

Report of the Director of Children and Families

Report to Scrutiny Board (Children and Families)

Date: 7th October 2020



Subject: Coronavirus (Covid-19) Pandemic – Response and Recovery Plan for Schools

Are specific electoral wards affected?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If yes, name(s) of ward(s):	
Has consultation been carried out?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Will the decision be open for call-in?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, access to information procedure rule number:	
Appendix number:	

Summary

1. Main issues

- The return of children to school in September 2020 was greeted with a sense of cautious optimism throughout the educational and wider community. There was positive anticipation that children and young people could get back to their 'normal' educational studies and that schools could begin the process of supporting children to 'catch-up' and accelerate progress as a result of the long period of time they had been out of school. Many implications of the last six months can already be seen, despite children only recently returning to school. There will, however, be many consequences that are not fully known and are likely to become more apparent over the coming weeks and months.
- Despite the fact that schools are now open – it certainly isn't yet business as usual for school leaders, teachers and students. There needs to be an understanding that school leadership teams and teachers are having to devote considerable attention to the range of Covid-19 related issues and this ultimately could detract attention from their school improvement agenda.
- Attendance** for all pupils in Leeds (*based on school data submission to the DfE during the week commencing the 14th September*) was 87% and early indications suggest that this is broadly in line with England state-funded schools. Attendance rates are based on returns from schools via the DfE Attendance portal. In the week of 14th September, 103 schools had not submitted a return. The Attendance Team are calling these schools to ask for their submissions.

- As is being reported by other local authorities in Yorkshire and Humber, Leeds has witnessed an increase in the number of new notifications from parents choosing to **electively home educate (EHE)** their child. To date (Thursday 18th September) the EHE team has received 78 notifications from parent's choosing to home educate in comparison to 32 in the same period last year (1st September 2020). Further notifications are being received and it is anticipated that numbers of EHE will continue to rise.
- Initially, over 1400 children were required to **shield** due to being 'extremely clinically vulnerable'. This has since reduced by 368. The local authority is supporting schools in making the decision about the safest and most appropriate option for each student in line with medical advice and guidance. This could, for example, be a return to school in a safe 'bubble' following an individual risk assessment or remaining at home (with arrangements for home education).
- There have been no permanent **exclusions** since the beginning of the school year. Whilst there have been some fixed term exclusions, it is too early to identify any trends.
- Children and Families have requested that schools ensure **risk assessments** are easily accessible on school websites and have reminded school leaders that individual risk assessments are to be completed before vulnerable staff return to work. The Leeds Schools Health and Safety team produced template risk assessment documents for schools to utilise and have supported them through the publication of regular Health and safety updates, telephone support and on-site visits.
- In terms of **remote learning readiness**, the Government guidance states that schools need to provide high-quality online and offline resources that are linked to the school's curriculum expectations and that there should be a strong contingency plan in place for remote education provision by the end of September. Children and Families colleagues have established a Remote Learning Task Group with members from the Learning Improvement Team and representatives from schools. The remit of the group is to ensure all schools are aware of the high expectations in the Government guidance; to clarify advice about the live streaming of lessons; to ensure all schools have an on-line learning platform and to support them in this; and to quality assure the remote learning provision available, with a view to disseminating good practice.
- The Education Secretary confirmed that the Government was determined that **exams** in 2021 should go ahead. For GCSEs and A-levels, there may be a short delay to these taking place to allow teachers more time to catch up missed teaching time.
- In the first few weeks of term, many schools have received notification of positive Covid-19 cases from staff and pupils and this has, in some schools but not all, necessitated the closure of certain year groups or the disbanding of bubbles. This is impacting on the continuity of delivery of the **curriculum**. Some headteachers are reporting that their focus is having to be on Covid-19 management rather than school improvement. Children and Families officers have produced a comprehensive training package to support school improvement and the delivery of the curriculum.
- Support for **vulnerable learners** continues as teams are developing the 'Implementing Wellbeing for Education Return' package of resources from the DFE which seeks to better equip schools and colleges to promote children and young people's wellbeing, resilience, and recovery in response to Covid-19. As well as strengthening and building wellbeing and

resilience, this aims to prevent the onset of mental health problems and ensure those with pre-existing or emerging difficulties access the right support.

