

SCRUTINY ADVISORY BOARD – CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Meeting date: 11 September 2020

From: Executive Director People

CHILDREN’S COVID-19 RESPONSE AND RECOVERY IN CUMBRIA

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide the Board with an update on the how the children’s system has responded to COVID-19, its plans for recovery and a look ahead to priorities for children and families.
- 1.2 The report comes following one of the most challenging periods that services for children have faced, and sets out how each service has sought to mitigate any impact the past six months has had on children, families and staff.

2.0 Issues for Scrutiny

- 2.1 To note the report.
- 2.2 To seek assurances around the actions proposed in the report.
- 2.3 To make recommendations to the Executive Director People and the Assistant Directors.
- 2.4 To consider whether report raises wider issues for other Scrutiny Boards.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 This report provides an outline of the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Priorities across the Children’s System, which covers
 - Early Years and Schools
 - SEND
 - Social Care and Safeguarding
 - Think Family and Early Help
 - Children’s Commissioning

Schools and Early Years Settings

- 4.0 COVID-19 has had a major impact on schooling, and responding to the issues of closing schools, targeted opening for specific groups, full opening for all year groups, dealing with the welfare and learning needs of disadvantaged pupils and supporting pupils whose public exams have been affected has posed unprecedented challenges. The work around schools since March can be split into three phases:
- Phase 1: COVID-19 response – March to June;
 - Phase 2: COVID-19 initial recovery – June to September
 - Phase 3: Full school opening September and beyond.
- 4.1 **Phase 1:** In response to the COVID-19 pandemic the government took the decision to close all schools and settings with immediate effect and for an indefinite period. The DfE also published guidance stipulating that the following groups of children would still be able to access a school or setting:
- Children of critical workers;
 - Vulnerable children – those who had an Education and Health Care Plan and children who had a social worker.
- 4.2 In response the Council worked with Cumbria Association of School Leaders and all parts of the education system (including the Early Years sector and post-16 education providers) to establish the Education Tactical Co-ordination Group (ETCG). This was a working group of the Local Resilience Forum that focused on supporting the education system for all year phases to manage the response to the pandemic.
- 4.3 During this early phase the main areas of focus for the ETCG were:
- To prioritise access to vulnerable children and children of critical workers;
 - To facilitate and act in a system leadership role;
 - To ensure the system has clarity on the DfE guidance and demonstrate compliance with the guidance throughout;
 - To ensure there were regular strategic briefings with Members, MPs and partners throughout the response and recovery phase.
- 4.4 A number of key activities were carried out in the response phase of the pandemic these included the setting up of Hub schools, plans for vulnerable learners, communications and liaison with community resilience groups.
- 4.5 Within the first week it became clear to the ETCG that keeping open 300 schools posed a number of difficulties including:
- potential sudden closure of smaller schools if key staff had to self-isolate;
 - very low numbers of pupils per school attending (none in some cases);
 - the difficult logistics of maintaining the whole school system in a large rural county.

- 4.6 In response Cumbria took the step of establishing a network of Hub Schools. This was a specific decision that was taken locally, and reflected the challenges we were facing. In doing so consideration was given to ensuring equitable geographic coverage and meeting the needs of all age phases (from Early Years to post-16).
- 4.7 Given that Cabinet and Scrutiny were not meeting during this period, the Executive Director People made the following Officer Decisions that were formally recorded on the Officer Decision Record:
- Decision to set up Hub Schools
 - Decision to extend year group access to Hub Schools.
- 4.8 Having established the Hub Schools, the main priority for the ETCG was to ensure children of critical workers and vulnerable learners were accessing the Hub Schools. To do this the following activities were undertaken:
- Social Care and the School Improvement Team worked together to provide a definitive list of vulnerable learners and for this to be broken down by Hub School to enable the schools to work with the parents to encourage their children to attend;
 - Social work teams made contact with all children known to them and their carers to establish their intentions to access the School Hubs.
- 4.9 As the COVID-19 legislation and DfE guidance did not direct social care to require children to attend, their main focus was on ensuring contact with every child and facilitating attendance. As a result attendance of vulnerable children increased over the period so that by the summer term over 20% were attending a School.
- 4.10 In line with the DfE guidance priority children with an Education and Health Care Plan were risk assessed to see if it was safe for them to attend a Hub School, and those deemed safe were supported to attend.
- 4.11 The final main strand of activity during the response phase lay in supporting families and children in hardship. An immediate impact of the closure of schools was that disadvantaged learners could no longer access free school meals. Unlike vulnerable learners, disadvantaged learners were required to stay at home unless they were also vulnerable or a children of a critical worker, which meant that addressing this issue was an immediate priority.
- 4.12 In April, the Government announced the National Food Voucher Scheme, which entitled every FSM eligible child to access a £15 voucher each week. There was approximately a month's gap between the establishment of the scheme, and after its introduction there were a number of national problems in schools and parents accessing vouchers. In Cumbria the issue had been pre-empted as alternatives were already up and running by the end of March.
- 4.13 **Phase 2:** On Sunday 10 May, the Prime Minister announced the phased wider opening of schools to commence from 1 June. Further guidance from DfE confirmed these arrangements would be for:

- Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6;
- Some contact with Year 10 and 12 who were due to take exams;
- Vulnerable children and children of critical workers who have been accessing an educational setting during the lockdown period.

- 4.14 In response to the announcement ETCG focused on overseeing arrangements for the Hubs Schools to wind down and be replaced by all schools being able to open for the target groups from 1 June. The DfE guidance was clear that decisions to open schools had to be taken by schools individually, based on a risk assessment.
- 4.15 To support schools in carrying out the necessary steps to open, the Council's Corporate Health and Safety Team developed a risk tool and provided direct support and advice to individual schools. During this process the first priority once schools were safe to open was to ensure vulnerable learners and children of key workers, who were previously attending a Hub School, could transfer to their main school, and then to sequence in the other year groups when safe.
- 4.16 Overall the opening process was successful. On 1 June the majority of schools had opened for vulnerable learners and children of critical workers. By Monday 15 June all schools in Cumbria had opened, taking in over 20% of all vulnerable learners who were eligible to attend, and increasingly taking in all year groups. Attendance increased over the summer term and by the term's end around 10,000 children were attending.
- 4.17 During the latter part of phase 2 two other significant pieces of work were undertaken – the local implementation of the free laptop scheme, and the preparation of a directory of summer holiday activity:
- In May the DfE announced a scheme to allocate laptops, i-pads and 4G-routers to local authorities based on estimations of the numbers of children known to a social worker and disadvantaged pupils in year 10 who may lack home access to IT equipment;
 - A Council team co-ordinated by the Transformation Team with input from IT, Social Care and the School Improvement Team identified individuals who would benefit from the scheme and successfully loaned equipment to all individuals who qualified. Subsequently on 12 August the DfE announced the extension of the scheme to disadvantaged pupils of year groups 3-11 and pupils who are shielding.
 - The Summer Holiday directory was launched on the first day of the summer holidays and enabled parents and young people to see what activities would be taking place in their local area. The Directory was developed by Social Care, the School Improvement Team, the Area Managers, Schools and Third Sector organisations working collaboratively.

4.18 **Phase 3:** On 23 June the Prime Ministerial made a statement on the further easing of lock down measures, reiterating the commitment to full school opening by September, which has been followed by DfE Guidance detailing how schools should:

- Seek to create year bubbles to restrict interaction between pupils from different year groups;
- Measures to ensure social distancing, and, if not possible, to introduce mitigation measures relating washing, sanitiser, cleaning of rooms and equipment;
- Make plans for home to school transportation and encourage independent travel where possible.

4.19 To support the refocusing of attention to September opening for all year groups, the Cabinet Member for Schools and Learning agreed that the ECTG should stand down and be replaced by a September Opening Group that she would chair. This group developed a number of workstreams that operated throughout the school holidays reporting in every week. Some of the key workstreams included:

- Curriculum redesign, to take into account both the learning needs of the pupils and the challenges of successfully reintegrating the school community, and potentially address trauma some pupils and staff may be experiencing;
- Pastoral care, to ensure there were support teams around each school (details will be set out in the section on Think Family) and for staff, which has included the procurement of a specialist national service to support teachers;
- Transport, to review existing arrangements to see how they could be best adapted to reduce risk of infection;
- School layout and property – a particular priority for this group was to review school capacity to provide the level of washing facilities required;
- Revised HR guidance to support schools and employers to work with staff who have concerns about returning to work, to address any legitimate issues relating to infection risk, home circumstances of the staff member or any particular characteristics that place them statistically at higher risk if infected (i.e. if they are from a BAME background, are pregnant or have an underlying health condition).

An Equality impact Assessment of the programme was completed which sets out advice to workstream leads and actions being undertaken.

