

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

22 September 2020

Education

1. It was reported that attendance levels were good, taking into account that Reception children currently only attended school "part time", although they were slightly lower than previous years which was to be expected. Daily information on attendance was reported from schools to the DfE and the council reviewed that information.
2. The council had seen the risk assessments for schools it is responsible for. The council had also engaged with schools for their risk assessments for pupils with EHCP (Education, Health and Care Plan) to include in and out of school provision.
3. Schools were being as creative as they could within COVID-19 guidelines to offer extra-curricular activities (clubs, etc.) and wraparound care (breakfast clubs, etc.) to support pupils and to enable parents / carers to return to work.

Social services and safeguarding

4. There had been an initial 30% dip in referrals, but within three weeks the numbers were within 10% of average. Referral numbers were still lower than average. Modelling had been undertaken on the anticipated rise in referrals and contingency planning was underway, including setting trigger points and planning for resources to be "moved" where needed.
5. Fostering Excellence was launched and is expected to meet the approval targets set for this year.
6. Virtual meetings and hearings had taken place where possible and any delays to court proceedings were monitored by the council. Support such as childcare or socially-distanced meeting rooms at council hubs were offered to support attendees when childcare was an issue during virtual hearings.

Early years and childcare

7. It was reported that capacity was sufficient at present. 7 settings had been classed as vulnerable due to low occupancy and sufficiency requirements in the area. The council was working with these setting to explore all mitigation options.

SEND

8. It was reported that advisory teams of teachers had been providing support to schools through a mixture of virtual meetings and risk assessed visits. Support from SEND services continued to be in high demand from families and schools and the SEND team was working hard to manage the statutory processes relating to SEND needs assessments. There had been positive joint working between the council and schools (“team around the school”).

Physical and mental health

9. The committee was informed of: data collected by Health England, the support offered by CAMHS in the past 6 months 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.

School transport

10. It was reported that 20 additional buses (financed through a government grant) had been provided and 40 changes made to bus timetables to ensure adherence to COVID-19 guidance. There remained concern around the relatively low wearing of face covering on school buses and the council was working with schools, parents and bus companies to address this.