

To: All teaching unions
in Wales

Via email only

19 May 2020

Dear colleague,

I trust you are keeping safe and well during these unprecedented times.

There has been quite some attention in the UK national press over the weekend about the possibility of schools reopening in England. I wanted to take this opportunity to share my thoughts with you directly, as Children's Commissioner for Wales.

Like you all, I've been concerned about many aspects of children's wellbeing throughout this crisis and I have been in almost continuous contact with Welsh Government, local authorities, health boards and charities to advise on and monitor their support for children.

As the independent champion for children, I believe that children's safety and wellbeing must be a priority and we need to make sure that schools have the right environments in place to support them before they return. Your members will be acutely aware that if the adults around those children – parents and teachers – are feeling anxious then this will also affect children's feelings of security. What is crucial is that we do all we can to make sure all members of the school community feel safe and that those plans are guided by public health information. None of that means I don't want children to return to school as soon as it can be made safe enough to do so. They are missing out not only on much learning at the moment, but also their friendships and chances to play outside the home.

Overall, I am broadly satisfied with the Welsh Government's approach on the issue of schools reopening and acknowledge it's a very complex and difficult decision which must be guided by public health information.

I've been working with government to ensure that children's voices are heard in this increasingly heated debate. We launched a nationwide survey last Wednesday and have already heard from over 15,000 of children and young people of all ages. We are feeding in their views immediately to government so that they can influence this fast-moving decision-making; this includes views on the reopening of schools and other facilities.

If my team can be of any assistance or source of information during these critical deliberations here in Wales, please do not hesitate to get in touch.



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I'd be very happy for you to share a copy of this letter with your members.

With thanks,



Sally

Sally Holland
Comisiynydd Plant Cymru
Children's Commissioner for Wales

cc. Kirsty Williams, Minister for Education
Julie Morgan, Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services