

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.

Portfolio holder for Education - Cllr Phyl Davies

12th May 2020

REPORT TITLE: Continuity of Learning

REPORT FOR: Information – Cabinet.

Continuity of learning plan

On 20th April 2020, the Education minister published a continuity of learning policy statement entitled 'Stay safe, Stay learning'. The document outlines the expectation and support for learning moving forward during this period of school closure.

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2020-04/stay-safe-stay-learning.pdf>

The Local Authority is working closely with WG, Estyn, ERW and other local authorities to develop the plan. The main priority should be to ensure that as many people as possible remain fit, healthy and have a positive attitude towards life and will be ready for work or learning when this traumatic period is over. At the same time, we need to ensure that the learning pupils undertake during this period enables them to engage in their learning effectively and make progress.

The introduction of distance learning is a very different way of educating our pupils. For nearly all pupils in our county, they are learning at home with the support and help of their parents. This is new territory for us all, including the teaching profession, many of whom also have their own children at home at this time.

Distance learning should not be about replicating the normal classroom experience in the home. Circumstances make this virtually impossible. During this period, it is not reasonable to expect distance learning experiences to mirror learning which learners get at school.

Schools need to prepare for this new method of teaching and learning. Schools will need to consider the training needs of their staff in order that they can deliver distance learning experiences.

In Powys in week one and two of the continuity of learning plan, the school service has been pro-active in providing schools with guidance, facilitating the sharing of good practice and establishing connectivity issues.

We established that there were a substantial number of families that did not have a suitable device for learning and also some that had no wi-fi access. As a result of this, clusters of schools were asked to identify spare school devices that could be repurposed for home usage for those learners who did not have devices. The collaboration between and across

clusters has been excellent and has resulted in all learners throughout Powys now having a suitable device for learning. Working closely with Welsh Government we have also been able to ensure learners have access to Wi-fi through the purchase of 4G dongles which are due to arrive on Monday 11th May 2020.

Teachers have access to a wealth of resources through the Welsh Government learning platform HWB. All learners in our schools have a HWB username and password which enables them to access safe, reliable content for learning. The regional consortium ERW also facilitates shared resources which informs the development of the Powys continuity of learning plan which is updated on a weekly basis and sent to all schools for support and guidance.

Clusters of schools are meeting at least weekly, with the cluster leader of learning meeting fortnightly with the Interim Chief education officer and senior challenge advisor as well in order to discuss progress, issues and to share their practice. To date, clusters are at different stages of developing the joint working with some clusters sharing joint projects for example on the NHS and other clusters working on the new curriculum areas of learning and pooling resources under these headings. The purpose of the joint meeting is to share these resources across the county to ensure more consistency moving forward.

To date, all of our clusters are working on continuity of learning plans. A Powys Distance Learning Plan has been written which is an operational plan to put the continuity of learning plan into practice across our schools. There are key themes which include Wellbeing, Connectivity, Learning and learners, Remote teaching and Provision. This also includes a fortnightly publication of actions to support schools to implement the plan.

There are many examples of good practice which include joint projects, transition work and providing parents with guidance. All clusters have a challenge advisor supporting the work. Examples of good practice are being shared in clusters and across clusters through the use of teams. In addition, work has already begun on transition, from early years' settings to primary schools, from primary to secondary schools and to support our young people at 16 and 18 with their next, very important life changes.

Schools are also being supported through the production of examples of remote and digital learning shared with schools on a weekly basis. The focus is on approaches to digital learning, resources and networks. Many of these examples are from Powys schools that have adopted these methods successfully.

Many of our schools are embracing the change with confidence and at pace. Although not in their school buildings, the headteacher and governing body of each school still have the responsibility for teaching and learning for their own pupils. If parents have issues regarding the work the school is providing, then the process remains the same as it was before the school buildings were closed. They should contact the headteacher of their child's school to discuss their concerns.

Nearly all of our schools are supporting our vulnerable learners effectively. This has included all schools, in conjunction with children's services, health colleagues, youth workers, sports development officers working together to ensure learners are connected which includes weekly and often daily phone calls and emails. This has been a key priority for Welsh Government, Estyn and for all of us in Powys in our Continuity of Learning Plan.

Supporting learners with the Continuity of Learning Plan.

Many schools have already begun a system of check-ins with all pupils, including vulnerable learners and their families.

Children's Services are remaining in contact with the families they support. Schools and the PRU are making contact with learners as frequently as is necessary – a RAG rating system is commonly being used, with learners being contacted daily, more-than-weekly, or weekly as needed. This is in addition to any contact made in relation to academic work. Educational Welfare Officers are linked with clusters and childcare hubs and are making contact with vulnerable pupils and their families.

Weekly Emotional Health meetings are taking place between services including Childrens Commissioning, PRUs, Open Access Youth Service, Youth Intervention Service, Detached Youth Work team, CAMHS, School Nurses, Credu (Young Carers), Xenzone (Counselling), domestic violence services, Careers Wales, NPTC College and others. At these meetings, the level and type of service being offered to children and young people is shared and any gaps and cross-working opportunities are identified and actioned.

The Youth Intervention Service (YIS) are continuing to deliver one to one support to some of the most vulnerable young people in Powys who are open to the service. These young people have a variety of support needs, some of which have been exacerbated due to the impact of schools closing. The individually tailored support offered is by phone and digitally and is under constant review by the team and managers, adapting to changes in young people's emotional health as this period continues. Support is also being offered to the parents of young people open to YIS, to help them to deal with issues around behaviour, boundaries, loss of routine and the effect of being in closer proximity as a family.

The YIS are in contact with identified pastoral and safeguarding leads in the high schools in order to identify which additional young people may benefit from the additional support available from the service. The YIS and Detached Youth Work Team are working together with schools to identify those young people in Year 11 who may struggle to make a successful transition into employment, education or training, including those for which the current circumstances will have a negative impact on their transition plans. The Detached Youth Work team and partners including Careers Wales will offer support to these young people.

The Detached Youth Work Team is also continuing to offer one to one support to the vulnerable young people aged 16-25 open to the team, including learns in post-16 Education. The team is also working with Housing to offer essential support to the increasing number of young people presenting as homeless at this time.

Xenzone have also agreed to have twice-weekly check-ins with any children who are on the face-to-face counselling caseload, and are still accepting new referrals for face-to-face counselling. The provision of remote or tele-counselling support (i.e. contact with a counsellor via telephone, Skype or similar) is under continual review, and the Schools Service is seeking ways to enact this. This is distinct from the web-based Kooth provision, which remains available.

The Open Access Youth team are supporting young people through various virtual platforms including Facebook, Instagram, Whatsapp and Microsoft teams. They have published a series of videos on these platforms to send messages out to young people, such as 'stay home, stay safe and this week the message is Diolch/Thank you for the young people who are listening and staying home'. There are weekly virtual youth club sessions across the county via Microsoft teams and this is working well so far, young people join in the activities delivered by the youth workers and can ask questions, seek information and support and can ask for contact outside these sessions if required. This will be via phone calls, emails or Facebook messenger. The team are sending out weekly activity resource packs to the Hubs

and are in contact with the Urdd to provide Welsh Language activities. The wellbeing links in the schools are in contact with the school youth workers so any young people who need emotional support can contact the youth worker they know from the high schools across Powys.

This is a challenging time for all involved in our Education system in Wales. It is clear that the professionalism, commitment and care shown by school staff, school service staff and across other service areas in the council over the past six weeks has been admirable as we strive to ensure our learners stay safe and stay learning.