

REPORT TITLE:	Discharge of Roles and Responsibilities since the last meeting of the Council
REPORT AUTHOR:	Councillor Adam Wilkinson and Councillor Sarah Courtney
AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY:	Children and Young People's Services
DATE:	23 March 2022
Early Years, Schools and COVID	
<p>The situation in schools and other education and childcare settings has improved considerably since February. Whilst there are still some cases and consequently some disruption to education, this is currently minimal. Schools and settings responded quickly to the changes in national guidance and welcomed additional support from colleagues in Public Health to help with communication with parents and carers. The Safe Education and Childcare Group has met weekly up to the first week in March and will meet again on 30th March.</p> <p>Attendance based on available data for week ending 4th March 2022 was 93%, an increase of 5% from the end of January.</p> <p>The vaccination programme is continuing to be hosted in secondary schools and through the community. Vaccinations for the 5-11 age group are being planned and will be offered through GPs and pharmacies. Information will be provided for parents and carers later in the month.</p>	
Education Recovery Plan	
<p>Work is continuing at a pace to ensure gaps in learning are identified and closed. The Education Endowment Foundation project, with a prime aim of reducing inequality gaps for disadvantaged children in literacy, now has over 40 schools who have expressed an interest in taking part.</p> <p>Other strands of the Plan include mental health and wellbeing, workforce development and digital inclusion.</p>	

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Schools have reported that the Mental Health Services and Schools and Colleges Link Programme, which is open to all those not part of the Mental Health Support Team (MHST) work, has been excellent. As I mentioned in the February report, this programme is funded by the DfE and endorsed by NHSE, bringing together education and mental health professionals, facilitated by the Anna Freud Centre, it is aligned to and supports 'Thrive', delivered by the Open Minds Partnership. The programme, along with the wide range of support available through the Open Minds Partnership, will help schools to support children and young people well.

Inclusion Group

Following on from the successful Wicked Issues Forum on Inclusion, held in February, a new group has been formed to take responsibility for leading on inclusion work. The group, which includes representatives from schools, settings, CYP services, health, voluntary and community groups and parents/carers, will report to the Calderdale Partnership School Improvement Board and will prioritise work coming from the recommendations of the external review of alternative provision. This will be a key piece of work to support our most vulnerable children and young people and will have resource through the High Needs Budget to improve provision through a continuum of support.

School Place Planning

There are no further updates at this time about the proposed Free School in south east Calderdale. Officers are liaising with the DfE and stressing that the timing of that new provision opening must be in line with the growth in demand from the housing trajectory in the Local Plan.

Secondary school allocations for September 2022 were made on national offer day, 1st March. This year 87.4% of students were offered their first preference school, compared to 81.5% last year. Whilst overall more young people were offered their first preference than in any recent year, there have been questions raised about admission of North Halifax children to Trinity Academy Halifax. Further analysis has been undertaken and the majority of children (68%) who attend North Halifax Schools have been offered Trinity Academy Halifax with a further 5% being offered selective grammar schools and 1% being offered specialist provision.

Operation Warm Welcome

The asylum seeker children residing at The Wool Merchant Hotel have now started at schools. Beech Hill Primary School has accommodated all primary aged children to provide a careful transition into English school life to help prepare the children for a good start when they transition to their long term school once in permanent housing.

Ash Green Community Primary School

Whilst the fire in February was a devastating event for the school and the whole community, it has also led to some wonderful support and true partnership working. The school responded magnificently and ensured that all pupils and families were well supported with immediate effect. They made arrangements for education to continue, with some remote learning up to half term. Support from the community and much further afield included professional counselling and emotional wellbeing support, food, resources and significant fund raising which the school will use to provide further enrichment such as visits, visitors to school and additional activities to help children deal with the trauma they have experienced.

Council officers, the insurers and school leaders have worked collaboratively to ensure the upper site was able to accommodate pupils again after half term, less than three school weeks after the fire. The damaged section has been demolished and a new car park has been created to enable modular buildings to be installed on the existing car park. The only delay to date was caused by poor weather over half term that held up the installation of the temporary buildings but they are now on site and being fitted out ready for pupils to be learning in them from 21st March.

Officers are now working with the DfE and school to try to reach the best solution for the rebuild as we have nominated the school for the latest round of the School Rebuilding Programme which, if successful, could address other buildings related issues than just the fire rebuild. Officers have stressed the need for this nomination to be considered without delay. The guidance for the Programme does allow for a small number of nominations to be considered outside the usual processes in exceptional circumstances.

Schools Rebuilding Programme

Local authorities and responsible bodies have been invited to nominate schools meeting specific criteria about significant building issues for the School Rebuilding Programme. We have nominated 14 maintained schools, including Ash Green, and are aware that 3 others have been nominated by their responsible body. The final

date for the submission of evidence is 31st March and information about the successful schools is expected later in the year.

