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SHOPSHIRE COUNCIL

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2020
11.00 am - 1.40 pm Virtual Meeting

Responsible Officer: Julie Fildes
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Present

Councillor Claire Wild (Chair)
Councillors Joyce Barrow, Karen Calder, Roger Evans, Hannah Fraser, Cecilia Motley, Peggy Mullock and Leslie Winwood

68 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

Apologies were received from Councillors Alan Mosley and Dave Tremellen.
Councillor Pauline Dee attended as substitute for Councillor Dave Tremellen.

69 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

None were declared.

70 Minutes of the meeting held on 20th May 2020

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 20th May 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

71 Public Question Time

There were no public questions.

72 Member Question Time

The Chair advised that six Member questions had been received. A copy of the report containing the detailed questions and their formal response is attached to the signed minutes. The Chair agreed that the question [4] submitted by Councillor Heather Kidd could be read by Councillor Ruth Houghton on her behalf and as Councillor Houghton was cognisant of Councillor Kidd's views on the topic she would allow her to submit a supplementary question on Councillor Kidd's behalf.

- i) Received from Councillor Ruth Houghton in relation to the Care Sector. By way of a supplementary question Councillor Houghton asked how the Council monitored the payment rate the Carers received. The Acting Interim Chief Executive, Andy Begley, agreed to provide a detailed response outside of the meeting which would be circulated to all Members of the Committee. He confirmed that the Council worked with providers through Shropshire Partners in Care to understand current payments to frontline staff.

- ii) Received from Councillor David Vasmer in relation to Climate Change. By way of a supplementary question Councillor Vasmer asked if the documents referred to in the response could be published for the Performance Management Committee that would consider Climate Change. The Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Services and Climate Change responded that recent issues had delayed the publication of papers due to the redeployment of staff to critical functions. Whilst the work on the strategy had been delayed, the work on the projects to reduce carbon emissions had proceeded.
- iii) Received from Councillor Viv Parry in relation to the mowing of grass verges. By way of a supplementary question Councillor Parry requested that priority be given to the management of verges in the towns.
- iv) Received from Councillor Heather Kidd and asked by Councillor Ruth Houghton on the effect of Covid-19 on care homes. By way of a supplementary question Councillor Houghton asked whether more detailed information could be given on the outcomes for the under 65 age group with learning difficulties. The Acting Interim Chief Executive, Andy Begley responded that there was ongoing work with the ESP partnership on assessing the outcome of Covid-19 infection for this age group, but the Council could only provide information on those people from this group who were in receipt of council services. More specific reporting was done through the CQC and national reporting.
- v) Received from Councillor Roger Evans on the recovery plan. By way of a supplementary question Councillor asked why all opposition Councillors were being excluded from the two task groups which had been established when all other authorities were working cross party in response to the Covid-19 crisis. The Chair advised that this needed to be taken up with the Leader of Council. The Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Services and Climate Change advised that a cross party oversight and governance committee was in the process of being established.
- vi) Received from Councillor Roger Evans on the local outbreak control plan. By way of a supplementary question Councillor Evans asked that the cross party oversight and governance committee include cross party members.

73 Schools Operation during the Covid-19 Pandemic (Pages 45 - 110)

The Acting Interim Chief Executive, Director of Children's Services, Karen Bradshaw introduced the presentation. [Copy attached to the signed minutes.]

The Principal Schools Improvement Advisor advised Members of attendance at schools from the start of the Covid-19 until the end of May which showed that a greater percentage of children in Shropshire continued to attend school than the national average. Members noted that the numbers of vulnerable children attending schools have significantly increased over this time. Members noted that since the wider reopening on 1st June of schools there has been a phased reopening of schools and numbers attending schools has risen gradually, with attendance rates in line with national figures.

The Principal Schools Improvement Advisor outlined the ways that communication with schools had been maintained during the lock down period, with schools being supported and challenged. A parent helpline had also been established to ensure that school places were provided for the children of key workers and vulnerable children, this included early year settings. Schools were asked to assess the needs of their vulnerable children to ensure they were in the most suitable setting through a RAG rating template.

Members heard that the Local Authority had requested maintained schools to carry out a risk assessment in preparation for the wider reopening. Despite tight deadlines all schools completed the assessments by the deadline and no reopenings were delayed due to incomplete risk assessments.

The Service Manager for Learning and Skills, Children's Services reported on home to school transport. School transport had continued throughout the lock down period and usage rates mirrored the school attendance rates. National guidance is detailed in regard to social distancing and has impacted on the number of children who can be carried and how this is done, with carriers operating at 25% capacity, which will not be manageable once schools fully reopen if restrictions are still in place. Provisions were put into place to support and conserve the supplier network through paying 'Supplier Relief' until the end of June and possibly extended to the end of October.

Members noted that schools had been notified that their core funding for the next year was fully protected so that all regular financial commitments would be met. It had been acknowledged that schools had incurred additional costs as a direct result of the Covid-19 pandemic. In April, Government guidance had been issued which outlined the additional costs that could be reclaimed up to a certain funding limit based on a banding scheme according to the size of the school. Other costs not included in the initial guidance had been identified and it was hoped that the Government would produce further guidance on how these costs would be recognised and met, such as provision of PPE. Loss of private income was also of concern. As the employer for maintained schools the Council was responsible for furloughing staff who were paid directly from private income. Only one application could be made to Government by a single employer and this had delayed the application. Academies were outside of the Local Authority control and were the employer of staff in their schools.

The Interim Acting Chief Executive advised Members that the Council had taken a whole Children and Young People's Directorate approach to supporting children and families. Early Help had provided services where other agencies had withdrawn due to Covid-19. Children with special educational needs had experienced a particular challenging time. Numbers of assessment requests were lower than would be expected and further work around this was required. There was concern regarding fewer multidisciplinary assessments being requested and alternative ways of providing these assessments were being explored. Ofsted had been keen to support the Local Authority through this period and an inspector had been assigned who was working with children with an EHCP.

Members noted that the education access service [EAS] continued to work with children out of school to get them back into the education system. Safe guarding drop in sessions had received positive feedback. Children with a social worker had been risk assessed to ascertain whether they be better placed in school or remain in their care environment. Many of these children had been seen to thrive in their care settings. Social work visits had continued throughout the lockdown and foster parents had received additional support.

The Interim Acting Chief Executive, Karen Bradshaw, advised Members that the numbers of referrals to Compass had dropped significantly and this was reflected in all local authority areas which flagged concerns for the future.

The Principal Schools Improvement Adviser advised members that work had been undertaken to get looked after children back into schools to avoid a breakdown of placements in homes. This had been done through the virtual school. The provision of laptops for vulnerable children through a Government schemes has assisted in supporting these learners. The protected positive learning environment for many in this group had allowed them to consolidate their learning without the distractions of the school environment. School attendance figures for these children had shown a rapid increase early in May.

Members heard that the Department of Education [DfE] guidance for home learning had a high degree of interpretation and localised decision making. The need for greater clarity had been raised with the DfE particularly for the situation from September onwards, with more children returning to the school setting the provision of home learning would become more challenging for schools. Members noted that the communication with schools outlined the expectations of the blended curriculum, where different provision types were available. Training had been provided by the IT department on on-line learning platforms and on-line learning resources.

The Principal Schools Improvement Adviser expounded on the long-term effects of the pandemic and that support would continue to be provided for some time. During the transition period the focus would move from childcare provision to education and the re-establishment of school routines. The limitations of school buildings and transport to provide social distancing were being assessed to enable all children to return to school. Increased anxiety for children returning to school was anticipated and support for these children was being put in place to reduce future exclusions. Schools also needed support to undertake Tier 2 work.

