

DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL

**REPORT TO: CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICES COMMITTEE –
7 SEPTEMBER 2020**

REPORT ON: CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICE COVID-19 RECOVERY

REPORT BY: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICE

REPORT NO: 202-2020

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This report briefs members on the Children and Families Service response to and recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. The report covers both Education and Social Work elements of the service and includes details on approaches towards all children, young people and families from pre-birth through to early learning and childcare, primary and secondary school, post-school destinations and aftercare. It should be read in conjunction with the Council Covid-19 Recovery Plan approved by the Policy and Resources Committee on 24 August 2020 (report number 185-2020).

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Committee:

- 2.1 Note the extensive measures adopted to protect staff, support keyworkers, minimise disruption for children and young people and support vulnerable families.
- 2.2 Note the Local Education Phasing Delivery Plan 2020-2021 alongside continued measures to support vulnerable children, young people and families.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 This showed a projected funding gap for the Council for 20/21 of £19.558m after taking account of confirmed additional government funding and the project underspend per the June revenue monitoring report.
- 3.2 The Council's financial recovery plan totalled £16.456m. This included £4m from Scottish Government flexibilities on Early Learning and Childcare, Pupil Equity Funding and Attainment Challenge monies. In addition £851,000 was identified as share of funding for education recovery.
- 3.3 Children and Families have additional gross Covid 19 costs of £7.426m of which £2.924m has been identified from confirmed additional funding for teachers and school meals. Further funding of up to £50m is still to be allocated to the local authorities.
- 3.4 Children and Families have also been offered funding of £0.861m (mainly capital) for the purchase of digital devices and connectivity solutions to tackle digital exclusion amongst children and young people.

4.0 BACKGROUND

4.1 The Covid-19 pandemic has had a huge impact on our society and public health measures designed to limit the spread of infection have necessarily placed major

constraints on the delivery of all services. Following lockdown, the Children and Families Service operated in accordance with key principles which included protecting both staff and families from the risk of infection; maximising continuity of educational provision through a combination of direct teaching methods for some and remote methods for others; and providing targeted holistic support to the most vulnerable children and young people at home and in schools.

- 4.2 In doing so, the service established 8 Community Support Centres (CSCs) for the children of keyworkers in order to contribute towards the continued delivery of essential services and for vulnerable children and young people in order to maintain support. In addition, both Kingspark School and Rockwell remained open for children and young people with additional support needs. Other measures included enhanced home-based digital learning, targeted free school meals and targeted, proportionate support to other families across the city. This flexible delivery of key services, involving a particular focus on vulnerable children and young people, ensured that:
- ✓ Approximately 650 pupils attended the Community Support Centres on a daily basis, where they received educational and holistic support – this is a significantly high proportion of pupils compared to the National average for provision during lockdown
 - ✓ 86% of other pupils already receiving additional support before the outbreak were contacted to offer and/or provide support at least weekly by school staff
 - ✓ 100% of children on the Child Protection Register were seen and supported by Social Work staff at least fortnightly
 - ✓ 100% of care leavers aged up to 26 years were seen and supported by the Aftercare Team at least fortnightly
 - ✓ 100% of families with disabled children who were receiving respite before lockdown started were offered alternative support
- 4.3 In Children’s Social Work and Community Justice, new Minimum Practice Requirements were introduced as a risk-based framework to inform weekly, fortnightly or monthly direct contact with families, alongside regular and sometimes daily remote support. Overall, when comparing Child Protection referrals, Child Protection Orders and newly Looked After Children, trends were broadly similar as the equivalent period as a whole last year. There were more children and young people accommodated in care as opposed to remaining with their birth family or in kinship care, with a national relaxation on the number of children living with foster carers creating extra capacity.
- 4.4 In Community Justice, Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements were prioritised, with partnership meetings occurring remotely and partners continuing to supervise and monitor all Registered Sex Offenders. For people subject to a Community Payback Order with a supervision requirement, around 40% were seen and supported at least fortnightly with the remainder at least monthly, often alongside regular telephone support. The service was also jointly involved in partnership arrangements for the Early Release of some short-term prisoners. Nationally, Unpaid Work was suspended due to social distancing but would resume in accordance with the recovery process.
- 4.5 Dundee Schools and Early Years establishments have rolled forward our improvement plans to improve outcomes for our children and young people, raise attainment and close the gaps between the most and the least disadvantaged. We will continue to analyse the attainment data for session 2019/20 and provide a report later this session, with the overriding caveat that it will be challenging to make comparisons with previous years’ results due the disruption to schools caused by Covid 19, through lockdown and the cancellation of the SQA examination diet for 2020. We have also enhanced our procedures with our key partners to ensure we follow through on all school leavers to ensure positive destinations are maintained.