Ofsted inspections in education

A number of inspections have taken place since my February report. Most of these are yet to be published. Scout Road Academy had a section 8 inspection and remains a Good school, although the inspection identified that the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a full inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a full (section 5) inspection. The reports for Brighthouse High School, Calder Learning Trust, The Brooksbank School, Dean Field Community Primary School and Norland CE School are expected imminently.

New Healthy Holidays programme for 2022

Members will recall that we were pleased to receive confirmation that the DfE will be continuing to fund the Holiday Activities and Food programme for a further 3 years following our successful pilot last year. We are now in full on planning for the Healthy Holidays Calderdale Programme for the Easter, Summer, and Christmas school holidays throughout 2022.

The application process for *Healthy Holidays Calderdale 2022* closed on Monday 28th February. We received 29 applications worth £1,021,263. This is a positive situation for Calderdale and it is very pleasing to see that communications efforts have been successful in encouraging submissions. There are several applicants new to Healthy Holidays Calderdale, which is good news. However, this is considerably over the allocated budget, so the team is working with the Community Foundation for Calderdale to review these and prepare them for assessment by the assessment panel. We will be confirming the full programme of activities after assessment which will be later this month.

Early Intervention and Safeguarding

Horton Street

Following approval by Cabinet in February 2022, to reconfigure Horton Street to become a long-term base for a number of teams in CYPS. Things are moving at a pace, all of the IT and office equipment has now been ordered to set up the office in Horton Street to the same specification of those at Princess Buildings. We anticipate that these will be delivered very shortly and that the work to set up the offices will be concluded towards the end of April, beginning of May 2022. The work will also entail some minor building work to set up space on the lower floor for dedicated POD

Reflect Meeting spaces to support CYPS staff to continue to work in line with the systemic practice model that has proven so effective. The staff from CYPS who have been using the building on a temporary basis whilst waiting for approval to proceed with the reconfiguration will continue to use the building throughout the alternations with minimal disruptions. All staff from CYPS who use Horton Street are really looking forward to the changes which will allow them to come together with their peers on a much more frequent basis to work systemically with vulnerable children and families in Calderdale.

Staffing

As many of you will be aware, Rob Murray, the Assistant Director for Early Intervention and Safeguarding, will be retiring at the end of March 2022. Rob has given many years of service to children and young people in Hull, Leeds, North Lincolnshire and Calderdale. Rob has loved working in Calderdale and has worked incredibly hard during Covid-19 to keep the social work service well supported and well managed. He has overseen a successful front door health check; the development of a new children's home in Brighouse and seen Cousin lane, Hebble Lodge and Linden Brook get outstanding Ofsted judgements. We wish him a long and happy retirement as he gets to spend more time with his family and Grandchildren.

The arrangements for once Rob leaves are that Pam Allen will cover as an Interim AD until the end of May 2022, when the new permanent post will join. Pam has worked in Calderdale as an Interim previously and knows the service and the majority of staff well. Rob has met with Pam a number of times face to face to provide a detailed handover to Pam to ensure that the work that is underway does not stall. The permanent applicant will commence at the end of May 2022, her name is Di Drury, who is an experienced Head of Service who has worked in the Yorkshire and Humber region for a number of years. Di will be an exceptional addition to CYPS.

LGA Peer Review of Corporate Parenting arrangements

As reported within my last report, we are working with the LGA to undertake a review of our Corporate Parenting arrangements within the Council and the wider partnership. We have now agreed that this review will commence in June 2022 with the peer reviewers initially observing the June Corporate Parenting Panel; this will be followed by a more detailed look at our Corporate Parenting arrangements with Elected Members/Officers. This will then lead to an action plan being produced in partnership with the LGA which will help us to deliver any changes that are needed.

As part of this piece of work, myself and Rob Murray, Assistant Director for Early Help and Safeguarding, met with some of our Care Leavers at the Orange Box on the evening of the 7 March 2022, specifically to ask them how they would like Elected Members to engage with Care Leavers in our Corporate Parenting role and also to see if there were any other issues that they wanted to raise with us.

The young people we met were amazing and gave us some valuable insights into how we should engage with them, which included through social media, through informal meetings where we join them for activities at venues that they are used to going to. They also gave us a clear message that they do not want to come to adult meetings, as they felt they “were boring”. The young people talked very positively about a number of areas which included the kindness and support of their Personal Advisors, being able to use the Orange Box which they felt is a great venue for young people. They also raised some issues for us to think about, mainly in relation to preparation for independent living starting earlier for some young people. They also said that they would like to understand their financial entitlements better, as sometimes they were not always aware of what they are entitled to. Both of these issues are already being picked up by the Service and clear progress is being made. We agreed at the end of the meeting with the Care Leavers that we will continue to meet with them on an informal basis to seek their views, pending the outcomes of the LGA Peer Review.

Whilst meeting with the Care Leavers, I was shown around the Orange Box and was introduced to some of the partners that work there. I was really impressed with what I saw, the building was buzzing with various different groups of young people, who were sharing the building. The building is now well established as a hub for young people, with really ambitious plans for how the building will further develop in the future.