The Principal Schools Improvement Advisor explained that school buildings had physical limitations due to their size and were being challenged by the number of places requested whilst social distancing. Schools had set up bubbles to reduce contact between groups of children. It was anticipated that numbers attending school would increase as parents returned to work and this would increase difficulties. Positive feedback had been received with children returning to school.

The Director of Children's Services extended her thanks and appreciation to the head teachers and school staff for their quick response to the crisis and the dedication they had shown.

In response to a Member's question on the provision of additional transport when schools fully reopened, the Service Manager for Learning and Skills, Children's Services said that planning was critical for September, engagement with schools was underway, strategies were being developed with transport demand dependent on how schools reopened. Where transport was not available the full re-openings of a minority of schools may have to be managed beyond September. Additional costs due to the current restrictions were of concern.

The Principal Schools Improvement Advisor replied to a Member's question on the challenges of schools returning to normal, identifying that in the short term a significant challenge was to safely provide all the places requested. This was being done through the establishment of bubbles with children being confined to a small group of contacts. A helpline and a set of FAQs had been set up to answer parents' questions and concerns. Members requested that regular information was provided on the status of schools reopening.

Following further questions, Members noted that a number of schools used rotas (slide 4) which were determined by risk assessments undertaken by the schools based on predicted numbers of children returning and available space and resources. It was anticipated that as staffing numbers increased the number of schools employing rotas would reduce. The Principal Schools Improvement Advisor advised that it was at the schools' discretion on how they set up bubbles and whether siblings were put into the same bubble or separated.

The Service Manager for Learning and Skills advised that government guidance would be followed on face coverings in school settings when it was received.

Members noted that furloughing related only to staff funded from private income. The Service Manager for Learning and Skills added that there was a statutory requirement to provide school meals to reception and year 1 children and the cost of these meals were met by a Government grant. The Director of Children's Services added that Government guidance on furloughing excluded local authority employees, but schools were able to furlough staff funded through private income (for example, for paid school meals) which had to be done through the Local Authority as the employer who could only make a single application. Nine schools had requested to furlough staff and the application has been submitted. The Service Manager for Learning and Skills advised that Government guidance had been issued on costs incurred due to the Covid-19 crisis and this would be considered at future meetings of the Schools Forum.

The Director of Children's Services confirmed that in line with the national trend, referrals to Compass had fallen, but the referrals being received were of a complex nature. In terms of referrals to the NSPCC, which had reported a rise of 32%, it was expected that those referrals would be passed to the Local Authority as the statutory body for safeguarding referrals, which had not been received. The Director of Children's Services agreed to look into the matter.

In response to a Member's question on the disparity of educational experience of children at different schools, with varying levels of engagement for both curricular and pastoral support, the Principal Schools Improvement Advisor responded that

head-teacher briefings continued, with one to one conversations with head teachers to encourage dissemination of good practice and information. Where inconsistencies exist, these are challenged, and support provided. Schools were encouraged to offer continued pastoral care for pupils. Referring to GDPR concerns, he confirmed that this was not applicable, and added that there was trades union advice to teachers on the use of electronic platforms to stream lessons and contact children and this advice was different for primary and secondary schools. It was important that children without access to computer technology at home were not disadvantaged. Guidance on the expectations of the home curriculum had been requested from the DoE.

The Director of Children's Services confirmed that some early years settings had continued to operate to provide childcare for looked after and key worker children. She could not currently provide information on whether schools would be operating during the summer holidays as Government guidance had not yet been provided. She confirmed that vulnerable children had been encouraged to continue attending school and Officers had challenged schools to make provision.

The Principal Schools Improvement Advisor confirmed that the Council did not hold data on the provision of schooling via the internet to children in rural areas. Small scale provision of internet dongles had been made for children in areas with poor internet signals via the Government laptop scheme for vulnerable children.

A Member commented that she had received a letter from the Parents and Carers Committee [PAC] that children with special educational needs were not receiving appropriate and differentiated work, that they were not receiving one to one support and Severndale was not using the correct criteria for children returning to school. The Director of Children's services responded that the letter had been received and would be following up the points raised.

The Portfolio Holder for Children's Services added his thanks to the school community in a challenging time, and to parents and young people who had adapted to the situation. He particularly thanked foster parents who had supported and accommodated vulnerable children, ensuring they had access to education and support. He continued that the reopening of schools had been an emotive subject but it had become clear how important it was for professionals to have eyes on children and young people for safeguarding purposes.

Members thanked the Director of Children's Services and staff for the outstanding work that had been undertaken during a challenging time.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted, and thanks extended to schools, families and Council staff for the combined efforts in working together in difficult times.

74 Quarter 4, 2019/20 Corporate Performance Report

The report was introduced by the Intelligence and Insight Manager. Members noted that quarter 4 was an extraordinary period with both the severe flooding and the

onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. The impact of these events is demonstrated in the report.

In response to a Member's question, the Intelligence and Insight Manager I advised that the Local Transport Plan would be considered by the Road Safety Task and Finish Group as it currently existed. The Scrutiny Officer advised that the completion date for the document was 2021 which he considered to be a realistic date for such a large report. Members noted that the Road Safety Task and Finish group was the appropriate place for detailed consideration of the first drafts of the plan.

The Interim Acting Chief Executive, Director of Adult Services observed in response to a Members question regarding the Homeless Strategy, that The Homeless Agenda had moved forward at a staggering pace with a large increase in the numbers homeless people firstly due to the flooding and then individuals who had been previously accommodated by other households and could no longer be during the Covid-19 lockdown. He continued that this issue would have a significant impact on the Council.

A Member requested further information on the Council's programme to provide children with laptops during the Covid-19 crisis. The Interim Acting Chief Executive, Director of Children's Services, advised that the allocation of laptops was not to schools but individual children. Children who met the criteria for laptop allocation were being identified. Five hundred laptops had been received and would be distributed as soon as possible.

Members endorsed the comments made on the outstanding work done by the IT Department to continue the work of the Council and developing new ways of working.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

75 Future Work Programme

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer introduced the Future Work Programme Report and members noted the items set out within it for the year up to November 2020.

Members noted that the suspended Overview Committees would be re-established in September 2020 and topics included in the Work Programme that were within the remit of those Committees would be returned to them.

The Chair of the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee confirmed that it would be meeting in July 2020 and the Joint HOSC would be meeting in early August 2020. She continued that the Joint Chairs of the Joint HOSC had had regular meetings with colleagues in the NHS to identify topics where the Committee could add value to the work being undertaken.

.....The Director of Adult Social Care confirmed that work had been undertaken with health and social care partners across both the Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin Authority areas as part of a systematic approach at pace, to do the right things in the right order in response to the pandemic crisis and maintaining existing development work.

RESOLVED:

That in addition to the scheduled meeting on 8th July 2020 an extra meeting will be held at the end of July. Each meeting will have 2 agenda items determined by the Overview and Scrutiny Officer in consultation with the Committee Chair.

76 Date/Time of next meeting of the Committee

RESOLVED:

That the next meeting of the Committee will be held at 11am on Wednesday 8th July 2020.

