

Appendix 1

Response to the People Scrutiny Working Group Report 'Safeguarding children and young people within the context of Covid-19 response and recovery planning'

Below are the recommendations as outlined in the People Scrutiny Working Group Report and our response to them.

Recommendations

The People Scrutiny Working Group recommends that;

- 1. The Council has an excellent record of working with partners and experts to tap into and share best practice and develop innovation, including the contextual safeguarding work with Dr Firmin. The Council should continue to ensure the rich resource and knowledge across the sector for training and support is utilised; including being informed by expertise and insight of local youth organisations and engage with national support and advice, including from the Association of Child Protection Professionals.**

We will continue to work across multi-disciplinary partnerships as a continual source of support and building of mutual resilience. No anticipation that this will be undermined

Safeguarding board training is cross-sector and available to all partners. We lead a Bristol Health Partner's Health Improvement Team (HIT) on Adverse Childhood Experiences, this is a multi-organisational, cross border, life course HIT which aims to improve practice and therefore outcomes for children and adults who have experienced trauma in childhood. We have developed a comprehensive web-based development resource and held a Webinar based conference in November 20 in which 500+practitioners took part. There is an Education ACE subgroup which has developed trauma informed practice in education settings.

Bristol is engaged locally and nationally in sector led improvement, training and development activity. Training and workshops have continued on-line when it has not been possible to bring people together in person. To illustrate, in September 2020 Children's Services second cohort of social workers, frontline managers and leaders began their training in systemic practice, Bristol's predominant practice methodology, with the national Centre for Systemic Social Work. Our work with the University of Bedfordshire to develop contextual safeguarding approaches has continued and we are engaged in research with Research in Practice and the University of Huddersfield considering approaches to working with domestic abuse in child protection. Children's services are working with Stockport LA children's services to promote our learning in high level children's residential practice including learning through Covid.

- 2. The extra pressure on the Children's Services and Education and Skills Directorates since March has been highlighted, and the Council should consider ways to offer extra support for the work force. This is noted within the context of welcoming the growing satisfaction with support and leadership in the survey of children's professionals and practitioners, which should be acknowledged and built on to ensure each member of staff, from operational practitioners to senior leaders, feel able to manage the expected increase in demand for support as children return to school with continued uncertainty.**

There has been a strong focus on wellbeing across the Council, with lists of available resources compiled by the BCC Health and Safety team shared in the weekly blogs on the source, in management briefs, at management team meetings, and cascaded through internal emails.

Teams have stayed in touch and offices remain open both to enable services to continue to run and enable workers to attend in support of their wellbeing. In addition to the corporate offer, webinars focussing on wellbeing and mood boosting have been delivered and regular communication through a director's newsletter and staff webinars have been maintained. Staying connected is important and does not all focus on work, 'distraction events' have been offered with interesting local guest speakers alongside what have become usual team events sharing 'news', quizzes, meals together, competitions and other on-line events.

The People's Directorate have continued to have our PELT (people extended leadership team) meetings virtually quarterly as always. These have covered sharing information, business as usual items, innovation and resilience based activities. PELT enables us to test the pressure in the management system and their views on staffing pressures, learn from our managers and leaders about how we best provide support and try together to keep our optimism up.

Resilience is now a standing item on all Divisional Management meeting agendas and Extended Leadership team meetings to support staff.

The Employee Assistance Programme, a resource available to all staff, has been utilised by staff since the start of the pandemic.

The People Directorate commissioned and developed an Ethics Group, with key practice leaders in each division taking responsibility. The group consider key ethical considerations which have included the impact on staffing and resilience.

- 3. The positive increase in networking and close partnerships facilitating big changes quickly and efficiently should be captured and built upon; and networks such as the Designated Safeguarding Leads Network, brought together and supported by the Education and Skills directorate, should be encouraged, developed and incorporated into collaborative plans to help utilise expertise and build capacity and resilience.**

Work is ongoing and continues to be strengthened. There are regular deep dives in specific areas such as the initial semi closure of schools – this is an ongoing piece of work as we adapt to the ongoing lockdown restrictions.

