

LEARNING DEPARTMENT SUMMARY OF LOCKDOWN ACTIVITIES SINCE SEPTEMBER

GENERAL

- All teams have continued their Keeping in Touch (KIT) processes with children and families and as a result stronger relationships have been forged with some groups e.g. EAL, GT and EHE
- Regular meetings are held with teams to ensure staff wellbeing and to monitor the progress of actions undertaken.
- The Vulnerable Learners Panel that was set up during March 2020 has continued to meet. The frequency of this moved to monthly when school re-opened, but this panel has met weekly since the second lockdown.
- Weekly staff tracking form completed to show staff availability for work.

SCHOOLS

- Schools opened for all pupils at the start of September.
 - After the half-term break secondary schools remained closed as part of a fire-break situation
 - Schools closed for face-to-face learning on 16th December
 - Schools have delivered remote learning since the start of the Spring Term (except Ty Dysgu who have remained open)
 - Foundation Phase Pupils, pupils in KS2 learning resource classes and Greenfield School started a phased return from 23rd February
- Weekly attendance of school pupils was monitored during the Autumn Term and daily collation of pupil numbers at emergency provision in schools has been undertaken since January.
- Attendance at the end of December 2020 was 89.53% for primary schools and 86.87% for secondary schools. While many children remained at home, colleagues across Inclusion have been keeping in touch with these families as well as endeavouring to encourage pupils to return to school prior to the lockdown as of December 2020.
- All schools delivered home learning activities when classes needed to isolate. Engagement in this varied from school to school, however schools have adapted and improved their approach to the delivery of this during this time.
 - Advice and guidance available from the Central South Consortium to support this work and continues.
- At each point of change to curriculum delivery, risk assessments have been updated and reviewed in conjunction with Schools, Unions and Corporate Health & Safety unit. This included a risk assessment for the EAL/GT class based in Ty Dysgu Dowlais.
- Following the return to school in September all schools have been supported with liaison between Environmental Health and Public Health Wales regarding the monitoring of Covid cases and advice regarding isolation timescales and implications across classes and bubbles. This work supporting schools and monitoring cases has been continued throughout the lockdown period during the Spring Term.
- Class closures due to Covid have been monitored and weekly reporting has been provided to Welsh Government.
- Co-ordinated, supported and monitored the rolling out and delivery of mass Lateral Flow testing in the four secondary schools during November. This included provision of lead staff, delivery staff, training of personnel, logistical delivery of testing resources and PPE and monitoring of testing resources. Processes implemented were shared with lead military personnel supporting the corporate mass testing programme and were considered best practice and were requested by the military for sharing more widely.
- From January 2021 established an Appeals Panel for parents to appeal any school decisions regarding key worker eligibility for accessing a school place during the lockdown.
- Ongoing guidance on blended learning from Central South Consortium for schools.

CLEANING & RELIEF CARETAKING

- Continuation of midday cleaning service across all schools throughout Autumn and into the Spring term. This extra resource either provided by contract cleaners or via schools themselves (non-contract schools) has been funded through the Hardship fund.
- Enhanced Covid cleans have been undertaken in schools by SOLO throughout the Autumn Term and into the Spring Term where positive cases have been identified and areas have required cleaning.
- Relief cleaning cover has been provided in non-contract schools (where identified as necessary)
 - Schools supported with provision of relief caretaking service where caretakers required to isolate or shield throughout the pandemic. School holiday key holding service continued to operate during the standard periods of holiday cover.

SCHOOL MEALS SERVICE

- From w/c 11th September a reduced menu was offered in all schools, with all special diets continuing to be catered for. The service was delivered through a mixture of hall and classroom service with more schools moving to a hall service as the term progressed.
- FSM payments were continued for pupils involved in a class closure that was Covid related throughout the term and where kitchens were closed due to Covid. FSM payments were also made in October half-term, and for Years 9, 10 & 11 during the firebreak school closure affecting those year groups.
- Weekly payments have been ongoing since the pre-Christmas closure of schools w/c 14th December and will continue until pupils are able to return to school i.e. until w/c 1st March for Foundation Phase pupils and w/c 15th March for KS2 pupils.
- The school meal service will recommence on 1st March.
- It is hoped that Breakfast Club provision will recommence in the Summer Term.
- Welsh Government have funded the additional costs for all FSM payments over and above the local authority's budgeted costs to provide FSM, with the exception of the early closure of primary schools before Christmas as this was a local rather than a national decision.
- In January 2020 eFSM pupils were 22.5% of the pupil population. The number of children eligible for FSM February 2021 has increased and now accounts for 28% of the total pupil population.

ADMISSIONS

- During the Autumn Term all mid-term admissions were processed within statutory timescales and there has been continued contact with schools to ensure that all pupils have allocated school places.
- Parent meetings have continued to take place where necessary, via Teams.
- Admissions Forum return deadline met for November return to Welsh Government.
- Online Nursery admission application form devised in-house and went 'live' to support pre-Nursery admissions in January and April 2021.
- Pre-Nursery allocations and offers have been made for January/April 2021 and Secondary school allocations made in line with the national offer date of 1st March 2021.
- Statutory publication date met for the publishing of the Admissions Booklet.

INCLUSION/ALN

- The Inclusion Service and Additional Learning Needs teams continue to support schools, parents/carers and pupils when schools reopened and during the second lockdown through a combination of remote consultations and direct work with the most vulnerable children and young people. It should also be noted that colleagues in Inclusion have continued to make numerous home visits, where other agencies were able to only work remotely to ensure the safety of the most vulnerable of pupils.
- The LA ALN Transformation Implementation Plan 2020-2021 has met all agreed targets during half termly monitoring meetings with the Regional Transformation Lead.

