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5.	Note of meeting	10/08/20	Personal Information	38(1)(b)

## Enclosure 1 - Meeting notification: SYP contact with SQA

**From:** Jamie Dunlop <jamie.d@syp.org.uk>

**Sent:** 27 October 2020 10:54

**To:** Jamie Dunlop; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; Ben McKendrick; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot

**Cc:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot

**Subject:** SYP contact with SQA

**When:** 17 November 2020 13:30-14:30 (UTC+00:00) Dublin, Edinburgh, Lisbon, London.

**Where:** Microsoft Teams Meeting

Thanks[Redacted s38(1)(b)].

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Microsoft Teams meeting

**Join on your computer or mobile app**

[Redacted s30(c)]

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## **Enclosure 2 - Scottish Government document**

Report on young person surveys – prepared by Scottish Government Learning Directorate

### **COVID-19 - The Views of Young People on Education During Lockdown**

As those who are most affected by the Education Recovery process, it is as important now as it has ever been that the voice of children and young people is heard. Captured within this document are various surveys that have captured the views of young people, updates from partners and also planned resources going forward.

### **LockdownLowdown – what young people in Scotland are thinking about COVID-19**

The Scottish Youth Parliament, YouthLink Scotland and Young Scot partnered to deliver LockdownLowdown – a survey of young people from across Scotland on their concerns about COVID-19. The survey results give a clear picture of what young people are currently worried about – and the impact it's having on their lives.

There were 2,418 responses which were categorised into 40 main themes. The LockdownLowdown report demonstrates the 20 most popular themes, the most prominent ensuring that information is clear, honest and from a reliable source. Other themes included:

- Improvements to current impact on education
- Make current restrictions stricter
- Clarification of existing measures

#### **Key Findings –**

- Around half of respondents stated they are moderately or extremely concerned about **exams and coursework**.
- Two-fifths of respondents stated they are moderately or extremely concerned about their **mental wellbeing**.
- Two-thirds of respondents stated that they are moderately or extremely concerned about the **impact of COVID-19 on their future**.
- Two-fifths of respondents aren't confident about accessing the **information on mental health**, and over half don't know where to access **information on financial support**.
- Respondents stated that decision-makers should improve the **impact on education** and **make restrictions even stricter**.

Following on from the initial survey, young people will be encouraged to keep submitting their concerns on a weekly survey on social media. This will help to track the key issues.

The full report can be accessed [here](#).

#### **Children's Parliament – How are you doing? Survey**

3,968 children took part in the April survey and 3,698 children took part in May. The survey is aimed at children aged between 8 and 14 years old.

Children were given 31 statements and a 5-point scale to respond – from strongly agree to strongly disagree. There are final questions where children can identify what they are worried about and what helps them feel good.

#### **Key Findings –**

- Across all areas there is a small but noticeable decline in the **wellbeing of children**. This is particularly true for girls, and especially for girls aged 12 to 14.
- When it comes to **learning at home** children are reporting less choice and a declining sense of fun or pride in work and increased levels of boredom. Meanwhile they are increasingly worried about doing school work and learning at home. Older children, 12 to 14 years old, are less likely to see learning at home positively.
- Most children **can access information, express opinions and experience their rights**. However there are indications of a decline in these areas which is of importance in our preparedness for incorporation of the UNCRC.
- Children are indicating a decline in **mental wellbeing**; fewer generally feel cheerful and in a good mood and they have less energy. Children are increasingly feeling lonely and less sure that in difficult times they will be okay.
- The period of lockdown has **shifted the balance of children's lives** - not going to school or meeting friends means that family time and relationships become even more central. Most children are safe and happy at home but for those children who are not the experience of lockdown may intensify concerns or worries.
- Children are **increasingly worried about a number of things**. What they worry about is influenced by age and sex, but as time passes they worry more. Most children have someone at home or external to their family to speak to, but a significant number indicate they do not have someone.
- Children identify a number of things that **support their wellbeing and help them feel good at the moment**. While overall, between April and May, children are identifying fewer things that make them feel good. Parents and carers are central to children's wellbeing.

The full report can be found [here](#).

### **Useful updates from Partners from the last meeting of the Rights and Participation Network – 28<sup>th</sup> May 2020**

**Young Scot** are currently delivering their Co-design sessions online. They are using a suite of online communication and engagement tools. Young Scot have reached out to all of their core volunteers to see what support they might need engaging with young people. This is ensuring that their Co-design sessions remain accessible and inclusive for all young people.

