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**Executive Director of
Education**
Maureen McKenna

**Education Services
Glasgow City Council**
City Chambers East Building
40 John Street
Glasgow G1 1JL

Phone **0141-287 4551**
Fax 0141-287 4895
Our Ref MMcK/SLA Your Ref
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If phoning please ask for Maureen McKenna
email maureen.mckenna@education.glasgow.gov.uk

Dear Parents

As we move to the next phase out of lockdown and following government advice, I wanted to keep you up to date in as much as I am able to in these uncertain times.

I am very grateful to all our early learning and childcare staff who have been continuing to support your children over the last few months – providing childcare for key and essential workers and keeping in contact with families with offers of help.

I also wanted to say thank you to all our parents and carers for doing their very best to support their children during lockdown – we know that this has been a difficult and anxious few months for us all.

In line with the current government advice, we are now making arrangements for senior staff to return to all council nurseries during this week to begin the preparations needed for children to return when we get a date confirmed by the Scottish Government.

From next week, Monday 8 June, we expect groups of nursery staff in all council nurseries to be in on a planned basis to meet with senior staff to discuss the plans and the adaptations that will be needed to deliver early learning and childcare within current guidelines.

The nurseries and partner providers that have been operating during lockdown will continue over the summer months and they will communicate directly with the families they are supporting.

New guidance for nurseries on how to manage and reduce the risk of the virus will be published by the Scottish Government by 15 June 2020 and this will help shape the plans for our nurseries and partner providers.

It is clear that social or physical distancing will remain as something we should all be practicing in the coming months. This will mean we will have to think differently about how we deliver childcare and early learning.

This will not be the same in every setting due to the variety of different buildings that our nurseries and childcare settings operate out of.

It does mean that we will not be able to have as many children in the nursery and our nurseries will communicate directly with existing parents on what the new model will look like and what hours their children will be offered from August.

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As you may have seen in the national press, Scottish Government have paused the nursery expansion programme for 1140 hours. This means it is no longer a legal requirement for those hours to be delivered. We are committed to offering families as many hours as we can but as I've said above, this will be affected by the government advice on safely operating nurseries in the short term. The entitlement to 1140 hours will be reintroduced by government at some point in the future.

Parents will be contacted over the summer about arrangements for returning to nursery or starting nursery for the first time for new entrants.

This will be very different for all of us and I understand that this temporary way we deliver early learning and childcare will mean that families need to make adjustments for work and childcare arrangements.

We understand that this would mean some continued disruption for those of you who are working. I apologise for this but I am afraid in order for us to follow physical distancing advice from the government we would be unable to have all children in nurseries at the same time for the time being.

As I've said earlier, given the different style of buildings and outdoor opportunities across the city, each nursery and partner provider will develop their own plan that supports their families' needs as much as possible.

We will also be appealing to employers to work with their employees to consider flexible working patterns to enable parents to care for their children on the days they are not in nursery. The advice remains that, where possible, children should be cared for at home when not in nursery.

Thank you again for all your support. I know this period has been and continues to be challenging for us all.

However, as I said at the very outset of this health crisis, I know you will continue to work with us to ensure that we deliver high quality early learning and childcare in the city.

I will send out more information and updates to our families as our plans are confirmed and try and give as much notice as possible over the summer holidays for going back for the beginning of the new term.

However, the more detailed information about your child's nursery hours will come direct from your setting.

If you would like to read the current government guidance on the re-opening of schools and nurseries you can access them on line at:

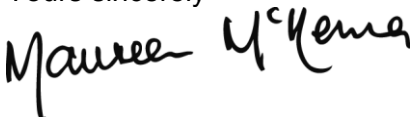
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-re-opening-schools-guide/>

<https://news.gov.scot/news/safe-return-to-schools-and-nurseries>

<https://www.parentclub.scot/articles/reopening-schools-faqs> - **this is being updated so we advise to check back here regularly**

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-schools-early-learning-and-childcare-settings---scientific-evidence/>

Yours sincerely



MAUREEN McKENNA
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