- The required statutory role of an Early Years ALN Lead Officer, (EYALNLO) was appointed at the end of the Autumn term and took up position in January 2021. The EYALNLO will provide a strategic direction to ensure the local authority meets its statutory duties in relation to children with ALN under compulsory school age.
- A part time ALN Officer, was appointed to the ALN Team to provide support to schools to manage disagreement resolution and mediation of more complex cases.
- During the Covid lockdown periods there has been a clear expectation from WG and other agencies that the needs of children with a statement of special educational needs must be met. The ALN Team, working in partnership with CSC Improvement Partners, has been able to support all schools and monitor and evaluate how well our teachers are managing to meet the needs of these learners through the blended learning approach of face to face and online learning. All schools attended a Teams online training workshop on 18th January, where good practise was shared and the 'Continuity of Learning' document delivered to support schools. All schools have since submitted detailed information regarding their learners with Statements. This document will also be available for professional discussion with IPs during inhouse school review meetings. The LA will be producing a comprehensive report on how our schools have been able to meet the needs of our Statemented pupils during this period, which will be shared with all stakeholders.
- 2021-22 ALN Additional Support Funding application process started in the Spring term 2021. Schools received the proforma week beg Jan 18th. A meeting was held with newly appointed EYALNLO, Flying Start and Early Years colleagues to plan and further develop processes for supporting pre-school ALN pupils' transition needs.
- The local authority ALNCo Forum is now well established as a professional learning platform to meet the needs of the ALN Transformation agenda in all our schools and educational settings. All training has been delivered via Teams meetings which has allowed between 45 and 52 colleagues to participate. This included ALN Department staff, Educational Psychology Service, Early Years' leaders, Merthyr College and 100% schools in Merthyr Tydfil. The Cluster Lead model has allowed the cluster leads to act as 'Pathfinders' supported by Liz Jones, Regional Transformation Lead and local authority Officers in a co-construction model of learning and developing professional practice.
- Over the Autumn and Spring terms the focus has been on leading whole school improvement in relation to the identification of ALN, the development of IDPs and provision management. The local authority has seconded ALNCo (Debra Davies from Ysgol Santes Tudful) for 2.5 terms to lead a quality assurance process across all schools, provide support to the Merthyr IDP Pilot and keep ALP (Additional Learning Provision) under review. Positive feedback has been received from all Forum attendees in their understanding of the identification of ALN and all settings are developing a consistent approach to IDPs (100% submission of IDPs from schools for Merthyr Pilot). IDP Quality Assurance feedback report produced for all schools and further training needs identified. Person Centred Outcome Training workshops were held Feb 2021 and attended by 100% of primary school ALNcos and three out of four Secondary ALNcos.
- IDP Pilot workshops are planned with health colleagues (March 4th and 11th) to develop an agreed approach to the writing of Section 2c of the IDP.
- IRIS Connect 3-year professional collaborative learning programme launched in November with all four Secondary schools, Primary LRBs, Ty Dysgu and Greenfield Special School. All schools are now engaged, lead practitioners identified in each setting and roles and responsibilities have been clarified at school and local authority level. CSC Improvement Partners in partnership with Officers to monitor and evaluate the professional learning programme, and the impact on standards in teaching and learning and learner engagement.
- WG ALN Grant Sept 2020 provided a much-needed injection of money and has enabled the local authority to develop sustainability and build capacity in education workforce skill levels. (Funding for accredited trainers in PBS Restrictive Physical Intervention; PECS & POPAT communication training; WELLCOMM; B-Squared secured for LRBs to replace the outdated Instep assessment).
- SALT training offered to LRBs and selected mainstream staff to upskill practitioners in their ability to meet pupil need – 27 staff trained during Autumn term.

- Wellbeing training developed and delivered to all headteachers and ALNCoS by EPS and adapted for Early Years' practitioners. Staff Wellbeing training also delivered to all HTs, Greenfield and Pen y Dre whole staff. Training evaluations were positive and schools subsequently requested additional whole staff training.
- EPs have continued to deliver two ELSA supervisions per term during lockdown via Teams online meetings. These sessions are well attended and consist of peer support, case discussions and a small component of training. EPs are also able to deliver top up training to schools on topics such as bereavement, CBT etc. This has ensured that ELSAs in Merthyr are up to date with knowledge and training, supported with case management and delivering high quality ELSA intervention.
- The regional appointment of the Designated Education Clinical Lead Officer (DECLO) was completed in December 2020 and meetings have been held with the local authority's ALN Team to discuss the Merthyr context and establish effective collaborative working practices. IDP Pilot workshops take place on March 4th and 11th with colleagues from health.
- The 'Multi Agency Transition Principles (16+) for Young People within RCT, Merthyr and Bridgend local authorities has been produced as a guidance document for young people with ALN and will be finalised by the end of March.
- Half termly meetings with Merthyr College and the local authority have continued to engage professionals in partnership working and collaborative working practices with regard to post-16 further educational provision.
- Systems have been put in place since early spring 2020 in ensuring that schools have the appropriate **PPE**. This has been refined along the way and has become a role undertaken by Inclusion. Schools now make orders on a half-termly basis which is then put together for them and collected by schools from Unit 5. New higher specification face masks have been sourced in order to support the re-opening of schools for after February half-term 2021.
- Posters were shared and printed for schools in September 2020 showing at a glance the symptoms of a cold, Flu and Covid 19.
- The Inclusion Service has balanced their work in responding to the demands of the pandemic with those of undertaking actions of "business as usual", as well as ensuring that these contribute to the Raising Aspirations Raising Standards Strategy (RARS).
- During March 2020 a Vulnerable Learners Panel was set up including staff from the Learning Department (Early Years, Inclusion, ALN, Youth Services, Families First), Social Services, YOS, Police and Health to discuss provision, address issues and ensure families and their children are kept safe. This work was supported by a detailed database which identified which staff were keeping in touch with which family – it was supported by schools who were able to identify where they had concerns for example due to lack of engagement.
- All Inclusion teams have continued to support transition from early years through to post-16 with many schools choosing to develop welcome videos for their new pupils.

Safeguarding

- The COVID pandemic and the Stay-at-Home rules have required a number of adjustments to services that support vulnerable families. There is particular concern about the impact of these changes for children at risk and their families as services and schools close or reduce their visiting and intervention in the community in order to protect the public and staff. The safeguarding of children at risk continues to be a priority for partner agencies of the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board. The Learning Department has established an approach to supporting vulnerable learners, and prioritising the most vulnerable, who may require access to the Hubs.
- The local authority has continued to meet safeguarding regulations and ensure that all school staff remain in compliance with training requirements. The detailed Estyn Self-evaluation form for Safeguarding and Child Protection which was completed in 2019 showed no significant areas for development. This is currently being updated.

