

From: Huxstep, Cllr R Roger.Huxstep@hants.gov.uk 
Subject: Fw: Sent on behalf of Cllrs Stallard and Chadd – Children’s Services briefing for Hampshire County Councillors
Date: 27 April 2020 at 20:25



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Cc: Jane Isaac pjisaac@btinternet.com

I thought you would all like to receive this report from HCC Executive Members: Cllrs Stallard & Chadd.

Best wishes,

Roger

Cllr Roger Huxstep
Member for Meon Valley Division
Hampshire County Council

From: Hayes, Danielle (CS) <danielle.hayes@hants.gov.uk>
Sent: 27 April 2020 13:29
Subject: Sent on behalf of Cllrs Stallard and Chadd – Children’s Services briefing for Hampshire County Councillors

Dear Member,

Response by Children’s Services during the Covid-19 pandemic

We wanted to highlight to you how the Children’s Services Department is responding to the current, very challenging situation that we find ourselves in.

We can confirm that services are operating on a business as usual footing, but staff are working differently in many areas. The proportion of staff who are ill or self-isolating for various reasons has remained stable at between 10-15%.

In relation to children’s social care services, all the statutory timescales for safeguarding visits and meetings are being met and, as far as possible, the use of digital technology is being put to greater use to ensure staff adhere to the national guidance. This means seeing children and families through the use of Apps such as WhatsApp and MS Teams. This way of working is already embedded across the department as part of its transformation programme. Some face to face visits and home visits are being undertaken when necessary – usually in relation to urgent child protection work – where staff can safely socially distance themselves. We are also working very closely with police colleagues in this regard.

Similarly, adhering to the national guidance, the department is maintaining statutory visits for looked after children. Our foster carers and residential staff continue to provide excellent direct care for our vulnerable children. For care leavers, our professionals continue to maintain contact by all means possible to ensure that they keep in touch with our young people and make sure that they have access to all the support that is available including where necessary

have access to all the support that is available including, where necessary, financial support and basic needs such as food etc.

All foster carers and adopters and their children are being seen and spoken to at the required frequency but remotely as far as possible e.g. phone, MS Teams, Skype or WhatsApp.

Where children's cases are in court proceedings or need to be put into proceedings, this is still happening. The courts are working remotely and cases are largely being managed within the usual timescales.

Practically all schools have been providing childcare to children of key workers and vulnerable children

Vulnerable children include those who have a social worker, either because they have a child protection plan in place or are looked after by the local authority, for example foster children. It also includes children who have education, health and care (EHC) plans for their specific needs.

Around 3,700 school age children have been attending regularly which is around 2% of the total school population. Schools remained open over the Easter holiday even on Good Friday and Easter Monday, although the number of children fell to around 800 during the break. Early indications are that the number of pupils attending is increasing from the pre-Easter figure.

The department has been particularly busy providing ongoing advice and guidance to headteachers to ensure schools could remain open safely and offer a high-quality experience to children.

A system has been implemented to ensure that all schools report weekly on the support they are giving to every child who has a social worker (such as those on a child protection plan or those in care). Over 500 children known to social care are attending school regularly which is around 13% of the cohort. Those who are not in school are being contacted regularly, by the school, to ensure pastoral needs are being met. Colleagues from both social care and education are working together to increase the numbers of children attending school from this specific group.

Correspondingly, since schools have been closed, there has been a reduction in the number of home to school transport routes in operation. Those that are running are adhering to national guidance on social distancing when transporting children from home to school - in some cases, additional vehicles have had to be commissioned to support this. Financial support has been made available to the home to school transport market through continued payment of part or all of contract costs.

For children who will be eligible to start school in September 2020, you will have seen that all parents who applied on time had their child's school place confirmed to them, as planned, on national offer day (16 April). The service processed over 22,500 applications for reception year and year 3 places (transfer from infants to a junior school). Just under 98 per cent (97.77 per cent) of parents have been offered a reception year place for their child in one of their

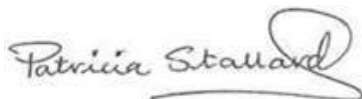
three preferred choice schools.

Early Years' childcare providers have adapted to provide care for vulnerable children and the children of key workers. Government has confirmed that Early Years Education funding will continue to be paid to providers, regardless of whether settings are open or closed, this source of funding represents less than 50% of income for the majority. Remaining income comes from private parental fees and providers are under significant pressure from parents, whose children are not attending, to reduce these fees. This is creating tension and significant financial pressure in the sector and the department is looking at what it can do to support the sector.

In conclusion, it is very much business as usual albeit working differently and, in the event that the situation worsens and fewer staff are available to work, the department has plans in place to be able to continue maintaining children's services.

Finally, may we take this opportunity to remind you of the telephone number for people to call, if they have a [concern about a child](#): **0300 555 1384** (out-of-hours **0300 555 1373**)

Yours sincerely



Councillor Patricia Stallard
Executive Lead Member for Children's Services and Young People



Councillor Roz Chadd
Executive Member for Education and Skills