able to provide more extended support to vulnerable families. The following information provides a brief overview of work which has been ongoing throughout the Covid-19 Pandemic:

- Both the colleges and a number of secondary and primary schools have provided virtual learning materials to pupils, and students in home isolation.
- Schools have maintained contact with the families of vulnerable pupils, working with colleagues within our Social Care teams. There has been a resolute focus on the needs of vulnerable pupils.
- Service continuity has been maintained through daily bulletins to schools and centres.
- A significant proportion of schools remained open during the Easter break to support vulnerable children and those of Critical Workers.
- Numbers of pupils in attendance at schools have risen steadily across the period of the Covid-19 lockdown.
- There have been virtual meetings with schools; School Cluster Groups, pastoral meetings and discussions of the Heads Advisory Group.
- Both the Bury Association of Primary Heads (BAPH) and the Bury Association of Secondary Heads (BASH), have continued to meet and communicate with each other, and with the Local Authority.
- Regular briefings have taken place with the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC), Regional HMI, DFE officials and with our two diocesan directors.
- The Local Authority has bid successfully to the DfE, with the support of our regional HMI for an allocated resource to assist us in the education recovery and resetting work for vulnerable pupils.
- The GM sub-regional group of authorities continues to meet regularly in order to share good practice and to support authorities.
- The Bury Risk Assessment Guidance has been well received by schools and has been adopted by both colleges, and used by independent providers.

### **3. Performance Review.**

- 3.1 In order to mitigate and to manage the challenge of the Covid-19 pandemic, schools and the LA have engaged in a substantial programme of adjustment and support. The majority of our schools and centres have remained open: children of critical workers and vulnerable children have been provided with on-site provision and support. The transport arrangements have been adjusted to provide flexible support, as has catering, cleaning and our approach to hygiene and deep cleaning of premises.
- 3.2 Both the two colleges and schools have managed some virtual learning, and have sought to support vulnerable pupils and students.
- 3.3 The successive waves of government advice have been digested and disseminated. The Bury Risk Assessment Guidance tool has been developed and disseminated not only to schools and colleges, but also to the private sector as a manual of best practice.
- 3.4 Work is continuing with schools, colleges and other providers in order to safely return pupils and students to learning in accordance with both government guidance and safe practice.

### **4. Summary.**

- 4.1 The substantial challenge of the Covid-19 pandemic is being managed carefully, and as coherently as the situation allows.
- 4.2 The colleges, schools and centres will support the safe return of key groups of pupils and students in the early days and weeks of June 2020. This work has been done in close liaison with our parent and carer groups, with the RSC and with partners in education including the diocesan authorities, unions and associations.
- 4.3 Whilst the service will have the required places available from either 1 June 2020, 8 June 2020 or 15 June 2020, it is unclear from the school survey returns from parents exactly how confident parents and carers will be in supporting the return of their children to schools and centres.

**Karen Dolton**  
**26 May 2020**

*Our Ref*  
*Date*  
*Please ask for*  
*E-mail*

TT/JK  
18 May 2020  
Councillor Tamoor Tariq  
[t.tariq@bury.gov.uk](mailto:t.tariq@bury.gov.uk)



Dear Head Teacher,

### **Covid-19 and the Bury Education Service**

I am writing to you, firstly to place on the public record my sincere thanks and those of our council for your unswerving professionalism and for the dedication of your staff during what is an unprecedented time in the life of Bury, whilst we get to grips with the biggest public health crisis our country has ever seen.

Secondly, I want to set out the concerns we have regarding the proposed extensions to the current opening arrangements as proposed by central government.

The third matter, and one which is of the utmost gravity is to announce I have approval from Bury Council's Cabinet to **not** support the government guidance regarding the progressive extension of schools re-opening to more pupils from 1st June 2020.

I set out below the main themes of my argument;

From the detailed discussions I have had with the DCS, Karen Dolton, and the Interim Director of Education and Inclusion, Julien Kramer, I have become very clear that there is an unacceptable risk to our pupils, our staff and to the communities of vulnerable people in Bury, if we were to extend the opening of our schools from 1st June as central government had proposed.

The North West region and Bury face persistently high levels of new infection, and a significant level of deaths through Covid-19 infection: and we have very high levels of vulnerable individuals within our communities. There are in addition real concerns regarding, Covid-19 testing, availability of PPE, limitations on the proposed Track and Trace, and real concerns regarding the inconsistent level of central government support for our recovery.

