

Scrutiny Briefing:

The Council's Covid-19 response to support children and young people

Hackney Learning Trust

1. Background & Introduction

The lockdown affecting schools and settings was announced on 18 March 2020. This followed a week of declining rolls as families kept children at home for fear of them catching the virus. During the first two weeks in March there was also a slight decline in staff attendance as staff followed government advice to shield or self isolate. As you will know schools have not been closed completely. Schools have been providing distance learning for children at home, as well as care, at school, for children of key workers and for vulnerable children.

Current situation in schools

1.1. Since lockdown was announced from 20 March 2020, Hackney has managed to open the significant majority of its schools and settings. 93% of Hackney schools are open to vulnerable pupils (pupils who have a social worker or Education Health & Care Plan) and those of key workers. This compares to a national average of around 70%. Nine schools have set up local partnership agreements sharing staff and school sites. Closed schools and colleges have systems in place to provide home learning and regular checks on vulnerable pupils. Regular contact with HLT is maintained.

1.2. Although variable day to day, an average of 653 pupils are attending Hackney schools, with around 250 vulnerable pupils attending each day. Schools have set up systems to check on pupils who are not attending with structured discussions which cover both well-being and learning. Pupils who are considered vulnerable are contacted at least twice a week. HLT officers have worked closely with Children's Social Care to support the screening of pupils for whom contact cannot be made.

2. Safeguarding oversight and support to vulnerable children (including those with SEND) across Hackney

2.1. There is a clear expectation that pastoral contact with all children from designated school staff will occur at least once a week, in addition to the more frequent contact around learning materials. For vulnerable children, this pastoral contact would be more often.

2.2. Education and social care have developed a joint approach to supporting Hackney's most vulnerable children during the COVID-19 outbreak. This ensures that where school is a protective factor, vulnerable children & young people attend wherever it is safe for them to do so. It is also designed to maintain contact between vulnerable children, their education providers and (where applicable) their social workers / YOT workers / SEND plan coordinators. With regular contact being maintained, plans to address vulnerable children's educational needs and any risks they face can be monitored, followed, and amended as necessary.

2.3. To support this, a database of all children that meet the definition of vulnerable has been established (i.e., those living at home under a Child Protection or Child in

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Need Plan or a Youth Justice Order, in terms of social care contact, as well as all children who are on an EHC plan and may also be vulnerable).

- 2.4.** The implemented Covid-19 response ensures social workers & YOT workers maintaining regular contact and review with schools (both inborough & out borough) of children & young people (who have been red RAG rated) to determine how best to support their education and attendance where appropriate.
- 2.5.** For children & young people with an EHCP attending school in borough, where there are flagged concerns (via a risk assessment by the school), a SEND Plan Coordinator will undertake regular planning and monitoring with the school. For out borough schools, the school or setting is asked to provide a weekly update. Where urgent issues arise, these are followed up on an ad hoc basis.
- 2.6.** The local offer has provided a significant amount of advice for families of children with SEND.

2.7. Early Years

2.7.1. Overview of closures (as at 30/04/2020)

Type of provision	Number of providers	Number open	Number of children attending provision
Childminders	176	41	43
Nursery classes in maintained schools	55	47	97
Private, voluntary, independent & children's centres	133	37	190
Total	364	125	330

- 2.7.2.** To mitigate against the impact of the closure of settings on children's outcomes, places have been prioritised and coordinated for vulnerable children at an alternative setting, if their usual setting has been unable to remain open.
- 2.7.3.** Less than 50% of children identified as having vulnerabilities have accessed their allocated early education or childcare place.
- 2.7.4.** A number of settings have maintained weekly, or fortnightly telephone contact with their children and families, both those who are eligible for a place but have not used the place, and those who are not eligible for a place.
- 2.7.5.** In addition to telephone contact with families, settings, largely led by children's centres, have coordinated fortnightly home learning packs and activities to keep children engaged in learning at home. These learning packs are bolstered with

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online resources and online story-telling and music sessions. Activities have been delivered to parents who are unable to access online resources.

2.7.6. To support children's physical health and wellbeing, 216 food packs, 122 Rose vouchers for fresh fruit and veg 61 health start vitamins have been given, posted or delivered to parents.