4.20 **GSCE's and A-levels:** One of the biggest challenges of COVID-19 has been around the suspension of public exams for the 2020 academic year and its replacement with a system of grades for GCSEs and A-levels based on teacher assessment and electronic moderation by an algorithm overseen by Ofqual.

- 4.21 On the day before the grades were due to be published, the Secretary of State announced a change in policy, so that pupils who have been downgraded can appeal to seek to have their grade assessed at the level they achieved in their mock exams. On 13 August the national A-level results were published which showed that 40% of pupils in 78.8% of entries were graded as 4+ in 2020 – up from 67.1% last year (+11.7%). For grades 7-9, 25.9% of entries achieved the top grades - up from 20.7% in 2019. This was subsequently followed by further national policy changes to address the issue, resulting in pupils being awarded the results of the teacher assessments (or the moderated result if this was higher).
- 4.22 Due to the uniqueness of the 2020 results any statistical analysis has to be treated with extreme caution. The DfE will not be collating, analysing and reporting data for this academic year (2020). Therefore, local arrangements will be required to generate any performance information required. This data should be information that is of use to schools given the extraordinary circumstances we are in.
- 4.23 Local information, once collated from individual schools, will be used to analyse attainment gaps within the 2020 cohort i.e. disadvantaged, SEND, girls in science, BAME groups to see what the picture is telling us and if there are particular groups we have to focus on, both within Cumbria and against the national results. Data will be used as background information to assist schools with planning for the curriculum, assist Further Education and Sixth Form Colleges to plan how they will work with the 2020 cohort, and to provide information to wider partnerships working with children and families, as well as employers and training providers. Information and data will also be used to assist partnership working in evaluating the impacts of COVID-19 on children and families as we prepare for recovery.
- 4.24 While limited in its role concerning the 2020 exam arrangements, the Council released a press release and Member Briefing on 13 August setting out the approach they would be taking together with education settings and partners to:
- Being pupil or learner centred and supporting the schools and colleges in providing support to pupils who wish to appeal their grades or sit an autumn exam;
 - To congratulate those pupils who have achieved good grades and recognise this as being a reflection of their academic performance to date;
 - To remain focused on the opportunities ahead for pupils to achieve the placements they desire in terms of Further Education, Higher Education Employment and Training, and to do what we can in Cumbria to support the system to welcome this year's cohort to the next stage of learning, employment or training;

- To recognise the hard work of students head teachers, teachers, schools and parents in the period leading up to COVID-19 and in response;
 - To stressing our immense pride in everyone’s efforts and to take an inclusive approach to support all pupils and learners in their next stage;
 - To signpost pupils and learners on to advice, help and support.
- 4.25 **Early Years:** Children in early years settings in Cumbria attend a mixture of provision across primary and infant schools, maintained nursery schools and PVI (private and voluntary) providers, including childminders.
- 4.26 During the COVID response phase, the early years hub model was created alongside the school hub model – 12 PVI providers and 33 childminders remained open throughout; additionally, some early years children attended school hubs.
- 4.27 The sector has shown incredible resilience and support to families throughout the pandemic, often keeping in touch through phone calls and sharing posts/messages via social media.
- 4.28 The number of vulnerable children who attended an early years setting throughout the pandemic remained low which would be an area to consider if there were future COVID restrictions.
- 4.29 This would need to consider the additional complexity in early years setting, where it is difficult for small children to socially distance, in addition they need close physical contact as part of their support. This means there are additional demands practically and financially for early years settings in order to keep children in smaller groups, observe hygiene practices etc.
- 4.30 Although we are not aware of children sufficiency issues currently, the sector remains fragile due to the Coronavirus Jobs Retention Scheme coming to an end in October, and the possibility of families not sending their children back (due to anxiety, illness or loss of employment) or not requiring the same number of hours in future.
- 4.31 The impact on young children’s development, health and learning from missing months of childcare is not yet known – some children may have thrived due to extended time with caregivers, others may have missed vital opportunities in terms of their nutrition, learning and socialisation. Emerging evidence points to a widening disadvantage gap. Other potential challenges include:
- Children who have missed time in Reception since March may also find the transition to Year 1 challenging.
 - Opportunities to identify early SEND may have been lost due to children not starting or attending their early years setting this year, there is also likely to be a backlog of health led assessments

- 4.32 The government has indicated a desire to prioritise support for the first 1000 days including the development of family hubs, as has the children's commissioner in 'Best Beginnings'