Young Scot are continually updating their [young.scot/coronavirus](http://young.scot/coronavirus) website and social media channels with the latest information on COVID-19. We continue to update [young.scot](http://young.scot) with a range of information about other subjects.

**Unicef** have developed more training online for their Rights Respecting Schools Awards (RRSA), and are offering this all for free to registered RRSA schools during this time. They are offering a more relaxed approach to achieving a Bronze award, so that schools are able to still create their action plans and submit these to Unicef, to award bronze.

The Unicef website has been updated and will regularly be updated – there is guidance for talking to children about covid-19, the free Article of the week resources and some really useful guidance about returning to school and ensuring a rights based approach to planning - <https://www.unicef.org.uk/rights-respecting-schools/the-rrsa/about-the-rrsa/coronavirus-resources/>

**Children in Scotland (CIS)** continue their direct work with children and young people, involved in their advisory group and projects. This is now online, but CIS are cognisant of supporting those who are not online and are making these as accessible as possible for all children, working with partners to reach families who may not be online. A new challenge will be getting to know young people online, instead of face-face.

CIS have been sharing their learning through their Comms output (blogs, podcasts etc) and their learning and events team are now offering online learning to support practitioners working with children and families through approx. two webinars a week (some of these are free, some are paid for).

**Children and Young Peoples Commissioner Scotland (CYPCS)** are working with their young advisers to support them through lockdown and also to provide opportunities for them to engage with organisations, the media and CYPCS' website so that they feel included and heard. Including - working with Police Scotland to develop guidance for police officers in their engagement with children and young people and talking to the SQA on their engagement with young people and on the information that SQA has been producing around the cancellation of the exams.

They have also been writing blogs, recording podcasts and doing Instagram lives.

The CYPCS website is providing updated information about [Getting Human Rights Advice in Scary Times](#) and they have also been making short films for primary aged children around rights called Learning at Home with the Children's Commissioner. You can find those [here](#)

In addition to the 'how are you doing' survey for children, the **Children's Parliament** have created with their Members of Children's Parliament, the *Corona Times Journal* which is helping adults to understand the impact that the coronavirus is having on children's lives. [bit.ly/Coronavirus\\_Kids](https://bit.ly/Coronavirus_Kids)

Children's Parliament have created 'Adventures at Home', their first newspaper for children with children's rights-based activities, creative ideas and top tips from Members of Children's Parliament for keeping happy, healthy, safe and connected. More information and link to newspaper here: [https://bit.ly/Adventures\\_at\\_home](https://bit.ly/Adventures_at_home)

**A Place in Childhood (APiC) – Covid-19 Changes for Scottish Children and Young People – The Big 5** - <http://aplaceinchildhood.org/covid-19-changes-for-scottish-children-and-young-people/>

Seeking to address the absence of children and young people's meaningful participation in the Covid-19 crisis response, A Place in Childhood convened three virtual workshops with them over the last fortnight in May. The aim was to give young Scots opportunity to discuss and agree the big changes and challenges they face due to Covid-19, and how they might be addressed.

Despite very different places and backgrounds, there was strong consensus over the first two workshops on 5 big changes, and the associated challenges. The third workshop focused on those challenges where they believed small improvements could make a big difference. Remote schooling was the top priority for all, and the discussion gave rise to **5 key recommendations**:

**1. Manage our workload – it's too much!** All are receiving too much work which is leading to feelings of being overwhelmed and fed up with learning. They felt teachers were giving them more work than usual, and seem to have limited awareness of cumulative workload between different subjects. They agreed that better communication between different teachers around timetabling and managing workload could make a huge difference. Work and deadlines must also take into consideration the varied technological challenges and additional time and stress this involves, and importance of maintaining their free-time and weekends.

*"It feels like we're stuck in an endless cycle of work and we're never done. No weekend." Young Consultant*

**2. Enable us to collaborate with our classmates.** Education has become isolating and demotivating, and they are missing their classmates and the ongoing peer support they provide. They felt that workgroup collaboration via video-conferencing was entirely achievable across subjects, for example, for group projects or upfront discussion of new subjects. If authorities weren't able to provide video-conferencing solutions, then the young people felt they must approve their setting up their own informal video / social media groups on the basis of the importance of collaboration and peer support for their learning motivation and wellbeing.

