

Children's Services Update on Key Issues and Developments

**Actions taken to safeguard children and young people,
and support high quality education for all to deliver
Vibrant Communities**

Cabinet, 19 April 2021



City of Westminster



What we said:

In City for All we committed to:

- ✓ Keeping children at the centre of everything we do
- ✓ Transforming our Pre-Birth to Five programme
- ✓ Ensuring all our children can access our excellent, diverse and inclusive schools
- ✓ Ensuring our offer is effective in engaging young people in positive activities
- ✓ Improve our local offer for children with special needs or disabilities
- ✓ Provide services that enhance and support EWMH

In our Children and Young People's Plan we set our priorities to:

- ✓ Improve the positive impact of practice and further developing its evidence-base..
- ✓ Continue to deliver, implement and develop our 'Local Offers' that improve outcomes for children and young people leaving care and for 0 to 25-year olds with SEND.
- ✓ Ensure children and families can access help early
- ✓ Support all children and young people so that they can move successfully into adulthood.
- ✓ Ensure our work is shaped and influenced by the views of children and young people.
- ✓ Maintain excellence in schools and improve access and support for children and young people who need help to thrive.

This presentation sets out what we said, did and continue to do to deliver these commitments and priorities over last twelve months

Key Highlights last 12 months

- Distributed the DWP Covid Winter Grant of £1.032m to fund food and hardship needs of Westminster families.
- Delivered 5249 digital devices to ensure those who needed them most remained connected and able to learn.
- Continued face to face social work throughout the pandemic 271 care leavers, 194 looked after children, 45 child on a child protection plan and 590 Children in Need were all contacted at least every 4 weeks.
- Placement stability has improved over the last year. In 2020/21 5% of children compared to 11% in the previous year had three or more placements and 83% of children have been in the same placement for more than 2.5 years compared to 71 in 201/20.
- Made best use of digital including transferring parenting support to digital platforms. We had 159 digital participants during 2020/21.
- Contacted all new mothers and only one of a few areas using digital platforms for the healthy child programme.
- Primary schools became hub and we introduced a recovery curriculum following first lock down.
- Mapped the emotional wellbeing and mental health offer across all our schools and developed and distributed a range of resources for nurseries and schools to support the emotional wellbeing and mental health of pupils, as part of a recovery curriculum.
- Moved the Libraries events programme online hosting 242 events with 20,878 attendees. Supported digital inclusion throughout lockdown with over 300 unique visitors per library using the PCs.



What we did:

Maintained excellence in schools and improve access and support for children and young people who need help to enable them to access high quality education and training and move into work.



- We ensured digital access for vulnerable families prior to national offer : More than 5249 laptops were delivered to children via Westminster schools. This includes devices funded by the Council, refurbished and donated by WCC and ordered from the DfE
- In September, we set up a Diversity and Equality working group which is attended by Schools and LA staff. This is underpinned by two working groups; the Curriculum working group and a Professional Development working group. Funding has been made available to allow schools to release staff to attend these groups and related training such as the EDI masterclasses for school leadership teams.
- Diversity and Equality training is also available to school governors and we are making links with the Black Governors Association to increase diversity and representation. As part of our enhanced governor training programme offered to all governors within our schools, we provide financial training to ensure that there is a financial grip across the schools system.
- We've engaged independent expert advice through ISOS to work with us on the issue of falling rolls engaging positively with all schools and the diocese. Westminster is one of only a few local authorities with no overspend in the high needs block due to careful planning of SEND places and a reflection of our SEND strategy.
- Distributed a recovery curriculum to help children return to school after the first lockdown and in the second lockdown issued guidance to parents for where children were working from home. Increased frequency of meetings with heads teachers and ensured they received public health and health and safety updates – at a time of multiple and rapidly evolving guidance from government.
- During reopening of schools to all pupils at the start of 2020/2021 academic year, Family Navigators offered support to parents concerned about children returning to school. This informal intervention was well received by schools and 15 out of 35 families responded positively by sending children back to school. The work will be launched again in Summer Term to encourage and promote attendance before considering challenge and enforcement.

