

# Report of the Strategic Director of Children's Services to the meeting of Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be held on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2020

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**Subject:** Plans for Return to School in September 2020

## **Summary statement:**

The contingency plans in place that will allow education to take place and continue whether there is or is not a further or extended COVID19 local lockdown across the District.

This report will also outline the additional funding approved by Executive in June 2020 to support the post Covid recovery for education.

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## **Portfolio**

Children & Families

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## **Overview & Scrutiny Area**

Children's Services

## 1. SUMMARY

The contingency plans in place that will allow education to take place and continue whether there is or is not a further or extended COVID19 local lockdown across the District.

This report will also outline the additional funding approved by Executive in June 2020 to support the post Covid recovery for education.

## 2. BACKGROUND

Schools are set to reopen in September 2020 to all pupils following their closure to most pupils on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. There are 7 Local Authority maintained nursery schools within the district. 161 primary schools, 77 which are Local Authority maintained and 84 Academy or free schools. In the secondary sector there are 35 schools in total, 6 which are Local Authority maintained and 29 Academy or free schools. There are 9 designated special schools in the district, 4 of which are in the primary sector and 5 which are for secondary aged pupils, two of these schools are academies.

On 2<sup>nd</sup> July the Government issued guidance to schools and special schools in relation to their full opening from September 2020 and subsequent updated versions of the guidance have been issued to include additional aspects of advice as the situation has continued to develop.

Childcare providers have been able to open fully since 1<sup>st</sup> June 2020 and have also been following government guidance.

To support schools with wider reopening the Education and Learning Team produced a bespoke and detailed risk assessment template, which was issued to all Headteachers and CEOs across the district. The template is intended to be utilised alongside all government issued guidance to support the risk assessment of all aspects of pupils returning to school safely in September.

In addition, the local authority has worked closely with colleagues in public health to provide concise advice about how schools and settings should respond to any potential or confirmed cases or outbreaks of COVID-19. This advice allows public health and the local authority to provide support and guidance to any setting who has identified potential cases to minimise the risks of further spreading of the virus.

Throughout the pandemic and school closure to most pupils, schools have adapted to deliver learning to children who remained at home. Schools have all approached this differently, in order to respond to their school community needs, alongside any identified special educational needs of individual pupils.

Additionally, there is a full range of curriculum support being provided by Oak National Academy, available online and free of charge for schools. <https://www.thenational.academy/oaks-curricula>. Many schools supported children through virtual learning through forums such as Seneca <https://www.senecalearning.com/> to enable pupils to access a full range of

subjects from home. Schools also delivered lessons virtually, enabling pupils to interact with teachers online. Where children did not have access to IT resources, schools ensured pupils were provided with physical learning packs and equipment which were delivered to their homes.

All pupils will be supported to return to school for face to face learning from September. However, there is an expectation that there will be a need for distanced learning to continue as schools manage closures of school bubbles or full school closures, where a pupil or staff member is identified as having symptoms or a confirmed case of coronavirus. The guidance and risk assessment support provided to schools has enabled them to plan fully for this eventuality and they have evaluated processes used since 23<sup>rd</sup> March to ensure there is as little disruption to learning as possible.

The government has announced £650 million catch-up premium funding allocated across schools in the UK to support children to catch up on missed learning as a result of school closure. This equates to schools being issued with £80 per pupil for mainstream schools, £240 for special schools. Schools should use this funding for specific activities to support their pupils to catch up for lost teaching over the previous months, in line with the guidance on curriculum expectations for the next academic year.

### **Post Covid Recovery Funding for Education**

Since the 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020, schools closed for the direct delivery of education but have remained open to provide childcare for vulnerable and key worker children.

During the period of closure, schools were required to ensure that learning opportunities were provided for all children on their roll. This was done in a number of different ways and most schools were successful in engaging with the majority of their learners. However, it is recognised that the impact of the closure of schools will have undoubtedly had a negative impact on the learning for many children, especially those who come from disadvantaged backgrounds. It should also be noted, that non-disadvantaged children will also have also been negatively impacted by the closures. Therefore, whilst the post Covid funding will naturally focus on the impact for disadvantaged children, aspects of this recovery process will benefit a wider group of children.

In June 2020, the Executive agreed for funding to be allocated to support the delivery of several strategies that would help to reduce the medium-term impact of the closures. An Interim Programme Manager will be put in place to oversee the delivery of the Post Covid Recovery Programme and to ensure that a robust framework is put in place to capture activity and measure progress against identified outcomes.

### **Digital Strategy for Disadvantaged Children**

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for online access for communication, education and wellbeing in the district, making digital inclusion more imperative both in the response and the recovery for children, young people and families in the District.

In May the Government announced a national programme to roll out laptops & devices for all children with a social worker and disadvantaged Y10 pupils. This programme also included internet access until the end of March 2021. A process was used by the DfE based on historical trend data to determine the numbers of laptops or devices to be allocated to each Local Authority. In the case of Bradford, the total number of laptops or devices allocated was just over 2000 against a number of just over 5000 children, including Care Leavers, who have a social worker. Therefore, it was recognised that there was a gap in the provision of devices to support remote learning for vulnerable children and young people.

