

PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS ON COVID-19 AND ANSWERS BY THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT

Friday 1 May 2020

A link to Members' Virtual Question Time on Constitution, Europe and External Affairs and Economy, Fair Work and Culture, where oral questions and answers relating to COVID-19 can be found, is included at page 5.

Written questions lodged on 1 May 2020 can be found on page 6 of this document.

ANSWERS TO PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS (Received on 1 May)

Government initiated questions

Emma Harper (South Scotland) (Scottish National Party): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on Marine Scotland's scientific trial of electrofishing for razor clams.

S5W-28815

Fergus Ewing: As a result of coronavirus and advice relating to physical distancing, the scientific trial of electrofishing for razor clams was suspended until 30 April 2020. I am not in a position to recommence the trial at this stage as all Marine Scotland survey programmes are suspended.

I am therefore extending the suspension of the trial until 15 June 2020, in line with current Marine Scotland Science survey suspension, and will review the situation then.

The domestic fishing licences of the vessels engaged in the trial remain valid should the fishers wish to seek alternative fishing opportunities.

Angela Constance (Almond Valley) (Scottish National Party): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update on the expected timescales for the opening of the Royal Hospital for Children and Young People.

S5W-28817

Jeane Freeman: I halted the move to the Royal Hospital for Children and Young People in July 2019, on the utmost priority of patient safety. There continues to be significant positive progress which has led to NHS Lothian taking occupancy of the Department of Clinical Neurosciences in May.

I have been informed by NHS Lothian that due to complexities with the remaining work and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, this has led to possible changes to the delivery of the programme of works to address the issues of patient safety in haemato – oncology. NHS Lothian is working closely with IHSL to ensure delivery of the programme as close to the timeframe of a full handover in Autumn 2020, but this timeframe is now under review. A refreshed programme is likely to be available during the second half of May and I will of course keep Parliament updated.

Ministerial portfolio: Constitution, Europe and External Affairs

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government what consideration it is giving to the implications of holding Scottish parliamentary elections in May 2021 if full or partial social distancing restrictions are in place.

S5W-28689

Graeme Dey: The Scottish Government fully expects the Scottish Parliament Election scheduled for 6 May 2021 to go ahead. If necessary, we will work with Returning Officers and others to look at options for running an election in different circumstances from the norm but the election is more than a year away and it is too early to make such decisions.

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government whether it has examined the feasibility of conducting Scottish parliamentary elections exclusively by postal ballot should social distancing restrictions remain in place in whole or in part in May 2021.

S5W-28690

Graeme Dey: I refer the Member to the answer to question S5W-28689 on 1 May 2020.

A feasibility study into conducting the Scottish Parliament Election exclusively by postal ballot has not been undertaken at this point.

All answers to written parliamentary questions are available on the Parliament's website, the search facility for which can be found at:

<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx>

Ministerial portfolio: Education and Skills

Jeremy Balfour (Lothian) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government whether a phased return to school is being considered for children with additional needs for whom social distancing during the COVID-19 outbreak is more difficult, particularly for those with physical requirements.

S5W-28679

John Swinney: There is a lot to consider around the re-opening of schools and early learning settings ahead of the science indicating that we are able to do so. The recently established C-19 Education Recovery Group is looking into a range of issues, and ensuring that learners, including those with additional support needs are able to progress with their education and be prepared for the school year ahead is of course a part of this. The group, chaired by the Deputy First Minister, will be working with key stakeholders to ensure that we consider all sensible options.

On 20 April 2020 the Scottish Government also published comprehensive guidance to help support continuity for children and young people's learning for the term ahead. This is available from <https://www.gov.scot/publications/supporting-pupils-parents-teachers-learning-during-term-4/>

This guidance is for pupils, parents and teachers and was prepared by the Scottish Government and Education Scotland with input from CoSLA, SOLACE, ADES and professional associations. It gives an overview of the measures in place and steps being taken, at a national and local level, to support all children and young people in Scotland.

Jeremy Balfour (Lothian) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government how it will support children with additional support needs who will not be able to benefit from transition support because of the COVID-19 outbreak, particularly between (a) Nursery-P1 and (b) P7-S1.

S5W-28681

John Swinney: Local authorities, head teachers and teachers are experienced and skilled in leading transition arrangements. For Term 4, and looking ahead to the next session, schools, clusters and local authorities are considering new and innovative approaches to transition in relation to curriculum and wellbeing matters. This will include consideration of a wide range of factors, including the challenges faced by young people who have been particularly affected by COVID-19. This could be due to illness or bereavement, the impact of social isolation or experiencing poverty for the first time. The importance of relationships at a local level is paramount to successful work in this area.

