

FOI REQUEST 202100174388

CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED BY THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT ON "SHIELDING TEACHER" AND "SHIELDING TEACHERS" FROM 01/08/20 – 01/12-20

-----Original Message-----

From: [redacted under s38(1)(b)] <[redacted under s38(1)(b)] @hotmail.co.uk>

Sent: 02 August 2020 20:50

To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>

Subject: Shielding teacher

My daughter is a secondary teacher in [redacted under s38(1)(b)] Secondary in [redacted under s38(1)(b)]. She has been shielding since lockdown with the appropriate letter. I as a mother have serious concerns for her to return to teaching in a secondary school as more than 130 plus pupils go through her classroom on a daily basis. There has been to my knowledge no thought regarding these vulnerable teachers for the past 5 months who have been shielding at home also doing their best re teaching online to pupils. I have real concerns for her on returning to school . Shielding has stopped on the 1st August and she is back in the classroom on the [redacted under s38(1)(b)] August.

An extremely worried parent.

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

Sent from my iPhone

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From: [redacted under s38(1)(b)] <[redacted under s38(1)(b)] @talktalk.net>

Sent: 08 July 2020 13:45

To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
<DFMCSE@gov.scot>

Subject: Shielding teacher

Mr Swinney,

I am a primary school teacher who is currently shielding.
Can you comment on the WHO's new statement regarding the strong evidence around airborne transmission of Covid-19 by asymptomatic carriers....

"Benedetta Allegranzi, the WHO's technical lead for infection prevention and control, said that evidence emerging of airborne transmission of the coronavirus in "crowded, closed, poorly ventilated settings that have been described, cannot be ruled out".

Can you tell me how a school classroom with 33 children, no social distancing and no PPE is a " Covid Secure" workplace for teachers who are coming out of shielding? Also how does an RCT teacher (every Primary school in Scotland has at least one but usually more than one teacher in this role) protect themselves and others from Covid-19? I usually teach around 250 children over just 3 days a week with full time RCT teachers teaching even more children weekly.
Your comments would be appreciated.

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

Sent from my iPhone

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Dear Sirs,

I was on the government shielding list and I am feeling that I and others like me have been forgotten about since the easing of the lock down.

I am a secondary school teacher in Edinburgh, and since returning to school in mid August I have been asked to teach pupils face to face from age 12 to 18. It was very difficult to go from being advised to very rarely leave the house to having to teach over 100 pupils face to face in a short period of time.

As the infection rate is very high at the moment (mid Oct), I am feeling extremely anxious about teaching pupils face to face.

I feel that it is heartless for the government to ask shielding people to work, especially at this time of high infection rate. As a shielding teacher, we have not been given a choice to teach from home and we have to risk our lives teaching at school.

As winter comes the infection rate will no doubt be high too.

Therefore, I would like you to promote a scheme whereby shielding teachers are allowed to teach from home. Or at the very least be allowed to take a break (unpaid if necessary) from teaching when the incidence of Covid in the community is known to be high.

Kind regards,

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

Good afternoon.

I am writing to highlight a very frustrating situation that i have found myself in.

I have been shielding previously and now living in Glasgow I am in Tier 4. I have been very fortunate that I have an amazing SLT at my school and we have had regular risk assessments. I have had mitigation's all put in place and until recently I felt very safe in my work.

However, I have recently been suffering from symptoms of arthritis and my GP has run a number of tests and one has retuened positive for Lupus.

I have since spoken to my GP regarding my shielding status and have been advised it is not safe for me to attend work. I happily work as a [redacted under s38(1)(b)] teacher in a single person department within Glasgow City Council.

I requested to work from home however this has been denied. I have subsequently left a number of lesson resources for pupils to study. I had hoped I would be able to use my iPad to deliver the lessons however I am now being forced to go off sick. I have two disabilities prior to the LUPUS diagnosis.

This is absolutely ridiculous , the only purpose this serves is the students having no contact with a subject specialist. At least if I had been granted permission to work from home I would have been able to use teams to support their learning.

My headteacher today was almost apologetic that she was telling me I couldn't support the pupils in their learning. Please can someone speak to Maureen McKenna and explain as a shielding teacher I am desperate to support pupils in their education but not at the price of my life. I am a mother, carer for my elderly father and wife. It is for this reason I want to work but from home.

I have had days recently when due to the symptoms of LUPUS I have been unable to get myself dressed but I have managed with the help of my husband to drag myself into school so that the students needs were met and lessons taught. Now after all my efforts I'm being penalised as are the students. I don't want to be one of the teacher to speak ill of my employer or go to the media but this scenario is dreadful.

I really hope that someone somewhere can rectify this situation.

Your truly frustrated a stressed teacher with disabilities.

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

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Dear First Minister,

I hope this email finds you well.

I write to you as the husband of a primary school teacher, to express my frustration at the current situation primary school teachers face on a daily basis, during the Covid pandemic. And, I write this as someone who, earlier this year when Covid struck, was the first to jump to your defence when others offered their criticism of your leadership. Let me start by saying that I do not envy the decisions you have to take on a daily basis during the pandemic and I do appreciate that the pandemic must be a great and increasing weight for you to endure.

My frustration comes from the fact that school teachers, and in particular, primary school teachers, which my wife is, have been largely forgotten by the Scottish government when it comes to what should be paramount. Their safety. In the case of my wife (an ex shielding teacher) her workplace is unsafe and nothing is being done about it.

Wearing face coverings has been a contentious issue in schools for some time now, with some teachers choosing to wear them initially, and some (but not many more) wearing them when they became mandatory in secondary school corridors and staff rooms etc. Even in cases and places where they are mandatory, only a small percentage of teachers are wearing them. Why are management teams not leading by example and wearing face coverings and encouraging others to do as well? Have they been advised to by local and national government? If Not, Why not? Why are the government not insisting that these rules are followed?

More specifically though, after your press conference last week, where you announced face coverings would be mandatory from today (Monday 19th October) in workplace corridors, staff canteens etc etc, my major concern is for the safety of my family and in particular my wife. Currently she works in a primary school where she continues to witness (and it seems this is fairly typical across a vast number of schools):

Social distancing between members of staff, including management is non-existent. This is NOT an exaggeration.

Union Reps are singled out and regarded as trouble-makers when trying to enforce guidelines and rules and protect vulnerable staff members.

Staff who have underlying health conditions and have no choice but to wear a mask, are smirked at by a number of non-mask-wearing staff who seem to think Covid is a joke.

Windows are not open for ventilation, even when requested on a daily basis.

Cleaning of equipment does not take place.

Staff brag openly about having been in Blackpool and other parts of England over the recent October break.

Staff who do have masks often have them only covering their mouths.

limited numbers in staff rooms is being ignored.

signage is being ignored.

How can any of this be happening ? How can you honestly say that you feel teachers are safe when this is the reality in a primary school in your country? The weight for her is equally increasing and causing her great angst every single day. She cannot work from the safety of her home or large office. That luxury is not afforded to her.

Thanking teachers last week when they have to undergo the above at their 'workplace' really doesn't sit right with me. My wife is frightened to go to work because primary schools in particular are forgotten by Scotgov. We, as a family, have followed every one of your rules thus far to the letter, to keep our family safe. We don't travel unnecessarily for anything, we stay home, we maintain good hand hygiene, we wear masks to protect ourselves and others and follow all the rules and guidance. No doubt there will be many teachers like her, who literally cry themselves to sleep at night with fear.

If as it appears, you want to keep schools open for as long as possible, wouldn't it be wise to encourage wider use of face coverings by staff at all times, for the sake of staff and pupils alike? Therefore there would be less risk of staff catching or spreading the virus and a greater chance that schools would remain appropriately staffed and open for the benefit of the pupils. I don't pretend to be a top academic but I'm sure you will agree that my simple little point here makes more sense than some of the guidance floating around at the moment. Wider use of face coverings in schools, by staff, = reduced risk to staff and schools more likely to remain open and safe. Why can't some of the brightest minds in the country see this? This simple and effective measure would take a great deal of strain away from my wife and others like her and make her vocation easier to bear.

Yours Sincerely

Worried husband

EMAIL CHAIN FROM MR MACKAY MSP REGARDING A SHIELDING TEACHER

Dear Ministers

Derek Mackay MSP has been representing his constituent [redacted under s38(1)(b)] , who is a "shielding teacher" within Renfrewshire. [redacted under s38(1)(b)] is very keen for teachers like herself who are shielding to take up home working, Mr Mackay raised [redacted under s38(1)(b)] case with Renfrewshire Council. The authority have advised "It is not reasonable or

practicable for a teacher to work from home as their contractual role involves face to face working with children in the classroom."

[redacted under s38(1)(b)] has been advised that other councils have accommodated teachers.

The Scottish Government desperately want schools to remain open, home working for some teachers who would otherwise have to remain on sick leave, maybe an option which should be considered to help achieve this end goal.

[redacted under s38(1)(b)] is given consent for her correspondence and case to be shared with the Scottish Government.

Kind regards.

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]
Senior Caseworker for Derek Mackay MSP
Renfrewshire North & West

Constituency Office, 37 Hairst Street, Renfrew, PA4 8QU. Tel No: 0141-885-2076

From: [redacted under s38(1)(b)] @parliament.scot
Sent: 29 September 2020 14:40
To: [redacted under s38(1)(b)] @renfrewshire.gov.uk
Subject: DEREK MACKAY MSP: HOME WORKING FOR TEACHERS Case Ref: DM7902)

Good afternoon [redacted under s38(1)(b)]

Derek Mackay MSP has been contacted by [redacted under s38(1)(b)] who is a primary school teacher in Renfrewshire. [redacted under s38(1)(b)] advises that she has ongoing health issues and was shielding from March to August. [redacted under s38(1)(b)] very keen to return to primary teaching, however, she has been told that working from home is not an option currently being offered to teachers in Renfrewshire who find themselves in the same position herself. [redacted under s38(1)(b)] want to contribute rather than accept taking sick leave. [redacted under s38(1)(b)] advises that other councils have accommodated teachers namely, Aberdeenshire, Fife, Highland and North Lanarkshire. [redacted under s38(1)(b)] has also just advised that her school has been allocated an 'isolation support teacher' who will provide work for self-isolating pupils. [redacted under s38(1)(b)] does not understand why this opportunity is not available for to her? Has the situation changed and evolved since [redacted under s38(1)(b)] recent correspondence with HR?

[redacted under s38(1)(b)] has provided correspondence attached which she is happy for Mr Mackay to share with you:- letters from consultant- the first one saying she could return and the

second one supporting work from home, OH report and HR response.

Mr Mackay would like to thank you for your assistance with this matter and look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards.

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

*Senior Caseworker for Derek Mackay MSP
Renfrewshire North & West*

Constituency Office, 37 Hairst Street, Renfrew, PA4 8QU. Tel No: 0141-885-2076

Dear Mr MacKay

I am contacting you today to raise awareness of the situation teachers who were previously shielding are finding themselves in within Renfrewshire.

I have Cystic Fibrosis, my lung function is 35%, I am on the pre-transplant list and I take daily steroids. I was shielding from March until August. I am a primary teacher and when schools returned in August, I was keen to return to work.

I was due an occupational health appointment, however my CF consultant wrote a letter stating that I could return to work if:

Government guidelines were adhered to

Social distancing was observed

Hygiene/cleaning was rigorous

Mask worn

I formed one bubble

On receipt of this letter HR cancelled my occupational health appointment and I returned to work. It quickly became evident that despite the best efforts of school staff socially distancing in a class of 30 children is impossible. This combined with the high rate of pupil and staff absences and the growing number of cases in Renfrewshire I felt very unsafe. I spoke to my consultant again and they agreed that work from home would be much safer. However Renfrewshire Council are refusing to allow this. Stating that they 'are not in the position to consider working from home.' They state that if you have an underlying health condition you must provide fit notes for absence from work.

I have since had an occupational health appointment where I was advised that due to me being in the extremely vulnerable category that I should work from home and again Renfrewshire Council have said no.

Scottish Government advice is to work from home where possible and there is an

extremely important role that I, and others like me could fulfil. As growing numbers of children are required to self isolate there is a need for teachers to be available for support, instead I have to be off sick when I could be contributing to the well being of our young people.

I cannot understand how the council can go against the recommendations of medical professionals and are willing to put someone's health and possibly their life at risk. Are we waiting for someone to become seriously ill before anyone listens?

I am asking for your support for myself and other shielding teachers at a time where COVID numbers are rising at an alarming rate. It should not be considered sick leave when we are perfectly capable of contributing. Other authorities in Scotland are allowing this.

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From: [redacted under s38(1)(b)] <[redacted under s38(1)(b)] @yahoo.co.uk>
Sent: 02 September 2020 15:56
To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>
Subject: Shielding Teachers

Dear Mr Swinney

I would like to draw your attention to the situation that many teachers who were in the shielding category now find themselves in.

My personal circumstances are that I have cystic fibrosis with an average of 35% lung function. Until the end of August I had very limited contact with others, really only my immediate family.

Within the space of two weeks we were expected back in school surrounded by children and staff. I decided I wanted to try and go back as I love my job and I have missed working face to face with children. However when I got there I discovered that social distancing in a class of 30 primary children is impossible, I tried wearing a mask but again extremely difficult to teach this way and I ended up with no voice. Within a week of being back we had 7 members of staff and 80 children absent. This caused me huge anxiety and I approached my consultant who agreed that at this time work from home would be safer. Bearing in mind that the message from government was you could return to work IF it was safe and that work from home where possible was being pushed I did not envisage any problems.

However [redacted under s38(1)(b)] Council have said no to this and I have been told I need to be off sick until I can see occupational health on the 15th of September. I find this unfair and ridiculous! They will pay me to stay at home and do nothing when they could pay me to stay home and be productive. I know many education staff who are working from home but it seems teachers are being excluded.

I am not alone in this, surely the disability act means the government and councils must make reasonable adjustments and for some of us that means work from home until things settle and we see how opening schools affects the R rating?

I appreciate you are extremely busy but I would appreciate a reply outlining how you plan to support the most vulnerable staff at this time. We are desperate to get back into the classroom, when it is safe!

Kind Regards

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

From: [redacted under s38(1)(b)]

Sent: Tuesday, September 22, 2020 6:14:19 PM

To: Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP

Subject: Shielding Teachers

Dear Ms Sturgeon

I am contacting you today to raise awareness of the situation teachers who were previously shielding are finding themselves in within [redacted under s38(1)(b)] .

I have Cystic Fibrosis, my lung function is 35%, I am on the pre-transplant list and I take daily steroids. I was shielding from March until August. I am a primary teacher and when schools returned in August, I was keen to return to work.

I was due an occupational health appointment, however my CF consultant wrote a letter stating that I could return to work if:

Government guidelines were adhered to

Social distancing was observed

Hygiene/cleaning was rigorous

Mask worn

I formed one bubble

On receipt of this letter HR cancelled my occupational health appointment and I returned to work. It quickly became evident that despite the best efforts of school staff socially distancing in a class of 30 children is impossible. This combined with the high rate of pupil and staff absences and the growing number of cases in [redacted under s38(1)(b)] I felt very unsafe. I spoke to my consultant again and they agreed that work from home would be much safer. However [redacted under s38(1)(b)] Council are refusing to allow this. Stating that they 'are not in the position to consider working from home.' They state that if you have an underlying health condition you must provide fit notes for absence from work. I have since had an occupational health appointment where I was advised that due to me being in the extremely vulnerable category that I should work from home and again Renfrewshire Council have said no.

Scottish Government advice is to work from home where possible and there is an extremely important role that I, and others like me could fulfil. As growing numbers of children are required to self isolate there is a need for teachers to be available for support, instead I have to be off sick when I could be contributing to the well being of our young people.

I cannot understand how the council can go against the recommendations of medical professionals and are willing to put someone's health and possibly their life at risk. Are we waiting for someone to become seriously ill before anyone listens?

I am asking for your support for myself and other shielding teachers at a time where COVID numbers are rising at an alarming rate. It should not be considered sick leave when we are perfectly capable of contributing. Other authorities in Scotland are allowing this.

Thank you for taking the time to read this. I am sure you can appreciate how this situation is causing a great deal of stress and anxiety.

Kind Regards

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows 10

On Monday, November 9, 2020, 4:13 pm, [redacted under s38(1)(b)] wrote:

Dear Ms Sturgeon

I wish to draw your attention to the extremely difficult position that I and other clinically extremely vulnerable teachers find ourselves in.

I have cystic fibrosis with a lung function of 35%. I have had a risk assessment which resulted in work from home being advised. I have 2 letters from my cystic fibrosis consultants and a fit note from my doctor all advising work from home. However, [redacted under s38(1)(b)] Council refuses to allow this. They say that under Scottish Government guidelines teachers are not allowed to work from home and must deliver face-to-face teaching.

[redacted under s38(1)(b)] is in level 3 and we have had COVID cases in my school so I am sure you can appreciate my concerns.

Each day I listen to you urging employers to allow employees to work from home and saying that the vulnerable must be protected and this is not happening. I could be providing vital support to the growing number of pupils who are self-isolating- this is a task that is becoming more onerous for class teachers.

I am a member of the SNP and I admire how well the Scottish Government has tackled this pandemic but I am incredibly disappointed and frustrated at how I am being treated. Some authorities are permitting work from home and some or not. It is a postcode lottery at the moment which is simply unfair.

I have emailed previously and received no reply, I got a generic reply from Mr. Swinney which did not alleviate my concerns at all. I appreciate how busy you must be but our local authorities need clear guidance across the board so that all staff are treated the same, no matter where they live in Scotland.

Kind Regards

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

From: [redacted under s38(1)(b)] <[redacted under s38(1)(b)]@LIVE.CO.UK>
Sent: 19 August 2020 12:45
To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>
Subject: shielding teachers

Mr Swinney

Having just listened to you talk on tv, I feel the need to email you.

I am a primary teacher in [redacted under s38(1)(b)] and, because of underlying health conditions and my taking immunosuppression biologic medication, was shielding for months. I am at the moment signed off from work with one of my auto-immune conditions, but due to go back to work soon. I scored a Covid age of 79 on the Scottish Government Risk Assessment.

My worries are great but mainly concern this – colleagues tell me that neither teachers or pupils are observing 2m distancing, colleagues share the staff room in groups of 5, my school is open plan and at any time I will be in an area with up to 57 children and 4 adults (not always the same 4 adults), my HT does not appear to realise my concerns.

My question is this – what are you doing to ensure the safety of teachers who have been shielding? Should they be in schools and in front of classes of children?

Yes, pupils MUST return to education, yes, teachers MUST continue to teach (I have a 35 year teaching career behind me and am committed to my job) but should all this be at the risk of the health of shielding staff?

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

John Swinney MSP
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education
Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh EH99 1SP
9 October 2020

Dear John,

I am writing to raise the concerns of at-risk teachers who have been pressured to return to classrooms.

I have been contacted in recent weeks by a number of teachers who were previously shielding and whose requests to continue working from home, which have been backed by their doctors or other health practitioners, have been refused. Instead, they have been told to either go on sick leave, which many cannot afford, or return to the classroom.

As you will be aware, mitigation measures such as consistent social distancing are in practice simply not happening in many schools. Vulnerable teachers have as a result found themselves in situations where their health is at immediate risk. I believe this may violate the Equality Act 2010 provisions on disability discrimination and reasonable accommodation, as well as health and safety requirements.

Many education authorities have supported vulnerable teachers to work from home. However, several authorities have not been so supportive. This inconsistency has created a postcode lottery for teacher safety. I therefore ask that you work with education authorities to ensure that all vulnerable teachers are properly supported, able to work from home where possible and not pressured into returning to classrooms where this presents an unacceptable risk.

Kind regards

Ross Greer MSP

**Ross Greer MSP for the West of Scotland
Scottish Green Party**

MG.21 Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP
0131 348 6347
ross.greer.msp@parliament.scot

From: [redacted under s38(1)(b)] <[redacted under s38(1)(b)] @gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, October 23, 2020 5:49:23 PM
To: Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP <Nicola.Sturgeon.msp@parliament.scot>
Subject: Teachers who were previously shielding.

Dear Nicola Sturgeon MSP,

I am writing to you regarding teachers who were previously on the shielding list.

Talking from my own experience, I paused shielding on [redacted under s38(1)(b)] and was advised that it was safe to go back to work with a personalised risk assessment in place.

As you know, cases are rising, and there is no real difference in numbers now than in March or April when I was advised to shield.

I now watch as staff and pupils who I have been in close proximity test positive and self isolate. It is a very stressful time for me and I am really worrying that I have to go into the school building each day. I ask myself why I am not being advised to shield or told to work from home now?

I feel that teachers who were previously asked to shield are being asked to put their lives at significant risk of death by the Scottish Government. Although mitigations are in place

to lower the risk of Covid -19 in schools these often do not work in practicality especially in a primary school setting.

Local authorities are not allowing teachers who were previously shielding to work from home, especially with the current advice in place from the Scottish Government which is not clear. The Scottish Government has to step in and take the lead. All previously shielding teachers should be working at home, this is working with success in countries like Denmark and Russia and Scotland should be no different.

I have been a SNP voter and supporter of the Scottish Government for the past 13 years but my support is really wavering. I feel my life is on the line each day especially with what feels like the Scottish Government removing its support for clinically vulnerable teachers.

I hope you will raise this matter with John Swinney and ask for something to get done to support previously shielding teachers.

I am a huge fan of yours, and a [redacted under s38(1)(b)] , please help me and other teachers in my position.

Thank you

Sincerely

John Swinney MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Education
By Email
Friday 4th December 2020
Dear Cabinet Secretary

Working from home arrangements for teachers classed as high risk

I am contacting you on behalf of a constituent who is a teacher in Fife, who is being denied the opportunity to work from home, despite being classed as very high risk (having previously been in the shielding group), and Fife currently being in level 3 restrictions.

They have received an assessment from Occupational Health which concluded that they are at very high risk of catching Covid-19, are extremely vulnerable, and recommended that they work from home. However Fife Council have said that working from home is not an option long term for teachers, and informed them that they must get a fit note and be signed off on sickness leave if they are unable to return to teaching in person.

This is clearly not acceptable, given my constituent is able and willing to work from home.

Furthermore, being signed off will impact on their sickness leave entitlement, and potentially impact on pay and benefits.

I intend to write to Fife Council on the matter, but I would like to ask in your role as Cabinet Secretary for Education, can you please confirm;

- What arrangements are in place for at risk, formerly shielding teachers, particularly in areas in level 3 and 4 restrictions?
- Are local authority employers obliged to provide work from home arrangements for formerly shielding teachers, if teachers are willing to do so?
- Should a fit note from doctors constitute a requirement to provide work from home arrangements, or should it require teachers to take sick leave, and the subsequent loss of pay and future leave?

I would like to remind you that the Parliament voted for a motion from my colleague Ross Greer on the 18th November, which included the following;

calls on the Scottish Government to work with local authorities to ensure that any vulnerable school staff member who is medically unable to attend school in person without being placed at unacceptable risk is better supported to either work from home or in a safer alternative setting, or, if this is not possible, to potentially be placed on leave without loss of income;

It is clear that in Fife this principle is still not being adhered to. I would be most grateful if you could clarify the points listed above, and update me on what steps you are taking to ensure the motion parliament approved is being implemented.