Part of the recovery programme will be expanding this further by providing online connectivity and digital devices for all children with a social worker to use digital devices and resources to support their learning. The focus of the DFE roll out was to support children aged 5-15 and 16+ children. The recovery programme will support our 2000 younger children under the age of 5 across the district access an age appropriate device to support children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). It will also support the other children who have since been allocated a social worker to be able to benefit in the same way.

This programme will also include ongoing support and maintenance of the existing 4g connections being provided in the DFE scheme, as well as the provision of additional connections for the extra devices and ensure that these are extended to the end of the current academic year in the first instance.

#### Summer Tuition Programme for the new Y11 pupils

The Opportunity Area, in partnership with Born in Bradford already have a planned programme of summer tuition in GCSE mathematics. The Council had originally committed funding of £200k to support the implementation of this alongside the funding from the Opportunity Area. As part of the wider ambition to support individuals on lower incomes, work has been done with Bradford University to create the opportunity for Maths tuition to be delivered by Undergraduates. This may also have a longer-term advantage of encouraging more students to consider teaching as a future career prospect, especially in Maths which is one of the core subjects where recruitment remains a challenge locally and nationally.

The Post Covid Educational Recovery programme has also committed an equivalent sum of money to further enhance the funding for Maths Tuition as well as to provide funding to develop a parallel system to support rapid improvements to prepare students for the Y11 GCSE English language examinations. Focus will be on examination technique, question analysis and efficient and effective text analysis. Delivery of the English Language tuition programme will be by suitably qualified staff who will be trained to deliver a programme to meet specific requirements.

Specific schools and cohorts will be identified jointly between the LA and the OA to begin the roll out of the Tuition. This will then be widened as the programme begins to expand over time.

#### Supporting Mental Health for Learning

It is recognised that many children will have been impacted by the restrictions imposed during the lockdown period and sadly, some children may have experienced deaths of family members during Covid-19.

It is well documented that children will often use schools and education adults as “safe spaces” in which to explore their feelings. Therefore, specialist advice will need to be in place to support schools directly and indirectly to help children work through feelings. Disadvantaged children and families may need more targeted and specialist support.

The aspiration is to provide a comprehensive response to children and young peoples’ mental health and emotional wellbeing needs at all levels within schools (whole school, class/form and individual pupils). Guidance, consultation and resources will be provided to support the school’s pastoral curriculum by the Educational Psychology Service. To have the greatest impact this should be strengthened by individual and small group mental health interventions. There is insufficient mental health capacity within the locality, which is evident in the extensive waiting time for existing services.

The Post Covid Educational Recovery programme will establish a team of 5 Education Therapeutic Officers (ETO) to deliver therapeutic interventions to both individuals and small groups, and be based within the Educational Psychology Service. The advantages of having a local authority ETO Team include:

- Working directly in schools (taking support to communities) with increase children and young people engagement. It has been consentingly shown that clinical based services can experience high “failure to attend” rates.
- Build partnership and collaborative working school and educational settings. Involving schools and families/in assessment and reviews of progress towards outcomes improves outcomes.
- Having a Local Authority lead team enable services to be targeted with agility and pace. It also allows the service to be designed with public sector priorities.

Increasing the LA’s capacity to meet mental health needs provides the opportunity to strengthen partnerships with local mental health providers and commissioners.

### **3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

On Friday 31<sup>st</sup> August, Bradford District was subjected to local restrictions due to a rise in the COVID-19 infection rate across the district. At the time of writing, there is no suggestion this will impact on the plans to fully reopen schools from September.

### **4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL**

£1.2 Million additional Capital funding has been committed by the council to support post COVID recovery for the provision of digital devices. In addition, revenue funding of £715k has been identified to provide tuition programmes and the creation of a small team of Education Therapeutic Officers.

## **5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES**

If there are no significant risks arising out of the implementation of the proposed recommendations it should be stated but only on advice of the Assistant Director Finance and Procurement and the City Solicitor.

## **6. LEGAL APPRAISAL**

All advice to schools given in line with National Government guidance and the Education Act.

## **7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

### **7.1 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY**

Impacts on all children and young people of statutory school age. Specific focus on supporting vulnerable children to reengage with learning positively.

### **7.2 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

Not applicable.

### **7.3 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS**

Not applicable.

### **7.4 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

Not applicable.

### **7.5 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT**

All children have the right to an education.

### **7.6 TRADE UNION**

All establishments of posts have been done via the appropriate engagement with the Trade Unions.

### **7.7 WARD IMPLICATIONS**

All wards.

### **7.8 AREA COMMITTEE ACTION PLAN IMPLICATIONS - N/A (for reports to Area Committees only)**

Not applicable.

### **7.9 IMPLICATIONS FOR CORPORATE PARENTING**

Children Looked After are a specific cohort that will benefit from this work.

## **7.10 ISSUES ARISING FROM PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESMENT**

Not applicable.

## **8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS**

None.

## **9. OPTIONS**

Not applicable.

## **10. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Members of the committee to note the contents of this report & to support the delivery of the Post Covid Educational Recovery Programme.

## **11. APPENDICES**

None.

## **12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

None.