

	Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee 22 February 2022
	Report from the Operational Director, Safeguarding, Partnerships and Strategy
Education and Wellbeing Recovery	
Wards Affected:	All
No. of Appendices:	0
Background papers	<p>Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee report: Brent Council and Covid-19: Service Response and Recovery, July 2020</p> <p>Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee report: Update on schools and education, including action plan for raising achievement of British boys of Black Caribbean heritage November 2020</p> <p>Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee report: Brent Council's Management of the Impact of Covid 19 on Education Settings and Children's Services, November 2020</p>
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1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report updates members on the recovery of children and young people's education and wellbeing in response to the Covid-19 pandemic in Brent. This report adds to the reports provided to the Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee on 24 November 2020 and 21 July 2020 that gave an overview of the collaborative work between the local authority, schools and other partner organisations to support the education and wellbeing of Brent children and young people in the earlier phases of the pandemic.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members of the Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee are asked to note and comment on the content of this report.

3.0 Detail – Background to Settings and Schools Recovery

- 3.1 Further to the reports to Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny committee on 24 November 2020, Covid has continued to have a significant impact in Brent settings and schools throughout 2021. Schools and early years settings fully re-opened in September 2020. There was a further lockdown in spring 2021, but schools have remained fully open since March 2021 with full or partial closures of individual schools only in response to localised cases. Since the beginning of the autumn term 2021 and updated government guidance supporting the full reopening of schools for all pupils, with the continued support of the local authority, schools have successfully focused on ensuring high attendance, re-establishing routines for learning, delivering the curriculum and closing identified gaps in pupils' learning. Since schools returned in January 2022 there has been a marked increase in notifications from schools of the number of positive cases of staff and pupils exceeding the published thresholds for notification in Government guidance, further illustrating the ongoing challenge which Covid (Omicron) presents to settings and schools recovery.
- 3.2 The comprehensive support arrangements provided by the Local Authority to schools and settings reported to Scrutiny committee in November 2020 have remained in place and have been built upon and developed, with positive feedback from schools and settings on the support being provided by the Local Authority. The Strategic Director Children and Young People has continued to convene regular meetings with headteachers, Chairs of Governors and early years providers in response to the changing phases of the pandemic, with an increased focus on education recovery. The Director of Public Health has been a regular attendee, providing public health advice and advising schools on changing government guidance and protective measures, for example mask-wearing in secondary schools. These arrangements have continued to support resilience in the sector and facilitated the sharing of good practice. Regular written briefings have also been provided to settings and schools. Feedback from early years settings and schools has been very positive regarding both the webinars and published briefings provided by the Council.
- 3.3 The CYP Department has worked with settings and schools to implement a comprehensive education and wellbeing recovery plan. Recovery planning has focused on all children and young people, but with particular focus on vulnerable children known to CYP (including Children in Need, Children subject to a Child Protection Plan, children with an Education, Health and Care Plan, young people known to the Youth Offending Service and Looked After Children and care leavers).
- 3.4 Multi-agency governance boards have continued to provide oversight of delivery for children and families, including the Health and Wellbeing Board, the Children's Trust, and the Strategic School Effectiveness Partnership Board. The Strategic Director is chairing monthly meetings of the Children's Services Leadership Team to oversee the coordination of work to support education and wellbeing recovery with a focus on vulnerable children.
- 3.5 During autumn 2021 and since January 2022, in the context of the Omicron strain of Covid-19, schools have seen an increasing number of children, young people and staff absent due to Covid-19. Schools have responded by putting in place additional protective measures, on the advice of the CYP Department, Brent Public Health and

Public Health England. These have ensured that no school has had to close to all pupils and that only a very small number of classes or year groups have had to be taught remotely for a short period of time.