What we did:

Improved the positive impact of practice and further develop its evidence-base to deliver better outcomes for children and young people.



The Children's Social Care Innovation Programme Report (September 2020) and Kantar and Tilda Goldberg Centre highlighted the excellent work Children's Services has achieved in our commitment to Systemic Practice.

- Evidence of sustainable improvement of outcomes for children and young people.
- A larger reduction in the rate of child protection plans (18.5 fewer per 10,000 children) compared to a comparison group of similar local authorities (7.6 fewer per 10,000 children).
- A reduction in the rate of child in need plans (of 75.8 fewer per 10,000 children) compared to an increase among the comparison group of similar local authorities
- for every £1 spent, approximately £1.89 was saved due to the embedding of systemic practice.
- "Families interviewed had positive feedback on their experience with their social worker, saying it was a collaborative process and had helped to strengthen family relationships and recognise their family's inherent strengths to bring about change".
- "at a practice level, in supervision and in direct work with families, there was evidence of a strengths-based, systemically informed approach and practice was generally of a high quality"



What we did:

Continued to deliver, implement and develop our 'Local Offers' that improve outcomes for children and young people leaving care and for 0 to 25-year olds with SEND.

- Throughout the crisis, our SEND Local Offer websites have acted as a hub of information for families and professionals, incl. staff from our local schools.
- Changed the delivery model of our short breaks offer to extend support children with disabilities.
- Set up a 'Virtual SENCO Forum' for all schools across that enabled us to maintain regular communication with schools.
- Westminster Family Hubs: GPs and council work together to deliver a strong child health system.
- Westminster Guardians: revised corporate parenting strategy with updated action plan
- We recognise the emotional, economic, and behavioural impact the Covid-19 will have had on children in care and care leavers and we continue to support them to engage in education, employment, and training and have a voice in decisions that affect their lives.
- Libraries introduced a programme of regular online after school activities to support literacy and learning including Tuesday Book Group, Thursday Get Creative sessions and Friday Club with an average of 15 children attending every week including several SEN children.
- Parents told Ofsted that the special schools in Westminster had helped their children to be "more confident, independent and happier."
- Our local offer survey shows that 77% of users found the site to be up-to-date, 71% of users found it to be useful and 90% found it to be understandable.



What we did:

Ensured children and families can access help early and provide services that enable children to have the best start in life.

- We continue to develop our Family Hubs and were able to offer a holistic approach to supporting families during the pandemic. Westminster participated in a ministerial event to launch national family hubs.
- During lockdown we made sure we contacted every new mother, sending out new birth packs and ensuring they have a link worker to monitor their wellbeing.
- Non Violence Resistance is just one of the parenting courses being delivered through the Family Hubs which continued during the pandemic. NVR helps parents and carers overcome their sense of helplessness and develop strategies to manage behaviours. 43 parents attended.
- Family Navigators are an integral part of our Family Hubs. There are now 5 Family Navigators who have worked with 200 families over the past year acting as a bridge for universal services such as schools and GP practices into the wider services of the Family Hub.
- One of the only areas in the country to introduce online support tools that ensure appropriate development reviews are based on identified need.
- A new delivery model for the Healthy Child Programme will be in place by Summer 2022 following re-procurement and Early Help redesign.





What we did:

Supported all children and young people so that they can move successfully into adulthood including those at risk of harm, exploitation and/or criminalisation, serious youth violence and new and emerging risks.

- Collaborative trauma informed, and area-based approach to preventing school exclusions (16 schools participating in a pilot, 83 teachers trained, 59 young people on the programme – None have been permanently excluded).
- Local networks with employers, education and learning facilities and sport events.
- Well-established Vulnerable Children’s collaborative continues to drive forward improvements in the system and unpick individual cases.
- As the risks of gang affiliation rise, the IGXU ETE Coaches continue to ensure and young people have access to the latest opportunities; by brokering new vacancies, forging partnerships, and working creatively – 35 young people engaging fully with education, training and employment outcomes.
- Willmott Dixon partnership with YOT, 15 trained mentors with trauma informed training worked with 9 young people – one more than the target - to develop their potential.
- Analysis of serious youth violence shows reducing trend in under 18s. Over the last two year period the number of First Time Entrants to the criminal justice system decreased from 42 to 37, a decrease of 12%.



