

## COVID-19 Advisory Sub-Group on Education & Children's Issues

### Terms of Reference

#### Context

1. The Scottish Government COVID-19 Advisory Group was established in recognition of the need for additional scientific analysis of the impact of COVID-19 in Scotland, based on regularly updated advice and modelling from the UK SAGE, and other emerging scientific evidence. The COVID-19 Advisory Group has operated effectively and will retain its existing remit.
2. A need has now been identified to increase capacity and capability to provide rapid, regular and more granular scientific advice on education and children's issues to support the iterative development of guidance as we move through the four phases set out in the Routemap (*Coronavirus (COVID-19): framework for decision making, May 2020*).
3. To ensure consistency of advice, a sub-group of the COVID-19 Advisory Group will be created: the COVID-19 Advisory Sub-Group on Education & Children's Issues ("the sub-group"). This will be a time-limited, expert sub-group, chaired by Professor Carol Tannahill, Chief Social Policy Adviser to the Scottish Government.

#### Remit

4. The sub-group will begin with a focussed remit, covering all issues affecting early learning centres and schools, and linked children's services issues, but not higher and further education settings.
5. The sub-group will give detailed consideration of how public health advice can be applied to operational implementation. It will support Scottish Ministers and relevant Scottish Government senior officials to:
  - Interpret SAGE and COVID-19 Advisory Group outputs, and other emerging scientific and public health evidence, in relation to education and children's issues in the context of Scotland.
  - Provide expert advice spanning the disciplines of public health, clinic advice, behavioural sciences and statistical modelling, combined with expertise in education, early learning and development, and children's services.
  - Advise Scottish Government, relevant Directorates, and ASD colleagues on strategic approach to identifying, accessing and using data to support our understanding of managing Covid-19 risks in educational, early learning and children's services settings.
  - Provide advice to support and inform the development of iterative operational guidance for providers of learning, childcare and children's services.
  - Develop links with other SG COVID-19 Advisory sub-groups, as appropriate.

6. This sub-group will be responsive to policy needs in the provision of its advice, phasing its advice to support the phases of the Routemap. Like the COVID-19 Advisory Group, the sub-group will not respond directly to policy questions, but provide scientific and public health advice to inform development of policy and guidance, leaving final policy decisions in the hands of policy-makers and Ministers. The sub-group will also not be used for other operational reasons, such as legal issues, contractual matters, or financial issues.
7. This sub-Group will adhere to the same high standards of transparency as the COVID-19 Advisory Group – terms of reference and membership will be published online, as will summary minutes of every meeting.

### **Relationship with COVID-19 Advisory Group**

8. The Chair of the sub-group on education and children's issues will sit on the COVID-19 Advisory Group as a full member, to ensure links are maintained and work is developing in line with their advice. The sub-group will have an overlap in membership with the COVID-19 Advisory Group, and those scientific and public health members will also be responsible for ensuring links are maintained.
9. Minutes and future workplans of the COVID-19 Advisory Group will be shared with the sub-group Chair, and vice versa, and the sub-group Chair will be responsible for raising any issues of fit for consideration or clarification.
10. The Chair of the sub-group will engage with the Chair of the COVID-19 Advisory Group around any issues where there may be questions about consistency of advice, with the aim of ensuring sub-group advice is consistent with Advisory Group advice. Where any differences in expert opinion and evidence cannot be resolved, these will be highlighted (with explanation) to Ministers. And the COVID-19 Advisory Group will provide a short comment / endorsement of sub-group advice before it is shared with Ministers.

### **Membership**

11. Members are selected to enable scientific and public health advice to be brought to bear on operational questions, and therefore members include scientific and public health experts, clinicians and academics, as well as experts in education, early learning and children's services.
12. Professor Carol Tannahill, Chief Social Policy Adviser, SG (chair)  
 Professor Marion Bain, Deputy Chief Medical Officer, SG  
 Professor Chris Chapman, University of Glasgow  
 Iona Colvin, Chief Social Work Adviser, SG  
 Professor Brigid Daniel, Queen Margaret University  
 Professor Aline-Wendy Dunlop, University of Strathclyde  
 Professor Paul Flowers, University of Strathclyde  
 Gayle Gorman, Education Scotland  
 Dona Milne, Director of Public Health, Fife  
 Professor Ian Rivers, University of Strathclyde  
 Professor Sheila Rowan, Chief Scientific Adviser for Scotland, SG

Eileen Scott, Public Health Scotland  
Professor Devi Sridhar, University of Edinburgh

13. Membership will be kept under review and the Chair will be able to co-opt further members. The Chair of the sub-group can also obtain input from the CSA, CMO, Chief Scientist (Health), Chief Scientist (ENRA), Chief Economist, Chief Statistician and Chief Social Researcher directly, who may attend – or be represented on – the sub-group.

### **Meetings**

14. The sub-group on education and children's issues will meet once weekly for 90 minutes virtually. The meetings will be scheduled for 1.00-2.30 pm every Tuesday.

### **Confidentiality**

15. Information arising from SAGE and the COVID-19 Advisory Group is official sensitive and should not be shared outside of these structures. Any inputs shared with the sub-group for discussion will be considered confidential and not for further sharing.

### **Secretariat**

16. Secretariat support will be provided to the sub-group, including arranging all meetings and circulating agenda and papers. The SG Deputy Director, Education Analytical Services, will provide senior analytical support to the operation of the group, connecting to the SG Corporate Covid-19 Analytical Hub (SG Modelling Team) as appropriate.
17. The Chair will agree the final agenda for each meeting of the sub-group. Members may ask for an item or paper to be included on the agenda. Agendas, supporting papers and minutes of the previous meeting will be circulated to members as soon as is practicably possible.
18. Other than in exceptional circumstances, all members should endeavour to attend all meetings of the sub-group.
19. Where urgent business is required to be conducted between meetings, the Chair will arrange for members' views to be sought by email and the outcome will be reported to the next meeting of the sub-group.
20. Minutes of the meeting will be submitted to the SAGE Secretariat for information.

COVID-19 Advisory Sub-Group on Education & Children's Issues Secretariat  
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