*"We need more team-based activities over zoom or teams just like this project" Young Consultant*

**3. Help us communicate directly with our teachers.** Gaining help from teachers via email was regarded as unnecessarily unclear, onerous and slow. Leaving questions on group boards was seen as embarrassing. This was a deterrent to seeking help for everyone, and particularly for the young people in most need of support. The whole approach, particularly in the absence of peer support, meant that when pupils get stuck, they often had no way of progressing, which was stressful and demotivating. Simple solutions proposed included being able to leave private voice or video messages for teachers, or being able to book private one-to-one chats. Also requested was quicker feedback on work, and upfront introductions to new subjects by the teacher, where a whole class might have opportunity to ask questions about the work or instructions.

*“You used to be able to ask teachers in your classrooms, now you have to email them and wait” Young Consultant*

*“We could learn about something first and then we can do work about it instead of doing it all at once” Young Consultant*

**4. Give us more outdoor and offline learning.** Given that learning, socialising and leisure during lockdown were all largely happening online, young people reported feeling exhausted by incessant screen time. They were also struggling with distractions of other people or opportunities at home. There was a very strong consensus that this situation provides a golden opportunity to commit to outdoor learning now and going forwards, and that applying mind to this now could ease transition. Physical education, geography, biology, history and art are subjects they highlighted as ideal for blending online collaboration with individual place-based or outdoor activities which respect Covid-19 guidelines. They identified how using more paper jotters and text books might enable reading and writing to take place offline or outdoors, thereby reducing screen time. They also recognised that adjustments to ways of learning and infrastructure could make more outdoor classes viable.

*“We now have a real opportunity to integrate the outdoors into our learning” Young Consultant*

**5. Work together to standardise and support approaches.** The young people spoke about a big variation in the levels and quality of services they were receiving, and felt authorities need to learn from pupils, teachers, and parents about what does and does not work. Some spoke about having to use many different platforms and the wish to have all of their work located in one place. Many felt there was too much reliance on watching educational videos, which added further screen time, and thought that a video conference with the teacher and classmates would be superior. Pupils disadvantaged by not having a home computer bear even greater challenges, with some having no choice but to attend school on their phones. Accessing and purchasing items like paper become the burden of families, many of whom had limited access to resources before the crisis and are most likely to be feeling the negative impacts on their current means of the Covid-19 control measures.

The young people were clear that these **5 recommendations**, and the challenges that underlie them, are cumulative. Together, they are putting the young people off school, and are creating or exacerbating divides between classmates which will be difficult to broach. These are causing significant demotivation and stress for all, but the burden is falling most squarely on groups who have been the focus of Scottish Government’s attention in closing the attainment gap.

### **Future Projects Engaging with Young People**

- **Scottish Government** policy colleagues are currently working with **Young Scot** to develop a Covid-19 Learner Panel. This will be a virtual forum to engage with and capture the views of learners.
- **Children’s Parliament** survey work with young people will continue – with further work being explored with children and families colleagues, and a likely focus on learning alongside other themes such as mental health.
- **Public Health Scotland** survey of parents of children aged 2-7 developed with Scottish Government Children and Families analytical service. This is now live and will run until 6<sup>th</sup> July 2020

[https://surveys.publichealthscotland.scot/index.php/754455?utm\\_source=survey&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=ceyris](https://surveys.publichealthscotland.scot/index.php/754455?utm_source=survey&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=ceyris)

- Work is being developed by **Save the Children** to gather reflections and experiences from children living in poverty

**Curriculum Unit**  
**June 2020**

## Enclosure 3 - Note of meeting

### Young Person's Panel Discussion – Education Recovery online meeting, 16:00 – 17:00, Wednesday 17 June 2020

#### 1. Background

This meeting was arranged with a panel of young people in order for them to air with the DFM their views on education arrangements and other issues during lockdown. The panel was assembled from schools that have been approached through contact points in Education Scotland and local authority Directors of Education, and represent a cross-section of ages and location. Appropriate adults were on the call for safeguarding purposes and officials were in attendance to take notes of the discussion.

Attendees were drawn from 11 different secondary schools from across Scotland, mainly S4 – S6 pupils, with some S1 and S2 pupils.

#### 3. Notes from discussion

Mr Swinney opened the discussion up for a free and frank exchange of views from the young people, to hear directly from them about the matters of greatest importance to them.