Networks:

The Safeguarding in Education Team have been able to move their work online and have continued to deliver regular professionals network meetings to provide forums for Governors, Senior leadership and Designated Safeguarding Leads to be kept up to date with national developments, reflect on practice and feedback to our statutory Local Safeguarding Partnerships.

Despite the pandemic, the team have been able to respond to key changes in statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education and develop a forum and infrastructure to increase communication with the workforce which compliments the council's values of **collaboration, ownership** and **respect**. Despite the education workforce being under significant pressures and competing priorities, moving to an online forum has increased engagement significantly in terms of accessibility.

This work is supplemented by monthly safeguarding briefings. The team are currently working on a website which will ensure that resources are more accessible to support development of a community of practice.

Training and building up capacity within the workforce:

The Safeguarding in Education team have trained nearly 300 colleagues to date since the beginning of the pandemic (March 2020). This was with a view to ensure that settings were able to build up continuity planning and respond robustly to an ever-increasing vulnerable cohort.

The team have also launched a new course for LA officers to be able to support collaborative work and understand, the often complex, systems that some frontline professionals are encountering. This is aimed at developing better working together practices and facilitating effective partnership work between education and social care teams. Safeguarding has a high profile in all meetings.

Under the auspices of the Keeping Bristol Safe Board, the Children's Partnership Delivery Group and Safer Communities Delivery Group continue to meet weekly/ bi-weekly to consider system response and recovery.

Responding to deficits in practice:

The 'Safeguarding in Education Team' work in partnership with other Local Authority officers (LADO, school improvement officers) to ensure that any deficits in practice are responded to. In relation to qualifying complaints this academic year to date (from Ofsted, Parents, and other professionals). These trigger a safeguarding review around practice, process and support for settings which have received a complaint against them. This allows the LA to fulfil their duty to ensure that children remain safe, and that support and resource is offered to review and strengthen practice which may have led to a complaint.

We have continued to support settings to reflect on and consider how best to meet the needs of vulnerable children and when to refer to Children's services including consideration of the factors that impact when a referral is not progressed to a social work allocation. The school safeguarding advisors provide support, guidance and supervision to professionals to consider improving their information and analysis provided, consider alternative actions or route for support to the family or support the setting to draft professional challenge depending on the circumstances.

Supporting the effectiveness of safeguarding within education settings:

The Safeguarding in education Team also coordinate the annual S. 175 Audit. This has been a challenging piece of work for settings this academic year, the workforce remains vulnerable with competing priorities. The team have resourced additional support for colleagues who have required it to ensure that they continue to fulfil their statutory duties in relation to safeguarding re: S.175.

- 4. The Council, in consultation with partners and communities, should investigate how to produce clear child-friendly advice and guidance about keeping safe and well during lockdown restrictions with a focus on mental health. It could explain the effects of Covid-19, how people may be affected and react, what support is available, and how to access that support. Any guidance should be adaptable and reactive to a fast-changing environment, and be available for all school settings, youth networks, and community groups.**

Children and young people's mental health services have continued to be delivered during lockdown. They are frequently reviewed and adapted for the changing situation. These services have always been promoted through school channels and this has continued during lockdown. The Public Health consultant for children and young people meets regularly with the Director of Education to ensure that evidence based Public Health messages are consistently delivered to schools.

In addition, a business case of proposals was developed by the CCG and other partners, including BCC, to mitigate against the risks to mental health from the COVID-19 pandemic. The proposals relating to children and young people cover three areas:

1. additional Primary Mental Health Specialists
2. a new project providing support for Black young people
3. increased CAMHS capacity, focusing on earlier intervention and access to treatment, as well as an improved CAMHS crisis offer including a 24/7 free crisis line

These proposals are currently being implemented.

Webinars/ online developed by the Education Psychology service for families, this has delivered the Mental Health DfE funded programme for staff to directly support children and young people in school settings. Schools continue to ensure they have site of the most vulnerable children if not in attendance – schools have a wide reach into the community, which has improved throughout the pandemic (supporting families & children)

Children centres continued to deliver parenting programmes through the pandemic, whilst there is some face-to-face work with children and families at highest risk, there has also been a move to deliver programmes virtually.

