

## **Report for Cabinet – Joint working in Powys to support and monitor vulnerable learners during the Covid-19 emergency**

**Cllr Phyl Davies – Portfolio holder for Education**

**Cllr Rachel Powell – Portfolio holder for Social Services**

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### **Identifying Vulnerable Learners**

The Schools Service has been working closely with Children's Services and health professionals to identify vulnerable learners, and to ensure that those learners are tracked and supported. Schools and Schools Service staff are maintaining regular contact with those learners they believe to be vulnerable. Whilst it isn't possible to categorise all of these learners by particular labels, it includes (but is not limited to):

- Children/families supported by TAF;
- Children/families supported at the level of Care and Support;
- Children on the Child Protection register;
- Children Looked After;
- Children with disabilities;
- Children with Statements of SEN, or with lower levels of ALN/SEN;
- Children with Hearing or Visual Impairments (Sensory Support Service are maintaining regular contact);
- Children who are Young Carers;
- Children with other wellbeing needs;
- Children with Statements of SEN who are on roll at a maintained special school;
- Children on roll at the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU).

In addition, schools (and Schools Service staff) have identified those learners from their rolls who they consider to be vulnerable, but who may not fall within the official definition given by Welsh Government.

### **Supporting Individual Children and Young People across Powys**

The challenge adviser team, led by the senior challenge adviser, have been working with schools to begin a continuity of learning plan to provide differentiated education for all pupils, including vulnerable learners in mainstream schools, special schools and pupil referral units (PRUs). 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.

The team will also be working with the police and housing department to disperse gatherings of young people, this will take a youth work approach and discuss for example, why they are gathering, is there an underlying issue that is forcing them out of home or is it 'boredom'.

### **Emergency Childcare Hubs**

Emergency Childcare Hubs (ECHs) and Emergency Childcare Specialist Hubs (ECSHs). Bespoke safeguarding policies for both Emergency Childcare Hubs (ECHs) and Emergency Childcare Specialist Hubs (ECSHs) have been created. The ECHs are open from 8am to 6pm, seven days a week, including school holidays. The ECSHs are open as requested and for identified pupils. The senior challenge advisor and acting senior ALN manager have established a 'Team Around the Hub' to provide

support for staff and pupils in each hub. This includes a challenge adviser, ALN manager, foundation phase advisory teacher, Xenzone counsellor, Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) and a member of the social services team.

Designated and Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads for Emergency Childcare Hubs and Emergency Childcare Specialist Hubs have been identified. These have overall responsibility for safeguarding and child protection within their hub. Each hub also identifies a nominated lead person for safeguarding to be on site during each shift. In addition, every school has Designated and Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads. They have also nominated additional contacts, with contact details for each person whether they're in school or at home. This database has been shared with Children's Services.

Children's Services and the Schools Service are aware of which learners are Children Looked After (CLA), and those who are on the Child Protection (CP) Register. Each hub has been provided with the list of children who are within their hub's 'catchment' who are CLA or CP. This is being checked and updated if necessary on a weekly basis by the Schools Service and re-distributed to Hubs.

Where schools are making contact with children/families, guidance has been issued on how this should be undertaken and logged.

For those learners on roll at either a special school or the PRU, provision in the ECSHs has been organised on a rota system, to ensure that all learners can access the ECSH, and to ensure that the correct staff with the requisite training are available on site to meet each learner's individual needs.