

REPORT TO: Children, Young People & Families
Policy & Performance Board

DATE: 20th July 2020

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, People

PORTFOLIO: Children, Education & Social Care

SUBJECT: Education, Inclusion & Provision Update

WARD(S) All

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 This report provides a summary of the work of the Education, Inclusion and Provision Department during COVID 19.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That:

i) Members note the contents of the report.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Background

Although most staff have been working from home, throughout the lockdown the Officers in the Education, Inclusion and Provision Department have continued to provide key services. This informal report summarises some of the key activities that have taken place since 23rd March 2020.

3.2 Early Years and School Improvement Update

3.2.1 Early Years

- Collecting the attendance details of EY's children attending pre-schools; nurseries; childminders and out of school clubs. This includes breaking down and reporting attendance of vulnerable groups such as Children in Care (CIC); Children in Need (CIN); children with a child protection plan (CP) and other vulnerabilities such as those with an Education Health & Care Plan (EHCP).
- Reporting to DFE changes and trends in attendance on a daily basis.
- Regular telephone conferences with RSC/DFE officer to outline the key issues and barriers to the sector including financial implications; sustainability; sufficiency; Out of School Club issues

and matters that we can raise to feedback to government

- Initially ensuring we had enough childcare provision; securing provision and brokering settings to remain open and act as hubs so that we could meet sufficiency requirements
- Advising about risk assessments for re-opening for all children; for risk assessments for vulnerable and following up provisions making arrangements for children with EHCP's to support and meet their needs
- Advising and providing guidance about frequent and regular changes in government guidance and public health guidance to ensure provisions are aware or latest statutory requirements and guidelines
- Weekly phone calls with an EY Communication group sharing effective practice; key issues; national and local plans; feeding back to DFE about sector issues
- Updating Family Information Service with information and provision available which requires regular updating
- Liaise with DFE regarding the EY Outcomes Fund programme "TALK Halton" and EY Professional Development Fund which is currently on from DFE pause but due to continue next year.

3.3 **School Improvement & Governance**

3.3.1

- Leading on the creation and coordination of extensive documents to support around schools re-opening; planning; assessment changes and recording; practical planning for physical school environment; meeting children's social, emotional and well-being needs; PHSE and bereavement guidance; transport to school; communication pathways; signposts to advice.
- Identifying and sharing sources and resources for home learning and links to websites for home/remote learning prior to the government establishing The Oak Academy online resource.
- Creating and sharing Transition documents to support transition processes during a Covid outbreak response.
- Support to schools around NQT assessment, support and completion of induction year arrangements, whilst planning a suite of NQT handbook and training documents for next academic year.
- Ahead of Covid a new governor services provider had been brokered so time has been spent frequently liaising and sharing contacts with schools and the new service provider ; supporting governor queries; providing guidance and advice to governors;

checking governor compliance for schools and continuing to recruit LA governors.

- Directors briefing for governors and planning for a virtual briefing termly detailed report.
- Supporting Headteacher recruitment arrangements and re-organising for next academic year for those going through recruitment. Brokering interim arrangements.
- Liaising with EEF about Halton's EEF Maths project which is working across the primary and secondary sector.
- Liaising weekly with Primary; secondary and special schools and the college about educational issues; Covid plans and impact and national/local issues to share with DFE/RSC.
- Continuing to hold Schools Causing Concern meetings for schools that fall into this category-ongoing challenge, support and monitoring.
- Creating, establishment and holding regular 3 hour IEB meetings to support a school in special measures. A wealth of challenge and support work to secure a rapid improvement journey for the school.
- Support and advice to schools covering a range of school concerns and planning. Schools are requiring a great deal of advice and reassurance throughout this period.
- Advising and informing schools of changes to assessment processes and plans moving into next year.
- Planning of school improvement core offer for next academic year.
- Detailed reports produced of school performance data with relevant benchmarking; census data and performance of SEND children EHCP and children on support plans; data analysis reports produced for Children in Care; detailed reports and analysis of a range of attendance data.
- School Games Organised has tweeted and created daily physical challenges for children, families and schools, whilst organising virtual competitions and physical challenges.
- Liaising virtually with Reading Strategy group to continue plans for Halton Reading Strategy.
- Ongoing liaison with regional partners to share planning and effective practice locally and regionally.
- TALK Halton team have been creating a wealth of communication training materials to support communication and language development including postcards for parents sharing

communication ideas in the home and whilst out at the park/shops etc. they have also produced a detailed evaluation report sharing impact so far and future planning.

- Some key successes include being able to maintain provision for vulnerable children and keyworker children throughout in both EY's, schools and Riverside College; ensuring that Halton were able to deliver on the statutory duty to provide sufficient childcare for the region and advise parents/carers of provision available. Our rates of vulnerable EY's children attending provision is increasing week on week and has always been above national rates.