- **Major issues** include headteachers and staff already feeling exhausted and under a great deal of pressure. This is principally as a result of the extra duties they undertake to implement and maintain covid secure learning environments and the need to provide work for pupils who are self-isolating. The issues affecting the national test and trace programme are impacting significantly on schools. The capacity for testing and the delay in results being returned is affecting the return of staff and pupils who are potentially negative and could be in school.

2. Best Council Plan Implications

- The Best Council Plan (BCP) agreed at February's Full Council has been amended to ensure that the current COVID context is captured, in so far as is possible given the continued uncertainty. This version has now been published and can be found by clicking [here - https://www.leeds.gov.uk/docs/BCP%202020-2025.PDF](https://www.leeds.gov.uk/docs/BCP%202020-2025.PDF)
- Within the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, the vulnerabilities of children and families across the city have inevitably increased. In addition, many families not previously experiencing significant challenges to their health or finances, now find themselves in unfamiliar and concerning situations.
- Children and Families Services, therefore, finds itself under additional pressure in pursuit of achieving all the goals set out in the Best Council Plan and continues to adapt and work flexibly as the challenges brought on by the pandemic have been changing rapidly.
- The updated BCP highlights the challenges to education settings as it states, "As a Child-Friendly City, Leeds continues to invest in the future of our young people which has led to improvements in health and educational outcomes. However, we are acutely aware of the potentially significant immediate and longer-term impacts of coronavirus on the health, wellbeing and learning of our children and young people and so now, more than ever, there is much more to do to ensure everyone is equipped with the education and skills they need to succeed in life. The council is working with families, schools and others to secure a brighter future for every child in Leeds."

3. Resource Implications

- The Covid-19 pandemic is unprecedented and as such, Children and Families has had to redeploy resources to areas of need with the highest priority. This has included colleagues working with, and also within, education settings across the city.
- The risk of infection to the workforce, particularly to front line staff and vulnerable staff (some of whom are shielding), has been a significant concern which has placed additional pressure on the directorate as the needs of vulnerable children and families across the city rises.

4. Recommendations

- The Scrutiny Board is asked to consider the information regarding the Children and Families Directorate's Covid-19 response and continuity planning, for schools and education settings across the city.

1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1. The Council's Chief Executive provided a comprehensive update report to the Executive Board during its meeting on 20th July 2020 on developments surrounding the Council's Response and Recovery Plan.
- 1.2. In September 2020, Scrutiny Board discussed Children and Families Services response and recovery plan to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 1.3. This report provides the Scrutiny Board with an update on specific requested areas of the Children and Families Services' response and recovery plan for schools, working with partners and communities, in response to the unprecedented Covid-19 pandemic.

2. Background information

- 2.1. The initial governance and delivery structure to drive the response to the coronavirus outbreak, including an initial Response and Recovery Plan, was considered by the Executive Board in March 2020. A further update report by the Chief Executive, which included an updated version of the Response and Recovery Plan, was then reported to the Executive Board during its first public remote meeting held on 22nd April 2020 ([Link to Executive Board meeting agenda 22-04-20](#)).
- 2.2. During April, arrangements were also put in place for each of the Council's Scrutiny Board Chairs to receive regular briefings from their respective Lead Directors and Executive Members to review the COVID-19 response. During May, these arrangements were extended so that, on a fortnightly basis, all Scrutiny Board Members were also being engaged (as part of a remote working group) in those briefings.
- 2.3. The Scrutiny Board held a further working group meeting on 17th June 2020 to consider the update report of the Chief Executive on the Council's Response and Recovery Plan which was reported to the Executive Board on 19th May 2020 ([Link to Executive Board meeting agenda 24-06-20](#)). During this meeting, the Board was also briefed on the latest position with regard to those service areas that fall within the remit of the Children and Families Scrutiny Board, including Schools, Early Years/Childcare Provision, Children Social Care and Children's Homes.
- 2.4. As part of its first public remote meeting, on 8th July 2020, the Children and Families Scrutiny Board continued to focus its attention on how the Council and its partners are working collaboratively to support all children and their families especially the most vulnerable during such an unprecedented and difficult period.
- 2.5. A statement was released on 23rd August 2020 from the Chief Medical Officers and Deputy Chief Medical Officers of England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales on the evidence of risks and benefits to health from schools and childcare settings reopening. The full statement can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/statement-from-the-uk-chief-medical-officers-on-schools-and-childcare-reopening> Key findings include:
 - 2.5.1 "We are confident that multiple sources of evidence show that a lack of schooling increases inequalities, reduces the life chances of children and can exacerbate physical and mental health issues. School improves health, learning, socialisation and opportunities throughout the life course including employment. It has not been possible to reduce societal inequalities through the provision of home-based education alone. School attendance is very important for children and young people."