Yours Sincerely,

Mark Ruskell

MSP for Mid Scotland and Fife

Mark Ruskell MSP
Office MG.17
The Scottish Parliament

Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

From: [redacted under s38(1)(b)] **On Behalf Of** Tomkins A (Adam), MSP
Sent: 23 September 2020 16:20
To: Scottish Ministers
Subject: Ex-shielding teachers

FAO: Cabinet Secretary for Education, John Swinney MSP

Dear John,

I have received an email from a constituent who is a primary school teacher in Glasgow. My constituent has a heart condition and during the spring and early summer, adhered closely to Scottish Government advice by shielding. In recent weeks she has been understandably cautious about her personal health and wellbeing.

However, having now returned to teaching her class of 29 seven-year-olds, she believes it is not always possible for her to maintain social distancing from the children in the classroom. As someone who had previously been advised to shield, she would like to know at what stage teaching staff like her will be given updated guidance for their safety.

I hope you know how strongly I support the measures you and colleagues are taking to keep Scotland's schools open. I support these measures and I am very grateful for them. That said, however, I should be grateful if you could consider the issue of teachers who were formerly advised to shield, so that I can advise my constituent of the latest Scottish Government thinking on this matter.

With every best wish,

Adam Tomkins MSP
Glasgow Region

From: [redacted under s38(1)(b)] <[redacted under s38(1)(b)]@yahoo.com>
Sent: 13 August 2020 12:54
To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>
Subject: Ex shielded teachers

Dear Mr Swinney,

I was wondering if the government have come up with any more acceptable outcomes for ex shielding teachers yet? We are back at work now.

I see Ms Sturgeon is now acknowledging they anticipate outbreaks in schools, especially secondaries.

In my opinion, a classroom is not covid safe. Shielders were to return to covid safe workplaces.

As you know from the EIS survey results, a significant number of staff dont feel safe. And that is not people identified as being at very high risk.

I remain unconvinced that the current situation has my wellbeing and health as top priority.

Best Wishes,

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

[Sent from Yahoo Mail on Android](#)

From: [redacted under s38(1)(b)] <[redacted under s38(1)(b)]@yahoo.com>

Sent: 14 September 2020 12:56

To: Gray I (Iain), MSP <Iain.Gray.msp@parliament.scot>; Adamson C (Clare), MSP <Clare.Adamson.msp@parliament.scot>; Greer R (Ross), MSP <Ross.Greer.msp@parliament.scot>; Harvie P (Patrick), MSP <Patrick.Harvie.msp@parliament.scot>; Rennie W (Willie), MSP <Willie.Rennie.msp@parliament.scot>; Greene J (Jamie), MSP <Jamie.Greene.msp@parliament.scot>; Johnson D (Daniel), MSP <Daniel.Johnson.msp@parliament.scot>; Mackay R (Rona), MSP <Rona.Mackay.msp@parliament.scot>

Cc: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>; Cole-Hamilton A (Alex), MSP <Alex.Cole-Hamilton.msp@parliament.scot>

Subject: Concerns of "paused" shielded teachers from across Scotland

Dear MSPs,

Please find attached a letter outlining some concerns of Scottish teachers who were in the shielded category until shielding was paused.

We have shared our concerns in a group online and I volunteered to share them with you in your capacity as either the elected MSP for some of our members, or in your capacity as attending the Education and Skills Committee or indeed both. We would appreciate some answers to issues that continue to cause us great concern.

Best Wishes,

[redacted under s38(1)(b)] (Secondary teacher. Edinburgh)

Dear MSP,

This letter covers a set of shared concerns from a group of teachers from across Scotland, who were previously in the shielded/vulnerable category. We have teachers in all regions across Scotland and in all sectors of education in our group. Until the 31st July, we were given very clear and reassuring guidelines. Until the 23rd June, the working status of any teacher in the shielded category was also to continue to work from home. Under the blended learning model, this would have been possible. Since the decision was made to return schools fulltime, "paused" shielded teachers have been left with absolutely no acknowledgement of the risk posed to them in doing so. Schools are simply not covid secure. It is disingenuous to suggest they are. The results of the EIS survey in August confirmed that the vast majority of teachers have major concerns about the safety in schools. The anxiety for previously shielded/vulnerable staff was noted to be particularly high.

As numbers rise, some areas are now seeing local restrictions being put back in place. The guidance to people who were previously shielded is that they "should be extra careful to keep themselves safe." How exactly is that achievable in a school setting? At what exact point will "paused" shielded teaching/school staff be given updated guidance and stronger shielding advice?

In addition to the obvious concerns around rising numbers, we have found huge discrepancies between individual council interpretations of guidance. In some cases, medical advice to remain working from home has been overruled by HR/Head teachers, whilst in other regions, working from home agreements have been reached. Why is there not a consistent approach offered to all staff? Why would medical recommendations be overruled by non-medically qualified people?

The assurances that transmission does not occur in schools are beginning to look flawed. It suits the Scottish government narrative to assure parents that schools are safe but the sharp increase in numbers across the UK may suggest a different story. The reporting of a letter from M McKenna in the Glasgow Herald in which she said a "ridiculous number of teachers and support staff" are being sent home to self-isolate" would appear to demonstrate a surprisingly unsympathetic approach to staff who may have become ill as a result of being at work. Are teachers now going to be held responsible for having the misfortune of catching the virus?? Since when did it become acceptable to expect school staff to risk their own health and the health of their own families in delivering education?

It is not acceptable to us that our concerns remain unheard or not acted upon. We need clearer and consistent guidelines across all regions. Many of us have sent emails already and simply receive standard cut and paste replies.

Why are school staff not being protected in the way other workers who come face to face with considerable numbers of other households are? It seems to us that the circumstances for shielding teachers returning to work are unique in that we simply cannot adhere to the FACTS guidelines.

Please support us by raising these issues as a matter of urgency.

Yours,

[redacted under s38(1)(b)] (on behalf of a group of ex shielded teachers,)

From: [redacted under s38(1)(b)] : [redacted under s38(1)(b)] @yahoo.com
Sent: 30 September 2020 15:36:55 (UTC+00:00) Dublin, Edinburgh, Lisbon, London
To: Smith G (Gregor)
Subject: Paused shielded teachers' concerns

Dear Mr Smith,

I am writing to you as the situation for shielded teaching staff is increasingly precarious. What will it take for someone to listen to us? We shielded on your advice. We are wondering why we bothered now given the situation we find ourselves in now.

Please address our concerns.

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

[Sent from Yahoo Mail on Android](#)

From: Kate Forbes MSP <Kate.Forbes.msp@parliament.scot>

Sent: 12 August 2020 15:19

To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>

Subject: (Case Ref: KF9044)

Dear John

Thank you for all that you are doing to ensure that pupils can return to school safely.

One of my constituents has raised their concerns regarding the lack of provision available to shielding teachers who are now expected to return to work. My constituent, who is a secondary school teacher, has been shielding throughout the Covid-19 pandemic following two kidney transplants and an autoimmune disease which resulted in a reduced lung function.

My constituent explained that they were informed that they were expected to return to work as the shielding restrictions had ended but there was no additional information available as to what protection was available for teachers who had been in the shielding category. They were particularly concerned that they would be teaching pupils in the 15 to 18 age bracket who were not expected to wear a face mask.

My constituent explained that their union recommended that they have a risk assessment carried out by their employer. Despite contacting the Highland Council's Human Resources department to arrange this there was no response. My constituent eventually was able to have a health assessment and Covid-19 age assessment carried out by their GP which gave my constituent a Covid age of 88. The GP signed my constituent off from physically returning to school but has allowed them to work from home. Whilst this is a compromise, my constituent is concerned that they are letting their fellow teaching colleagues down by being unable to physically return to work but yet protect their health. They feel that there has not been adequate support and protection made available for teachers who had previously been shielding and were to return to the workplace.

Please can you clarify what measures have been put into place to place in schools to protect teachers who have been shielding?

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards

Kate

From: [redacted under s38(1)(b)] <[redacted under s38(1)(b)] @yahoo.com>
Sent: 18 August 2020 11:54
To: Shielding Correspondence <Shielding.Correspondence@gov.scot>
Subject: Re: Ex shielded teachers - [redacted under s38(1)(b)]

Dear [redacted under s38(1)(b)] ,

Thank you for your reply. I know it will be the standard reply you are encouraged to give so I accept it as such.

However, it does not really address any of my valid concerns re being sent back to work in a secondary school without FACTS. As an ex shielder.

That toolkit places me as moderate risk. My GP and Consultant both place me as remaining at high risk.

There is daily evidence of pupils testing positive for the virus in the news now.

I was shielded for months and yet now I am fair game??

If I feel anxious it is because the government are playing a very risky strategy with my health right now.

The idea that social distancing and masks must be used indoors everywhere to keep everyone safe, except in schools is quite frankly showing the government either dont care about teacher safety or are prepared to put us at risk to appease the vocal parental lobby. I am not convinced this is wise.

Yours,

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

Sent from Yahoo Mail on Android

On Mon, 17 Aug 2020 at 11:18, Shielding.Correspondence@gov.scot
<Shielding.Correspondence@gov.scot> wrote:

Dear [redacted under s38(1)(b)]

Thank you for your email. As a member of the COVID-19 Shielding for the Clinically High-Risk team, your enquiry has been passed to me for reply.

This is a worrying time, especially for those who have a underlying illnesses and have been shielding. The safety and the continued provision of the care and treatment individuals need is a priority for the Scottish Government and the NHS in Scotland.

We fully understand your concerns and have paused shielding from [redacted under s38(1)(b)] because the levels of infection in Scotland are low enough for us to do this and this is based on clinical evidence.

The decision to pause shielding was taken in the context of very low rates of the virus in the community. We will continue to review this, and we will not hesitate to take additional steps to safeguard those at the highest risk if the evidence tells us we should.

We recognise that some people will be anxious about a return to work after they have been shielding. We have developed a specific risk assessment tool, to help employers and employees across all industries understand individual risk factors, and how these might be mitigated. The tool can be found here: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-individual-risk-assessment-for-the-workplace/>

We would expect schools to use this tool to support conversations with teachers and other staff to ensure that they can return safely, taking account of any individual circumstances and concerns they may have. The tool also offers guidance on potential next steps if staff feel that their concerns are not being adequately addressed.

We are doing everything we can to get the advice right so everyone can safely make choices that reflect their needs and we continually review all advice and monitor infection levels. There is guidance available at <https://www.mygov.scot/coronavirus-if-you-need-to-stay-at-home/> and you can keep up to date with further announcements at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/covid-shielding/>

I hope this is helpful.

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

COVID-19 Shielding for the Clinically High at Risk

Further information is available at www.mygov.scot/shielding

From: [redacted under s38(1)(b)] <[redacted under s38(1)(b)]@yahoo.com>
Sent: 13 August 2020 12:54
To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>
Subject: Ex shielded teachers

Dear Mr Swinney,

I was wondering if the government have come up with any more acceptable outcomes for ex shielding teachers yet? We are back at work now.

I see Ms Sturgeon is now acknowledging they anticipate outbreaks in schools, especially secondaries.

In my opinion, a classroom is not covid safe. Shielders were to return to covid safe workplaces.

As you know from the EIS survey results, a significant number of staff dont feel safe. And that is not people identified as being at very high risk.

I remain unconvinced that the current situation has my wellbeing and health as top priority.

Best Wishes,

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

[Sent from Yahoo Mail on Android](#)

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From: [redacted under s38(1)(b)] <[redacted under s38(1)(b)] @gmail.com>

Sent: 21 September 2020 22:20

To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>

Subject: Ex-shielding teachers

Dear First Minister,

I am a primary school teacher working for Glasgow City Council. Due to a heart condition, I had been advised to shield for over four months. As shielding has been paused, I am now working in a classroom with 29 pupils, many of whom are EAL and ASN and require support (as is the case in almost every class across the country). Let me be clear, it is IMPOSSIBLE to socially distance in a classroom. The notion that this is being 'effectively' achieved is ridiculous. I am sure you are now aware of the email GCC teaching staff received from the Executive Director of Education, Maureen McKenna. This email was deeply upsetting. I am in effect risking my life by attending work. This email caused deep distress, fear, and anger amongst many teaching staff. I have attached the email for your viewing. I request that you contact GCC and raise my sincere concerns that this email has obliterated staff morale at a most crucial time and caused teachers to fear possible repercussions of having to self-isolate.

As Covid-19 cases continue to rise, I along with fellow ex-shielding teaching, feel our health and welfare has been jeopardised by ill planning and absurd social distancing notions. I ask you, are our lives a risk the government is willing to take?

I followed the guidance I received back in March to the letter. I did not socialise. I maintained social distancing when I was finally allowed to go outdoors. Now I am being told to be extra vigilant and maintain 2-meter distance from almost thirty 7-year olds who require assistance turning on/off the tap, reaching the soap, and zipping up their jackets for outdoor learning!

I have also attached an email from [redacted under s38(1)(b)] who drafted the email on behalf of 'ex-shielding' teachers. I would appreciate your timely response to the issues raised in the email.

Regards,

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

Your ref 202000074490

Dear [redacted under s38(1)(b)],

Thank you for your correspondence of 9September in response to my plea for your attention to this issue. I have to say it did read as a copy and paste in its nature and really did not even begin to address the very unique nature of the crisis facing clinically highly vulnerable and previously shielding teachers across Scotland.

I feel that my plea has literally been fielded by you and I beg that you just listen to our issue. We are going into the highest risk environments to work and we are the most vulnerable in society.

We are in deep crisis and it does seem to be that someone has to die before we will be heard. With numbers on the rise across Scotland we are walking into death. My consultant has said and written to me that if I am exposed to Covid 19 I will die. There are teachers like me across Scotland having to go in to classrooms - many with experience of agreed mitigations ignored in reality. You NEED to look at this issue and understand how appalling and unreasonable a situation this is! It is NOT about general employees who were shielding returning to work - it is about the unique situation for previously shielding TEACHERS returning to dangerous environments for them with no support - not a whisper even of an acknowledgement from Scottish Government, Nicola Sturgeon or John Swinney that our situation is unique and is extremely dangerous. Please do not reply with a copy and paste - it is unhelpful to say the least. That copy and paste you sent took more than three weeks to be sent to me.

Please just read what I am saying and raise it as an issue. Please listen and tell me what specifically you are doing to support this unique group of people who feel utterly abandoned and ignored and fearing for their lives.

Regards,

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

Sent from my iPhone

This email has been scanned by the Symantec Email Security.cloud service.
For more information please visit <http://www.symanteccloud.com>

Dear Sir/ Madam,

Can you confirm the legal status of the guidance in the following documents :

1. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-individual-risk-assessment-for-the-workplace/>

2. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/impact-assessment-closure-reopening-schools-part-covid-19-recovery-process-scotland-version-2/pages/2/>

I am part of a group of 300 ex shielding/ clinically extremely vulnerable / disabled teachers who are being subjected to very different treatments from different local authorities. They have all provided GP letters or medical consultant and many local authorities are overturning the advice of these medical professionals. Yet point 52 in your guidance states staff who are shielding will be able to return to school in August, unless given advice from a GP or healthcare provider not to, “

What legal right do they have to ignore this advice and discriminate against these vulnerable teachers? Some are so distraught it has caused their medical conditions to flare. Some are in hospital.

They do not feel safe at school and many are at home. They want to work from home yet are being denied this safety measure.

Please help.

Kind Regards,

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

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For more information please visit <http://www.symanteccloud.com>

From: [redacted under s38(1)(b)] <[redacted under s38(1)(b)] @yahoo.com>

Sent: 13 August 2020 12:54

To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>

Subject: Ex shielded teachers

Dear Mr Swinney,

I was wondering if the government have come up with any more acceptable outcomes for ex shielding teachers yet? We are back at work now. I see Ms Sturgeon is now acknowledging they anticipate outbreaks in schools, especially secondaries.

In my opinion, a classroom is not covid safe. Shielders were to return to covid safe workplaces.

As you know from the EIS survey results, a significant number of staff dont feel safe. And that is not people identified as being at very high risk.

I remain unconvinced that the current situation has my wellbeing and health as top priority.

Best Wishes,

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

[Sent from Yahoo Mail on Android](#)

Dear Nicola,

I listened intently to the Parliament report on vaccinating this afternoon and was surprised and disappointed to see that previously shielding teachers will not be included in the first wave of vaccinations. It is impossible to socially distance as a Support for Learning teacher and I feel very vulnerable even with some PPE (mask, visor, gloves and a plastic apron). I also am concerned about catching Covid and passing it to our ASN children. I am delighted that NHS and Social care frontline staff will be in Wave 1 but teachers are also on the frontline keeping a very valuable service open.

My Covid age is 71 even though I am only 49 - is this taken into account when it is decided when you receive your vaccine?

Can previously shielding teachers be added to wave 1?

Should all previously shielding people not be in the first wave of vaccination as we are not all old or retired and not all able to work safely from home if employed in frontline services?

Yours hopefully,

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

Dear Nicola Sturgeon,

I've always supported and admired you as a politician. I've always been proud that you greW up round the corner from me in [redacted under s38(1)(b)] - I'm [redacted under s38(1)(b)] older. I moved age 11 to [redacted under s38(1)(b)] .

Today I am desperate and there is no support - nothing from you. I have had two kidney transplants and dealt with health all my adult life - autoimmune disease which caused poor lung function (33%) but I work hard and I push through and get on with my life.

I take very very little time off - less than most and I just always have taken the best care possible with my health and largely live a normal productive life. I was a [redacted under

s38(1)(b)] and have now [redacted under s38(1)(b)] . I am a person who gives my all and contribute to society. I was stringently careful with shielding.

So now I am told that I have to go back to school with large numbers of closely gathered children none of whom have to even wear masks. I feel devastated over this and absolutely powerless. You are seriously letting all teachers down but specifically critically high vulnerability shielding teachers have no chance. No. Chance.

My school has been incredibly supportive and tried to help implement what they can but seriously we all know the risk is ridiculously high. Please please look at this and pre-empt it before we have yet another care home type situation post devastation!!! Please look at it. I am begging you.

Regards,
[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

Sent from my iPhone

The attached letter is what I sent to be addressed. Nothing about face coverings. As an extremely vulnerable teacher currently forced to work because of government policymakers, I'm actually a fan of face coverings in schools. Think you are getting the legitimate concerns of an ex-shielded teacher mixed up with the non-legitimate mail bombings from US for their brigade. Perhaps you could read the attached! Don't expect it will make the slightest difference to policy but at least send me the appropriate "standard" reply perhaps?

ATTACHED LETTER:

Dear MSP,

This letter covers a set of shared concerns from a group of teachers from across Scotland, who were previously in the shielded/vulnerable category. We have teachers in all regions across Scotland and in all sectors of education in our group. Until the 31st July, we were given very clear and reassuring guidelines. Until the 23rd June, the working status of any teacher in the shielded category was also to continue to work from home. Under the blended learning model, this would have been possible. Since the decision was made to return schools fulltime, "paused" shielded teachers have been left with absolutely no acknowledgement of the risk posed to them in doing so. Schools are simply not COVID secure. It is disingenuous to suggest they are. The results of the EIS survey in August confirmed that the vast majority of teachers have major concerns about the safety in schools. The anxiety for previously shielded/vulnerable staff was noted to be particularly high.

As numbers rise, some areas are now seeing local restrictions being put back in place. The guidance to people who were previously shielded is that they "should be extra careful to keep themselves safe." How exactly is that achievable in a school

setting? At what exact point will “paused “shielded teaching/school staff be given updated guidance and stronger shielding advice?

In addition to the obvious concerns around rising numbers, we have found huge discrepancies between individual council interpretations of guidance. In some cases, medical advice to remain working from home has been overruled by HR/Head teachers, whilst in other regions, working from home agreements have been reached. Why is there not a consistent approach offered to all staff? Why would medical recommendations be overruled by non-medically qualified people?

The assurances that transmission does not occur in schools are beginning to look flawed. It suits the Scottish government narrative to assure parents that schools are safe but the sharp increase in numbers across the UK may suggest a different story. The reporting of a letter from M McKenna in the Glasgow Herald in which she said *a “ridiculous number of teachers and support staff” are being sent home to self-isolate*” would appear to demonstrate a surprisingly unsympathetic approach to staff who may have become ill as a result of being at work. Are teachers now going to be held responsible for having the misfortune of catching the virus?? Since when did it become acceptable to expect school staff to risk their own health and the health of their own families in delivering education?

It is not acceptable to us that our concerns remain unheard or not acted upon. We need clearer and consistent guidelines across all regions. Many of us have sent emails already and simply receive standard cut and paste replies.

Why are school staff not being protected in the way other workers who come face to face with considerable numbers of other households are? It seems to us that the circumstances for shielding teachers returning to work are unique in that we simply cannot adhere to the FACTS guidelines.

Please support us by raising these issues as a matter of urgency.

Yours,

[redacted under s38(1)(b)] (on behalf of a group of ex shielded teachers,)

Mr John Swinney MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Education & Skills
Education and Skills
Scottish Government
St. Andrews House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

6 October 2020 Reference: ALF/JK10951

Dear Mr Swinney

[redacted under s38(1)(b)] , [redacted under s38(1)(b)]

I am writing to you on behalf of the above constituent regarding various concerns she has in relation to ex-shielding teachers within the school environment.

[redacted under s38(1)(b)] has put to me that she feels she has been raising genuine concerns, and has been met with ‘false reassurances that schools are safe.’ Furthermore, my constituent feels that while her Headteacher has met all her requests with regards to health and safety in their school – she feels that this should not be the sole responsibility of the Headteacher and that they should receive additional support and guidance from the government on these matters. She has also highlighted that Headteachers do not have the ability to permit class teachers to work from home, or relocate

[redacted under s38(1)(b)] has put to me that she feels despite the Scottish Governments recognition of the escalation of the Covid-19 situation in Scotland since the decision was made to allow schools to return full time, this has not been reflected among the restrictions in place within schools.

She has pointed out that most other workplace settings have undergone changing restrictions alongside the increasing transmission rates of Covid 19 in Scotland, but this has not been the case in schools. [redacted under s38(1)(b)] had previously been shielding under Scottish Government guidance throughout the initial lockdown period, and she is incredibly concerned that she and others like her are risking their own health within their work place. I am sure you will agree that no employee, and especially no teacher, should feel that way.

[redacted under s38(1)(b)] has put to me that in March she had been classed as “clinically vulnerable” to COVID-19, however a recent occupational health assessment deemed her to be a “moderate risk.” [redacted under s38(1)(b)] has fairly questioned how, despite her health conditions remaining, her risk level in relation to COVID-19 has been downgraded. She has also noted that she feels individual risk assessments should undergo review following the significant change in infection level.

I understand that in some Local Authority areas vulnerable staff have been given the option of working from home, but this is not a uniform approach across the country. My constituent has expressed that she feels this is creating an effective postcode lottery in the ability to protect herself at work.

