

Committee: Safeguarding Sub Committee	Dated: 24/06/2020
Subject: Special educational needs and disability (SEND) – Update	Public
Report of: Andrew Carter, Director of Community and Children's Services	For Information
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Summary

This report provides an update on the work that the City of London Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) service during the Covid19 restrictions.

- The Education & Early Years Service have maintained the capacity to provide services during the Covid 19 lockdown period. The SEND team have continued to support all children with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) since 23rd March 2020 when schools closed due to the COVID 19 restrictions.
- The team have met all deadlines for assessments and reviews by working differently and using social media to maintain contact with children and families. The team will continue to work within the Department for Education (DfE) guidance and with children, families, schools and other partners in children's social care and health going forward.
- The Local Offer and City website have been updated regularly with guidance and information for parents of children and young people with SEND during the lockdown. This information continues to include guidance and advice regarding the return to school.

Recommendation

Members are asked to note the report.

Main Report

Context

1. On 18th March 2020, it was announced that all schools would close from Monday 23rd March during lockdown. Schools were asked to remain open for children with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP), vulnerable children known to a social worker, and for the children of critical workers.

Update

2. Staff in the Education & Early Years Team have maintained the capacity to provide services during the Covid 19 lockdown period. Staff welfare is good, the team are working from home and have maintained regular contact with children with SEND and vulnerable children, parents, schools, early years setting, commissioned services and other partners including health.
3. In May 2020, the Department for Education made modifications to the law on Education, Health and Care needs assessments and plans due to Coronavirus. Whilst there is no change to the legislation covering special educational needs, the government has introduced some flexibility around aspects of the Children and Families Act 2014 through the recent Coronavirus Act 2020. Statutory functions continue to be fulfilled consistent with current DfE guidelines, including the EHC Needs Assessment process.
4. The SEND team have met online with the City's DfE SEND Contacts to talk through our responses to Covid-19. We have also provided support to the early years settings that have remained and continued with Special Education Needs Coordinator (SENCO) training that was in progress. Also provided support for younger children on the early years register with additional needs
5. Children and young people have continued their education and studies at home using resources from their schools provided online. The SEND team very quickly established regular contact with all children with EHCPs. The team have continued to monitor the wellbeing of the children and their education. Children and young people with EHCPs have actively been encouraged to attend school if they have remained open. Home to school transport has continued to enable those with EHCPs to attend school.
6. The Education & Early Years' Service staff have been working from home meaning that some services had to be delivered in different ways. Due to the Covid-19 restrictions, requests for new Education, Health and Care Needs Assessments are being accepted via email only. There is no longer the facility for schools or parents to make the request for assessment by post. All requests should now be sent to EEYservice@cityoflondon.gov.uk.
7. A Risk Assessment for schools was designed to monitor the access pupils had to online learning from their school. Assessments have been completed by schools for all children and young people with EHC plans for both the spring and summer terms. Copies of the assessments have been shared with the SEND team.
8. The SEND panel has continued to meet on Microsoft Teams. Panels will continue to be held via Teams as we go into the Autumn term and the new academic year in September 2020.
9. The Education Psychologist has worked with Headteachers and the SENCO in City schools to provide a range of support options for staff, children and

families. We have prepared advice to settings and provided information on helping children deal with bereavement if any of them have needed this in the context of COVID 19. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) professionals have also been engaged in plans with school for wellbeing support to school.

10. The Local Offer and City website have been updated regularly with guidance and information for parents of children and young people with SEND. This information includes guidance and advice regarding the return to school. Information is constantly being added and updated on the Family Information Service, SEND Local Offer and City websites. This includes FAQs, links to home learning resources, and sources of advice families.
<https://fyi.cityoflondon.gov.uk/kb5/cityoflondon/fyi/advice.page?id=JA1JTgg-G9A>
11. SENCOs have been advised to offer virtual meetings to families. There are six annual reviews due to be scheduled for the summer term. Annual reviews have been happening online within the statutory timeframe, with attendance from all key professionals involved, including the SEND team.
12. A draft of the 2020-2023 strategy is in the final stage of consultation. The strategy is based on information collected from the Coproduction workshop, the commissioning mapping exercise and other feedback from parent carers, children and young people. A final version will be taken to the Community and Children Services Committee for approval and an action plan will be developed to take forward the outcomes set out in the strategy.
13. Launch of the Safer Schools App: this provides safeguarding information and advice for early years settings, schools, families and professionals. The App provides support on topics including staying safe online, bullying, mental health, gaming and sexual exploitation online.
https://fyi.cityoflondon.gov.uk/kb5/cityoflondon/fyi/service.page?id=WRLKv7R_naM

Conclusion

14. The SEND team have continued to support all children with an EHCP since March when schools closed. The team have met all deadlines for assessments and reviews by working differently and using social media to maintain contact with children and families. The team will continue to work within the DfE guidance and with children, families, schools and other partners in children's social care and health going forward.

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