

Agenda

Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Thursday, 15 October 2020, 2.00 pm

Due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, Worcestershire County Council will be holding this meeting in accordance with the relevant legislative arrangements for remote meetings of a local authority. For more information please refer to: Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.

Please note that this is a public meeting, conducting remotely by videoconferencing between invited participants and live streamed for general access via a link on the Council's website to the Council's [You Tube Channel](#)

The Agenda papers and background papers can be accessed electronically on the Council's website. Members of the public and press are permitted to report on the proceedings.

DISCLOSING INTERESTS

There are now 2 types of interests:
'Disclosable pecuniary interests' and 'other disclosable interests'

WHAT IS A 'DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTEREST' (DPI)?

- Any **employment**, office, trade or vocation carried on for profit or gain
- **Sponsorship** by a 3rd party of your member or election expenses
- Any **contract** for goods, services or works between the Council and you, a firm where you are a partner/director, or company in which you hold shares
- Interests in **land** in Worcestershire (including licence to occupy for a month or longer)
- **Shares** etc (with either a total nominal value above £25,000 or 1% of the total issued share capital) in companies with a place of business or land in Worcestershire.

NB Your DPIs include the interests of your spouse/partner as well as you

WHAT MUST I DO WITH A DPI?

- **Register** it within 28 days and
- **Declare** it where you have a DPI in a matter at a particular meeting
 - you must **not participate** and you **must withdraw**.

NB It is a criminal offence to participate in matters in which you have a DPI

WHAT ABOUT 'OTHER DISCLOSABLE INTERESTS'?

- No need to register them but
- You must **declare** them at a particular meeting where:
You/your family/person or body with whom you are associated have a **pecuniary interest** in or **close connection** with the matter under discussion.

WHAT ABOUT MEMBERSHIP OF ANOTHER AUTHORITY OR PUBLIC BODY?

You will not normally even need to declare this as an interest. The only exception is where the conflict of interest is so significant it is seen as likely to prejudice your judgement of the public interest.

DO I HAVE TO WITHDRAW IF I HAVE A DISCLOSABLE INTEREST WHICH ISN'T A DPI?

Not normally. You must withdraw only if it:

- affects your **pecuniary interests** OR relates to a **planning or regulatory** matter
- **AND** it is seen as likely to **prejudice your judgement** of the public interest.

DON'T FORGET

- If you have a disclosable interest at a meeting you must **disclose both its existence and nature** – 'as noted/recorded' is insufficient
- **Declarations must relate to specific business** on the agenda
 - General scattergun declarations are not needed and achieve little
- Breaches of most of the **DPI provisions** are now **criminal offences** which may be referred to the police which can on conviction by a court lead to fines up to £5,000 and disqualification up to 5 years
- Formal **dispensation** in respect of interests can be sought in appropriate cases.

Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Thursday, 15 October 2020, 2.00 pm, Online only

Membership

Councillors:

Mrs F M Oborski (Chairman), Mr S J Mackay (Vice Chairman), Ms P Agar, Mr T Baker-Price, Mr B Clayton, Ms R L Dent, Mr P M McDonald, Ms T L Onslow and Mrs J A Potter

Co-opted Church Representatives (for education matters)

Mr B Allbut (Church of England)

Parent Governor Representatives (for education matters)

Vacancy

Agenda

| Item No | Subject | Page No |
|----------------|---|----------------|
| 1 | Apologies and Welcome | |
| 2 | Declaration of Interest and of any Party Whip | |
| 3 | Public Participation Members of the public wishing to take part should notify the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance in writing or by e-mail indicating the nature and content of their proposed participation no later than 9.00am on the working day before the meeting (in this case 14 October 2020). Enquiries can be made through the telephone number/e-mail address below. | |
| 4 | Confirmation of the Minutes of the Previous Meeting (to follow) | |
| 5 | COVID-19 October Education Update | 1 - 16 |
| 6 | Provision of Overnight Unit Based Short Breaks for Children with Disabilities | 17 - 32 |
| 7 | Work Programme 2020/21 | 33 - 38 |

Agenda produced and published by the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance, County Hall, Spetchley Road, Worcester WR5 2NP. To obtain further information or hard copies of this agenda, please contact Alyson Grice 01905 844962/Alison Spall 01905 846607 email: scrutiny@worcestershire.gov.uk

All the above reports and supporting information can be accessed via the Council's website [here](#)

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CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

15 OCTOBER 2020

COVID-19 OCTOBER EDUCATION UPDATE

Summary

1. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education and Skills and the Director of Children's Services have been invited to the meeting to update the Panel on developments relating to:
 - a) an update of wider reopening of Worcestershire settings and schools from 1 September 2020; and
 - b) an update on the handling of COVID-19 cases in settings and schools.

Background

2. Scrutiny requested an update on the work being carried out to support Education settings and schools during the COVID-19 period.

Progress following September full re-opening of school provision

3. Following Government guidance, all children and young people, in all year groups, returned to school full-time from the beginning of September 2020.