- All schools engage in the annual Safeguarding self-evaluation process. All schools engaged with this process during the academic year 2019/20. This has recently commenced for the academic year 2020/21. The self-evaluation form aims to enable schools to monitor and evaluate their own safeguarding arrangements. The self-assessment audit tool will be used in schools to:
 - Ensure all staff are aware of their safeguarding arrangements;
 - Provide brief feedback at the end of the self-assessment audit to school staff;
 - Highlight appropriate training requirements if deemed necessary.
- All school governing bodies adopted the Cwm Taf exemplar Child Safeguarding Policy for 2019/20 and that for 2020/21 which was updated in the Spring/Summer of 2020 and then endorsed by the CTMSB at the end of the Summer term.
- The Child Safeguarding Policy and self-evaluation audit tool are updated annually. During 2020 further updates were made in respect of the following;
 - Reference to the new All Wales Safeguarding Procedures+ link
 - Updated Prevent information
 - Insertion of a number of links to documents in different sections
 - Inclusion of information on staying safe online and distance learning (in view of the current situation- but always applicable)
 - Appendix 10- guidance and legislation – all have links
 - Inclusion of the BCBC recruitment policy in Appendix 11
 - Inclusion of guidance on COVID 19
- Safeguarding is routinely an agenda item at the Headteacher’s Forum. External agencies are also invited to present at to this group e.g. WECTU and Counter Terrorism.
- “Counter Terrorism Lockdown” Training was due to be delivered by the Police in March 2020, but this has had to be postponed due to the pandemic. We are waiting to hear when the Police have the facility to deliver this online.
- The local authority has continued to
 - disseminate up to date information, policies and protocols in respect of safeguarding to colleagues in the department and to schools.
 - provide information and resources in relation to anti-bullying and safeguarding week so that schools can partake in these activities. The aim of which is to ensure that children and young people can make informed choices.
- Safeguarding training modules produced by Welsh Government have been shared with schools and local authority colleagues. These are available on Hwb. Online safeguarding training has been developed that all local authority staff have accessed. This now forms part of staff induction.
- Education continues to have representation on the Cwm Taf Safeguarding Board and its Subgroups to ensure that it is aware of new policies and protocols and therefore best placed to share good practice.
- The local authority Corporate Safeguarding Group continues to meet termly to develop relationships between all departments to ensure safeguarding and the promotion of welfare of both children and adults. This group monitors performance in relation to Safeguarding across the Council.
- The support given to schools on safeguarding has always referred back to the WG guidance document on Blended Learning that was issued in the first lockdown and has been recently updated. [Live-streaming and video-conferencing: safeguarding principles and practice](#). Originally issued in May 2020, the updated guidance reflects a change to enable **decision-making at a school or setting level** to determine the most appropriate approach to live-streaming or video-conferencing for their setting. All normal standards of behaviour apply in the online classroom and as such behaviour incidents will be dealt with in the usual way. This includes any incidents of bullying. All pupils and staff have been asked to sign Acceptable User Policies (AUP) in order to be part of the online learning.

Education Welfare Service (EWS)

- During these unprecedented times, the role of the EWS has been able to evolve into that of addressing wellbeing. Moving forward the EWS has been focusing on wellbeing rather than attendance. During the Autumn term, in conjunction with schools, the EWS had been offering support to try to alleviate any anxiety families may have had in sending their children back to school. We recognise that the curriculum has been based in the community for a long period of time and EWS has been able to listen to what has happened in this time in order to understand the needs of our families and engage them in the transitioning of learning back into school.
- Training was delivered at the start of term for school based FLOs, EWS and Key workers on how best to support families post trauma to enable to support those who need it most in their work. 20 schools out of 28 (including the PRU) **71%** attended this training.
- During the second lockdown the EWS team has continued to support schools with keeping in touch with their pupils via phone calls, texts and/or home visits. The purpose of this is, is to check the welfare of the child and to signpost the family to the appropriate agency for support where needed. The EWS has been able to deliver work to pupils and re-establish contact with the family.

Vulnerable Learning Panel

- There is representation on the weekly Vulnerable Learners Panel from the EWS. The panel continues to meet fortnightly. This ensures close working relations with several agencies to enable the identification of an appropriate and proportionate response. Where there remain issues with regards to confirming a child's welfare these cases have been escalated to the Police for them to follow up.

Attendance

- Guidance on the recording and monitoring of attendance continues to be updated as the pandemic progresses.
- Attendance for critical worker children and vulnerable pupils is being collected weekly and being monitored by the EWS and a rationalised monthly attendance report will be collated which will include persistent absentees for EWS colleagues to focus on all of those who are not accessing remote learning whilst in lockdown.
- In January 2021 WG updated the Operational Guidance on attendance to include fines may be considered for a small number of cases relating to persistent absence, which are unrelated to the Covid-19 pandemic, and there are concerns about the welfare of the child. As such a new 'pre-warning' attendance letter has been devised as a tool for those small cohort of families that are not engaging in any education. This is to be used as a last resort after school has exhausted all attempts at engaging.

Exclusions

- Appropriate behaviour has remained a priority for the schools and the local authority. All normal standards of behaviour apply in the online classroom and as such behaviour incidents are to be dealt with in the usual way. This includes any incidents of bullying. All pupils and staff have been asked to sign Acceptable User Policies (AUP) in order to be part of the online learning.
- It should be noted that some pupils have struggled to adjust to the school routine and to adhere to social distancing guidance upon returning to school. Schools have tried to support these pupils in their transition back to school.

Shielding pupils

- Of those pupils who had received Shielding letters 91 % returned to school by December, all are engaging with online learning and schools KIT. This highlights the issue that low attendance rates across MTCBC are not as a result of this vulnerable group but are a result of those who have a history of persistent absentees, which is exacerbated by those who are anxious about returning.

Operation Encompass

- The Police continued to provide the local authority with details of those learners who have been victims of or witnesses to incidents of domestic abuse. Colleagues in EWS were able to inform the school in order to make them aware of the situation as part of their KIT process.

- This process of sharing information on domestic Abuse from the Police to EWS continued during lockdown and remains in place.