Signed (Chairman)

Date:

Performance Management Scrutiny Committee 10 June 2020

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Schools Operation During the Covid-19 Pandemic

Minute Item 78

Context

Commencing 23 March 2020

All schools requested by Department for Education (DfE) to offer provision for:

- Children of critical workers
- Vulnerable children

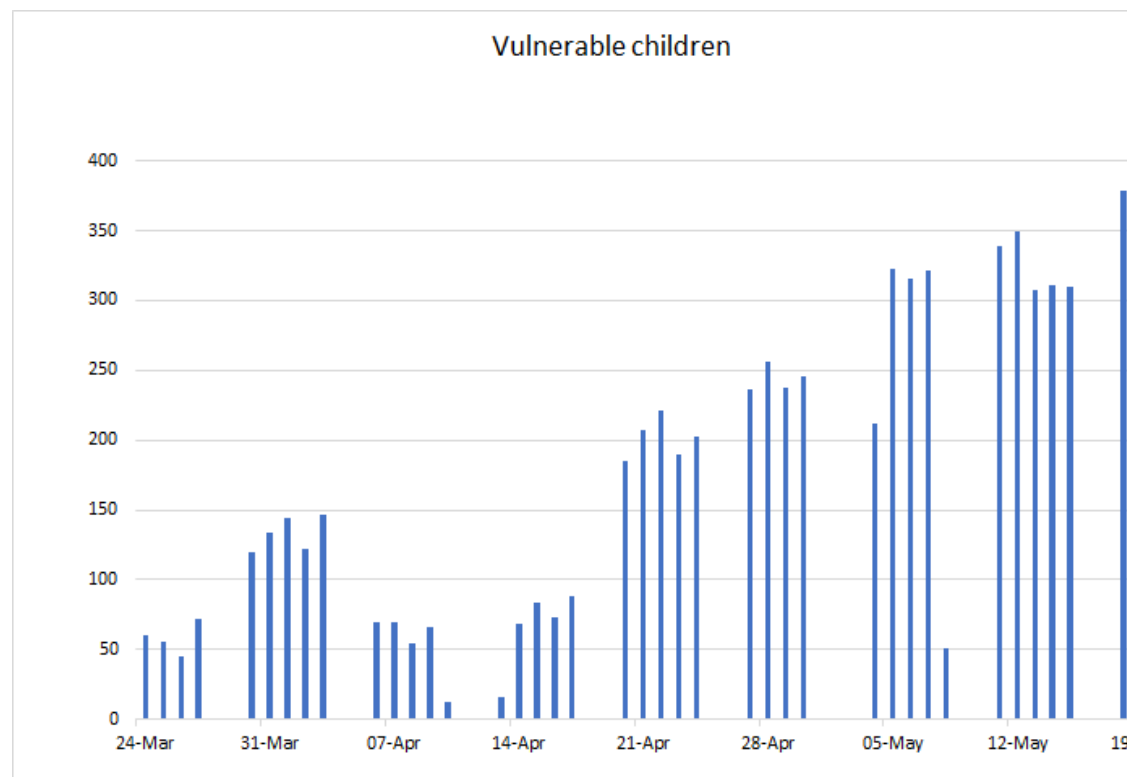
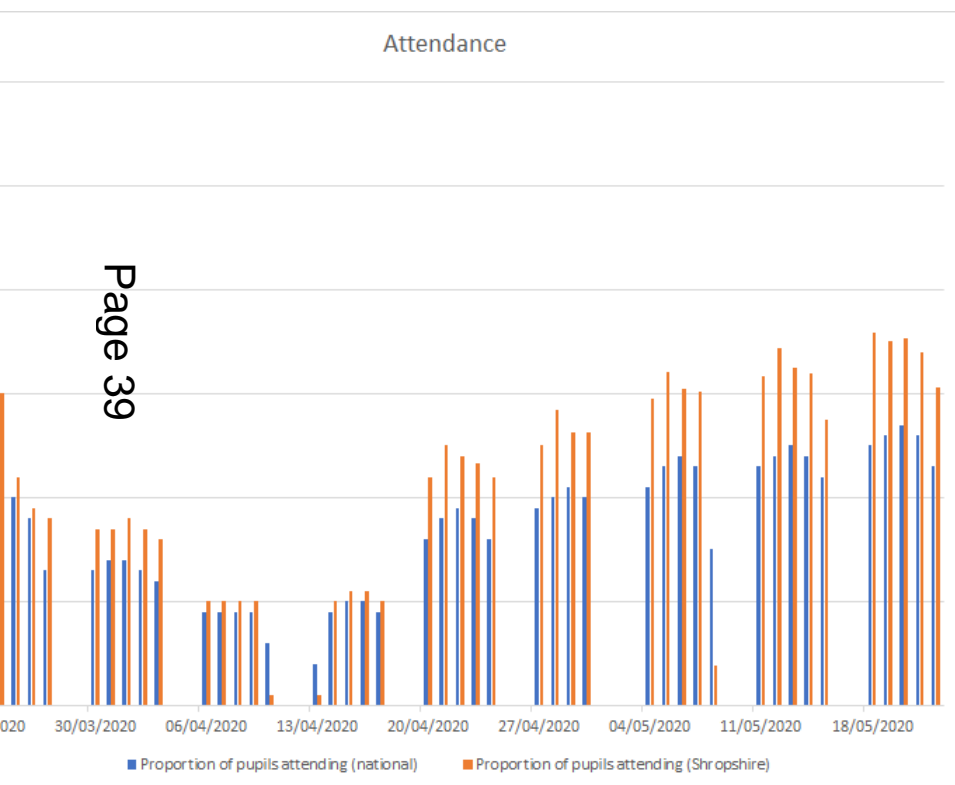
Commencing 1 June 2020

Primary schools also requested to offer places for Reception, Year 1, Year 6 pupils

Commencing 15 June 2020

Secondary schools also requested to offer increased contact to Year 10 and Year 12 pupils

Attendance (23/3 – 22/5)



Source – DfE data dashboard

Attendance (5 June 2020)

- 3,503 pupils attended primary schools, an increase of over 2,000 pupils compared with prior to wider re-opening.
- 80.3% of schools had opened to one or more of the wider year groups (Reception, Year 1, Year 6).
- Overall attendance in primary schools was approximately 16.5%.
- 18.9% of schools have introduced rotas.
- Number of primary schools re-opening to Reception, Year 1, Year 6 is expected to further increase to over 95% by 15 June.

Communication with schools/DfE

Since 23 March, daily email sent to headteachers in maintained schools and academies, sharing policy and guidance from a local, regional and national perspective.

Central Policy Group of senior school leaders meeting held online to help shape Shropshire's position and agree common principles. Position statement shared with elected members.

Maintained Schools Headteacher Forum meeting (regional headteacher representatives) held online twice in addition to a maintained headteacher meeting.

All maintained headteachers offered 1:1 meetings/support, as well having access to officers across all Council services supporting schools.

Meetings with DfE/Regional School Commissioner's (RSC's) office, initially daily during first weeks of lockdown, before reverting to twice per week – provides mechanism for escalation of local issues and influencing further guidance.

Actions taken – pre 1 June

From 23 March, a daily list of school closures, including schools hosting provision for displaced critical worker and vulnerable children, has been posted on the Council website.

Council officers have arranged school places for critical worker/vulnerable children unable to access places at usual school, including pupils from independent sector.

A dedicated customer helpline was set up for parents/carers.

A risk assessment template, with RAG rating, for vulnerable children created through collaboration between Education Access Service, SEN and social care teams.

Schools have been challenged by officers and, where appropriate, through the RSC's office.

Officers have supported schools on the provision of free school meals for pupils not in school, provided guidance on the national voucher scheme, and taken up individual issues with the Df.

Maintained schools invited to submit claims for inclusion in the Council's submission for support through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) i.e. furloughing.

Actions taken – for 1 June onwards

Dedicated helpline for parents/carers re-established for extended opening of primary schools, while updated FAQs have been posted on the Council website.

Emergency packs of PPE have been sourced and distributed to all schools and academies requiring it (a minority sourced their own).

A risk assessment template was provided for all schools, with the completed assessments for maintained schools quality assured by Council officers prior to the extending opening. All completed by 1 June where necessary.

