



## Notice of Non-Key Executive Decision

<b>Subject Heading:</b>	Impact of Coronavirus COVID-19 on Education and Childcare and Business Continuity Planning
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Robert Benham, Deputy Leader, and Lead Member for Children & Learning
<b>CMT Lead:</b>	Robert South, Acting Director of Children's Services
<b>Report Author and contact details:</b>	Trevor Cook, Assistant Director, Education Services trevor.cook@havering.gov.uk
<b>Policy context:</b>	Education and Childcare
<b>Financial summary:</b>	There are no direct financial costs associated with this decision

### The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

Communities making Havering	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Places making Havering	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Opportunities making Havering	<input type="checkbox"/>
Connections making Havering	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Part A – Report seeking decision

### DETAIL OF THE DECISION REQUESTED AND RECOMMENDED ACTION

Recommendation to note the current situation regarding the impact of Coronavirus COVID-19 on Education & Childcare in Havering, and responses to challenges faced and decisions made for different areas within Education, to continue to effectively manage through the COVID-19 Pandemic.

### AUTHORITY UNDER WHICH DECISION IS MADE

The Director as a member of SLT has the following relevant powers under Part 3 section 3.4 As follows:

- (a) To take any steps necessary for proper management and administration for their allocated portfolios.
- (b) To exercise all the powers delegated to relevant staff members where circumstances require, so far as legally permissible. Exercise of such powers should be recorded. Where possible, a Second Tier Manager should give notice to a relevant staff member that he or she intends to exercise a specified power that is delegated to that staff member.
- (c) To manage buildings and facilities under their control including letting, hiring or otherwise permitting the use of such premises and property for occasional purposes...
- (d) To be responsible and accountable for all health and safety matters.

### STATEMENT OF THE REASONS FOR THE DECISION

Following the implementation of the Pandemic Plan, a COVID-19 Bronze group focussing on Education & Childcare has been established, chaired by the Assistant Director, Education Services. This group has led the Local Authorities work in supporting schools and early years providers through this unprecedented situation, including any changes required for business continuity reasons.

As part of our support to early years providers, daily updates have been sent, updating them on a range of issues. Below is a summary of the key issues and actions taken since that announcement;

#### **School Closure (Partial or Full)**

On Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> March 2020, the Government announced that schools would remain closed from 23<sup>rd</sup> March, except for children of key workers and vulnerable children.

The DfE has made it clear that the Local Authority will take a lead role in implementing this approach, and has responsibility for co-ordinating, communicating and reporting on this new school based provision.

In order to maintain regular communication, the Local Authority is engaging directly with all schools and early years providers on a daily basis to monitor the situation., and has adopted a 'cluster' based approach for early years providers, primary schools, secondary schools, special schools and alternative provisions.

At this time, all Primary and Secondary schools in Havering remain open. It is critical that the Local Authority maintains an overview of the status of our schools, so all schools have been asked to provide a daily update as to their staffing levels, and any capacity issues.

Schools are also being asked to provide a daily update to the DfE on their status (open or closed), the number of pupils attending, and whether they are vulnerable children, the child of a key worker, or both.

The three Special schools in Havering are not open at this time. Corbets Tey remains closed due to low staffing levels, but are conducting outreach work with vulnerable families, including the delivery of meals to families eligible for Free School meals. Forest Approach remains closed following a staff member testing positive for COVID-19, and will remain closed for a further 14 days following advice from Public Health England, and Ravensbourne remains closed due to low staffing levels.

To support vulnerable children with EHCP, the approach taken has been a case by case review, conducted jointly by education, social care and health. Each case has been RAG rated, and the vast majority of children remain at home due to their complex health needs and issues. This does present different pressures which will require specific social care responses, including increasing Direct Payments where necessary, broadening short break provision, and increasing care in the home where necessary, working closely with the Joint Commissioning Unit.

### **Home Learning**

Schools were advised to consider their plans for providing work for children to complete during a full/partial closure, and whilst there is currently a strong emphasis on remote, online learning, we suggested that careful consideration should be given to homes that have limited wi-fi/devices beyond mobile phones, and parents working from home may also need the family laptop. HSIS have developed a guide for home learning, which includes links to a range of resources and materials.

### **National Guidance**

All education providers have been reminded to regularly check the national guidance, including the updated guidance on self-isolation, and cascade this information to their parents regularly.

### **Safeguarding**

In the event of a partial or full closure, schools and early years providers have been advised to consider the impact on current child protection plans, and other vulnerable families. To support this, HSIS have developed a detailed guidance document, and created a DSL group across all schools.

### **Staffing**

The Schools HR team have regularly provided updated guidance, with the latest information regarding the suggested approach to sickness relating to self-isolation etc and preparations should schools have to fully close.

### **School Meals**

To support children eligible for free school meals (and attending school), yesterday the Government announced that schools will be able to purchase meals or vouchers for

supermarkets or local shops.