3.4 **Behaviour Support Service**

- 3.4.1
 - The LA's has been proactive in its support around managing trauma, behaviour and mental health issues in readiness for (vulnerable) children's return to school. Summarised is the key activities undertaken in this area by the Behaviour Support Service.
 - Kept in touch with 150 previously trained school Mental Health First Aider, including providing them with bespoke advice on how to support CYP both during and in preparation for post COVID19.
 - Regularly reviewed all guidance on behaviour management, physical handling and Mental Health First Aid to ensure that it is in line with the advice offered by DfE, PHE and national providers, both during COVID 19 and post COVID 19. This has also included updating the model Behaviour Policy provided to schools to that it includes all the required amendments and ensuring that the PHSE curriculum takes into account the impact of COVID 19 ready for September. Advice also been gained from Tom Bennett, Government's behaviour Tsar and from other LAs to ensure the most effective practice is in place in Halton. All of this has been communicated this to schools via the LA Daily briefing.
 - Developed resources for school staff to support them in identifying the signs that a child is experiencing anxiety, reminding them that behaviour is a communication of need, and providing strategies to manage this. These have been sent to all schools.
 - Provided a signposting service for HTs and other agencies, professionals and the community to relevant information from other reputable sources so that support can be provided to both pupils and adults on how to adapt to the 'new normal', including trauma based curriculum resources, emotional and mental health wellbeing resources for children and adults. All of this is regularly updated and is on the BSS section of the Local Offer.

- Recognising capacity issues for HTs, supported them by providing summaries of relevant documents for example the Education Endowment Fund's guidance report *Improving Social & Emotional Learning in Primary Schools*;
- Family Liaison Officers have continued to provide direct support to parents the Behaviour Support Service have previously worked with and also the new cases that have been referred by schools. Any additional support required has been coordinated by BSS, this has included acting as a conduit with school and parent, and facilitating a safe and planned return to school for the child.
- Provided bespoke advice and support to members of school staff and senior leaders in planning for the effective return of individual children who have previously displayed challenging behaviour. This has included input into risk assessments, guidance around the law regarding school behaviour policies and supporting the schools to reflect on and prioritise the needs of the child as well as reducing staff anxieties.
- With wider school opening we have resumed supporting our schools involved in a project with Pivotal Education to ensure that they are enabled to continue and enhance this work post-COVID and that this has a positive impact on behaviour in school.

3.5 Halton Virtual Schools

- 3.5.1 The Virtual School has continued to support our children and young people and the work it has undertaken is summarised below.
- Developed a PEP that takes into account the impact of COVID19 on the emotional health and mental wellbeing, and educational outcomes of children in care. The PEP meetings have been taking place using virtual platforms but are still in line with statutory guidance.
 - Reviewed the attendance of each child in care, regardless of where they are educated and coordinated plans for their safe return to school if they are not attending.
 - Provided bespoke support for any child who is experiencing anxiety or presenting with challenging behaviour to ensure that they can remain accessing their school. This has often meant coordinating individualised programmes.
 - Provided a large number of online resources, via the Virtual School website, to support children and carers with learning at home. This has included emotional and mental health resources

as well as curriculum and transition support.

- Developed 'Keeping in Touch' age related packs which will go out to all children and young people in care to support them with learning during the summer and also prepare them for a return to a 'new normal' school in September.
- Continued to provide additional tuition through online services as required.
- Kept in touch with all Designated Teachers to ensure that they are up to date with any issues and also to provide support as they prepare for children in care returning to school.

3.6 Placement

- 3.6.1
 - An overarching priority for the Placements team has been the immediate processing and authorisation of all invoices to ensure earliest possible payments to aid cashflow – this will revert back to usual process as of 20th July 2020 in line with authority payment terms.
 - Some of the sub regional and regional meetings that have traditionally been face to face meetings are able to be conducted via Skype / Zoom / Teams - this will reduce travel time as well as carbon footprint and some financials linked to mileage /parking
 - **SEND** – Regional framework that was being developed prior to lockdown has continued and tender will be launched imminently for day , 38 week and 52 week Educational placements
 - **SEND OOB pupils** - risk assessments completed for children in out of borough settings and maintained contact with schools having regular discussions about the status of children and how schools support children to come return.
 - **SEND OOB pupils** – weekly contact collated including attendance and any issues raised – fed on appropriately to the key person as well as SEN
 - **SEND OOB schools** - planned contractual monitoring visits are in the process of starting again , linked to a an agreed risk assessment – process has been reviewed
 - **SEND OOB Schools** - aside from the quality monitoring visits all other functions of the team have continued remotely
 - **Short breaks** – innovative delivery of services – on line / zoom / skype as well as direct delivery for some of the most complex young people throughout lockdown