Wellbeing

- Local authority officers work closely with schools to ensure that timely and relevant information, is shared to enable improved resilience and tolerance, and ultimately to reduce the number of bullying incidents. This includes information on training opportunities and pupil workshops (e.g. on Transgender, Social Emotional Aspects of Learning, online safety).
- Caedraw, Cyfarthfa Park, Heolgerrig, Twynrodyn and Coed Y Dderwen Primary Schools, the PRU and Bishop Hedley High School are part of the WLGA Hate Crime in Schools Project. The project is funded through the Welsh Government European Transition Fund and is part of a suite of additional support being provided over the coming months to help to prevent incidences and mitigate the effects of hate crime in Wales. This project will provide workshops for pupils delivered by Show Racism the Red Card and training for staff by Sapere. The delivery date has had to be postponed due to COVID 19, but the funding remains in place for this project and will be delivered this calendar year.
- During Anti-bullying week in 2020 the annual Student Conference was held with a variety of workshops being delivered online. 96 pupils from 9 primary schools and Greenfield Special School attended 10 workshops over the week. Topics covered resilience, staying physically and mentally well, hate crime and bullying. The company Bullies Out delivered a workshop called “The Jar of Kindness” and Healthy Schools partnership worked with pupils to update the child-friendly anti-policies and learn how anti-bullying messages are linked to children’s rights.
- The Anti-bullying guidance was updated in line with WG guidance in September 2020.
- A Wellbeing curriculum was produced ready for September 2020 for schools with colleagues from Central South Consortium (CSC) and the local authority, as well as some primary Headteachers. The focus of this is on re-connection, recovery and resilience in light of the current pandemic and has been used across our schools.
- An online Wellbeing Toolkit has been completed and published on the Headteacher’s Hwb platform so that there is access to an extensive range of information on supporting Wellbeing- curriculum, pupil and staff. This includes a training programme for schools to support this agenda.
- A task and finish Group comprising of local authority staff and Headteachers has been established to update the Wellbeing Handbook. The purpose of this handbook is to provide guidance on how schools can make a difference in supporting the wellbeing of its pupils and staff.
- In November 2020 Council approved the Raising Standards Raising Aspirations (RARS) strategy where strong links between raising standards and wellbeing resonate throughout the document. Commitments focus on emotional, mental and physical wellbeing of both pupils and staff as a pre-requisite to improved outcomes.
- Wellcomm has been rolled out across our primary schools. Wellcomm is a tool that can be used to inform planning as part of a whole class differentiated approach to improve speech and language and ultimately literacy. Poor literacy can often result in frustration and poor behaviour, so by addressing levels of literacy it is hoped that this will have a positive affect on behaviour also.
- IRIS Connect professional learning programme has been purchased for secondary schools. The programme is intended to support the professional learning of all staff within our Learning Resource Base classes, secondary schools and specialist provisions.
- A project for pupils living in the Aberfan area was set up in December 2020 in partnership with the CwmTaf Morgannwg Health Board Research Innovation and Improvement Hub . This project aims to help capture the imagination of children using enterprise technology, whilst allowing them to play and create ideas providing new learning opportunities. The focus of the workshops will be for the children and young people to see how they can influence their future and how engaging with these projects supports their own wellbeing.

- The support given to schools on safeguarding has always referred back to the WG guidance document on Blended Learning that was issued in the first lockdown and has been recently updated. [Live-streaming and video-conferencing: safeguarding principles and practice](#). Originally issued in May 2020, the updated guidance reflects a change to enable **decision-making at a school or setting level** to determine the most appropriate approach to live-streaming or videoconferencing for their setting. All normal standards of behaviour apply in the online classroom and as such behaviour incidents will be dealt with in the usual way. This includes any incidents of bullying. All pupils and staff have been asked to sign Acceptable User Policies (AUP) in order to be part of the online learning.
- Good staff well-being is essential for cultivating a mentally healthy school, for retaining and motivating staff and for promoting pupil well-being and attainment. In September 2019 the local authority published a Wellbeing Charter for school staff, this charter was produced with headteachers and the charity Education Support.
- The local authority has commissioned InspireU to work with the schools in the Pen-Y-Dre Cluster to further support wellbeing. This work focuses on the rights of the child as set out in the United Nation Convention but is firmly rooted in the expectation that all children should achieve the very best they can.
- A multidimensional framework for understanding and promoting wellbeing called PERMA (Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning and Achievement/Accomplishment) has been rolled out across our schools.
- In developing an approach to improving wellbeing and outcomes the local authority, in partnership with identified schools, has initiated a programme of skills development to implement the national nurture programme. This seeks to influence the culture of schools and how behaviours are viewed and addressed, creating long term benefits. This has also included ensuring staff are trained in the approach to provide ongoing support to schools.
- This approach is working in tandem with the support that has been commissioned through the whole school approach grant. Upskilling teachers and partners to provide bespoke programmes to children and young people facing challenges on the following: family breakdown, transition, self-harm, loss or bereavement. In addition, identified staff have undertaken an emotional coaching training programme to support their work with parents.
- The authority has reaffirmed its commitment to developing the Positive Behaviour Support programme through the outreach approach with Greenfields. All schools now have staff trained in PBS and annual refresher systems in place. Discussions have also been held as to the local authority becoming licenced through this system to improve long term sustainability of the approach. The local authority's guidance on Positive Behaviour Management has been reviewed.

English as and Additional Language (EAL)/Gypsy Travellers (GT)

- The team has continued to produce home learning packs of resources for EAL/GT pupils related to language acquisition and wellbeing; identified digitally excluded EAL/GT learners; sourced and purchased curriculum and wellbeing books for EAL/GT pupils; created and delivered paper-based resources and learning packs;
 - delivered sanitary products to Yr6 and secondary pupils.
- Worked closely with schools to ensure that EAL/GT pupils were engaging with learning
 - where they were not, carried out follow-up visits to offer support
- Supported EAL/GT children and young people to complete the Children's Commissioners Coronavirus & Me survey
- Termly EAL/GT Newsletter have been circulated to schools
- Pre-recorded online bite size lessons have been produced and uploaded to the schools' Hwb platform for them to access and support in their teaching.
- During the summer Ty Dysgu Dowlais, including the EAL/GT Base, was fully refurbished. Between September and October, the Base gradually reopened to pupils, with full RA and safety measures in place. Classes were then held on Mondays and Tuesdays for Secondary pupils in their year group bubbles, and GT pupils on Wednesdays.

- As a result of keeping in touch processes and working practices of the Vulnerable Learners Panel stronger relationships have developed between families, especially those of the GT community and local authority staff.
- The Base is proving to be a useful steppingstone to easing pupils back into school who might otherwise be absent due to Covid. We are looking at how we could offer access to qualifications for those learners who are not currently attending school.
- Plans in place for drop-in sessions for EAL/GT families. Plans are also underway to develop a lending library for bilingual books and teaching resources.
- Purchase course materials for BTEC Sweet and LIBF Personal Finance qualifications.
- Create a closed, secure social media group for GT families for faster transmission of information and sharing of good practice.
- As Covid restrictions are further eased allowing mixed groups, sessions for Primary children will be re-introduced.

