



SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORT

Date Written	6 th September 2020
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Service Area	Learning
Committee Date	21 st September 2020

To: Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen

Update on Activity – Pandemic

1.0 SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The report shows the scope and scale of the challenges faced by the Learning Department as a result of lockdown.
- 1.2 It provides members with an overview of the work undertaken by the department during this time.
- 1.3 It considers what needs to be done next to ensure children and young people have the best educational experiences possible in order to mitigate the impact of lockdown.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 2.1 The content of this report is discussed and noted.

3.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 3.1 This report aims to show the scope and scale of the impact of lockdown on the Learning Department and how it maintained and delivered key services to children, young people and their families during lockdown.
- 3.2 The department is providing Committee Members with an overview of how the pandemic has affected their ability to meet the needs of children, young people and their families during lockdown, in order to support Committee Members to understand the scope and scale of the challenges faced and the ways in which responses to these have been designed and delivered.
- 3.3 Committee Members are asked to consider the report's content in line with the feedback they have received from the communities they represent.

4.0 WHERE WE WERE

- 4.1 On 20th March 2020 all schools closed for learning. At the same time a high number of childcare settings closed although a few stayed open to provide childcare for keyworkers.
- 4.2 Learning department staff were asked to work from home and arrangements were made to provide staff with appropriate equipment. Staff supporting the delivery of Free School Meals (FSM) remained in the office for another two weeks.
- 4.3 Since lockdown the department has continued to deliver services and support schools, early years settings and adult learning remotely – a summary of the activities can be found at Appendix 1.
- 4.4 Most staff within the department have been able to work at home and have been able to continue working throughout lockdown. A few were unable to work due to childcare issues but a significant number of those with childcare issues did manage to continue to carry out activities throughout lockdown.
 - 4.4.1 Some part-time sessional staff who deliver face-to-face work directly with children and young people have been unable to work due to government regulations.
- 4.5 Due to the nature of the work within the department nearly all staff continued working within their own service area.
 - 4.5.1 The FSM team were supported by staff from other service areas as well as third sector organisations during the two weeks they were delivering meals.
 - 4.5.2 Across the department a number of staff were deployed to manage the transition of FSM from delivery to direct payments and/or vouchers. Since 6th May, approximately 95% of those eligible for FSM payments have received either direct payments or vouchers.
 - 4.5.3 Catering staff were furloughed as this service is an income generation service (some catering staff provided a meal service to hub schools until week commencing 22nd June).
 - 4.5.4 Some Breakfast Club staff were redeployed by schools to support re-opening.
 - 4.5.5 When Track Trace and Protect started, the department's Polish speaking worker supported the programmes although this support is no longer required.
 - 4.5.6 Across the department a number of staff supported the delivery of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to schools.

5.0 WHERE WE ARE NOW

- 5.1 Staff within the department based in Unit 5 have returned to the office on a rota basis – those in other buildings are still working from home.
- 5.2 As part of the Council Improvement Plan (CIP), a multi-agency Education Partnership Panel (EPP) has been set up.

5.2.1 This panel has had its inaugural meeting and further meetings are planned throughout the course of this academic year.

5.2.2 The panel is chaired by Nick Batchelar who has been appointed by Welsh Government to support education as part of the Assurance Board work.

5.3 As of 14th September, all year groups except nursery are back in school and all nursery children are expected to be in school by 1st October 2020.

5.4 A Vulnerable Learners Panel set up during lockdown continues to meet.

5.5 The number of children eligible for FSM has increased by 7.4% as of beginning of August 2020.

6.0 WHERE WE WANT TO BE

6.1 All childcare and school settings fully open: -

- Breakfast clubs available for all parents subject to guidance on social distancing
- Attendance across schools to be at least where it was prior to March 2020
- Children, young people and staff able to access more comprehensive wellbeing support if needed
- School staff able to react quickly to any local lockdown and immediately provide learning activities for children and young people to access at home
- No child is digitally excluded if there is need for home learning
- All children and young people accessing high quality educational experiences.

6.2 All staff within the department able to work safely and carry out their substantive duties either in the workplace or where roles allow, from home.

7.0 WHAT HAS CHANGED

7.1 For the academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21 Welsh Government will **not** publish a range of performance measures across services, including all attainment measures (Flying Start, Schools, Youth Services) and attendance figures.

7.2 Categorisation of schools will not take place for 2020/21. All schools will have the same basic level of support from the Central South Consortium (CSC) and additional support will be brokered where this is needed.

