

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

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This paper provides a brief overview of the key changes in service delivery and response to Covid-19 in SEND. It addresses the impact on children, young people and their families and how the service has delivered a co-ordinated response

The Haven

Initial Challenges under Covid-19

- The Haven is our children's home, at time of outbreak - 3 full time residents, 1 child with a split placement with Q-house the children's home in Queensmill school plus RBKC resident children (for whom RBKC pay full fees).
- In early March all full-time children became ill, resulting in the 1 child with split placement having to remain at Qhouse.
- Close working with Director of public health, systems and processes put in place to ensure staff and children protected. The Haven was the first LBHF outbreak we have modelled much of our understanding of management of outbreaks on this.
- Haven staff are all LBHF employees – impact of risk assessment, staff health and safety staff resilience.

The Haven Response

- Staff resilience and commitment to the children has been incredible.
- Staff continued to come to work for 3 weeks when they believed the children all had Covid-19.
- Staff sickness has been low and no one has experienced severe symptoms.
- Increased staffing was made available, full PPE worn at all times, building work undertaken to create improved infection control facilities.
- Contact and external visitors were ceased with virtual methods successfully put in place for children to continue to see their families and professional networks.
- The Haven was well supported by schools, particularly Jack Tizard school.

Future Challenges

- Ongoing risk of further outbreaks, it remains unclear whether the children did have Covid-19 so the risk remains high for future outbreaks.
- Impact of Test, Track and Trace is an ongoing risk to staffing levels.

- Staff have worked at an intense level for the last 4 months, we are mindful of staff wellbeing and burn out.

Stephen Wiltshire and Short Breaks

Initial Challenges under Covid-19

- Majority of the Special Schools closed in the early lockdown period with Queensmill running a significantly reduced offer and Jack Tizard opening in June for a very limited number of children.
- Impact on families due to school closure, lockdown restrictions and risk of Covid to themselves as carers and to children with more complex needs.
- High number of children with complex needs were shielded.
- Stephen Wiltshire Centre needed to remain open throughout to deliver support to children and their families, this required all staff to be risk assessed and supported to be safe in work.

The Stephen Wiltshire and Short Breaks Response

- A 6 day per week offer has been available since March, offering sessions on site to children whose schools are closed.
- The Play Association extended their day-care offer to 6 days per week to provide support to children and young adults who were not able to attend school or adult day-care offer.
- Increased in home support packages through Direct payments and agency support agreed as required to support families.
- All cases have been RAG rated, priority access to sessions given to most vulnerable children and families.
- Families contacted weekly by their lead professional.
- Stephen Wiltshire Duty hours extended to provide advice and support to all parents of disabled children in Hammersmith and Fulham.
- Stephen Wiltshire Centre co-ordinated the children's PPE distribution supporting all families with agency and direct payments packages to access PPE.
- Fit-testing (for specialist PPE) for all services in LBHF across children's and adults was co-ordinated from the Stephen Wiltshire Centre.
- SWC have supported children to celebrate the NHS with the weekly claps, have celebrated Black Lives Matter and remembered Grenfell.



Future Challenges

- Ongoing impact of return to school for children with complex needs.
- Impact of social distancing on limited space in the centre and all of our facilities.
- Risk of families becoming exhausted as a result of relentless ongoing impact.
- Increased levels of support may be ongoing, the Short Breaks budget is budgeted assuming children are at school full time, there will be increased budget pressures.

Education, Health and Care Planning (EHCP)

Initial Challenges under Covid-19

- Since Lockdown the service has been delivered fully remotely.
- Closure of school and incremental reopening has resulted in wholesale impact on delivery of Special Educational needs provision.
- Secretary of State issued notice to amend the SEN Regulations under the Coronavirus Act – this allows for the LA to use reasonable endeavours to ensure that needs are met.
- Requirement to risk assess every child with EHCP – identify impact of changes and measures to be put in place to ensure needs can be met.

EHCP Service Response

- Ongoing close working EHCP service, SENCos and the Education team to risk assess, support schools and families to ensure that virtual learning, advice and support in place.

- BAU has continued despite disruption in schools thus 88% of primary phased transfers were completed by February 15th deadline and 66% of the Secondary Transfers by the 31st March deadline. Work is now underway to ensure that children transition into their next education phase, transition is always challenging and has required considerable additional support this year.
- The service has led on the digital inclusion and laptops have been issued where identified as required.
- Virtual annual reviews have been successful, supporting increased attendance of key professionals.

Future Challenges

- Return to school in September remains a challenge for all schools, returning children who require higher levels of support, struggle to socially distance etc will be a further challenge.
- Parental confidence in schools to keep children safe in relation to Covid remains an ongoing challenge.
- Virtual education where schools can not be fully open is challenging for many children, for those with SEN there are additional layers of complexity.

Co-production of the Local Offer and Pathways to Employment

Initial Challenges under Covid-19

- Service is now wholly virtual, while this has been very successful, we have during this time brought on board our 2 inclusive apprentices who have had to start their roles in LBHF virtually.
- High volume of DFE guidance and information to disseminate to parent groups has been supported through the Local Offer Team.
- Supported Internships have been disrupted as placements have been impacted by lockdown.

Service Response

- Weekly zoom sessions with parents have taken place to with a range of professional attendance including paediatricians, EHCP service, Educational Psychologists, Short Breaks service, transitions etc. Sessions have been very well attended with a much wider group of parents that would historically have attended the coffee mornings
- Issues raised by parents have been tracked and responded to where ever possible to ensure that thematic and individual concerns are addressed.
- Local offer has been regularly updated.
- Supported interns have been supported by their colleges.

- Appointment of the Inclusive apprentices is leading on the SEND Youth Voice with the move to virtual youth council meetings has enabled the voice of young people with SEND to be fully included in the LBHF youth voice.
- Redesign of pathways to employment roles is underway to ensure that we have capacity to deliver independent travel training to deliver against travel care priorities and improve outcomes for young people.

Future Challenges

- Parents remain anxious about return to school and the Local Offer team will continue to support access to the SEND service to ensure concerns are addressed.
- As part of Recovery there will continue to be join up between SEND, the Economy and Social Care in driving forwards the employment agenda, given the likely economic impact of Covid this joined up approach will be required to ensure that those with SEND are not left behind.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Inclusive Youth Voice Summer 2020

Appendix 2 – Responding Together