Elective Home Education

- The team has:
 - KIT with those families that have wished for this support.
 - Liaised with Careers Wales to support career pathway.
 - Distributed Wellbeing packs, the response to which has been positive.
 - Produced a leaflet confirming the education offer and promoted with families.
 - Been working on a guidance leaflet for pupils who have aspirations to sit GCSEs
 - Produced Guidance booklet on external exams produced and issued to families.
 - Published an EHE Newsletter highlighting the funding offer and signposting families towards useful websites and free resources.
- As a result of keeping in touch processes and working practices of the Vulnerable Learners Panel stronger relationships have developed between these families and local authority staff. A number of families have used the education offer grant to support the education of their child with further indications of their intention to draw on the funding prior to the end of the financial year.
- There are further plans to
 - Establish a lending library of resources and an open morning at the EAL/GT class for EHE families.
 - Purchase course materials for BTEC Sweet and LIBF Personal Finance qualifications.
 - Purchase a number of licenses for Twinkl online resources
 - Offer a selection of resources for those families who have not taken up the offer of funding
 - Purchase curriculum materials for the lending library
 - Create a closed, secure social media group for faster transmission of information and sharing of good practice

Special Tuition

- Working with colleagues across the department and in schools has facilitated the production of a directory of alternative placements.
- Colleagues delivering special tuition have had to adapt to new ways of working and have continued to provide tuition for those pupils being educated in this way. This provision has continued largely as 'normal', despite the lockdown. Groupings and timetables have been adjusted to try and utilise the Dowlais bungalow venue more, while adhering to social distance guidance. This is a setting where it is easier to ensure that appropriate adjustments are in place to keep learners safe.
- The Cefn Community Centre is currently closed, 3Gs has remained open for the 3 pupils that attend there. Pupils that are not able to attend Dowlais are having a 'blended learning' approach. This involves a mixture of Teams (where two staff are present), work placed on the learners' Hwb accounts, and traditional printed work that is delivered to, and collected from, homes (socially distant).
- Contact is daily for all attending Dowlais and 3Gs, and nearly all others, with only an extremely small minority who are at home that occasionally don't attend their Teams/Hwb, etc. session. For these, the same strategies are employed as during 'normal' times for lower than desired attendance, and work with them, with families and EWO, etc. to support.

- Extra activities have been arranged via Stephens and George, who have been working more closely with the local authority on literacy initiatives; a visit from Tee2Sugars, a graffiti artist that worked with learners on Christmas themed art murals for public display, Mike Church, a children's writer on designing and creating their own pieces of inspirational fiction.
- Education delivery has been in place for all pupils. A weekly panel monitors the engagement of these pupils and identifies actions for improvement in wellbeing, engagement etc. The safety and welfare of all pupils has been closely monitored.

GOVERNING BODIES

- All Governors have access to Hwb and have been supported in the use of Microsoft Teams which has enabled the vast majority of governors to participate fully in remote meetings and fulfil their responsibilities.
- In collaboration with the Central South Consortium Governors have been offered the mandatory training programme through on-line training and additional training opportunities by the way of webinars and specific on-line training sessions.
- Chairs & Vice Chairs Briefing sessions continue to be held via. Microsoft Teams and Chairs receive regular updates with regards to changes in guidance.
- A RARS Secondary Governors Group has been established with the purpose of identifying areas where schools and governing bodies can collaborate to achieve the objectives of the RARS Strategy.
- Specific activities that have taken place during the period September 2020 to February 2021 include:
 - Wellbeing checks with Head teachers and Chairs of Governors.
 - Annual Meeting held for all governing bodies which included the election of chairs and vice chairs and the establishment of committees.
 - Budget monitoring and reporting, updating of MTFPs, preparation for closing of accounts 2020/21 and commencing budget preparation for 2021/22.
 - Staff appointments including head teacher.
 - Finance, Standards, Redundancy and Disciplinary Meetings.
 - Risk Assessments agreed with governing bodies.

MUSIC SERVICE

The Music Service Peri team has worked to find new ways to provide continuity of service since March 2020 and the following was offered to ALL schools on SLA in the first week of January 2021:

- Online session for those pupils who usually have 1-1/small group tuition providing access to Instrumental and Vocal Music Lessons
- For the schools who usually engage in WCET Music lessons with the Music Service, we are uploading new material into the 'Charanga' classrooms weekly for pupils to access anywhere/anytime;
- 'live' remote Music lessons can be delivered as part of a school's online learning programme,
- Every Friday morning, each SLA school receives bespoke pre-recorded videos for individual learners and whole class music lessons.
- Merthyr Tydfil Youth Music has met online weekly for rehearsals since September 2020 with music specifically arranged by staff to avoid any copyright issues whilst livestreaming and recording.
- staff in PRU and FP are working face to face. All SLA schools were offered face to face music for vulnerable and critical key worker children.
- We have a 25% uptake of all our individual/small group school lessons moving to online 1-1 lessons; many pupils/parents/carers struggled signing the AUP document so we are awaiting an electronic version from IT to make life simpler and increase the 1-1 online learners.
- Fortnightly Teams Rock and Pop sessions
- MENU: Music Education Needs Us is still very much a strong focus with the Music Service. Staff have audio and video recorded a St David's Day contribution

BEHAVIOUR SUPPORT TEAM

- Since the first lockdown in March 2020, the behaviour support team took a flexible approach to supporting our schools. The first month staff were involved daily in the delivery of free school meals through the borough.
- Throughout the school holidays of 2020, the team leader volunteered to deliver PPE to all schools and this continued when the schools returned in September.
- Although face to face meetings were not possible during lockdown, the team quickly moved to supporting schools through Teams meetings and by telephone offering advice and guidance to parents and pupils. Multi agency meetings also went ahead as planned via teams.
- When schools were open for all pupils, we were restricted to visiting one school a day.
- Since September 2020 64 pupils have been supported by the Behaviour Support Team.
- The completion of action plans for each pupil that is shared with school, pupils and parents and reviewed after six weeks.
- Weekly School Support Service meetings have continued via teams.
- Class observations took place in school when open to all pupils.
- Regular staff supervision and performance management have continued as normal.
- HLTA continues with updating of Capita weekly.
- MATRIX completed termly.

EARLY YEARS

- Management of teams continues to be carried out successfully through regular team meetings, supervision and task focussed meetings on Teams.
- Staff wellbeing is a key focus as staff continue to manage increasing workloads whilst navigating through the personal challenges that Covid is posing for most people.
- Weekly staff tracking form completed with all Early Years/ Flying Start staff flagging up Covid related absences;
- Grant funding performance reports completed for; C-CAS, Families First/ CF Legacy, Summer Holiday scheme, Flying Start Welsh Government, Childcare and Play (CCG) and Childcare Offer Welsh Government.
- Regular contact maintained with WG to consult and update on changes to policy and guidance.
- Financial claims prepared with accountancy.
- Ensuring all staff across the service have completed the Covid Workforce Risk Assessment;
- Risk Assessments continue to be updated for ICC and Treharris
- Virtual online training sourced for mandatory training for the sector to ensure continued compliance with CIW.
- Wellbeing training delivered by Education Psychologists which focussed on staff, children and parents' wellbeing.
- WellComm training for schools delivered by Flying Start Language Lead Officer and FS SLT and implementation of WellComm in schools being supported by the early years team.
- Lateral Flow testing programme, advice and support offered to the sector on the implementation of the scheme.

