

LANCASHIRE SCHOOLS FORUM

20 October 2020

Item No: 12

Title of Item: Urgent Business Outcomes - Supply Scheme update September 2020

Executive Summary

This report provides confirmation of the decisions taken to amend the staff supply scheme arrangements from September 2020 onwards following updated government and county council advice on COVID-19.

Recommendation

The Forum is asked to:

- a) Note the report.

Background

On 20 August 2020 the Forum's Urgent Business Procedure was used to obtain views about amendments to the Supply Cover Insurance and Maternity Scheme for Lancashire Schools for September 2020 onwards in the light of revised Government guidance.

Changes to the operation of the 2020/21 Supply Cover Scheme had been made in April 2020 and June 2020, following consultation with Forum, to reflect the changing government advice on schools in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and to offer extended support for scheme members in certain circumstances beyond the normal scheme operation .

Government advice and expectations on schools was updated again in preparation for the full reopening of schools from September 2020 and a new draft update of the scheme operation was circulated for consideration. The main change proposed related to the removal of support for shielding absences and costs, as government guidance on shielding had changed and workers who were clinically extremely vulnerable were advised that they no longer needed to shield. Staff in Lancashire schools could therefore return to work in September as long as the workplace is COVID secure. The updated rules continued to support staff who are self isolating due to COVID-19 symptoms or as a result of test and trace advice even though these absences would not normally be covered by the scheme as they are not classed as a sickness absence.

Responses by 5.00pm on Monday 24 August 2020 were requested and by the closing date, responses were received from 20 members.

13 responses supported the proposals as originally presented and a further 6 replies supported the proposals but suggested certain amendments. One response opposed the introduction of revised arrangements.

Areas where comments and amendments to the proposals were suggested by members were considered alongside the county council's Schools HR policies and amendments were made to the revised autumn term 2020 supply arrangements to include:

- The scheme will not automatically cover costs for staff needing to self-isolate when returning from foreign travel, as HR advice, available on the Schools Portal, confirms that there is no entitlement to additional paid leave for a period of quarantine after returning from holiday and includes a range of options for covering such circumstances, including taking unpaid leave. The HR advice does include some circumstances that schools may wish to consider sympathetically.
- In specific circumstances where shielding is extended or reintroduced by the government, including in any local shielding extensions, the scheme will cover any additional costs incurred by schools during this period, subject to the normal scheme rules and supporting evidence in any claims process.

Some members felt that the scheme should continue to support staff who were shielding and cover for pregnant staff beyond 28 weeks was particularly highlighted. It was not felt possible to incorporate this into the scheme, as it did not conform to current LCC HR advice, although national and local guidance will be kept under review.