

CYPE(5)-26-20 - Paper to note 5

Senedd Cymru

Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg

Welsh Parliament

Children, Young People and Education Committee

Vaughan Gething MS, Minister for Health and Social Services

Eluned Morgan MS, Minister for Mental Health, Wellbeing and Welsh Language

Julie Morgan MS, Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services

Kirsty Williams MS, Minister for Education

Dyddiad | Date: 26 October 2020

Pwnc | Subject: **COVID-19 and its impact on children and young people – two week fire break and beyond**

Dear Ministers,

On Monday 19 October the First Minister announced the Welsh Government's intention to introduce a "fire break" from 18:00 Friday 23 October until 00:01 Monday 9 November.

The Committee welcomes the reiteration of the Welsh Government's commitment to prioritising children in the [Cabinet Statement](#). It also notes the steps taken to address some of the Committee's concerns in the last lockdown about the availability of childcare, playgrounds, and the continuation of education for our children in primary and secondary school through to our young people in further and higher education.

The Committee's ongoing scrutiny of the impact of COVID-19 on children and young people continues. To inform our next series of sessions (details of which we will publish shortly) we would be grateful if you could provide answers to the questions in the annex to this letter. Given the time critical nature of these matters, we would welcome a response by Friday 6 November.

Yours sincerely,



Lynne Neagle MS

Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg | We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.



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ANNEX

The Committee would welcome a response to the points below:

- Was a Children's Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA) produced to inform the decision to introduce a two week fire break from 23 October? Please can a copy be shared with the Committee and published?
- What rationale underpins the decision to re-open as normal, after the half-term, primary, special, and secondary schools for children in years seven and eight, but not for other secondary school or college year groups (many of which will be undertaking examinations during this academic year and whose well-being may already have been affected by the pandemic's impact to date)?

[NB we note that: other school pupils will continue their learning from home for an extra week; colleges will move to online-only provision for the week following half term; work-based learning programmes, like apprenticeships and traineeships, will also be online-only for the period of the fire break; and school pupils and college students will be able to attend their settings to take exams.]

- How was the Welsh Government's duty to give due regard to article 28 of the UNCRC applied to the decision that year 9 upwards would be educated at home?
- What guidance and support has/will be issued to ensure that students in years 9-13 and/or college receive quality online provision after the half-term break?
- What specific arrangements have the Welsh Government, in cooperation with the higher education sector, ensured are in place in relation to student well-being, support and accommodation during this two week fire break, and beyond?

*[NB we welcome the £10 million funding **announced** on 22 October 2020 to support students through the pandemic and the speed with which the distribution methodology was decided.]*

- What arrangements have the Welsh Government put in place to work, coordinate and liaise with higher education providers? What significant issues or risks have providers raised with the Welsh Government in relation to both the fire break and longer term measures, and which of these remain to be resolved?
- What work will take place during this two week fire break to monitor and assess its impact on children and young people (including those in further and higher education)? What plans are in place to learn lessons – and inform the principles that should be adopted – for decisions about any potential future fire breaks?
- Can you confirm the main factors and sources of advice you will be taking into account when deciding on arrangements for awarding qualifications in 2021 and the timescale for making and announcing this decision?