

**P-05-988 Give key worker children equal access to their schools and teachers,  
Correspondence -Petitioner to Committee: Additional information, 09.07.20**

**Commentary: Welsh Government operational guidance on reopening of schools.**

1. It is expected that all learners who are able to, have the opportunity to attend their school or setting for face to face time over the remainder of the summer term. In practice, this means schools accommodating reduced number of learners each day according to their capacity while ensuring appropriate social distancing is in place.

In most schools in Powys (and anecdotally, Cardiff, Flintshire and Monmouthshire), face to face time for key worker children with teachers and friends is not being offered, if their parents use childcare to enable them to do critical work. Where children are being looked after in leisure centres, they are not even allowed on school premises.

Again anecdotally, children in the same position in Swansea, Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Denbighshire and Vale of Glamorgan are able to access the same number of 'check in' classroom-based sessions as their peers, while attending childcare for the rest of the week.

Key worker families have no choice but to send their children to childcare as their employers know it is available to them. Headteachers, however, refer to the 'choice' between childcare and attending school.

*'all learners who are able to' do not currently have the opportunity to attend their school and many are not receiving teaching. Will this be allowed to continue into September? With social distancing in place (my children's school is operating classes of just 5-6) there should be no need to segregate key worker children.*

2. Minister for Education's 5 key principles for the next phase [include:]

- The safety and mental, emotional and physical well-being of learners and staff.
- The confidence of parents and carers, staff and learners – based on evidence and information – so that they can plan ahead.

The emotional well-being of key worker children who are being excluded from their settings has not been considered. My daughter (10) and my son (7) are the only ones in their friendship groups who will have to attend key worker childcare in September. Their emotional well-being will suffer, as will their academic progress.

As parents, we are unable to plan ahead as our children's school will not assure us that they will teach our children in September. Powys's plan to introduce leisure centre hubs was announced on the evening of 24<sup>th</sup> June, again impacting parents' ability to plan ahead. We had to change our plans to request 'catch up' sessions, using annual leave to do so – we will have no annual leave left in September. We don't know if one of us will have to request part time working so that our children can be educated in school.

3. In practice, it is expected that a school or setting's capacity will mean that overall, at most, a third of learners present at any one time.

It is our expectation that in most schools learners would have the opportunity to attend school on 3 occasions before the summer holidays, however in some schools it may be more.

Our children's school is operating at around 22% capacity with just five or six learners per room. It is open four days per week and non-childcare children are offered four days over four weeks. Key worker children could and should have been accommodated. Schools should be providing education to all children on roll (and by education I don't mean undifferentiated online tasks aimed at classes of combined year groups).

4. For learners who are currently using of hubs provision, the expectation is that schools and settings should continue to make additional provision for those learners, alongside the learning that they are entitled to for the remainder of the summer term.

In a number of Local Authorities, schools are being supported in not providing the learning that keyworker children are entitled to. Many don't have access to a teacher. They are either supervised by TAs doing online work or in external hubs looked after by CIW childcare workers.

5. Schools and settings should also keep in mind that provision for critical workers and vulnerable children may be required in the event of a second peak in transmission and lockdown. Further guidance on this will be provided.

In the event of a second peak and lockdown, key worker children must not continue to be disadvantaged while their parents carry out critical work, as schools begin to reopen again.

6. To reduce the risk of transmission, where possible the same staff should interact with the same group of learners over time.

Schools have not taken account of the conditional 'where possible' in their planning. It is not possible for key worker children to receive the education they are entitled to if they are excluded from their classrooms and teachers. If key workers are to continue in their jobs, inclusion of their children in their school, with their peer group is necessary. Many, like me, will have to consider leaving those jobs if our children are to pay the price with their emotional well-being and learning.

7. The operation of a school or setting will have an important impact on learners' physical, mental and emotional and social well-being. When planning to increase operations, schools and staff should consider how this has an impact on well-being.

Some schools have not taken the mental, social and emotional well-being of key worker children into account at all. While all other children were provided with information about what to expect, what school would look like and how they would be kept safe, none of this was provided for families using key worker childcare. Powys County Council is yet to explain what to expect from leisure centre-based childcare. Those children are expected to adapt to unfamiliar faces and spaces with no preparation.