Additional Learning Needs Early Years

- The Enhanced support panels for Flying Start, Childcare Offer and Families First have continued to meet virtually;
- The Early Years and Flying Start Education Psychologists are in contact with the childcare settings to offer support for ALN children to provide any strategies for support.
- A Support Guide for parents of ALN children has been developed with tips and ideas for how to support children during Covid 19.
- The FF Inclusion Officer is KIT with families of ALN children to offer advice and support.

- Transition information and TAC processes have continued virtually for ALN children who are transitioning to school in April.
- Close liaison with the Education Inclusion department on ALNET issues and for ALN children attending Early Years.

The Childcare Sector & Covid related capital and revenue funding

- Since June 2020, the childcare sector has been open and available to all families;
- Overall take up of childcare has decreased as families chose for children to remain at home due to Covid concerns, for some families, employment has changed and schools closing from Christmas has also impacted;
- Sustainability of the sector is a concern so in response, WG issued Capital and revenue funding;
- £60,000 available through the Covid capital fund and £162,307 available for revenue funding, a grants panel has been established to oversee that the strict criteria is met for all applications;
- Support and advice continue to be provided to the sector on the implementation of the *Protective Measures in Childcare Settings: Keep Childcare Safe guidance* produced by WG;
- Termly Childcare Sub-group meetings with the whole sector have been maintained during the pandemic using the TEAMS platform.

The Early Language Development (ELD) Offer (also part of Families First)

- The ELD team and Flying Start Speech and Language Therapist continue to work with all open cases, using video links and phone calls to encourage families to continue to support their child's early language development.
- 20 Month WellComm assessments – conducted over the phone with parents.
- Follow up interventions delivered over phone, teams, e mail and closed groups.
- Daily bilingual communication with families using Facebook with ELD activities, as well as a number of longer campaigns such as the countdown to Christmas and Bookstart Cymru Big Welsh Nursery Rhyme event.
- Closed groups – parents access in their own time and follow up keeping in touch – currently 82 families actively engaging with these groups this term.
- Keeping in Touch with families to include ELD support and signposting to other agencies and escalating any concerns as appropriate.
- Monthly Early Language newsletters with hints, tips and ideas for language development.
- Language resource packs distributed termly to families engaged on programmes, they include activities and resources that support ELD for babies and young children.
- The ELD team and Flying Start Speech and Language Therapist continue to work with all open cases, using video links and phone calls.
- SLT continues to roll out an alternative model of delivery to provide support for families identified, providing a toy/activity pack and written instructions to work on the child's specific targets on a weekly basis from the SLT or CNN.
- The increase in communicating online using social media platforms has been a real positive since the pandemic.

Childcare Offer

- The Childcare Offer was reinstated for new applications from 1 September 2020.
- Take up of Childcare Offer was very low in the Autumn term as the majority of children attended full time Nursery.
- Additional capacity has been built within the early years team using the CCO grant to progress with marketing of the Offer.

Flying Start

- All Flying Start Childcare settings re-opened from 1 September 2020, weekly attendance monitoring has been implemented to establish impact of Covid on attendance.
- Average attendance across the programme is 68% compared to an average attendance pre-covid of 85%.

- Children not attending provision are receiving regular keeping in touch contact with access to activities and resources for families to do at home.
- Regular communication with parenting, health and Barnardo's to ensure that these elements of the Programme are delivering in line with latest WG guidance.
- The Flying Start childcare team has developed a blended opportunities in the early years good practice guide which offers advice on engaging with and supporting children and their families when they are not attending childcare.
- Nursery applications – applications for FPN for Spring term are down on previous years, the team are working with all settings, families and other professionals to ensure any outstanding nursery applications have been submitted for April and September.

Local Authority managed Flying Start Childcare settings

- Managing all CIW notifications of change including moving from sessional care to full day-care (childcare hub)
- Communicating with CIW via telephone and email
- Facebook pages active for settings to communicate with their families, Facebook parent contract developed.
- Induction, transition videos developed for new starters.
- Transition meetings held for new families.
- Introduced practices to comply with Covid guidance; Developing risk assessments for reopening of childcare, in line with WG advice: Protective measures in childcare settings: Keep Childcare Safe
- Protocols in place for dealing with suspected and positive cases of Covid 19.

YOUTH SERVICE

Targeted Supported – referral through schools, Early Help Hub, Social Services

Inspire to Work (Post 16)

- Supporting young people with job search, job applications mock interviews and CV's over the phone or via video conferencing.
- Young people have been enrolled onto e-learning courses e.g. Food Safety, with support provided by a tutor.
- Resources have been updated for delivery of new Agored Cymru PSE units.
- Continue to support existing clients through KIT and telephone or online interventions if a young person is comfortable with this.
- Will take new referrals if the young person is comfortable with phone or online interventions.
- The roll on, roll off Employability Programme has been delivered to small groups of young people with a focus on completing a CV and undertaking certain on line qualifications such as 'Safety in Catering'. This will prepare young people to apply for the Kickstart programme.
- A new PSD intervention is being piloted for young people who are furthest away from the labour market.

Inspire to Achieve (pre-16)

- Continue supporting existing clients through KIT and telephone or online interventions if a young person is comfortable with this.
- Will take new referrals if the young person is comfortable with phone or online interventions.
- Staff have had access to some young people via the school hubs and PRU.
- Tutors have supported young people in year's 10 and 11 to complete Agored Cymru Level One PSD qualifications.

School Support Team

- BTEC Level One PSD certificates have been claimed (prior to school closures). Awaiting update from Pearson Edexcel on BTEC Level Two qualifications. Preparation is underway for delivery in the new academic year.
- Approval has been granted to delivery the BTEC Personal Growth and Wellbeing, which replaces the BTEC PSD.

- Successful BTEC Centre inspection took place on 6th January with good practice highlighted in the inspection report.
- Hoping to reinstate face to face delivery of BTEC PSD and Work Skills in Afon Taf and Cyfarthfa when permitted.
- All resources have been prepared and ready for delivery.
- Group work interventions Homelessness and Mental Health are developed and ready for delivery. Offer will be made to schools once they re-open.