What we did:

Ensured our work is shaped and influenced by the views of children and young people their parents and/or carers.



- Strengthened the voice of the child and embedded service user feedback and reflective practice into everything we do
- Co-production with parents/carers to update our SEND Strategy
- New assessment YOT pilot to increase CYP engagement
- Contacted 500 children across Bi-Borough to understand their views, both positive and negative, about returning to school.
- 80% of children report that they “feel listened to regarding their health needs. (Westminster Guardians Annual Survey)
- Audits and service user feedback indicate that children have been actively involved in assessments, planning meetings, and co-design of service interventions: 72.3 % (181) of all monthly audits in WCC show that ‘the voice of the child’ is clearly evidenced in the file.
- Creative collaborative digital exhibition of children’s experiences during lockdowns



What we did:

In our libraries and registration services



Registration services

- We conducted 1056 weddings and civil partnerships during 20/21 and we currently have 2034 booked for 21/22- 1543 of those at OMTM.
- Westminster Registration Service has supported the families of 1952 Westminster residents who have sadly passed away over the last year. This includes 490 residents whose death has been covid related.
- Since the birth registration service resumed on 01st July 2020 the Westminster Registration Service has welcomed 4'956 families in registering births within the district of Westminster

Libraries

- Introduced Libby a new eResources supplier with ten times the amount of eBooks, more than 3,000 additional eMagazine titles, three times the amount of eAudio titles
- Continued to offer the Home Library Service throughout lockdown, supporting our most vulnerable residents, piloting tablet loans to enhance the service and extending the homes service to children and families through free book packs
- Supported the Thriving Economy through a soon to launch business library at Victoria Library, offering a range of business information, resources and events and affordable co-working space to hire for new and small businesses
- Archives secured a £10,000 National Archives grant to employ a consultant to scope WCC businesses in financial difficulties resulting from the pandemic and preserve their archives
- Archives KS2 project with MOD theatre suitable for Y4-6 and focusses on the year 1066 and how it compares to 2020. to address mental health issues.



Up and coming challenges

- In Westminster published permanent and fixed term exclusion rates are above national and inner London averages. We will publish an inclusion strategy this month- to keep these young people in school, intervening and providing support early.
- Serious youth violence, gang activity continues to be a concern in Westminster. We are seeking an overall outstanding judgement when our youth offending services are inspected we are focusing now on improving information sharing between YOT and SEND services.
- Young people in Westminster have been significantly and disproportionately affected by the pandemic – socially, emotionally and economically. The Cabinet Member is leading collaborative cross-council work to understand the underlying and influencing factors from sectoral challenges to furlough and redundancy – and what it means for our young people.
- There has been a significant and negative mental health impact on young people due to COVID-19. A survey of young people by Young Minds indicates that 83% of young people say their mental health has worsened. We are developing a wellbeing hub for 16 to 25 year olds to strengthen mental health and employability for young people and support transitions into adulthood based on a successful model from Camden with strong outcomes.
- We are in the early stages of updating our SEND Strategy. We are consulting widely at the moment and over the course of the next few months we will be engaging with a wide group of stakeholders to shape, inform and co-produce ambitious priorities for the 2021-2024 strategy.
- Disadvantaged families have suffered disproportionately through the pandemic. Government has allocated funding of £709k and throughout the holiday periods – Easter, Summer and Christmas holiday - this year we will be developing and providing a programme of free holiday activity for children and young people eligible for free school meals which includes both nutritious food as well as education on nutrition.
- We will need to continue to listen to children and young people as we recover and reopen the city. The Youth Council continues to grow in confidence and is helping shape the councils offer to young people as is The children in care council which also supports council recruitment. A Tuesday Group will continue to meet weekly with older children in care and care leavers, providing a safe space to develop life skills, social networks, supporting independence and emotional well-being.



CITY FOR ALL – Vibrant Communities: Priorities and milestones