SEND

- 5.0 Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic the focus on SEND has continued. This section sets out measures to support SEND pupils during the outbreak, and work to continue with the SEND improvement plan.
- 5.1 **COVID-19 response:** The decision to close all education settings, including special schools posed particular issues. The DfE Guidance was clear that all pupils with an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) were still eligible to attend, however this should be done on a risk assessed basis given that many had underlying health conditions that meant they would be in the shielding group (or at higher risk if they attended and were infected).
- 5.2 In Cumbria there are around 3700 pupils with an EHCP, so the main focus was upon initially risk assessing those with the highest need. This enabled the cohort as a whole to be supported safely and for those who could attend were supported to do so.
- 5.3 During the period a SEND helpline was also established for the Hub Schools and support was put in place for families around respite and short breaks in recognition of challenges they would be facing during the response phase.
- 5.4 A key priority during the past six months has been to ensure that work on the SEND Improvement would be insulated from any potential disruption. At the beginning of COVID response phase the chairs of all the working groups revised their action plans to identify priority areas to keep working on.
- 5.5 Meetings have continued virtually and many parent reps identified that there were pros and cons to the situation but for many not having to travel to a meeting was a definite bonus. The working groups have all identified benefits from the new ways of working that they plan to take forward, such as webinars rather than conferences in order to reach a wider audience.
- 5.6 There have been limited opportunities to engage with groups outside Cumbria but these have been taken up when available. External training which had been due to be delivered is now booked in for October. A pilot programme for learners with anxiety which had been planned to start before the summer will now commence in September.
- 5.7 Improvements have been made to the audit process and the pool of auditors has been widened with training taking place virtually.

Social Care and Safeguarding

- 6.0 **COVID-19 Response:** During the initial phase of the pandemic, the social care managers convened a daily conference call to put in place measures that could ensure business as usual throughout. Despite pressures staffing

levels remained high, there was good morale and the service was highly resilient.

- 6.1 The Covid pandemic has presented an unprecedented challenge to our service, as well as to the children and families we support. We are proud to be able to say we have maintained continuity of support and provision for our most vulnerable children and young people, and that despite the disruption, wherever possible we have maintained business as usual.
- 6.2 We were swift to introduce a RAG rating system to risk assess all our children and young people to prioritise increased levels of contact during lockdown, as well as moving key meetings such as child protection conferences, and fostering and adoption panels to virtual mechanisms very quickly. We've also continued key priority activity such as fostering recruitment during this period.
- 6.3 Our staffing levels have remained stable, and morale has remained positive. We have ensured regular communication and support for staff as well as developing a full suite of Covid specific policies and procedures in response to emerging government guidance. Our AD has been in weekly correspondence with the DfE representative for the North West to ensure we are fully aligned with regional and national developments.
- 6.4 We have maintained and strengthened our key partnerships during this period, with fortnightly Cumbria Safeguarding Children Partnership (CSCP) business continuity meetings and a reinvigorated Children's Trust Board with district groups developing to lead the children's agenda and support a joined up response to the challenges posed by Covid and more widely.
- 6.5 To ensure leaders had assurance regarding the management of risk during Covid, we substituted our standard monthly audit programme with a new Covid specific audit tool, which was explicitly focused on key areas of potential concern.
- 6.6 We worked quickly to create contingency placement capacity including approaching all existing carers as well as using diverting resource from our existing respite homes, including providing emergency placements.
- 6.7 The joint working between our service and the learning improvement team, around school and education more generally for vulnerable children has been a key area of focus. A working group has met regularly during this period to ensure a joined up approach and we've worked together to make sure the needs of vulnerable children are understood and addressed, including the roll out of the DfE laptop provision.
- 6.8 We have worked hard to maintain contact with children and families; we were very aware of the increased vulnerability that not attending school would create for many children. The DfE survey completed in June highlights that we outperformed both statistical neighbours and national rates in maintaining contact during this period; this applies for children in need, those subject to a child protection plan and children looked after (applicable to both

reviews being undertaken and being contacted during a 2 and 4 week period).