- **Short breaks** – positive feedback from families accessing the services offered – feeling very supported
- **Short breaks** – building a Summer school holiday offer – risk assessed and direct contact with families to gauge what engagement would potentially look like
- **Short breaks** – providers using a you said we did in terms of how the service offer has changed during COVID
- **Social Care placements** – planned contractual monitoring visits are in the process of starting again , linked to a an agreed risk assessment – process has been reviewed
- **Social Care placements** – sub regional work across Liverpool City Region relating to a localised contractual framework has continued during lockdown – a full provider consultation exercise has been completed and tender goes out mid July for Residential and Fostering placements in the external sector
- **Social care placements** – aside from the quality monitoring visits all other functions of the team have continued remotely.

3.7 Policy, Provision and Performance

- 3.7.1
- Officers have continued to deliver their statutory functions across a range of areas, and have adapted their ways of working to the current environment. In some cases existing statutory regulations have been temporarily amended by Parliament to ensure continuity of service, and officers have interpreted and adopted those regulations across service areas.
 - **Admissions:** the annual allocation of places to children in reception class at primary schools for September 2020 took place as usual on 16th April 2020. Officers continued to support parents and schools throughout this process and parents were notified of the outcome of their child's allocation without any disruption to the service.
 - Temporary Regulations were introduced to allow School Admission Appeals to continue throughout this time. LAs were given discretion to determine a process that would work for their demographic. School Admission Appeals are normally held with the panel, parents, school/LA representative, and clerk all present in the same room, but this has not been allowed during lockdown. Instead, all parties have been given the paperwork in advance, and been given time to email questions, queries on the appeal cases presented, following which panels have met virtually, with the clerk, and made their decisions. This process, to-date, has worked well.

- In Year Fair Access Panel meetings have been undertaken remotely with LA officers and school staff, ensuring that those children who are without a school place (pupils moving into the area, excluded, or where all parties feel that a move will be beneficial for the pupil) are continued to be offered provision and provided with the appropriate support.
- **Education Welfare Service:** The Education Welfare Service has continued to support schools and the borough's vulnerable families.
- Schools have received support with attendance matters, and Education Welfare Officers have collated attendance data from all Halton schools on a daily basis throughout the lockdown period to complete a return on the number of "vulnerable children and children of key/critical workers" attending all our schools each day.
- Vulnerable families have received a range of support from the provision of food vouchers, joint meetings with Children's Social Care Staff to family homes, and telephone support.
- Fixed penalty fines were ceased during this time for previous non-attendance as it was determined that those families were already likely to be suffering financial hardship due to work ceasing, parents being furloughed etc.
- Officers have continued to liaise and visit those families whose children are Electively Home Educated (those children and young people whose parents had removed them from education prior to COVID-19). Any home visit undertaken was risk assessed prior to visit, with officers equipped appropriately, and all social distancing and Health & Safety applied.
- Home Tuition review meetings have continued, being held remotely, for those pupils who, prior to COVID-19, were deemed medically unfit to attend school and were accessing tuition via attendance at the Home Tuition Centre in Ditton.
- **Technical Support:** have continued to visit schools and undertake electrical testing on portable appliances, and undertaken routine maintenance work on kitchen appliances.
- They have also provided a range of support to Head Teachers, caretakers, site managers, and school cleaning staff on increased cleaning routines throughout schools at this time across the borough nursery, primary, secondary and special schools.
- **Capital Development:** Whilst, generally, capital works at schools have temporarily ceased, this has allowed time for more in-depth discussions with schools about planned programmes of work in the future.

- Several capital programmes have continued due to the nature of the works, and others will commence again shortly. None of the cessation of works has or will impact upon curriculum delivery.
- **14-19 Team:** Members of the 14-19 Team have continued to liaise with children and young people who are at risk of becoming NEET (Not in Employment, Education, or Training), and it is widely acknowledged both locally and nationally that the current COVID-19 situation will have a significant impact in the future for the number of young people at risk of becoming NEET.
- Officers have been targeting support where needed, and scoping out plans to support those year groups who will be affected in the future. Officers have also continued to work with colleagues across the Liverpool City Region in this area.
- **Policy Team, and Performance & Improvement Team:** Work has continued in preparation for the transfer from the Carefirst Children's Social Care system, to the Eclipse system, and officers in both the Policy Team and the Performance and Improvement Team have been working with Children's Social Care colleagues to ensure that data is accurate in readiness for transfer, and that policy documents are in place to support social workers once the new system goes live.
- General policy reviews have continued across service areas as would normally happen, with officers working remotely, via telephone conferencing, Skype, Teams etc.
- The Performance and Improvement Team have also completed and submitted statutory returns to the Department for Education, and also continued to review how best they can work with teams across the department to provide performance improvement support.
- Officers working with some of our commissioned services set up regular Question & Answer sessions for particular provider groups to problem solve/inform etc. This has allowed the flow of communications to continue throughout this time, and ensure that services continue to deliver.