Furthermore, [redacted under s38(1)(b)] has put to me that when she has raised concerns around the lack of opportunity to work from home, she has been advised that she could request a ‘fit note’ from her GP. However, I am sure you will agree that [redacted under s38(1)(b)] should not be forced to accept a reduced wage, particularly when this could be for an unknown period of time.

Furthermore, she's highlighted that she is 'fit for work', she is capable of teaching – however she feels that while she remains at such a high risk to Covid-19 she should be able to do this in an alternative setting.

Moreover, my constituent has noted further concerns around the impact of Covid-19 restrictions within schools on vulnerable staff and pupils. For example, I understand that outdoor learning has increased and PE has been taking place outdoors, despite bad weather, and windows and doors are being left open for additional ventilation. While these things are understandable and obviously aimed at reducing transmission of COVID-19, they highlight the further pressures placed on vulnerable people throughout the school. Will the government offer further up to date guidance on measures such as these as we move into winter? And in doing so will it give consideration to teachers and pupils with additional health concerns,

I would be grateful if you would look into the above issue and welcome your comments,

Yours sincerely

James Kelly MSP

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Dear [redacted under s38(1)(b)] ,

Thank you for sending a copy of the COVID-19 Scottish Government's Strategic Framework.

The EIS notes the articulation of a tiered approach to managing the risk of COVID-19 but as currently drafted, there is a lack of critical detail in the proposals, particularly in relation to their application in schools and ELC settings.

The EIS shares the ambition for schools and ELC settings to remain open whenever possible, as long as this can be done safely for both children and staff. The safety, health and well-being of teachers in both contexts, therefore, requires specific consideration and yet this is an aspect which is lacking in the current Framework and even where provision has been made, the advice is ambiguous and capable of mis-interpretation.

We are particularly concerned about this lack of detail in the context of advice for paused-shielding teachers. Page 43 of the draft Framework provides a grid outlining the approaches to be adopted in different situations in relation to those for whom shielding has been paused. Reference is made to situations in which people can't work from home and advice is given. However, there is then a distinct heading for

schools and formal childcare. It is unclear whether this latter advice is intended to apply to both teachers, staff and pupils attending schools or formal childcare settings or whether this advice is restricted solely to attendance as a pupil. Clarity on this is needed. Furthermore, the advice takes no account of the situation in which a number of our members find themselves, where they are being forced to attend workplaces by employers who have set themselves against clinically based advice that working from home should be the option used.

The EIS notes that the Framework recommends that schools and ELC settings should apply the level of advice applicable to the general population for those for whom shielding has been paused, when they are in a level 0, 1 or 2 area. Given the vulnerabilities of those within this category, we believe that this offers insufficient protection and that the Framework should include reference to the use of bespoke risk assessments. This will ensure that proportionate and tailored risk mitigation measures are adopted for some of the most vulnerable in these settings.

The draft Framework also provides that children who were shielding previously and who are in level 4 areas, should not attend schools or ELC settings in person. No reference is made to teachers or other staff under this heading, although there is generic advice given for those who cannot work from home. Again, it is unclear under which section teachers will fall and greater clarity is again needed.

Although the generic advice for those who cannot work from home states that a two week fit note will be issued by the Chief Medical Officer to allow individuals to make contact with their GPs or consultants, there is no automatic provision that teachers in this situation should not attend schools or ELC settings in person until the area is removed from the level 4 category. If it is unsafe for pupils who were formerly shielding to be present in schools or ELC settings, then it is surely unsafe for teachers and other members of staff to be present in the same circumstances. The Framework should make this clear.

The chart on page 50 of the Framework outlines the default position that at Level 4, schools and regulated childcare settings will remain open. This seems to the EIS to be predicated on political messaging rather than on controlling the spread of infection. No reference has been made to the potential for blended or remote learning. We have seen school closures, and partial closures, deployed in Wales and Northern Ireland as part of a coherent national strategy for infection control (albeit as short-term measures) but this seems to be ruled out in the current draft of the Framework, despite significant investment of time and resource in contingency measures to enable blended and remote learning approaches. The EIS believes that the deployment of blended or remote learning contingencies should be cited as required interventions at Level 4 of the Framework.

As currently drafted, the Framework purports to provide a hierarchy of mitigation measures which can be applied at different levels. It cites the 'additional use of face coverings' for schools and ELC settings at levels 2 and 3. This takes no cognisance

of the current guidance and could undermine existing provisions which allow for the voluntary use of face coverings in all settings, including those which will come within levels 0 or 1. Similarly, risk assessments should be reviewed periodically or if circumstances change, regardless of the level. By highlighting the refreshed risk assessment at one level, it may inadvertently undermine good practice which should be taking place at a lower level also.

The EIS is happy to expand on any of the points raised.

Kind Regards,

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

From: [redacted under s38(1)(b)]
Sent: 15 December 2020 12:37
To: Central Enquiry Unit
Subject: Non Acceptance of Your Letter by Local Authority

Dear Professor Leitch

My name is [redacted under s38(1)(b)] and I was born [redacted under s38(1)(b)] In [redacted under s38(1)(b)] I was diagnosed with [redacted under s38(1)(b)] and [redacted under s38(1)(b)] both conditions are chronic, severe and I am on the high risk list, having received your letters stating this.

I have had many hospitalisations over the years with both conditions

My Local Authority have received a copy of every letter.

Recently, my GP signed me off work due to exacerbation of [redacted under s38(1)(b)] and considerable anxiety due to being a teacher in an area of Ayr having the most cases of Covid-19. We were in Tier 3 at this point.

I wear vinyl gloves all day (allergy to sanitiser and latex) and wear my mask around adults but need to remove it for teaching because I struggle to breathe (never smoked and trained in sport from 8-45)

My fit note ended on 1.12.20 by then we were in Tier 4.

My Managers and I had still to discuss the 'triggers' and areas of high risk to me therefore I explained that I would use my Government Letter to carry me for 1 week until we discussed changes to my workplace.

My manager sanctioned this however did not believe your letter to be valid When it states clearly on Page 2 - regarding previously shielding teachers and work.

The HumanResources department in the Authority have said that your letter is not valid either and my GP fit note is not Covid-19 related,.

This is not the case.

Can you advise on how to prove to my authority how authentic your letter is please?

I have attached personal details as proof.

I apologise for troubling you during an exceptionally busy time but I am becoming extremely anxious over this decision from Human Resources.

Regards

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]
[redacted under s38(1)(b)] | Pupil Support Teacher | People and Directorate | [redacted under s38(1)(b)] @south-ayrshire.gov.uk | 01292 612736 | [redacted under s38(1)(b)] Primary | [redacted under s38(1)(b)] | Ayr | [redacted under s38(1)(b)] | www.South-ayrshire.gov.uk |

John Swinney MSP
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
St. Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG
Our Ref: GM/DG/
4th August 2020

Dear John,

I am writing to you on behalf of a constituent who has contacted me regarding their concerns about returning to teach in school. I have enclosed a copy of relevant correspondence for your attention. As you will note, my constituent outlines that they have a form of [redacted under s38(1)(b)] that has required them to shield at home for the last five months. I have written to [redacted under s38(1)(b)] Council regarding what specific measures they have in place to ensure the safety of teachers in school. However, I would be grateful if you could address the following concerns expressed by my constituent.

As you will note, my constituent queries why children will not be required to wear face coverings in school, given that they are required to do so in other enclosed spaces such as shops. Furthermore, my constituent relays their understanding that recent studies in the USA, South Korea and Italy have shown that children over the age of 10 are as likely to spread covid-19 as adults. Can

you advise whether the Scottish Government is aware of any such studies, and, if so, whether these have been factored into its decisions regarding the re-opening of schools?

Finally, I would be grateful if you could provide for my constituent copies of, or links to, the scientific evidence that informed the Scottish Government's decision to reopen schools. I appreciate the volume of correspondence you are dealing with at this time may be considerable, nevertheless, with schools reopening next week, I would be grateful if you could address my constituent's specific concerns timeously, and respond in a manner I may share with them.

Gillian Martin MSP

SUITE A, UNIT 6, COLPY BUSINESS PARK, OLDMELDROM, ABERDEENSHIRE, AB51 0FU TELEPHONE: 01651 871750 GILLIAN.MARTIN.MSP@PARLIAMENT.SCOT

CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED BY THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT ON “VULNERABLE TEACHER” AND “VULNERABLE TEACHERS” FROM 01/08/20 – 01/12-20

From: [redacted under s38(1)(b)] <[redacted under s38(1)(b)] @parliament.scot> **On Behalf Of** Greer R (Ross), MSP
Sent: 17 November 2020 15:11
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>
Subject: Information regarding vulnerable teacher

Dear John,

I am writing to you regarding my constituent [redacted under s38(1)(b)], following your invitation to do so in response to my topical question on Tuesday 3 November.

As I mentioned in Parliament, I've been contacted by teachers who have been pressured to return to in-classroom teaching when they do not believe it is safe for them to do so. In [redacted under s38(1)(b)] case, she has a congenital heart condition and pulmonary hypertension. Both are serious health conditions which required her to shield during the initial phase of the pandemic. The British Heart Foundation has been clear about the vulnerability of people with heart conditions, and recommends their working from home.

[redacted under s38(1)(b)] has sought to work from home, but [redacted under s38(1)(b)] Council, her employer, have not permitted this. Instead, they have insisted she is signed off sick and receive sick pay entitlement, which uses up her sick days. As [redacted under s38(1)(b)] felt using her sick leave was not an option, she continued to teach in person. However, the requirement to keep windows open to provide ventilation has meant that she has been teaching in very cold conditions (despite wearing several coats) and has now become ill as a result and is on sick leave. Given her heart condition, teaching in such cold conditions is also unsafe.

To make matters worse, while management at her school were initially supportive, as [redacted under s38(1)(b)] has pursued her request to work from home via her trade union, management have now started to identify her as, in their view, “demanding” and “unsupportive” and raise questions about her performance. I believe this amounts to bullying in the workplace.

[redacted under s38(1)(b)] is now in a situation where she is pursuing her claim to work from home with the help of her union, but is now signed off work due to becoming ill from the conditions she has been compelled to teach in. She is very worried about losing her job and does not know what she will do when her sick days are used up.

I am extremely concerned at this situation. My constituent has been put in a dangerous situation where she cannot attend work due to significant risk to her health and is now being punished for attempting to uphold her basic employment rights. This is completely unacceptable. Whilst I understand that you cannot engage in the particular of the case before the tribunal, I do believe that intervention from the Government on the issue of pay in the interim period is necessary, as is a wider intention on the issue of support and protection for vulnerable school staff.

Kind regards

Ross Greer MSP
West Scotland
Scottish Green Party

I keep constituents and other interested individuals up to date with my work through a monthly e-newsletter. If you do not wish to receive this newsletter please reply to confirm.

British Sign Language (BSL) users can get in touch using [contactSCOTLAND-BSL](#)

From: [redacted under s38(1)(b)] <[redacted under s38(1)(b)] @parliament.scot> **On Behalf Of** Greer R (Ross), MSP
Sent: 18 November 2020 11:09
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>
Subject: Vulnerable teacher

Dear John,

I am writing to you regarding my constituent [redacted under s38(1)(b)], following your invitation to do so in response to my topical question on Tuesday 3 November.

As I mentioned in my topical question, I've been contacted by teachers who have been pressured to teach in the classroom when they do not believe it is safe for them to do so. In [redacted under s38(1)(b)] case, she has cystic fibrosis and a lung function of around 35%. She has supporting letters from her consultants, a letter from her GP, and an occupational health assessment that all say she should work from home. However, her requests to work from home have been refused by [redacted under s38(1)(b)] Council, who have insisted she must instead take sick leave.

Another MSP has already written to [redacted under s38(1)(b)] Council to raise her case directly with them, but she has informed me that the council have refused to

change their position, though I hope they will reconsider now that Renfrewshire has moved into Level 4.

I am extremely concerned by the situation [redacted under s38(1)(b)] is in. She clearly cannot attend school due to the significant risk to her health but the Council appear unwilling to consider alternative options, leaving her facing a significant loss of income through being signed off sick. As per your offer, I would appreciate if you could assist my constituent.

Kind regards,

Ross Greer MSP
West Scotland
Scottish Green Party

I keep constituents and other interested individuals up to date with my work through a monthly e-newsletter. If you do not wish to receive this newsletter please reply to confirm.

British Sign Language (BSL) users can get in touch using [contactSCOTLAND-BSL](#)

From: [redacted under s38(1)(b)] <[redacted under s38(1)(b)]@btinternet.com>
Date: 5 October 2020 at 21:38:19 BST
To: Nicola.Sturgeon.msp@parliament.scot
Subject: Vulnerable Teachers

<https://www.tes.com/news/coronavirus-schools-lack-empathy-vulnerable-teachers-staggering>

Shared via the [Google app](#)

Sent from my iPad

Dear Ms Sturgeon

Please read the above article.
I eagerly await your response.

Kind Regards

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

From: [redacted under s38(1)(b)] <[redacted under s38(1)(b)]@yahoo.co.uk>

Sent: 23 September 2020 19:30

To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>

Subject: Vulnerable Teachers and their families

CAUTION: This e-mail originated from outside of The Scottish Parliament. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Mr Swinney,

I write to you having tried every avenue available to me to protect my health and my families health. I have been unsuccessful and therefore I have now resigned as a teacher but I would like to plead with you for the teachers I leave behind. You need to put in place the following to ensure a safe working environment for teachers:

1. Face masks in classrooms for pupils and teachers
2. Perspex screens for teachers to work behind
3. The ability for teachers to work from home
4. Staff meetings always having an electronic option to join
5. The ability for vulnerable teachers not to move classrooms and not to be in crowded corridors, assemblies or playgrounds
6. Improved ventilation in schools and classrooms
7. Smaller class sizes to enable social distancing for all

I am lucky I am a Computing Science teacher with highly valuable skills and I have a new job working from home but not all teachers are as lucky as I am right now.

None of us can guarantee that we won't get it, or pass it on. But we can all make choices that significantly reduce our own risk, and help keep our communities safer. I have underlying health conditions and my GP has instructed me to wear a mask at all times in school and to ask all pupils to wear a mask in my classroom, this has been refused. My family consists of three elderly relatives all over 80 and all have health conditions that make them vulnerable to COVID-19. I would therefore have to choose between teaching or seeing my family, some of whom I have caring responsibilities for. I also can't bring myself to put a family member into a care home right now.

I expected more from a country where we should all be looking out for each other right now.

Please work with teachers and the unions before a teacher or teachers family member dies from COVID-19 contracted within one of your schools.

Yours for Scotland

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

From: [redacted under s38(1)(b)] <[redacted under s38(1)(b)] @parliament.scot> **On Behalf Of** Wishart B (Beatrice), MSP
Sent: 20 October 2020 11:35
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>
Cc: [redacted under s38(1)(b)] <[redacted under s38(1)(b)] @parliament.scot>
Subject: MSP correspondence: Vulnerable Teachers and School Staff

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

I write to highlight urgent concerns that have been raised with me about the safety of individual teachers and school staff across Scotland who were asked to shield. They have been back working in schools since the start of August, when the virus had been driven to a low level, but many are understandably anxious now it is spreading rapidly again.

I understand that there is no Scotland-wide assurance that vulnerable school staff members will be offered home working options should their medical vulnerability necessitate it. This is despite the increasing infection rate, and the inevitable risks for staff working in schools that this will lead to.

I note that Denmark implemented a policy before schools returned, whereby teachers with existing health conditions could seek consultations with their doctors, and that the doctor's advice to the individual teacher returning to work must be adhered to by the employer. This would seem a sensible step, and has reportedly meant that school staff who returned to work in Denmark felt safe and trusting.

That does not appear to be the case in Scotland, even in terms of individuals who were asked to shield. It is difficult to understand how individuals deemed so medically vulnerable that they were asked to stay in their homes for months on end are now being asked to turn a blind eye to that medical risk, and continue to work in a place where risk of transmission can only be mitigated to some extent.

Since August, many teachers have felt that they are just being expected to get on with it and have been telling the government that the guidance doesn't reflect the realities of teaching. With statistics showing the situation deteriorating by the day, will the Scottish Government now ensure that decisions around working arrangements are informed by the medical advice received by each individual staff member, and that they won't be penalised if the evidence is that they need greater protections? I am worried by reports that teachers in extremely vulnerable categories have not been allowed to work from home.

Did the Scottish Government give consideration to shielding and vulnerable school staff during the course of planning for a return to schools? What advice did it offer to local authorities, who now appear to have diverged in their treatment of these individuals? Will the Scottish Government now consider the Danish model going forward?

These are questions that need to be answered urgently, and I would therefore be grateful if your response would reflect that.

Kind regards,

Beatrice

Beatrice Wishart

Member of the Scottish Parliament for Shetland
The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh EH99 1SP

T: [0131 348 6296](tel:01313486296)

and

Shetland Parliamentary Office, [171 Commercial Street, Lerwick, Shetland ZE1 0HX](https://www.shetland.gov.uk/171-Commercial-Street-Lerwick-Shetland-ZE1-0HX)

T: [01595 690044](tel:01595690044)

M: [redacted - s38(1)(b)]

<https://www.beatricewishart.org.uk/privacy>

Dear First Minister of Scotland, Ms N Sturgeon,

I would like to bring to your attention the experience I have encountered working in Scottish Education as a pregnant teacher and ask for urgent action to be taken on the issues outlined below.

I am [redacted under s38(1)(b)] years old and at present 25 weeks pregnant. Guidance provided by the Royal College of Obstetricians & Gynaecologists, state for those women who are 28 weeks pregnant and beyond, there is an increased risk of becoming severely ill should you contract COVID-19 and pregnant women over the age of 35 are at a higher risk of developing severe illness requiring admission to hospital^[1].

I am employed by [redacted under s38(1)(b)] as a Secondary Education Teacher and work with 840 pupils per week ranging in ages from 12 to 18 years old. I teach 30 pupils each period, with 7 periods per day, in an indoor classroom environment which is inadequately ventilated. The small cramped classroom environment does not allow pupils to socially distance. I am currently socially distancing from pupils and staff which lowers my risk of contracting COVID-19. However, given that airborne transmission of SARS-CoV-2 can occur (stated by WHO^[2]), particularly in indoor settings with poor ventilation I feel I am at undue risk of contracting COVID-19 in my workplace.

The Scottish Government guidance on pregnant women working in public facing roles such as Education has been widely interpreted by Local Authorities. I asked [redacted under s38(1)(b)] if I could work in a non-public facing role, therefore not in a classroom setting with exposure to 870 pupils per week post 28 weeks pregnancy but have been refused this request.

I personally feel [redacted under s38(1)(b)] Council and the Scottish Government are not acting to protect vulnerable pregnant teachers, like myself, particularly, when the risk increases in their third trimester. Face coverings in classrooms are not mandatory, despite asking my students to wear one to protect myself and others many have not obliged as face coverings are not mandatory and despite asking my Head Teacher to make this compulsory in my classroom, the school can not grant this request based on the current Scottish Government guidance.

I do not feel safe teaching 870 students ranging from 12-18 years old in an indoor setting. My exposure with staff and students is significantly high and not all students abide by the 2-metre distance rule. [redacted under s38(1)(b)] has experienced increasing positive cases of COVID-19 and a localised lockdown. Despite the number of

rapidly rising positive cases, I have been informed by my school that I will still be required to work fulltime in the classroom, with no change to my timetable to reduce exposure and that no alternative setting would be possible to protect myself from contacting COVID-19.

The stress and anxiety caused as a result of having to act individually to help protect myself and my unborn child is unnecessary. Stress in pregnancy has been linked to children's long-term psychological disorders^[3]. I plead that the Scottish Government changes the current guidance to better protect pregnant teachers post 28 weeks of pregnancy and allow all teachers to work in a non-public role at their request.

I carried out an online survey with pregnant teachers regarding their current experience working in Scottish Education and I was overwhelmed by the response received from 145 teachers having posted the survey for only 2 hours online.

- 50% feel stressed and anxious teaching in education at present.
- 80% feel they should not be working in school post 28 weeks of their pregnancy.
- 33% have not been allowed to work from home post 28 weeks of pregnancy.
- 10% have been offered working from home post 28 weeks of pregnancy.
- 88% feel the Scottish Government's current guidance on pregnant teachers working in education does not protect them from COVID-19.

The results of the survey demonstrate the need to protect this vulnerable group. It should not be down to individual teachers to protect themselves in the workplace.

Please can you outline why Local Authorities in Scotland are widely interpreting the Scottish Government's guidance differently. Pregnant teachers who work in Falkirk Council, Aberdeen City Council, Scottish Borders Council, East Lothian Council and North Lanarkshire Council are being offered to work from home post 28 weeks of pregnancy. Fife Council are offering teachers to work in an alternative setting. This exemplifies the lack of clarity around the guidance and needs to be addressed.

Pregnant employees who work in other government bodies such as Local Authority Council Offices, Police Scotland and the NHS are offered working from home or alternative arrangements are in place to take them out of a public-facing role post 28 weeks of pregnancy. **Why aren't pregnant teachers not all offered the option to work from home? I feel this is discriminating pregnant teachers from the rest of society.**

Despite asking to work in a non-public facing role post 28 weeks of my pregnancy, East Renfrewshire Council has stated this is not possible and have requested I continue working full-time in school throughout my pregnancy in a public facing role. I will be directly teaching 870 pupils each week with the only control measure of obeying the 2-metre social distancing rule and opening the windows in my classroom. No PPE has been provided as this is not mandatory in the classroom. I have requested a change to my timetable in my individual risk assessment to reduce my contact with students, but this has been refused.

I plead that you act on behalf of this vulnerable group to better protect us and allow pregnant teachers the opportunity to work in a non-public facing setting post 28 weeks of pregnancy.

Kind regards,

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

[1] <https://www.rcog.org.uk/globalassets/documents/guidelines/2020-09-10-occupational-health-statement-rcog-rcmfom.pdf>

[2] <https://www.who.int/news-room/commentaries/detail/transmission-of-sars-cov-2-implications-for-infection-prevention-precautions>

[3] <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/the-british-journal-of-psychiatry>

From: [redacted under s38(1)(b)] <[redacted under s38(1)(b)] @gmail.com>
Sent: 06 October 2020 10:55
To: Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>
Subject: Vulnerable teachers

CAUTION: This e-mail originated from outside of The Scottish Parliament. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear John,

I am a member of the [redacted under s38(1)(b)] SNP branch and I want to write to you to express my disappointment and anger with regards to the treatment of teachers, particularly those who are clinically vulnerable or extremely vulnerable, as a result of the full time return to school.

I have been a secondary teacher for 20 years, and am [redacted under s38(1)(b)] at [redacted under s38(1)(b)] in [redacted under s38(1)(b)] where I have taught for 15 years. I have two underlying health conditions, asthma and type 1 diabetes, and as someone regarded as clinically vulnerable, when shielding was introduced I worked from home.

Like many people, as well as home schooling my daughter I was also working full time, doing all I could to ensure pupils were engaged in learning. As a [redacted under s38(1)(b)] I was also responsible for overseeing the teacher estimated grades for the SQA and as a faculty presenting pupils at multiple levels in several subjects this was a huge undertaking.