Youth Support Team (key working)

- Continue to support existing client through KIT and telephone or online interventions if a young person is comfortable with this.
- Supported families to engage in the MTHA Fit & Fed programme by purchasing cooking equipment, food vouchers and small fitness equipment.
- Supported the 'Operation Play packs' programme for February half term.

Universal, Open Access Service, Local Authority & Commissioned Providers

Street Based Team

- Currently deploying for four shifts per week using intelligence from South Wales Police

Open Access Youth Clubs (including commissioned providers (Treharris Boys & Girls Club, Georgetown Boys & Girls Club, Urdd/Menter Iaith, Dowlais Engine House, Gellideg Foundation, Twynrodyn Action Group, Merthyr Valley Homes (Gurnos), Willow's Centre, (Troedyrhiw))

- Virtual Youth Club is being delivered at various times throughout the week to deliver a variety of activities, including quizzes, podcasts, competitions, open mic, keep fit, etc.
- Weekly phone contact with vulnerable young people is taking place, discussing any concerns or issues that they may be experiencing.
- Youth workers are available via Messenger on a rota basis to deal with queries and concerns.
- Information and advice is updated and posted on youth clubs own social media sites.
- Staff and young people have been involved in the delivery of activity packs, hygiene packs and food parcels to families and individuals in their communities.
- Monthly Youth Service Partnership Forum meetings are taking place.
- The Universal Youth Service and commissioned partners continue to undertake outreach work. Teams have partnered with organisations such as Barod, Cwm Taf Morgannwg Mind, Cardiff City Foundation.
- Prior to lockdown in December, the local authority and commissioned partner teams participated in the 30 Days of Play scheme and delivered small outdoor group activities such as 'Ride your Bike' and 'Geocaching' and online activities such as 'Decorate a Tree' and 'Cookery'.
- Teams also recently supported the 'Operation Play Packs' programme for February half term.
- As a result of the Tier 4 Lockdown in December work has continued online with workshops being delivered in partnership with the Street Based Youth Service team, Treharris BGC and the Calon Las (MVH) Youth Project, for example.

Merthyr Tydfil Borough Wide Youth Forum (MTBWYF)

- Regular meetings, via video conferencing, are held with members of the Youth Forum to discuss current and future projects.
- The Forum has contributed to recent discussions on the effectiveness of current on-line learning arrangements with schools and the new RARS Strategy.
- The Forum has completed a recycling competition, been involved in the development of a reading festival and are producing a documentary on the local impact of Covid-19, with involvement of the First Minister.
- The Covid-19 documentary film on how Covid-19 has affected the community, including an interview with the First Minister, is in the final stages of being edited.

- ‘Make your Mark’ national campaign with Merthyr having the highest turnout of young people voting in Wales at 12.8%.
- Working in partnership with the Police and Crime Commissioner to set-up young voices conversation with young people across the Youth Forum.
- Votes @ 16 - it was agreed for the young people to produce a ‘project vote’ video for the election campaign, script to be agreed with Corporate Communications and young people are taking part in a mock election event on 26th February with the Senedd.

NEET’s Team

- School review meetings take place on a monthly basis via MS Teams; a key focus is highlighting those young people who are high risk NEET and the transition planning of year 11 leavers. Good attendance from school staff and partners and monthly updates submitted.
- Early Identification Toolkit Review - a scoping exercise has taken place and a task and finish group set-up for 3rd March.
- Undertaking a two-year analysis of the ‘presenting needs’ of young people categorised as ‘red’ in order to gain a more holistic picture of the needs of young people.
- Post 16 Lead worker practitioner meetings have taken place weekly since the beginning of September to support transition and the destination survey; this has more recently reverted to monthly meetings.

ADULT COMMUNITY LEARNING

- Adult Education Tutors have maintained a Keeping in Touch (KIT) approach with learners using a variety of communication methods - phones, text, emailing and online tools such as Microsoft Teams. Wherever possible, course delivery has been maintained digitally, with course work shared via electronic means and for learners without access the use of postal services, via workbooks and tasks.
- All Adult Education Tutors are delivering our core courses via online platforms (specifically Microsoft Teams).
- Where learners are unable to join courses online, tutors are facilitating telephone tutorials and are distributing “hard copy” work to individuals via the post.
- We have expanded our learning offer to reflect the pandemic environment – introducing two new courses: Using Social Media to be a Digital Citizen and Using the Internet and Email. Both focus on “keeping in touch” and being able to access services despite the ongoing lockdown.
- We have introduced Well Being Fridays to existing and new learners. Linked to the *Five Ways to Well-Being* – learners benefit from weekly sessions exploring mental health issues but more importantly sharing strategies and tools to improve well-being.
- Aim to expand this to include more practical courses (e.g. *Art, Cookery, Jewellery Making*) with the continued aim to promote well-being in the context of the pandemic.
- We are working with the peripatetic music department to pilot a Rock & Pop School (again linked to the Well-Being agenda).
- The Family Programmes course has been updated to reflect the challenges around learner attendance (e.g. due to home-schooling, home working responsibilities). Learners can now benefit from “*Help your child with Reading*” or “*Help your Child with Maths*” courses.
- Family Programmes has been extended to Early Years settings – with a current pilot running – “Time 2 Talk”.
- Benefited from funding via the Digital 2030 grant – eventual aim to roll out a “lending library” for learners most in need of a digital device or internet connectivity.
- Working with colleagues at RCT and Bridgend ACL’s – having received funding to address staff and learner well-being. The ACE Co-ordinator is attending a Teaching Pedagogy course – with the aim of sharing this with all tutors.
- The same funding stream has produced a Well Being Champions course – which equips staff with the appropriate skills to support and signpost learners.

- Continued work on the ESTYN Post Inspection Action Plan (specific work carried out on Internal Quality Assurance, Welsh Language Standards, Digital Learning Approaches).
- Review of marketing strategy to address learner engagement challenges.

