

Public Document Pack

Children, Education and Skills Sub Committee

Thursday, 9 September 2021

Present: Councillor M Thirlaway (Chair)
Councillors J Cassidy, H Johnson, C Johnston,
M Madden, J Montague, S Phillips and M Wilson

Rev M Vine-Church Representative

Apologies: Councillors P Oliver and E Parker-Leonard

CES9/21 Appointment of substitutes

There were no substitute members

CES10/21 To receive any declarations of interest

Councillor M Madden declared a registerable personal interest in Item 7 Poverty Intervention Fund as she is a member of the Wallsend Memorial Hall and a Director of the People's Advice Service.

CES11/21 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 8 July 2021 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

CES12/21 Children's Readiness for School Response Report and Action Plan

The recommendations of the Children, Education and Skills Sub-Group had been accepted by Cabinet and the Action Plan set out in Appendix 1 had been approved by Cabinet on 6 April 2021.

The Committee considered an update on the Action Plan and in the course of discussion raised the following points:

- The Action Plan proposed that further communication was undertaken with early years providers and settings to ensure the respective Early Help Assessment and early years funding and resources processes and requirements were understood. The Early Years Manager now attended the Early Years and Primary Network meetings, working with the school improvement team to ensure that early year's providers and schools have up to date information and guidance around any new training available or changes to legislation. This has also helped to improve the communication systems from the local authority to schools and private nurseries,

whilst providing a networking opportunity for schools and early years settings to access peer support.

A question was raised regarding take up and it was confirmed that there had been an increase in Early Help Assessments from partners during the lockdowns and that debt was an issue for parents and a clothing and foodbank had been set up in the Riverside Centre.

- It was noted that across Children's Services there had been a significant increase in demand due to the impact of poverty, debt, neglect, family breakdown, mental health issues and substance misuse and this was reflected in the child protection statistics and an increase in the complexity of cases.
- Pilot sessions were to be mainstreamed on both the Ready For School (RFS) and Children's Centre Facebook pages, with the option to join virtual group sessions or face to face options, dependant on Covid restrictions.
Parenting sessions were to be offered to all new parents attending the Ready for School Centre on a rolling basis.
These sessions were also now available to any parent or professional via the Children's Centre and RFS face book pages. The 0-19 team also had access to the modules and could use them with families, to enable a consistent approach.
It was confirmed that attendance at these sessions had increased.
- Reference was made to the external evaluation of the Ready for School offer which had begun in partnership with St John's University in York and would help inform the further development of the offer across the Borough.
It was noted that once completed the evaluation could be shared with the Sub-Committee at the end of 2022.

The Chair thanked the Senior Manager Prevention and Early Help for the informative update and for attendance at the meeting.

CES13/21 Education Update - Covid Recovery

The Sub-Committee considered a report on the academic year 2020/2021, the work of Local Authority Officers in their support of schools, and any impact seen in pupils' attainment and wellbeing because of Covid.

The academic year 2020/2021 was beset by further disruption to pupils' education, because of Covid. High rates of outbreak within schools and repeated periods of enforced isolation led to an extended period of closure in the spring term 2021 which required schools to move to on-line learning at haste.

Previous periods of lock down and isolation had enabled most schools to hone their approaches to home learning and ensure that all pupils had access to appropriate devices and data. The facilitation of regular 'teach meets' by Local Authority officers and the support of the Research School and the EdTech demonstrator schools programme ensured good practice was shared.

Continuing high levels of infection during the summer term, particularly within the 10-14 age range led to further disruption for pupils. By the time schools began summer holidays over half were deemed in outbreak.

Despite the challenges that Covid had brought, Local Authority Officers continued to work with schools to support recovery and to tackle the priorities outlined within the Ambition for Education document to improve outcomes for all pupils.

The full extent of the impact of two interrupted academic years of education was yet to be realised.

The report also included an update on Attendance, Transition to another phase of education, Curriculum and Assessment, Interventions, Ofsted Inspections and Personal Development.

