



# Continuity and recovery in schools during COVID-19

**Barking &  
Dagenham**

Interim update  
March 2021

Overview and Scrutiny  
Committee

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## Introduction

- This is an interim update which sets out key areas of focus for continuity in schools during COVID-19. Some key learning and legacy is also highlighted.
- During the pandemic, Barking and Dagenham schools have worked tirelessly to remain open, including for vulnerable pupils and Critical Workers' children when required.
- There is much that we do not know about the impact of COVID-19 on children and young people. Schools' efforts to maintain contact with, and provide quality learning for, pupils in Barking and Dagenham are remarkable. However, no one would argue that this is a proper substitute for being in school each day.
- Research has shown that areas of disadvantage are more likely to be adversely affected by the pandemic. Given the multiple lockdowns and ongoing disruption to face-to-face learning, the impacts of COVID-19 on young people's educational outcomes in the borough could be seen for several years to come. It is unlikely that catch-up sessions during the holidays and after school hours will replace the learning that has been missed during the past 12-months.
- Despite these challenges, close partnership working between schools, Education and other Local Authority services has brought about positive developments and learning which will last beyond the pandemic.

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## Examples of key areas supporting continuity...

### Tracking and brokering support for vulnerable pupils

- Since Autumn 2020, the Education Team have worked with schools to encourage vulnerable pupils back to education settings where there is concern about pupils' home settings and/or their engagement with home learning.
- The tracking and brokering of support for vulnerable pupils by schools in partnership with the Council has been recognised as a strength. Building on this model and previous learning, the Education team has organised three staff - called 'Education Inclusion Partners' – to support clusters of schools in the borough in the North, East, and West.
- The new arrangements have led to the creation of new multi-agency partnership support structures (Figure 1).

#### Vulnerable Pupils' Hot Clinics

allow professionals to refer to a multi-disciplinary team of professionals from Children's Social Care, the Youth at Risk Matrix (YARM), North East London Foundation Trust (NELFT), and Youth Offending Service (YOS)

#### Team Around the School (TAS)

**pilot model:** TAS operates at three of the borough's Primary schools – Richard Alibon, Monteagle, and Thomas Arnold. TAS brings together professionals from Education, Social Care, Early Help, and Health. TAS aims to reduce exclusions and support children who have been identified as an increasing risk.

#### Team Around the Area (TAA)

brings professionals together from across Education, Children's Social Care, the YARM and Police to share local information about the clusters of schools.

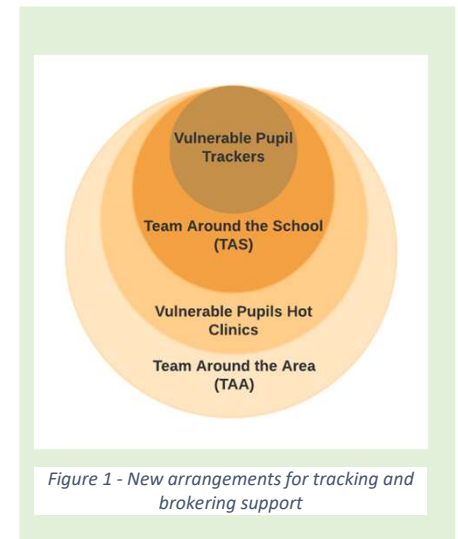


Figure 1 - New arrangements for tracking and brokering support

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## Mental health and wellbeing support for pupils

- Young people in the borough are facing traumatic experiences including bereavement, self-isolation, a loss of routine, uncertainty about their futures, and a breakdown of formal support mechanisms.
- Since the Summer term 2020, Children's and Adolescents Mental Health Services (CAMHS) have delivered virtual weekly 'Hot Clinics'. At these, school staff discuss pupils they are concerned about who are not already receiving CAMHS support. The Hot Clinics have been well received by schools.
- During the Summer term 2020, 58 staff in 8 schools participated in Thrive online training courses. Thrive training gives parents, carers, teaching staff, youth workers, and medical experts an integrated approach to understand children's behaviour.

Young volunteers surveyed young people from the LBBD, Havering, and Redbridge in July 2020 – during lockdown, 1 in 4 young people worried about their mental health and 1 in 3 young people worried about their physical health, family, and friendships.

Thrive London, in partnership with the Education team, has planned 'Bounce Forward', a 6-week resilience programme for parents and carers. The programme has 250 spaces and is being promoted with schools.

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## Early Years and Portage

- Following the wider re-opening of Early Years settings from September 2020, attendance remained high and slightly below attendance in 2019. Since January 2021, attendance has been approximately 60% of capacity. Nursery attendance has increased to approximately 90% in March 2021.
- The Early Years team have created a webpage which brings together good practice resources to help parents and carers support their child's learning at home. The team has developed a range of online 'Bitesize' training sessions for providers through a YouTube channel.

