

# **Overview & Scrutiny Sub Committee. Children's Services**

## **PRESENTATION: Covid 19- resetting the Service**

- What actions have we taken to manage the pandemic ?
- What is the current state of play in the service?
- What are our ambitions for the Future?
- What is proving challenging, and how fluid is the structure to enable us to manage or mitigate the challenges?

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# Children's Services as a whole

## Impact of Covid-19

- The pandemic has affected all day to day activity
- Staff and Services have engaged in a substantial programme of adjustment and support.
- Early Help Teams have successfully worked with families to provide advice & support
- Statutory Social work processes have been maintained
- Schools have remained open to care for vulnerable children and those of key workers
- Staff morale has remained positive with very low numbers of sickness

# Early Help & Early Years

## Managing the pandemic: Success Measures.

- At the height of closures (38% open) we were able to ensure that every key worker and vulnerable child had a place at nursery.
- We sharpened our communications and provided a daily update on Government guidance and now have an Early Years bulletin which is circulated every other week.
- We have used the Bury Directory and the Family Information Service to provide details on other activities that parents can access if their children are not in nursery i.e. *'Tiny Happy People'*
- The Inclusion Ambassador, Youth Service and Educational Psychologists have developed on-line informal chat groups and have provided more formal support.
- Our two locality hubs remained open throughout the Pandemic to provide practical support to families.
- Our locality teams have continued to deliver wrap around support to schools and families when needed

# Early Help & School Readiness

## **The current State of Play: What is being delivered.**

- We now have 60% of settings open, with increasing numbers of children in attendance.
- Bespoke support is being provided by Early Years advisors linked to clusters of settings.
- Work is ongoing with the Growth Company in respect of sufficiency and supporting businesses with financial concerns.
- Changes have been made in respect of DA notifications from the police to ensure a rapid response.
- We have created a weekly virtual timetable of activities for our young people
- Year 11 pupils have been contacted to provide support with destinations and work.
- We meet regularly with the DfE and OFSTED to report on our progress
- We are re-introducing home visiting

# Early Help & School Readiness

## What are our ambitions? Success Criteria:

- We want to continue with the regular lines of communication we now have in place.
- We will continue providing a virtual service as well as direct contacts as some of our families prefer this.
- We are currently working with a seconded HMI to look at how we improve transition from nursery to schools with a view to developing shared standards to drive up school readiness.
- Our Early Years advisors are now linked to nursery clusters and we will continue with this.
- We have started to facilitate group discussions with nurseries and we will continue to do this, virtually.
- We want to extend our EH offer to TAP and TAS+
- Development of the Family Offer which will be integrated with the wider PSR agenda.

# Early Help & School Readiness

## Challenges and Mitigation.

- Sufficiency – We need to have sufficient places for our parents –We are
  - Monitoring
  - Providing guidance and support
  - Directing providers to financial support so they can access all available help
- Demand- We know we might have higher demand on services as families needs escalate. We are
  - Developing a family offer
  - Extending our TAS to early years providers and colleges
  - Reviewing working patterns so we have more flexibility to respond
- Staff safety –We need to ensure we keep our staff well so we can continue to support families. We are
  - Completing risks assessments for all staff
  - Managing building spaces
  - Blending office and home working
  - Blending virtual and physical meetings

# Children's Social Care & Safeguarding (CSC)

## Managing the pandemic: Success Measures.

- MASH & EDT continued to receive referrals and all child protection concerns were responded to and immediate action to safeguard children was taken where required.
- All vulnerable children open to the service were individually risk assessed and risk rated to determine support including direct contact where needed.
- Routine processes and multi-agency meetings for CIN, Child Protection and LAC have continued virtually.
- Social workers across the service have worked with schools and actively encouraged vulnerable children's attendance.
- Additional support was put in place for Care Leavers and Foster Carers.
- Specific weekly multi-agency meetings on domestic abuse have taken place

# Children's Social Care & Safeguarding (CSC)

## **The current State of Play: What is being delivered.**

- All services continue to operate with the majority of staff working from home.
- Contact to children and families is undertaken virtually, with face to face and home visits being carried out where need determines.
- A buddy system is in place to provide support to our foster carers and placements continue to be monitored with support packages provided to unstable placements.
- Work is ongoing to allow young people/care leavers to move on to supported accommodation and tenancies.
- Multi agency meetings continue to take place virtually using Microsoft teams.
- Dip sampling of cases continues to ensure that risk assessments are appropriate and monthly file audit programme continues.



# Children's Social Care & Safeguarding (CSC)

## **What are our ambitions? Success Criteria:**

- To safely reintroduce more routine direct contact with children and families.
- To progress plans for children which have been delayed.
- To focus resources to ensure we have capacity in the right place and be able to respond flexibly to new pressures.
- To ensure care leavers are supported into education & employment
- To support vulnerable children in their education settings
- To continue to support placements which are unstable and at risk of breakdown
- To continue to improve service delivery through quality assurance/performance management and staff development

# Children's Social Care & Safeguarding (CSC)

## Challenges and Mitigation.

- Care Planning Delays - Court Hearings have been postponed and delayed - Ensure all cases are ready to be progressed following completion of Court Cases
- NEET -Targeted work with care leavers, with a focus on education and employment/training opportunities, housing sufficiency, participation and social isolation.
- Placement Stability – Providing help to carers earlier and using creative packages of support.
- Budget Pressures – Weekly monitoring of budget pressures due to Covid-19, ensure these are clearly identified and tracked
- Workforce - We continue to recruit staff and provide extra support to staff where required. We are working up plans for a partial return to office working on a team rota basis
- Training & Development – We are working with the Signs of Safety consultant to look at restarting the training programme

# Learning & Inclusion

## Managing the pandemic: Success Measures.

- After the initial disruption of the pandemic, all Bury schools, and the Pru, have remained open.
- The children of critical workers and vulnerable children are attending in increasing numbers.
- Distance learning is being offered; it is recognised that this is not a full substitute for learning.
- Daily bulletins are issued to the service.
- Weekly meetings of the Heads Advisory Group take place, as do meetings with unions and associations and of the School Cluster Groups.
- The gradual return of pupils and students is taking place within a strict Risk Assessed protocol.

# Learning & Inclusion

## **The current State of Play: What is being delivered.**

- Robust Risk assessment Guidance with support from the Local Authority has supported risk assessment from every school and centre in Bury. RA's are being audited.
- Provision of laptops to vulnerable children, provision of school meal vouchers, and continuing support to children at risk.
- Support from HMI across four critical themes is in place.
- Social Workers in Schools bid.

# Learning & Inclusion

## **What are our ambitions? Success Criteria:**

- Re-setting the Education Service. Supported and progressive return to learning for all pupils.
- Review.
- Planned summer break activities supported by school meals vouchers.
- Substantial and Sustained learning and well-being recovery programmes.
- Re-setting of all school improvement programmes.

# Learning & Inclusion

## Challenges and Mitigation.

- The Education Service needs to be re-set and recovered during a period of continuing risk to physical and mental health and well-being.
- We need to complete the financial recovery programme, and manage within our means.
- The Lean Service Review should be completed, in order that we can become a modern education service; schools-led, and with a resolute focus on Family Around the Child, and School.