- 2.5.2 “Our overall consensus is that, compared to adults, children may have a lower risk of catching COVID-19 (lowest in younger children), definitely have a much lower rate of hospitalisation and severe disease, and an exceptionally low risk of dying from COVID-19. Very few, if any, children or teenagers will come to long-term harm from COVID-19 due solely to attending school. This has to be set against a certainty of long-term harm to many children and young people from not attending school.”
- 2.5.3 “Data from the UK (Office for National Statistics (ONS)) suggest teachers are not at increased risk of dying from COVID-19 compared to the general working-age population. ONS data identifies teaching as a lower risk profession (no profession is zero risk). International data support this.”
- 2.5.4 “Transmission of COVID-19 to staff members in school does occur, and data from UK and international studies suggest it may largely be staff to staff (like other workplaces) rather than pupil to staff.”
- 2.5.5 “Because schools connect households it is likely opening schools will put some upward pressure on transmission more widely and therefore increase R. We have confidence in the current evidence that schools are much less important in the transmission of COVID-19 than for influenza or some other respiratory infections. Other work and social environments also increase risk and are likely to be more important for transmission of COVID-19.”
- 2.5.6 “Opening schools may be as important in linking households indirectly as through direct transmission in school. For example allowing parents to go back to work, or meeting at the school gates, on public transport or in shared private vehicles, via after school social or sport activities or wrap-around care may be as important as what happens within the school.”
- 2.6 On 9th September 2020, the Children and Families Scrutiny Board continued to focus its attention on how the Council and its partners are working collaboratively to support all children and their families especially the most vulnerable during the pandemic.

3. Main issues

- 3.1. Updates have been provided to focus on the following areas requested by Scrutiny Board:
- Attendance, Elective Home Education and Exclusions
 - Risk Assessments
 - Remote Learning Readiness
 - Exams
 - Curriculum
 - Support for Vulnerable Learners
 - Major Issues

3.2. Attendance, Elective Home Education and Exclusions

3.2.1 Attendance:

- 3.2.2 Attendance for all pupils in Leeds (*based on a return of 67% of schools*) during week commencing the 14th September was 87% and early indications suggest that this is broadly in line with England state-funded schools.

- 3.2.3 Average attendance during week commencing the **14th September** for all pupils was 87%, compared to 95.1% during the 2018/19 academic year. For pupils with an EHCP average attendance was 77%, compared to 89.7% during academic year 2018/19. There is no comparable data for pupils with a social worker as this data has only been collected since March due to Covid-19 and the focus on vulnerable learners accessing available school places during the pandemic. Please note that the pupils with a social worker in March may not be the same pupils with a social worker at the beginning of September and hence this is a new line of data collection by the DfE.
- 3.2.4 In 2018/19 attendance rates for all pupils was 95.1% and for pupils with an EHCP the attendance rate was 89.7%. There is no comparable data for the attendance rates of children with a social worker for the same reasons given in the previous point.
- 3.2.5 The DfE has requested schools submit daily attendance data. It is important to note that not all schools have submitted this. Between Wednesday 10th September and Friday 18th September between 62% and 68% of state-funded schools have submitted data to the DfE. The rate in Leeds was 67%. Learning teams are actively encouraging schools to complete the online return.
- 3.2.6 Based on the DfE return, the attendance of all pupils increased from 73.7% on Wednesday 10th September to 87% on Thursday 17th September 2020. Any comparison should be treated with caution as the data is not validated and the response rate across England is unknown. Based on available data and taking account of this caution, the attendance rate in Leeds does appear to be broadly in line with England.
- 3.2.7 The percentage of pupils with a social worker reported to be attending has decreased marginally each day during week commencing the 14th September, from 82.6% on Monday 14th September to 78% on Thursday 17th September.
- 3.2.8 The percentage of pupils with an EHCP reported to be attending decreased from 79.1% on Monday 14th September to 75% on Friday 18th September.
- 3.2.9 The number of pupils reported to be away from school due to exposure to Covid-19 increased from 77 on Friday 11th September to 1382 on Friday 18th September. The majority of those away from school are away due to being in contact with Covid-19 (1238), followed by suspected to have Covid-19 (131) and confirmed Covid-19 (13).
- 3.2.10 The number of teachers reported to not be able to attend school has risen from 127 on Friday 14th September to 262 on Friday 18th September.
- 3.2.11 The number of schools that are partially closed due to Covid-19 has risen from 1 on 11th September to 10 on the 17th September.
- 3.2.12 Whilst it is not possible to provide accurate geographical attendance rates due to the number of schools that haven't submitted data across the city, the local authority will monitor attendance levels across the city, particularly for vulnerable cohorts. Local authority officers are actively encouraging all settings to complete the DFE attendance return.
- 3.2.13 **Appendix 1** shows Leeds Covid School Attendance Dashboards for: Pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP), Pupils with a Social worker and All Pupils (All charts are for local authority maintained schools). Children and Families colleagues continue to monitor attendance rates on a weekly basis.