Risk Assessments for September full opening

4. Worcestershire Children's First (WCF) provided all Local Authority (LA) maintained schools (including voluntary aided) with a Risk Assessment addendum form including additional questions to highlight risks in relation to; Public Health, Health & Safety, Accommodation and Staffing).
5. Through this process, one site was unable to open as planned following a review of the risk assessment by specialist teams. Worcestershire County Council's (WCC) Health and Safety Team were unable to sign off the risk assessment due to concerns over the water supply at the Lea Street site for outreach for Beacon Pupil Referral Unit and which accommodates onsite provision for children and young people receiving support from the Medical Education Team. As an interim measure, portable toilets and a bottled water supply have been provided on site to enable staff and pupils to return whilst the water supply is made safe. The impact on education provision was a one-week delay in return to site. During this time, the children received their education at alternative sites or via remote learning.
6. As a part of the continued offer of support for all education settings across the county, specialist teams are now offering to support Academies in their infection prevention and control processes. A checklist, based on our risk assessment

addendum and latest guidance, has been created by specialist teams and will be shared with Academies to support them to conduct a self-assessment. Any queries or concerns raised through this process can then be discussed and addressed through a webinar and series of surgery events that will be available for all schools and include learning from outbreak case examples.

Reopening Attendance Rates

7. Full reopening commenced from 1 September 2020. Feedback from the Education Planning Group of phase leads reported a positive experience for staff and children and a relatively smooth start to the term in logistical terms.

8. Data is collected by the Department for Education (DfE) on a daily basis. Of the schools reporting to the DfE they had opened, 97.7% on 1 October reported as being fully open, compared to a national average of 92.4%. Our head teachers across both maintained and academies reported high levels of attendance, and DfE reporting figures show a 91.6% attendance rate in Worcestershire schools compared to a national average of 88.7% (on 1 October 2020).

9. Special schools reported a lower return for children with very complex needs (80% attendance rate on 1 October 2020) but that is to be expected and as a multi-agency approach there will be intensive planning and support to get children into school and ensure provision of education is appropriate.

The handling of outbreaks in schools and other settings

10. Worcestershire County Council Public Health team has responded swiftly to the COVID-19 pandemic. Publishing a robust Outbreak Control Plan (OCP) which has a Local Outbreak Response Team (LORT) at its centre, responding to local outbreaks in settings and communities and working with partners such as Public Health England, Herefordshire & Worcestershire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and Worcestershire Regulatory Services (WRS) to reduce the risk of further transmission of COVID-19 as well as the national Test & Trace service. The LORT is now fully operational 7 days a week from 9am to 6pm.

11. The LORT recognised an increase in volume of enquiries from the first week of September as schools returned which impacted on resource capacity. Additional resource was mobilised immediately to assist the LORT and enable the Public Health professionals to focus on infection prevention and control. Through this period, key improvements have been made to the process for schools contacting the LORT, including the refining of the school notification form to create a more streamlined experience for schools.

12. A key role of the LORT is to support schools in the event of a positive case. Upon notification of symptomatic or confirmed positive Children and Young People (CYP) or staff, the LORT undertake a risk assessment, support testing, provide infection prevention control and self-isolation advice, contact tracing and public health action to prevent any further transmission within the setting or wider community. In schools, this has involved support and advice when school bubbles have to be collapsed to prevent further transmission. To further support education settings, the LORT notify the Education COVID Response Team when a bubble is collapsed so that a Liaison Person can be identified to contact the school and offer further support,

advice and guidance. This process has been well received by schools. The process has been refined following each bubble closure and support is now offered to the school to identify issues and offer suggested solutions around themes such as free school meals, vulnerable learners, media enquiries, communication for parents and support for staff.

13. The standard operating procedures for schools are well used and have been refined following feedback through Education Incident planning meetings, with representatives from across school phases and types. On 18 September, a specific scenario planning session was held to review, and stress test a range of potential situations and work through the stages of response and reaction. The scenarios were used to further test the protective measures and controls that schools have put in place, the Operational Control/ Standard Operating Procedures (OCP) standard operating procedures and the resilience of both local settings and the wider system. This session was very well received. Breakout sessions were used to work through the scenarios and key learning from the first few weeks of the autumn term was consolidated and built upon.

14. WCC has committed to supporting schools and settings to stay open and provide education in a safe and appropriate way. Additional resource has been earmarked to support the Liaison Person role to assist schools with practical measures when outbreaks occur and to coordinate the learning and feed this back to schools; along with being the education link to the District Incident Management Team meetings that have been established to develop a district specific system wide approach to the management of COVID-19 across each district council region within Worcestershire.

Remote Learning

15. On 1 October the Education Secretary announced further support to help children learn from home if they have to self-isolate. A new temporary Continuity Direction (under the Coronavirus Act 2020) means school have a duty to provide education at home, as they do when children are in the classroom.

16. Part of the Worcestershire Liaison process with schools who have partial or full bubble closures is to ensure that the school(s) enact their Remote Learning plans. The School Improvement Team are rolling out CPD to schools on Effective Remote Learning and the first session webinar has been delivered to 29 schools with more sessions planned.

Education Transport

17. Following significant planning throughout the summer, the transport team have ensured that the provision of dedicated home to school transport is safe, available and compliant with the most up to date guidance issued by both the Department for Education and the Department for Transport. Measures introduced include addition of extra buses, creation of “closed” services which would have been open to the public and coordinated seating plans.

