

The logo for eBRIEF, featuring a stylized '@' symbol with an 'e' inside, followed by the word 'BRIEF' in a bold, sans-serif font.

Bargaining and Campaigns

The logo for UNISON Scotland, featuring the word 'UNISON' in a bold, sans-serif font with a green swoosh underneath, and the word 'Scotland' in a smaller, italicized font below it.

## Education Recovery Programme May 2020

The Scottish government has indicated that schools will return on August 11th. Some staff are also currently working in hubs. There also appears to be an expectation that early learning and childcare provision will continue and indeed scale up over the summer. There is little published detail or guidance as yet on the education recovery process as most of this will be done at authority and school level. This is expected very soon. There is a commitment that there is a commitment that Councils and head Teachers will work in close partnership with trade unions and UNISON will lead that work.

UNISON is involved in a range of strategic groups with the Scottish Government and COSLA as they plan the easing of lockdown. Our aim in these groups is to ensure the safety of staff who are currently working and other workers as they return to workplaces in the coming weeks and months.

As guidance is agreed and published it will be shared with branches. Guidance has to be implemented properly to be effective and that will need effective trade union involvement in local planning and decision making. Employers cannot treat staff and staffing issues as an afterthought.

UNISON has surveyed members and the findings are clear. Members are very concerned about their own safety.

- 83% are “worried” or “very worried” about returning to work and/or increasing numbers of children returning to establishments. Of those people 13% are losing sleep worrying about it. Only 3% felt fully confident
- Less than a fifth felt that their setting had the staff, resources and expertise to ensure all health and safety measure and risk assessments are in place
- Just under a quarter felt that establishments were cleaned often enough to keep them safe from Covid 19
- They are also deeply concerned about transmission from a-symptomatic children/parents and how effective infection control procedures can be put into place for those working with children.

UNISON will raise these findings are raised in our ongoing discussion with the Scottish Government and COSLA. Key findings and survey responses as of Thursday are attached.

This briefing aims to lay out our key concerns to support branches in this work with their employers. Lots of decisions will be made at council and individual workplace level and also to some extent Regional Collaboratives. It is important that branches are involved in this process locally.

### **Key issues**

- Testing, tracing and isolation (TTI): needs to be in place to ensure children are not bring Covid-10 into schools
- Appropriate guidance round safety and infection control needs to be in place
- Guidance needs to implemented in settings
- Risk assessments need to be done for settings but also for some staff who have specific health concerns and for some pupils
- Training for staff re new ways of working re COVID-19
- Cleaning plans and supplies for COVID-19: who what when how often
- Appropriate PPE: what it is for settings and staff? PPE supplies need to then be available in appropriate quantities
- Decision need to be made about the safe capacity of individual settings.
- Space in school office? Should admin and clerical staff continue to work from home. What support and equipment will they need.
- Safe drop off and collection plans need to be organised
- School transport plans need to be in place
- Staff room space/cleaning needs to be reviewed
- Equipment sharing; what can be shared and how is it kept clean?
- Changes to staff/child ratios to meet COVID-19 new ways of working
- Utilising more outdoor space: a great deal of work is needed to put more outdoor space into safe use.

### **Action for branches**

Branches are encouraged to take part local discussions with employers particularly round any plans for expanding the service to offer childcare and summer clubs. The Scottish government has agreed that trade unions involvement is crucial to the ending of “lockdown”. We need to ensure that this is a reality on the ground. Trade unions have health and safety expertise and should be included at the start of any local planning round expansion and reopening. Risk assessments and then action to mitigate risks need to be in place to ensure that workers are safe. The Education Issues Group will continue to have informal catch ups each Friday to ensure that those meeting with government as up to date with issues from branches. Lorraine Thompson who chairs the EIG is Vice Chair of the local government committee and keep the committee informed. If your branch does not currently take part then contact Kay Sillars [k.sillars@unison.co.uk](mailto:k.sillars@unison.co.uk) for details on how to take part.