- 3.6 The local authority has been acting as the key liaison between schools and the North West London CCG Covid-19 Vaccination Group following the national extension of vaccinations to 12-15 year olds. The school based vaccination programme for 12-15 year olds in Brent began on 12 October 2021 and all mainstream secondary schools had hosted a vaccination session by 4 November 2021. 4,990 first doses were administered throughout the autumn term, which equates to 39% of the eligible pupil population. Second dose visits are currently taking place and will run until 14 March 2022. The local authority has also encouraged parents to book first or second doses at a range of local vaccination sites, including pop up sites that have operated in evenings and weekends to encourage uptake.
- 3.7 At the end of the academic year 2020-21, 96% of Brent schools were judged good and outstanding by Ofsted. This is above the national average of 83% and the London average of 93%. Whilst the proportion of good and outstanding provision is high compared to the national and London averages, there are two primary schools and one secondary school not yet judged good or outstanding. Ofsted returned to a full programme of inspections from September 2021. In the final days of the autumn term inspections were cancelled to allow schools to consider their Omicron contingency measures for January 2022. Inspections have now resumed. Ofsted has a deferral policy in place that allows settings and schools to ask for their inspection to be deferred in exceptional circumstances. The CYP department and the Director of Public Health have supported three Brent schools who successfully requested a deferral due to the impact of Covid-19 on pupils and staff.

4.0 Early Years

- 4.1 Throughout the pandemic, early years providers have experienced lower than usual demand from parents for free entitlement places, lower income from fee-paying parents and the challenge of keeping settings open with staff teams reduced due to staff illness and self-isolation. Overall recovery has been slow in the sector, with attendance having only returned to near pre-pandemic levels at the end of December 2021. Take-up in the PVI (private, voluntary and independent) sector has remained stable, but take-up in the maintained sector has reduced. The one area that has seen an increase is the number of 30 hour places being taken up by parents, indicating that working parents have continued to use their entitlements even when working from home.
- 4.2 The statistical data return to DfE in November 2021 has indicated that approximately 4114 under 5s were attending early years settings in schools, PVI and childminding settings. This is an increase on early autumn figures, although this increase is partly due to the inclusion in the data for the first time of the number of under 5s attending school based provision.
- 4.3 Brent Early Years Service has continued to provide tailored support to assist the recovery of the early years sector. The service has helped providers to navigate changing government guidance and has provided both a virtual and face to face training offer, as well as support on provider organisation and advice on how to meet the needs of children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND). The Early Years teams have continued to disseminate the latest national guidance and relevant updates across the sector, signposting providers to national and local funding streams that could support their sustainability. Providers have also been supported on how to manage Covid-19 cases in their settings through the Early Years single point of contact and the Brent Public Health team.

- 4.4 Information obtained from settings has continued to demonstrate a wide variance in business planning capacity and demonstrated that there is a significant business support need during the recovery phase. Providers have reported that they have accessed both national and local support opportunities, such as business rates holidays, small business grant schemes, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme. Childminders have also accessed the self-employment income support scheme.
- 4.5 While numbers are slowly returning close to pre-pandemic levels, some providers are concerned about their ability to remain financially viable without an increase in children taking up places and/or an increase in the funding rate for the free entitlement in the context of rising business costs. Providers have also reported that they are facing severe difficulties in recruiting staff (both qualified and un-qualified). Nationally there are reports that practitioners have left the sector to take up posts in retail or other fields that are deemed to be lower risk for higher financial reward. The Local Authority is continuing to work with providers to support them with recruitment advice and guidance and through advertising vacancies via the Council.
- 4.6 There has been a decrease in the number of childminder providers in the borough with 36 childminders de-registering since March 2020. Reasons for these include a move out of the borough, retirement and in some a longer-term decision expedited as a result of COVID related concerns. This decrease is mirrored nationally.
- 4.7 Seven group based PVI providers, ranging from small family run provision to larger commercial operations, have closed in the period March 2020-November 2021. Again reasons for these are varied, including failed lease renewal negotiations, rental increases coupled with a reduction in demand and some have reported being unable to re-open due to Covid-19. A few providers have moved premises in order to expand and some new providers are entering the market, which indicates ongoing demand for places.
- 4.8 In 2022, as providers adapt to a changing landscape with reduced financial support by way of national and local grants, a key area of focus of the Early Years Service is supporting sustainability in the sector. A programme of management workshops for the year has commenced with the first session focusing on successful recruitment and retention, encouraging the sharing of existent good practice. Overall sufficiency will continue to be monitored. While some providers have left the sector and others have set up new provision in the borough, the long-term impact of the pandemic on the sector is yet to be seen.