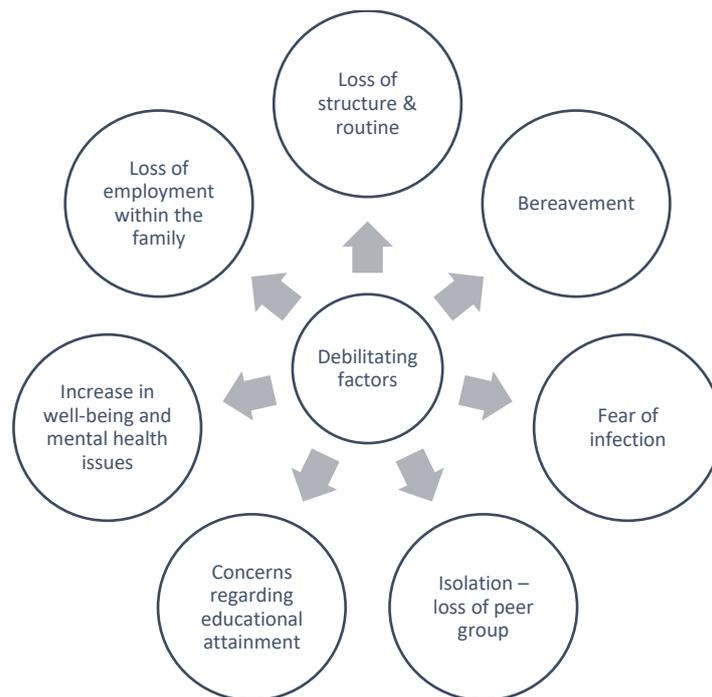
18. Dedicated Schools Transport for Mainstream and SEND pupils has been operating relatively smoothly from the start of the new term. Reports from operators indicate that most pupils have adapted to the seating plans. From Tuesday 6 October

young people in year 7 and above are required to wear face coverings on home to school transport unless exemptions apply to them. This measure has been changed to respond to the growth in positive cases and an achievable control measure that promotes a continuity of approach

19. Monitoring of train use and management of peak services and stations focused on Hagley and Worcester and during the first week of term we received reports from West Midlands Trains (WMT) detailing their management of any issues. Reporting continued throughout early September as colleges returned and additional carriages were on hand to be deployed where needed.

Back to School

20. Children and young people in the UK are expected to return to school full-time as of September 2020, following an unprecedented period of absence. It is important to recognise that CYP will have been presented with negative and positive experiences during lockdown and the approach to enhancing their well-being should be differentiated accordingly. It is the varying continuum of adverse experiences that is the key focus of staff in WCF because it has been hypothesised nationally that some will find the transition (returning to education settings) too difficult and will not return. Reasons for this will be multiple and complex effecting the child, the parent and in some cases the whole family, as exemplified below:

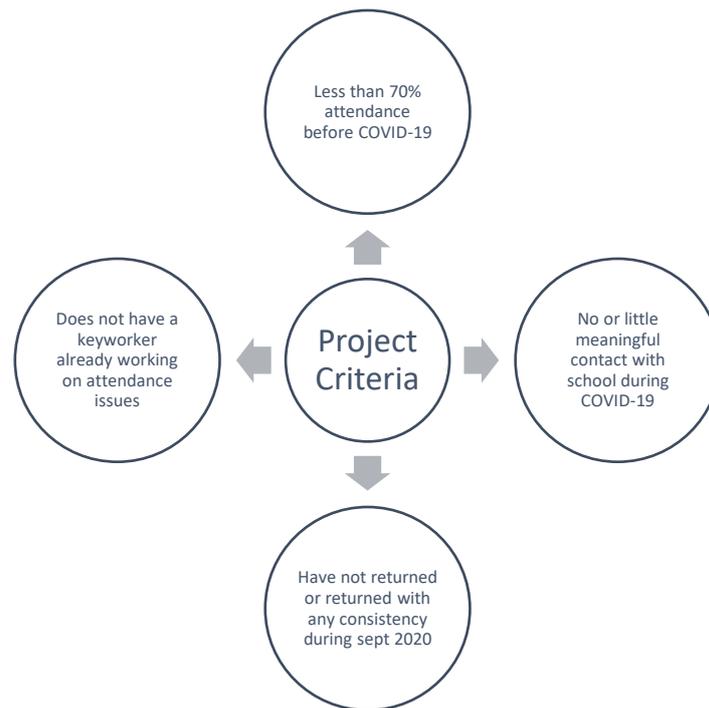


21. WCF understand the need for an intensive programme to identify and then support the children most likely to struggle with going 'Back to School' (BTS). A CYP registered as continually absent will not, on its own, be a reason for Children's Social Care to undertake an assessment at level 4. Therefore, WCF are instigating partnership working to ensure a timely and proportionate response to the inevitable. As an organisation responsible for delivering statutory children's

services, we know that missing school amplifies already existing vulnerabilities and that school is a protective factor for children experiencing challenges.

Referral Criteria and Methodology

22. WCF are working with Schools, Public Health/CCG commissioned services and the University of Worcester to provide support to children and young people. Schools will be required to fulfil their statutory duties for attendance whilst BTS will accept referrals from education settings and partners meeting the following criteria:



23. Referrals will be triaged by WCF to determine the appropriate and proportionate pathway of support. The dedicated staff in the Vulnerable Learners team will be identifying children and young people experiencing complex and entrenched issues preventing their sustained engagement in school. Referrals meeting the criteria will be allocated to an experienced member of staff who will apply the 'Signs of Safety' methodology

NB: This is a validated, universal tool/model already known to partners. It empowers early important and informative conversation and is integral to safeguarding work.

Project Progress

24. Project Progress.

1. The project management group was established in July 2020 led by the Director for Social Care and Safeguarding, Tina Russell with representatives

from each stakeholder service.

2. Towards the end of the summer term, WCF contacted 17 schools identified by data, as most likely to have CYP meeting the project brief. Consenting families from this intelligence formed the early adopter cohort, enabling timely support to commence for them.
3. A referral process has been established for the main project and was communicated to all schools at the start of the new term.
4. The Signs of Safety Tool has been developed, bespoke to the BTS project. Training on the use of the tool with the 18 BTS staff has been completed.
5. Referrals to the project are now being received and twice weekly triage sessions are taking place.
6. The referral tracker and monitoring and reporting dashboard has been created and is in use.
7. A virtual programme of child and parent support has been launched by the CCG along with feedback process to establish experience of virtual programme.
8. A mentoring scheme has been set up in partnership with Worcester university.