- 3.2.14 In the initial round of identifying people who are extremely clinically vulnerable, over 1400 children were identified as ‘being required to shield’.
- 3.2.15 During the early phase of the pandemic, shielding meant that children needed to stay at home and were not able to attend school. There was some initial confusion expressed by some parents about why their child had been identified as needing to shield. The advice was that parents should speak to the clinician who would make the decision with the parents about whether it was safe for the student to attend school.
- 3.2.16 Currently the children on the shielding list are being reviewed and it is likely the number of children and young people required to shield will reduce significantly. To date the number of children has reduced by **368**. The local authority is awaiting details of which children have been removed from the shielding list and will inform schools of which students are continuing to shield and support the schools in making the decision about the safest option for each student. This could be a return to school in a safe ‘bubble’ following a risk assessment or remaining at home (with arrangements for home education in place).
- 3.2.17 **Appendix 2** sets out the current guidance for shielding for children and young people.
- 3.2.18 **Elective Home Education (EHE):**
- 3.2.19 As being reported by other local authorities in Yorkshire and Humber, Leeds has seen an increase in the number of new notifications of parents choosing to electively home educate their child.
- 3.2.20 To date (Thursday 17th September) the EHE team has received 78 notifications of parent’s choice to home educate (*in comparison to 32 in the same period last year, 1st September 2020*). Further notifications are being received and we anticipate a continued increase.
- 3.2.21 Of these, 20 notifications have stated the reason is Covid-19 related. There may be more notifications with this reason identified which will be updated following caseworkers making direct contact with parents.
- 3.2.22 Currently there are 40 notifications which state “rather not say” as the reason for electively home educating.
- 3.2.23 The notifications are from across all year groups and are often from family groups. No specific ethnic group has been identified as a trend. Approximately a third of notifications are children and young people in receipt of Free School Meals (FSM) and around 20% have had previous social care involvement at some time in their lives. Many have low attendance in previous school years.

3.2.24 Summary of reason of new notifications to 18th September 2020

EHE - Not School Of Preference	2
EHE As a short Term Intervention	2
EHE Belief in Home Education	9
EHE Childrens safety	1
EHE COVID-19	20
EHE Dissatisfied With School System	1
EHE Dissatisfied with Teaching	2
EHE Rather not say / Unknown	40
EHE Stress/Anxiety	1

3.2.25 Schools are asked to outline concerns to parents for the child becoming EHE - Where the child is already below age related expectations, this is highlighted by the teacher assessing the education plans from parents. SENIT may become involved if appropriate.

3.2.26 New Notifications by year group 18th September 2020

Reception	5
Year 1	12
Year 2	6
Year 3	4
Year 4	9
Year 5	5
Year 6	8
Year 7	8
Year 8	9
Year 9	5
Year 10	7
Year 11	1

3.2.27 The EHE team will continue to check each notification with social care to see if the child is currently the subject of an 'open case' or if the family have been known to social care in the last 18 months. In both instances, social care are asked to reassess the safety and wellbeing of the child and if being home educated is appropriate for their safety.

