

CYPSP STATUTORY MEMBERS UPDATE REPORT

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Organisation	Department of Education
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CYPSP Regional Priorities 2021 - 2024:

- Children's mental health and emotional wellbeing, in particular but not exclusively children in the 5-10 age groups.
- Early intervention support for children with disabilities and their families.
- Support to children whose wellbeing is being affected by disruption to their schooling.
- Contribution to strategic cross Departmental actions in response to food and fuel poverty, as well as locality based service responses.

Please keep update brief

Statutory Member Update	
Achievements / Activities	<p>Education Restart Programme/Education through Covid</p> <p>The Education Restart Programme included a Wellbeing element and funding of £5m was provided to educational settings to address emotional health and wellbeing pressures arising as a result of the pandemic.</p> <p>The Education Authority (EA) has developed a series of new training resources to support the mental health and wellbeing of both teachers / school staff and their pupils. The EA Health and Wellbeing team are also supporting teachers and school staff through its Health Well Hub (https://healthwell.eani.org.uk/), a microsite that offers advice and guidance on a range of topics in this area.</p> <p>Vulnerable Children and Young People – EA Support Services During COVID</p> <p>Vulnerable children are able to attend school during the current restrictions, along with children of key workers. The number of vulnerable children attending school settings or engaging in remote learning during the current restrictions is being captured as part of the Analytical Services Unit weekly school survey.</p> <p>Looked after Children Strategy</p> <p>The Departments of Health and Education have jointly</p>

developed a Strategy for Looked After Children '*A Life Deserved: "Caring" for Children and Young People in Northern Ireland*'. The Strategy, brought forward in the context of the recently published Children and Young People's Strategy, sets out the strategic framework for improving the lives and outcomes of these children to align with their peers.

The development of the Strategy included direct engagement with key stakeholders and a public consultation exercise and following analysis of the responses, a revised draft was prepared. Executive approval to publish was granted on 4 February 2021 and a move to publication is anticipated in the near future.

SEN

Sure Start projects provide a range of specific support activities for SEN children e.g. Play and Development Groups; Music therapy; Sensory Rooms; Home visit support, parenting programmes, allied health professional support, partnerships with other core services etc.

The Pathway Fund provides additional targeted support to children up to age four who are at risk of not reaching their full potential within the school system. It also aims to achieve, an enhanced, more sustainable Early Years sector. The Fund targets provision in areas of greatest disadvantage and for children with additional educational needs. In response to COVID-19, an additional £500k was secured in 2020/21 to support all eligible Pathway Funded projects.

The consultation on the new draft SEN Regulations and associated Code of Practice ended on 22 December 2020. This was supplemented by targeted consultation work with children and young people with SEN and parents. During the consultation the Department commenced the duty in SEND Act which requires the EA to seek and have regard to the views of the child – subject to the Minister's approval.

Emotional Health and Wellbeing

The increasing concern about the mental health and emotional wellbeing of children and young people including the impact of Covid is well known. While many schools are providing strong support to pupils, many are struggling to cope with the increasing complex issues presenting in children and young people. DE is working collaboratively with the Department of Health (DoH), the Public Health Agency (PHA), the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB),

the Education Authority (EA) and other Government Departments, to develop an Emotional Health and Wellbeing in Education Framework that will aim to provide clear structures of support and appropriate referral pathways.

The main emphasis of the Framework is to support schools to promote emotional health and wellbeing at a universal level, through a holistic, multi-disciplinary approach, and providing early and enhanced support for those children and young people who may be at risk or showing signs of needing further help.

£5m has been made available by DE to enable the implementation of this Framework in 2020/21, and subsequent years. DoH are providing an additional £1.5m from 2021/22 onward. A range of proposals are currently being considered – all of which have a focus on promotion, prevention and early intervention, through which Education, Health and Community services can work together in an integrated way.

Free School Meals

The Free School Meals (FSM) direct payment scheme was set up in March 2020 to ensure that families whose children were eligible for free school meals did not suffer additional hardship due to school closures as a result of Covid 19. Fortnightly payments based on £2.70 per day per child were made in respect of over 100,000 pupils at a cost of £19.4m.

Free School Meal Payments

Payments were made over the school holidays to assist families of those children entitled to FSM during term time to ensure the welfare of their children is not impacted by Covid restrictions on the provision of summer schemes which often run over the summer. This scheme allowed for two payments totalling £118.80 per child to be paid to the parents/guardians of that child and to cover the period 1st July 2020 to 31st August 2020.