Project Evaluation

25. The project has received funding from What Works for Children's Social Care who will be undertaking a full evaluation on conclusion of the project. Success of BTS will be determined by the following quality assurance mechanisms:



26. As the project progresses, we will be using these to make 'live' improvements to practise and to subsequently analyse whether there is a need to continue the project into the second term of the new academic year. This will depend on whether there is a continued demand for CYP who are yet to return to school and whether there may be additional resource required for the children (especially towards project closure) to sustain their attendance. There will be several

confounding variables which may instigate further extended or new project work in protecting CYP from harm, ensuring they continue to value family life and experience a good education – this is of course, at the heart of everything we do.

Purpose of the Meeting

27. The Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel is asked to:

- consider and comment on the updates provided from the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education and Skills and the Director of Children’s Services; and
- determine whether any further information or scrutiny on a particular topic is required.

Supporting Information

- Appendix 1 Back to School presentation

Specific Contact Points for this report

Alyson Grice/Alison Spall, Overview and Scrutiny Officers

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Director of Children’s Services) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

- Agenda and Minutes of Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 16 June 2020, 17 July 2020, 8 September 2020

[All agendas and minutes are available on the Council's website here.](#)

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WORCESTERSHIRE
CHILDREN FIRST



Back to School

Judy Mayo & Louise Butler on behalf of

Tina Russell

Director Social Care & Safeguarding

The covid19 context

- March 20 schools closed as physical buildings to all “non vulnerable children and those of critical worker” and a programme of home supported learning began to develop
- Vulnerable children “those open with a social work plan” were able to attend school if the parent/carer wanted them to. During “lock down” the community message was “stay at home if you can”
- Our Covid working protocol phase 1 and 2 took the message back to parents from “encourage” to “expect” your child to attend their school place

School plays an essential part of safety and outcomes

- Prior to the summer holidays we saw 37% of our children on plans attending school
- Child Protection 48%
- Children in Need 33%
- Children Looked After 32%

Vision, Mission and Values



Back to School Project

- Some children and parents will experience barriers and challenges with returning to school.
- A child/young person not returning to school will not, on its own, be a reason for Children's Social Care to undertake an assessment at level 4.
- "Hidden Harm" and to ensure we get a timely and proportionate response into families to identify any risks and to minimise further delay and impact of non-school attendance is also important to us.

Back to School project approach

In scope criteria

- Less than 70% attendance pre Covid
- Non or very little meaningful contact with school during Covid
- Have not returned or not returned with any consistency Sept 20

- Out of scope
- Looked After Children
- Children with an allocated early help or EWO worker
- Those who don't meet the criteria who can access alternative targeted support
- School responsibilities and Barnardo's "See, Hear, Respond"

Our Back to School Offer

- Referrals will be received directly from schools and be triaged
- We will be using the Signs of Safety model of intervention and a bespoke tool.
- Dedicated workers to each child & parent
- Worcestershire Health & Care Trust have developed a programme of on line sessions covering aspects associated with rejection/fear/anxiety of school return
- Support Mentors – Children & Parents

Outcomes and Evaluation

Attendance
at
school

We will track cases against specific interventions provided as part of the project to identify patterns in what worked and what didn't.

We will also track cases referred to the other 2 pathways to measure our success.

Sustained
attendance
at school

We will seek child and parent feedback as part of our evaluation to capture their experience of what worked and why.

Jan 21 we will evaluate impact to see if there is a need for any continuation

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CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 15 OCTOBER 2020

PROVISION OF OVERNIGHT UNIT-BASED SHORT BREAKS FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Summary

1. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families and the Director for Education and Early Help have been invited to the meeting to update the Panel on developments relating to the overnight unit-based short breaks transition planning for children with disabilities during COVID-19.

Background

2. Members will be aware of the consultation on proposals for the re-design of overnight unit-based short breaks for children with disabilities undertaken in January and February 2018, the Scrutiny Task Group Report on the same subject, and the subsequent report to Cabinet on 26 September 2019 where a number of recommendations from the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families were agreed.

3. The following is a reminder of key dates in the process so far:

- 14 December 2017 – Cabinet agrees consultation with parents, carers, professionals and wider stakeholders on a number of proposals to re-design the provision of overnight unit-based short breaks
- 8 January – 19 February 2018 – consultation including on-line survey, meetings with families, unit drop-ins, letters to parent carers and publication of FAQs on website
- 8 March 2018 – Cabinet Member with Responsibility meeting with families
- 26 April 2018 – presentation of Scrutiny Task Group Report to Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board
- 12 July 2018 – report to Cabinet by the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families
- 8 August 2018 – discussion at Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel in the light of decisions taken at 12 July Cabinet
- 27 and 29 September 2018 – Cabinet Member with Responsibility and Scrutiny Task Group Members attend co-design events with parent carers, professionals and providers.
- 6 June 2019 – discussion at Cabinet on the results of co-design activity and authorisation agreed for the Director of CFC to carry out a consultation on the proposed changes.

- 25 September 2019 – update presented at Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel ahead of the discussion at Cabinet on 26 September 2019.
- 26 September 2019 – discussion and approval at Cabinet for the future model of delivery by the Health and Care Trust, including varying the contractual arrangements with the Trust as necessary to implement the changes.