- 6.9 We were very aware of the importance of supporting our care leavers during this period and initiated a quick, proactive and practical response which ensured regular contact, financial support, phones, food and support networks were in place. We linked in nationally with DFE around our approach and Cumbria's response has been shared nationally as good practice.
- 6.10 **Recovery Priorities:** One of the key priorities is preparing the children's system for a potential spike in demand once schools re-open to all year groups. During the response phase there was a decrease in contacts to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub, which was in line with the national trend. This has been monitored on a weekly then fortnightly basis within the Cumbria's Safeguarding Children's Partnership (CSCP).
- 6.11 Work is being undertaken with children, young people and families to deal with any of the consequences of COVID-19.
- 6.12 Throughout Covid there has been a strong line of sight in terms of practice and performance which has engaged staff, families and carers in development and process. There have been daily key information emails which set out policy and guidance which have been updated in line with any new government or public health information. There have also been online whole management meetings across county which have delivered information and training and development time.
- 6.13 Our visiting to families has been based on RAG risk assessment and has had management oversight up to AD level with appropriate support and challenge. Our contact with families has been more regular and more creative.
- 6.14 We have continued to progress our Quality and Development plan objectives around service development, performance and sufficiency work.
- 6.15 We have held a successful practice week which was well attended and had excellent feedback.
- 6.16 A successful family time project throughout July and August has enabled all family centres to be up and running with a reduced service to ensure that physical contact was taking place for our children looked after with their families.
- 6.17 We are aware that Ofsted is likely to visit in the autumn this year and have been preparing for this.
- 6.18 In August we received confirmation that Cumbria will be funded to take part in a pilot study that is looking into the benefits of placing social workers within schools. The study is being hosted by the What Works Centre, whose work is closely aligned to the Department for Education. We are currently in

the process of identifying the schools and will be able to keep the Board updated on this highly innovative project as it develops.

Developing the whole system: the Children's Trust Board, Early Help and Think Family

7.0 **Children's Trust:** During the response phase of COVID-19 a recurring issue both in Cumbria and nationally was the concern about hidden harm, and the potential for a surge in demand as society re-opens. In response the Children's Trust Board has been revitalised, with a focus on developing a system-wide approach to supporting children and families in Cumbria.

7.1 The Children's Trust reviewed its priorities and agreed to focus on:

- Development and implementation of the Early Help Strategy and ownership and championing of the "Think Family" approach;
- Strengthening early help to meet the potential increase in demand to prevent children's needs from escalating;
- Refresh of the Children and Young People's Plan to reflect Covid-19 Recovery and the language of Think Family and Early Help;
- Developing the wrap around support to schools.

7.2 To support these priorities the Children's Trust agreed to establish locality partnerships, or to revitalise existing partnerships where they are currently operating.

7.3 Partners were invited to locality workshops across Cumbria to flesh out what a whole systems approach to providing support to children and families would look like, and how it will function. The workshops also came up with a list of issues to address:

- Under 5s
- Obesity in Young Children
- Domestic Violence
- Neglect
- Inequality
- Poverty
- Rurality
- Hidden Harm
- Adult Substance Misuse

7.4 **Early Help:** Early Help is defined as the total support that improves a family's resilience and outcomes or reduces the chance of a problem getting worse. The vision looks at the Early Help system from the point of view of families, communities, people in the diverse workforce, and leaders

7.5 The Children's Trust Board has developed an Early Help Strategy for Cumbria that sets out the vision of priorities for Early Help through the local partnerships.

- 7.6 The vision for Early Help is that:
- In Cumbria all children will be a part of a strong family network living in a resilient community being happy and healthy and able to succeed with a sense of pride
- 7.7 **Think Family:** Think Family is the approach that will be taken for delivering the Early Help Strategy. Think Family is an approach that:
- Works with families in an integrated way;
 - Focuses on the child's life within the family and family's community networks;
 - Pays equal attention to adult facing and children facing services – recognising the duplication of gaps that arise when families receive separate support;
 - Understands the impact of adult choices on children;
 - Places equal emphasis on families, communities, leaders and the workforce working with families in achieving better outcomes for children and their families.
- 7.8 Think Family uses the Signs of Wellbeing and Success approach, which has adapted from the Signs of Safety approach that has been extensively used in Children's Social Care. It is a solution focussed approach to promote change. It is a consistent strengths based approach, using common language which is simple and easy to understand which enables the family to engage in the early help process. In the Signs of Wellbeing and Success assessment this is done by working families to identify
- What is working well and what are the strengths for the child/ren and their family?
 - What are we worried /concerned about?
 - What will wellbeing and success look like?
- 7.9 **Professional team around the school:** One of the key drivers for the Early Help Strategy is to ensure that there is wrap around support for every school in Cumbria. Work has been taking place prior to the opening of schools to all year groups to ensure the professional team around the school is in place. Their main function will be to ensure:
- Families get support when they need it;
 - Each individual school/cluster has a group of professionals working collaboratively who support them in a child focused way;
 - There is no wrong door, so families are not passed between services, but services work together around the family;
 - Schools are prevented from being overwhelmed with having to address issues that the Early Help system can support them with.
- 7.10 Typically each will have a bespoke team they can draw upon by directly accessing a named officers from the following services:
- Early Help;
 - Senior Access and Inclusion;

- Focus Family;
- Targeted Youth Support;
- Police;
- My Time;
- Education and Health Care Plan Co-ordinator;
- Learning and Improvement Service;
- Educational Psychology;
- Child and Family Support 0-19;
- 5-19 Clinical Public Health lead.

