

Greens challenge “grossly unfair” decision on early years



15 January 2021

- **Last-minute guidance from Government on Early Years means providers who sought to prioritise health will be punished by Government**

Greens have today spoken out regarding a last-minute change in guidance, which means that early years providers seeking to protect staff and children from Covid-19 transmission will be penalised by Government.

The amount of free-places funding given to early years providers is decided next week, as providers will be asked to count the number of children in attendance during the week of the census – a data counting measure that government are pursuing despite the impact of the national pandemic.

Prior to guidance issued on Thursday 14th January, providers were able to claim for pupils registered at a nursery and on roll under ‘exceptional circumstances’. Following this new guidance, issued at short notice, nurseries who have limited expected attendance or who have supported staff concerned about the pandemic, will not be able to claim funding for children. Brighton and Hove City Council will experience a further gap in funding as a result of the earlier committee decision to move council-run nurseries to close to all but vulnerable children and the children of key workers. [2]

This new guidance from government comes despite the increasing case numbers in England, and rising infection rates across all age groups in Brighton & Hove. Latest Covid-19 data has confirmed that infection rates in the city are now higher than the rate for England, more than doubling since the national lockdown began on 26th December. Rising infection rates locally have also provoked concern for the NHS, with recent news reports stating that all critical care beds in Brighton and Hove’s NHS trust are full. [3]

Greens say the decision to make funding decisions based on attendance in the midst of the pandemic is “grossly unfair” and will be writing to the

Department for Education to challenge the decision. Councils in areas where nurseries are open to all have also begun to demand a change in position from government ministers, as it is likely that new rules mean both private and council-run nursery providers will have limited attendance of both staff and children, and experience a funding shortfall.[4]

This also comes in the same week councillors were told that the amount of funding given to early years providers in Brighton and Hove remains lower than the national average.[5]

Caroline Lucas, MP for Brighton Pavilion said:

“It beggars belief that, in the middle of a pandemic crisis, the Government would deliberately change its guidance in such a way as to increase the risk of infection for children and staff. Ministers are wilfully putting Councils in an impossible situation: if nursery providers remain closed, collectively they stand to lose millions of pounds; if they’re forced to open, they put staff and children at risk. To hold nursery providers and young children to ransom in this way is despicable and – following the free school meals debacle – marks a new low in the Government’s cruel and callous treatment of our young people.”

Cllr Hannah Clare, Chair of the Children, Young People and Skills Committee said:

“In the middle of a pandemic, where the number of cases are higher than ever – the choice from Government is that unless we re-open our council-run nurseries, we will lose out.

“Asking councils to count the attendance and demand that we progress with this census during a national lockdown and some of the worst rates of this virus we have ever seen locally is grossly unfair. Providers are being forced by Government to make decisions based on finances – not on the health and wellbeing of our community.

“We will continue to challenge this decision and remain clear – that the health of our community is the priority of this council.”

NOTES

1

Guidance issued 14 January 2021

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Ytd1eEIbgnIGyZP8dwdDk3Q8I0MAFmFK/view?usp=drivesdk>

2

<https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/news/2021/changes-nursery-and-early-years-provision-7-january>

3

[Covid-19 key statistics for Brighton & Hove \(brighton-hove.gov.uk\)](https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/covid-19-key-statistics)

and

<https://www.brightonandhovenews.org/2021/01/14/its-critical-brighton-hospital-full-after-surge-in-coronavirus-cases/>

4

<https://kccmediahub.net/council-urges-government-to-review-nursery-funding-during-lockdown745>

5

<https://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/documents/s161397/Families%20Children%20and%20Learning%20Fees%20and%20Charges%20202122.pdf>

Last-minute guidance from Government on Early Years means providers who sought to prioritise health will be punished by Government

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[Green Party criticises delay to “tokenistic and inadequate” border checks](#)



14 January 2021

- Jonathan Bartley: “With news of another new variant arriving from

Brazil, this government's inaction is continuing to cost lives"

The Green Party has criticised the latest delay to introducing Covid checks at UK borders.

Little more than 24 hours before pre-departure testing for international travellers to England was due to be introduced, the government has announced that it will now only start from Monday. [1]

Green Party co-leader Jonathan Bartley said:

"Once again we see the government presiding over absolute chaos when it comes to tackling this pandemic.

"Months after other countries introduced stringent and properly resourced Covid checks at borders, Grant Shapps has announced a tokenistic and inadequate plan and failed to even implement it on time.

"With news of another new variant arriving from Brazil, this government's inaction is continuing to cost lives."

While the introduction of tighter international travel regulations has been welcomed by the Greens, the party has warned the UK's restrictions do not go far enough.

Bartley said:

"Proof of a test up to three days before travel and then unregulated quarantine for only 10 days is not going to protect the UK either against reintroductions or new mutated strains. We need the sort of regulated quarantine in government hotels that other countries across the world have introduced, with a final test before travellers are free to enter our communities.

