

To: John Swinney MSP, Deputy First Minister and Chair, COVID-19 Education Recovery Group, Scottish Government
Maree Todd MSP, Minister for Children & Young People, Scottish Government

Cc: Alison Cumming, Interim Director, ELC, Scottish Government

7 July 2020

Dear John (and Maree),

**URGENT: COVID-19:
Restrictions on Blended Care/Placements and the Impact on Childminding, Children, Families & Parental Choice**

I am writing to you in your capacity as Deputy First Minister and Chair of the COVID-19 Education Recovery Group, and also to Maree Todd with whom we work closely and who I am aware is very supportive of and interested in childminding.

The current restrictions on blended placements/care and lack of advance clarity of intent as to when they will be removed (subject to continued progress in suppressing the virus) are causing significant problems for childminders and the families they support. Evidence obtained by SCMA has found that childminders have already lost over 1190 families from their settings due to restrictions on blended placements/care and that **only 19% of childminders believe their businesses will still be viable in 12 months' time if restrictions on blended placements/care continue after the schools go back**. This could have a devastating effect on childminding businesses and parental choice in Scotland.

SCMA has worked very closely and constructively with the Scottish Government, Care Inspectorate and other organisations from across the childcare sector to contribute to national recovery planning. We have very much supported the cautious and considered approach adopted by the Scottish Government which has enabled us to suppress the virus. In doing so we have all been led by the public health advice and none of us wish to risk the progress which has been made in suppressing the virus. However, in addition to considering the public health advice, as the risks reduce there is also an increasing need to take into account the economic and social impact of COVID-19 on families and childcare providers which is becoming more critical by the day.

The Scottish Government has shown strong leadership and advance clarity of intent by announcing last month that it is now possible to plan for the full-time return of schools from 11 August if we continue to make progress in suppressing the virus. This also provided all involved with 7 weeks' notice to plan for this.

We believe that similar leadership and advance clarity of intent is urgently required now for childcare with an advance, unequivocal commitment and statement of intent to remove all restrictions on blended placements (both those involving more than one childcare provider and involving schools and childminding) before the schools go back on 11 August 2020 if we continue to make progress in suppressing the virus. No less is required to maintain the childminding workforce, to restore confidence and enable parents, childminders and other childcare providers to start planning now for when the schools go back next month.

I enclose a copy of a Briefing Paper (including our survey results and further detail) which is being issued under embargo today and which will be published tomorrow. We would be happy to discuss our concerns with you.

Kind regards



Graeme McAlister
Chief Executive

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