

Committee: Safeguarding Sub Committee	Dated: 24/06/2020
Subject: Education and Early Years Service Safeguarding Update	Public
Report of: Andrew Carter, Director of Community and Children's Services	For Information
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Summary

In October 2019, the Safeguarding Sub Committee was updated on the work that the Education and Early Years Service was undertaking to improve the safety and welfare of City-resident children being educated in the City of London and other boroughs, as well as non-resident children attending schools within the City of London.

As a result of the coronavirus pandemic, all schools have been closed from 23rd March 2020, with only some reopening for Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 pupils since 1st June 2020. During this time, extensive efforts have been made to identify the most vulnerable children, including children known to social care, those with Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans and those known to the education service who are at risk of missing education.

This report is an update on work that the Education Service has done during the COVID-19 restrictions to support our most vulnerable school-age population.

Recommendation

Members are asked to note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. The City of London has a unique educational landscape in that it has only one maintained primary school and no maintained secondary schools. There are four independent schools and one independent college (David Game College); most children attending these schools are non-City residents. Most of the City of London's primary-age children and all secondary-age children in the maintained sector are educated either in the independent sector or outside the City of London altogether. Consequently, this puts them outside

the standard reporting and/or legal framework that governs the City of London's statutory responsibilities.

2. From 23rd March 2020 to 1st June 2020, Schools were only able to remain open for children and young people known to a social worker and with education, health and care plans (EHCP) and for children of critical workers. It became clear, following the Easter break that the country would remain in lockdown until at least the May half term.
3. Revised government guidance has now confirmed that only a select few year groups within the primary age group have been allowed to return to school. Therefore, many secondary aged pupils will not be returning to school before September, which may have a detrimental impact on their education.

Current Position

Vulnerable Children's List

4. In April 2020 the Education and Early Years team worked collaboratively with the Social Care, Early Help and Short Breaks team to create a list of vulnerable children of statutory school age known to our services. The key priority at this time was to identify their current situation – what home learning was taking place, whether their school was open and whether they had the means in which to learn remotely from home if required.
5. As of the 1st June 2020, there are 49 children on the list. Out of these:
 - 22 are of secondary school age
 - 19 are of primary school age
 - Less than 10 are in further education (post 16)
 - Less than 5 are early years children

These children can also be categorised in the following:

- 30 are known to the Children Social Care, Early Help and Short breaks team (either on Child Protection Plan, Children in Need, Early Help, receiving short breaks or going through a Child & Family assessment)
 - 12 have EHC Plans
 - Less than five are being electively home educated
 - Less than ten are known to the Education Service (Children Missing Education)
6. The list has been monitored on a weekly basis and includes all known vulnerable children who attend either an early years setting, school or college. This list does not include any Looked After Children, all of whom are being monitored separately by the Virtual Headteacher. On-going discussions have taken place with individual families to identify each child's specific situation, including whether or not the children have been at home or attending school as a 'vulnerable' child or young person.

Primary and Secondary Hubs in the City of London

7. At the beginning of April 2020, Sir John Cass's Foundation Primary School developed a proposal for a primary education hub in the City of London. The hub was accessible to children with EHC Plans, those known to social care and children of parents who were key workers. Sir John Cass's Foundation Primary School has remained open during the lockdown period to enable their more vulnerable children a safe place to learn, but decided to extend its offer to the wider community.
8. Following discussions about a primary hub, the City of London School confirmed that it would open as a secondary hub following the Easter break. Both hubs would be run by staff employed by the schools and offer a safe place for children not currently on school roll to learn. Both hubs ensured that adequate staff were on site at all times, including a member of staff to oversee safeguarding.
9. In order to identify which children and young people would be suitable to attend a hub, risk assessments were requested, initially from all children with EHC Plans. This was then extended to include all children known to the Children's Social Care, Early Help and Short Breaks team. These completed forms provided the service with essential information on the needs of each child or young person, which could then be shared with either the primary or secondary hub if a place was taken up.

10. Number of children accessing the hubs

11. Although all children who attended Sir John Cass's Foundation Primary School during the lockdown were on school roll, the numbers have gradually increased since the beginning of lockdown. A summary is below:

w/c 6 th April	average of 3 children
w/c 13 th April	average of less than 5 children
w/c 20 th April	average of 5 children
w/c 27 th April	average of 9 children
w/c 4 th May	average of 9 children
w/c 11 th May	average of 13 children
w/c 18 th May	average of 14 children
w/c 25 th May	Half term week – average of 6 children

12. Since Sir John Cass's Foundation School has reopened from 1st June 2020 for its Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 pupils, the numbers have increased dramatically. In the first week there were on average 19 children in

attendance each day. Attendance is being monitored on a weekly basis until the end of term.

13. For young people accessing the secondary hub, the number has remained less than 5. Substantial efforts were made to encourage the attendance of vulnerable young people, especially those with far to travel to their own schools and those known to social care as a Child In Need or on Child Protection Plan. There were a few young people who were interested in participating, however we did not receive any further confirmation from them that they were willing to attend.
14. Many of our young people attend schools across London and beyond. However, following direct contact with the social workers and the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Case worker, the majority of pupils and carers were able to remain at home and work remotely. For the remaining families who met the 'vulnerable' criteria, the children went to school. All children have access to access their online learning provided by their school.

Access to technology and Government Laptops

15. In April 2020 the Department for Education (DfE) announced that it would be providing laptops for the most vulnerable young people, known to social care who were currently in Year 10. Following this announcement, an initial allocation of 16 laptops was requested
16. During April and May, as the lockdown continued, both the Education Service and Children's Social Care, Early Help and Short Breaks team worked collaboratively to identify those young people who did not have direct access to a laptop. Due to an initial delay with the delivery of the laptops from the Department for Education the City of London decided that it would purchase a number of laptops independently for young people who did not have access to online learning.
17. There are currently 34 children and young people on the laptop list, all of these children have access to laptops or tablets and can access their education and online
18. To further support families, the government is also offering 4G wireless routers to children with no internet access. An application to acquire nine routers has been placed and we are awaiting the outcome.

City of London Independent Schools

19. During the lockdown, the Service has continued to maintain close relationships with the independent schools. The Education Welfare Consultant (EWC) has regularly been in contact with all schools to offer support and guidance on the reintegration of children back to school including attendance processes and as a key professional on individual cases. Over the course of the summer term, the EWC will provide on-going support to all the City of London independent schools.

Future Priorities

20. Our main priorities until the beginning of the autumn term will be:

- a. to regularly maintain our vulnerable children and young people list and to specifically ensure that all vulnerable children, who are 'expected' to return to school are doing so where possible
- b. to support our resident children who cannot or unable to attend school to access home learning by providing laptops and internet access where needed
- c. to anticipate and address any issues that may occur with the full reintegration of children back to school (subject to government guidelines)

Corporate & Strategic Implications

21. This work supports priorities 1 and 2 in the Children and Young People's Plan 2018–21:

- Our children and young people are safe and feel safe
- Our children and young people have equal opportunities to enrich their lives and are well prepared to achieve in adulthood.

Conclusion

22. Over the past couple of months, our key priority in the Education and Early Years Service has been to ensure the safeguarding and wellbeing of City-resident children accessing education. Even with the challenges we have experienced with the pandemic, we have successfully supported our most vulnerable cohort by providing laptops to enable online learning, and supporting the development of the 'hubs'.

Appendices

- None

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