**A message from Cllr Carole Pattison, Cabinet member for Learning, Aspiration and Communities, and Mel Meggs, Strategic Director of Children’s Services**

Dear colleagues

Thank you once again for the exceptional support you are providing to Kirklees pupils and families. Your dedication continues to make an enormous difference at this very difficult time and we truly appreciate the way you are overcoming so many complex challenges.

We know that the majority of our schools have remained open throughout the Covid-19 pandemic and, therefore, many staff have been working continuously for several months. We recognise that many people are in need of a richly-deserved break over the upcoming summer holidays.

Some schools, of course, will have no option but to close over the summer as they are undergoing works on their site. Others will make the decision to close, while others will choose to remain open in some way. There is clearly a very careful balance to be reached between the desire to support families, the need to consider staff and the need to have enough time to plan for September. Whichever decision you make for your individual school, please be assured that we will understand your reasons and you will have our support.

With this in mind, our Community Hub Co-ordinators and Learning Partners will be talking to schools very soon to discuss the weeks ahead. You will be aware that, in partnership with the Kirklees Youth Alliance, we already operate a Healthy Holidays programme which is targeted at specific groups. We are highly committed to this programme, and it will continue. However, we are now looking to widen the available provision so that we reach a larger number of families over the holiday period at a time of increased anxiety, vulnerability and disadvantage in our communities.

We are keen to understand the summer plans of each school so that we can identify any areas where there may be a need for the local authority to provide extra community support and capacity. Once we know how the school closures will look in each area, we will shape the local provision accordingly and at pace. Our aim is to ensure that children and families can continue to access services, support and opportunities throughout the holiday period.

We also recognise that the usual transitions from year group to year group are fundamentally different this year and have been a concern for all of us. Strong and successful transitions are vital for all pupils and we are keen to take steps which could reduce the impact of the current huge disruption.

Next week, the Education and Learning Partnership Board will decide whether the first week of the autumn term will be designated as ‘Transitions Week’ in Kirklees. Again, we know that different schools have different needs in this context and have been able to make different levels of progress. However, a dedicated Transitions Week would be another way of supporting our children and young people at a time of unprecedented challenges.

We will write to you again soon with a further update on how we can all work together in helping children across Kirklees to enjoy the best possible standards of care and education. We also intend to write another letter to parents and carers, once the government has provided more information. Thank you for everything you do.

Cllr Carole Pattison

Mel Meggs