In [redacted under s38(1)(b)] my [redacted under s38(1)(b)] passed away very suddenly and while isolating with my sister in England. Arrangements had to be made to bring her back to [redacted under s38(1)(b)] for a graveside funeral which only our immediate family could attend. I did not even stay overnight with family when I travelled home for her funeral, and there was no wake or church service.

I observed the government's rules regarding isolating, social distancing, face masks etc. to the letter and found the thought of a return to work extremely worrying, especially when shielding was paused, however I was preparing myself to return to blended learning, with smaller pupil numbers. Like all schools, ours had prepared classrooms and timetables on the basis of part time learning and since the country was still in Phase 3 of the route map to recovery and full time school opening was

not scheduled until Phase 4, I was absolutely shocked when the announcement of a return to full time school was announced.

The thought of putting myself in that situation after months of observing guidance so carefully caused me such anxiety that I became extremely distressed and had no choice but to ask my Dr to provide an absence line from work. This in itself caused stress as I have never been signed off work before and also felt the guilt of burdening my colleagues with more work. Within the first week of return to school cases were identified among pupils at [redacted under s38(1)(b)] and it received significant media attention. Since then, several further cases have been identified among our pupils although there is no longer media interest.

Positive cases and the resultant isolation of close contacts has a serious impact on learning and teaching. We recently had one Higher class where 20 pupils were instructed to isolate yet teachers were expected to conduct face to face teaching and at the same time as provide work online for pupils who are at home; this is an impossible burden. Why not, as Sweden, Italy and other countries have done, use clinically vulnerable teachers like me, who would be more than happy to work from home? Yesterday, two further pupil cases were identified in our school, resulting in further pupil and staff isolation. This situation cannot be sustainable.

Having worked in the building with nearly 1300 pupils and over 100 staff for 15 years; a building where I cannot accommodate all members of department staff in a classroom of their own, rooms and resources are shared and the corridors and social spaces are jam packed, I knew the government recommendations for schools would be unworkable. My colleagues have repeatedly told me not to return to work, that they feel unsafe, and if they had my health conditions they would do the same thing.

Can you explain to me why teaching seems to be the only profession where people are expected to work in small spaces, with large numbers of people, without masks, and unable to social distance? A class of 30 Higher pupils means young adults, 17 or 18 years old, sitting shoulder to shoulder, unmasked for a double period of over an hour. Advice in school is to have the windows and classroom door open. From a purely practical point of view this means pupils sitting in jackets as the weather deteriorates and having to listen to the noise of every other class with the door open. When staff have a free period, where do they work? Or where do they eat their lunch? Our staff base is so small that a maximum of 5 people can sit in it if social distancing is to be observed; our department has 12 members of staff. MSPs are not expected to work in these conditions, why should teachers?

Case numbers are rising significantly, we are no longer in the low community transmission state we were when a full time return to school was claimed to be safe. I now have colleagues who have tested positive, and yet the mood seems to be to blame teachers for not following the rules, as per Maureen McKenna's letter to Glasgow head teachers, ignoring the fact the rules are impossible to follow in schools. The recent testing at Northumbria University highlights the dangers which schools pose to those who are vulnerable. Although nearly 800 students tested positive for the virus, only 78 were symptomatic. It beggars belief to suggest that schools are an environment where the same situation would not exist since we know Covid is an airborne virus.

I hear a lot about the negative impact shielding may have on mental health, but my mental health and that of my vulnerable colleagues has never been more negatively affected by the unsafe environment teachers are expected to put up with. The stress and anxiety is adding to my already existing health conditions and I see no evidence that the government is concerned by the situation in schools. I am a teacher who loves my job, but I will not endanger my health or that of my family. I could be utilised in a positive and productive manner working from home providing online learning if the government would be prepared to take the concerns of vulnerable teachers seriously. As it stands, I am signed off, unable to do the job which I have done for 20 years, and while pupils miss out on my experience and passion, my mental health continue to deteriorate.

I look forward to hearing your response,

Yours sincerely,

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

John Swinney MSP
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education
Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh EH99 1SP
9 October 2020

Dear John,

I am writing to raise the concerns of at-risk teachers who have been pressured to return to classrooms.

I have been contacted in recent weeks by a number of teachers who were previously shielding and whose requests to continue working from home, which have been backed by their doctors or other health practitioners, have been refused. Instead, they have been told to either go on sick leave, which many cannot afford, or return to the classroom.

As you will be aware, mitigation measures such as consistent social distancing are in practice simply not happening in many schools. Vulnerable teachers have as a result found themselves in situations where their health is at immediate risk. I believe this may violate the Equality Act 2010 provisions on disability discrimination and reasonable accommodation, as well as health and safety requirements. Many education authorities have supported vulnerable teachers to work from home. However, several authorities have not been so supportive. This inconsistency has created a postcode lottery for teacher safety. I therefore ask that you work with education authorities to ensure that all vulnerable teachers are properly supported, able to work from home where possible and not pressured into returning to classrooms where this presents an unacceptable risk.

Kind regards

Ross Greer MSP

Ross Greer MSP for the West of Scotland
Scottish Green Party
MG.21 Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh EH99 1SP
0131 348 6347 | ross.greer.msp@parliament.scot

Good afternoon,

In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act, I would be grateful if you could comply with the following request.

Please provide a copy of all correspondence received by (a) the Scottish Government and (b) the Covid-19 Education Recovery Group on vulnerable teachers in schools since 1/08/20.

For example, I am aware that correspondence was received by the Covid-19 Education Recovery Group as referred to here: <https://www.tes.com/news/vulnerable-teachers-being-treated-cannon-fodder>.

If this request is too wide or unclear, I would be grateful if you could get in touch in order to clarify.

I would also be grateful for an acknowledgement upon receipt of this request.

Thank you in anticipation for your assistance and I look forward to your response.

Kind regards,

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

Parliamentary Researcher | Office of Beatrice Wishart MSP

MG.11 | Scottish Parliament | Edinburgh | EH99 1SP
Email: [redacted under s38(1)(b)] @parliament.scot
Tel: 013134 86297

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From: [redacted under s38(1)(b)] @gmail.com

Sent: Tuesday, September 22, 2020 8:12:52 PM

To: Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP

Subject: Re: Vulnerable and confused at advice provided

CAUTION: This e-mail originated from outside of The Scottish Parliament. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Hello

I emailed last month with no response! Is there a reason why I am being ignored? I am now heading into my third trimester with positive cases in my secondary school. No pupils wearing masks or distancing in small poorly ventilated classrooms. Yet I am still told by HR this is low risk. Not agreed by OH, midwives, RCOG or doctor!! Unfortunately I do not have the luxury of time here to wait for a response that takes months! I am working everyday putting myself and baby at risk! Why are vulnerable teachers esp pregnant teachers in their 3rd trimester being ignored? I'm disgusted by the behaviour of the Scottish government over their handling of us.

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

Sent from my iPhone

> On 19 Aug 2020, at 20:11, [redacted under s38(1)(b)] @gmail.com wrote:

>

> Hello

>

> My name is [redacted under s38(1)(b)] and I have contacted my local msp who has not gotten back to me. I am a pregnant secondary school teacher exposed to up to 140 pupils/households per day who do not need to wear masks or socially distance. The advice from RCOG is that if feasible pregnant teachers should work from home or a bespoke risk assessment should be in place as they still class us as clinically vulnerable as if exposed to infection this could lead to premature labour and other other complications. Before a return to work my school referred me to occupational health who advised me to work from home or lone work. HR have since said there is no risk to me or baby and that I should come in to work and no additional mitigation's are required. They suggest if I am worried that I wear a mask. From the scientific evidence this is not how non medical grade masks work and I am only safer if the infected person is wearing the mask.

>

> I explained that due to the high exposure of pupils over the age of 12 in a small classroom appears to me to be high risk, I have been told it is not. I feel that no other vulnerable professional is being expected to work with up to 140 clients per day in an enclosed space with clients not wearing PPE or social distancing. I will also need to effectively hide behind my desk which as a pregnant woman I should not have to do due to risk of DVT.

>

> Can you please explain to me how this level of exposure with no FACTS is low risk? All medical professionals I have spoken to are very concerned about me in this environment.

>

> I also live with a [redacted under s38(1)(b)] , am a part time carer for my [redacted under s38(1)(b)] year old grandfather who has [redacted under s38(1)(b)] and [redacted under s38(1)(b)] and I support my brother who has an [redacted under s38(1)(b)] and is currently receiving [redacted under s38(1)(b)] with child care of his 1 year old. All of which my employer is aware of and add to my concerns as I do not want to pass Covid 19 onto them.

>

> [redacted under s38(1)(b)]

>
>
>

> Sent from my iPhone

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From: [redacted under s38(1)(b)] <[redacted under s38(1)(b)]@parliament.scot>
Sent: 22 September 2020 11:05
To: Shielding Correspondence <Shielding.Correspondence@gov.scot>
Subject: Paused shielding and Pregnancy Advice for Teachers

Hello

We have been contacted by a constituent , a primary teacher on the paused shielding register. She is immunocompromised and currently teaching in a school with around 800 pupils and teaching staff.

As of yesterday with announcements about the “Covid crisis turning points”, and given her health circumstances, she would really like a return to shielding to allow her to leave the school environment and work from home.

It would be helpful if you could advise if consideration is being given to facilitating the opportunity for clinically vulnerable teachers to be able to remove themselves from the school environment to work from home?

A second constituent is in her second trimester of pregnancy. She is seeking greater clarity on the current stance of the Scottish Government with regard to pregnant women who work in public facing roles. As she is moving towards her third trimester she asks if the Scottish Government is planning on addressing this, or making any further clear guidance with regards to pregnant people in public facing roles over and above observance of social distancing measures?

I appreciate that this latter case may not fall fully within Shielding guidance but thought it worth asking the question.

Again, any advice you can offer will be welcome.

Best wishes

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

Case Worker

On behalf of Willie Coffey (SNP) MSP

Kilmarnock and the Irvine Valley

62 John Finnie Street

Kilmarnock KA1 1BS

t: [redacted - s38(1)(b)]

From: [FirstMinisterWebsite@gov.scot][SMTP:FIRSTMINISTERWEBSITE@GOV.SCOT]

Sent: 26 September 2020 13:58:00

To: First Ministers Website Mailbox

Subject: Scottish Education policy

Auto forwarded by a Rule

From: [redacted under s38(1)(b)] <[redacted under s38(1)(b)]@hockerill.com>

Subject: Scottish Education policy

Message Body:

Dear First Minister, listening to the recent education debate today on BBC I was struck by the difficulties wrt recruitment of teachers particularly wrt the steam subjects.

COVID is complicating the issue but provides stimulus for a new vision. As a teacher of integrated STEaMplus with 52 years secondary teaching it occurs to me that blended learning is a way forward if we were to create a schools version of the Open University: The Open School to deliver courses and quality resources online, working with teachers and schools with free broadband and equipment to disadvantaged students. Retired teachers and vulnerable teachers could staff a National tutoring scheme. Delivery via The Open School would enable teachers provide tailored and individualised education. Currently we have 1000s of teachers preparing and marking much the same lessons; this is a waste of resources and teaching talent. Having taught online myself, it is different but it has advantages that are being ignored. Bring schools into the 21st century using ed tec whilst we try to resurrect a failed Victorian factory production model of education things won't change. Integrate Youth and Sports clubs into schools as community centres.

EVine Nesta Foundation Award Winner 2020 Educational Innovation

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This e-mail was sent from a contact form on the First Minister of Scotlands website

(<https://firstminister.gov.scot>)

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

[redacted under s38(1)(b)] @gmail.com

Dear Nicola,

I am a member of the [redacted under s38(1)(b)] SNP branch and I want to write to you to express my disappointment and anger with regards to the treatment of teachers, particularly those who are clinically vulnerable or extremely vulnerable, as a result of the full time return to school.

I have been a secondary teacher for 20 years, and am [redacted under s38(1)(b)] at [redacted under s38(1)(b)] in [redacted under s38(1)(b)] where I have taught for 15 years. I have two underlying health conditions, [redacted under s38(1)(b)] and [redacted under s38(1)(b)], and as someone regarded as clinically vulnerable, when shielding was introduced I worked from home.

Like many people, as well as home schooling my daughter I was also working full time, doing all I could to ensure pupils were engaged in learning. As a [redacted under s38(1)(b)] I was also responsible for overseeing the teacher estimated grades for the SQA and as a faculty presenting pupils at multiple levels in several subjects this was a huge undertaking.

In [redacted under s38(1)(b)] my [redacted under s38(1)(b)] passed away very suddenly and while isolating with my sister in England. Arrangements had to be made to bring her back to [redacted under s38(1)(b)] for a graveside funeral which only our immediate family could attend. I did not even stay overnight with family when I travelled home for her funeral, and there was no wake or church service.

I observed the government's rules regarding isolating, social distancing, face masks etc. to the letter and found the thought of a return to work extremely worrying, especially when shielding was paused, however I was preparing myself to return to blended learning, with smaller pupil numbers. Like all schools, ours had prepared classrooms and timetables on the basis of part time learning and since the country was still in Phase 3 of the route map to recovery and full time school opening was not scheduled until Phase 4, I was absolutely shocked when the announcement of a return to full time school was announced.

The thought of putting myself in that situation after months of observing guidance so carefully caused me such anxiety that I became extremely distressed and had no choice but to ask my Dr to provide an absence line from work. This in itself caused stress as I have never been signed off work before and also felt the guilt of burdening my colleagues with more work. Within the first week of return to school cases were identified among pupils at [redacted under s38(1)(b)] and it received significant media attention. Since then, several further cases have been identified among our pupils although there is no longer media interest.

Positive cases and the resultant isolation of close contacts has a serious impact on learning and teaching. We recently had one Higher class where 20 pupils were instructed to isolate yet teachers were expected to conduct face to face teaching and at the same time as provide work online for pupils who are at home; this is an impossible burden. Why not, as Sweden, Italy and other countries have done, use clinically vulnerable teachers like me, who would be more than happy to work from home? Yesterday, two further pupil cases were identified in our school, resulting in further pupil and staff isolation. This situation cannot be sustainable. Having worked in the building with nearly 1300 pupils and over 100 staff for 15 years; a building where I cannot accommodate all members of department staff in a classroom of their own, rooms and resources are shared and the corridors and social spaces are jam packed, I knew the government recommendations for schools would be unworkable. My colleagues have repeatedly told me not to return to work, that they feel unsafe, and if they had my health conditions they would do the same thing.

Can you explain to me why teaching seems to be the only profession where people are expected to work in small spaces, with large numbers of people, without masks, and unable to social distance? A class of 30 Higher pupils means young adults, 17 or 18 years old, sitting shoulder to shoulder, unmasked for a double period of over an hour.

Advice in school is to have the windows and classroom door open. From a purely practical point of view this means pupils sitting in jackets as the weather deteriorates and having to listen to the noise of every other class with the door open. When staff have a free period, where do they work? Or where do they eat their lunch? Our staff base

is so small that a maximum of 5 people can sit in it if social distancing is to be observed; our department has 12 members of staff. MSPs are not expected to work in these conditions, why should teachers?

Case numbers are rising significantly, we are no longer in the low community transmission state we were when a full time return to school was claimed to be safe. I now have colleagues who have tested positive, and yet the mood seems to be to blame teachers for not following the rules, as per Maureen McKenna's letter to Glasgow head teachers, ignoring the fact the rules are impossible to follow in schools. The recent testing at Northumbria University highlights the dangers which schools pose to those who are vulnerable. Although nearly 800 students tested positive for the virus, only 78 were symptomatic. It beggars belief to suggest that schools are an environment where the same situation would not exist since we know Covid is an airborne virus.

I hear a lot about the negative impact shielding may have on mental health, but my mental health and that of my vulnerable colleagues has never been more negatively affected by the unsafe environment teachers are expected to put up with. The stress and anxiety is adding to my already existing health conditions and I see no evidence that the government is concerned by the situation in schools. I am a teacher who loves my job, but I will not endanger my health or that of my family. I could be utilised in a positive and productive manner working from home providing online learning if the government would be prepared to take the concerns of vulnerable teachers seriously. As it stands, I am signed off, unable to do the job which I have done for 20 years, and while pupils miss out on my experience and passion, my mental health continue to deteriorate.

I look forward to hearing your response,

Yours sincerely,

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

From: [FirstMinisterWebsite@gov.scot][SMTP:FIRSTMINISTERWEBSITE@GOV.SCOT]

Sent: 13 October 2020 13:56:41

To: First Ministers Website Mailbox

Subject: Schools

Auto forwarded by a Rule

From: [redacted under s38(1)(b)] <[redacted under s38(1)(b)] @hotmail.com>
Subject: Schools

Message Body:

500 people today gasping for breath with the likelihood of long term Covid or death. Which is better?

Pupils not wearing masks so they can infect their guardians and teachers. The halls of residence scam. Most parents will not send their children to school after mid November. I shall be starting an internet group demanding that pupils should have the option of online teaching if they do not want to kill their parents.

The school and University terms could be extended in summer.

The courses could be shortened and still be valid. If University students can be taught online so can senior pupils and protect vulnerable teachers.

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This e-mail was sent from a contact form on the First Minister of Scotlands website (<https://firstminister.gov.scot>)

To my FM Nicola Sturgeon

I am contacting you today as an SNP voter, a proud Scot, a Teacher and a pregnant woman. I never dreamt that I would ever find it necessary to have to make such contact but I am very concerned about a potential risk to pregnant women in public facing roles that I can not accept.

When lockdown was first announced there was a clear statement about the welfare of pregnant women in their third trimester. That was that they were high risk and should work from home. However, the advice has now been muddled and the information provided by the royal college of midwives and obstetricians is that pregnant women in their third trimester should work from home, if they can, but this must be agreed with their employer. I can't help feel that the later part of the statement (if they can) is very ambiguous and open to interpretation by employers who will now be making decisions about the health of pregnant women without the appropriate medical or scientific knowledge to do so responsibly. This also means there is a huge inconsistency across the country in the arrangements made to protect pregnant women from the corona virus when they are in public facing roles. I don't believe this is fair or even ethical.

I feel very passionately about the fact that we can not take risks with peoples lives and certainly not the lives of mothers who may have other children to care for. I understand that there is limited evidence available at the moment to identify the real risk that pregnant woman face but rather than use that to pacify women in public facing roles, I strongly believe we should practice caution in this situation. There are just so many unknowns but potentially very serious consequences. We know that the virus can cross the placenta, but we do not know what long term developmental effects this could cause to an unborn baby. We know that pregnant women can become seriously ill with other viruses like the flu and we know that there are many medications that pregnant women can not take to treat the possible consequences. For this reason I believe that all pregnant women over 28 weeks must work from home as standard ,for health and safety reasons, while the corona virus is still active in our society and this should be the advice given to all employers.

I especially believe that this must apply nationally to teachers, even if it can not apply to everyone. I say this because the decision to keep schools open regardless of the tier an authority is in, means secondary school teachers will come into contact with several hundred people a day when the number of cases are very high. Since the virus can be carried asymptotically, and many young people will be spending more time indoors during the school day as a result of the weather; teachers/school staff will be among the most exposed groups in society. While social distancing reduces risk it will not eliminate it and if schools are to stay open (which I agree with); I really believe there needs to be more guidance on how teachers will be protected, a more standardised approach to risk assessment across authorities and clear rules drawn up about who can and who can't work from home to protect the most vulnerable teachers.

I understand there will be financial and staffing consequences of this at a time when absence rate is high and schools need teachers in front of children but I send this to you for consideration in the hope that the concerns I have may be addressed, irrespective of the outcome you decide upon.

With Kind Regards

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

From: [redacted under s38(1)(b)] <[redacted under s38(1)(b)]@parliament.scot>
Sent: 27 November 2020 13:02
To: Scottish Ministers <Scottish_Ministers@gov.scot>
Subject: Reps from Anas Sarwar MSP - Schools

John Swinney MSP

Deputy First Minister of Scotland & Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills

Good afternoon,

Several teachers and pupils have recently contacted Anas Sarwar MSP to raise their continued concerns about Covid transmission in schools.

Many teachers and staff still have little confidence that the mitigation measures outlined in the Scottish Government's guidance are effectively protecting staff and pupils, particularly those teachers who are extremely clinically vulnerable or pupils who have vulnerable family members at home and those working in Tier 4 areas. Please find below an example of the kind of correspondence we have received.

More specifically, several constituents have recently raised concerns about the inconsistency in the measures in place for vulnerable staff working in school across local authorities.

Anas would therefore be grateful if you could clarify what national guidelines will be put in place for previously shielding and vulnerable teachers in order best ensure their safety in the workplace.

Also, further to Anas' question in the Chamber this week, we would be grateful if you could clarify the Scottish Government's plans to provide weekly Covid-19 tests for teachers.

Thank you for your help in this matter. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Kind regards,

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]
Office of Anas Sarwar MSP

As a Secondary School teacher in a now Tier 4 area, I am seriously concerned at the Scottish Government's ongoing handling of the Covid-19 Pandemic in relation to schools. So much so, that I felt compelled to pass on these concerns to my MSP Representatives. Due to the on-going political nature of this pandemic, I would appreciate that any concerns raised remain anonymous.

There are shared frustrations and genuine fears from those working in education that as other professions, organisations, and institutions place a vital emphasis on social distancing and PPE, as well as being closed when infections increase, that schools are not as well equipped or understood to put appropriate measures in place. It is very clear when speaking to colleagues from across the country that we agree our young people need to be in school and have contact with us, and that lock-down has been so difficult for so many of them. Has the government considered the very specific challenges that many young people face across the country and how this has an impact on their ability to conform to such new and stringent rules? In my experience, like many other schools, young people are

struggling to wear masks, and this is putting themselves and educational staff at risk. Despite the many attempts at mitigations across schools, we cannot deny young people their education for refusing to wear a mask and this creates huge implications for young people were being sent home is not an appropriate or safe action. School corridors are crowded and there is no avoiding staff being part of this to manage behaviour and to move around the building appropriately. Staff are not provided with any form of PPE, and although we wear our own masks (not provided), we feel exposed to the possibility of contracting the virus daily. We are now being told we are front-line workers but do not have the same protections as other sectors. Staff with underlying health conditions or who have caring responsibilities feel especially anxious, leading to further mental and physical stress. In other sectors it seems that so much more is being done to protect those who could be vulnerable. Pregnant women are supported and encouraged to work from home at a specific point in their pregnancy; this is not the case for teachers even though we have less PPE and work in environments that currently feel very high risk.

As an individual school, we are continuing to look for solutions to try and make things as safe as possible, but the reality is, that full time education poses significant risks to educational staff, young people, and their families. As the virus becomes more prevalent, staff absences are inevitable, and they are increasing. This is adding to the huge pressure that Senior Leadership and teachers are already facing to keep schools open safely. Lack of staff adds significant workload to educational staff at all levels, and the need for more blended learning as young people isolate creates another aspect of a new workload that we are all trying to upskill in, while still delivering a full curriculum in person. Furthermore, the paper published yesterday about the prevalence of how the virus is spread in schools is not broken down by area and therefore does not demonstrate the significant staff and pupil absences in areas where infection rates are at their highest.