- 5. The Council, with city partners, should explore more ways to support parents, carers and families cope with the extra stress and strains Covid-19 has, and continues to, put them through. This may include family and household guidance in the form of tips, advice and coping strategies to help prevent and diffuse stressful circumstances escalating into unmanageable and harmful situations.**

(Incorporated in the above)

- 6. It is welcomed that the Council has continued to commission detached youth work across the city. This should continue and be built on as a priority; and its value should continue to be considered by the Council when planning for future commissioned services.**

Youth Services have continued to support young people throughout the pandemic, reaching out into our communities with activities and targeted support to the most vulnerable. In February, Bristol strengthened its support of voluntary organisations and the delivery of community based mentoring through the award of a new community mentoring framework.

The development of a Belonging Strategy for the city, focuses on equality and inclusion for children, young people and their families has a Belonging in Community pillar as one of its four pillars. This specifically focusses on what it means for young people to Belong in their community, what services and support help them to feel safe, engaged and to develop into adulthood. The configuration and delivery of youth services is key to this.

Young people have contributed their views as part of a Belonging Survey and focus groups. Their views will help us shape future commissioned arrangements including a Youth Zone for the south of the city. A cabinet paper approved in September 2020 set out Bristol's vision and intentions to continue to commission youth services

A Youth Zone in the South of the City signals our ambition and aspiration for children and young people where current indicators and outcomes are below that in other areas of Bristol. The Youth Zone delivery model has been nationally validated as delivering benefits within the community including the reduction in

crime and anti-social behaviour, an increase in school attendance, in feeling more prepared for the future and in young people reporting that they are healthier, happier and more resilient. We know that children and young people face a huge challenge through their experiences of Covid-19 and through the changing economic landscape that they will have to navigate. The Youth Zone, alongside our continuing youth work provision in all areas of the City will be central to providing the confidence and support that young people need in order to meet these challenges and reach their potential.

Youth Zones are delivered in partnership with a third sector organisation, Onside. The partnership brings 50% of the build costs of this exciting project and 70% of revenue running costs so that this is a sustainable model creating value for the residents of Bristol.

As part of our recovery a new initiative is being developed with Youth Service partners for future recovery is providing a link Youth Worker to each of our Residential Children's Homes. This will support our young people in care to engage in normative activities and reduce the risk of contextual harm.

7. The positive role of volunteers and mutual aid groups during this period should be learnt from and the Council should explore further ways of supporting them. Social Prescribing within community settings should be encouraged and further developed, helping to provide much needed local information and signposting for families and young people

Volunteers, the voluntary and faith sector have continued to provide much needed support in our communities. Bristol's Neighbourhoods & Communities teams and VOSCUR are instrumental in continuing to support the coordination of volunteers. Growing the Power of Communities is an action learning approach in two neighbourhoods - Hartcliffe and St. Pauls/ St. Judes. The aim is to identify how/if closer placed based collaboration across the city council system and embedding community building principles can achieve better outcomes for citizens and communities over time. The first part of the process is bringing together people who work in the same place and developing a shared understanding of community building behaviours and practice. Feeding Bristol has worked with the council and local organisations to ensure children get a decent meal in the school holidays. Further, the faith sector and leaders in the city are working closely with Children's Services to support wellbeing as children return to school, one example being developing their Transforming Lives for Good mentoring and support offer into schools.

8. The Council should work with city partners to place a greater focus on tackling the digital divide, and explore options that would enable every household and child to have equitable access to the internet.

The government has agreed to supply digital devices and data to all children and young people directly through primary, school and college settings – however the roll out is slow and the local authority is maintaining contact with local education settings to identify the level of unmet needs; the education and skills directorate have worked within the context of the policy to direct devices to date, to schools, children and young people.

The Children's commissioning team together with Creative Youth Network sourced funding and issued tablets to all young carers.

Through the Government scheme 1750 devices have been allocated to children with a social worker.

WECA have committed £1.5m funding for digital skills as part of their Economic Recovery plan including a focus on both basic and mid/higher level skills. The first call for applications for basic digital kit/data has been issued to existing Adult Education Budget providers, aiming for release of funds to be used with adult learners from Feb/March. As part of this scheme, Bristol City Council Community Learning Service has

submitted an application for devices/data to enable people experiencing digital poverty to continue to access local learning opportunities.