3.2.28 Parents are asked to provide education plans for their child. These are then assessed by a teacher for their suitability to the child's age, aptitude and relevant special needs. Those with an EHCP are reviewed by SENSAF. Usually there is a 3 week time gap between the notification and any education plan being submitted. Any case where the education is not deemed as suitable will be referred for a school attendance order for the pupil to return to school as soon as possible.

3.2.29 Further capacity for the EHE team may be required if the number of notifications continues to rise at current rates.

3.2.30 Exclusions:

3.2.31 No permanent exclusions have been reported since the start of this academic year.

3.2.32 Some fixed term exclusions are being reported, however it is currently too early in the term to see any trends.

3.3. Risk Assessments

3.3.1 On 10th September 2020, the local authority asked school leaders to ensure their Covid-19 risk assessments were published and available on the school's website.

3.3.2 A further reminder was sent to school leaders on 15th September 2020 that individual risk assessments need to be completed before vulnerable staff could return to school.

3.3.3 Health and Safety, HR and Learning teams have worked closely to support schools in enabling the safe return of staff and pupils to school.

- 3.3.4 Leeds Schools Health and Safety team have provided intensive support to schools during the lockdown and re-opening phase of the pandemic. They have produced and updated risk assessment templates in addition to a range of guidance documents to support schools. The team has been available for 1-1 support, on-site visits and have been an integral partner in our work with school leaders, such as through the bronze groups and Headteacher briefings. Many academy trusts have their own Health and Safety teams, but support has been available and provided to both academy and maintained schools.
- 3.3.5 National advice and guidance for schools has changed frequently and the Schools' Health and Safety team has provided regular updates to schools, including updates to the risk assessment document.
- 3.3.6 Health and Safety Officers have visited a random selection of schools to monitor risk assessments and covid arrangements. They aim to visit 25% of schools during the period. Officers have visited schools at the request of school leaders and governors in addition to making a visit at the request of local authority officers when an issue has been identified at a specific school.
- 3.3.7 The National Health and Safety Executive are contacting schools to discuss risk assessments and Covid-19 arrangements. They will arrange follow-up on-site visits if appropriate. To date, schools have received phone calls but no school has required a follow up visit.

3.4. Remote Learning Readiness

- 3.4.1 The Government guidance states that schools need to provide high-quality online and offline resources that are linked to the school's curriculum expectations and that there should be a strong contingency plan in place for remote education provision by the end of September.
- 3.4.2 Because the remote learning needs to be linked to a school's curriculum, a uniform approach across the authority is not possible, however, the local authority is seeking to support schools in delivering their individual remote learning.
- 3.4.3 Children and Families colleagues have established a Remote Learning Task Group with members from the Learning Improvement Team and representatives from schools. The remit of the group is to ensure all schools are aware of the high expectations in the Government guidance; to clarify advice about the live streaming of lessons; to ensure all schools have an on-line learning platform and to support them in this; and to quality assure the remote learning provision available, with a view to disseminating good practice.
- 3.4.4 The Leeds Learning Partnership, the training package which secondary schools in Leeds can buy into, will deliver training in the spring term on remote learning.
- 3.4.5 Overseen by the local authority, digital devices have now been allocated to the 382 pupils in Year 10. Initially the DfE provided 343 and an additional 39 when the local authority alerted them to the shortfall.
- 3.4.6 The DfE allocation to the scheme to provide digital devices to children with an allocated Childrens Services worker consisted of 1,831 laptops, 350 iPads and 303 routers, delivered between early June and the end of August. 814 laptops, 155 iPads and 201 routers have already been distributed through the local authority with plans to deliver the balance over the coming months.

- 3.4.7 Children and Families colleagues have provided the Department for Education (DfE) with the contact details which will enable headteachers to order digital devices for pupils who need them in the event of a local lockdown or if a child is shielding.
- 3.4.8 The initial focus for the Education ‘Bronze’ groups has been to support schools with the range of issues in returning to operation. The focus for future meetings will be remote learning. This groups will discuss issues, offer solutions and share good practice with colleagues.