I am, as well as many others, concerned about the impact on self-isolating for senior pupils who may have to go through this process more than once, having a significant impact on their learning and then still having to do their higher exams. Furthermore, many young people do not have access to environments at home that allow them to learn. We feel that some learners are going to be disadvantaged more than others due to barriers completely out-with their control. These concerns are cemented further due to the very slow response from the SQA about what we should be putting in place to ensure correct and coherent National 5 qualifications. The challenges of Physical Education outdoors for Tier 4 schools (with limited facilities) in December is disadvantaging young people further whereas schools in parts of the country which are in any of the other tiers will still have access to their indoor spaces and therefore a more full curriculum, placing them at another significant advantage. It is clear that the Higher Examinations still taking place is only going to widen the attainment gap as teachers and education workers try their best in a system that is constantly working against the

young people in front of them, but it will also be full of inequity and inequality. This is something we work so hard to eliminate for our young people and it is hard to describe how worrying and to be honest, heart-breaking this is, as we see the potential of another 'post-code lottery' damaging the futures of our learners yet again.

The conversations I have had with staff have been harrowing; the emotional and physical impact this is having on teachers is significant and as the rest of society goes into lock down and is protected from the virus, we feel that we are being put in danger when a blended learning model was ready and fit for purpose for August. The balance of engaging young people in meaningful learning while ensuring stringent health and safety measures is very challenging and is creating a huge amount of pressure and anxiety for staff as we desperately want to do things the correct and safe way. Young people have suffered trauma and their behaviours also need to be managed carefully and effectively, which in many circumstances makes safe social distancing while ensuring other safety measures are adhered to very difficult.

Jason Leitch's comment about decisions on teachers who used to be in the shielding category or now require enhanced protection and considering whether they work from home being made at a 'local level' shows a complete misunderstanding of the profession. Teachers do not want to be off their work and see the impact that high absences have on their colleagues workload and the quality of the education their young people receive and so need to feel confident that when they put their health first that they will be fully supported. Working from home is one thing, trying to teach from home is a much more complex and difficult challenge. This is not to mention the fact that teaching, like most public sector areas I am sure, is highly politicised and frankly, head teachers are under so much pressure to ensure schools stay open and staff are too scared to come forward about their personal health due to the potential that it might damage their career prospects or that they could be disciplined. There needs to be National guidance for this.

The governments apparent lack of understanding of what is going on in schools is astounding. Nicola Sturgeon stated when putting Glasgow into Tier 4 that she understood that some people wanted schools to close. I have not spoken to one teacher who feels that this is the solution. Our young people keep us going and they need to be in school. We know that more than anyone. What I and many others (including the unions) are asking for is the safe working environment that was organised for the start of term. Which we were told would be used if infections grew. I feel utterly betrayed by the government and I never imagined myself writing an email to my MSP because I feel so voiceless. The government are not listening but instead, by making out that people are wanting schools to close and continually repeating why it is important they stay open (which I agree with, but not like this), they are creating an environment where it looks like teachers

are desperate for schools to close which they know will alienate the public to any support.

I have included the link to a recent article which I wholly agree with:

<https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/18880474.opinion-neil-mackay-snp-endangering-teachers/>

[redacted under s38(1)(b)] ,

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]@hotmail.co.uk

Hi my name is [redacted under s38(1)(b)] ,many months ago I done a YouTube video called [redacted under s38(1)(b)] the video was to be based on the conversions in my motorhome as I had turned my back window in to a 60inch virtual window so I could be at the beach during lockdown by sitting in my motorhome in my street at this time the health minister had went to her second home which changed the full subject of the video as many people where facing lockdown I as a member of the public found her actions unacceptable as we where to be led by example I did not feel she should be dismissed as all of us hav e made mistakes and this was new to us all and her experience and knowledge was crucial to the circumstances we where in with this deadly virus and yet you where put under pressure to dismiss her of her duties an advisor to the prime minister sister run a mock and wasnt disciplined in any way his advise and expertise have been proven to be useless during the battle against covid 19,I feel under Margaret Thatcher the country was safe during war time her decision.s where hard and firm and as she said this lady is not for the turning I believe as the advert says I know you didnt make this mess but the country want you to fix it they are willing to take your victories as their own and yet willing to leave any failures to you alone such as politics my son goes to [redacted under s38(1)(b)] high school I believe there are [redacted under s38(1)(b)] pupils attending this school it is clear staggered days would not be suitable for education it is clear social distancing is near hand impossible so looking at the situation I would like to run a few ideas past you, if all pupils were set in to a class room and kept in that classroom for the full school day accept break time and dinner time and the 30 teachers moved from class to class for different subjects while wearing ppe rather than the [redacted under s38(1)(b)] pupils if protective shielding was put on teachers desk and

hand sanitizer this means if someone in a class comes down with covid 19 a class can be sent home rather than a full school this would be easier for isolation and trace second idea would be staggered break times for year groups and also staggered lunch times there is more chance of a teacher being responsible than a child which makes success rate higher and cross contamination less inemant P.e could be done out doors reducing risk I understand this comes with it's own set of problems as certain classes such as science may need to be cancelled but surely if it is so important for the children to be at school for their education and parents to be back at work to help the economy this is the only solution also I hav eto teachers who ha e certain health concerns and worries about returning to the schools there are also parents who have been shielding who are in a vulnerable category who share the same concerns so surely if the country was willing to do home schooling for everyone it would be easier for vulnerable teachers to do home schooling for high risk peoples children this means people with genuine concerns would not be penalised on either side, understanding your enemy is half the battle, willing to listen solutions from any source is good guidance thank you for your attention in this matter I have sent the same email to [redacted under s38(1)(b)] from daily record [redacted under s38(1)(b)] from the sun and [redacted under s38(1)(b)]. from talk radio I believe all the support publicly should be given to you as you are giving all your support to the public and I believe that you dont have to be famous to be heard by our first minister you only have to be a con earned member of the public.my number is [redacted under s38(1)(b)]

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From: [redacted under s38(1)(b)] <[redacted under s38(1)(b)]@parliament.scot> **On Behalf Of** Lamont J (Johann), MSP
Sent: 12 October 2020 14:01
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>
Subject: Constituent Enquiry

Dear Cabinet Secretary

Please find below an email that I have received from a constituent who is a primary school teacher.

My constituent has a serious health condition and was required to shield during lockdown. She acknowledges that some safety measures have been put in place at her place of work; however, despite this, she believes that staff, especially vulnerable employees, are being put at risk as not enough is being done to make classrooms safe.

As you will be aware from my previous correspondence, this is just one of many emails I receive from teachers who remain concerned that classrooms are not safe places for teachers; in particular, those with health conditions.

I would welcome your comments on how the Scottish Government will address these concerns.

Kind regards,

Johann

Johann Lamont MSP (Glasgow Region)

Bellahouston Business Centre, 423 Paisley Road West, Glasgow, G51 1PZ

Tel: 0141 465 9937

Dear Ms Lamont

I would like to make you aware of several issues faced by myself and fellow 'vulnerable teachers' across Scotland.

I am deeply disheartened that despite this issue being raised by local representatives, Teachers' Unions and the media, there has been no support from the government or constructive action taken by any local education authority.

I am disappointed that despite raising genuine issues and concerns, I am being met with false reassurances that schools are safe. It is true that measures have been put in place, such as, staggered breaks/lunches and additional cleaning, however, these are not enough. The very notion of social distancing taking place effectively in primary schools is, quite frankly, absurd. It is not possible to successfully teach and manage a class of almost 30 children whilst staying 2metres away from them. The physical layout of the classroom does not enable me to be 2metres away from children at any time.

In addition, I am continuously directed to the school Headteacher to ensure my safety in school. I can attest that every request I have made with regards my health and safety in school have been met by the school Headteacher. However, Headteachers are employees of the local education authority – in this case, Glasgow city council – they do not have the agency to permit class teachers to work from home or to relocate staff/ change roles. This responsibly rests with the government and local authorities.

The Scottish Government approved the reopening of schools full time back in June stating 'This updated planning assumption reflects the latest scientific evidence and advice and the significant progress that Scotland has made in suppressing the

virus' <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-preparing-start-new-school-term-august-2020-version-2/pa>.

This is no longer the case, in fact over the weekend, the highest number of Covid-19 cases were recorded across the UK. Scotland's Deputy First Minister, John Swinney has stated "We are seeing a rising prevalence of coronavirus within our community. That has been going on for some time".

The World Health Organisation suggests that the coronavirus is under control if a country's positivity rate is below 5%. Yesterday, 4th October, 758 new cases of Covid-19 were reported in Scotland, representing 13.3% of newly tested individuals. I believe it is safe to say we are no longer in control of this virus.

The Scottish Government acknowledges that the situation is not as it were when the decision to reopen schools fulltime was made. Advice has changed, and restrictions have been put in place in almost every other workplace, yet nothing has changed in schools. I demand to know why.

The Education Director of Glasgow City Council, Maureen McKenna, announced there had been a 'ridiculous' number of teachers testing positive across Glasgow council. Despite this, nothing has changed, no additional measures have been put in place, vulnerable teachers and children are to rely on handwashing to keep themselves safe. After almost 5 months of shielding, why am I being so exposed to this risk?

Moreover, it could be argued that the situation in schools has been made even more unsafe. On the 29th September, Public Health lifted the restrictions which meant all households must self-isolate when one member is contacted by Track and Trace. As a result, the children of parents who are self-isolating, having been contacted by Track and Trace, do not have to isolate, and can come back into class while their family member may develop symptoms. Teaching staff were not made aware of this change. How can it be deemed safe for vulnerable staff and children to be in close proximity with these children given the fact the virus is no longer under control, hospital admissions are rising and it is known that many people can be asymptomatic?

On 28th September, First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon declared 'The human right not to get infected by Covid-19 was more important than other human right considerations.' However, as a primary school teacher, my right to protect myself has been denied.

I was referred to OH for an individual risk assessment. I was assessed as a 'moderate risk'. The risk assessment used by Occupational Health was different to the one previously used by the Headteacher and I. I never received a copy of the risk assessment I was assessed against. I am 31, I have congenital heart disease including valve disease and pulmonary hypertension- for which I was required to shield. On their website, The British Heart foundation, states 'You are considered particularly high risk if your valve disease is severe and causes symptoms' and recommends working from home. <https://www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/heart-matters-magazine/news/coronavirus-and-your-health#Heading13>

How can I be classed as 'clinically vulnerable' in March and 'moderate risk' in September?

Furthermore, the rising level of infection in the community should necessitate a review of individual risk assessments. I can confirm that this has not taken place and a failure to review risk assessments in light of a significant change means that risk assessments are not "suitable

and sufficient” in terms of The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, specifically Reg 3.

I understand, the teaching profession does not lend itself well to working from home, but I know there are many school tasks that could be completed at home, along with supporting the growing number of children self-isolating. I would also like to highlight the disparity in approaches to working from home by different councils with Aberdeen, Fife, North Lanarkshire, and Highland council offering working from home as an option to vulnerable staff while others E.G. Glasgow City Council, do not. This reveals disconcerting inequality on a very serious issue when there should be a unified approach. The right to protect yourself should not be a postcode/council lottery.

As Glasgow City Council are not offering a work from home option to vulnerable staff, it has been suggested to me by management and OH that if I feel unsafe attending work, I should request a ‘fit note’ from my GP. However, I am not in a financial position to accept reduced sick pay for an unknown amount of time – none of us know when this situation will improve nor should I have to. Indeed, nor would I qualify for one. Guidance regarding obtaining a fit note states ‘Your doctor will only give you a fit note if your health affects your fitness for work.’ However, my health has not changed. My disability - which I have always made known to my employer- has not changed. I am capable of teaching. The work environment has changed. To suggest that I should identify myself as ‘unfit for work’ and accept reduced pay as a result of my health condition is without doubt discrimination and a breach of the 2010 Equality Act.

The first requirement is a requirement, where a provision, criterion or practice of A's puts a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage in relation to a relevant matter in comparison with persons who are not disabled, to take such steps as it is reasonable to have to take to avoid the disadvantage.

(4)The second requirement is a requirement, where a physical feature puts a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage in relation to a relevant matter in comparison with persons who are not disabled, to take such steps as it is reasonable to have to take to avoid the disadvantage.

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/20>

Discrimination arising from disability

(1)A person (A) discriminates against a disabled person (B) if—

(a)A treats B unfavourably because of something arising in consequence of B's disability, and

(b)A cannot show that the treatment is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/15>

Many of the measures put in place to prevent the spread of Covid-19 in schools including additional outdoor learning and outdoor PE, even if it's raining, along with all windows and doors open for ventilation, create adverse health and safety issues. For many vulnerable staff and children with weakened immune systems and for someone, such as myself, with a heart condition, these measures only heighten the risk of becoming run down or ill with colds/flu at a time when we all need to protect ourselves. With winter fast approaching and temperatures

to drop again this week, how does the government mean for children and staff to continue working in these conditions? Was this issue even considered before?

I do appreciate the difficulty faced by all employers at this time, and the need for children to attend school. However, the blanket approach many local authorities have opted to take on 'all staff' returning to work amounts to indirect discrimination and a violation of employers' legal obligations.

*If you equally apply a policy or practice to everyone, you may place someone with a particular characteristic at a disadvantage. This would be **indirect discrimination**, unless it is objectively justified, or you have a real need to apply the policy and do so in a way that is necessary and appropriate. Examples include:*

- *requiring all employees to continue to work in front-line, key worker roles - this would have a greater impact on those who need to self-isolate or follow the social distancing guidance more strictly, such as disabled, older or pregnant employees or ethnic minority staff due to the disproportionate impact of coronavirus (COVID-19)*

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-employers>

I would be most grateful for your help in raising these matters on my behalf.

From: [redacted under s38(1)(b)] <[redacted under s38(1)(b)]@hotmail.com>
Sent: Monday, September 7, 2020 1:08:59 PM
To: Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP <Nicola.Sturgeon.msp@parliament.scot>
Subject: Schools Re-opening - Parents Rights

Good afternoon First Minister,

Firstly, please allow me to congratulate you on your handling of the current situation. As a firm supporter of yourself and the Scottish Government, however, it is deeply upsetting that I have been compelled to write to you. I implore you; please consider what I say as I have never in my life as a parent, felt my hands have been so tied.

I have a 7 year old son who attends the [redacted under s38(1)(b)] Primary school; I'm sure you'll be familiar with the name, they are a wonderful school with a wonderful team. They have also been on the news in recent days.

As my husband is in the high risk category, we have been home since March; no pubs, restaurants, no takeaways, no risk. We have employed every safety measure available to us, researched and made sure to be self-informed. My husband and I run a [redacted under s38(1)(b)] company; we are well versed in safe working practice and risk assessment. The general consensus of "You won't escape this virus", is not an easy one to accept, and I will do all in my power to mitigate this.

I suffer from anxiety disorder, an ordinarily invisible mental illness that I don't require daily medication for. It is generally circumstantial, and does not drive my decisions; most who know me would not know I have it.

My son has unidentified additional support needs, and has thrived in lockdown without being constrained to a standard school environment; without the stimulus, he is now writing, reading and teaching me about roman numerals and environmental biomes, areas he has self-taught in. I

understand this is somewhat different to the view painted by various parent groups of miserable parents and miserable children. My own experience opened my eyes; I began researching Home Education and became a member of Home Education Scotland. I believe that the dialogue that children need school to flourish, is simply untrue, outdated and out of touch. I have seen many members of this community's children flourish, and go on to study at University. Furthermore, the Home Education Community make sure the social and emotional needs of children are met by local meetups, outdoor learning and specific tutors. It truly has been a breathe of fresh air.

I do apologise as I know the immense pressure you are under; I simply need to ensure you have all the relevant information.

Due to my very valid concerns regarding my husband's health, my sons health and needs, and my own mental health, I have contacted almost everyone I can think of to share my concerns and my fears. This includes my Local Authority, Educational Psychologist, Parent Groups, help lines and surveys. I have received many cut and paste responses.

On Wednesday, the day before my son was due to start school, we visited my son's school (who we have a wonderful relationship with; my husband visiting as a guest teacher to work with children failing under the current system, teaching them wood working skills and crafting a story telling chair in those children's legacy, before they left for secondary school). As a former pupil myself, and working in the education sector, I am particularly fond of the school and teachers. However, it became apparently clear that their remit was to try and reassure us, because they themselves had no choice. I provided local authority legislation of flexi schooling (a Head Teachers remit), and Home Education (a parent's right to request consent to withdraw), and stated that full time education at this time, was not appropriate, safe, or adequate for our families situation. I was given no choice; the only choice is the same choice that we had Pre-Pandemic. That is not appropriate.

Against every maternal instinct, I took my child to school on Thursday morning, to find the school grounds (outside of the school remit) full of parents, with no social distancing, no masks and no care. The teachers, who have worked incredibly hard to put safety measures in place, had no option. Many staff have been shielding since March and had children of their own to worry about; they had the added pressure of trying to reassure a parent that they shared the same fears with. It was desperately unfair for everyone.

As I approached the crowd, I was the only parent in a mask, and my son the only child in a mask. He desperately wanted to stay home, and despite the accusations I have experienced, I have never displayed my anxiety in front of my son; he has always asked to learn at home.

As I tried to walk along the pavement between the fence and railing outside of the school, to get to the school gates, I felt parents push in on every side of me. I tried to pull my child in to my front, and ended up with parents at my heels, side and front, going in both directions.

I regret to say I began to have a panic attack and a fellow parent from my son's class, stopped and spoke to me for a few minutes to calm me down. It was incredibly embarrassing, and I was subject to many looks of pity and sniggers. I took my son back to the car where my vulnerable husband put on a mask and took my son into the school, against all his judgement, and explained how poor the crowds had been.

In [redacted under s38(1)(b)] Primary's credit, I received a phone call the minute I arrived home, to ensure I was ok. I have never in my life as a parent, felt the urge to protect my child or went against my gut instinct or rationale thinking. I required anxiety medication and followed all sensible advice; all uniform washed on a high heat, bag wiped down, etc. I didn't even feel safe to kiss my son's head until he had a bath. I understand the epidemiology of this virus; I know the surfaces it can survive on and I have taken personal responsibility for months to practice every safe measure I possibly can. I believe that it was my responsibility; and where the government have made sectors open again, I have continued to use my own judgement and take, always, the safest possible option, for my families sake and I.

My husband had to risk his own health, again, between parents, to take our son to school. I contacted all relevant departments with my concerns, I took all actions I could. However, on Saturday morning I received a message from the parent who had spoken to me at the school to say she has the virus, her daughter had the virus, and would have had it when she spoke to me, and when her daughter spent

two days in close contact with my son. Due to her being less than a meter away, I was contacted by track and trace to tell me to self-isolate.

I cannot possibly tell you, for someone who has taken personal responsibility for my families health, watched with utter disdain people flouting lockdown rules, and going against every belief and instinct, to end up in a position that I had done my very best to avoid; after always having my families best interest at heart, to end up exposed to this virus, is nothing short of incredibly unfair.

Had I, as a parent who values education, has continued to educate, who has a complex family situation, simply been given a choice, I would not now be self isolating, and I would not be sick with fear that I have this virus, or that I have passed this on to my husband.

I was absolutely right to be concerned last week; it is a travesty that in Scotland, 2020, I as a parent, was given no choice. Please let me make it clear; the choice pre-pandemic is not appropriate now. I can assure you from the parent groups I am on, I am not alone, nor am I unintelligent, uninformed, or looking for months of staying home whilst my child "falls behind". This driving attitude that children cannot receive an appropriate education at home, where they are being given one to one attention minus the class numbers, stimulus and distraction, is wrong. In many cases, such as my own, it is precisely the opposite. Children can have access to wonderful experiences, resources, and valuable one to one time that schools are under pressure to, but cannot, deliver. Let me be clear; I am from an under privileged background, but this does not mitigate my ability to do what is best and right for my son, his education and our family.

This brings me to the point of my email. I passionately believe that children at this time absolutely need choice; I understand the very real fears that the Scottish Government may have, that vulnerable children may fall through the gaps and fall behind, that there are families desperate for schools to remain open for their support and care. I fully agree that where safe and sustainable, schools should remain open, but I believe during these unprecedented times, parents who can (I work from home) should also teach from home if it is their wish. I am asking that the Scottish Government open up powers to the school to allow elective home education without the need to remove a child from the school roll.

I ask that the Scottish Government open up the discussion and include parents and teachers in the dialogue; ask parents and teachers what would work for their circumstances.

The parent group that I am part of have suggested many valid options; for vulnerable teachers or additional support teachers to be able to remote teach to vulnerable children and families, for children to continue to follow Google Classroom lessons as we did during lockdown with great success, or for parents to simply be allowed to follow lesson plans or the curriculum of excellence with an emphasis on STEM and core subjects, with portfolios or evidence during this time submitted. This would, with schools remaining open for parents who wish to send a student in, or for parents who are unable to, for whatever reason, provide a reasonable education that fits the age, aptitude and ability of the child, create a flexible agreement that would not only reduce class sizes, work for vulnerable families or parents and teachers alike, but provide great reassurance for parents who feel they are currently living in a dystopian society.

I ask that you involve parents, teachers, teachers unions, parenting group, local authorities, GP's, counsellors etc their views and give us the platform, the voice, and ultimately the choice. I ask you do not punish parents by forcing them to choose full time school, or risk losing their child's over-subscribed school placement.

I ask that you consider this an opportunity to be the forward thinking Scotland that I love, that this be the catalyst to change a struggling school system that has remained static and fails ASN children such as my own. I ask that you do not pit teachers and parents against each other as we are one body, and I would happily walk side by side with them to create a safe environment for everyone. Please give Head Teachers, and Local Authorities, more powers and leniency. The one rule fits all is not appropriate. Where every other sector has had innovative solutions, discussion and concepts, school has remained largely static.

When I became a Mum, I never imagined a day that I would go against every instinct my gut had, and send my son, myself, and my husband, into a position that proved to be dangerous to us. I never

imagined I'd be weighing up my son's education with my husband's life, and my own mental health. Please give us a voice. If the first minister cannot employ this, I ask that she employ emergency powers to Local Authorities to authorise absence from school indefinitely, with a guarantee to a child's placement for at least the rest of the year.

I implore the First Minister to feel the injustice I currently feel. I have never as a Scottish resident felt so bitterly robbed of choice, and I don't wish my choice to be between the rock and the hard place, as that is no choice at all. No parent should ever be in a position of running in front of a shooting gun, in order to make sure their child has education. Let's be a forward thinking, innovative, all inclusive nation. Let's set by example. Let's learn by the resources currently out there. Let's reassure by giving choice, voice and not coercion and words. Let's not treat parents like children; we need to be able to make these choices; the Scottish Government are not our parents.

The Parentkind forum recently completed a survey of over 27,000 parents, of which 10% would only be happy to send their child to school when a vaccine became available, even if this took 12-18 months. 40% said they don't wish to consider a timeframe until they can be assured it is safe. What is clear is that parents aren't assured; they need Option Number 3, be it flexi school, authorised absence, remote learning, providing evidence of education at home, or some other means. If a parent can prove to a Local Authority their ability to provide a suitable education (in the same way as they do for home educators) at home, they should be fully supported to do so, and their child should be supported by the school and back into education when there is either a vaccine or when a parent believes it to be safe, whichever comes first.