5.0 Schools

- 5.1 Brent has maintained a focus on vulnerable pupils throughout the pandemic period. Brent's definition of vulnerable children is:
- Children who are assessed as being in need under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989, including children and young people who have a child in need plan, a child protection plan or who are a looked-after child
 - Children who have an education, health and care plan or who are identified as requiring SEN support
 - Children who have been assessed as otherwise vulnerable by educational providers or at the local authority's discretion (including children's social care services). This might include children and young people on the edge of receiving support from children's social care services, adopted children, those at risk of becoming NEET (not in employment, education or training), those living in temporary accommodation, and those who are young carers.

- 5.2 From the outset of the pandemic, Brent schools have been assessing their pupils to identify the gaps in their learning which has informed on-going modifications to the delivery of the curriculum. To support schools to close the gaps the DfE announced the Covid-19 Catch-up Premium in July 2021. This is additional funding to support pupils who fell behind in their learning during the first lockdown period. Schools are using the funding to accelerate progress through tailored teaching activities which include small group or one-to-one tuition and extra teaching capacity including after school lessons.
- 5.3 School leaders have continued to access support and guidance from the local authority on how to interpret new government guidance and to continually update their risk assessments. As a result schools have been able to mitigate Covid-19 related risks by implementing control measures and all have contingency plans in place should they need to consider additional protective actions.
- 5.4 Brent's self-improving school system has been strengthened with a number of new developments recognising the strength of Brent schools leadership in the past year. The North West London Teaching School Hub led by Wembley High Technology College and the Behaviour Hub led by St Gregory's are excellent examples of schools taking a leading role in supporting school effectiveness. Where the local authority needs to intervene in schools to bring about rapid improvement it commissions and brokers school-to-school support from its partners: Brent Schools Partnership BSP, National Leaders of Education (NLEs) and National Leader of Governance (NLG), and the leaders of outstanding and good schools.
- 5.5 From September 2021 the North West London Teaching School Hub based at Wembley High Technology College became one of 87 National Teaching School Hubs. Teaching school hubs are school-led centres of excellence for teacher training focusing on training to support teachers and leaders to become more effective. Teaching School Hubs lead on the delivery of six National Professional Qualifications (NPQs) in Senior Leadership, Headship and Executive Leadership as well as NPQs for teachers and school leaders who want to broaden and deepen their expertise in specialist areas.
- 5.6 From September 2021 The Department for Education (DfE) has nominated St Gregory's Catholic Science College as one of 20 National Behaviour Hubs. The Hubs will support improved pupil behaviour in identified schools, using the Hub as an exemplar of behaviour practices. The St Gregory's Behaviour hub will work with identified schools, supporting them by providing training on specific issues, common problems and effective approaches that can be implemented within the school. The hub will also host open days so partner schools can observe good systems and approaches in action and provide ongoing support, mentoring and coaching to support leaders in implementing lasting change.
- 5.7 During the pandemic, the Brent school clusters (Harlesden, Kilburn, Kingsbury, Willesden and Wembley) have played a key role in providing mutual support in addressing the extraordinary issues that have impacted on the leadership and operation of schools. The clusters have in a short space of time re-established themselves as a key component of the borough's school-to-school support. Two case studies are included which highlight the work being undertaken and the dynamic and supportive arrangements in place between Brent schools. Both clusters include special schools, PRU, primary and secondary and all forms of governance in school members – Voluntary Aided, community schools, and academies. Both case studies highlight the importance of a safe supportive space for school leaders.

5.8 Case study in collaboration: Kingsbury Schools Together

KST has been a collaboration of a cluster of schools in the Kingsbury area over the past ten years. Over the time of its existence, the cluster has undertaken academic collaboration (for example group moderation) and enrichment collaboration (for example, the Kingsbury carnival, with a range of shared activities, and an environmental project in partnership with Brent Council and Veolia, “love where you live.” During the pandemic period the cluster strengthened even further, not just in managing the response to the pandemic but in setting higher ambitions for pupils. Following the declaration of a climate emergency by Brent Council and supported by the introduction of the climate champion network in Brent schools, KST have held an eco conference to coincide with COP26, with participation of pupils from all schools in the cluster. Enrichment activity and curriculum resources were shared between schools in the cluster in preparation for the conference, which involved the local authority. Actions have come out of the conference which will directly contribute to the carbon net zero campaign in Brent, for Brent schools and for the wider community.