2.7.7. The family support teams have continued to intervene with families known to the children's centre early help multi-agency team (MAT) offering more intensive support to parents where required.

3. Ensuring that the impact of school closures does not compound levels of educational disadvantage in Hackney

3.1. Access to Educational Resources

3.1.1. Hackney Schools have been proactive in providing learning resources for pupils. School websites have been used to organise resources and online assemblies. Some schools are using video links to deliver or record lessons for pupils to access at home. Many schools have organised the delivery or collection of printed resources for pupils who have limited access to the internet. Some schools have loaned equipment and a new Government Scheme is being accessed to provide laptops and internet connectivity to disadvantaged Year 10 pupils, care leavers and pupils who have a Social Worker. New Government resources and resources produced by the Teaching and Learning Team at Hackney Learning Trust have also been provided for pupils to access.

3.1.2. It is acknowledged that despite the best efforts of schools to mitigate the impact of school closures on learning, many pupils will be adversely affected by not attending school and an extended closure will widen educational disadvantage. Hackney Learning Trust is working with schools to share strategies for a return to school which will rapidly address this legacy and close gaps. This recovery period is likely to continue to impact on pupil outcomes in the coming academic year.

3.2. Free School Meals - Hackney Schools were quick to provide vouchers and meals in the initial absence of a national scheme. Some schools continue to provide hot meals and food hampers, however the majority have now signed up to the National voucher scheme. Initial issues appear to have been resolved and families who are eligible to benefits tested free school meals for these children are receiving vouchers for £15 per child per week.

4. Ensuring children and young people with SEND continue to have access to appropriate education resources, advice and support to meet their needs

4.1. The following services across local education, health and care partners are currently being provided in response to the needs of local children and young people with SEND. All of the services have had to adapt their systems, processes and practices to ensure that services remain accessible, implementing reasonable endeavours and adjustments to minimise the impact on service users where

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possible in discharging duties. All service updates are available at

www.hackneylocaloffer.co.uk/team-updates

- 4.2. **Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) Team:** There is a business as usual approach from the service with continued management of EHCP caseloads and discharging of the associated statutory duties on behalf of the LA. The number of local area issued plans has increased recently to rising 2,500, from the previous pre Covid 19 measures 2,400 plans issued.
- 4.3. **Special Educational Needs Disability Information Advice and Guidance Service (SENDIAGS):** The team is fully operational and providing business as usual in providing access to timely information, advice and guidance support to parents and carers of children and young people with SEND. The Service is currently supporting 60 local area families directly.
- 4.4. **Education Psychology Service:** The service is fully operational in response to local needs including providing a response to requests from schools and settings re bereavement/trauma support. They are discharging business as usual, core and statutory duties. The service is actively addressing a backlog of formally required EP advice statements for the development of EHCPs, which has seen the numbers of overdue needs assessments reduce from c 90 at the beginning of April period to seven currently.
- 4.5. **A Space:** Ongoing targeted therapeutic support for children, parents and carers in 20 local schools is being provided in response to need.
- 4.6. **Travel Assistance SEND:** Home to school transport to enable access to education provision continues to be provided to those assessed as requiring support.
- 4.7. **Pupil Benefits:** The service continues to provide free school meal information, advice and guidance
- 4.8. **Speech and Language Therapy Service:** The service remains fully operational, providing targeted support for the most urgent / vulnerable children & young people, as well as regular keep in touch communications with parents. New referrals are being managed by telephone or video-link where possible and resource sharing, through posted activity packs and online/service website, is available. Ongoing partnership work has continued with multi-agency teams and school staff.
- 4.9. **Specialist Teaching Service:** The team is providing regular keep in touch communications with parents in response to need, as well as information, advice and guidance where required.
- 4.10. **Disabled Children's Service:** Short breaks provision and targeted support continues to be provided in response to need and there have been no reports of care providers being unable to provide support packages. The service is currently supporting 350 local children directly and assessing a further 48 requests with a view to providing support. In the absence of many activities currently being

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available, it has been agreed that families can spend up to £250 of shortbreaks funding on home activities for children (e.g., trampoline or educational games).