Liaison with trades union representatives, particularly in relation to the detailed risk assessments required for schools to open safely and securely for staff and pupils.

Detailed '*Guidance for School Transport Provision from 1 June 2020*' was consulted on and distributed to operators and schools.

Officers currently working closely with public health on the production of the local outbreak control plan for the testing, tracking and isolating of Covid-19 cases in education settings.

Home to School Transport

- A tiny number of entitled critical worker pupils transported (less than 1%) since 23 March.
- A few Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 pupils returned on 1 June taking transported numbers up to 3%.
- Indications that secondary entitled pupils returning from 15 June will be low.
- School buses at 25% capacity maximum (i.e. 2 metre separation).
- Could go to 50% capacity September 2020 (i.e. 1 metre)
- But 50% still means there won't be capacity for a third of entitled pupils, unless we double trip or provide extra vehicles, which will be limited in supply.
- Working on solutions and awaiting further Government guidance.
- SEND transport numbers low currently, minibus capacity is circa 4 pupils with a capacity of 25%.
- Face covering for passengers on public transport from 15 June.
- Face coverings may need to be considered on school transport if we cannot maintain the 2 metre social distancing on vehicles when more pupils return in September.
- School transport operators have lost the majority of public/private work – paying 'Supplier Relief' to them until the end of June, but concerned about their future viability beyond this.

Schools' finances

Schools funding has been protected, all receiving their core funding allocations and targeted funds (e.g. SEND top up) for the 2020 to 2021 financial years.

Funds are being made available for additional Covid-19 related costs, with banded limits of £25,000 for schools with 250 pupils or fewer, up to £75,000 for schools with over 1,000 pupils.

Guidance is due on how schools can claim these costs – officers have canvassed the DfE to have these extended to include costs not currently covered including PPE and supply costs.

'Private income' (e.g. paid school meals, breakfast and after school clubs) is not covered by the guidance – this is presenting a minority of schools with potential financial problems.

9 maintained schools submitted claims to furlough 31 employees through the CJRS.

A report on the impact of Covid-19 on school finances is to be presented to Schools Forum at their meeting on 25 June 2020.

Early Help Activity Supporting Schools

- Family Support Workers financed through the Troubled Families funding have supported a further 226 families in total.
- During this period the Early Help teams have worked with 48 families at Tier 2 that would normally access their schools and other agencies for this level of support and the Schools Family Support workers have offered support to 134 families from the schools 'vulnerable list'.
- Overall during the month of April and period of Covid-19 lockdown, the Council's Early Help teams have supported a total of 407 families, offering direct support to more than 314 parents/carers and more than 145 children.

SEND DATA – the impact of Covid-19 on requests for EHCP need assessments

There has been an increase in requests from schools for 5-25 age group compared with last year (23/03 to 07/06)

Number of new requests for assessment		Number of assessments agreed	
2018/19	2019/20	2018/19	2019/20
28	41	22	31

31 assessments agreed, of these 14 will be delayed as school closure means Educational Psychologists cannot undertake meaningful assessment. This number may increase if other professionals have the same difficulty.

The increase in requests reflects a national trend but is probably impacted further by school closure, as school staff have more time to complete paperwork.

The majority of EHC needs assessments for 0-5 year olds are undertaken through the Child Development Centre (CDC) utilising the multi-disciplinary assessment (MDA). The process is led by health colleagues and enables assessment to take place where a child has significant special educational needs that are likely to be apparent from an early age and where the child may not be already accessing an education placement. During the period from March to June 2020 there were no assessments being undertaken, compared with 30 in the same period in 2019.

Work is underway with health professionals to establish alternative methods of assessment using online assessment tools to support a virtual assessment. The first pilots are currently taking place.

EAS

The EAS team has worked with an **additional 468 families** since lockdown.

Syrian Refugee children and their families have been supported by the team's Refugee Education Support Assistant during lockdown.

The service is responsible for monitoring children who are electively home educated (EHE). **45** families have been contacted directly during lockdown so far.

The Education Access team have continued to participate in strategy meetings, child protection conferences and Early Help meetings.

The service has collated all school risk assessments of vulnerable pupils for the LA and undertakes ongoing monitoring of crises.

Covid 19 safeguarding addendum and Covid 19 Behaviour addendum policy has been developed.

School Safeguarding virtual 'drop in' sessions have been established.

Increased time allocation to the daily domestic abuse triage sessions and Operation Encompass. Officers attend virtual MARAC meetings

Continuing participation in Exploitation triage meetings and Panels. Due to demand for triage, additional time has been allocated to allow for bi-weekly meetings.

Virtual Pupil Disciplinary Committee meetings have been convened to assist with timely responses to the Exclusion process.

Specialist Placement and Fair Access Panels have continued to ensure that school placements are identified and plans remain in place to support vulnerable learners.

Children with a social worker

We have consistently supported the Government guidance about children attending school where they have a social worker or are vulnerable, proactively talking to parents about the expectation that children should be in school .

Where individual children have needed to be in school social workers have visited and worked with parents and children directly to get them back into school.

We have delivered free school meals during the school holidays to those on a Child Protection Plan.

For disabled children we have used flexible packages of support to assist parents where children cannot be in school.

For several children we have provided staff to support them in school when they have needed to be in school but needed additional support.

Provided additional materials to foster carers to enable creative activities.