The Sub-Committee discussed the issues raised in the report and in the course of discussion raised the following points:

- Members highlighted concerns about how children could catch up with work that had been covered but had not been understood via online learning. It was noted that whilst some schools had robust gap analysis systems in place and had been proactive in assessing pupils' attainment throughout the pandemic, others had been less successful in their efforts. A 'Different Summer 2020', primary documents, had been created by North Tyneside Local Authority Advisers and serving practitioners and based on National Curriculum programmes of study for key stages 1 and 2. They were designed to support subject leaders to plan their curriculum in a more targeted way, by focusing on those objectives that could be delivered remotely and those that required face to face teaching for optimum impact. They were provided free to all schools. These were subsequently extended to include autumn and spring term curriculum plans. Extremely positive feedback was received by those schools who adopted them, with teachers reporting that they gave them a clearer understanding of progression in subjects across year groups and phases. These recovery documents would continue to be promoted in the autumn term to support transition into the next year group.
- Catch up funding had been used in a range of ways as schools saw fit. For example, some did after school booster classes and others did pre-teaching and follow up sessions. The national tutoring programme had been used by some schools with mixed responses: for some it had engaged pupils more and others found it restrictive in what it offered. There had been a similar picture with schools who used the academic mentor programme, the success of which very much depended on the quality of the mentor. Members stated that it had been an unequal pandemic which had affected less affluent young people who had fewer online devices and IT equipment and further funding for catch up was required from the Government.
- Reference was made to 'TeachMeets' and it was explained that in September 2020, the secondary team had produced and shared a detailed paper for Blended Learning. It drew together best practice internationally and evidence and research to support the rationale and development of schools own Blended Learning policies and approaches. This pre-empted subsequent government and Ofsted guidance for

remote learning. Emerging and best practice was shared at 'TeachMeets' which were run by the secondary team. These were virtual sessions where classroom practitioners shared something which worked well for them and attendees were able to ask practical and developmental questions. This has developed into a professional collaborative enquiry group of around 50 teachers from across North Tyneside - a lively and innovative group, which would continue into the forthcoming academic year.

Members welcomed this innovative approach and noted that 'TeachMeets' sessions were recorded and could be accessed by practitioners via google.

- To facilitate remote learning, schools were able to access devices for their disadvantaged pupils, with support from the Local Authority officer team and access to DfE and locally funded schemes. For example: one High school had devices in place for every pupil by October 2020 and was able to transition to live learning seamlessly in January 2021. Educationalists in North Tyneside had embraced the opportunity to develop their approaches to blended learning and had plans to bring the best elements of learning in an era of Covid to everyday practice. Google Classroom to support independent learning had been an impactful development.

- The mental health pilot project, delivered on the Mental Health First Aid England plan, had produced some interesting results. Fifteen schools took part in the first tranche of training for universal mental health awareness training. They completed: audits, surveys, accessed training to increase their staff understanding of mental health and created action plans for improvement. Outcomes from the surveys completed by children and young people, parents and school staff showed; an increase in awareness of different types of mental health issues, a better understanding of identifying emerging needs and being able to signpost to appropriate support. Mental Health Literacy had improved markedly in a 6 month period. In each of the 15 schools there were 3 or more mental health first aid trained adults and 5 further adults who had completed mental health awareness training. The schools met at a network meeting each month facilitated by Local Authority Officers to support and challenge each other to improve and to share best practice. The second and third cohorts of schools to complete the project had been identified and would start the process in the Autumn term 2021.
Members welcomed the mental health pilot project in schools and reference was made to work on a mental health strategy which would focus on three strands – how do you take care of yourself, how do you help others emotional wellbeing and we will take care of you.

The Chair thanked the School Improvement Officer Teaching Learning and Curriculum, Secondary for the informative report and for attendance at the meeting.

CES14/21 Poverty Intervention Fund

The Sub-Committee considered a report on the use and spend of the Poverty Intervention Fund.

The purpose of the Fund was to help to alleviate the impact of poverty on families and individuals across North Tyneside with particular emphasis on children, by providing support to those who needed it.

On 21 September 2020, Cabinet had agreed the first priorities and initiatives for the Fund. These were to deliver the Fund in a phased approach with the first phase focussed on the following priorities:

- for children – focusing on the key impact which living in poverty has in relation to their experience at school
- for older people – focusing on the key impact of not taking up full benefit entitlement
- for families with children – focusing on the key impact of not being able to afford the essentials of clothing for school and food during school holidays (where they do not have access to free school meals).

The Committee considered an update on progress on the following initiatives in the 2020/2021 financial year:

- Poverty Proofing the School Day (for children)
- benefit advice and support for older residents (for older people)
- school appropriate clothing (for families with children)
- holiday food (for families with children)
- Food for older residents (for older people)

£172,755 had been allocated from the Poverty Intervention Fund for Poverty Proofing the School Day in order to address the impacts of poverty felt by children and young people at school.