First Minister, thank you for your time reading this, I admit, rather long email. I am in hopes that you can feel the level of despair through my experience, and the logic in my thinking. I cannot, however, apologise for the level of emotion throughout my email.

I would be happy to discuss anything further, and please accept my apologies at this already very trying time. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours Sincerely

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]
[redacted under s38(1)(b)]
[redacted under s38(1)(b)]
[redacted under s38(1)(b)]
[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows 10

From: [redacted under s38(1)(b)] <[redacted under s38(1)(b)]@icloud.com>
Date: 1 October 2020 at 12:07:01 BST
To: Nicola.Sturgeon.msp@parliament.scot
Subject: **Concern over Testing Criteria and school staff/pupils**

Dear First Minister,

I thought I would write to you with a few thoughts about symptoms of Covid and why

I feel the current advice regarding eligibility for testing may be one of the factors contributing to the rising numbers in Scotland and indeed UK.

I received a positive Covid-19 test on Monday. On Friday, I started to feel unwell - I didn't have a cough, but had a runny nose and chest congestion. I had a mild rise in temperature. I booked a test anyway on the [Friday night](#), just to be on the safe side but really expected it to be negative as it just felt like a mild cold and other teachers and kids at the school I work at also had what they deemed to be colds.

If I hadn't bothered to get a test on Friday, I would've woken up on Saturday thinking...oh it was just a cold - I feel a bit better and would've gone to work on Monday as normal, thus infecting a lot of people.

I guess my point is that everyone thinks that you shouldn't get tested unless you have those three symptoms of high fever, new and continuous cough or change in taste and smell and then so just carry on as normal when they could be carrying it. I'm sure you are already aware that this is the case but I wanted to put it in writing to you.

I also want to say that I am pretty certain I caught this from children at school (a primary school) as I work with all year groups and as you can imagine, 5 year olds pick their nose and sneeze without covering their faces. I hadn't met anyone outside my household in the few days before and hadn't been to any shops or bars/restaurants. Many parents seem to be convinced that children can't pass covid on (the Us for them movement in particular) and so they seem to just be sending kids in who are unwell but not meeting the criteria for testing. I know for a fact from GPs I have spoken to, that primary children are often asymptomatic or have very mild symptoms.

I really think testing needs to be extended and more accessible, particularly to those who work in schools so that if people are feeling unwell but do have the classic symptoms, they should be allowed a test. These tests should be offered at school to all staff and pupils on a regular basis and in fact, people should be encouraged not to feel they are wasting time and that if they are in doubt, they should get a test.

More research also needs to be done on how likely it is that children can infect teachers and other children. Luckily I have a mild case and all being well will be okay soon. However, this could've been a different story for more vulnerable teachers.

I am fed up of the misconception that there's no way a child could have passed this to me.

I really feel mass testing in school and universities is needed to keep on top of this in order to protect staff and pupils/students and to keep schools open.

I have a huge amount of respect for you and think you have been a fantastic leader

throughout this pandemic. You have always been honest and clear with everyone which is admirable, so thank you.

Best wishes

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

From: [redacted under s38(1)(b)]@gmail.com <[redacted under s38(1)(b)]@gmail.com>
Sent: 18 November 2020 16:30
To: Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP <Nicola.Sturgeon.msp@parliament.scot>; Swinney J (John), MSP <John.Swinney.msp@parliament.scot>
Subject: Covid in schools

CAUTION: This e-mail originated from outside of The Scottish Parliament. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Good evening.

I am an English teacher in a [redacted under s38(1)(b)] High School. I have a Covid age of 93 and live in absolute fear of catching this virus and leaving my [redacted under s38(1)(b)]-year old and [redacted under s38(1)(b)]-year old sons without a mother. It is almost impossible to teach effectively from behind a taped-off desk and it is becoming increasingly difficult for all staff to manage behaviour of students. I have had students pretend to cough on me, throw used anti-bacterial wipes at me, refuse to wear masks and this is just the tip of the iceberg. My school have refused to allow me to work from home. My anxiety and mental health have plummeted to horrific depths – for the past few months, I have been on a full dose of [redacted under s38(1)(b)], a full dose of [redacted under s38(1)(b)], I have engaged with two mental health counsellors, a mental health nurse, paid for EMDR therapy and I speak to my GP on a weekly basis, due to the fact I have become almost suicidal.

The strain that teachers are under is crippling. I have never witnessed anything like this in schools. Add in to the fact my Covid age of 93 and I am about at breaking point. Please, I am begging you – is it not time to go to blended learning? To allow high risk / vulnerable teachers like myself to work from home and support the students that are at home? Absences are high – students that are isolating at home need help and support as well. So can we not make this official, by moving to blended learning? I fully understand we need to look after our pupils and I am wholly supportive of that. But this current model just is not working. We have less protection than any shop worker, office worker or NHS staff. We are vulnerable, hurting and about to leave the profession in droves.

Please, please help us.

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

From: [redacted under s38(1)(b)] <[redacted under s38(1)(b)]@icloud.com>

Sent: 01 October 2020 11:57

To: Central Enquiry Unit <CEU@gov.scot>

Subject: Covid symptoms

Dear First Minister,

I thought I would write to you with a few thoughts about symptoms of Covid and why I feel the current advice regarding eligibility for testing may be one of the factors contributing to the rising numbers in Scotland and indeed UK.

I received a positive Covid-19 test on Monday. On Friday, I started to feel unwell - I didn't have a cough, but had a runny nose and chest congestion. I had a mild rise in temperature. I booked a test anyway on the Friday night, just to be on the safe side but really expected it to be negative as it just felt like a mild cold and other teachers and kids at the school I work at also had what they deemed to be colds.

If I hadn't bothered to get a test on Friday, I would've woken up on Saturday thinking...oh it was just a cold - I feel a bit better and would've gone to work on Monday as normal, thus infecting a lot of people.

I guess my point is that everyone thinks that you shouldn't get tested unless you have those three symptoms of high fever, new and continuous cough or change in taste and smell and then so just carry on as normal when they could be carrying it. I'm sure you are already aware that this is the case but I wanted to put it in writing to you.

I also want to say that I am pretty certain I caught this from children at school (a primary school) as I work with all year groups and as you can imagine, 5 year olds pick their nose and sneeze without covering their faces. I hadn't met anyone outside my household in the few days before and hadn't been to any shops or bars/restaurants. Many parents seem to be convinced that children can't pass covid on (the Us for them movement in particular) and so they seem to just be sending kids in who are unwell but not meeting the criteria for testing. I know for a fact from GPs I have spoken to, that primary children are often asymptomatic or have very mild symptoms.

I really think testing needs to be extended and more accessible, particularly to those who work in schools so that if people are feeling unwell but do have the classic symptoms, they should be allowed a test. These tests should be offered at school to all staff and pupils on a regular basis and in fact, people should be encouraged not to feel they are wasting time and that if they are in doubt, they should get a test.

More research also needs to be done on how likely it is that children can infect teachers and other children. Luckily I have a mild case and all being well will be okay soon. However, this could've been a different story for more vulnerable teachers.

I am fed up of the misconception that there's no way a child could have passed this to me.

I really feel mass testing in school and universities is needed to keep on top of this In order to protect staff and pupils/students and to keep schools open.

I have a huge amount of respect for you and think you have been a fantastic leader throughout this pandemic. You have always been honest and clear with everyone which is admirable, so thank you.

Best wishes

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

Dear John,

Case Ref: JB21138 – Teacher Concerns

I am writing on behalf of a constituent who is a teacher at [redacted under s38(1)(b)] High School in Renfrewshire. I have kept her name anonymous. She has a number of concerns regarding the way that COVID-19 restrictions and guidance is impacting on her ability to teach and the way that her local authority is handling the situation.

Firstly, in line with guidance, my constituent has kept all of her classroom windows open when teaching. She has tried to wrap up as much as she can so that she can stay warm but has concerns that her pupils are becoming far too cold to concentrate in class. She has encouraged them to bring extra layers to wear but understands that this has financial implications and might not always be possible for pupils to do. I would be grateful if you could tell me whether it would be possible for either the Scottish Government or local authorities to provide some of these pupils with extra layers through FME or clothing grant entitlement. In addition, would it be possible for schools to be given funds for portable radiators?

Secondly, my constituent is pregnant and is therefore classed as 'at risk'. She has serious concerns that, when pupils are identified as track and trace contacts, they are being allowed to finish the school day before going home and isolating. This goes against Scottish Government advice to isolate as soon as possible and she is worried she is being put at risk because pupils who have confirmation that they have been around COVID-19 are still allowed into her classroom. My constituent has raised this with her head teacher and EIS representatives and has been told that the school is following advice and that there is no issue.

I would be grateful if you could provide an explanation as to why pupils who have been contacted by track and trace are still allowed to roam around schools for the rest of the day and whether the Government will update its guidance to reflect the concerns of many 'at risk' and vulnerable teachers.

Many thanks,

Jackie

**CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED BY THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT ON “PREGNANT TEACHER”
AND “PREGNANT TEACHERS” FROM 01/08/20 – 01/12-20**

From: [redacted under s38(1)(b)]<[redacted under s38(1)(b)]@gmail.com>

Sent: 11 September 2020 16:19

To: Central Enquiry Unit <CEU@gov.scot>

Subject: Concerned Pregnant Teacher

Hi,

At the minute, I feel that we as teachers have been let down by the government. We are expected to go to work and be in contact with numerous pupils after 28 weeks despite us still being in the clinically vulnerable category. Restrictions are now being put in place and I can't be in the same house as my immediate family but it's ok for me to be around 100+ children each week?

Furthermore, I have joined a group for pregnant Scottish teachers and there are numerous people on there that are allowed to work from home. This is not due to them having existing health conditions or anything else that makes them different, it is purely because there is no clear cut guidance for pregnant teachers and different head teachers are interpreting the advice in different ways. The risk assessment offers no protection as it is impossible for children to socially distance.

I am emailing to ask for clear guidance for all pregnant teachers in Scotland as it is not fair that so many teachers are able to be safe working from home whilst myself and many others are being made to go into school and teach a class.

There are a lot of anxious pregnant teachers in Scotland (I know this from the Facebook page) who feel as though we have been forgotten about.

Please listen to my concerns and answer with clear advice/guidance.

Regards

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

From: [redacted under s38(1)(b)]<[redacted under s38(1)(b)]@gmail.com>

Sent: 28 September 2020 11:05

To: Sarwar A (Anas), MSP <Anas.Sarwar.msp@parliament.scot>
Cc: Google <[\[redacted under s38\(1\)\(b\)\]@gmail.com](mailto:[redacted under s38(1)(b)]@gmail.com)>
Subject: Urgent Action Needed to Protect Vulnerable Pregnant Teachers

Dear Mr Anas Sarwar,

I would like to bring to your attention the experience I have encountered working in Scottish Education as a pregnant teacher and ask for urgent action to be taken on the issues outlined below.

I am [\[redacted under s38\(1\)\(b\)\]](#) years old and at present 25 weeks pregnant. Guidance provided by the Royal College of Obstetricians & Gynaecologists, state for those women who are 28 weeks pregnant and beyond, there is an increased risk of becoming severely ill should you contract COVID-19 and pregnant women over the age of 35 are at a higher risk of developing severe illness requiring admission to hospital^[1].

I am employed by [\[redacted under s38\(1\)\(b\)\]](#) as a Secondary Education Teacher and work with 840 pupils per week ranging in ages from 12 to 18 years old. I teach 30 pupils each period, with 7 periods per day, in an indoor classroom environment which is inadequately ventilated. The small cramped classroom environment does not allow pupils to socially distance. I am currently socially distancing from pupils and staff which lowers my risk of contracting COVID-19. However, given that airborne transmission of SARS-CoV-2 can occur (stated by WHO^[2]), particularly in indoor settings with poor ventilation I feel I am at undue risk of contracting COVID-19 in my workplace.

The Scottish Government guidance on pregnant women working in public facing roles such as Education has been widely interpreted by Local Authorities. I asked [\[redacted under s38\(1\)\(b\)\]](#) if I could work in a non-public facing role, therefore not in a classroom setting with exposure to 870 pupils per week post 28 weeks pregnancy but have been refused this request.

I personally feel [\[redacted under s38\(1\)\(b\)\]](#) Council and the Scottish Government are not acting to protect vulnerable pregnant teachers, like myself, particularly, when the risk increases in their third trimester. Face coverings in classrooms are not mandatory, despite asking my students to wear one to protect myself and others many have not obliged as face coverings are not mandatory and despite asking my Head Teacher to make this compulsory in my classroom, the school can not grant this request based on the current Scottish Government guidance.

I do not feel safe teaching 870 students ranging from 12-18 years old in an indoor setting. My exposure with staff and students is significantly high and not all students abide by the 2-metre distance rule. [\[redacted under s38\(1\)\(b\)\]](#) has experienced increasing positive cases of COVID-19 and a localised lockdown. Despite the number of rapidly rising positive cases, I have been informed by my school that I will still be required to work fulltime in the classroom, with no change to my timetable to reduce exposure and that no alternative setting would be possible to protect myself from contacting COVID-19.

The stress and anxiety caused as a result of having to act individually to help protect myself and my unborn child is unnecessary. Stress in pregnancy has been linked to children's long-term psychological disorders^[3]. I plead that the Scottish Government changes the current guidance to better protect pregnant teachers post 28 weeks of pregnancy and allow all teachers to work in a non-public role at their request.

I carried out an online survey with pregnant teachers regarding their current experience working in Scottish Education and I was overwhelmed by the response received from 145 teachers having posted the survey for only 2 hours online.

- 50% feel stressed and anxious teaching in education at present.
- 80% feel they should not be working in school post 28 weeks of their pregnancy.
- 33% have not been allowed to work from home post 28 weeks of pregnancy.
- 10% have been offered working from home post 28 weeks of pregnancy.
- 88% feel the Scottish Government's current guidance on pregnant teachers working in education does not protect them from COVID-19.

The results of the survey demonstrate the need to protect this vulnerable group. It should not be down to individual teachers to protect themselves in the workplace.

Please can you outline why Local Authorities in Scotland are widely interpreting the Scottish Government's guidance differently. Pregnant teachers who work in Falkirk Council, Aberdeen City Council, Scottish Borders Council, East Lothian Council and North Lanarkshire Council are being offered to work from home post 28 weeks of pregnancy. Fife Council are offering teachers to work in an alternative setting. This exemplifies the lack of clarity around the guidance and needs to be addressed.

Pregnant employees who work in other government bodies such as Local Authority Council Offices, Police Scotland and the NHS are offered working from home or alternative arrangements are in place to take them out of a public-facing role post 28 weeks of pregnancy. **Why aren't pregnant teachers not all offered the option to work from home? I feel this is discriminating pregnant teachers from the rest of society.**

Despite asking to work in a non-public facing role post 28 weeks of my pregnancy, East Renfrewshire Council has stated this is not possible and have requested I continue working full-time in school throughout my pregnancy in a public facing role. I will be directly teaching 870 pupils each week with the only control measure of obeying the 2-metre social distancing rule and opening the windows in my classroom. No PPE has been provided as this is not mandatory in the classroom. I have requested a change to my timetable in my individual risk assessment to reduce my contact with students, but this has been refused.

I plead that you act on behalf of this vulnerable group to better protect us and allow pregnant teachers the opportunity to work in a non-public facing setting post 28 weeks of pregnancy.

Kind regards,

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

[1] <https://www.rcog.org.uk/globalassets/documents/guidelines/2020-09-10-occupational-health-statement-rcog-rcm-fom.pdf>

[2] <https://www.who.int/news-room/commentaries/detail/transmission-of-sars-cov-2-implications-for-infection-prevention-precautions>

[3] <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/the-british-journal-of-psychiatry>

Good evening

I am getting in touch as I am deeply concerned about the lack of consideration for the safety of pregnant teachers, during this pandemic.

There does not seem to be any clear guidance and pregnant teacher's treatment seems to depend on which school and which authority they are working for.

A few months ago, during the peak of lockdown, schools were closed and pregnant women were in the shielding category. Schools were re-opened and nobody was to continue shielding once the infection rate was lower.

Now that it is higher/as high, infection rates continue to rise and restrictions are becoming tighter, there has been no change to shielding guidance and in particular the treatment of pregnant teachers.

As a teacher, I have no option to not go to work otherwise I risk not being paid/losing my job. I have to go to a building, where other adults are encouraged to socially distance but are touching the same door handles, using the same toilets etc. Children are not social distancing from teachers, especially a problem the younger they are. During pregnancy there's an increased pressure on a woman's lung capacity, which we know could affect a woman's ability to fight Covid 19 if infected. There have been cases of babies being born prematurely. Ultimately we just don't know enough about the virus and it's effect on both a pregnant woman and her baby.

All pregnant NHS employees work from home from 28 weeks. Why is this not happening with teachers?

We are being told working from home is the default position, unless you are a teacher, with no regard for the safety of a pregnant teacher.

Please can this be questioned, raised as a concern, clarified and addressed appropriately.

Many thanks

Mr John Swinney MSP

Cabinet Secretary for Education & Skills
Scottish Government
St. Andrews House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

Our Ref: IG8444 CA 3 September 2020

Dear John

Please find below the text of an email I have received from a constituent. You will note my constituent highlights concerns based on the experience of pregnant teachers throughout Scotland and raises what she sees as a lack of nationally consistent risk assessments and policy with regards to their working environments.

Can I ask what steps the Scottish Government is taking to ensure there is a nationally consistent policy with regards to pregnant teachers, to allow me to respond to my constituent?

Kind regards

Yours sincerely

Iain Gray MSP

Dear Mr Gray,

I am a pregnant teacher working in an [redacted under s38(1)(b)] secondary school. I live in [redacted under s38(1)(b)] too.

I have joined a facebook group for pregnant Scottish teachers which has brought to my attention 2 inconsistencies across Scotland with regards to the way that pregnant teachers are being treated.

The first way is the quality of risk assessment being carried out in different schools. Some are in depth, some are the same as staff who are not pregnant. My own states that if the 2m social distance cannot be maintained I should be advised to work from home or suspended on full pay. This is very worrying to me as on the 11th of August, both my headteacher and union rep

stood up in front of staff and stated that the 2m distance could not be maintained at all times. This has since been proven to be true.

The second is how the advice for pregnant teachers in their third trimester is being followed depending on local authority and school. There is clear medical advice from the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists that pregnant women past 28 weeks gestation should not work in a public facing role. Many authorities, including I believe [redacted under s38(1)(b)], have interpreted this as advising pregnant women past 28 weeks work from home or in school not in class, for their safety and that of their unborn child.

The facebook group has shown that this isn't the case for every pregnant teacher, school or authority. It is causing a huge amount of stress for many woman at an already vulnerable time in their lives.

I have emailed John Swinney about this a couple of weeks ago, but I imagine my questions have since been passed on to a civil servant and won't be answered for some time. I would very much appreciate it if you could help find some clarification on this matter than can be passed on to all pregnant teachers across Scotland.

Jeane Freeman

Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport

The Scottish Government
St. Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

Our Ref: GM/KJH/

18th September, 2020

Dear Jeane

Pregnant teachers

I write following on from discussions with a constituent, who has approached me regarding concerns about safety she has related to teaching while pregnant.

My constituent draws my attention to the fact that there is still a dearth of scientific data on the effects of Covid-19 on pregnant women and unborn children and, as such, she is worried by the prospect of returning to work in an environment where social distancing is a major challenge.

In particular, she draws my attention to the fact that pregnant NHS employees have arrangements in place to work from home from 28 weeks onward, but that this does not apply to teaching staff in schools.

I have enclosed a copy of my constituent's correspondence for ease of reference. It would be helpful if you could clarify whether the Scottish Government will give consideration to extending the arrangements being made available for pregnant NHS staff to teaching staff in the same position.

Thank you for your assistance in this matter. I look forward to your response, which I will share with my constituent.

With very best wishes,



Gillian Martin MSP

From: [redacted under s38(1)(b)] <[redacted under s38(1)(b)]@parliament.scot> **On Behalf Of** Lamont J (Johann), MSP

Sent: 05 October 2020 13:43

To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
<DFMCSE@gov.scot>

Subject: FW: Constituent Enquiry

Dear Cabinet Secretary

You will recall that I contacted the Scottish Government recently regarding inconsistencies in how local authorities are protecting pregnant teachers during this pandemic. I would like to thank you for your response of 24th September (your ref: 202000086612).

I have been contacted by another constituent who has raised the same concerns. Her employer, East Renfrewshire Council, is also insisting that pregnant teachers remain in the classroom post 28 weeks.

I will raise these concerns with the local authority but my constituent is concerned that the guidance, which states that pregnant mothers should ideally work from home post 28 weeks **where possible**, allows local authorities to simply disregard the recommendation of working from home. My constituent carried out an online surgery with pregnant teachers across Scotland, which was online for 2 hours. Of the 145 teachers who responded during this time, she reports that:

- 50% feel stressed and anxious teaching in education at present;
- 80% feel they should not be working in school post 28 weeks of their pregnancy;
- 33% have not been allowed to work from home post 28 weeks of pregnancy;
- 10% have been offered working from home post 28 weeks of pregnancy;
- 88% feel the Scottish Government's current guidance on pregnant teachers working in education does not protect them from COVID-19.

I understand that Falkirk, Aberdeen, Borders, East Lothian and North Lanarkshire councils are all allowing teachers to work from home if requested. However, it would appear that Renfrewshire and East Renfrewshire councils are using the lack of clarity within the guidance to force pregnant teachers to remain in the classroom.

It is clear that my constituents feel that the government is not protecting pregnant teachers and I would welcome your further comments on what action you will take to ensure that pregnant teachers and their unborn children are not being put at unnecessary risk of COVID-19.

Kind regards,

Johann

Johann Lamont MSP (Glasgow Region)

Bellahouston Business Centre, 423 Paisley Road West, Glasgow, G51 1PZ

Tel: 0141 465 9937

From: Lamont J (Johann), MSP
Sent: 09 September 2020 13:50
To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>
Subject: Constituent Enquiry

Dear First Minister

Please find below an email that I have received from a constituent who has raised concerns regarding inconsistencies in how local authorities are protecting pregnant teachers during this pandemic.

You will note that some councils are asking pregnant teachers to work from home from 28 weeks due to the risks involved; however, other councils are expecting teachers to continue working in the classroom.

I would welcome your comments on what guidance the Scottish Government has given to local authorities in relation to teachers and school staff who are pregnant.

Kind regards,

Johann

Johann Lamont MSP (Glasgow Region)
Bellahouston Business Centre, 423 Paisley Road West, Glasgow, G51 1PZ
Tel: 0141 465 9937

*To: Lamont J (Johann), MSP <Johann.Lamont.msp@parliament.scot>
Subject: Pregnant Teacher*

I am slightly confused as to why some councils are expecting pregnant teachers to work post 28 weeks and some are not. Can you explain this?