Eat Well Live Well (EWLW) and Restart (Food Parcels)

The EA Youth Service 'Eat Well Live Well' programme was expanded to supply healthy breakfasts and lunches to up to 5,000 vulnerable young people (aged 4 – 25) who remained at risk despite many of them receiving direct payments in lieu of FSM. There was the added benefit of allowing current engagement to continue between children and youth workers when delivering meals, which would be the Departments main aim. These engagements facilitate child protection and

	<p>safeguarding for these vulnerable young people as well as referrals to other services as required (e.g. young people reporting mental health issues)</p> <p>Steps have been taken to ensure food provision is available to pupils entitled to free school meals who are unable to attend school due to Covid-19 restrictions and who wish such provision. Food parcels are being provided to a small number of children who meet certain criteria.</p> <p>Education Maintenance Allowance</p> <p>Given the exceptional Covid-19 related circumstances of the extended school closure and the fact that pupils from low income families are unable to attend school through no fault of their own Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) was paid to pupils during the period 19 – 23 October. £30 weekly allowance and a £200 annual bonus - value of approx. £1,000 per annum</p> <p>Young People Participation in Decision Making project</p> <p>DE in partnership with other departments and the EA Youth Services are taking forward a project to create a mechanism which will empower children and young people to take part in co-design and provide their views on issues which impact on their lives. The mechanism will also provide access to youth, voluntary and community organisations to support the young people they work with to contribute views on issues of interest to them. A Youth Panel has been working with the project team to create the mechanism. The mechanism will also have linkage to the forthcoming Youth Assembly.</p> <p>In the interim (and in light of the impact of the pandemic) the DE/EA/YS project team have been working together to facilitate participation for a wide number of children and young people to provide their views on a variety of issues including: Liquor licencing, Careers, the Education Restart programme/Education through Covid, Special Educational Needs Framework and Regulations, Emotional Health and Well-being Framework, Expulsion and Suspension arrangements, and the Sport and Physical Activity Strategy. They will shortly be commencing working with the DfC on their four social inclusion strategies (Disability, Anti-Poverty, Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation). Young people are also having the opportunity to provide their views on the Programme for Government Framework and draft Mental Health Strategy.</p>
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Executive Children and Young People’s Strategy

The Children and Young People’s Strategy (CYPS) was approved for publication by the Executive in December 2020 and Departments are currently working with DE to produce the first **3-year CYPS Delivery Plan**. The plan will continue to be strategic in nature and focus primarily on actions to address the 40 ‘Areas of Greatest Focus’ (priorities) in the CYPS which young people and stakeholders identified during the co-design. The Delivery Plan will be tabled at the Executive and published for public consultation aiming for finalisation by the summer. The CYPS is an outcomes based strategy and will be accompanied by a **series of population indicators** developed to monitor the effectiveness of the strategy these indicators will be published in due course.

Underpinning the PfG the CYPS is the strategic framework through which departments will deliver the PfG outcomes for children and young people.

Two-way **monitoring and reporting structures** are currently being brought forward in relation to the CYPS and the CYPSP along with children’s service providers, parents and children and young people, and academic and practised based research will be invited to take part in this process.

Education Technology Services

Since the beginning of the pandemic, DE has invested significantly in the provision of laptops and other IT equipment, having initially loaned 11,664 devices to vulnerable learners up to the end of November 2020.

A further 17,700 additional devices have been procured and the EA are in the process of allocating these to schools. Up to the 5 February, 13,924 devices have been provided by the Education Authority (EA) to lend to pupils.

As with any finite budget, resources have to be targeted where the need is greatest. To ensure this is achieved, priority has therefore been given to children who are entitled to free school meals, and either have special educational needs, are newcomer children or are children looked after or otherwise vulnerable in year groups 12, 14, 7, 4, 11 and 13.

Where devices are available, there is no bar to young people from outside the year groups I have identified and who are entitled to free school meals from applying for a device. The additional devices will allow the scheme to extend to pupils in

	<p>the remaining year groups.</p> <p>In July 2020, DE announced that free Wi-Fi and mobile connectivity will be provided to children and young people, including those in rural settings, who may not have had access to digital technology. To date this support has included 5500 WiFi vouchers and 1600 Mi-Fi devices.</p>
<p>Issues / Challenges</p>	<p>The Covid-19 pandemic has brought many new challenges and reinforced the focus on the well-being of our children and young people. The EA have continued to work closely with the EITP (SBNI) Trauma Based Practice project to build on initial work and strengthen knowledge and awareness of this important issue within their services across the education sector.</p> <p>While most face to face youth work stopped from 20 March 2020, some services continued, including those for young people considered as at risk, and with many services switching on-line including the highly effective START youth support programme.</p> <p>SEN</p> <p>The implementation of the new SEN Framework will bring increased pressures for all schools. When the Minister launched the consultations on 30 September he also announced funding of £7.5m to deliver the new SEN framework which will provide additional resources for schools. This will be made available for the period January to March 2021, and details of this additional funding will be provided directly to schools shortly.</p>