

EXECUTIVE MEMBER REPORT TO COUNCIL Wednesday 2nd September 2020

STRATEGIC

Education, Health and Care Plans (SEND)

Covid19 has limited the ability to carry out assessments to support the EHCP process. Across the country local areas have applied innovation to ensure that assessments can continue to take place and that the 20-week process is not delayed. Currently within Middlesbrough, the 20-week completion rate remains above 90% which is above the national average ensuring our young people get best support possible.

Early Years Specialist Support Service (EYSSS)

The EYSSS, a specialist assessment setting for children with a variety of special educational needs and disabilities, was previously based at James Cook University Hospital. In response to Covid19 this setting was closed to allow the emergency response from the hospital to take place.

As from September 2020, the service will be temporary based at Hemlington Initiative Centre for one year. During this time, the service will work with partners to develop a new and improved model within the community.

Virtual School

On March 18th 2020, the Government announced that schools across England would be 'closed' from Friday 20th March 2020 until further notice. Schools would however continue to accommodate vulnerable children and children of key workers.

With the repurposing of schools, it has not been practical for Personal Education Plans (PEPs) to be created or reviewed. This is due to the difficulties in assessing academic attainment and progress in order to create SMART targets. Many schools contacted the Virtual School noting that carrying out meaningful PEPs was not currently viable and that the added pressure of completing PEPs was adding unnecessary pressure to schools.

The Virtual School responded by temporarily suspending all PEPs until further notice. To ensure our students still receive quality education and emotional support throughout these difficult times the Virtual School worked with schools, social workers, the SEND team and foster carers to ensure each child has an education offer and safety plan.

Foster Carer Support - In order to support parents/carers during unprecedented times Virtual Schools organised a weekly Educational Support Session which allow foster carers to share their concerns and provide us with the opportunity to support them and, most importantly, share experience and resources on how to approach home education and how 'education by stealth' can often be the best way forward.

Tuition Provision- To ensure our students have the best support possible with their education the Virtual School has been using an on-line education platform called Bramble which is an interactive online classroom allowing for direct teaching to take place. It can be accessed via computer, laptop, iPad or tablet. Each student has a bespoke programme of education and staff can continue to build relationships, carry out safeguarding checks and help bridge educational gaps. Virtual School have been delivering around 130 hours of education to those children who are most vulnerable and those who live in care homes.

Distribution of books, study materials and on-line learning resources - Every child in the care of Middlesbrough Local Authority has received a parcel containing stationery, a reading book and a letter.

We have also created educational resource packs that can be accessed via the Council website with everything from Early Years to Year 11. There are also resources for foster carers to help them deliver home education.

Laptop Provision - Virtual School and social care colleagues have worked together to identify the level of need for digital provision. The DfE provided 960 laptops which have now been distributed to our children.

PERFORMANCE

The Early Years Development Lead (EYDL)

The EYDL continues to deliver a high quality of advice and support, reassuring schools, settings and practitioners with revised the revised practice and guidance throughout the Covid-19 crisis. Over the last few months, work has focused on maintaining and further strengthening relationships with all Early Years practitioners in all schools and nurseries across the town. This has been achieved through:

- Providing up to date guidance and information at national and local level to support Early Years (EY) settings throughout lockdown and now in this new phase of reopening;
- Sharing online Continued Professional Development (CPD) opportunities for all EY practitioners;
- Responding to queries and signposting individuals to relevant advice, support, resources and guidance;
- Promoting local and national events and competitions for schools and settings to involve family engagement;
- Supporting Early Years Professional Development (EYDP) champions through regular contact;
- Continuing to support individual colleagues with their practice, in particular those new to Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS);
- Developing a transition working party aimed at easing anxiety for staff and parents when their children return to formal education in September;
- Planning training events in preparation for the new EYFS reforms.

Children's Centres

Usual methods of delivery have been changed to digital delivery with families during Covid-19; those families who attend universal services are being contacted on a weekly basis to discuss children's progress and advice offered to support families. In terms of the targeted School Readiness (SR) interventions, staff are continuing to deliver these programmes but do so via WhatsApp or video call. Parents' feedback on this has been really positive.

Family Information Service (FIS)

During Covid19 the FIS team have continued to support nurseries, childminders and parents. They have supported parents to access their funded places, particularly when their usual nursery has been closed. They have also kept updated information on the website on settings which were open for parents to view.

South Tees Youth Offending Service

The Covid19 pandemic resulted in a fundamental re-appraisal of how STYOS delivers its services to young people and their families, how the service ensures the health and safety of staff and continues to deliver effective work with partner agencies.

The requirements of the lockdown and social distancing brought significant challenges to how services were to be delivered. Contact with young people and their families was initially restricted to contact by telephone or using social media and face to face contact became an exception, used only where the risks or issues of safety and wellbeing facing young people demanded that the YOS see the young person in a face to face setting. In recent weeks face to face work has been re-established incrementally with staff conducting 'door step' visits and utilising appropriate PPE. Throughout the pandemic, staff have been able to continue to deliver good quality assessments and interventions and maintain meaningful contact with young people and their families. Feedback received from young people between April to June 2020 has been overwhelmingly positive, with over 93% rating the service they received as 'Good'.

With reference to those young people who are subject to involvement by Children's Services, including Looked after Children, STYOS have continued to play an active role in their care planning, attending strategy meetings and other multi agency meetings and ensuring that the programme for the joint supervision of staff has been maintained.

INVOLVEMENT AND PROMOTION

Literacy

The Achievement Team's Literacy Advisor and National Literacy Trust (NLT) Hub Manager has worked tirelessly in conjunction with the School Readiness Team in order to engage children and young people, their families and the wider community. Much work has gone into sourcing and disseminating books, resources and competitions so that reading has remained a high priority throughout lockdown. Collaboration with other services has meant that a wider audience has benefitted from reading books and magazines e.g. social care teams have been helping to distribute them during visits, Health Visitors have taken them on their home visits and they have been gifted as part of MBC's food parcel scheme – to date over 7,500 books and magazines have been gifted to our vulnerable families with an RRP in excess of £45k. Furthermore, fortnightly Roald Dahl reading challenges provided additional engagement with those who participated offered the chance of winning a set of Roald Dahl books for each of the challenges. Author Rachel Wong also collaborated with the NLT in order to challenge children to help her write her Middlesbrough based book, 'Parmo to the Rescue' – and a subsequent illustration competition saw over 150 entries, with 25 Middlesbrough children's work being selected for inclusion in the published book. Most recently, children and families took part in the Midsummer Challenge where they submitted photographs of themselves reading in various places and scenarios with daily winners. Ten children completed each of the 30 challenges and have received a large book bundle to enjoy as a family. For Middlesbrough families these books, challenges and resources have been invaluable and have helped support the home learning environment throughout lockdown. Please follow the link for one family's story: <https://literacytrust.org.uk/communities/middlesbrough/-lockdown-story/>