

Children's Select Committee

DRAFT MINUTES EXCERPT OF THE ONLINE CHILDRENS SELECT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 19 JANUARY 2021.

8 Covid-19 Update

The Chairman introduced the report from the council's Chief Executive providing a summary of activity to mitigate the impact of the coronavirus in Wiltshire, which was received by Cabinet on 5 January 2021. Ad noted at that meeting the imposition of further national restrictions on 4 January 2021 meant that many parts of the update had been overtaken by events and would therefore be out of date.

Members of the Committee had submitted questions in advance of the meeting, with written responses to be attached to these minutes. These included questions in relation to free school meals, accessing learning, pressures on nurseries and schools, mental health, seeking the views of young people during Covid and fostering.

The Select Committee sought details on the monitoring of school attendance and the reasons for non-attendance, as well as the procuring of digital devices for use in schools, mental health provision and other subjects.

In relation to the fostering campaign it was stated the council was looking at approximately 50 additional placements through 35 foster carers following the campaign, above the 12-15 that would be average for previous years.

In relation to free school meals it was stated that vouchers were being prepared for half term as were provided at Christmas. For digital devices schools had been putting in orders using the £1.1m grant to acquire new equipment, and the Department for Education was working with Secondary Schools.

On mental health, some members raised concerns that there had been a greater impact on the mental health of young people during the latest lockdowns. Self-referrals to support services including on substance abuse had increased as other referrals decreased as a result of national lockdown, and there had been an increase in demand for the domestic abuse helpline. Meetings with stakeholders took place regularly to monitor capacity.

Following discussion, it was agreed to include further responses in an attachment to the minutes and it was,

Resolved:

To thank officers for the update and note the report.

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