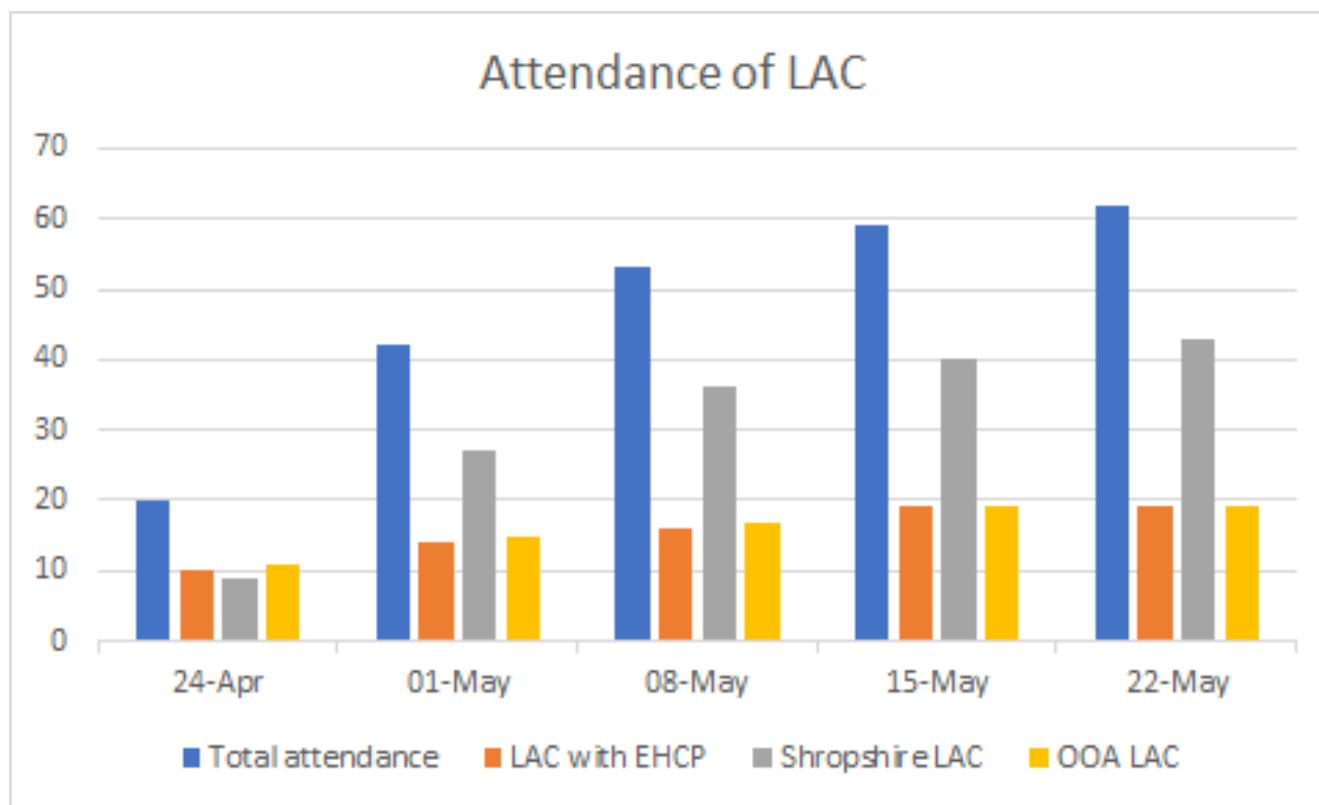
Compass and Assessment teams

- Schools play a vital role in keeping 'eyes on the child'
- As a main source of referrals into compass, the numbers have considerably dropped.
- However, where schools have made referrals, many have been serious and schools have responded excellently.
- Data for year as follows:
 - January 221 referrals received of these 54 were made by education
 - February 156 referrals were received of these 51 were made by education
 - March 150 referrals were received of these 56 were made by education
 - April 89 referrals were received of these 6 were made by education
- In total 28.2% of referrals were received from educational settings across January to April.

Looked After Children and Virtual School

- Supported foster carers and parents with children placed at home to enable and support education at home.
- Individual child level decisions about whether it is best for children to attend school or remain at home, especially where there are multiple children in placement, individual home circumstances.
- Where children have wanted to go to school we have worked with the Virtual School to enable this to happen.
- Provided some technology in early weeks to enable children and young people to learn remotely.
- Seen incredible creativity from social workers, foster carers and residential care workers to engage and support children in learning.
- Enabled older looked after children and care leavers, including our unaccompanied asylum seeking young people, to access technology to continue their studies.
- Some children have thrived, learning in a more protected environment.
- IROs have continued to provide scrutiny regarding the educational needs of children who are looked after.

Looked After Children and Virtual School



Overcoming curriculum challenges

ational curriculum was suspended. DfE expectations:

Agree what learning is appropriate (including the relationship between face-to-face and remote education), for example, identify curriculum priorities, agree revised expectations and required adjustments in practical lessons, and any approaches to 'catch up' support.

Work with local authority or academy trust (and where applicable NHS Clinical Commissioning Group) and families to identify what provision can be reasonably provided for in line with education, health and care (EHC) plans.

Agree ongoing learning offer for eligible pupils who can't attend school, as well as offer for those that continue to be out of school.

Agree ongoing approach for learning offer for vulnerable children and children of critical workers who are in school but not in the returning year groups.

Overcoming curriculum challenges

Guidance placed expectation on schools to offer 'blended' curriculum to meet need based on factors such as age, IT accessibility, etc.

Resources list created by Council officers and provided signposting the Government funded online Oak National Academy.

Shropshire Music Service and School Library Service have offered curriculum input.

Schools expected to make regular contact with vulnerable pupils.

Delivery of curriculum discussed in headteacher 1:1s.

Small number of parental concerns raised with officers and followed up.

'Recovery' curriculum required by schools to support pupils back into full-time school-based learning and routines while supporting emotional wellbeing.

Transitional issues

Shifting from 'childcare provision' to education.

Need for a 're-focusing' curriculum drive to benefit pupils in re-establishing routines and expectations as well as supporting mental and emotional needs.

Transition support.

Support for vulnerable learners.

Need for collaborative approach.

Responding to an expected increase in referrals as children return to school and children can talk about their experiences at home.

Without further relaxation in guidelines, particularly in relation to social distancing, the physical limitations of most school buildings will restrict extended opening to further year groups.

To fully re-open the school transport network, particularly from September 2020, significant relaxation in current restrictions will be required (currently capacity is reduced to 25%).

Transitional issues

Managing pupil anxiety and school phobia while actively encouraging attendance.

Developing approaches to supporting pupils with re-adjustment, self-regulation and behaviour in school to ensure that exclusions do not rise due to Covid-19 related factors.

Schools capacity to take on tier 2 work to support the Early Help system.

Shropshire has been allocated 500 laptops for children in care and children with a social worker – officers are working with social care and schools to identify and distribute these digital devices this month.

Shropshire SEND Data

Number of EHCPS maintained by Shropshire

to 5 : 74

to 16 : 1429

to 25 : 563

total: 2066

SEN Support

total: 4194

SEN accounts for approx. 15% of the total school population (total school population 37419)

Temporary changes to the law in respect of The Children and Families Act (CAFA)2014

2 key areas

1. Relaxation of statutory timescales in relation to the education health and care (EHC) needs assessment (in place until 30 September 2020) which allow a local authority to apply an exemption if advice is late as a result of COVID. This means that the assessment is likely to take longer than 20 weeks to complete.
2. The duty for a local authority to use '**reasonable endeavours**' to put in place the provision described within the EHCP. This was initially provided until 31 May and has now been extended until 30 June 2020. This means that where the provision identified within an EHCP cannot be put in place because it would be impractical to do so whilst schools are closed it remains the responsibility of the local authority to support schools and other professionals to make 'reasonable provision'. This will include access to online learning, work sent home, virtual classrooms, video/facetime calls etc. and is likely to be a blended approach to learning using a range techniques.

All other elements of the CAFA remain in force including the statutory responsibility to conduct an annual review of all EHCPs.

END DATA

Impact of Covid 19 on the number of requests for and EHC needs assessment:

The SEN team has seen an increase in requests from schools based on the same period last year i.e. from 01 March to 07 June for the **5 to 25 age group**

Number of new requests for assessment		Number of assessments agreed	
2018/19	2019/20	2018/19	2019/20
28	41	22	31

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Of the 31 assessments that have been agreed, we are already aware that 14 will be delayed as Educational Psychologists will not be able to undertake a meaningful assessment due to school closure.

This number may increase if other professionals inform the SEN Team that they are unable to provide a meaningful assessment as a result of the requirements of lockdown.

This increase in the number of assessments may reflect a year on year increase that has been seen previously since the introduction of the Children and Families Act but is likely to have been further impacted by the closure of schools allowing time for school staff to complete paperwork.

Requests for assessment for children aged 0 – 5 through the Child Development Centre (CDC)

The majority of EHC needs assessment for this age group are undertaken through the CDC utilising the multi-disciplinary assessment (MDA). This process is led by health colleagues and enables assessment to take place where a child has significant special educational needs that are likely to be apparent from an early age and where the child may not be already accessing an education placement:

March to June 2019	March to June 2020
30	0

We are working with health professionals to establish alternative methods of assessment using online assessment tools to support a virtual assessment. This is early days and the first pilots are currently taking place.

School attendance and risk assessments

- All vulnerable children have been able to request a placement in school, this has included those with an EHCP.
- Where children are not accessing a school placement risk assessments are undertaken to identify any children that may be at risk.
- The SEN Team are currently contacting all families of children and young people with an EHCP to establish what concerns they have they have with regard to returning to school and what additional support they may need.