3.5. Exams

- 3.5.1 The Education Secretary confirmed that the Government was determined that exams in 2021 should go ahead. For GCSEs and A-levels, there may be a short delay to these taking place to allow teachers more time to catch up missed teaching time.
- 3.5.2 Following a consultation run by Ofqual (The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation), some of the content in the exam specifications will be assessed differently. This includes changes to 15 A-level subjects, and 25 GCSEs.
- 3.5.3 Based on the most commonly taken combinations of GCSEs, most GCSE students will benefit from the changes being made. For example, pupils will not do Geography fieldwork, in GCSE English literature there will be a choice of topics on which students are required to answer questions in their exams and in Modern Foreign Languages students' speaking skills will be assessed through a teacher endorsement alongside the 9 to 1 grade.
- 3.5.4 Teachers, leaders and pupils are concerned about whether exam specifications can be adequately delivered to current year 11 and year 13 students following the lockdown restrictions and further disruption to learning. This eloquent letter sent to her MP, and copied to the Director, by a year 13 student expresses the concern and frustration felt by young people in Leeds:
- 3.5.5 *“As the threat of the coronavirus to public health increased in schools, the Government were making plans to mitigate the impact of lockdown which focused solely upon the 2020 entry exam students. Since then, the focus has remained entirely on them. There has been little recognition of the difficult position faced by those sitting public examinations in 2021. This has led me to feel neglected by the education system, the examination boards and the Government. This feeling of neglect has been reinforced by the public perception that the only students affected have been those who should have sat examinations this summer. Acknowledging that this has been a highly stressful time for them, for the majority this will have ceased at the publication of their exam results. However, for those students facing public examinations, like myself, in the summer of 2021 this level of stress will continue for the next 12 months and beyond as we face an uncertain progression into further education or employment. This is magnified by the threat of further disruption due to the imposition of local lockdowns or additional restrictions in the forthcoming academic year.”*
- 3.5.6 *“Having followed closely the Government consultation into GCSE and A-Level examinations for 2021 and noted it’s outcomes I am deeply disappointed to see the changes made which are supposed to ensure equity have been minimal. I fail to see how any of them will make any difference for myself and my peers to mitigate the extenuating circumstances that we have experienced. No account has been taken of the unfair disadvantage we will face in competing against 2020 students for 2021 university entrance places. This appears to be*

additionally unfair when the apparent inflation of this year's grades is taken into consideration."

- 3.5.7 For primary schools, SATs, and other statutory tests, including the multiplication tables check and the phonics check are planned to take place in 2021. The new Early Years Baseline Assessment scheduled to start in September 2020 has been postponed and will be statutory in September 2021. Statutory assessment in primary settings will place considerable pressure on children and staff as they aim to 'catch-up' on missed learning. Schools will be mindful that performance tables may not take into account the impact of Covid-19 and the disproportionate effect it has had on the progress of the most disadvantaged learners.
- 3.5.8 It has been well publicised that the closure of schools has had an increased detrimental impact on the progress of disadvantaged children. Local authority teams will support schools to mitigate the effect of this and the Government has announced a Covid-19 catch up fund worth £80 per pupil to help schools make up for lost learning. However, it remains the case that schools with large numbers of disadvantaged pupils are likely to have results which are lower than in previous years and this will be reflected in the performance tables.
- 3.5.9 Children and Families' assessment team supports primary schools, including publishing a fortnightly newsletter and has organised training for governors on assessment.

3.6 Curriculum

- 3.6.1 It is hard to assess the extent to which schools are fully implementing their curriculum plans, as at the time of writing, many only fully re-opened last week. Since then, many have received notification of positive Covid-19 cases either of staff or pupils and this has necessitated the closure of certain year groups or the disbanding of bubbles. This is impacting on the continuity of delivery of the curriculum. Some headteachers are reporting that their focus is having to be on Covid-19 management rather than school improvement.
- 3.6.2 Children and Families officers have produced a comprehensive training package to support school improvement and the delivery of the curriculum. One of the main strands of this is a webinar series featuring key and internationally renowned educationalists. This supports leaders in schools in delivering CPD to their staff at a time when social distancing is key. The first of the webinars will focus on 'assessment for learning', that is, how teachers should identify what pupils know and can do and how to address gaps in pupil learning.
- 3.6.3 Secondary advisers are undertaking a series of virtual discussions with all local authority maintained secondary headteachers, and extending this offer to academy principals, in order to build up a picture of trends in pupil performance across the city. These meetings will also focus on schools' strengths and areas for improvement so that the local authority can respond as necessary.