It should be noted that the discussion took place at the end of June 2020, and so the majority of the discussion focused on the impact of full “lockdown”, ie closure of schools, distance learning and other experiences at the time.

#### Comments were as follows

“I have had difficulties in being motivated for **home learning** as I am used to switching off at home. As this arrangement has become the norm, it has become slightly easier. Our teachers have been issuing work - not too much, not too little. What helps most to motivate is the online Teams call from the teacher as all pupils are then tuning in to learn.”

“On the positive side for senior pupils, there are more opportunities to get involved in things that they wouldn't normally have time for – **extra-curricular and wider achievement**. (My school have done an excellent job in promoting these. A negative is that pupils – often younger pupils - who are struggling will go un-noticed much more than in the in school model of learning. You can “check the box” and say you have done the task when you have not in fact completed it.”

“There has been a relative **lack of guidance and support for school leavers** going on to university, college or employment. They have only been provided with a couple of modules, which has left pupils feeling demotivated. The demotivation is causing mental health and physical health issues. More could be done for pupils looking to move on to positive destinations”.

“Most of my classes are at X College. On the positive side of things, the two classes I have done remotely have been quite positive. A lot of people prefer the **distance learning** approach as it is more relaxed with less distraction. **Sleep patterns** are not so positive. My peers are turning into nocturnal beings, which means that school work is harder to engage with. A lot of people do not turn up for online teaching, turnout can be quite low and there is limited amount that teachers can do about that.”

“It can be quite **difficult to concentrate**. Over time, it has become more difficult to engage with distance learning. Teachers picked up on some of my difficulties and they helped me through with alternative strategies and motivation.”

“I have found that it (distance learning) has been **easier to concentrate** compared to school. It has been difficult to transition into my new year but the school have been good at issuing bulletins each week, and opening the chats on Teams to wide numbers of pupils. The disability unit have been excellent in helping my sister, dropping off activities for her to complete. My [Redacted s38(1)(b)] is usually very easily distracted in school and the distance learning has suited her better. One negative is that the **less confident pupils** who don't speak up in class can feel uncomfortable in taking part in group chat activities online. It has also been difficult in terms of many pupils' mental health.”

“There was no support from guidance when the year was brought to a halt abruptly. There is a feeling that pupil leavers have been **forgotten about**. There is a great deal of uncertainty amongst leavers, and they feel left out. For things to come to an end in the space of two days was incredibly demotivating. There was enthusiasm for the end of year activities, the **social element** and marking a big change (the rights of passage). Young people are now at home, demotivated and there is no real plan for what happens next. We feel that we need a bit more support and guidance.”

“When students join drop-in sessions their participation levels are patchy. Lots of students have missed out on learning. Without guidance counsellors or social opportunities it can feel very isolating. Often this is worse for students who are studying as foreign students. **Anxieties about employment** has been a worry, with typical part-time student jobs drying up. Students are having to take out more loans and there are a lot of financial worries for students.”

“Children in S2/S3 are not going to take part if there is no-one really driving their engagement. In households that are more chaotic (for example, parents trying to work, siblings in the house) it is very difficult to concentrate. The students have missed out on the classroom feeling. **Access to digital technology** has been an issue when microphones and keyboards have stopped working. For people suffering from anxiety or in more chaotic home environments, it can be very difficult signing up for online chat and joining people they may not know.”

“I'm **stressed about family issues**. Primary age siblings are trying to do school work while their parents have tried to work from home. It's easier for senior phase pupils to drop their teacher an email and ask for support, but this can be much more difficult for S2/S3 pupils who may not be so confident.”

“The **sleep cycle** issue is affecting large numbers of pupils. Lots of pupils are going to bed at 1am or staying up all night. This is often due to lack of routine. Schools are providing a good amount of tasks but the deadlines are often too far away (5 or 6 days away). This is giving pupils too much time, they then leave it until the last minute. This is meaning there is a lack of daily routing and focus on a daily basis. Routine is very important if we return to the plans for 2-3 days per week. It would be good if we could timetable the lessons and the work in a more structured way for those who wish to work that way, and then flexibility for those who cannot.”

“A lot of pupils do not take part in **online learning**. There is variation in the quality and timeliness of teacher engagement with pupils. “

“ In some classes, I am simply sent work with very little explanation or a steer. In other classes, there is much better advice about the learning. There has been **no time to develop relationship with new teachers**. Some pupils find it difficult to establish routine. A younger family member has additional support needs but has not been provided with extra support since lockdown.”