The DfE has confirmed that the Early Years Dedicated Schools Grant will be paid on expected attendance rather than actual attendance (with a minimum guarantee of 85%). However, there are concerns that the resulting 15% decrease in funding could impact upon the delivery of places.

The Portage Service have developed over 170 individual videos which model activities for children. The service introduced its own YouTube channel and Facebook page to teach parents and carers new skills to further enrich their child's development.

**"During this lockdown, we had ups and downs with our child's behaviour and you gave us the right advice or cheered on his achievements.** We are very grateful to have you, lockdown or not! I cannot stress highly enough how much our Portage Provider helped us, from being a friend, advisor and helper. She kept me calm, focused and she knew exactly how we were feeling".

*Early Years parent*

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**There have been important positive developments and learning which will last beyond the pandemic. Examples include...**

## **Remote Learning**

- Even in the first six weeks of Spring 2021 during the third lockdown, much has been learned.
- Schools have refined their remote learning offer drawing on feedback from teachers, pupils, and parents. Most are offering a mix of live sessions, recorded, and posted clips, and, particularly for younger pupils, some paper-based work.
- Headteachers are already seeing the potential for developments in home learning – and providing wider opportunities for pupils who miss lessons to access materials and catch up.

The government has provided 3491 devices for schools to distribute to vulnerable pupils. However, we know that despite this many pupils still do not have adequate access. **In January 2021, headteachers estimated that around 8,000 pupils (20%) in the borough do not have sufficient access to an appropriate device and around 4,000 (10%) do not have sufficient broadband.**

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## Recovery of provision for pupils with SEND

- Three priorities for recovering SEND, for September 2021:
  1. *Early individual reviews*
  2. *A support strategy for second lockdown or self-isolation*
  3. *Getting therapies in place*
- Weekly network meetings to support SENCOs, including the following attendees:
  - EHC Team,
  - Educational Psychologists,
  - BDSIP, and
  - Health colleagues.

During the Summer term of 2020, the Education team worked in partnership with schools to ensure that pupils with EHC plans and those with additional needs were encouraged to attend their school where individual risk assessments determined it was safe to do so. By June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020, 82 pupils with EHC plans attended the borough's ARPs (approximately 1 in 5).

## Anti-racist Education – Responding to Black Lives Matter (BLM)

- Following the BLM movement, three workstreams have been developed about race and discrimination that include schools:
  - Creative cultural education in schools
  - Listening to and incorporating young people’s voices
  - Partnership work with Barking & Dagenham School Improvement Partnership (BDSIP)
- The November 2020 CEP ‘SlowCo’ (a longer conference delivered across a number of days) held a discussion session with a panel (comprising Early years and primary and secondary school representatives) and cultural organisations about BLM.
- BDSIP have discussed with the BAMEed Teachers Network, the Black Curriculum, local Headteachers, and a Professor of Educational Leadership and Social Justice. There are proposals to facilitate school-led work, supported by LA-commissioned funds, around the following areas: leadership of cultural change, staff recruitment and progression, behaviour and inclusion, and curriculum and inclusive teaching.

In response to the BLM movement, the BAD Youth Forum held discussions about their experiences as residents and whilst at school. They shared a range of experiences and knowledge about the topics of racism, unconscious bias and racial inequality. The Forum also linked with the ‘BLM Barking and Dagenham Group’. Both groups invited one another to a session to discuss BLM at their respective organisations.

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## Schools Update March 2021

- Schools re-opened fully to all pupils from 8 March 2021
- All school staff are testing at home twice weekly with Lateral Flow Tests – there has been strong compliance with this requirement. All secondary pupils expected to take 3 lateral flow tests on site and move to home testing from the week commencing 15 March 2021.
- Currently, we are seeing very low numbers of staff testing positive
  - Wb 8<sup>th</sup> March = 3
  - Wb 15<sup>th</sup> March = 9
- Pupil numbers of positive cases
  - Wb 8<sup>th</sup> March = 18
  - Wb 15<sup>th</sup> March = 47
- The Holiday Activities and Food programme, funded by the government, will provide Free School Meals and activities for pupils over 12 sites during Easter, to increase in the Summer. There is currently a call for applications live on the Council's OneBoroughVoice website. Free School meals vouchers will also be available during this time.
- Elective Home Education has continued to rise with 350 active cases in 2021, rising 88% from August 2020

Examinations and national tests have been cancelled for the second year. Ofqual and the Department for Education have decided that teacher assessments with a best fit model for grading will be used instead – schools are still waiting for final guidance on this.

Schools are currently operating a mix of face-to-face teaching and remote teaching and learning for those who are self-isolating.

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