7.3 Corporate Schools Performance Panels will continue to meet with secondary schools and some primary schools to monitor progress.

8.0 WHAT WE NEED TO DO MOVING FORWARD

8.1 The following will need to be undertaken to enable recovery to be swift and as robust as possible:

- Produce a directory of wellbeing support for schools
 - Implement the use of PERMA wellbeing tool across all schools
 - Ensure all schools have an appropriate number of trained ELSA's in post
- Continue to hold the multi-agency vulnerable groups panel on a fortnightly basis to ensure support is provided as soon as possible to those in need and explore devolving this to a cluster approach.

- Support schools to deliver a wellbeing focussed recovery curriculum alongside one that is focussed on securing rapid improvement in academic skills.
- Continue to engage with Headteachers and governing bodies as and when further guidance is issued from Welsh Government.

8.2 Publish the Raising Aspirations, Raising Standards (RARS) strategy and develop a monitoring mechanism for measuring progress.

8.3 Consider how best to support staff either return to their workplace or support agile working, ensuring that staff can respond to issues in schools and childcare settings in a timely manner when they arise.

9.0 CONTRIBUTION TO WELLBEING OBJECTIVES

9.1 The content of this report relates to the following Wellbeing Objectives:

Best start to life: Children and young people are equipped with the skills they need to be successful learners and confident individuals.

Living Well: Tackling adverse childhood experiences and developing community resilience; improving emotional wellbeing and mental health.

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COUNCILLOR LISA MYTTON
CABINET MEMBER FOR LEARNING

BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Title of Document(s)	Document(s) Date	Document Location
Does the report contain any issue that may impact the Council's Constitution?		

Appendix 1

March-April 2020

During the emergency period, no person may leave the place where they are living without a reasonable excuse (e.g.)

- To get food or medical supplies;
- To get money;
- For essential work; to exercise – once a day (except for those shielding)

Essential businesses remain open; however; retailers have a duty to ensure social distancing measures are observed and adhered to.

Police have the power to stop and request information from people out in public; people can be arrested for refusing to provide personal details and, as a last resort, can be fined (Initial fine in Wales - £60 – rising)

May 2020

08/05/2020

First Minister extends lockdown for a further 3 weeks - adjustment to restrictions:

- Outdoor exercise more than once a day;
- Councils can plan to reopen tips and libraries

15/05/2020

First Minister outlines a 'traffic light' route out of lockdown for Wales; which is currently in the red zone.

29/05/2020

First Minister announces the members of 2 households to meet up outdoors.

31/05/2020

Health Secretary announces those shielding can now exercise outdoors

June 2020

02/06/2020

All schools to reopen on 29/06/2020.

05/06/2020

UK government ban on tenant evictions is extended to 23/08/2020

08/06/2020

Welsh Government rolls out the 'Track and Trace' system to enable contact mapping that will support the reopening of facilities

19/06/2020

Change to restrictions:

- Retailers to reopen from 22/06/2020;
- Restrictions lifted on outdoor sports

22/06/2020

Changes to restrictions:

- Weddings/civil partnerships resume (ban on social gatherings);
- Shielding will be lifted for those affected

29/06/2020

Two households in Wales can form an extended household enabling them to meet indoors

July 2020

02/07/2020

Pubs, restaurants cafes and bars can open outdoors from 13/07/2020

03/07/2020

The 'stay local' 5-mile travel restrictions are lifted removing limited travel from 06/07/2020

06/07/2020

£21 million scheme to help firms provide trainee places announced

09/07/2020

All state schools in Wales to reopen in September; schools will have limited social distancing for groups of pupils; but adults will have to maintain social distancing

10/07/2020

Pubs, restaurants cafes and bars can open indoors from 03/08/2020

11/07/2020

Some holidays homes re-open in Wales

13/07/2020

- Hairdressers and barbers re-open in Wales

13/07/2020

- Face coverings to become mandatory on public transport from 27/07/2020

15/07/2020

First Minister confirms driving lessons can resume in Wales from 27/07/2020

16/07/2020

People who have been shielding will not need to do so from 16/08/2020

20/07/2020

Playgrounds, outdoor gyms and funfairs can re-open in Wales

23/07/2020

Pregnant women can take partner to antenatal appointments

24/07/2020

Beauty salons, tattooists, nails, spas, tanning shops, art galleries and museums re-open

27/07/2020

Welsh Government scraps law requiring people to work from home; but people are still advised to work from home if this option exists

31/07/2020

Swimming pools; gyms; leisure centres and indoor play areas can reopen from 03/08/2020