Concerns for the future:

- Heightened levels of anxiety could impact on mental health
- Difficulty for some children transitioning back into school following an extended period of home schooling and continued concerns with regard to the safety of schools
- Lack of transition opportunities may impact on those pupils transferring to a new phase in their education from September
- Additional increase in numbers of assessment requested for 5 to 25 age group for those children who may be close to compulsory school age and who have not accessed a MDA as a result of the closure of the CDC.
- Increase in numbers of children being identified with SEN as a result of:
 - Gap widening SEN/ none SEN as children reduced access quality first teaching is more likely to have a greater negative impact on progress of children with SEN
 - Lack of access to specialist teachers and therapists
 - Delayed identification may cause escalation of need.
 - Increase in number with SEN specific training opportunities for school staff cancelled may mean settings have reduced capacity to meet need in the short term

Opportunities

- Development of virtual working is likely to increase capacity of professionals to work directly with more children and minimise the impact of the geographical nature of Shropshire
- Enabled schools to develop virtual learning experiences which could be positive for some children who are anxious about attending school and may support children to gradually re-integrate into school where there has been a period of poor attendance.
- Some children who have accessed school during this time have had an enhanced learning experience in an environment where there is less noise/higher ratio of adult to child support/changed expectations with regard to social interaction reducing anxiety levels for some children
- Increased attendance of SEN officers at annual reviews and pupil planning meetings using virtual platforms

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Education Access Service

- Pupil Attendance
- Pupil Exclusions and Behaviour
- Vulnerable Learners
- Children Missing Education
- Elective Home Education (EHE)
- Safeguarding
- Operation Encompass (Domestic Abuse)
- Syrian Refugee Education Support
- Child Employment & Performance Licensing

EAS statistics, 23 March – 5 June 2020

- 24 people in the team, equating to 18.4 full time equivalent posts.
- **2043** 'core' attendance/welfare and behaviour cases remain open to EAS Officers since lockdown.
- The EAS team has worked with an **additional 468 families** since lockdown.
- **35** Syrian Refugee children and their families have been supported by the team's Refugee Education Support Assistant during lockdown.
- The service is responsible for monitoring children who are electively home educated (EHE). **45** families have been contacted directly during lockdown so far.
- **35** Children Missing Education (CME) have been traced.

Covid-19 Service Continuity & Response

- At point of lockdown, pupils open to EAS immediately RAG rated by Officers to ensure that these vulnerable children were listed on the school's RAG rating return to the LA.
- Where the assessed level of risk means that the child ought to attend school but parents/carers do not send them, the Education Access Team is engaged to work with agencies to resolve the issues presenting barriers to that child's attendance.
- Teams involved with assessment and securing a vulnerable child's attendance include staff from educational settings, Children's Social Care, Early Help, Education Welfare, SEND and Health.
- Education Welfare Officers are in daily contact with school staff, supporting the contact of vulnerable pupils including home visits to check on welfare.
- EAS Officers are supporting parents and carers through offering guidance and promoting contact with schools. We signpost to agencies that can offer support (Covid-19 helpline, food bank referrals, housing support).

- Education Welfare Officers provide expert advice and guidance to schools about recording pupil absence in the current situation.
- There has been a continuation of Pupil Planning Meetings through lockdown; these have been held virtually.
- Increased time allocation to the daily domestic abuse triage sessions and Operation Encompass.
- Virtual Pupil Disciplinary Committee meetings have been convened to assist with timely responses to the Exclusion process.
- Specialist Placement and Fair Access Panels have continued to ensure that school placements are identified and plans remain in place to support vulnerable learners.
- Continuing participation in Exploitation triage meetings and Panels. Due to demand for triage, additional time has been allocated to allow for bi-weekly meetings.
- EAS Officers to support parents with the new Schools Admissions Appeal process.

- The Education Access team have continued to participate in strategy meetings, child protection conferences and Early Help meetings.
- The service has collated all school risk assessments of vulnerable pupils for the LA and undertakes ongoing monitoring of entries.
- Officers attend MARAC to share relevant pupil information following conversations with school Designated Safeguarding Leads.
- A Covid 19 safeguarding addendum has been developed by the Education Access Safeguarding Officer and Safeguarding Development Officer (EIS). This was circulated to all schools on 2 April 2020 to provide advice and guidance to supplement school's safeguarding and child protection policies already in place and will be updated as required.
- A Covid 19 Behaviour addendum policy has been developed by the Education Access Service and circulated to all schools. This policy reflects government guidance and is under regular review . It provides advice and guidance to supplement current Behaviour policies that are in place.

- School Safeguarding virtual 'drop in' sessions have been established. These sessions provide a multi-agency collaborative and supportive network for all Shropshire schools to share safeguarding practice and information in light of the Covid 19 Pandemic. They are scheduled to take place on a weekly basis and will run until further notice.
- The EAS Manager represents Learning & Skills on the Coronavirus Community Response group.
- EAS Officers are part of the Mental Health Task and Finish Group convened through the Coronavirus Community Response group.
- All key responsibilities and current statutory functions continue to be met.



Case study related specifically to Corona Virus pandemic

On 21 April 2020 the headteacher of a small, rural school reported to EAS that the parents of three children were frequently breaching lockdown rules as mother couldn't cope with having the children at home. Year 6 child has challenging behaviour but the children were not originally assessed as being in the 'vulnerable' category for a school place.

The EAS Safeguarding Officer arranged and chaired a meeting involving mother and the school on 22 April 2020. Agreed children should attend school as parents struggling/heightened risks. Parent admitted breaching lockdown rules – police had been involved with case and have been monitoring daily. Liaison with police took place to obtain further information.

Further meeting (Early Help Planning) held on 24 April 2020.

Outcomes:

- Parents agreed to adhere to lockdown rules and self-isolate for 14 days.
- Parents provided with activities for the children and Targeted Early Help Workers engaged to provide parenting support.
- Children to attend school from end of self-isolation period.
(Actions successful, children in school as planned and continue to attend.)

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PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

10 June 2020

11.00am

1. WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2. DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS



3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 20TH MAY 2020

4. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

5. MEMBER QUESTION TIME



6. SCHOOLS OPERATION DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC



Performance Management Scrutiny Committee 10 June 2020

Schools Operation During the Covid-19 Pandemic

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Context

Commencing 23 March 2020

All schools requested by Department for Education (DfE) to offer provision for:

