



City of Westminster

Business and Children's Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Date: Monday 26 April 2021

Report Of: Councillor Timothy Barnes

Portfolio: Cabinet Member for Young People and Learning

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1 Summary

As per the new agreed Cabinet Member report structure, this update provides highlights on my City for All priorities, areas of current focus in the Young People and Learning portfolio and pertinent performance information. Since the last Business and Children's Policy and Scrutiny Committee I have formally approved the following key decisions:

- Issued the Nomination and Appointment of Local Authority School Governors.

2 City for All – Young People and Learning Priorities

Vibrant Communities

2.1 Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy Refresh

Consultation with stakeholders will continue into the spring as the refreshed SEND strategy begins to take shape. Our launch date for this strategy is still aimed for September 2021. We continue to fund additional activities for children with SEND through the Holiday and Activity and Food Fund (HAF).

2.2 Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Offer

We continue to work with our emotional wellbeing and mental health providers and wider stakeholders to communicate and promote the local offer to young people. We expect to see a significant uptake in this offer in the upcoming months as children return to school.

2.3 Ensure All Our Children Can Access Our Excellent Schools Which Celebrate the Diversity of Our Communities and Promote Inclusion

The Bi-Borough School Inclusion strategy is to be implemented imminently. The strategy ultimately aims to reduce the number of children and young people being excluded from mainstream education as a result of their behaviour. This strategy aims to address the factors that can lead to exclusion and it also seeks to improve outcomes

for children who have been excluded. The strategy includes the role of alternative provision and aims to strengthen the reintegration route back to mainstream education.

2.4 18 to 25 Mental Health Service Pilot Wellbeing Pilot

The pilot of an integrated service that will provide young adults with a holistic support in the community from mental health practitioners and other workers is progressing as expected. We have secured £630,000 of funding from the My Westminster Fund for a two-year pilot. Due to the impacts of Covid-19 on young people we have also been focusing on employability strategies.

Smart City

2.5 Children's Learning: Digital Futures Project

We continue to promote children being able to learn from home by ensuring they have a digital device and access to the internet. As of the end of term **5249** devices have been distributed to children in Westminster schools – through a combined effort from the DfE and through our local Digital Futures Programme in partnership with the Young Westminster Foundation.

2.6 Digital Libraries

Our virtual libraries project is currently ongoing and set for full implementation April 2022. Work has just begun on the scoping phase and we are engaging with suppliers on design, and transactional services. An operational steering group currently meets monthly, and recruitment services will begin April 15th.

3 Areas of focus

3.1 COVID Winter Grant (CWG)

This winter WCC had been allocated a total of **£766k** from the DWP to cover from November 2020 to March 2021 which was extended by an additional **£266k** up until **16th April**. To date we have helped over **300 individuals** and **10,500 families** since we received the grant.

3.2 Holiday and Activity and Food Fund (HAF)

WCC have been allocated a total of **£709,120** for the provision of a school holiday food and activity offer from **1st April to 31st December 2021**. Our Easter offer was predominantly face to face, including a range of sport, learning, arts, play and inclusive provision. We have over **1,000** places available to families across all programmes. Turnout will be released at the next Committee meeting. This offer will be supplemented by Free School Meal vouchers during the Easter Holiday for all eligible pupils funded by the CWG.

3.3 Pimlico Academy

We are concerned and saddened by the situation at Pimlico Academy and we are working to support them and their community. We have been in contact with the school and we are keen to help them address the issues which have been highlighted in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion.

3.4 Outbreak Control Process

The figures below represent positive Covid-19 cases among pupils and staff in schools, nurseries and Early Years/ Children's Centres from 4th January 2021 – 1st April 2021.

Setting type	No. of cases in pupils	No. of cases in staff	Sum of Total
Independent	4	3	7
Secondary	3	1	4
Primary	24	23	47
Special	2	6	8
Nursery / Early Years & Children's Centres	23	40	63
Total	56	73	129

3.5 Library Updates

During lockdown 3.0 Libraries continue to utilise social media as a delivery tool in the interim for online children's events (rhyme-time, story-time and crafts) and more recently interactive afterschool clubs. As lockdown restrictions ease face to face sessions for children can slowly begin to resume safely in line with government guidance.

3.6 Working with Children, Young People and Families

Social Care staff continue to support families during lockdown 3.0. Our front-line workers are continuing with face to face visits. **Family Hubs** are remaining open for walk-in support. **Youth Clubs** in Westminster are providing a virtual offer and onsite contact for our most vulnerable groups.

4 **Performance Updates**

4.1 Social Care

Performance continues to be strong against all key indicators reported annually to the Department of Education. Placements for children in our care have remained stable and our care leavers continue to be accommodated appropriately with education, employment and training pathways continued to be tracked.

4.2 Appointments to Register Births Available Within 5 Days of Enquiry

There has been increased demand for birth registrations due to clearing backlog of birth registrations from lockdown 1.0 (where births were restricted to those in urgent need only).

4.3 Marriages and Civil Partnerships

In line with government guidance from March 29th weddings and civil partnership ceremonies can continue to take place for up to 6 people and will no longer be limited to exceptional circumstances.