3.8 Inclusion (0-25)

- 3.8.1
- **Halton EP Service** has: Provided guidance to HTs on staff wellbeing post-COVID 19 and also how to support children displaying trauma symptoms (based on advice previously enacted after the Manchester bombing 2018).
 - Continued to undertake EHCP assessments and have prioritised pupils with SEMH needs and challenging anxiety-based behaviours for face-to-face visits once social distancing has ended.

- **Specialist Support Teachers:** have continued to support early years settings and schools to accommodate pupils with SEND. This has included bespoke advice and guidance to schools and support with innovative ways of delivering education for pupils with SEND.
- Contributed support to ensure that all pupils with an EHCP in Halton had been appropriately risk assessed for access to school provision throughout lockdown.
- Contributed to the risk assessment and support and challenge role to schools to ensure that Halton is appropriately able to evidence that we have used our best endeavours to ensure that the provision cited in EHCPs is being appropriately delivered
- Delivered virtual training and drop in sessions for schools and early years settings to provide advice and guidance across a range of educational needs including strategies relating to ASD, cognition and learning, sensory impairment and physical disabilities.
- **Assessment and Provision:** unlike many other local authorities Halton has maintained its education, health and care plan assessment and practice in line with statutory requirements. All assessments of need and new plans since the 19th March have remained on track and provision and support put in place. This has been done through practice innovation and flexibility in approach to ensure that virtual meetings and assessments are taking place.
- Co-ordinated the Risk Assessment processes and supported schools to ensure that risk assessments are in place for each pupil with an education, health and care plan. This amounts to 979 individual risk assessments.
- Despite remaining open to new requests to assess for EHCPs the team has significantly improved its timeliness rates from a low point in 2019. Timeliness for new plans issued in May 2020 was above the national average and overall timeliness for 2020 is 9 percentage points higher than 2019.
- The time during lockdown had been used to eradicate a backlog of work and clear almost all outstanding EHCPs. Those that remain are due to challenges in arranging provision with schools understandably challenged by the limitations imposed on them by national guidance.
- Offer to families of a reassessment once their child or young person is back in full time education if they feel it is necessary. This has only been made possible by the efforts made to clear

outstanding plans.

- Manage the Best Endeavours process to ensure that education providers, health service and social care continue to deliver the provision set out in EHCPs for some of Halton's most vulnerable children and young people, or can demonstrate that they have used their best endeavours in trying to do so.

Information, Advice and Support: throughout lockdown Halton's SENDIASS (Special Educational Needs Information Advice and Support Service) has continued to offer up to date advice and support to the families of children and young people with SEND. The Local Offer website has been continuously updated as a one stop shop for online advice and guidance regarding family support.

3.9 Broader Council Support

- 3.9.1
- Provided a comprehensive transition package of support which includes guidance, curriculum resources including for recovery, strategies etc.
 - Updated Psychological First Aid training and recommended that it is undertaken by frontline staff including school-facing services and school staff;
 - Services have collaborated to develop updated guidance on transition for all children and have provided additional advice, strategies and templates for use for children displaying SEMH needs or challenging behaviour.
 - Fast tracked plans for a bespoke Secondary SEMH Re-integration and Outreach Service commissioned in collaboration with the PRU, specifically for pupils who display SEMH needs and challenging behaviour.
 - With wider school opening we have resumed our pilot focusing on ACES that was suspended at the beginning of COVID19. This is a multi-agency approach to support our schools.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 None identified.

5.0 OTHER/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 None identified.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children & Young People in Halton

The key focus of the Department throughout COVID 19 has been to support schools and settings and parents and carers and to continue to provide good quality, timely support advice and guidance.

6.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton

None identified.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

None identified.

6.4 A Safer Halton

None identified.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

None identified.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 Given the sometimes conflicting messages to schools and settings the Department has been keen to provide some clarity and support through daily briefings, weekly liaison with each sector, regular meetings with the Dioceses, weekly meetings with trade union colleagues. When necessary issues have been raised directly with the Department for Education.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 Schools have been encouraged to encourage their vulnerable learners including those with EHCPs back to school. Where this has not been possible a risk assessments and regular contact with these pupils has been undertaken.

8.2 Year 10 pupils on free school meals and those pupils in CIC, Care Leavers or with a social worker have been issued with a laptop. It has not always been possible to issue each child but at least one laptop has been issued per family.

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
DFE Guidance to schools and settings	DFE Website	Ann McIntyre – Operational Director- Education, Inclusion and Provision