- Children of critical workers
- Vulnerable children

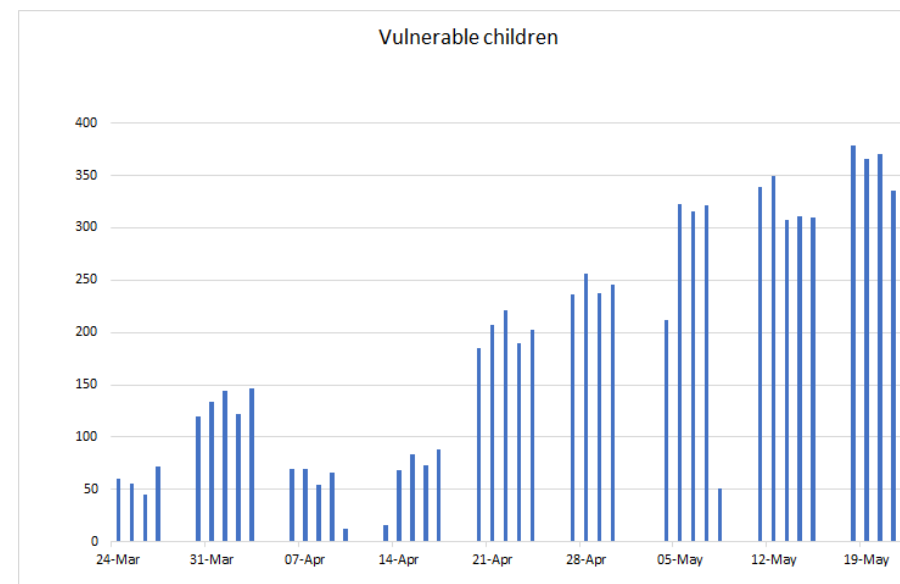
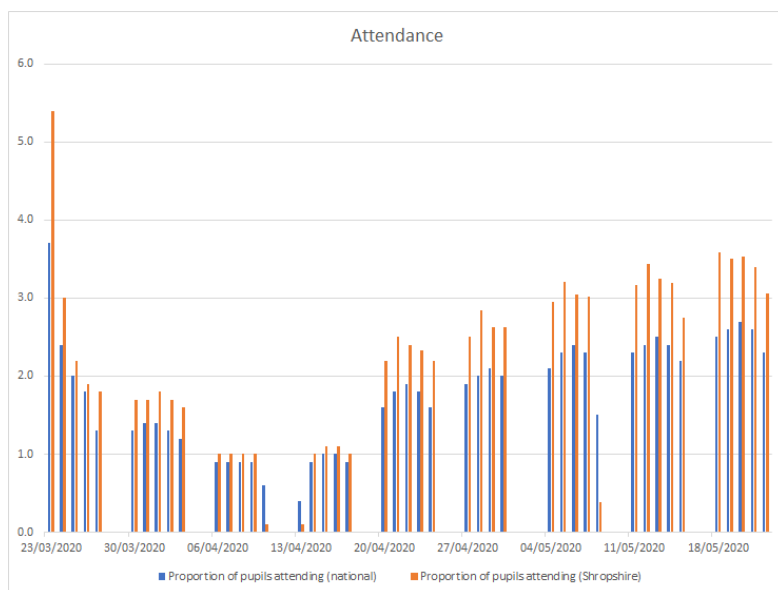
Commencing 1 June 2020

Primary schools also requested to offer places for Reception, Year 1, Year 6 pupils

Commencing 15 June 2020

Secondary schools also requested to offer increased contact to Year 10 and Year 12 pupils

Attendance (23/3 – 22/5)



Source – DfE data dashboard

Attendance (5 June 2020)

- 3,503 pupils attended primary schools, an increase of over 2,000 pupils compared with prior to wider re-opening.
- 80.3% of schools had opened to one or more of the wider year groups (Reception, Year 1, Year 6).
- Overall attendance in primary schools was approximately 16.5%.
- 18.9% of schools have introduced rotas.
- Number of primary schools re-opening to Reception, Year 1, Year 6 is expected to further increase to over 95% by 15 June.

Communication with schools/DfE

- Since 23 March, daily email sent to headteachers in maintained schools and academies, sharing policy and guidance from a local, regional and national perspective.
- Central Policy Group of senior school leaders meeting held online to help shape Shropshire's position and agree common principles. Position statement shared with elected members.
- Maintained Schools Headteacher Forum meeting (regional headteacher representatives) held online twice in addition to a maintained headteacher meeting.
- All maintained headteachers offered 1:1 meetings/support, as well having access to officers across all Council services supporting schools.
- Meetings with DfE/Regional School Commissioner's (RSC's) office, initially daily during first weeks of lockdown, before reverting to twice per week – provides mechanism for escalation of local issues and influencing further guidance.

Actions taken – pre 1 June

- From 23 March, a daily list of school closures, including schools hosting provision for displaced critical worker and vulnerable children, has been posted on the Council website.
- Council officers have arranged school places for critical worker/vulnerable children unable to access places at usual school, including pupils from independent sector.
- A dedicated customer helpline was set up for parents/carers.
- A risk assessment template, with RAG rating, for vulnerable children created through collaboration between Education Access Service, SEN and social care teams.
- Schools have been challenged by officers and, where appropriate, through the RSC's office.
- Officers have supported schools on the provision of free school meals for pupils not in school, provided guidance on the national voucher scheme, and taken up individual issues with the DfE.
- Maintained schools invited to submit claims for inclusion in the Council's submission for support through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) i.e. furloughing.

Actions taken – for 1 June onwards

- Dedicated helpline for parents/carers re-established for extended opening of primary schools, while updated FAQs have been posted on the Council website.
- Emergency packs of PPE have been sourced and distributed to all schools and academies requiring it (a minority sourced their own).
- A risk assessment template was provided for all schools, with the completed assessments for maintained schools quality assured by Council officers prior to the extending opening. All completed by 1 June where necessary.
- Liaison with trades union representatives, particularly in relation to the detailed risk assessments required for schools to open safely and securely for staff and pupils.
- Detailed '*Guidance for School Transport Provision from 1 June 2020*' was consulted on and distributed to operators and schools.
- Officers currently working closely with public health on the production of the local outbreak control plan for the testing, tracking and isolating of Covid-19 cases in education settings.

Home to School Transport

- A tiny number of entitled critical worker pupils transported (less than 1%) since 23 March.
- A few Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 pupils returned on 1 June taking transported numbers up to 3%.
- Indications that secondary entitled pupils returning from 15 June will be low.
- School buses at 25% capacity maximum (i.e. 2 metre separation).
- Could go to 50% capacity September 2020 (i.e. 1 metre)
- But 50% still means there won't be capacity for a third of entitled pupils, unless we double trip or provide extra vehicles, which will be limited in supply.
- Working on solutions and awaiting further Government guidance.
- SEND transport numbers low currently, minibus capacity is circa 4 pupils with a capacity of 25%.
- Face covering for passengers on public transport from 15 June.
- Face coverings may need to be considered on school transport if we cannot maintain the 2 metre social distancing on vehicles when more pupils return in September.
- School transport operators have lost the majority of public/private work – paying 'Supplier Relief' to them until the end of June, but concerned about their future viability beyond this.

Schools' finances

- Schools funding has been protected, all receiving their core funding allocations and targeted funds (e.g. SEND top up) for the 2020 to 2021 financial years.
- Funds are being made available for additional Covid-19 related costs, with banded limits of £25,000 for schools with 250 pupils or fewer, up to £75,000 for schools with over 1,000 pupils.
- Guidance is due on how schools can claim these costs – officers have canvassed the DfE to have these extended to include costs not currently covered including PPE and supply costs.
- 'Private income' (e.g. paid school meals, breakfast and after school clubs) is not covered by the guidance – this is presenting a minority of schools with potential financial problems.
- 9 maintained schools submitted claims to furlough 31 employees through the CJRS.
- A report on the impact of Covid-19 on school finances is to be presented to Schools Forum at their meeting on 25 June 2020.

Early Help Activity Supporting Schools

- Family Support Workers financed through the Troubled Families funding have supported a further 226 families in total.
- During this period the Early Help teams have worked with 48 families at Tier 2 that would normally access their schools and other agencies for this level of support and the Schools Family Support workers have offered support to 134 families from the schools 'vulnerable list'.
- Overall during the month of April and period of Covid-19 lockdown, the Council's Early Help teams have supported a total of 407 families, offering direct support to more than 314 parents/carers and more than 145 children.



SEND DATA – the impact of Covid-19 on requests for EHCP need assessments

- There has been an increase in requests from schools for 5-25 age group compared with last year (23/03 to 07/06)

Number of new requests for assessment		Number of assessments agreed	
2018/19	2019/20	2018/19	2019/20
28	41	22	31

- 31 assessments agreed, of these 14 will be delayed as school closure means Educational Psychologists cannot undertake meaningful assessment. This number may increase if other professionals have the same difficulty.
- The increase in requests reflects a national trend but is probably impacted further by school closure, as school staff have more time to complete paperwork.
- The majority of EHC needs assessments for 0-5 year olds are undertaken through the Child Development Centre (CDC) utilising the multi-disciplinary assessment (MDA). The process is led by health colleagues and enables assessment to take place where a child has significant special educational needs that are likely to be apparent from an early age and where the child may not be already accessing an education placement. During the period from March to June 2020 there were no assessments being undertaken, compared with 30 in the same period in 2019.
- Work is underway with health professionals to establish alternative methods of assessment using online assessment tools to support a virtual assessment. The first pilots are currently taking place.

