

Children's Services response to Covid-19: **Education**

Report Author: Jan Parnell

This paper provides a brief overview of the key changes made to the [service] operating model in response to Covid-19 in response to challenges within our community, and how we will implement this learning going forward.

Initial Challenges under Covid-19

The initial challenges were immense in the education sector. They had a few days to respond to lockdown and redesigning their offer to online support and sending packs home to school. There was an emergency food response as the central government guidance was initially very slow and schools were buying vouchers and sending home food parcels.

All special and secondary academies closed in the first week and the majority of primary schools, especially the community schools, remained open to key workers and vulnerable children. With the support of the education team, the remaining primary schools opened up to larger group of key workers.

Vulnerable children did not turn up to school in large numbers but joint working with social care identified the at-risk children who were contacted by social workers at home. Through collaboration with the EHCP service, SENCos, Educational Psychologists and the Inspire Team, additional support has been provided both to schools and families to ensure virtual learning, advice and support is in place.

The support for vulnerable groups intensified and the majority of schools were ringing and sending home additional resources to families. Many could not access the online learning due to lack of kit and family organisation around the education offer.

School staff were mainly working from home and many were deemed vulnerable with underlying health conditions including a larger % of headteachers who have stressful jobs and an older age profile.

Over the next three months there were 193 individual guidance documents aimed at education settings, this needed interpreting and translating into LA guidance and action.

Schools needed to risk assess for wider opening and individual staff risk assessments. The schools initially maintained the 2m distancing rules, then the 1 plus and now the whole year bubbles (up to 300 in secondary) and between 30 – 120 in primary. Distancing was difficult to observe in EY settings. There was confusion over the use of PPE in schools and special schools needed further support to interpret the DFE guidance. The role of governors took on additional importance and responsibility to sign off risk assessments. Under new acts of parliament, the LA was deemed responsible for coordinating all PVI, nursery, primary, academy, free school and independent schools in their civic/education response.

There was increased need for Easter and half term cover for key workers and third sector partners were asked to support the delivery plan.

Education Response

The development of an LA emergency education plan was a collaborative effort by the key education advisers, SEND, social services and commissioning colleagues. It was led by the AD for Education, Jan Parnell.

Please refer to the responding together document, Appendix 1, that exemplifies the detailed Education response which has had excellent feedback from all stakeholders.

Future Challenges

School/PVI sector:

- Space – full return to school and social distancing will there be enough space in schools?
- Teacher & support staff resilience - % of staff shielding and BAME disproportionality impact, so schools need to be supported on constantly reviewing their individual & school risk assessments
- Parent/carer confidence in returning children to school
- Staff wellbeing and HT resilience
- Co-ordination of new responsibilities tutoring, catch-up and student mental health
- Recovery curriculum and expectations to offer full curriculum
- Re stating assessment and OFSTED April 2021
- SEND responsibilities
- Business model /resilience of PVI sector

Internal Education Team:

- Balancing support for the recovery curriculum and standards monitoring
- Managing expectations with the ten secondary academies without a dedicated secondary post
- Brokering access to additional space/outdoor learning
- Building the comms profile with wider community
- Integrating additional support for schools to manage wider SEND and inclusion including home support for online learning and therapies
- EY sufficiency as the sector has contracted in C19 era
- Move to blended learning model and ensuring parity of access to quality provision
- Further developing the Learning Partnership to build peer to peer support and system improvement

- Implementing the track & trace /local lockdown plan if required
- Maintaining standards and high profile during C19 period and fiscal challenge

A draft recovery plan is in progress, Appendix 2, detail future service developments from September 2020 under the 'Mary Seacole Education Recovery Plan'. This programme builds upon the Learning Partnership with schools and our community, introducing a recovery curriculum integrating a focus on climate change, a decolonised offer, and mental health within a blended learning model.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – 'Responding Together'

Appendix 2 – Mary Seacole Education Recovery Plan