As the lead Member for Children's Services Schools and Families, I feel the heavy responsibility of protecting our education communities; and the wider community. I therefore have approval from Bury Council's Cabinet to not open schools to a wider intake of pupils from 1<sup>st</sup> June. I further intend, to lobby our case for a delayed, and more planned restart, with central government through the Secretary of State for Education. We will commit to regularly review this decision if there is clear evidence to suggest any changes around Covid-19 infection rates or if the government brings forward different direction or guidance than it has done currently affecting education.

I have only praise for the superb professionalism and determination of our Heads, and our staff in Bury schools. Through the daily briefings and from conversations with heads and staff it is clear

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how resilient the education service is, and how determined colleagues have been to protect the most vulnerable. I thank them for their brave work.

But I must recognise, both the high level of uncertainty regarding persistent high levels of Covid-19 infection in the North West; and the widespread anxiety which govt proposals have created; across our education service, among parents and carers; and in the communities we serve here in Bury. In the last week the public view and the views of parents and carers around the re-opening of schools has been quite clear. I know some of our schools have directly consulted with parents to ask if they intend to send their children into school in line with the governments timescales, and overwhelmingly the response has been NO.

The decision to ask Early Years Children to be amongst the first back into the school was ill thought out and most definitely ill judged. Pupils of that age, would not adhere to or understand social distancing and this would place greater pressure on our teaching staff.

Moreover there are clear significant implications including, the impact for our SEN children, school staff that are shielding, the lack of physical space in some schools and the fact next to no PPE has been offered for our School staff. We must learn the lessons from recent weeks where significant number of health and social care staff were put at risk without PPE.

I have had detailed engagement with Heads, parents, carers and professional associations/unions; and I have listened carefully to their expressions of doubt, and their misgivings.

The latest government announcement by the Prime Minister, together with an unfortunately timed and poorly judged Ministerial letter, have created yet further uncertainty and some dismay.

As the Lead Member for Education I have had valuable advice from, and discussions with the Bury Heads Advisory Group. I have also had numerous representations from parents and local groups; unions and the professional associations. All are saying to me, the present risk is too great.

Bury Council believe passionately that each child in our Borough should have access to education, we are also conscious of the fact that there will be gaps around the teaching and learning of disadvantaged pupils. However we will continue to work with you as our head teachers in helping to bridge and repair this gap at the earliest opportunity. Moreover at this stage our decision making and priority has been based on the clear concerns that have been raised from the teaching profession, parents and carers and teaching unions and the risk that is placed on all if schools were to reopen on 1 June.

The cabinet recognises that this decision will necessitate a clarity around safeguarding procedures aligned to the latest government advice. We will continue with our safeguarding plans which have been in place through the period of lockdown and ensure through this next stage of the Summer Term we keep up the engagement with schools. We are clear that vulnerable children and children of key workers should continue with school provision as they have been doing over recent weeks.

I recognise the Cabinet's heavy duty in making this decision to not further open schools from 1<sup>st</sup> June; and I am clear that there are wider health and safety issues which government must address, before we risk returning more children to our schools. Subject to your advice to me, I intend to write to the Secretary of State for Education, citing the persistently high levels of

infection in the North West region, the lack of PPE, the very slow progress in setting up Track and Trace, and the confused government approach to resourcing our recovery. I will urge him to reflect on the importance of local evidence, the local scientific advice, and the national opinion of the British Medical Association in proposing decisions which could have a dramatic impact on our lives here in Bury.

In conclusion I thank you for your outstanding contribution and leadership to teaching and learning within our borough during this pandemic. It is abundantly clear that you have more than risen to the challenge. I share my gratitude and thanks to you our Head teachers and all of your staff for the flexibility, resilience, and your determination to protect the health and safety of our schools communities at this time.

Once again Bury has shown the strength of our Education Service, through the strong family of schools, including our local authority maintained schools, our faiths schools and our academy trusts.

Looking ahead, the Local Authority advice that you have been receiving on a daily basis will continue, and we will of course keep dialogue open with you around risk assessments, and your individual plans for the eventual opening of schools whenever that may be.

Please forward this letter to the parents and carers in your school, your staff team and your governing bodies.

More than ever, feedback is appreciated at this unprecedented time.

Yours faithfully,



Councillor Tamoor Tariq  
Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Schools and Families

Copy to           Vicky Beer, Department for Education  
                      Deborah Smith, Diocese of Manchester  
                      Simon Smith, Diocese of Salford