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Publication - Minutes

Coronavirus (COVID 19): Advisory Sub-Group on Education and Children's Issues minutes : 23 June 2020

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Minute summary from the first meeting of the COVID-19 Advisory Sub-Group on Education and Children's Issues held on 23 June 2020.

Items and actions

1. The sub-group heard from the Director of Learning about the context for the group's work and confirmed its terms of reference. It then focussed on the Commission it had received in relation to physical distancing.
2. The sub-group considered the scientific evidence relating to COVID-19 and children and young people, and focussed on physical distancing and its implementation in schools and early learning settings. The evidence emerging from across the UK, as well as from international approaches was considered.
3. The sub-group considered the balance of risks, noting that this may vary for different ages of children and, potentially, for different groups of children. They also considered the relevant evidence about risks to adults (including teachers, student teachers, staff, parents).
4. The importance of monitoring was highlighted, as was the desirability of staggering interventions and tracking their impact, where possible.
5. The sub-group discussed the significant harms caused to children and young people by being out of school. This included evidence around learning loss, child development, child protection issues, and mental health issues, among others. The sub-group noted the differential impact of many of these issues on those from more disadvantaged backgrounds.
6. The sub-group agreed the importance of considering physical distancing as one part of a system of mitigating measures. The sub-group discussed the evidence for other mitigation measures (hygiene measures, face coverings, no tolerance of symptoms etc) and the relationship to testing and wider public information about prevalence.
7. Members agreed the importance of considering mitigation measures within a school environment as well as in children's wider world, including on transport to school, in family homes etc., recognising that the school is not a closed system.

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