5.9 Case study in collaboration: Harlesden cluster

The Harlesden cluster started as a model to support headteachers, developing strong relationships between school leaders and creating a supportive network of colleagues. The pandemic brought Harlesden schools closer together, particularly in supporting remote learning and supporting the wellbeing of staff and children as well as school leaders. Responding to the Brent Black Community Action Plan, the Harlesden Curriculum has emerged as a key element of the collaboration. The curriculum aims to streamline teaching and learning in Harlesden so that there are increasingly clear links between teaching and learning in primary and secondary schools, so that schools are not re-teaching. The curriculum will deepen the knowledge and understanding for pupils in Year 6 in identified subject areas, tapping into specialisms in individual schools.

- 5.10 Brent schools quickly developed their on-line teaching platforms and resources to teach pupils remotely early in the pandemic. They also provided teaching and learning packs for children who did not have the required access for on-line learning. The development of remote learning has been on-going to ensure that when pupils or teachers have to isolate because of Covid-19 outbreaks, their learning and teaching can continue as seamlessly as possible. This online digital learning offer now allows schools to continue to teach the curriculum if Covid-19 restricts attendance for staff or pupils. The development of remote teaching now sits within curriculum planning and not only allows for remote teaching to be put in place as part of contingency delivery plans, but also complements face-to-face learning and home learning/study.
- 5.11 Despite remote learning and the continuation of face-to-face teaching for vulnerable pupils and the children of key workers, the pandemic has inevitably impacted on learning. From the beginning of the pandemic Brent schools have continued to assess their pupils to identify the gaps in their learning which has informed on-going modifications to the delivery of the curriculum. As a result, Brent Council and schools have developed a deeper shared understanding of vulnerable pupils which will be the basis of increasingly effective targeted support for every Brent pupil to succeed.
- 5.12 Work has continued in Brent schools to support the delivery of the Brent Borough Plan 2019-2023 priority to raise the attainment of particular groups and narrow the gap with their peers for Boys of Black Caribbean heritage. The “Update on schools and education, including action plan for raising achievement of British boys of Black Caribbean heritage” report, presented to Scrutiny Committee November 2020, set out an overview of the work that had taken place to support raising the achievement of boys of Black Caribbean heritage and other priority groups. This work has been maintained as follows:

- 5.13 78 BCA champions in 73 Brent schools have continued to be supported by Brent Schools Partnership to drive forward improvement strategies in their school. The leadership capacity created through the designation of a BCA Champion continues to make a significant contribution to ensuring that raising achievement is a strategic priority in schools leading to a range of actions aimed at tackling the legacy of underachievement of this group of pupils.
- 5.14 68 schools have had a BCA audit supported by a Brent Schools Partnership (BSP) School Improvement Specialist. An analysis of the issues identified through the audit across Brent has been carried out, and has informed the content of the training and support available for schools.
- 5.15 The Parent Resource Portal went live in the autumn term 2020, and is being promoted to parents by schools and their BCA champions. Parents and community members have recognised that the resources are of great value.
- 5.16 DfE-funded summer schools were held in 13 Brent secondary schools in 2021, aimed at supporting the transition of children from Year 6 to Year 7.
- 5.17 On 12 July 2021, Brent Full Council agreed the establishment of an additional reserve budget of £17M as part of the Borough's COVID-19 recovery plan. The reserve budget funds programmes that build on the success of Brent Council's immediate response to the pandemic and take Brent forward to a sustainable, inclusive recovery, aligned to Brent Borough Plan priorities, under four themes:
- **Supporting Communities** (£1.4M of programme funding aligned to the Borough Plan priorities "Every Opportunity to Succeed" and "Strong Foundations")
 - **Supporting Businesses** (£10.6M of programme funding aligned to the Borough Plan priorities "A Future Built for Everyone, An Economy Fit for All" and "Strong Foundations"),
 - **Reducing Health Inequalities** (£0.5M of programme funding aligned to the Borough Plan priority "A Borough where we can all feel safe, secure, happy and healthy") and
 - **The Green Recovery** (£4.5M of programme funding aligned to the Borough Plan priority "A cleaner more considerate Borough").
- 5.18 Wellbeing and Education recovery support for Brent children, young people and families is at the heart of Brent's recovery programme, with a range of initiatives funded to support children and families, including £520,000 over 2 years to provide a two year programme of evidence-based education recovery action with Brent schools. The aim of the funding is to support Brent children to not only recover to where they were educationally, but to support a "recovery for childhood", to help Brent children to progress to where we want all Brent children to be.
- 5.19 The government has chosen to fund limited elements of the Government's Education Recovery Commissioner's recommendations, including: training for Early Years staff to support recovery; the National Tutoring Programme and funding for school-led approaches to take on local tutors; training for early career teachers and expansion of access to National Professional Qualifications; Continuous Professional Development support for teachers regarding mental wellbeing and STEM; and Catch-up and Recovery premium funding to support individual schools' recovery planning. Brent Council's programme is intended to support the gap between the funded government programme and the other proposals that the Education Recovery Commissioner recommended.

