

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE MINISTER

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Dear David

Thank you for your letter and attached draft Executive Paper: "EXECUTIVE APPROACH TO CORONAVIRUS DECISION-MAKING".

The strategic approach from the Executive to society's recovery from the Coronavirus pandemic is perhaps the most critical decision that the Executive is likely to make, and consequently needs to be given detailed consideration, rather than a hasty kneejerk reaction. I am concerned that we are not bounced into an ill judged position which will be difficult to adapt in the future.

Given the limited timescale to consider the Paper, I would have a range of initial concerns. While clearly health is a central concern in the way forward, it is clear that this needs to be part of a wider consideration of the needs of our society and reflective of the interconnected nature of our lives. In particular the links between health, the economy and education must be realised. The centrality of any decisions taken in terms of education to both the wider economy and the health of our people bear this out.

I am concerned at the somewhat vague and ill thought out education references in the document to education. For example, given currently there is a place available 5 days a week for the children of key workers, it is a little unclear how there could be "increased use of school" for this group at a later stage or indeed the provision of places for "some children" means, while uniquely aligning education with a specific timeframe.

The document must reflect a considered and response position, but I believe people will look for greater clarity in any road map that we produce, and also in these dark days for greater hope as we move forward. While I appreciate that the Paper has had to be produced in a very limited timeframe, and welcome the hard work put in to bring it forward so quickly, I believe that further work and discussion will be required before a finished acceptable position can be reached.

Yours sincerely

Personal Data

**Peter Weir MLA
Minister of Education**