The Programme was run by Children North East and delivered through schools and sought to better understand what poverty looks like from a child and young person's perspective. Each school involved was fully supported to be able to put in place an action plan to alleviate this in the school setting and to reduce the stigma and discrimination faced by children who live in poverty.

Funding the programme through the Poverty Intervention Fund meant that every school in the borough was able to take part and there was a consistent experience for children and young people.

Successful outcomes for the programme included more equity of experience, opportunity and learning outcomes for pupils who live in poverty. Where the programme had been delivered there had also been improvements in relation to mental health and wellbeing amongst children and young people. Schools had implemented actions such as free musical instrument tuition for all pupils, supplying bus passes, alternatives to non-uniform days for fund-raising, not sending debt letters home with pupils and challenging staff over whether asking pupils to write about their holidays or presents was appropriate.

Members acknowledged that one of the biggest impacts for schools was a cultural shift. One school told evaluators that previously, they had done things without 'necessarily being aware of what the impact on disadvantaged pupils would be', but that after the programme, they 'now considered the impact first'.

The programme would run through all of the 2021/2022 academic year to ensure that no

school was disadvantaged due to the impact of Covid.

£253,845 had been allocated from the Poverty Intervention Fund to support families with the costs of school clothing – uniform, coats and shoes.

Part of the funding was used to provide £45 directly to families for every pupil in receipt of free school meals due to low income. This was being provided through a locally managed scheme where vouchers were provided for parents and carers to be able to purchase the clothing for school. Vouchers of £20 per pupil had been provided for use at the eight school uniform suppliers across the borough (for branded uniform items) and vouchers of £25 per pupil have been provided for use in supermarkets which supply school clothing.

In June 2020 there were 6225 families in receipt of free school meals and this number had now increased to 7025 families.

Additional access to school clothing over and above the £45 per pupil had also been provided for families in need via the Community School Clothing Scheme. This was able to be accessed through schools and work was undertaken with schools to identify those in need.

£200,000 of the Poverty Intervention Fund was allocated to provide support for families to meet the costs of food during school holidays. During the October 2020 half term school holiday a trial saw five providers delivering food and activities to children on free school meals and through this, over 1,700 meals were delivered either face to face or remotely through hamper provision. The total cost of this activity was £6,646.

In November 2020, the government announced the COVID Winter Grant which was to support those most in need by providing support over the winter to children and households who were experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, poverty, where they were impacted by the ongoing public health emergency and where alternative sources of assistance might be unavailable. By using this funding for holiday food, it was possible to redirect the remainder of the amount originally allocated for this purpose in the Poverty Intervention Fund to extend the school clothing scheme and also to provide funding for food for older people over winter.

The Government recently announced additional funding to local authorities to provide for holiday activities via the Holiday Activity Fund. North Tyneside's allocation of this fund was £788k. This holiday provision was for children who were entitled to benefits-related free school meals.

Work was currently underway to develop the model for the delivery of school holiday activities across North Tyneside in line with the criteria for the Government funding. This would also contribute to addressing the policy priorities identified for the Poverty Intervention Fund.

In relation to the Benefit take-up campaign for older residents which was delivered by Age UK and Citizens Advice, Members asked how the Council would ensure that the organisations were giving value for money and it was confirmed that quarterly monitoring meetings were held with the organisations.

Reference was made to families in in-work poverty who were struggling but who did not qualify for free school meals and it was noted that due to pressures on schools in relation to the pandemic and school lockdowns, the free school meals criteria had been used but going forward the Council would be working closely with schools who would have the capacity to

identify those additional families in need.

It was **agreed** to note the contents of the report.

The Chair thanked the Senior Manager Participation, Advocacy and Engagement for the informative report and for attendance at the meeting.

This page is intentionally left blank

Meeting: Children Education and Skills Sub-Committee
Date: 9 September 2021
Title: Update on Children's readiness for school response report and action plan.

Author: Lesley Davies- Senior Manager Prevention and Early Help

Service: HECS

Wards affected: All

1. Purpose of Report

To provide and update on Children's readiness for school report and action plan.

2. Introduction

In September 2019, the Children, Education and Skills Sub-committee agreed to review the early intervention support available for parents in North Tyneside that supports childrens development, to be ready for school with the aim of identifying if any improvements could be made.

Following a period of consultation with partners from Early Help, Education and Health, the report was published in November 2020, with a number of recommendations, which were all accepted, and an action plan developed.