3.7 Support for Vulnerable Learners

- 3.7.1 Alongside the continuation of home-working arrangements, learning support services are now working directly in schools, undertaking assessment and offering their support and advice carried out in line with clear risk assessment advice. To this end, the Educational Psychology team are undertaking planning meetings with all schools to reconnect and review the support needed for the most vulnerable learners.

- 3.7.2 The teams are also developing the ‘Implementing Wellbeing for Education Return’ package of resources from the DFE, so this can be delivered as training into schools and colleges reflecting local needs and resources and embedding within Leeds systems and practice.
- 3.7.3 ‘Wellbeing for Education Return’ seeks to better equip schools and colleges to promote children and young people’s wellbeing, resilience, and recovery in response to Covid-19. As well as strengthening and building wellbeing and resilience, this aims to prevent the onset of mental health problems and ensure those with pre-existing or emerging difficulties access the right support.
- 3.7.4 There are two elements to the project:
- A new national training package providing guidance and resources for education staff on responding to the impact of Covid-19 on the wellbeing of their students and pupils.
 - Funding to local authorities to help put local experts in place to work with partners to adapt this training, deliver it to nominated staff in education settings, and provide ongoing advice and support until March 2021.
- 3.7.5 In supporting the wellbeing of children and young people in Leeds upon returning to school, the city is taking a partnership approach between Educational Psychologists, the Health and Wellbeing Service, Clusters / Early Help and CAMHS.
- 3.7.6 Training is being adapted to the local context and to recognise and complement training and resource already in place.
- 3.7.7 The second phase will be to utilise the current system within Learning Inclusion and work within the cluster model to offer supervision and support. It will build capacity within schools to meet needs within universal and targeted provision and provide clear signposting to join education, health and care.
- 3.7.8 Special Educational Need and Disability (SEND) teams are available to support schools with the return to school for individual pupils and for systemic work. Referrals and identified work is being delivered by all teams.
- 3.7.9 The Special Educational Needs and Inclusion Team (SENIT) is receiving requests for support across all teams:
- Sensory services are providing peripatetic work for CYP in schools.
 - STARS team return to training for level 1, 2 and 3 and individual casework.
 - The Educational Psychologist team is delivering all planning meetings with Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCos) to understand themes of need and or work on support for individual needs.
 - Continuing Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) assessments, safe systems of work and risk assessments have supported the safe return to work for SEND staff.
- 3.7.10 City wide consultations have re-commenced and are available to all schools and settings in addition to the link with the schools’ Educational Psychologist.
- 3.7.11 Educational Psychologists (EP) have remained in current Clusters to maintain known relationships during this time. Usually EPs would move according to capacity needs.
- 3.7.12 Planning visits are focussing on current needs for children and young people with SEND returning to school.

- 3.7.13 Service delivery has not changed for this academic year to support return to school.
- 3.7.14 The current flexibility in the system will be used to respond to themes highlighted by partners following feedback from planning meetings.
- 3.7.15 New SEND support teams are working as one service which has supported the delivery in a more joined up manner.
- 3.7.16 Children and Families colleagues are continuing to develop strong partnership working to support the emotional wellbeing of children and young people, for example, Early Help Hubs, Youth Services and Health Partners are all working closely in response to the challenge.
- 3.7.17 Children and Families colleagues are also working with regional and national networks to share resources, for example, the mental health framework.
- 3.7.18 E-learning and resources remain free on Leeds for Learning. Work during the lockdown is available for staff e.g. on attendance and emotional based school refusal.
- 3.7.19 There remains a clear focus on the impact of Covid-19 with NHS partners. Monthly meetings are taking place to ensure a joined up approach and a continued focus on wellbeing and mental health.
- 3.7.20 The work being undertaken around Covid-19 is also being fed into the refresh of the city's social, emotional and mental health strategy for children and young people - *Future in Mind*.
- 3.7.21 Throughout the pandemic, the Special Education Needs and Statutory Assessment Process (SENSAP) team have been working from home to continue to deliver the statutory services. This is continuing, with all work being delivered from home unless there are exceptional circumstances that would require them to visit settings. The team will follow the risk assessment processes in these situations but anticipate that meetings and training will be delivered or be attended virtually. The wider use of Zoom has been extended to the team to support with this.
- 3.7.22 Whilst, during the last school term, there were modifications of the duty to deliver the full contents of an Education Health and Care plan (EHCP), this modification has now been removed. The return to school in September sees the return of the absolute duty on settings to deliver what is in a child and young person's EHCP. It is the expectation that all children and young people will be back in settings and the team will be vigilant to any issues around this to be able to offer schools and settings advice regarding how to make sure any barriers are removed.
- 3.7.23 The Inclusion Service has remained in contact with the key parent carer groups and the DFE and Yorkshire and Humber region through this time.