- 5.20 Recognising the disproportionate and unequal effect of the pandemic and acknowledging the anticipated impact of the pandemic in wider gaps of inequality, funding will prioritise vulnerable pupils and priority groups of pupils including boys of Black Caribbean heritage. School clusters, with the support of the Setting and School Effectiveness Service, are leading on the implementation of the Brent Education Recovery Programme to ensure it meets the needs of the pupils attending their schools.
- 5.21 Brent schools were invited to provide suggestions and proposals for the programme to the acting Head of Setting and School Effectiveness and Operational Director, Safeguarding, Partnerships and Strategy in October 2021. School Effectiveness Partnership Board representatives then met to consider proposals for the development of the recovery programme in November 2021, which were reviewed and agreed by the Board on 17 November 2021.
- 5.22 The funding made available by Brent Council is substantial but broken down to a school by school level this funding will only make an impact through focused and coordinated action. As such, to help promote engagement at a Brent school cluster level and a shared commitment and approach to recovery across all Brent schools, funding will be provided at a cluster level, with match funding contributions from clusters encouraged. The Board agreed that funding should focus on evidence based actions which directly impact on education recovery and that the programme should have a focus on curriculum, to include curriculum training, resources and support in particular for middle leaders to drive subject leadership and secure accelerated recovery for pupils. Learning from the success of the Raising Achievement of Boys of Black Caribbean Heritage programme, the programme will aim to secure a named education recovery leader in every Brent school to provide overall leadership and to report on the progress and impact of the programme, alongside the wider context of education recovery actions in Brent schools.
- 5.23 Following the Board meeting of 17 November 2021, the Interim Head of Setting and School Effectiveness has met with all five school cluster headteacher leads to develop the programme as agreed by the Strategic School Effectiveness Partnership Board. Each of the five Brent school clusters discussed the indicative allocation of the total fund, to match with cluster school held funds, to develop the recovery programme within each cluster. All schools in each cluster are being given the opportunity to engage in the development and delivery of the programme. These meetings have confirmed the establishment of Recovery Practice Leaders network in every Brent School, with proposals delivering a year- long programme of evidence-based evidence based recovery initiatives.
- 5.24 Elements of the programme developed so far include:
- A programme to address the decline in children's language development arising from the pandemic through a structured programme that starts in the Early Years and also supports older students.
 - A 'Brent Writes' programme designed to address the decline in children's writing arising from the pandemic from Early Years through to Sixth Form
 - A knowledge-rich humanities programme for teaching history, geography and religion in Years 3 to 6, with curriculum resources together with training, support and ongoing programme-related professional development for primary school teachers. The full programme is being finalised week commencing 28 February 2022.