I work for Renfrewshire council but live in Glasgow. I have been told to contact the msp for where I live. Many councils are asking their teachers to work from home post 28 weeks due to the increase in risk of early labour/non viable birth and also due to the reduced lung capacity of the mother. I work for Renfrewshire council who believe I will be fine and have also ignored OH recommendations.

I am very worried as every health professional I have spoken to has told me I should not be working in a patient facing role particularly as I see up to 140 unmasked households per day. Apparently this is low risk according to my employer which they have been told by the Scottish government? Another fact which clearly does not add up.

I have contacted Nicola Sturgeon and Patrick Harvey both of whom have not written back. I feel completely let down by our government. I can't Believe how awfully and inconsistently pregnant teachers are being treated in this country.

I was also told I will be safe if only I wear a mask. This is not how masks work. The infected person must wear it to have the largest impact. I am now also having to stay off until I get test results back as I have had a temperature the past 2 nights. Hopefully I do not have Corona virus. If I do not, and this is the typical rhinovirus, how is it that the only me wearing a mask solution has not helped me with that virus though apparently it will for Covid?

Yours sincerely

From: Gmail <[\[redacted under s38\(1\)\(b\)\]@gmail.com](#)>

Sent: 07 September 2020 14:21

To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>

Subject: Local restrictions in Glasgow

Good afternoon,

I more than anything want to express my concern and anger at the new restrictions imposed in Glasgow.

I am currently [\[redacted under s38\(1\)\(b\)\]](#) weeks pregnant and have attended all appointments alone, that has been difficult and has had an knock effect for both my husband and myself. This is our first child and the excitement I feel had been tarred for us. We had some light at the end of the tunnel when it looked like he could attend the final few appointments and be present for the full birth but restrictions have since returned. My frustration comes with these new restrictions. As a pregnant teacher I can and have mixed with up to 60 households in one day- no one considers that a risk to me. I can go to a pub or restaurant full of strangers- again not considered a risk to me. However, I can't have the support of my family in the safety of my home where we have had very few visitor nor can my husband be present with Me during one of the scariest, yet happiest moments of our lives!! Is this really considering the mental health of everyone!

I look forward to your views.

[\[redacted under s38\(1\)\(b\)\]](#)

From: [FirstMinisterWebsite@gov.scot][SMTP:FIRSTMINISTERWEBSITE@GOV.SCOT]

Sent: 26 December 2020 19:49:47

To: First Ministers Website Mailbox

Subject: Covid Travel abroad

Auto forwarded by a Rule

From: [redacted under s38(1)(b)] <[redacted under s38(1)(b)]@btinternet.com>

Subject: Covid Travel abroad

Message Body:

Hi First Minister,

I am a teacher living in [redacted under s38(1)(b)] and I am originally from [redacted under s38(1)(b)]. I just want to thank you for all your hard work in the first instance but also ask your thoughts on people who are indulging on going on holidays to places to [redacted under s38(1)(b)] from Scotland. This is really bothering me. I can't travel to see my family. I am stuck at home with 2 small children meanwhile 2 members of my husbands family left to go on holiday to [redacted under s38(1)(b)] on Christmas Eve with no cares in the world. They both live in Ayrshire and saw the travel window to Dubai as an opportunity for a holiday. It's not the restrictions that have caused me stress but people being allowed to travel, defy rules and potentially pass on a new variant to other parts of the world as well as potentially bringing back a different variant. Why can you travel to Dubai and enjoy a holiday but not to local beach for a walk outside the council boundary. Please can you stop people like this from being allowed to travel from Scotland and back again? I know they won't follow quarantine rules either as they are above the rules clearly! It's not fair to People following rules.

I would also like to point out that socially distancing in schools is impossible and as a pregnant teacher I am very apprehensive about how I can stay safe. The government have out autistic children into normal classrooms but have you thought how safe that is in a pandemic. I have a severely autistic child who screams, cuddles me pulls me and I am pregnant. Are teachers safe First Minister?

Please give thought to how we socially distance from children with complex needs?

I would love your thoughts on these matters?

It would sort these folks out if they were fined for going to Dubai. It's ridiculous that this is allowed while everyone else suffers.

Regards [redacted under s38(1)(b)]

From: noreply@parliament.scot

Sent: Thursday, November 12, 2020 10:09:00 AM

To: Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP

Subject: Message from Scottish Parliament website

name:

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

address:

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

postcode:

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

email:

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]@gmail.com

telephone:

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

message:

Dear First Minister,

I am writing to you as a pregnant teacher who has just been asked to self isolate for two weeks, following three positive COVID 19 cases within two days at [redacted under s38(1)(b)] Academy. I am afraid to say that I, and many others, have lost faith in how the government is currently dealing with the coronavirus pandemic as far as it relates to education in Scotland.

To put things into perspective for you. Junior students at our school have been fantastic on the whole in following safety guidance and doing their best to keep their distance from staff without complaint.

However, senior students, those students who we, as teachers, are working the most to support in order that they can achieve their qualifications, have been consistently displaying a lack of respect for teacher health and well-being. This has been demonstrated in extreme and ongoing cases.

I have a senior [redacted under s38(1)(b)] class of around 20 students. 7 of the males within this class have ignored every single time this year that I have asked them to wear their face covering in the corridors. The same students are not using the hand sanitiser on entry to classrooms. One of these students has never worn a face covering and yet continues to invade my personal space, in a very intimidating manner, at regular intervals throughout the lesson, every lesson. Nothing is being done about this because we have been told by SLT that "we can only advise students to follow the guidelines". The same student hosted a house party on Saturday night, in which everyone who wanted to go from S4-S6 was invited. This was eventually broken up by the police, but we have been given the news today that the first of the attendees to this party has tested positive for coronavirus. Despite the clear flouting of the coronavirus restrictions, nothing is being done to show these young people that there are consequences to putting so many other peoples' lives at risk.

Furthermore, around our school, senior students have been vandalising the hand sanitiser stations in communal areas. As well as this, hand sanitiser bottles have been stolen from teachers' classrooms. All of this comes with absolutely no follow up or consequences.

As far as ventilation is concerned, students are closing the windows in classrooms without permission and refusing to then open the window back up after being told clearly that this violates COVID ventilation procedure. There is no way as a teacher to then reopen the window as it means going over to where the student is sat and being within a 1m or less distance of them. This happens very regularly throughout the day.

Our role as a teacher is to support the young people to achieve their best and give them the right grounding for their future. How can we be expected to provide an adequate level of support for anybody else when we are all suffering from such high anxiety as a result of the

actions of our young people during this pandemic?

The procedures that have been put in place to "keep schools safe" do not work. The same procedures are not followed by everyone. There are no consequences for those who are putting other peoples' health so blatantly at risk. There is no motivation for teachers.

Schools should not be open. Having spent almost 12 full weeks of the academic year trying my best to "get on with it", I am fully convinced that keeping schools open is the wrong choice and is a huge contributing factor to the rising coronavirus cases in Scotland.

I will continue to comply with the guidance that has been given for those who are self-isolating. However, until you can be confident that this is something that everybody else in our nation is doing, you should not be expecting so many of us to continue putting our health at risk in schools, especially when there are online learning alternatives available.

I do not have much confidence that my voice will be listened to. But I hope that at some point in the near future you and your government will see reason and put an end to the manner in which you are putting so many of us at risk in this pandemic.

Regards,

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

From: [redacted under s38(1)(b)] <[redacted under s38(1)(b)]@eis.org.uk>

Sent: 10 December 2020 18:15

To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>

Cc: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>; [redacted under s38(1)(b)] <[redacted under s38(1)(b)]@eis.org.uk>

Subject: "Not at all Costs"

Dear First Minister

I write to draw your attention to a series of briefings which the EIS is releasing, based on feedback from members on their experience in schools during the Covid-19 pandemic. The first two in the series are attached.

You will be aware EIS members have been clear in supporting the priority of keeping schools open, despite their very real concerns about safety, but **not at all costs**, First Minister.

As you will read, teachers are working in crowded classrooms where social distancing is not possible, often with inadequate cleaning supplies and protections. Schools are not Covid free environments – look at the evidence - and current mitigations are not keeping staff or pupils safe enough. Mounting workload and the stress of working under such conditions is having a significant impact on the mental health and resilience of our education workforce.

I would ask that you read the comments from the classroom, and that moving forward your Government does more to acknowledge, and address, the real fear and

anxieties which exist in schools, than has been the case to date, especially when we have areas operating at Level 4.

Yours sincerely

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

EIS General Secretary

From: [redacted under s38(1)(b)] <[redacted under s38(1)(b)]@glow.sch.uk>

Sent: 15 August 2020 16:48

To: First Minister <firstminister@gov.scot>

Subject: Pregnant Woman Medical Guidance - Specifically Pregnant Teachers

Dear Ms Sturgeon

I am contacting you on behalf of a large group of pregnant Scottish Teachers who have many questions and concerns regarding the return to schools.

The main concerns we have are regarding the inconsistencies between councils, the issue of Risk Assessments and the lack of acknowledgement around medical advice for pregnant women.

Since the announcement from Government regarding returning to work and schools reopening, the inconsistencies between councils and even schools within the same council with regards to pregnant teachers returning to school buildings have varied significantly. This has resulted in some pregnant teachers being told that they will continue to work from home, others being told they will be back in school buildings with an individual risk assessment and others are back with a generic risk assessment.

We understand a risk assessment is needed for many school staff for a variety of health reasons, including pregnancy, and that being back in school buildings may be the overall outcome, however, it is the lack of consistency across councils and schools and lack of acknowledgement around individual risk assessments that is causing the biggest added anxiety to an already stressful situation. We have found that many line managers and head teachers are not completing a personal risk assessment because the guidance from the Scottish Government puts the majority of us in a 'low risk' category meaning they only need to do a basic risk assessment that all staff would receive.

Based on previous (and current) advice from The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG), pregnant woman, particularly over 28 weeks gestation and/or with other health conditions/BMAE were advised to work from home if in public facing roles. This advice still stands and yet is being ignored by many councils and/or head teachers because of the difference between guidance from the Scottish Government which clearly works better for staffing reasons.

The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG) states that pregnant women, particularly those beyond 28 weeks gestation, should work from home where possible as we are considered at "high risk" of infection. Their recommendations also state that *"should a pregnant person be unable to work from home, the employer should make appropriate arrangements to minimise exposure to the virus. This should be considered and discussed with your occupational health team and/or employer in line with the RCOG clinical guidance and the UK government guidance."* Some councils appear to be following this guidance, however, many are not due to the contradictions to Scottish Government Guidance.

The RCOG guidance also states in their Occupational health advice for employers and pregnant women during the COVID-19 pandemic Version 3.4: Published Monday 10 August 2020:

"RCOG/RCM/FOM Occupational health advice for employers and pregnant women during the COVID-19 pandemic was written for implementation at the peak of the pandemic when clinically vulnerable individuals were advised to stringently apply social distancing measures and extremely vulnerable individuals were advised to shield. While national policy has shifted since then and now varies regionally, the government has maintained the precautionary measure that pregnant women are classed as 'vulnerable'. Therefore, although this guidance is no longer current for the UK as a whole, it remains useful for pregnant workers who are still advised to stringently adhere to any active national guidance on social distancing. Furthermore, our clinical advice around pregnant women and the risk and potential implications of being severely affected by COVID-19, particularly affecting those who are at 28 weeks' gestation or above, still stands."

Specific guidance on how and where pregnant women can safely work should be advised on an individual basis, following employer-led workplace and individual risk assessments. The RCOG recommends that employers use the clinical advice in the RCOG/RCM/FOM Occupational Health Guidance (see section 3 of this guidance 'Recommendations for pregnant healthcare workers') when performing mandatory risk assessments for their pregnant employees."

Further to this, the Scottish Government's guidelines suggest that employers should be supportive and understanding of individual circumstances, however, I am aware that Local Authorities are inconsistent in their actions with some women in similar situations being offered varying advice and instruction.

On reading the Equality & Human Rights Commission (EHRC) guidance, it is noted that pregnant women have been considered to be in a clinically vulnerable category and such workers should strictly follow physical distancing. The EHRC guidance also notes that if a risk is identified in the workplace which is greater than the risk outside of the workplace, employers must make reasonable changes to avoid that risk.

Given the information stated above, it is evident that pregnant staff are in a vulnerable position and deem the risks within our workplace to vastly outweigh those out of our workplace

Given the advice we have been told to follow by midwives, consultants, medical professionals, the guidance mentioned and the varying measures in place from school to school, I seek your position on this matter.

We have spoken to our unions who again are differing in their advice because of the difference of opinion between the Scottish Government and RCOG.

We as teachers are glad that schools are reopening, however, as I am sure you are aware from the EIS survey we are not completely behind the full opening so quickly. Our main concern as pregnant teachers, in all educational settings, is that we are being given medical advice from our own personal midwives, consultants, doctors and RCOG and yet this is being ignored because the Scottish Government advice has not acknowledged this medical guidance.

Can you advise me on what can be done about this?

This is causing a great deal of stress and anxiety amongst many pregnant staff, at all stages of pregnancy, but particularly those 28 weeks or more due to the conflicting advice.

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

Area Cover Primary Teacher

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]@glow.sch.uk

www.southlanarkshire.gov.uk

British Sign Language (BSL) users can contact us via www.contactscotland-bsl.org

From: [FirstMinisterWebsite@gov.scot][SMTP:FIRSTMINISTERWEBSITE@GOV.SCOT]

Sent: 26 September 2020 21:29:21

To: First Ministers Website Mailbox

Subject: Pregnant teachers

Auto forwarded by a Rule

From: [redacted under s38(1)(b)] <[redacted under s38(1)(b)]@gmail.com>

Subject: Pregnant teachers

Message Body:

Dear first minister,

I hope this message finds you well.

I am a primary teacher currently in my third trimester of pregnancy and glad to be working within a supportive school environment.

However I am becoming increasingly concerned about the rising cases of COVID 19 and the risk my continuing to work in a primary school presents, to my own health and that of my unborn baby.

I know this matter has been raised and the response, in summary, stated that it was up to councils to conduct their own risk assessments. However, head teachers are left to conduct these risk assessments and, with the greatest respect, have no medical expertise to inform these. The RCOG guidance is clear, pregnant women in their third trimester are at greater risk.

Pregnant NHS staff (28weeks+) are given non public facing roles or are working from home, yet it is deemed safe for teacher to enter environments where it can be incredibly difficult to social distance from often very young/vulnerable children.

There is also a lack of consistency across education authorities. North Lanarkshire council is allowing pregnant teachers in third trimester to work from home, however Glasgow are not. How can it be deemed safe in one authority and unsafe in another. Is the risk to my health and that of my unborn baby a postcode lottery?

I truly appreciate everything you are doing to help keep our country safe at the moment. However I would appreciate some kind of action/response to the points notes in this message.

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This e-mail was sent from a contact form on the First Minister of Scotlands website (<https://firstminister.gov.scot>)

From: [redacted under s38(1)(b)] <[redacted under s38(1)(b)]@hotmail.co.uk>

Sent: 03 August 2020 19:59

To: Central Enquiry Unit <CEU@gov.scot>

Subject: Pregnant Teachers

To whom it may concern,

I am looking for further guidance/clarity on the position of teachers in their 3rd trimester. I have worked from home since the beginning of the pandemic providing online support for my learners. Before the beginning of our summer break in June, I was told I would be continuing to work from home until my maternity leave started.

However, now as we ease restrictions and life returns to some form of normal I am being told to return to work. I am saddened that each council has interpreted your guidance differently and now has a range of measures in place for their pregnant employees. Some

have been granted special leave, working from home & others returning to normal classroom procedures.

I find this approach lacks fairness and equality as it suggests that some teachers and their babies safety are of greater importance than others.

Working for [redacted under s38(1)(b)] I am to return to work full time & have chosen to bring my maternity leave forward to reduce the number of weeks I am putting myself at risk. However teachers working for Edinburgh or Highlands, for example, are being provided with reduced contact roles.

I am sure you can appreciate this is an apprehensive time for everyone after spending so many weeks inside keeping myself & unborn child safe. Yet, I am now being told I am safe to return to work in Fife but my colleagues in other councils have to continue to work from home.

Please can you provide further information as to why there are so many interpretations of the guidance, when previously all pregnant women in the 3rd trimester were classed as a vulnerable group.

Many thanks,

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

Dear Mr John Swinney, Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills,

I would like to bring to your attention the experience I have encountered working in Scottish Education as a pregnant teacher and ask for urgent action to be taken on the issues outlined below.

I am [redacted under s38(1)(b)] years old and at present 25 weeks pregnant. Guidance provided by the Royal College of Obstetricians & Gynaecologists, state for those women who are 28 weeks pregnant and beyond, there is an increased risk of becoming severely ill should you contract COVID-19 and pregnant women over the age of 35 are at a higher risk of developing severe illness requiring admission to hospital^[1].

I am employed by [redacted under s38(1)(b)] as a Secondary Education Teacher and work with 840 pupils per week ranging in ages from 12 to 18 years old. I teach 30 pupils each period, with 7 periods per day, in an indoor classroom environment which is inadequately ventilated. The small cramped classroom environment does not allow pupils to socially distance. I am currently socially distancing from pupils and staff which lowers my risk of contracting COVID-19. However, given that airborne transmission of SARS-CoV-2 can occur (stated by WHO^[2]), particularly in indoor settings with poor ventilation I feel I am at undue risk of contracting COVID-19 in my workplace.

The Scottish Government guidance on pregnant women working in public facing roles such as Education has been widely interpreted by Local Authorities. I asked [redacted under s38(1)(b)] Council if I could work in a non-public facing role, therefore not in a classroom setting with exposure to 870 pupils per week post 28 weeks pregnancy but have been refused this request.

I personally feel [redacted under s38(1)(b)] and the Scottish Government are not acting to protect vulnerable pregnant teachers, like myself, particularly, when the risk increases in their third trimester. Face coverings in classrooms are not mandatory, despite asking my students to wear one to protect myself and others many have not obliged as face

coverings are not mandatory and despite asking my Head Teacher to make this compulsory in my classroom, the school can not grant this request based on the current Scottish Government guidance.

I do not feel safe teaching 870 students ranging from 12-18 years old in an indoor setting. My exposure with staff and students is significantly high and not all students abide by the 2-metre distance rule. [redacted under s38(1)(b)] has experienced increasing positive cases of COVID-19 and a localised lockdown. Despite the number of rapidly rising positive cases, I have been informed by my school that I will still be required to work fulltime in the classroom, with no change to my timetable to reduce exposure and that no alternative setting would be possible to protect myself from contacting COVID-19.

The stress and anxiety caused as a result of having to act individually to help protect myself and my unborn child is unnecessary. Stress in pregnancy has been linked to children's long-term psychological disorders^[3]. I plead that the Scottish Government changes the current guidance to better protect pregnant teachers post 28 weeks of pregnancy and allow all teachers to work in a non-public role at their request.

I carried out an online survey with pregnant teachers regarding their current experience working in Scottish Education and I was overwhelmed by the response received from 145 teachers having posted the survey for only 2 hours online.

- 50% feel stressed and anxious teaching in education at present.
- 80% feel they should not be working in school post 28 weeks of their pregnancy.
- 33% have not been allowed to work from home post 28 weeks of pregnancy.
- 10% have been offered working from home post 28 weeks of pregnancy.
- 88% feel the Scottish Government's current guidance on pregnant teachers working in education does not protect them from COVID-19.

The results of the survey demonstrate the need to protect this vulnerable group. It should not be down to individual teachers to protect themselves in the workplace.

Please can you outline why Local Authorities in Scotland are widely interpreting the Scottish Government's guidance differently. Pregnant teachers who work in Falkirk Council, Aberdeen City Council, Scottish Borders Council, East Lothian Council and North Lanarkshire Council are being offered to work from home post 28 weeks of pregnancy. Fife Council are offering teachers to work in an alternative setting. This exemplifies the lack of clarity around the guidance and needs to be addressed.

Pregnant employees who work in other government bodies such as Local Authority Council Offices, Police Scotland and the NHS are offered working from home or alternative arrangements are in place to take them out of a public-facing role post 28 weeks of pregnancy. **Why aren't pregnant teachers not all offered the option to work from home? I feel this is discriminating pregnant teachers from the rest of society.**

Despite asking to work in a non-public facing role post 28 weeks of my pregnancy, East Renfrewshire Council has stated this is not possible and have requested I continue working full-time in school throughout my pregnancy in a public facing role. I will be directly teaching 870 pupils each week with the only control measure of obeying the 2-metre social distancing rule and opening the windows in my classroom. No PPE has been provided as this is not mandatory in the classroom. I have requested a change to my timetable in my individual risk assessment to reduce my contact with students, but this has been refused.

I plead that you act on behalf of this vulnerable group to better protect us and allow pregnant teachers the opportunity to work in a non-public facing setting post 28 weeks of pregnancy.

Kind regards,

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]v

[1] <https://www.rcog.org.uk/globalassets/documents/guidelines/2020-09-10-occupational-health-statement-rcog-rcmfom.pdf>

[2] <https://www.who.int/news-room/commentaries/detail/transmission-of-sars-cov-2-implications-for-infection-prevention-precautions>

[3] <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/the-british-journal-of-psychiatry>

FAO: John Swinney MSP, (Cabinet Secretary for Education)

Dear Cabinet Secretary

I have received an email from a constituent who is a secondary school teacher in [redacted under s38(1)(b)]. She is 25 weeks pregnant and as a woman in her mid-30s, is at increased risk of becoming severely ill, should she contract Covid-19.

My constituent has advised me that Scottish Government guidance on pregnant women who work in public facing roles, such as in education, are being widely interpreted by local authorities. For example, I understand that pregnant teachers who work in Falkirk Council, Aberdeen City Council, Scottish Borders Council, East Lothian Council and North Lanarkshire Council are being offered the opportunity to work from home post-28 weeks of pregnancy, while in Fife, the local authority is offering teachers the opportunity to work in an alternative setting. My constituent's request to [redacted under s38(1)(b)] to be transferred to a non-public facing role was refused.

Having entered the final third of her pregnancy, my constituent is concerned about the effects that her anxiety may be having on her unborn child. In order to allow her and other women in her position to feel safer at this time, she has asked that the Scottish Government review its current guidance to better protect pregnant teachers, post 28-weeks of their pregnancy, and on request, allow teachers in any local authority area in Scotland, to switch to a non-public facing role in the final weeks of their pregnancy.

I thank you for your consideration of this matter and look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

Adam Tomkins MSP
Glasgow Region

From: [redacted under s38(1)(b)] <[redacted under s38(1)(b)]@icloud.com>

Sent: 27 October 2020 18:13

To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills

<DFMCSE@gov.scot>

Subject: Pregnant teachers

Please help. I am very concerned about the fact that pregnant teachers are still working although NHS workers are allowed to shield at 28 weeks. Young children can NOT socially distance. I feel this needs to be looked at ASAP as COVID is on the rise again. I have e mailed the Scottish government before but have not heard back. This has to be looked at now. Please help

Sent from my iPad

From: [redacted under s38(1)(b)]

Sent: 18 September 2020 20:10

To: Scottish Ministers

Subject: Advice for Pregnant Teachers

Good evening,

Sorry to bother you when you're extremely busy.