"The deeply concerning stories of people arriving at our airports and filling in a form with no follow up increases the risk of transmission but also sends a message that the government is not taking the virus seriously, thus undermining compliance with other public-health measures.

"As prevalence of the virus falls as a result of vaccination and movement restrictions, we need an adequate system to protect the country against new cases being brought into the country by travellers."

The Green Party's proposals are supported by evidence published by the APPG on Covid. [2]

Since the public health response will continue to be run by the devolved governments, introducing regulated quarantine will require the UK government to work collaboratively with the devolved administration in Wales.

Notes

<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-negative-test-requirement-for-people-arriving-in-england-delayed-until-next-week-12187294>

2

Interim report from the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Covid, December 2020.

https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/marchforchange/pages/326/attachments/original/1606989975/APPG_on_Coronavirus_Interim_Report_December_2020__%28%29.pdf?1606989975

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[Greens support union's campaign to make schools safe](#)



8 January 2021

Green Party leader Jonathan Bartley has welcomed calls from the National Education Union to invest more in school staff to cut class sizes and ensure Covid safety.

Bartley said:

“The government should be doing everything it can to reduce class sizes, both in the immediate threat of this pandemic but also for the future. This means a nationwide campaign backed up by the necessary government investment to mobilise all teaching assistants and agency staff, some of whom are furloughed and others who are unemployed.

“The pandemic has also revealed the inadequate amount of space in our school buildings. We need schools to have immediate access to more community buildings to allow more social distancing. And longer term, we should reverse the decade of under investment spending cuts, enabling schools to have adequate space for safe and effective learning.”

Data from the Institute for Fiscal Studies show that 83% of schools in England will have less money this year compared with 2015 while overall, schools in England will be £2bn poorer in 2020 than in 2015.[1]

“It was the issue of over-crowded schools that first brought me into politics, when I had to battle to get my wheelchair-using son into our local school. The limitations on space were damaging then and they are shown to be unsafe today. We have heard much about the importance of education in recent months but this rings rather hollow and needs to be backed up with investment in school staff and buildings.

“I am also calling on the health secretary to show support for our brave school staff by prioritising them for vaccination.”

ENDS

Notes

1

<https://schoolcuts.org.uk/story/funding-crisis-explained/>

2

The Green Party are supporting the National Education Union’s campaign for a better education

system:<https://twitter.com/NEUnion/status/1347146081893818374>

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[Greens call on government to vaccinate all frontline workers](#)



7 January 2021

Petition launched today asks the JCVI to recognise frontline workers as a priority for receiving the coronavirus vaccine

The Green Party has [launched an online petition](#) today calling on the government and the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) to propel all frontline workers up the coronavirus vaccination priority list.

Green Party Co-Leader Jonathan Bartley said: “We have heard from frontline workers themselves about the experiences they have gone through in the past year – and are still going through – in relation to the pandemic. The nature of their roles means that social workers, teachers, police officers, delivery drivers and huge numbers of others, are vulnerable, and they feel that every day when out there doing their jobs.

“Being unable to work from home means they are running the risk of catching a virus which has mutated into a more transmissible and therefore more dangerous threat. So not only are they risking becoming unwell themselves but also potentially infecting loved ones at home.

“We want to see as many people as possible sign this petition to force the government’s hand on prioritising vaccination for all frontline workers, who are so critical in our fight against this virus.”

Green Party health spokesperson Larry Sanders wrote to Nadhim Zahawi MP at the beginning of December calling for this prioritisation.

ENDS

Larry Sanders’ letter dated from December can be read here:

<https://www.greenparty.org.uk/assets/files/letters/Letter-to-Nadhim-Zahawi-02122020.pdf>

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[Green Party responds to Donald Trump attempted coup](#)



7 January 2021

Green Party co-leader Sian Berry: “Democracy demands defence and renewal”

In response to the violent scenes in Washington yesterday, the Green Party has called for a renewed commitment to democracy from all citizens, wherever they are in the world.

Co-leader Sian Berry said: “For the past five years Donald Trump has shown nothing but contempt for democracy. He has flouted democratic norms and institutions, and worse, he has incited violence on the streets and online. Yet in spite of this a large number of influential British politicians and journalists have supported him and sought his approval.

“Politicians, including the majority of the current Cabinet, enabled him and failed to challenge his clear attacks on democratic standards. Far right politicians epitomised by Nigel Farage, explicitly nurtured Trump’s conspiracy theories and propaganda. Some journalists, now expressing shock, facilitated this attack on democracy and made hay from headlines and clickbait.

“The UK and USA consider ourselves global leaders of democracy but we have failed to renew and update our own political systems. The events of yesterday indicate the urgent need for serious constitutional review and reform of political systems on both sides of the Atlantic.

“This morning we should all remember that eternal vigilance is the price of freedom. We cannot afford to take democracy for granted.”

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