



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Education, Children and Young People Committee

The Rt. Hon. Sir Jack Beatson FBA
Chair
Independent Commission on
UK Public Health Emergency Powers
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20th March 2023

Dear Rt. Hon. Sir Jack Beatson FBA,

I am writing on behalf of the Education, Children and Young People Committee ('the Committee') in response to the Independent Commission on UK Public Health Emergency Powers' ('the Commission') call for evidence.

The COVID-19 pandemic has spanned two parliamentary sessions in Scotland (Session 5: 12 May 2016 – 4 May 2021; Session 6: 13 May 2021 –). For this reason, I have provided information that relates both to the Committee's work in Session 6, as well as its predecessor in Session 5.

The Education and Skills Committee (Session 5)

During Session 5, the Education and Skills Committee undertook work around Covid and its impact on—

- [the exam diet and assessments](#); and
- [schools](#).

Education, Children and Young People Committee (Session 6)

During this parliamentary session 6, given the continued impact of Covid on assessments, the Committee has again considered this, taking evidence on the

[Alternative Certification Model](#) at [informal sessions](#) with young people in September 2021 and, formally, at Committee meetings on—

- [22 September 2021](#); and
- [29 September 2021](#).

The Committee conducted a short inquiry on the impact of Covid-19 on children and young people, taking evidence in November and December 2021. This looked in particular at learners with additional support needs, those who are care experienced and those who live in poverty. It published its [report](#) in February 2022.

In [January 2022](#), the Committee looked at how schools were coping with the start of the school term, following the period of lockdown in December 2021.

The Committee was also a secondary committee which scrutinised the Coronavirus (Recovery and Reform) (Scotland) Bill. The Committee focused on Part 2 of the Bill which contained clauses relating to Education. The Committee published its [Stage 1 Report](#) in April 2022.

The Committee recognises that Covid continues to have an impact on a wide range of education and child and young person-related areas. While not the primary focus of the following sessions, the issue and impact of the pandemic was regularly raised.

At an evidence session with senior representatives from the Scottish Qualifications Authority on [7 September 2022](#), the Committee heard about the ongoing impact on students including—

- on their learning,
- the modifications required as a result of any gaps in learning; and
- other support required for learners and their teachers.

Similarly, as part of its recent college regionalisation inquiry, the Committee heard from witnesses about the ongoing pressures on students and institutions including from College Principals, Colleges Scotland and the Scottish Funding Council during meetings on [21 September 2022](#) and [5 October 2022](#).

When giving evidence to the college regionalisation inquiry, the then Commissioner for Fair Access, Sir Peter Scott suggested that the impact from the pandemic would continue for two to three years.

The Committee therefore anticipates that it will continue to feature in its work for the foreseeable future.

Other committee contributions

I understand that the Covid Recovery Committee and the Delegated Powers and Law Reform Committee will be providing separate responses to the call for views

and the Commission may find it helpful to read these responses in conjunction with our response.

Should the Commission have any queries regarding this response, please do not hesitate to contact the Committee using the contact details provided above.

Yours sincerely,

Sue Webber MSP
Convener
Education, Children and Young People's Committee