

27 November 2020

Dear Minister Gibb

We have raised with you questions our members have about the level of risk they face given the difficulties of social distancing in many education settings, the sometime poor ventilation and the general absence of mask wearing by children in class.

We have raised with you our belief that it is not safe for CEV members of school staff to return to school-based working from Dec 3rd. We urged you to tell schools that they should maintain that CEV staff should continue working from home for the present and that other disabled and or vulnerable staff should have their risk assessments re-evaluated.

As part of your duty of care to education staff we are confident that you are collecting data about the risks they face and therefore we would urge you to share with us, for each week since September:

1. The number of teachers and support staff who have tested positive.
2. The number of teachers and support staff who have been hospitalised.
3. The number of teachers and support staff who have died.

In each case we would urge you to share available demographic information as to age, sex and ethnicity.

We have also shared with you our thinking on projections of number of infections in primary and secondary schools and on the possible impacts on school attendances. Partly this draws on strong correlations between published infection data and published absence data.

We realise that we have far less data available to us than the department has.

We would therefore urge you to share with us and with the profession what projections you have around virus levels and absence in primary and secondary schools in the various regions and local authority areas for the period between now and Christmas.

We have told you that we think there is a strong case for moving to rota operation - in a way that could maintain more educational continuity and whilst help suppressing the R rate. Your projections would allow us to understand the reasoning behind your apparent determination that there should be no move any period of online learning - or at least not in any planned way.

We also appreciate that these projections could have significant uncertainties - but we are sure you must have such projections: otherwise, you would just be flying blind. We would also urge you to update those projections for the Spring term in the light of developing data and other developments between now and then.

Yours sincerely

Mary Bousted
Joint General Secretary

Kevin Courtney
Joint General Secretary