I was wondering if there was any updated advice for teachers who are pregnant in their third trimester regarding working from home or having to go into school? I work for [redacted under s38(1)(b)] and they and my school are refusing to let me work from home. I don't think risk assessments are good enough for me to work from the school as they do not following the National guidance or the RCOG guidance of pregnant women to work from home or adhere strictly to social distancing. I am a [redacted under s38(1)(b)] teacher, so it is even harder for me to maintain distancing. I would be a great asset to my team if I could work from home but unfortunately I am currently signed off work with anxiety. Only 20miles down the road, [redacted under s38(1)(b)] are saying all pregnant workers in their third trimester are to work from home.

I know I am lucky to have a job in this current climate but my mental health has taken a severe hit over the past month or so. I am now unable to sleep and I am worrying about the safety of my child if I were to return to the school building as I cannot stay signed off forever.

I am now particularly anxious again with cases rising and although the risks to pregnant women seem minimal, we are still in the vulnerable category so I have been staying at home as much as possible and isolating myself from friends and family to protect myself and my child.

I understand that the decisions will probably remain with local councils but I was hoping some new guidance might come out to help them change their minds as I am now in a position of feeling totally hopeless and sad that I am not allowed to work at all.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

From: [redacted under s38(1)(b)] <[redacted under s38(1)(b)]@east-ayrshire.gov.uk>
Sent: 06 August 2020 12:02
To: [redacted under s38(1)(b)] <[redacted under s38(1)(b)]@gov.scot>
Subject: Pregnant teachers [PUBLIC]

CLASSIFICATION: PUBLIC

[redacted under s38(1)(b)],

We are starting to receive an increasing number of enquiries from pregnant teaching staff unhappy about returning to work.

When looking at the SG's Occupational Risk Assessment Guidance V1 27th July to determine Covid age.

[https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/advice-and-guidance/2020/07/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-individual-risk-assessment-for-the-workplace/documents/occupational-risk-assessment-tool-and-guidance/occupational-risk-assessment-tool-and-guidance/govscot%3Adocument/COVID-19 Occupational Risk Assessment Guidance Interactive 27.07.20.pdf](https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/advice-and-guidance/2020/07/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-individual-risk-assessment-for-the-workplace/documents/occupational-risk-assessment-tool-and-guidance/occupational-risk-assessment-tool-and-guidance/govscot%3Adocument/COVID-19%20Occupational%20Risk%20Assessment%20Guidance%20Interactive%2027.07.20.pdf)

The following text sits below the categorisation of Low, Moderate, High, Very High.

Pregnancy

There's no current evidence that you or your baby are at any increased risk from COVID-19, unless you have an underlying health condition.

- You should keep any risk as low as you can by physically distancing from others and regularly washing your hands. You should also have some choice about whether to attend work, or whether you can change the type of work you do at work to keep risks low. You can find out more from the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists.*
- You're advised to try and avoid roles where a degree of risk cannot be avoided, such as clinical work, care work and working closely with others.*

The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists advice states:

[Occupational health advice for employers and pregnant women](#)
Version 3.3 - updated Friday 31 July 2020

A note on this guidance:

The RCOG, RCM & FOM joint occupational health advice for employers and pregnant women during the COVID-19 pandemic was written for implementation at the peak of the pandemic. National policy on social distancing and shielding has significantly shifted since then, and varies regionally. This guidance is therefore no longer current.

Our clinical advice for pregnant women on the risk and potential implications of being severely affected by COVID-19, particularly affecting those who are at 28 weeks' gestation or above, still stands.

However, specific guidance on how and when pregnant women can safely work should be advised on a individual basis, following employer-led workplace and individual risk assessments.

The RCOG recommends that employers use the clinical advice (above) when performing mandatory risk assessments for their pregnant employees, along with other sector-specific advice published on the UK government

Taking the two documents together it would appear that pregnant teachers should on no or little pupil contact and work from home. Has there been an SG discussion with SNCT about the arrangements for teacher that are pregnant until they start their maternity leave. We are starting to see challenges regarding class contact time. Some pregnant teachers have submitted Fit notes citing stress and anxiety others are citing the RCOG guidance as justification for continuing to work from home.

Any information that you are able to share with me would be helpful.

Thanks.

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

Dear First Minister of Scotland, Ms N Sturgeon,

I would like to bring to your attention the experience I have encountered working in Scottish Education as a pregnant teacher and ask for urgent action to be taken on the issues outlined below.

I am [redacted under s38(1)(b)] years old and at present 25 weeks pregnant. Guidance provided by the Royal College of Obstetricians & Gynaecologists, state for those women who are 28 weeks pregnant and beyond, there is an increased risk of becoming severely ill should you contract COVID-19 and pregnant women over the age of 35 are at a higher risk of developing severe illness requiring admission to hospital^[1].

I am employed by [redacted under s38(1)(b)] as a Secondary Education Teacher and work with 840 pupils per week ranging in ages from 12 to 18 years old. I teach 30 pupils each period, with 7 periods per day, in an indoor classroom environment which is inadequately ventilated. The small cramped classroom environment does not allow pupils to socially distance. I am currently socially distancing from pupils and staff which lowers my risk of contracting COVID-19. However, given that airborne transmission of SARS-CoV-2 can occur (stated by WHO^[2]), particularly in indoor settings with poor ventilation I feel I am at undue risk of contracting COVID-19 in my workplace.

The Scottish Government guidance on pregnant women working in public facing roles such as Education has been widely interpreted by Local Authorities. I asked [redacted under s38(1)(b)] if I could work in a non-public facing role, therefore not in a classroom setting with exposure to 870 pupils per week post 28 weeks pregnancy but have been refused this request.

I personally feel [redacted under s38(1)(b)] and the Scottish Government are not acting to protect vulnerable pregnant teachers, like myself, particularly, when the risk increases in their third trimester. Face coverings in classrooms are not mandatory, despite asking my students to wear one to protect myself and others many have not obliged as face coverings are not mandatory and despite asking my Head Teacher to make this compulsory in my classroom, the school can not grant this request based on the current Scottish Government guidance.

I do not feel safe teaching 870 students ranging from 12-18 years old in an indoor setting. My exposure with staff and students is significantly high and not all students abide by the 2-metre distance rule [redacted under s38(1)(b)] has experienced increasing positive cases of COVID-19 and a localised lockdown. Despite the number of rapidly rising positive cases, I have been informed by my school that I will still be required to work fulltime in the classroom, with no change to my timetable to reduce exposure and that no alternative setting would be possible to protect myself from contacting COVID-19.

The stress and anxiety caused as a result of having to act individually to help protect myself and my unborn child is unnecessary. Stress in pregnancy has been linked to children's long-term psychological disorders^[3]. I plead that the Scottish Government changes the current guidance to better protect pregnant teachers post 28 weeks of pregnancy and allow all teachers to work in a non-public role at their request.

I carried out an online survey with pregnant teachers regarding their current experience working in Scottish Education and I was overwhelmed by the response received from 145 teachers having posted the survey for only 2 hours online.

- 50% feel stressed and anxious teaching in education at present.
- 80% feel they should not be working in school post 28 weeks of their pregnancy.
- 33% have not been allowed to work from home post 28 weeks of pregnancy.
- 10% have been offered working from home post 28 weeks of pregnancy.
- 88% feel the Scottish Government's current guidance on pregnant teachers working in education does not protect them from COVID-19.

The results of the survey demonstrate the need to protect this vulnerable group. It should not be down to individual teachers to protect themselves in the workplace.

Please can you outline why Local Authorities in Scotland are widely interpreting the Scottish Government's guidance differently. Pregnant teachers who work in Falkirk Council, Aberdeen City Council, Scottish Borders Council, East Lothian Council and North Lanarkshire Council are being offered to work from home post 28 weeks of pregnancy. Fife Council are offering teachers to work in an alternative setting. This exemplifies the lack of clarity around the guidance and needs to be addressed.

Pregnant employees who work in other government bodies such as Local Authority Council Offices, Police Scotland and the NHS are offered working from home or alternative arrangements are in place to take them out of a public-facing role post 28 weeks of pregnancy. **Why aren't pregnant teachers not all offered the option to work from home? I feel this is discriminating pregnant teachers from the rest of society.**

Despite asking to work in a non-public facing role post 28 weeks of my pregnancy, East Renfrewshire Council has stated this is not possible and have requested I continue working full-time in school throughout my pregnancy in a public facing role. I will be directly teaching 870 pupils each week with the only control measure of obeying the 2-metre social distancing rule and opening the windows in my classroom. No PPE has been provided as this is not mandatory in the classroom. I have requested a change to my timetable in my individual risk assessment to reduce my contact with students, but this has been refused.

I plead that you act on behalf of this vulnerable group to better protect us and allow pregnant teachers the opportunity to work in a non-public facing setting post 28 weeks of pregnancy.

Kind regards,

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

[1] <https://www.rcog.org.uk/globalassets/documents/guidelines/2020-09-10-occupational-health-statement-rcog-rcmfom.pdf>

[2] <https://www.who.int/news-room/commentaries/detail/transmission-of-sars-cov-2-implications-for-infection-prevention-precautions>

[3] <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/the-british-journal-of-psychiatry>

Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
John Swinney MSP
DFMCSE@gov.scot

30 September 2020

Dear John

I am making contact with you to raise an issue regarding the guidance on Covid-19 and pregnant employees within schools.

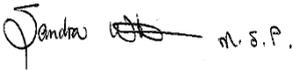
My constituent is currently 26 weeks pregnant and teaching within a school in [redacted under s38(1)(b)]. My constituent has requested a position, which does not include face to face teaching when she reaches 28 weeks as stated in the guidance produced by the Scottish Government. I believe other local authorities have been granting this for teachers however, [redacted under s38(1)(b)] have declined this request.

I am sure you can understand my constituent believes the discrepancy shown by local authorities in their interpretation and delivery of the guidance does not seem fair and balanced.

My constituent is also extremely anxious for both her health and the health of her unborn baby being in such close proximity to many young people and other members of staff.

I would appreciate your consideration of the concerns raised and look forward to your response in due course.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sandra White MSP". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Sandra White MSP

My daughter is 20 week's pregnant and works as a [redacted under s38(1)(b)] teacher in [redacted under s38(1)(b)]. I am so worried about this Covid virus. In March all pregnant teachers had to work from home. Now it's important for schools to stay open can there please be some guidelines put in place regarding woman in this position. I know nurses and NHS workers stop face to face interaction at 28 weeks

I really would like some support in this or guidance. Thank you

Sent from my iPad

From: [redacted under s38(1)(b)] <[redacted under s38(1)(b)]@gmail.com>
Sent: 19 August 2020 21:01
To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>
Subject: Inquiry

Dear Mr Swinney,

I am a pregnant secondary school teacher. Having spoken to colleagues throughout Scotland it has become apparent to me that the treatment of pregnant teachers is not consistent across the country. The rigour of risk assessments differs greatly depending on the local authority. There is also a great deal of confusion surrounding women who are in their third trimester (28 weeks onwards).

The advice from the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists states "the advice remains that pregnant women who can work from home should continue to do so. If you cannot work from home, you can work in a public-facing role if your employer can make appropriate arrangements to minimise your exposure to the virus". It also states that "It is known from other respiratory infections (e.g. influenza,

SARS) that pregnant woman who contract significant respiratory infections in the third trimester are more likely to become seriously unwell. This may also lead to preterm birth of their baby, intended to enable the woman to recover through improving the efficiency of her breathing or ventilation."

Following this advice some local authorities allow women who are 28 weeks pregnant to work from home, or to follow "lone working", which seems to mean in school but not in front of a class. This is inconsistent across the country.

Another inconsistency lies in the completion of risk assessments. Some women are given the same risk assessment as non pregnant staff while some are given more thorough risk assessments that focus on pregnancy. Many teachers have had to ask for referrals to occupational health and involve their union representative in order to have their concerns addressed.

I appreciate that every teacher and every pregnant woman is unique and it is difficult to give one rule for everyone. However, I feel it is deeply unfair that a pregnant woman in one authority is made to feel that she is being put at a greater risk than a colleague in a different authority. Pregnancy is a vulnerable and anxious time for any woman, and we deserve to feel safe and fairly treated in our place of work.

I would also like to add some of my own experience. All the advice I have read highlights the importance for all pregnant women to adhere to 2m social distancing while at work. In fact my own risk assessment states that if this cannot be achieved I should be allowed to work from home or be suspended on full pay.

Let me make this clear to you Mr Swinney: it is impossible for me to do my job and stay 2m away from pupils. My headteacher and union rep stated this when we returned to school on the 10th August as well.

I do not feel safe at school. In any one day I can teach over 200 pupils, many of them over 16, in a classroom where there is not enough room for me to stay 2m away. All of my classes contain 25-30 pupils. Only one pupil has chosen to wear a face covering in my class so far.

I am now in a position that for me to feel safe I will have to escalate this issue, involve my union rep and feel like I am letting my pupils and colleagues down. This is not a position I believe I should be put in, especially during pregnancy.

Please could you clarify the following:

1. Can we be issued with a national standard risk assessment for pregnant teachers that all local authorities must complete?
2. Are pregnant teachers expected to be in school teaching classes in their third trimester?

3. If it becomes apparent that 2m social distancing cannot be maintained between staff and pupils in schools (especially where the pupils are older), what additional mitigations will be put in place to keep schools and all people in them safe?

I look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely,

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

Dear Jeane,

My Constituent [redacted under s38(1)(b)], has contacted me regarding arrangements at her place of work for members of staff who are pregnant.

She has written to me as follows:

Good morning,

I am currently 32 weeks pregnant and work in a [redacted under s38(1)(b)] as an ELC Assistant. I have been working from home since mid March and was informed by my line manager that the new ScotGov risk assessments issued for returning teachers/nursery staff stated that pregnancy did not pose any increased risk and as such I would be fine to return to work.

This goes against the RCOG guidelines which clearly state there is a significant increased risk from 28 weeks in pregnancy and social distancing and WFH should be advised, with no face to face work.

Would it be possible to get some clarification into the decision to omit this from the ScotGov risk assessment? I know of other pregnant teachers and early years practitioners that are concerned about the increased risk and we feel we are being over looked and our unborn baby put at risk.

Kind regards

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

Would it be possible to investigate this situation as a matter of urgency to provide guidance for my constituent?

I look forward to your response in the near future.

Yours sincerely

Angus MacDonald MSP
SNP – Falkirk East Constituency

Angus MacDonald MSP is registered as a Data Controller with the Information Commissioner under registration reference Z3119224.

The office of Angus MacDonald MSP will process your data only to the extent necessary in order to perform the duties of an MSP. Any personal information you share with Angus MacDonald MSP or

his staff will be kept confidential. It will only be shared when required to pursue your case with other organisations or individuals with your consent.

You have the right to request, correct or delete any and all data we hold on you at any time. Any personal data processed by Angus MacDonald MSP will be carried out in line with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. You can find out more about this in our Privacy Notice, a copy of which is available by contacting the office on 01324 482100, or at 2 York Arcade, Grangemouth, FK3 8BA or replying to this email.

From: [redacted under s38(1)(b)] <[redacted under s38(1)(b)]@hotmail.com>

Sent: 03 December 2020 23:24

To: Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <DFMCSE@gov.scot>

Subject:

Dear Mr Swinney,

Firstly, I hope this email finds you well? I would like to say I am well in return but that would be an utter lie. You see I am currently approaching [redacted under s38(1)(b)] weeks of pregnancy and I have been forced into stressful, unsafe working conditions by you and your team. I am a full time primary school teacher who normally loves her job and feels extremely privileged to be doing it. However, this year I am drained, exhausted, anxious and on the brink of a breakdown. Add being pregnant to that list. I know I speak not only for myself but on behalf of my colleagues also. Today, when you announced there were to be no changes to Christmas holidays in Scotland you reduced a colleague to tears who stated 'They don't care. They just don't care.'. I can't say she was wrong. My midwife has strongly advised working from home since 28 weeks as NHS are being given special leave to do so. She was utterly appalled when my council threatened to not replace me and to start my maternity leave early if I did so. I am telling you now, I have been forced into many a situation where I am exposed to over 100 pupils daily who do not social distance within confined corridor spaces and are not made to wear masks. My class alone are a prime example of children not social distancing despite the number of times I have told them to keep a distance. There were over 20 positive cases in my work last term.. lots stemming from children who supposedly cannot get the virus?! There was the then shocking, disgusting accusations blaming teachers for becoming unwell during a pandemic?! Utterly shambolic. You do not pull the wool over my eyes. We are viewed as mere babysitters and you are too frightened of backlash from parents to prioritise the health and wellbeing of children, young adults and school staff across this country. There is also the constant scrutiny of teachers across the media when we have done nothing but help and support the wellbeing and education of children since March. We have went above and beyond our roles without so much as a thank you. I will always do this for the sake of the children but it would be nice to be shown some appreciation. Have you actually stepped foot inside a school or have you been too busy keeping safe and social distancing at home? The mental health of school staff is at a seriously low level right now. I feel I am a shadow of my former self and my

pregnancy journey has been tainted by lack of support from you. You could have easily deemed it mandatory for vulnerable and pregnant staff to work from home, especially in a tier 4 lockdown! Do you also realise there are severe inconsistencies with regards to working from home as some schools/councils are allowing it - what makes those pregnant women any more special than me that they are granted enhanced safety without being penalised? I also would like to know why you haven't provided schools with ppe equipment such as masks, visors and protective screens for teachers desks? It is the only workforce in the country with zero protective measures put in place. I have spent my own money buying masks since August. I should be used to that anyway spending my own money on work resources! I thought you had our best intentions at heart but over the last few months you have proved me wrong, sadly. I don't expect a reply any time soon and I'll probably be on my maternity leave by the time you do reply. But if this can help highlight serious issues for other pregnant teachers in my situation in the near future then I feel you must pay attention to these concerns. It costs you nothing to be kind.

Kind Regards,

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

From: [redacted under s38(1)(b)]@gmail.com

Sent: Tuesday, September 22, 2020 8:12:52 PM

To: Sturgeon N (Nicola), MSP

Subject: Re: Vulnerable and confused at advice provided

CAUTION: This e-mail originated from outside of The Scottish Parliament. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

Hello

I emailed last month with no response! Is there a reason why I am being ignored? I am now heading into my third trimester with positive cases in my secondary school. No pupils wearing masks or distancing in small poorly ventilated classrooms. Yet I am still told by HR this is low risk. Not agreed by OH, midwives, RCOG or doctor!! Unfortunately I do not have the luxury of time here to wait for a response that takes months! I am working everyday putting myself and baby at risk! Why are vulnerable teachers esp pregnant teachers in their 3rd trimester being ignored? I'm disgusted by the behaviour of the Scottish government over their handling of us.

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]

Sent from my iPhone

> On 19 Aug 2020, at 20:11, [redacted under s38(1)(b)]@gmail.com wrote:

>

> Hello

>

> My name is [redacted under s38(1)(b)] and I have contacted my local msp who has not

gotten back to me. I am a pregnant secondary school teacher exposed to up to 140 pupils/households per day who do not need to wear masks or socially distance. The advice from RCOG is that if feasible pregnant teachers should work from home or a bespoke risk assessment should be in place as they still class us as clinically vulnerable as if exposed to infection this could lead to premature labour and other other complications. Before a return to work my school referred me to occupational health who advised me to work from home or lone work. HR have since said there is no risk to me or baby and that I should come in to work and no additional mitigation's are required. They suggest if I am worried that I wear a mask. From the scientific evidence this is not how non medical grade masks work and I am only safer if the infected person is wearing the mask.

>

> I explained that due to the high exposure of pupils over the age of 12 in a small classroom appears to me to be high risk, I have been told it is not. I feel that no other vulnerable professional is being expected to work with up to 140 clients per day in an enclosed space with clients not wearing PPE or social distancing. I will also need to effectively hide behind my desk which as a pregnant woman I should not have to do due to risk of DVT.

>

> Can you please explain to me how this level of exposure with no FACTS is low risk? All medical professionals I have spoken to are very concerned about me in this environment.

>

> I also live with a [redacted under s38(1)(b)] , am a part time carer for my [redacted under s38(1)(b)] year old grandfather who has [redacted under s38(1)(b)] and respiratory conditions and I support my brother who has [redacted under s38(1)(b)] and is currently receiving [redacted under s38(1)(b)] with child care of his 1 year old. All of which my employer is aware of and add to my concerns as I do not want to pass Covid 19 onto them.

>

> [redacted under s38(1)(b)]

>

>

>

> Sent from my iPhone

Dear Nicola Sturgeon,

I wish firstly to say thank you for the way in which you have handled the hard decisions and difficult measures that it is has been your role to implement over the past six months. I am a resident of your constituency and I am writing to highlight some issues about the measures now being put in place to protect those who would previously have been shielding during the earlier lockdown.

I am an Primary Additional support needs teacher. I work with children who are unable to socially distance, a few who actively communicate through touch, some who lash out without warning and all who need assistance with personal hygiene tasks. I am currently 27 weeks pregnant.

Government advice is that pregnant women should continue to take particular care to minimise contact with others outside their household. This is particularly difficult in an ASN class setting. The EIS published an update on this on the 9th September. Due to an incident within my class when a pupil lashed out that I believe could have put my unborn child at risk, I have been asked to switch to McCrone cover in various classes after the October break to remove me from my normal class setting. However, this means I could now potentially be in contact with over 100 different ASN pupils and staff over the course of a week. I am frustrated at the lack of clarity concerning measures being put in place to protect people like myself and in particular my unborn child. People whose immune systems may be lowered and who do not have the option to work from home. It appears we know very little about this virus and how it effects pregnancy and the unborn fetus in the long term. I understand that there are of course people with much more severe illnesses and conditions but the inconsistencies I have been hearing in regard to the rules around pregnancy are frustrating and concerning.

Some local authorities and schools are ensuring that pregnant teachers are being allocated to out of class work from 28 weeks or earlier whereas in others no additional measures are being put in place. It seems this is a lottery based on the decisions of the particular Local Authority and School senior management teams. I have contacted my union who have said there is very little they are able to do in regard to this as it left to the discretion of the school and in regard to this area they are complying with government rules. Due to anxiety and work-related stress, I have been referred to occupational health over a month ago yet due to the back log in referrals, I am still awaiting an appointment.

I understand the government no longer want to impose shielding as widely as before but I struggle to understand how at a time when more cases are being reported than ever and restrictions have been relaxed from the situation when shielding was first implemented, that people who would previously have been shielding and who cannot work from home do not now have the option to shield. It is strange to be in a position where I am expected to work in an environment where it is exceptionally difficult to socially distance and I come into contact with numerous children who are bussed in on special transport and are exempt from wearing masks but at the same time, it is unlikely that I will be able to have my husband next to me for the majority of the labour process or my ante-natal appointments. What options and protections are being considered for those who would have been shielding previously but who do not now have the option to work from home?

I have forwarded this email on to John Swinny in his role as secretary for education.

Kind Regards

[redacted under s38(1)(b)]