- 5.25 The full programme, to include a model of impact monitoring to ensure that the recovery programme fund makes a maximum impact for Brent pupils, is being finalised week commencing 28 February 2022.
- 5.26 Senior leaders in CYP have been monitoring and promoting school attendance since September 2020 to ensure a full return to school. Overall attendance at Brent schools has been good over the past 2 years, with attendance above the national average. Over the autumn term 2021, average attendance was 91% with attendance at several schools 95% or over. The attendance of vulnerable children – children with a social worker and children with an EHCP has also been above national averages. Due to this strong performance, Brent is one of 10 local authorities selected by the Children's Commissioner in January 2022 to participate in a deep dive into attendance to develop shared learning. The Education Welfare Service has been working closely with schools to support the recovery of attendance levels of children and young people who are persistently absent. This combines supportive interventions with enforcement action, with the aim of ensuring persistently absent pupils re-engage. Many of the pupils who are struggling to maintain consistent attendance are those who have SEND or had pre-existing behavioural issues and persistent absenteeism prior to the pandemic. Some pupils have emerging mental health issues.
- 5.27 Brent Virtual School has responded quickly to the implementation of new duties from September 2021 to support the attendance and attainment of all children known to children's social care in settings and schools. With the recruitment of a secondary advisory teacher and two education officers, the Virtual School works with school leaders to understand how to best meet the needs of children and families with a social worker, as well as acting as a bridge into schools for social care teams. The impact has been to support schools to adjust the application of school policies including attendance and exclusions, enabling children to remain in mainstream and build their attendance and behaviour as part of a coordinated child and family centred plan. School and setting staff also have access to a wide set of training opportunities available through the Safeguarding Children Partnership to help them understand how partnership working can help to support this cohort of children and young people. The Virtual School is also working with a group of young people of secondary age who have multiple vulnerabilities and have experienced a significantly fractured educational history and who require targeted support.
- 5.28 Following the cancellation of the summer 2020 and 2021 examinations by the Department for Education, being replaced by Centre Assessed Grades in 2020 and Teacher Assessed Grades in 2021, there have been no published data on pupil outcomes for the past two academic years. For the 2021/22 academic year all existing statutory KS1 and KS2 assessments will return following their usual timetable. However the DfE has announced that school-level data from the KS2 national curriculum assessments will not be published in performance tables in 2022. Results will be shared securely with primary schools, academy trusts, LAs and Ofsted to inform targeted improvement work
- 5.29 GCSE, A Level and vocational qualification examinations are also scheduled to take place with a later start time to give schools more teaching time. The examinations are being modified to give schools and the pupils optional questions to assess the parts of the subject syllabus that were taught, with contingency plans put in place in the unlikely event of further impact of the pandemic on planned examinations in Summer 2022.

The Brent Strategic Framework for School Effectiveness has been refreshed and extended for the period 2021-22 and sets out Brent's vision for education. A new Brent Strategic Framework for School Effectiveness 2022-25 will be developed later this year

in consultation with partners and informed by the Education White Paper and SEND Green Paper expected to be published by the DfE later in the spring.