Transition Planning during COVID-19

4. Following the notice to cease delivery at Ludlow Road, the Interim Group Manager with responsibility for Children with Disabilities visited both Providence Road Overnight Short Breaks Unit and Osborne Court sites to examine the detailed transition planning for all the children identified and worked with both units to make direct contact with families to arrange visits and introductory sessions. Shortly after this instruction, the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown occurred.

5. During the COVID-19 pandemic many parents chose to keep their children at home rather than access overnight respite. Many of the children and their family members have underlying health concerns and were in a shielded group. In most cases this meant that active transition planning, through visits and introductory sessions, were put on hold until further government guidance was issued, or families felt more confident.

6. Worcestershire Health and Care Trust closed Ludlow Road Overnight Short Breaks Unit earlier at the end of March due to the COVID-19 response. In line with national guidance, Worcestershire Health and Care Trust decided to change service delivery models so the risks to patients could be minimised, and ensure they had capacity to support those services likely to be at the front line of the response.

7. The staff team at Ludlow Road remained in regular contact at least weekly with all families via keep in touch calls which were all electronically recorded. This was to assess the home situation and how families were managing and if they needed any urgent additional support as a result of not accessing overnight short breaks. This information was shared with the allocated social workers who were also making keep in touch calls to all families so had greater clarity on the family's situation at the time.

Transitions to Bromsgrove Short Breaks Unit – Providence Road Overnight Short Breaks Unit

8. All families due to transition to Providence Road Overnight Short Breaks Unit were contacted via phone to ask for an update on their situation regarding overnight short breaks. During the pandemic all confirmed that they were staying at home but would like to look at getting the arrangements for the transition completed. Some families wanted access to a short break of a few hours when they felt safe to do so. Families were assured that while face to face transition planning was on hold, the process would not be delayed unnecessarily.

9. A letter (see Appendix 1) was sent to families ensuring they had Providence Road Overnight Short Breaks Unit contact numbers and their social worker's contact details.

10. During the Spring and summer of 2020 Providence Road Overnight Short Breaks Unit senior management team made weekly and at the frequency agreed by families, keep in touch calls to all families so that they could continue to build the relationship in preparation for active transition when families felt in a position to safely do this. Families welcomed this approach. Managers at the unit also kept in touch with the relevant social workers to feedback and address any concerns.

11. Three face to face placement meetings were completed before the COVID national lockdown. From July to September seven young people have had introductory visits to Providence Road Overnight Short Breaks Unit and six have now started to access overnights. No families are currently shielding. Progress of transition is being determined at the pace and choice of the families. Staff have been completing individualised training provided by Worcestershire Health and Care Trust alongside introductions for young people.

12. Prior to COVID-19 national lockdown staff from Providence Road Overnight Short Breaks Unit went into Ludlow Road to meet young people and to see the work alongside Ludlow Road staff. Staff also went into the school environment to meet young people and start to build positive relationships.

13. Relevant paperwork and visual images of people and places were provided to all families to aid the move towards transition.

14. Staff recruitment has been successful at Providence Road Overnight Short Breaks Unit to meet the additional capacity needs. Providence Road Overnight Short Breaks Unit have adhered to the Government policies and guidelines around COVID-19 whilst continuing to deliver services.

15. Ofsted registration of the additional two beds within the Providence Road Overnight Short Breaks Unit has now been finalised and six beds are now operational and incorporated within the service.

Transitions to Osborne Court

16. All families due to transition to Osborne Court were contacted prior to and after Ludlow Road Overnight Short Breaks Unit closed. Initially, only three of the families due to transition decided to access an overnight short break at Osborne Court due to COVID-19. The remaining families chose to keep their children at home pending further government advice. The Registered Manager and the Deputy Manager made regular keep in touch calls with all the families and the families were aware of how to contact Osborne Court should they need to.

17. Over the last two months a further two children have commenced overnight short breaks, bringing the total number of children that have transitioned from Ludlow Road to Osborne Court to five.

18. Almost all young people have now made the transition from Ludlow Road to Osborne Court and are accessing overnight support. Where this has not happened, this is due to current needs which are kept under continual review and in partnership with families.

19. There was initially a delay on the completion of the building work at the Osborne Court site. In response to COVID-19, work was paused however, the contractors have since returned and completed the work.

20. The service has been in contact with Ofsted regarding registration of the new bungalow. A pre-registration visit is planned for the 2 October and it is anticipated that the setting will be registered shortly after.

21. Ten new staff members have been recruited, two of these staff transferred from Ludlow Road.

Transitions to Acorns Hospice Children's Hospice

22. Acorns Hospice took the decision to suspend all short breaks support until further notice in response to COVID-19 due to the vulnerability of the children who access this site. Between March and September 2020 Acorns Hospice have offered emergency support to families. Acorns Hospice are now in Phase 3 of their return to service whereby all families are now able to re-book short break stays.

23. Where there has been transition planning for children to Acorns Hospice overnight short breaks this has been managed and supported via keep in touch calls, outreach and the provision of support as required and in partnership with the social worker.

Support available to Children with Disabilities during COVID-19

24. The community short breaks groups and activities were suspended in March 2020 in response to COVID-19 and all families were informed in writing as to the reasons why (see Appendix 2). Worcestershire Children First reviewed the risk assessments for these services and following government guidance, reopened services during the summer. 146 young people obtained a place at an activity group throughout the summer.

25. Support work and domiciliary care services have continued throughout the COVID-19 pandemic to support families who still wanted to access this support. For those families who were shielding and opted not to access support during this time, providers continued to contact families by phone to check on their well-being. Social workers also continued with regular keep in touch calls to these families. Government guidance on delivering this service safely has been followed by providers.