The Scottish Government has published new guidance - Supporting Pupils, Parents and Teachers: Learning in Term 4 - to support the home learning of children and young people. This is available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/supporting-pupils-parents-teachers-learning-during-term-4/>

To support local authorities and schools, Education Scotland is developing further bespoke Term 4 guidance to assist in planning for the many transitions that take place during Term 4. These materials will be available in early May.

Jeremy Balfour (Lothian) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government what support is being provided to autistic children who are unable to attend the COVID-19 hubs because (a) their parents or guardians are not considered to be key workers, (b) they are not considered a child protection risk or (c) they are unable to social distance.

S5W-28678

John Swinney: We recognise that children and young people with autism may be finding things particularly challenging during this difficult time.

Local authorities have developed a range of creative ways to support children and young people with a wide range of needs during this challenging time. This includes

creating opportunities for distance and online learning and the use of a range of learning resources which can be adapted to meet the learning needs of children and young people.

The Scottish Government has developed a range of information and guidance, including specific advice within Coronavirus (COVID-19): supporting pupils, parents and teachers - learning during term 4 and on Parent Club for parents and carers to help them to support children and young people with a range of needs, including autism when learning at home; comprehensive guidance to help support continuity for children and young people's learning for the term ahead; updating the Autism Toolbox to include a section on coronavirus, which provides information and signposting on supporting autistic learners at home.

Ministerial portfolio: Health and Sport

Neil Findlay (Lothian) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will publish the scientific advice that it is using to inform its current testing strategy for COVID-19, and the advice it used for the period (a) up to 20 February and (b) from 21 February to 20 March 2020.

S5W-28234

Jeane Freeman: I shall reply to the member as soon as possible.

Ministerial portfolio: Rural Economy and Tourism

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government what action it will take to reduce the reportedly increased number of people roaming through livestock farms during the COVID-19 outbreak, and whether it will consider temporarily revoking the right to roam, particularly during lambing season.

S5W-28236

Roseanna Cunningham: I shall reply to the member as soon as possible.

ORAL QUESTIONS ON 1 MAY 2020

Members' Virtual Question Time Portfolios: Constitution, Europe and External Affairs and Economy, Fair Work and Culture

Questions and answers can be found in the Official Report of proceedings [here](#)

Written questions lodged on 1 May 2020

(Expected answer date: 18 May)

[S5W-28816](#) Jackie Baillie: To ask the Scottish Government how many requests for clarification regarding COVID-19 the Death Certification Review Service has received each month from GPs, broken down by NHS board area.

[S5W-28819](#) Stuart McMillan: To ask the Scottish Government what consideration will be given to prioritising testing for stage 4 cancer patients once a COVID-19 antibody test is developed and introduced.

[S5W-28820](#) Mark Ruskell: To ask the Scottish Government, further to the answer to question S5W-28306 by John Swinney on 29 April 2020, what percentage of the relevant school and early years population are vulnerable children, who can attend critical provision during the COVID-19 outbreak.

[S5W-28821](#) Mark Ruskell: To ask the Scottish Government, further to the answer to question S5W-28306 by John Swinney on 29 April 2020, what percentage of the relevant school and early years population are attending critical provision during the COVID-19 outbreak, broken down by reason.

[S5W-28822](#) Mark Ruskell: To ask the Scottish Government, further to the answer to question S5W-28306 by John Swinney on 29 April 2020, what steps it will take to collect data from local authorities on the use of critical provision for school and early learning during the COVID-19 outbreak.

[S5W-28823](#) Lewis Macdonald: To ask the Scottish Government whether it will issue guidance to local authorities and private providers in receipt of public funds to clarify what their approach should be to childcare facilities charging full or part fees to parents as a retainer fee for childcare places while these facilities are either closed or open only to key workers during the COVID-19 outbreak.

[S5W-28824](#) Jackie Baillie: To ask the Scottish Government whether it will prioritise the re-opening of the local authority-run recycling centres that were closed due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Searching for questions and motions

While this report contains only questions and answers relating to COVID-19, answers to all parliamentary questions can be found in daily written answer reports, which are published [here](#).

All parliamentary questions and answers can also be searched for by keyword, MSP asking, Scottish Government Minister answering, as well as by date and other filters, through the advanced search function on the Parliament's website [here](#).