

**Summary notes of the informal (non-public) discussion meeting of
Children's Select Committee**

25 November 2020

QUESTIONS FOR THE WILTSHIRE COVID-19 RESPONSE TASK GROUP

Transport

1. Any improvement on number of pupils wearing masks on school transport?
How is this being monitored?

Education and schools

2. Provision of ICT equipment to ensure continuity of learning for all pupils (but especially disadvantaged learners) – has this progressed as planned?
3. Attendance – paragraph 44 gives figures for weekly attendance data survey of early years providers – what about schools (or are they included in that data)?
4. The report shows reduction in exclusion for the first term but feedback to councillors from school staff seem to indicate issues / difficulties in sustaining behaviour after months out of school. Will the council continue monitoring behaviour related issues (including exclusion figures)?
5. Free school meals
 - a. Has the council been informed of the government's plans for support during the Christmas and Easter holidays in a way that will enable the council / schools to reach out to and inform families in advance of the holidays?
 - b. Paragraph 7 in the Cabinet report (1,351 children issues with FSM payments) – was that all FSM children? Or what percentage?
6. Funding issues (especially as Wiltshire is one of the lowest funded)
 - a. Are impact assessments planned / possible for schools to monitor the impact of schools having to reallocate some funding to respond to issues linked to Covid-19 rather than providing planned (or previous) interventions / support for pupils?
 - b. Can anything be done to support schools that may be experiencing budget issues linked to unexpected costs (e.g. supply staff, investing in PPE and additional costs of soap, hand sanitiser and paper towels)?
 - c. Does the council know if there are plans for school staff to be "higher" on the vaccine priority list?

Mental Health

7. Mental Health issues and how our young people are coping with living through the pandemic – is there a concern for the council that the pressure on demand could lead to very high threshold to access services?
This was also a potential area of work highlighted for the legacy report.

Covid Winter Grant Scheme

8. How will the families be identified (do they need to register)? Does the council have any more information on the school holiday activity fund and who will have access? How will the council inform families of this?

Safeguarding

9. Could we have further information on paragraph 54 (forecasted growth in demand) “*We are in the process of reviewing this in light of the number not meeting the expected level at this stage*”? Has demand actually been lower than forecasted?
10. What steps are taken by schools when sending children home to self-isolate to ensure that home education is taking place and pupils are staying home and being safe? What can the council do (or is already doing) to support this (in effect monitoring “truancy”)?

FUTURE AREAS OF WORK FOR THE COMMITTEE / LEGACY REPORT

1. How can we most efficiently deal with Free School Meal payments and / or support outside of school year, without stigmatisation? Possible rapid scrutiny / task group.
2. Virtual Schools update following change of leadership and ways of working (and budget reduction) – information about the service and its work.
3. Youth provision (gap analysis undertaken – ref Covid update to Cabinet, 1 December 2020) - committee members to look out of good / bad news story re youth provision in their area to ensure that where / when help is needed the council is informed.
4. Increasing concerns from pupils expecting to take exams this year (20/21) – keep an eye on guidance issued.
5. Mental Health – to receive an update on support offered / service delivered by CAMHS (demand / waiting time / threshold, etc.) and development to the service (including single point of contact), the launch of the Wiltshire Early Mental Health Service run by Barnardo’s ([on your mind](#)), and plans to co-ordinate training for schools based on the DfE programme.

6. Being informed of NEET numbers (update) and any take up of the government scheme. Maybe a briefing?
7. Childcare provision – currently scheduled to have a report / update on Early Years & Childcare places across Wiltshire for the March CSC meeting.
8. Ensuring the effectiveness of the ‘Well-being for Education Resilience’ (formally ‘Return’) programme being delivered to all education establishments in Wiltshire.
9. Budget – “*expected latent demand for services and correlation in the increase in LAC being pushed back into next financial year (21-22)*” – CSC to remain mindful of expected pressure when reviewing the budget.
10. Elective home education (EHE) - increase and tendency cooling off period mentioned in report – to be followed up / expanded on at the EHE pre-meeting briefing for the CSC March meeting.