3. Progress

The following shows the recommendations, agreed actions and subsequent update.

	RECOMMENDATION	PROGRESS/UPDATE
1	<p>Cabinet requests that the Director of Children's and Adult Services considers improving communication between the Council, schools, and private nurseries in relation to early help and being ready for school.</p> <p>Action: Develop and deliver a comprehensive communication plan to launch the new Prevention & Early Help Strategy. This will increase awareness of the services and support offer across the partnership.</p>	<p>The Early Help Strategy launch is currently with the Communication team, finalising the agreed launch material, which we are planning to release in September 2021.</p>
2	<p>Cabinet requests the Director of Children's and Adult Services to consider simplifying the early help assessment process, so it is less time consuming and bureaucratic for schools and private nurseries or provides adequate help to schools and private nurseries in completing the early help assessment process.</p> <p>Action: It is proposed that further communication is undertaken with early years providers and settings to ensure the respective Early Help Assessment and early years funding and resources processes and requirements are understood.</p>	<p>The Early Years Manager now attends the Early Years and Primary Network meetings, working with the school improvement team to ensure that early year's providers and schools have up to date information and guidance around any new training available or changes to legislation. This has also helped to improve the communication systems from the local authority to schools and private nurseries, whilst providing a networking opportunity for schools and early years settings to access peer support.</p>
3	<p>Cabinet requests that the Director of Children's and Adult Services provides more help to schools and private nurseries for toilet training, including for children without special needs.</p> <p>Action: All partners, including schools and private nurseries, will receive information and materials regarding available support so that parents are aware of what is available.</p>	<p>Virtual information and awareness sessions have been developed around key areas including toilet training, child development, communication, and language that parents and professionals can access at any time.</p> <p>There has also been a working group established to develop a quality award for nursery settings and schools offering the 2-year offer. This will consist of 6 sessions covering; training and knowledge required to work with 2-year-olds, working in partnership with parents and the whole family, professional</p>

		<p>relationships, the EYFS, personal, social and emotional wellbeing, communication and language and physical development.</p> <p>We are also currently developing a 'plan on the page' information summary of what is on offer that will be disseminated to both parents and professionals. It will be updated as the offer develops/changes.</p>
4	<p>Cabinet requests that the Director of Children's and Adult Services provides more help and encouragement for parents and carers in accessing early help information and services, including help for toilet training, language development, and accessing online educational material for children.</p> <p>Action: Pilot sessions to be mainstreamed on both the Ready For School (RFS) and Children's Centre Facebook pages, with the option to join virtual group sessions or face to face options, dependant on Covid restrictions.</p>	<p>Parenting sessions to be offered to all new parents attending the Ready for School Centre on a rolling basis.</p> <p>Update: These sessions are also now available to any parent or professional via the Children Centre and RFS face book pages. The 0-19 team also have access to the modules and can use them with families, to enable a consistent approach.</p>
5	<p>Cabinet requests that the Director of Children's and Adult Services consults with parents, schools, and private nurseries about early help and being ready for school, including a focus on the size and distribution of any problems in North Tyneside. The findings of this consultation are to be shared with Cabinet and all Elected Members.</p> <p>Action: External evaluation of the Ready for School offer to be commenced, including an assessment of need across the Authority and consultation with families and key stakeholders, to inform future service development.</p>	<p>We are currently working with our parent/carer forums to evaluate the parenting offer we have and establish if there are any gaps. Through this consultation we will be able to identify what parents need and work with them to develop an offer that meets the current need.</p> <p>In addition to this we have started an external evaluation of the RFS offer in partnership with St John's University in York, which will then help inform the further development of the offer across the borough.</p>

4. Background Information

The following documents have been used in the compilation of this report and may be inspected at the offices of the author.

- Children's readiness for school response report and action plan.

5. Appendices

- Children's readiness for school response report and action plan.

Cabinet Response to Children's Readiness for School Scrutiny Recommendations Completed Action Plan

Cabinet response to Children, Education and Skills Committee report on *Children's Readiness for School*

In accordance with Section 122 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, Cabinet are required to provide a response to the recommendations of the Committee within 2 months. In providing this response Cabinet are asked to state whether or not it accepts each recommendation and the reasons for this decision. Cabinet must also indicate what action, if any, it proposes to take.