EAS

- The EAS team has worked with an **additional 468 families** since lockdown.
- 35** Syrian Refugee children and their families have been supported by the team's Refugee Education Support Assistant during lockdown.
- The service is responsible for monitoring children who are electively home educated (EHE). **45** families have been contacted directly during lockdown so far.
- The Education Access team have continued to participate in strategy meetings, child protection conferences and Early Help meetings.
- The service has collated all school risk assessments of vulnerable pupils for the LA and undertakes ongoing monitoring of entries.
- A Covid 19 safeguarding addendum and Covid 19 Behaviour addendum policy has been developed.
- School Safeguarding virtual 'drop in' sessions have been established.
- Increased time allocation to the daily domestic abuse triage sessions and Operation Encompass. Officers attend virtual MARAC meetings
- Continuing participation in Exploitation triage meetings and Panels. Due to demand for triage, additional time has been allocated to allow for bi-weekly meetings.
- Virtual Pupil Disciplinary Committee meetings have been convened to assist with timely responses to the Exclusion process.
- Specialist Placement and Fair Access Panels have continued to ensure that school placements are identified and plans remain in place to support vulnerable learners.

Children with a social worker

- We have consistently supported the Government guidance about children attending school where they have a social worker or are vulnerable, proactively talking to parents about the expectation that children should be in school .
- Where individual children have needed to be in school social workers have visited and worked with parents and children directly to get them back into school.
- We have delivered free school meals during the school holidays to those on a Child Protection Plan.
- For disabled children we have used flexible packages of support to assist parents where children cannot be in school.
- For several children we have provided staff to support them in school when they have needed to be in school but needed additional support.
- Provided additional materials to foster carers to enable creative activities.

Compass and Assessment teams

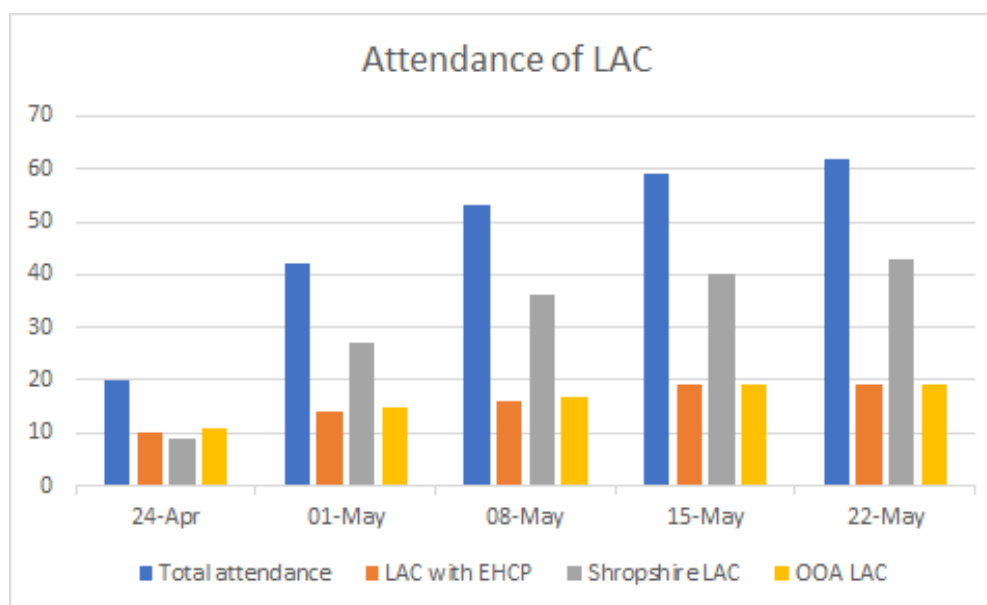
- Schools play a vital role in keeping 'eyes on the child'
- As a main source of referrals into compass, the numbers have considerably dropped.
- However, where schools have made referrals, many have been serious and schools have responded excellently.
- Data for year as follows:
 - January 221 referrals received of these 54 were made by education
 - February 156 referrals were received of these 51 were made by education
 - March 150 referrals were received of these 56 were made by education
 - April 89 referrals were received of these 6 were made by education
- In total 28.2% of referrals were received from educational settings across January to April.



Looked After Children and Virtual School

- Supported foster carers and parents with children placed at home to enable and support education at home.
- Individual child level decisions about whether it is best for children to attend school or remain at home, especially where there are multiple children in placement, individual home circumstances.
- Where children have wanted to go to school we have worked with the Virtual School to enable this to happen.
- Provided some technology in early weeks to enable children and young people to learn remotely.
- Seen incredible creativity from social workers, foster carers and residential care workers to engage and support children in learning.
- Enabled older looked after children and care leavers, including our unaccompanied asylum seeking young people, to access technology to continue their studies.
- Some children have thrived, learning in a more protected environment.
- IROs have continued to provide scrutiny regarding the educational needs of children who are looked after.

Looked After Children and Virtual School



Overcoming curriculum challenges

National curriculum was suspended. DfE expectations:

- Agree what learning is appropriate (including the relationship between face-to-face and remote education), for example, identify curriculum priorities, agree revised expectations and required adjustments in practical lessons, and any approaches to 'catch up' support.
- Work with local authority or academy trust (and where applicable NHS Clinical Commissioning Group) and families to identify what provision can be reasonably provided for in line with education, health and care (EHC) plans.
- Agree ongoing learning offer for eligible pupils who can't attend school, as well as offer for those that continue to be out of school.
- Agree ongoing approach for learning offer for vulnerable children and children of critical workers who are in school but not in the returning year groups.

Overcoming curriculum challenges

- Guidance placed expectation on schools to offer 'blended' curriculum to meet need based on factors such as age, IT accessibility, etc.
- Resources list created by Council officers and provided signposting the Government funded online Oak National Academy.
- Shropshire Music Service and School Library Service have offered curriculum input.
- Schools expected to make regular contact with vulnerable pupils.
- Delivery of curriculum discussed in headteacher 1:1s.
- Small number of parental concerns raised with officers and followed up.
- 'Recovery' curriculum required by schools to support pupils back into full-time school-based learning and routines while supporting emotional wellbeing.

Transitional issues

- Shifting from 'childcare provision' to education.
- Need for a 're-focusing' curriculum drive to benefit pupils in re-establishing routines and expectations as well as supporting mental and emotional needs.
- Transition support.
- Support for vulnerable learners.
- Need for collaborative approach.
- Responding to an expected increase in referrals as children return to school and children can talk about their experiences at home.
- Without further relaxation in guidelines, particularly in relation to social distancing, the physical limitations of most school buildings will restrict extended opening to further year groups.
- To fully re-open the school transport network, particularly from September 2020, significant relaxation in current restrictions will be required (currently capacity is reduced to 25%).

Transitional issues

- Managing pupil anxiety and school phobia while actively encouraging attendance.
- Developing approaches to supporting pupils with re-adjustment, self-regulation and behaviour in school to ensure that exclusions do not rise due to Covid-19 related factors.
- Schools capacity to take on tier 2 work to support the Early Help system.
- Shropshire has been allocated 500 laptops for children in care and children with a social worker – officers are working with social care and schools to identify and distribute these digital devices this month.

7. QUARTER 4, 2019/20 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT



8. FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

9. DATE/TIME OF THE NEXT COMMITTEE