Parenting Team

- The Delivery team continues to focus on offering a parenting intervention that is bespoke to the parents needs and situation.
- In line with the corporate approach, staff are tracking vulnerable children/young people and families, completing weekly Keeping in Touch (KIT) contacts and allocated new participants from the weekly Vulnerable Families meeting.
- Staff continue to work with all open cases, so all plans are up to date and recorded. This work includes signposting, referrals to other agencies, one to ones, completion of CAF's reviews etc.
- Development of remote working and new interventions is on-going and developing a hints and tips guide for parent to use.
- Staff are regularly linking with other agencies and specialist services via telephone, email and developing the use of Teams.
- Regular links are maintained along with paperwork and reporting with the Flying Start and Families First coordinators.
- The service is engaging with social media platforms ie Flying Start Facebook page and developing a specific Facebook page for the Parenting Programme.
- Using WG grant, the Parents as Partners (PAP) programme has been developed and implemented. Strengths based approach focused on utilising staff previously trained in PAP, and focused on parental conflict due to COVID, in partnership with Social Services, Safer Merthyr Tydfil and Exchange. The grant is also focused on developing parental resources to tackle parental conflict, a new and innovative approach.
- Staff member is attending training as part of Adult Education offer - a train the train approach to using online system- which will support online course delivery.
- the engagement team continue to operate as a pre programme service where they receive referrals and make the initial contact with families.
- The Engagement Workers continue to focus on reaching out to communities who need support via social media and keeping partnerships operating where possible.

Play

- PSA steering group online meetings taking place.
- Roll out of the Cwm Taf Morgannwg and Play Wales pilot in Merthyr aimed at reducing childhood obesity and increase the value of outdoor play. The pilot focused on working community and schools to develop the use of schools' grounds after school hours. Four schools are engaged and developing a street closure approach – three community partners engaged. Both developments have been awarded SEED funding for play resources using the WG Play Grant.
- Completion of a commissioned research project into the needs of vulnerable groups, report and action plan.
- The coordination of the WG Play grant for revenue and capital via grant panel approach £58,148 has been awarded to increase play opportunities.
- Due to Covid restrictions 800 play packs delivered to the most vulnerable children across the Borough. Play Providers have been invited to submit a proposal for play ideas for Easter.
- Roll out of online workshops with play providers in the area, with the view to develop a centralised database of play providers complete.

Community Zone

- Construction work on the IAA and community cafe is near completion, with snagging, training on the use of café equipment and formal handover to be complete.
- Community Zone steering group's operational using online means.

- Development work in regard to an environmental project to improve the area around the hub is ongoing. With key stakeholder's commitment in place and links to the development of a Neighbourhood Network being made.
- Regular contact is made with the third sector commissioned service (VAMT), and the Community Development officer who has an agreed work plan in place to maintain community contacts and links via the dedicated Facebook page.
- Daily community Facebook updates include details on where to get support, how to keep your children active, support for home schooling, vital details about the Foodbank distribution and tenancy and universal credit support and online services to tackle loneliness and isolation.
- A community online consultation survey has been completed, focused on community needs – results are being analysed.

OTHER FAMILIES FIRST ACTIVITIES

Integrated Counselling

- Extra capacity secured through WG grant and delivered by third sector partner reducing waiting lists.

CAPITAL PROJECTS

Following the successful completion of many capital programme and maintenance projects during the Summer Term 2020, planning, development and delivery of major capital and maintenance projects has continued throughout the Autumn Term and Spring Terms to date.

Schools

- Major Capital projects Sep 20 - Mar 21
 - YYG New Build (Band A)
 - Trelewis additional classroom works
 - Ysgol Santes Tudful additional classroom completion and ongoing roof repairs
- Scoping, feasibility and design works have been ongoing
 - 3-16 VA school (Band B) including public and stakeholder consultation regarding site selection and the awarding of the phase 1 contract for design development
 - Pen Y Dre major refurbishment (Band B) including commencing tender process for phase 1 contract
 - Caedraw nursery extension
 - Cyfarthfa Park Primary nursery extension / big bocs bwyd
 - Greenfield Special School additional classroom
 - Ysgol Rhyd Y Grug internal reconfiguration
 - Welsh Medium seedling school
- Various capital maintenance projects have also been ongoing

Early Years

- Continue to Progress 2020/21 Childcare Offer capital programme with Property Services including architect plans, capital agreements, lease agreements and liaising with providers and schools
- Prioritising Flying Start Capital projects that can be completed in 2020/21
- Small grants scheme (Early Years) - obtaining an update from providers that have been awarded funding. Held a virtual panel meeting to discuss the applications made for funding.

CAPITA ONE

- There has been on going technical maintenance support provided by Capita including updates to the cloud infrastructure, and upgrades and fixes to the Capita One application. These have been undertaken in timely manner and the Cloud support team are responsive to issues identified.
- Specific issues impacting the reliability of the system required a fix across the national cloud infrastructure and this was resolved in the first half of the Autumn Term.
- Ongoing issues with the B2B module (the transfer of information between school systems and the local authority) have been resolved.

- The roll out of the SEND portal to schools and Educational Psychologists (EP) took place during the Autumn Term. An online referral system now in place for schools to request EP involvement and for information to be fed back to schools. Training delivered to schools and local authority staff on the use of the system, support documentation has also been developed.
- Additional development work has been undertaken including creating involvement records for work undertaken with Gypsy Travellers and EAL pupils and recording and reporting of exclusions which has removed the need for the information to be recorded in a separate spreadsheet.
- A Capita One user group has been established to discuss support needs and a user perception survey is currently under development.
- There has been growth approved from April 2021 for additional staffing resources to support the ongoing development of Capita One as part of an overall strategy to develop a corporate data team across the local authority.

SCHOOLS FORUM

- During the Autumn Term and into the Spring Term work has been undertaken with the Schools Forum via Teams meetings to complete the strategic work programme in line with timescales including;
- Concluding and consulting on the Formula Funding review with implementation from April 21 incorporating three-year transitional arrangements.
- Working in collaboration with local authority Energy Officer and Schools Forum to approve funding model using school budgets for the delivery of REfit Cymru energy projects across schools as part of the overall corporate scheme to address carbon management and sustainability targets. Projects to be implemented.
- Working in collaboration with Schools SIMS ICT Lead officer and Schools Forum to approve the sustainability funding model using a 50/50 match funding model between schools and the local authority for Waves 1-3 of the ICT Hwb Grant project.
- Working in collaboration with Headteachers, Service leads and Schools Forum to review, amend and approve all SLAs delivered by local authority services to schools for the three-year cycle 2021-2024

SCHOOLS FINANCES & FINANCIAL ADMIN

- Paying of school invoices and processing of claims for Covid staff absences in schools.
- Scrutinising, challenging and supporting claims via the Hardship grant for all other relevant costs including liaison with WG to successfully challenge disallowed claims in order to maximise cost recovery to the local authority and schools.
- Supported and scrutinised/challenged schools planned licensed deficit applications and financial business cases for staff voluntary and compulsory redundancy and premature retirement application processes.