3.8 Major Issues

- 3.8.1 A major issue is that headteachers and staff already feel exhausted and under a great deal of pressure. This is primarily because of the extra duties they are required to undertake to ensure the school operates in a Covid-19 safe manner, as well as due to the need to provide work for pupils who are self-isolating.

- 3.8.2 Headteachers are having to make decisions about whether to disband bubbles or in some cases, close the school. They often have to field complaints from parents as a result and are asked for press statements. Some have reported that they are unable to lead on school improvement as their attention is concentrated on Covid-19 management in their schools.
- 3.8.3 Children and Families offers a dedicated headteacher support service where headteachers can access advice and support as necessary. The fortnightly Bronze meetings run by the local authority, the regular Family of Schools' meetings, 1-1 personal contact with officers and the DCS Alert Email all give headteachers a means of feeding through concerns to the local authority. In addition, all headteachers receive an invitation to regular Zoom meetings hosted by the Executive Board Member for Learning, Skills and Employment and the Director of Children and Families Services.

4 Consultation and engagement

- 4.1 In order to support and challenge schools and education settings appropriately and consistently during the pandemic, consultation and engagement has been undertaken with a wide range of stakeholders. This has been critical to the success of implementing necessary alterations to working practices with schools and education settings across the city and engagement has included, but has not been limited to: schools and education settings, children and families, health, the Police, trade unions, private, third sector and community groups.

5 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration

- 5.1 Considerations of equality, diversity, cohesion and integration are implicit to the planning of the Council's response to Covid-19 for schools and education settings. Children and Families Services continues to ensure the prioritisation of support for vulnerable children and families across the city and in monitoring the rapidly changing landscape for our young people.

6 Climate Emergency

- 6.1 Work continues to promote energy efficiency and eco-awareness with schools and education settings, children, young people and with families. There are likely to be environmental impacts associated with the current pandemic that will become clearer over time. Where current changes to working patterns reveal potential for carbon saving efficiencies, this potential will be balanced against the determination to continue to deliver high quality services.

7 Resources, procurement and value for money

- 7.1 Given the significance of the financial implications of coronavirus, arrangements are in place for the Council's Executive Board to receive separate and more detailed reports on this matter. The Council's Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Board will also be maintaining oversight of the Council's financial management strategy in accordance with its remit.

8 Legal implications, access to information, and call-in

- 8.1 This report has no specific legal implications.

9 Risk management and Business Continuity

- 9.1 The risks related to coronavirus will continue to be monitored through the Council's existing risk management processes.
- 9.2 Children and Families has business continuity plans across key areas of the directorate focus specifically on schools and education settings. These plans informed and supported the critical responses during the initial days of Covid-19.
- 9.3 Under normal circumstances, business continuity plans are reviewed periodically and the pandemic has given the service the opportunity to assess their resilience.
- 9.4 Business continuity plans will be discussed in more detail and as a focus of the Scrutiny Board in January 2021.

10 Conclusions

- 10.1 This report provides an update on the progress being made by Children and Families Services in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, specifically with schools and education settings across Leeds.

11 Recommendations

- 11.1 The Scrutiny Board is asked to consider the information regarding the Children and Families Directorate's Covid-19 response and continuity planning, for schools and education settings across the city.

12 Background documents¹

- 12.1 None.

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.