26. Support via direct payments has been maintained. A letter (see Appendix 3) was sent to families to outline the use of their direct payment during this time.

27. In addition, the Children with Disabilities Team, in partnership with commissioners, developed a crisis outreach support service for those families whose children were on the edge of becoming accommodated or where there were increasing concerns for the child's safety (see Appendix 4). As at 31 August, there were 24 referrals for crisis support.

28. The Children with Disabilities team have a parent advice line that operates every day should families want to call the team for support/advice.

29. Social workers are visiting children where required following government advice.

30. We continue to work in close partnership with health and education colleagues to create a coordinated supported response to families.

31. Contact has been maintained with families and as soon as families wished to move forward with overnight short breaks this has been facilitated in line with the Government's guidance.

Summary of key points

32. The COVID-19 situation has delayed active transitions for some children as many families chose to stay at home and shield to keep their families safe.

33. There are two families who have not yet transitioned to the new service. This is the choice of both families; social workers and unit managers are in contact with these families to ensure they continue to be supported.

34. Strict preventative measures and guidance is being followed as per Government advice for those families that continue to access or begin a service.

35. Kidderminster and Bromsgrove Short Breaks units and the bungalows at the Osborne Court site remained open for those families who wished to access short breaks support.

36. A variety of support options have been made available to families during COVID-19, including a crisis outreach support service.

37. All families had and continue to have regular Keep in Touch calls at least weekly from the managers at the short break units and their social workers in an effort to support families who may be feeling isolated at the present time. Having made the decision not to access overnight short breaks to keep their family safe, many parent carers acknowledged the benefit from such a break when it was safe for their child to access.

Purpose of the Meeting

38. The Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel is asked to:

- Consider the information relating to transition planning during COVID-19 for overnight unit based short breaks provision;
- Determine whether it would wish to carry out any further scrutiny; and
- Agree whether it would wish to make any comments to the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families.

Supporting Information

[Appendix 1](#) - Letter to parent carers of children transitioning to Providence Road Overnight Short Breaks Unit site

[Appendix 2](#) - Letter to parent carers regarding community short breaks

[Appendix 3](#) - Letter to parent carers regarding Direct Payment support
[Appendix 4](#) - Outline of Crisis Support Offer

Contact Points

Specific Contact Points for this report

Daniela Carson, Interim Group Manager for CWD and SEND
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Samantha Davey, Commissioning Manager
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Email: sdavey1@worcschildrenfirst.org.uk

Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Director for Education and Early Help) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

- Agenda and Minutes of the Cabinet held in July 2015, 16 May 2016, 14 December 2017, 14 June 2018, 12 July 2018, 6 June 2019 and 26 September 2019

[All agendas and minutes are available on the Council's website here.](#)



Private & Confidential

Our Ref: SB/JP
Date: 27th of April 2020

Dear

Thank you for speaking with me yesterday in respect of [REDACTED] and her transition from Ludlow Road to Providence Road in Bromsgrove.

You confirmed you are staying at home and keeping safe so do not want to access Providence Road for overnight short breaks at the present time due to the current lockdown and choosing to stay at home to minimise any risk of Covid 19. You reported you and your family are well.

I informed you Heather Darby, your allocated worker, is back from sick leave this week and would be in contact with you.

I said I would write to you to give you the details of Providence Road and who to contact should you have any queries. Bev Harris is the Manager and her Deputy is Lynda Hawkeswood, they can be contacted on 01527 575710

I have asked them to remain in weekly contact with you to not lose sight of the transition to Providence Road, when you feel it is safe to do so.

Yours sincerely,

Sally Branchflower

Interim Group Manager for CWD and SEND

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Name
Address1
Address2
Address3
Postcode

Date: 18th March 2020

Dear Parent/Carer,

Action taken to minimise the spread of Corona Virus to children and young people with additional needs

I am writing to inform you that as the Commissioner of community short break services to children and young people with additional needs we have made the decision to suspend Community Short Break activities for a temporary period. This is to prevent the spread of Corona Virus to those most vulnerable with likely underlying health conditions. The “social distancing” advise from Public Health is not something that providers can adhere to under our current contracts and unfortunately, we are not able to provide alternative services.

The temporary suspension of the service will take effect from 20.3.20 until further notice (likely to resume May/June 2020). We will continuously be reviewing the situation with our Public Health colleagues and will be in touch when we are clearer on a way forward.

During this period, if feel you are unable to **safely** manage the care for your child, please call our parent advise line, managed by the Children’s Disability Services on 01905 844343, 0900 – 1700 Monday to Thursday and 0900-1630 on a Friday.

The specialist children’s disability social worker team will offer you telephone support, advise and a home visit if necessary

We hope that you will understand and support the action we have had to take and we would like to take this opportunity to remind you that our priority is the wellbeing of your children

Yours sincerely,



Tina Russell
Director of Social Care and Safeguarding



Private & Confidential

April 2nd 2020

COVID-19/CORONAVIRUS INFORMATION

Dear Direct Payment Recipient or Facilitator,

I am writing to you in relation to the ongoing COVID-19 (coronavirus) situation. The following information explains what is happening in terms of ongoing health and care support for you or the person whom you support during this difficult period.

If you are concerned that you or anyone in your community may be displaying symptoms of the Coronavirus please go to NHS111 online - and do not go to your GP.