“I’m quite **enjoying the quarantine style of learning**. I have never fitted into a school environment, and I prefer to just work when I want to work. However he knows that most of his peers need structure. “When we go back, there needs to be structure for the days that we are in school”. “Prior to lockdown, I never used Microsoft Teams. I now feel a lot more confident in using these platforms.” Some have adapted to this new approach in the space of a few weeks. Others have found it a lot more difficult to adapt to working from home during lockdown. Some pupils will be slipping under the teacher’s radar as it is easier for them to say they are understanding learning when in fact they are not.”

“As distance learning has progressed, me and my peers have **lost motivation for this form of learning**. It’s difficult to know what the teachers are expecting from us. Over time, teachers have established a “sign on” time in the morning which has been helpful in establishing routine (though we also know that some pupils sign on and then switch off again). “

“There is **anxiety about the 2021 exams** and the prelims for 2020/21. Pupils are now very worried about the prelims and them being higher stakes if they are then used to determine final grades (as per this year). In our school, not many teachers have made use of Teams calls, which makes it more difficult for pupils to engage. Delays in teachers responding to questions from pupils can be an issue. This can raise anxiety levels for some pupils if they don’t get responses. Video calls from teachers would help a lot, but there is no sign that this will happen. Some pupils are also worried about using Teams as they don’t want to post messages that all other pupils can see.”

“**Wi-fi quality** is a key challenge.”

“I have found that the **home learning** has been good as I have been able to choose what to prioritise and when, however she also knows that some friends have been working quite late at night. Some pupils already struggled to speak up in class. Those pupils are now going to their friends who are often struggling to help as they are also busy themselves. “On the negative side of things, I have lost quite a lot of confidence as I have not seen people in person for so long.”

“My parents have found it very difficult as they have tried to work and to provide learning for my brother as well. Iain is worried about returning to school because he will be unlikely to get a scribe for support due to the physical distancing rules. “

## Conclusion

Mr Swinney drew discussion to a close by commenting that we could spend a lot longer on all of these issues. Mr Swinney was struck by how confidently and powerfully the pupils spoke about their experience. Key issues were summarised as:

- Significant challenges in supporting pupil wellbeing;
- Challenges of online learning;
- Difficulties with transition and the need to support that more effectively;
- Feelings of isolation;

- The need to ensure a really supportive arrangement for the return to schools with a focus on wellbeing, and;
- Variation in the practical support from teachers.

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]Curriculum Unit – 17 June 2020

## **Enclosure 4 Draft Note of meeting**

### **Meeting with DFM and Young People re Higher and Advance Higher Exams in 2021 – 4<sup>th</sup> December 2020**

#### **Draft Note of meeting**

#### **Welcome and introductions from DFM**

- DFM thanked the young people in attendance for their participation at short notice.
- DFM recognised that the young people will have heard and experienced the impact of COVID on the exams.
- DFM took the decision to cancel national 5 exams in October and his judgement was to remove this from the exam timetable to reduce the risk of disruption as cannot predict what will happen next year.
- Continuing to monitor Highers and Advanced Highers and will look at developing a contingency model to take in to account that there may have to be a change of plans.
- Another approach is continuous assessment and all of the work for this has been developed for Nat 5 and has been taken forward.
- DFM is looking closely at Highers and Advance Highers and what it is boiling down to is that it must be fair to all people involved. Some parts of the country – for example in Highland have low levels with little disruption to learning and in Glasgow where there are higher levels of Covid, the level of disruption to young people has been higher.
- DFM is currently gathering data and needs to make sure that the approach taken is fair to all young people.
- DFM indicated that it is very much on his mind and he wanted to hear from the young people directly and hear their views and thoughts on what the Scottish Government should do.
- DFM assured the young people that if they were not to have the exams there would be another way of assessment and DFM would work with SQA and teachers to ensure Highers and Advanced Highers have the same creditability as other years.
- When DFM spoke to young people about Nat 5's there was a real anxiety of not sitting exams but provided some reassurance that a lot of college and university tests are done continuously and not in a formal exam setting.