The government has also confirmed that the total value of vouchers offered to each eligible child per week will exceed the rate it pays to schools for free school meals, recognising that families will not be buying food in bulk and may therefore incur higher costs. The final amounts will be confirmed shortly.

Effective immediately, schools will be able to order vouchers directly from supermarkets or shops in their communities to be emailed or printed and posted to families, and they will have their costs covered by the Department for Education. Guidance for schools will be published shortly.

In the absence of any guidance, The Local Authority catering service is offering a revised menu to any child attending schools, and the provision of a packed lunch to any child eligible for a Free School meal.

### **Admissions**

Following the Government's announcement last week to close schools, except to children of key workers and vulnerable children, we had to temporarily suspend in-year applications until further guidance was provided – otherwise offers would have been made, without schools being open to process the offers.

Now that we have that guidance from the DfE, the suspension has been lifted, and further information is being put onto the website to ensure parents are aware that unless the child is LAC, or that they meet the definitions of a key workers and/or vulnerable child, their application will not be processed until such time that the schools re-open.

### **Child Employment and Chaperone Licenses**

Parents can normally apply for licenses for their children to perform on stage or take part in filming/adverts with licenses also being issued for chaperones to escort them.

In the absence of any guidance the LA will be guiding parents who wish to obtain child performance and chaperone licensing that with the safety of the children performing being paramount, to prevent the spread of Covid 19 and to adhere to the Government 'Social Distancing' guidance and avoiding all non-essential travel, LB Havering is suspending the issuing of Licenses for Children in Entertainment and for Chaperones for most performances until further notice. If however, the performance is for a Public Health information item or similar, parents are being guided on the website to call the admissions & inclusions team for advice.

### **OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

No additional service delivery changes made outside of government instruction. This was rejected as we need to evolve business continuity plans to ensure we provide effective services during the time of this Pandemic.

### **PRE-DECISION CONSULTATION**

None.

**NAME AND JOB TITLE OF STAFF MEMBER ADVISING THE DECISION-MAKER**

Name: Trevor Cook

Designation: Assistant Director, Education Services

Signature:

Date: 26/03/2020

**Part B - Assessment of implications and risks**

**LEGAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

There are no legal implications in noting the content of the Report. Legislation and Guidance are being produced at a rapid rate and the position is changing almost on a daily basis with a time lag between Government announcements and the legislation to implement their actions. The actions taken appear to be in line with current Government expectations even if these are not strictly required by legislation at the time of implementation.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

The costs of supporting vulnerable children with an EHCP will increase due to increased support. Work is currently being undertaken in the Joint Commissioning Unit to evaluate protection of the care market by provision of a lump-sum payment to providers of specialised care. This will be subject to a further decision report.

Currently the costs of meals provided to schools for any child eligible for a free school meal or children of key workers attending a school, are being met by the Schools Catering Service. Once DfE guidance is released for schools, they will be able to order vouchers directly and these costs will then be covered via DfE funding.

Further financial implications and risks are being assessed and determined as part of several other decision reports, and as practice and service delivery is changed to reflect the business continuity issues that arise.

**HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS  
(AND ACCOMMODATION IMPLICATIONS WHERE RELEVANT)**

Given the Coronavirus outbreak, the paramount consideration of the Council is the health and wellbeing of Members and officers

## **EQUALITIES AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have 'due regard' to:

- (i) The need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- (ii) The need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share protected characteristics and those who do not, and;
- (iii) Foster good relations between those who have protected characteristics and those who do not.

Note: 'Protected characteristics' are age, sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnerships, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment.

The Council is committed to all of the above in the provision, procurement and commissioning of its services, and the employment of its workforce. In addition, the Council is also committed to improving the quality of life and wellbeing for all Havering residents in respect of socio-economics and health determinants.

An EqHIA (Equality and Health Impact Assessment) is usually carried out when a current or planned service/policy/activity is likely to affect staff, service users, or other residents. It is acknowledged that due to the urgency of the threat posed by the coronavirus, it will not be possible to carry out an EqHIA in advance of the closure of a service, however, managers will undertake the required EqHIAs at the earliest opportunity. Where managers are already clear that particular groups/users will be impacted negatively by the curtailment, this will be noted in the next paragraph and/or put into draft EqHIAs. Where the impact of the closure can be mitigated, this too should be set out in this report.

The Council seeks to ensure equality, inclusion, and dignity for all in all situations.

**Part C – Record of decision**

I have made this executive decision in accordance with authority delegated to me by the Leader of the Council and in compliance with the requirements of the Constitution.

**Decision**

Proposal agreed

**Details of decision maker**

Signed

Name: Trevor Cook

CMT Member title: AD for Education

Head of Service title: N/A

Other manager title: N/A

Date:

**Lodging this notice**

The signed decision notice must be delivered to the proper officer, Principal Democratic Services Officer, in the Town Hall.

**For use by Committee Administration**

This notice was lodged with me on \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_