The following links will provide useful information for you

NHS 111 <https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19>

Coronavirus web pages www.worcestershire.gov.uk/coronavirus and
<http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/here2help>

Penderels Direct Payment Support Service: Specific Direct Payment information and advice and support if you employ Personal Assistants or Care Givers:

<https://www.penderelstrust.org.uk/>

<https://www.penderelstrust.org.uk/pdf/EmployerFAQ.pdf>

<https://www.penderelstrust.org.uk/pdf/BePrepared.pdf>

Children with Disabilities: Specific queries about your care and support package - **01905 844343**

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

We know that many of you are worried about the availability of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) (such as aprons, masks and gloves). We will continue to work with Public Health colleagues locally and nationally as they are trying to ensure appropriate equipment supplies are available to everyone who needs them. .

If you need PPE equipment, please contact The National Supply Disruption line: **0800 915 9964** or email: supplydisruptionservice@nhsbsa.nhs.uk

You need to ensure that you are clear that your care and support is funded by Worcestershire Children First and that all other options to obtaining a supply has been exhausted (your own supplies

and where you normally purchase equipment). You will be asked about the size of the pack you will require as they vary from 50-300 items.

If we are advised that the above guidance has changed the information at this link will be updated:
http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/info/20739/professionals_partners_and_providers/2190/covid-19_coronavirus_advice_for_care_providers/11

Supporting you in the coming weeks

We have taken some immediate steps that will support and reassure you through this difficult time, specifically in relation to financial support. This is in addition to the National announcements for the payment of Statutory Sick Pay and other support.

For the duration of the COVID-19 outbreak we will continue to pay your Direct Payment, even in cases where services cannot be delivered, for example:

If you must self-isolate and a call cannot be made/you cannot attend (for example day services and domiciliary care/homecare)

Care can't be delivered because your Personal Assistant or Care Giver is self-isolating or has the Coronavirus.

This means that:

We will continue to pay you the amount you currently receive even if the services you receive must change because of Coronavirus.

You will have enough money to continue to pay your direct payment to your usual provider of care.

We will postpone the reclaiming of any excess contingency funding until later in the year. We will advise you of when this will happen.

If you need to use other support because the usual services are not available, you can use the funding in your Direct Payment account to cover any additional temporary care costs. If you need to discuss this or are worried that there is not enough money in your account to cover any additional costs, please contact the Children with Disabilities team on **01905 844343** or email childrenwithdisabilitiesservices@wrcschildrenfirst.org.uk. If you are supported by Penderels please contact them directly - **01299 253225**

I hope this provides you with the reassurance that we will do everything in our power to support you during this time. Please make every effort to stay safe by following the NHS and Government guidelines

Finally, the Police are carrying out checks on people moving around unnecessarily; please ensure that any of your carers carry their official identity with them at all times and that any PAs that you employ directly carry their contract of employment with them to validate their need for travel.

Yours faithfully,

Sally Branchflower

Group Manager, Children with Disabilities team

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CWD CRISIS OUTREACH SUPPORT SERVICE

In response to the suspension of community short break services and in response to COVID 19 we will be delivering an emergency offer for those families, whose children are at high risk of becoming accommodated or at significant risk of harm,. This service is not a replacement for the community short breaks.

Who will provide CWD outreach support service?

This will be provided by a pool of available workers who have knowledge and experience in working with CWD.

It will also include support workers who are currently employed by WCF's commissioned providers of short breaks, support and respite related activity. This will include:

- Admax Corporate Ltd
- Autonomy Group
- Civicare
- Dolphin Healthcare
- Doves Care and Support
- Newcross
- Premier Care
- New Hope
- YMCA Worcestershire
- Pershore Riverside Centre
- Midland Mencap
- Malvern Special Families
- Wyre Forest School
- Perdiswell Young People's Leisure Club

Who is eligible for the service?

- Children aged 0-18 open to CWD and YAT who are on the edge of care or child protection and most urgently in need of support

What will the service provide?

It will provide short periods of specialised outreach home support, delivered in either the morning or afternoon across Monday to Sunday, depending on need and staff availability.

Workers will visit families at home and support them in their home for blocks of up to 1-3 hours, each session agreed in advance as required. Workers will be able to provide direct support for each family, which could include:

- One to one activity at home, in the garden or in the community (depending on the current guidance, opportunities and circumstances of each family)
- Support for parents with another sibling in the family, offering practical parenting support and emotional support.

- Supporting a parent to take their child out on a community activity i.e. walk or shopping etc. though this would be within the parameters of the latest government guidance and each family's circumstances.
- Supporting 1-1 activities with the child, having fun supporting them to do the activities that they like, to give the child that space and time that will support the child's emotional and physical wellbeing, as well as giving parents a much needed break in caring and supporting their emotional wellbeing.

Workers will need to use their initiative and work with each family to identify the best way of providing help and support.

The service will not provide:

Administering of medication or specialist health support i.e. physio etc.

The service will not provide domiciliary support such as cleaning, shopping etc

the service is for the child and family who are most at need of some quality time to have fun and recharge batteries.

Process for referring and matching

This service will be managed by Sally Branchflower GM for CWD in co-operation with Sam Davey and/or Austin Rodriguez as the lead commissioner. Beth Wilkinson will be the Commissioning Officer (CO) responsible for matching providers to each family requiring support.

SW will complete service request (word doc) considering the eligibility criteria, which will be sent to the GM for a decision.

The CO will identify who will provide the outreach support and what sessions will be offered. Where possible workers will be matched with families they already know and ideally will have an allocated cohort they support (depending on numbers). However, this is likely to change as the availability of workers changes.