Recommendation	Officer Commentary	Cabinet Decision (Accept or reject)	Action to be taken (if any) and timescale for completion
<p>1. Cabinet requests that the Director of Children's and Adult Services considers improving communication between the Council, schools, and private nurseries in relation to early help and being ready for school.</p>	<p>A number of recent developments across the Authority's services will assist with responding to this recommendation.</p> <p>A recently recruited Ready for School Improvement Officer post works across a range of partners to support children to be 'school ready', with communication and engagement across key partners, including the Authority, schools and private nurseries a key part of the role.</p> <p>In addition, the School Improvement Service has recently appointed to the Early Years SENCO post, with part of this role being to support early years settings with regard to children with SEND.</p>	<p>Accept</p>	<p>Develop and deliver a comprehensive communication plan to launch the new Prevention & Early help Strategy. This will increase awareness of the services and support offer across the partnership.</p> <p>This will be carried out in May and June 2021.</p>

	<p>We have also increased the capacity of the Early Years Manager in the early help service to further develop this work.</p> <p>We have recently reviewed and updated our Prevention & Early help Strategy (2021 -2024). We plan to launch the strategy between May and June and as part of the launch we will develop a comprehensive communications plan.</p>		
<p>2. Cabinet requests the Director of Children’s and Adult Services to consider simplifying the early help assessment process, so it is less time consuming and bureaucratic for schools and private nurseries or provides adequate help to schools and private nurseries in completing the early help assessment process.</p>	<p>The Early Help Assessment (EHA) is a short, 3-page document, which was developed with partners, and has been reviewed with partners to ensure it meets everyone’s needs.</p> <p>A significant proportion of the role of Early Help Coordinators is to assist partners with the Early Help Assessment process.</p> <p>In addition to early help, there are specific processes and requirements in order to access early years-specific funding and resources. This is unrelated to the EHA process.</p>	<p>Accept</p>	<p>It is proposed that further communication is undertaken with early years providers and settings to ensure the respective Early Help Assessment and early years funding and resources processes and requirements are understood.</p> <p>This will be carried out in April 2021.</p>
		<p>Accept</p>	

<p>3. Cabinet requests that the Director of Children's and Adult Services provides more help to schools and private nurseries for toilet training, including for children without special needs.</p>	<p>The key focus is on ensuring parents that would benefit from support in these areas are aware of, and have access to, this support.</p> <p>New approaches have been developed over the past year to enhance the support model, including online/virtual information and support, which is available to all parents. In addition, bespoke support is available for our most vulnerable parents, where needed.</p>		<p>All partners, including schools and private nurseries, will receive information and materials regarding available support so that parents are aware of what is available.</p> <p>This will be carried out in April 2021.</p>
<p>4. Cabinet requests that the Director of Children's and Adult Services provides more help and encouragement for parents and carers in accessing early help information and services, including help for toilet training, language development, and accessing online educational material for children.</p>	<p>The online information /sessions have been developed by the Early Years Manager in Early Help, in partnership with 0-19 Public Health team.</p> <p>They are currently being piloted with the parents registered with the Ready for School Centre in online sessions. Topics specifically cover "Helping your child talk" and "Toilet Training" amongst other child development/parenting issues.</p> <p>Parents have reported them to be easy to understand and the strategies useful. The 0-19 team have also developed a direct text service, so parents can text any questions or ask advice; parents are responded to directly by the Health Visitors.</p>	<p>Accept</p>	<p>Pilot sessions to be mainstreamed on both the RFS and Childrens Centre Facebook pages, with the option to join virtual group sessions or face to face options, dependant on Covid restrictions.</p> <p>This will be fully in place by August 2021</p> <p>Parenting sessions to be offered to all new parents attending the Ready for School Centre on a rolling basis.</p> <p>Action from April 2021.</p>

<p>5. Cabinet requests that the Director of Children's and Adult Services consults with parents, schools, and private nurseries about early help and being ready for school, including a focus on the size and distribution of any problems in North Tyneside. The findings of this consultation are to be shared with Cabinet and all Elected Members</p>	<p>We have recently entered into a partnership with York St John University to evaluate the Ready for School Offer. As part of this evaluation a needs assessment will be undertaken, and consultation completed with families and key stakeholders.</p>	<p>Accept</p>	<p>External evaluation of the Ready for School offer to be commenced, including an assessment of need across the Authority and consultation with families and key stakeholders, in order to inform future service development.</p> <p>This will be completed by March 2022.</p>
<p>6. Cabinet requests that the Elected Mayor writes to the Secretary of State for Education asking for more funding and resources for local government for early help to ensure all children are ready for school.</p>		<p>Accept</p>	