7.11 Currently work is being undertaken to implement the strategy:

- Embed early help model of working;
- Implement the Signs of Well Being and success approach;
- Whole system workforce development - core competencies;
- Partners using the same language and approach;
- Families are included in service development;
- Greater engagement of the 3rd sector and voluntary organisations;
- Development of the professional wrap around support to schools;
- Identifying and sharing good practice in early help from schools

7.12 In summary, the focus around Early Help and Think Family is to address the structural challenges that will emerge as society recovers from COVID-19 for children and families the three immediate challenges are around:

- **Hidden Harm** – linked to rurality, increased levels of poverty and children's lived experience, not having access to a trusted adult.
- **Newly Vulnerable** - due to unemployment, housing issues, family breakdown, personal experience of the virus and also increased inequality.
- **School Attendance** – related to anxiety and worry and lived experience during the pandemic.

There is a recognition too, that COVID has had a differential impact in society, with impacts felt more strongly in areas of high deprivation, and among BAME groups, people with disabilities and older people. Many children and young people either belong to these groups or have family members who do, and being able to deliver the Early Help Strategy in an inclusive way that addresses the challenges of poverty and equality will be vital.

Commissioned Services

8.0 The main objective for the Strategic Commissioning team during the early phase of the pandemic was to establish systems to quickly identify and manage any emerging issues that would impact commissioned providers, children, young people and their families. Providers completed and returned risk assessments, recovery plans and regular RAG reports. A project team comprising operational and strategic commissioning staff met daily to

manage this process. A weekly RAG report was produced for the Executive Director of People.

- 8.1 Strategic Commissioning developed a dedicated 'Coronavirus advice and information webpage', as a point of reference for providers on latest information for example on PPE, outbreak control and how to access the 24-hour emergency response helpline. The webpage also supported families, providing information and guidance on personal budgets and direct payments, advice on accessing PPE for personal assistants and information on testing, as well as FAQs and signposting.
- 8.2 The project team continues to meet three times weekly during the recovery phase to manage localised issues and provide a quick response should a second wave occur as the new school year begins. Where appropriate, it works with providers to develop action plans and implement measures to support children and families.
- 8.3 At a strategic level, the Commissioning team continues to monitor how the crisis has impacted providers, children, young people and families, to identify evolving longer-term priorities.
- 8.4 In addition, over the coming months Strategic Commissioning will work to support the Council's priority areas in relation to Early Help and the SEND Written Statement of Action.

Member engagement

- 9.0 Members have been engaged throughout in the following ways during the pandemic:
 - Two informal briefing sessions with Children's Scrutiny Board in June and August;
 - One to one briefings with the chair and vice chair of the Children's Scrutiny Board;
 - A presentation to a public meeting of Scrutiny Management Board in May;
 - A meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board to update Members on children in care and care leavers;
 - A meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board with the Children in Care Council to hear from them directly;
 - Weekly briefings to all Members on progress during the response phase.
 - Eleven weekly briefings to all Members on school opening between May and September.

Conclusions and summary

10.0 This report presents an overall view of how all our services for children and families have responded to COVID-19 and our plans looking ahead as we move into recovery.

10.1 The key messages for the Board to consider are:

- COVID-19 has been one of the most challenging times for children, families and services we can remember.
- Services have demonstrated their resilience across education, early years, social care and commissioning.
- We have strengthened area based partnership working, and will be drawing upon this using our Early Help approach in the coming period as we recover.
- Schools will be fully functional from September and our priorities will be support the children through the 2020 academic year, while maintaining our priorities on supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged children.

John Readman, Executive Director – People

11 September 2020

Please ensure that every part of this section where there is an asterisk is completed in accordance with the instructions before sending the report to Member Services, following which please delete this sentence.*

Appendices

No appendices

Previous Relevant Council or Executive Decisions [including Local Committees]

No background.

Background Papers

No background papers.

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