Bristol City Council has agreed to recycle 3000 laptops and to target these to residents most impacted by Covid 19 who are experiencing digital poverty. BCC devices will be targeted at NEET young people and adults 19+ that are experiencing digital poverty. The Bristol Waste Company (BWC) is providing a laptop cleansing, preparation and distribution service, and also provision of a 1-year warranty and IT support service. The Council is working to secure funding to cover the cost of this service, plus data and to provide free short digital skills courses with tutor support through the Community Learning Service.

The City Council is also facilitating a One City Digital Inclusion Taskforce to work with key stakeholders and other providers to map local needs and to develop a more co-ordinated digital inclusion system and quality framework for impact.

- 9. The Council, building on the existing positive work including #wearebristolkids and the developing 'Belonging' strategy by the Youth Council, should continue to explore how services to help children and young people stay safe and foster well-being could be more accessible. This could include building on the existing community outreach by inviting more co-design of provision, increasing cultural competency with stronger involvement of grass roots community organisations and with focussed training, investigating how Council services could be accessed in different ways and at different times, and listening to and learning from children's and young people's voices.**

Our commitment to co-production and co-construction with children and young people continues to be developed and enacted across Children's services. Opportunities for participation has been achieved through virtual platforms and digital feedback. E.g. #wearebristolkids has been used to survey views from younger children for the Belonging Strategy.

Working collaboratively Childrens Service and the Bristol Old Vic (BOV) has embarked on a programme of activity in connection with the Belonging Strategy. Beginning in Feb 2021, BOV have started planning activity and attending the BCC Belonging steering group to build our collaborative plans. There is a proposed film collaboration and engagement work with children and young people with the intention of commencing activity after February half term. After the Easter Holidays school sessions will commence where possible to reach as wide a group of young people as possible across the community to work together to produce a documentary film. There is also the potential to link to summer schooling.

The Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership and Shadow Board (Young People's Board) recently held a conference attended by 80 young people talking Mental Health, Safeguarding and Safety through Covid. Further child friendly materials will be produced as a result of contributions from this conference.

The Children and Young People's board has been established under the One City Plan, includes the youth Mayor and will work in partnership to deliver on its priorities with the Young People's Board.

- 10. This report should be considered by the Executive and the senior leadership team, and that all findings should be taken into account when planning to mitigate both the continuing negative effects of Covid-19 on children and young people, and the risks of pandemics causing similar issues in the future.**

The People Directorate have continued to learn from these sessions and the subsequent lockdowns and take all the recommendations into account when mitigating the negative effects of Covid-19 on children and young people.

In addition, the People Directorate take opportunities to learn from Core Cities DCS's, ADCS (the association of Directors of Children's Services, the SW ADCS region activities, partners in the Avon and

Somerset Strategic Safeguarding Group; the Regional Schools Commissioner, Ofsted and the 'communities of practice' leaders in the directorate engage in routinely.

The Communities Recovery Board was established at the start of the second lockdown as a vehicle to monitor aims to build resilience in our communities by bringing together oversight and prioritisation of all our community activity: Our preventative projects, our services that build local resilience, our work with the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sectors, our service interventions that delay the need for formal long term council services and our work with partners – health and police to delay and prevent needs escalating.

The Board's aims will be achieved by ensuring that transformative activity is delivered according to programme expectations, ensuring that voice and engagement are paramount, keeping partners involved and engaged, overcoming barriers, containing costs, monitoring timelines and making sure targets are met, and bringing in:

- residual elements of the Better Lives and Strengthening Families programmes; community capacity building including infrastructure; Integration into localities for children and adult services
- Innovation through infrastructure and build: options for care leavers; complex LD and autism; frail elderly; capital for community capacity infrastructure build

10a. This report should be considered at the appropriate partnership groups and boards (including but not restricted to the following):

- **Health and Wellbeing Board**
- **Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership (Keeping Children Safe)**
- **Children and Families Programme Board**
- **Learning City Partnership Board**
- **Race Equality Covid-19 Steering Group**

10b. The development of plans to keep children and young people safe within the context of the impact of Covid-19 and to build resilience for the future should be considered by the People Scrutiny Commission at the scheduled meeting on 14 December 2020, and there should be a review in the 2021-22 work programme.