5.0 RECOVERY

- 5.1 The principles informing the establishment of CSCs and the flexible maintenance of key services through the pandemic are being sustained through all stages of recovery. In all Early Learning Centres, Primary and Secondary Schools some further immediate principles include safe operations and logistics, with risk assessments in each building; a focus on learning, including through initial staff/pupil re-connection and adjustments to some subjects such as Home Economics and PE; entitlement and eligibility, including a focus on early learning and childcare, exams, transitions and vulnerable groups; and the wellbeing of staff and children and young people.
- 5.2 On 11 August, Dundee schools opened for 2 days of in-service for staff followed by 3 days of returning pupils, in some cases phased to their schools. From 17 August all schools returned full time for all pupils, with a continued phased approach for nurseries. It is anticipated that the percentage of 1140 delivery that was in place at the point of lockdown will be fully available in Early Years establishments by early September 2020. Since the full return of schools on August 17th there have been positive cases of COVID-19 associated with schools in Dundee. The Executive Director of Children and Families Service will provide a verbal report before the discussion of this report.
- 5.3 The Covid-19 Local Education Phasing Delivery Plan was shared with Scottish Government and Education Scotland on 18 June 2020 and also with all members of the Children and Families Service Committee. This plan outlines the principles and practice underlining the return and recovery and also refers to contingency planning should a local outbreak occur. We have worked with our parents/carers throughout the development of our plans for recovery and our schools have also included 'pupil voice' in the development of their individual school plans. Other key partners include Trade Unions, partner providers, Leisure and Culture Dundee and we also hold regular meetings with all Parent Council Chairs.
- 5.4 The COVID-19 Recovery Plan (Report 185-2020 refers) details key themes of recovery for schools and children's social work and community justice. These are being taken forward by the service with our partners and regular reports will be brought back to committee on the progress of these key themes.
- 5.5 In the circumstance of new cases being identified, we have an incident response team working across the service with Public Health and NHS Scotland. Communications have been developed to ensure parents/carers, pupils, staff and partners receive key information. We have mechanisms for fast track testing where required and protocols for cleaning in conjunction with Tayside Contracts.
- 5.6 The Communications Team are working with the Service to ensure regular updates and news releases are posted on the website and Social Media platforms.
- 5.7 Within these parameters, management teams in each setting are being supported to develop individual recovery plans and place a particular emphasis on communication and engagement with families. It is recognised that, following the lengthy period of absence from learning in a formal group setting, pupils will need additional support to reacquaint themselves with teaching staff, each other and the curriculum. All settings are also being supported to identify and respond to welfare concerns, either through Team Around the Child arrangements or Child Protection processes. Typically, CP referrals increase after the summer holiday and it is anticipated that this might be exacerbated by the experiences of families during the pandemic.
- 5.8 In Children's Social Work, Multi Agency Screening Hub (MASH) and Intake capacity and systems have therefore also already been reviewed, partly in response to possible increases in referrals and partly as part of a wider improvement plan. This includes Locality Teams carrying out assessments of families re-referred within the last 12 months; reducing the timeframe for Intake involvement from 12 weeks to 6

weeks; introducing a target timeframe from Intake to Locality Teams and Adolescent Teams of 5 working days; and ensuring that referrals relating to teenagers for problematic adolescent behaviour are routed straight to the Adolescent Teams. In addition to building capacity, these measures should also improve our immediate response to risk.

- 5.9 Further recovery actions over the next 6 months include increasing face-to-face contact with families in the context of the re-opening of buildings and ongoing public health measures. As digital methods of engagement with families also contributed towards support during the outbreak, elements of this will also continue for some as part of a mixed approach. Similarly, multi-agency meetings sharing assessment information and developing plans for families will continue on both a face-to-face and remote basis. The service will continue to work in partnership with other key organisations, such as the Scottish Court Service, Children's Reporter and Scottish Prison Service, as they also go through recovery in order to promote a joint approach towards justice, risk and need.

5.10 **Medium to Long-Term**

Going beyond immediate planning associated with the re-opening of early learning centres and schools and other scheduled activity over the next 6 months, the service is also planning or exploring recovery over the medium to longer-term. Some significant developments interrupted by the pandemic include completing consultation for the east secondary infrastructure and options for the western gateway; accelerating capital projects to regain lost momentum for nursery expansion and completing the 1140 recruitment exercise; developing learning approaches and/or resources such as delivery across schools and online methods; revising the Senior Phase curriculum; and developing new models of family support.

- 5.11 Clearly, these developments will need to occur in the context of the evolving Covid-19 situation and its financial impact on the Council. The nature, pace and extent of recovery will, for instance, be subject to the risk of any worsening of the pandemic and resource constraints. However, this is also an opportunity to work with partners and learn from, scale and/or accelerate approaches adopted before the outbreak and during recent months, particularly in relation to home, school and community-based education and support. For instance, the development of 365 schools in the context of learning from the CSCs; the development of new pedagogical approaches informed by digital technologies; and approaches towards vulnerable families.

6.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 This Report has been subject to an assessment of any impact on equality and diversity, fairness and poverty, environment and corporate risk. There are no major issues.

7.0 **CONSULTATIONS**

- 7.1 The Council Management Team have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

8.0 **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 8.1 None.

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