#### **Views were then invited from the young people in attendance and their comments and thoughts are detailed below -**

- Learning at home has been a really big change but was lucky to offered iPad from [Redacted s38(1)(b)] Council before COVID. Learning from home has been hard to get used to, for example, being able to raise hands during virtual classes and there is not as much contact with teachers at home. There are also more options for interaction with teachers at school in person. Is split about the decision on exams and can see both sides. Feels that cancelling exams may lead to continuous pressure to do well in tests.
- The impact of self-isolation only gets worse each time as you have to catch up on what you miss. Has some friends who feel behind after having to self-isolate continuously. Some are have a tough time at home and coping with this and feels it is worse being out of learning environment. Is of the opinion that if exams can go ahead they should as having not sat Nat 5's, they would be keen to sit Highers.

- Learning from home during lockdown was very varied on how much learning you got. Sometimes had to teach themselves and also had to mark own work. Was incredibly hard to teach yourself at home and would have been even harder if you have learning difficulties. Feels there is a big difference between private and state schools and that no exams may widen attainment gap. Lots of pupils home lives may affect how well they do – family life, poverty, technology, mental health. Uncertainty around exams is causing stress and some of the young people may be worried after last year as they were downgraded and would like time to work hard and know in advance about the exams.
- Pupils doing online learning may struggle with slow internet connection and could miss things that are important while doing classes. Cancelling projects in regards to Advanced Highers really helped to slow down pace of teaching as it started off rushed to begin with. Teachers have said that there will be alternatives offered if they have not done as well in certain aspects of course work. This feels like there is a load off the young people's shoulders.
- Has been really lucky not to have had to miss any school, although has experienced this indirectly. Digital inclusion is a big issue and some young people who are missing school need technology. It may seem like young people have the technology but this may not be available during the day for example their parents needs to use this for work. Any decision on exams needs to take a human rights based approach, for example, digital exclusion is a breach of UNCRC rights. These need to be tackled and we need to look at these as a bigger picture. DFM expressed clearly that this is an issue he is grappling with - where are children's human rights? if you have an erratic experience of young people missing out you need to look very closely at this.
- Has had to isolate twice and may happen again. Also has a [Redacted s38(1)(b)] at home and made doing work at home very hard. Testing at school has been frequent and the school should have enough evidence to assess progress but feels that young people are working harder because of the uncertainty. Feels that those at another local school where there has not been as many cases and someone who has had to isolate for 8 weeks for example should not be compared and expected to do the same exam. Varying amount of work from different teachers when learning at home and feels there should be a protocol for all teachers on what should be sent home children who are self-isolating. Has seen a difference in teachers approach and pupils have had different experiences - DFM spoke about young people sitting in an exam hall with those who have been isolating and those who have not. He indicated that this is a dilemma DFM is grappling with. DFM asked attendees how they felt about his and there was agreement from attendees that this is an important point.
- Is of a mixed opinion of whether exams should go ahead. Feels that it is not a level playing field and if exams do go ahead, periods of self-isolation should be taken in to consideration and appeals system should reflect this. It is idealistic to think that everyone can learn at home. Feels lucky to have technology in [Redacted s38(1)(b)] provided by the Local Authority. Feels decision regarding exams needs to be made sooner rather than later to put pupils at ease and let teachers start to collect evidence if there are to be no exams. Feels that this call is a positive step in engaging directly with young people as young people have felt that they are being ignored and this type of engagement is so important.
- There should be protocol on how pupils learn from home and teachers should have a set of steps so that pupils get the same experience of learning at home. Protocol

needs to come from the top down. Technology has been an issue as their Local Authority has not been able to provide this as budgets are an issue.