Allocations and matching of families to sessions and providers will be done weekly, with consideration for the changing demand for support alongside the capacity available from support workers. The GM will be in regular contact with social workers to understand that demand, whilst the CO will be in regular contact with providers to understand the capacity available to provide support.

Commissioned providers will be required to provide confirm to the CO that they have completed each session with a family, as well as raise and concerns they may have about the family. Providers will not be able to offer anything more than the agreed sessions.

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 15 OCTOBER 2020

WORK PROGRAMME 2020/21

Summary

1. From time to time the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel will review its work programme and consider which issues should be investigated as a priority.

Background

2. Worcestershire County Council has a rolling annual Work Programme for Overview and Scrutiny. The 2020/21 Work Programme has been developed by taking into account issues still to be completed from 2019/20, the views of Overview and Scrutiny Panel Members and the findings of the budget scrutiny process.
3. Suggested issues have been prioritised using scrutiny feasibility criteria in order to ensure that topics are selected subjectively and the 'added value' of a review is considered right from the beginning.
4. The Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel is responsible for scrutiny of:
 - Children's Social Care and Families
 - Public Health relating to Families
 - Education and Skills
5. The current Work Programme was discussed by OSPB on 22 July and agreed by Council on 10 September 2020.

Dates of Future Meetings

- 13 November 2020 at 10am
- Dates for 2021 tbc

Purpose of the Meeting

6. The Panel is asked to consider the 2020/21 Work Programme and agree whether it would like to make any amendments. The Panel will wish to retain the flexibility to take into account any urgent issues which may arise.

Supporting Information

- Appendix 1 – Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel Work Programme 2020/21

Contact Points

Alyson Grice / Samantha Morris, Overview and Scrutiny Officers, Tel: 01905 844962 / 844963 Email: scrutiny@worcestershire.gov.uk

Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Democratic Governance and Scrutiny Manager (Interim Monitoring Officer), the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

- Agenda and Minutes for Council on 10 September 2020
- Agenda and Minutes of OSPB on 22 July 2020

[All agendas and minutes are available on the Council's website here.](#)

2020/21 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME: Children & Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel

| Date of Meeting | Issue for Scrutiny | Date of Last Report | Notes/Follow-up Action |
|------------------|--|--|---|
| 15 October 2020 | Update on Children's Services in response to Covid-19 | 8 September 2020 | To include general education update and details of Back to School project |
| | Overnight Unit-based Short Breaks for Children with Disabilities – Update | 8 August 2018 4 June 2019 25 September 2019 | Following an in-depth Scrutiny in 2018, the Panel has been monitoring the new model of service delivery implemented from April 2020 every 6 months. |
| 13 November 2020 | Update on Starting Well | 11 January 2019 10 May 2019 14 February 2020 | Update on progress of Service since launch (1 April 2020) and performance against KPIs |
| | Update on the implementation of the Business Case for the Assessment Pathway for Children and Young People who may have Autism | OSPB 25 May 2019 CFOSP 25 September 2019 | Panel requested update on implementation of new delivery model |
| | Scrutiny of 2021/22 Budget: emerging challenges | | |
| | Performance and In-Year Budget Monitoring (Finance/Performance Q2 July- September 2020) | | |

| | | | |
|------------------------------|---|---|---|
| January 2021 | Scrutiny of 2021/22 Budget | | |
| | Supporting Families First | 17 July 2020 | Including update on Family Safeguarding Innovation Project |
| | Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report | 11 September 2019 (WSCB Annual Report) | |
| March 2021 | Educational Outcomes for Children in Worcestershire 2020 | 9 October 2018 7 February 2018 17 July 2019 14 February 2020 | |
| Possible Future Items | | | |
| TBC | New Model of Delivery for Medical Education Provision | 23 January 2020 16 June 2020 | Update when date of Cabinet meeting confirmed |
| TBC | Sufficiency work including private residential provision used by the council. To include types of placements in Worcestershire, emergency placements, costs, availability and information on Worcestershire children who have been placed out-of-county in unregistered children's homes, including when, where and in what circumstances | 11 January 2019 | Suggested by the Director of Children, Families and Communities during the Performance Monitoring discussion on 13 November 2019. (to be scheduled following the government national care review) |
| TBC | Ofsted ILACS Inspection – Feedback following annual standard inspection (Ofsted report published 29 July 2019). | 11 September 2019 | Delay due to COVID-19. Date of follow up inspection tbc |
| TBC | Update on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Improvement | 16 June 2020 | Ofsted/CQC re-visit delayed – now likely to be 2021 |

| | | | |
|--------------------|---|-------------------------|--|
| TBC | Elective Home Education | | Scrutiny task group to be set up autumn 2020 |
| TBC | Joint Targeted Area Inspection (focus on children's emotional health and well-being) | | Date tbc |
| TBC | Review of Alternative Provision for SEND and Vulnerable Learners | | Requested at Panel meeting 13 November 2019 - Review delayed due to COVID-19 |
| TBC | Impact of child poverty | | Requested at Panel meeting 13 November 2019. Ref report from Worcester City Task Group. Also linked to Public Health. Consider once economic impact of COVID-19 clearer. |
| TBC | Virtual School (including the Virtual School Governing Body) | | |
| Standing Items | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance and In-year Budget Monitoring • Quality Assurance • Safeguarding • Budget Scrutiny Process | Jan/March/July/Sept/Nov | |
| Scrutiny Champions | Safeguarding – Cllr Tom Baker-Price Education – Cllr Steve Mackay Looked After Children - Cllr Fran Oborski Finance/budget – Cllr Pat Agar | | |

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