- 4.11. NHS City and Hackney CCG:** All service updates are available at www.hackneylocaloffer.co.uk/team-updates
- All general practices are open across City and Hackney.
 - As per these updates the Hackney Ark reception is open, but the resource centre is closed. The majority of service provision is delivered remotely and queries to health re the EHCP process can continue to be directed via huh-tr.ehcp@nhs.net
 - Health Visiting has implemented a rapid response service so face to face visits can be arranged on the day as necessary.
 - School Nursing service is working closely with the Hackney Learning Trust to receive timely information on children attending schools to support their review. All health care plans are up to date.
 - Occupational Therapy, physiotherapy, speech and language therapy, and CAMHS are largely remote service offers.
 - A new online resource, KOOTH, is now available to support mental health concerns. Professionals can also make new referrals into CAMHS; there is a 24/7 crisis line and the team is available to see CYP presenting in crisis between 9am and 9pm.
 - As per national guidance, we are extending our multi-agency review of children and young people with Learning Difficulties and / or autism who display challenging behaviour, who are not attending school and whose vulnerability has increased during the pandemic.
- 4.12. Adult Learning Service:** Joint working is underway with a number of SEND teams to identify and support the parents and carers of SEND children with signposting, as well as support to help strengthen access to online material, courses, information advice and guidance (e.g., accessing benefits, how to access emergency food service, well-being information, education, training and employment advice & signposting and support with job applications).
- 4.13. Special Schools and New Regents College Pupil Referral Unit:** All local area special schools and the Pupil Referral Unit remain open to children being assessed as meeting the criteria for attendance. Whilst learner attendance at all of the settings has been variable, all of the schools are deploying welfare calls in the absence of attendance, to maintain connectivity and support learning, with children and families during this period. Links with the Disabled Children's Service and children's social care teams are also being maintained for escalation where concerns may arise.
- 4.14. Learning Trust and Children's Social Care - Supporting FAST programme:** An integrated virtual team has been established across HLT and Children's Social Care teams to support the anticipated rise in referrals, especially with regard to children that schools cannot make contact with during the Covid 19 period.

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- 4.15. **WAMHS:** Through the WAMHS programme, 50 schools are continuing to receive regular support from CAMHS workers. New plans are being written to adapt the work during lockdown. In some schools this is being offered over the holiday
5. **Preparing service for children and young people in Hackney once lockdown restrictions are eased.**
- 5.1. This document needed to go to press before any details of the government plans were announced re return to school - beyond that, year groups to be prioritised from 1st June are Reception, Year 1 and Year 6. Year 10 and Year 12 may return at some point this term.
- 5.2. Guidance has been sent to schools about issues to consider regarding the proposed return. This emphasises the need for health and safety standards to be clear for staff and pupils. It also outlines points about the curriculum needed for the children given the issues they will need to discuss and the gaps in learning they may face.

Appendix: latest data - provided since text above written.

- A. **Early Years** - The number of children attending Early Years provision has increased steadily since Easter.

	19 April	22 April	26 April	30 April	6 May
Total attending	272	334	331	374	365
Critical Worker	180	211	204	246	239
Vulnerable	92	123	127	128	126

- B. **Schools** - DfE attendance returns (as at 6 May 2020) show over 800 pupils attending Hackney Schools this week. This is just above 2% of the pupil population. 93% of Hackney schools and settings are offering provision in comparison to 78% nationally
- C. **Vulnerable Children** - The data below was the position as at 22nd April 2020 for school attendance during shutdown.

In and out of borough (CFS & SEND high risk cohort combined)

- Total number of children in cohort: **1,763**
- Total number of school aged children: **1,317** (75% of the total high risk cohort)
 - Of which are on roll at schools in borough: **1,086** (82%)

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- Of which are on roll at schools out of borough: **231** (18%)
- Below or over aged children and young people: **446** (25% of the total high risk cohort)

CFS Children in Need & Child Protection high risk cohort only

- Total number of school aged children: **1,227** (70% of the CFS high risk cohort)
 - Currently attending school: **80** (7%)
 - Currently not attending school: **720** (59%)
- School attendance yet to be verified: **427** (24% of the CFS high risk cohort)