

How has Covid-19 impacted on the delivery of the Children & Young People's Plan 2019 -2022?

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1. Summary

1.1. *Our Plan* - the Somerset Plan for Children, Young People and Families 2019 -2022 (the Plan) is a partnership plan that sets out the vision for all children and young people in Somerset to be happy, healthy and achieving. The progress of the plan is accountable to the Partnership Business Group of the Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership and is reported upon quarterly. Under the governance arrangements for local Safeguarding partnerships, partnership safeguarding arrangements are scrutinised by an Independent Scrutineer.

1.2. The Plan supports *Improving Lives* – the Somerset Health & Well-being strategy. Key priorities for Somerset are strong families and communities, the improvement of partnership work, providing the tools for families to help themselves and intervening early when we need to. These align to the vision of the County Plan which sets out clear, forward direction and priorities for the council.

2. Issues for consideration / Recommendations

2.1. Quarter 1 (year 2) - Areas of success:

Priority 1 – Supported Families

- The 'Family Time' service was adapted to support children and their families in lockdown and whilst virtual family time proved difficult and awkward for some, overall, as a service we were able to ensure that family time was maintained.
- Step Up to Social Work Programme remains on track with 10 students due to qualify to the same pre-Covid-19 timescale.
- Initial rollout of Corporate Parenting to SCC staff with 213 people undertaking training.

Priority 2 – Healthy lives

- Relationships, Social, Health and Economic (RSHE) provider LIFEbeat have facilitated Weekly Wellbeing Groups for School staff and CYP practitioners

including online training for schools to support the rebuilding of their school communities. 92 school staff attended the Staff Wellbeing sessions, 67 school staff attended the Community Rebuilding sessions, and 142 School staff attended the Emotional literacy sessions.

- Public Health Nursing launched ChatHealth - a new mobile health service for parents and young people in Somerset making it easier to get health and wellbeing advice.
- A multi-disciplinary team has been formed to develop the autism/behaviours that challenge pathway which is a major piece of work within the Written Statement of Action.

Priority 3 – A Great Education

- 40% of early years providers remained open for vulnerable children and children of critical workers throughout the period of school and setting closures due to Covid-19.
- Year 11 Transition Panels supporting over 1,354 students with additional panels being held in June. Year 10 Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) transition panels also implemented for the first time in June and are supporting 2,138 young people (63% Risk of Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) Indicator (RONI) and 37% SEND). Transitions Coordinator has managed all the virtual transition panel meetings so has an increased understanding of the most vulnerable Year 11s. Around 120 young people remain with unconfirmed September 2020 destinations.
- European Social Fund (ESF) NEETs project Programme Head and Post 16 Coordinator in post and preparations underway for Autumn start.

Priority 4 – Positive Activities

- Outdoor education centres working in conjunction with Support Services for Education (SSE) have been able to provide day activities and breaks for individual children and young people to support placement stability.
- Youth Forum met and prioritised forward work. Took concerns around emotional health and well-being in schools to June SSCP Partnership Business Group.

2.2. Quarter 1 (year 2) – Areas of Concern

Priority 1 – Supported Families

- Volunteer groups set up for Covid-19 are expected to disband but may be needed more than ever as we expect to see a range of issues over the next few months which have been hidden during this quarter.
- The rollout and provision of some key training programmes (particularly Motivational Interviewing, linked to the Family Safeguarding approach) has been delayed.
- Economic impact on families and the lack of data to evidence outcomes e.g. increase in new universal credit claimants.

Priority 2- Healthy Lives

- Mental health and wellbeing impact on children and young people.
- Missed immunisations – catch up programmes underway.
- Safeguarding – reduced referrals to children’s social care during lockdown. May have missed episodes of neglect or abuse as schools send greatest referrals to service.

Priority 3

- SEND Ofsted Inspectors identified nine key areas where improvement is urgently required and identified many strengths within early years.
- The NEET figures within Leaving Care continue to be of concern about the impact on job and educational opportunities, and consequent impact on the emotional health and well-being of some of our care leavers.
- Potential high numbers of NEETs in September due to predicted high youth unemployment; reduction in Apprenticeship offers, the pandemic affecting the summer term transition opportunities for current Year 11s resulting in students on inappropriate courses; GCSE grades preventing young people being able to progress as previously forecast; mental health impact of Covid-19 negatively impacting on young people’s ability to maintain their post 16 provision.

Priority 4 – Positive Activities

- Digital poverty has been a barrier to some of the successful intervention work which has moved online.
- Placement sufficiency and stability remain key issues. This was particularly evident for our children with more complex needs and those at risk of exploitation during lockdown.
- Increased pressure on our 16+ provision and Pathways to Independence due to the inability to move on into social housing during lockdown, creating a block in the system.

3. Background

- 3.1.** The Plan was co-produced with children and young people and their families, officers from Somerset County Council and their partners, practitioners, elected members, decision makers and other stakeholders.
- 3.2.** Over the summer of 2018 more than 200 children and young people took part in face to face consultations and follow up sessions to determine the priorities they wanted to see in the plan. We heard about what was important for good health and wellbeing, how our young people value their education, the support they feel is important for their parents and carers and what they want to do in their spare time – and how we can help them to achieve these priorities.
- 3.3.** Our young people also reminded us to think of their safety and security, the accessibility of services and how to support children and young people who are vulnerable because of individual environmental, social or economic factors.

4. Consultations undertaken

- 4.1. No formal consultations undertaken during this reporting period
- 4.2. Informal engagement included the inaugural sessions of the new Somerset Youth Forum (May 2020) which is a forum open to any child or young person aged between 10 – 18 (up to 24 if a young person with SEND) who wishes to have a voice about the experiences of living in Somerset to be an influencer of the SSCP.

5. Implications

- 5.1. See Powerpoint presentation to understand the implications from the point of view of children and young people
- 5.2. Areas covered include:
 - Support to parents (isolation, digital connections and poverty, community safety, transport)
 - Education (pressure at school, emotional health and wellbeing, bubbles, lack of support in schools)
 - Health (emotional health and well-being, lack of access to school nurse)
 - Positive Activities (closed venues, county lines, transport)

6. Background papers

- 6.1. *Our Plan* - the Somerset Plan for Children, Young People and Families 2019 -2022

Note For sight of individual background papers please contact the report author