- Feels lucky to have access to teams on their iPad but learning in lockdown has been hard so a reduction in course content has been welcomed. Self-isolation does not make it fair and is really difficult for everyone. Struggling with ongoing tests and testing is bringing stress to young people. Prelims are also causing stress as prelims are not meant to be final, but do not feel like practice.
- There is supposed to be an assessment period now and this will not be able to go ahead until next year due to self-isolation in their school. Work is getting out to pupils from teachers but not always the best infrastructure to do this.
- Is in a unique situation where there have not been many cases in his area. Teachers believe that young people in his area can carry on as normal and exams next year would not to be cancelled. Was affected by grading of exams last year and is hoping to get a better result this year for his university application so feels that sitting exams are important.
- Stress of last year was heavy. Teachers in their school are preparing for both situations but there have been some pupils off for long periods of time and have missed so much work. Removing the assignments feels like they do not now have the security blanket to fall back on. Feels that they need more notice with regards to cancelling exams as this is causing a lot stress.
- Has not personally dealt with the experience of self-isolation but feels that there is a lack of technology for home learning and Wi-Fi in rural areas is an issue. Feels like they can teach themselves at home but others may struggle. Would like exams to go ahead but recognises that it is not fair to compare their school to those who have been off. Worried about University applications and sitting no Highers but in a position this year with more evidence to back grades. Feels this has made young people work harder.
- Hard to find a solution that suits all and difference in prelims needs to be taken in to consideration as there has been a lot of difference in how and where prelims are sat. There have been developments over the school year and feels an assessment sat at the start of the year won't have the same value as those sat at the end of the year.
- Perhaps sitting exams that have been pushed back so that young people have had time to learn the material may be beneficial. There needs to be a more direct appeals system needed for everyone this year. Feels there will be a big effect on mental health with either decision with regards to exams.
- Worried about the credibility of awarded grades and believes that direct communication with young people would help instead of finding out in press. Projects being cancelled was welcome but afraid of the effect this will have in later years. They are struggling with the continuous pressure of doing well.
- In areas of high deprivation it is noticeable to see how these people have been affected and unfair to put them in an exam hall with someone from different background.

**Close from DFM**

Points put to DFM are strong and he is taking away from conversation a great deal.

Key points for DFM to consider –

1. Must be a level playing field – making sure everyone has an equal chance.
2. Difference in experience in terms of personal circumstances that have been made worse during COVID.
3. There is a desire to know what is going on and for this to be communicated – taking this very seriously
4. Wellbeing – COVID has taught us anything – essentiality of our wellbeing is fundamental and it is good to hear from young people on this.

Curriculum Unit  
4<sup>th</sup> December 2020

## Enclosure 5 - Note of meeting

**Sent:** 10 August 2020 15:09

**To:** [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; [Redacted s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>; Pentland MK (Malcolm) <Malcolm.Pentland@gov.scot>

**Cc:** Director of Learning <DirectorofLearning@gov.scot>

**Subject:** DFM - Pupil Zoom call

Hi all

A few points from the DFM Zoom call, which I ended up joining at the last minute. It went well – they were lovely, bright young people. The three attendees were:[Redacted s38(1)(b)], [Redacted s38(1)(b)] and [Redacted s38(1)(b)]. There was a special message of best wishes from FM to them all, especially [Redacted s38(1)(b)] who goes to [Redacted s38(1)(b)] school.

- DFM apologised several times during the call for getting the results right at a statistical/national and school level, but failing to spot that it was individual impact that young people really care about, and not comparisons between how the system performs year to year. He told them a couple of times that it was their letters that had helped him see that.
- He went quite far in his hints, telling them that appeals would not be required and at one point, in relation to universities and how they view the awards, saying ‘if you take away moderation’ as part of his explanation. None of them specifically pushed him on his plans and they seemed really pleased that something is going to be done in response to their comments.
- There were some good questions. One point in particular was that pupils may not be happy with their predicted grade and if put back to that grade, it may still not be enough. I think it was [Redacted s38(1)(b)] who said that she had been predicted a B in one exam but felt she could get an A in an exam. Her teacher said that they only had the evidence to predict a B. [Redacted s38(1)(b)] said there were a lot of people she knew who got predicted grades that were not what they deserved. We’ll need to bear this in mind in relation to any revised appeal process.
- She also asked about why some grades went up and also asked several questions about how the universities will respond. DFM said he’s meeting the unis this afternoon and talked about widening access. She also had points about rurality and deprivation, saying [Redacted s38(1)(b)] is not seen as deprived, and that different universities judge it differently.
- DFM also asked [Redacted s38(1)(b)] about her experience of eSgoil, quoting a pupil he’d spoken to at the results day conference. [Redacted s38(1)(b)] outlined a different experience, less positive, where the problems seemed to be around availability of a [Redacted s38(1)(b)] teacher rather than any problems with eSgoil as a platform. She said the teaching environment did work well.

All in all it felt like a positive session – we’ll need to see how it plays out on social media.

Best wishes

[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

[Redacted s38(1)(b)] email: | [tel:+44\(0\) \[Redacted s38\(1\)\(b\)\]](tel:+44(0)[Redacted s38(1)(b)]) 07[Redacted s38(1)(b)]

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