6.0 Holiday or after-school clubs and other out-of-school settings

- 6.1 Brent Council does not have responsibility for after-school clubs, but local schools and settings have endeavoured to keep provision running despite the pandemic, especially where these support vulnerable groups. Community and voluntary sector organisations have maintained a presence supporting vulnerable children and young people throughout the pandemic and an expansion of out-of-school activities has supported the education and wellbeing recovery of Brent's most vulnerable children and young people.
- 6.2 As restrictions have lifted from September 2021, schools have not only reinstated high quality face-to-face classroom teaching, but they have also endeavoured to reinstate the enrichments that play such an important part in the educational experience of Brent pupils. Pupils are once again active in their local communities visiting libraries and using local services. Trips are taking place including to the Gordon Brown Centre and the Brent Music Service is delivering tuition and performing for live audiences.
- 6.3 Roundwood Youth Centre's current activities have been developed as part of the Roundwood Alternative Provision school which opened in January 2021. A new and exciting offer for young people has been developed, offering in 2022 a range of activities including theatre, music, dance and sport.
- 6.4 The Brent Youth Strategy 2021-23, agreed by Brent Cabinet in September 2021, sets out the Council's vision to provide a wide range of positive activities for Brent young people, with a commitment to working closely with schools and the voluntary sector to promote a wide range of accessible activities.
- 6.5 The Brent Local Cultural Education Partnership was established in 2021, as part of the legacy of Brent's year as London Borough of Culture 2020, bringing together schools and arts and culture organisation partners, with the aim that all Brent children have access to a wide range of cultural enrichment opportunities.
- 6.6 On 8 November 2020, the government announced that the Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF) would be expanded across the whole of England in 2021, building on a pilot programme from 2018 to 2020. Following the Government's comprehensive spending review, the government has confirmed funding for a further 3 years to 2025. The programme makes available free places in holiday clubs to children of school age on benefits-related free school meals for the equivalent of at least 4 hours a day, 4 days a week over 4 weeks during the summer and a week during the Easter and Christmas holiday periods. The local authority secured agreement from the DfE to broaden the reach of the HAF programme beyond children on FSMs through agreement that up to 15% of the budget could support children and young people considered to be vulnerable by schools and other professionals.
- 6.7 The Brent HAF programme was shaped by a collaborative steering group that included representatives from the Young Brent Foundation, Public Health, Community Safety, representative headteachers, and officers from Children and Young People. To maximise participation, the HAF operating model has been flexed in line with government Covid-19 guidance. While the Summer 2021 programme offered only face-to-face activities, the Easter and Christmas holiday periods offered a mix of face-to-face and online provision.
- 6.8 Over the Easter, Summer and Christmas holiday periods in 2021 the authority commissioned around 50 schools and voluntary sector providers to deliver a

comprehensive and varied programme. In the summer for example just under 3000 places were made available, and 2325 children attended a HAF provision. A wide range of activities were on offer to attendees at HAF clubs. These included: multi-sports and games, arts and crafts, dance, drama, music, coding, gardening, podcasting, kayaking, horse riding, surfing, swimming, cooking and baking, amongst other activities. Many children and young people had new experiences. The offer was fully inclusive and children with SEND were supported to access specialist provision or were able to access mainstream provision with additional funding support. The programme also funded supplementary activities to run alongside holiday clubs. For example, 64 children and young people were able to attend a half-day kayaking activity alongside the holiday club they were attending.

- 6.9 To meet the programme aim that the families who participate in the programme develop their understanding of nutrition and food budgeting, online and in person healthy food workshops have been delivered at Family Wellbeing Centres. In addition, an information and resource pack for participating families was developed, and a directory of online and at home activities was made available on Brent's website.
- 6.10 Brent's Family Wellbeing Centres are hosting a variety of activities and programmes through strong partnerships with voluntary sector and health providers. Activities include homework clubs, staffed by appropriately qualified staff.
- 6.11 Brent Virtual School has continued to offer an enrichment programme for Looked After Children during school holiday periods, including residential trips. Other vulnerable groups have continued to be supported with holiday activities, including children with disabilities through holiday play schemes and Young Carers. Church Lane and Three Tree's FWCs host a range of activities for young carers every month and offsite trips, and a peer support group, facilitated by Brent Gateway Partnership. There is a wide range of activities for children and young people which on offer at Family Wellbeing Centres, including drama therapy (12-16 year olds), Global Thinking (for girls at risk of exploitation), It Takes A Village (education project), after school art and craft workshops, access to sports and Fun Fit Families
- 6.12 Brent has a good understanding of the number, type and characteristics of out-of-school settings. Regular Brent out-of-school setting network meetings are providing support and advice and guidance to out-of-school settings. Through this network, the local authority has supported out-of-school settings to navigate national Covid-19 guidance and has ensured that there is effective dialogue on a range of organizational issues with the sector to support recovery.

7.0 Mental health and Wellbeing Recovery

- 7.1 Brent has the lowest access to mental health services for Children and Young People in North West London, despite high demand. The NWL CCG has recognised that both additional resources and service redesign are essential to address this inequality in CAMHS delivery. Mental Health and Wellbeing has been identified as a key priority for the North West London Integrated Care Partnership (ICP). The Children's Trust is actively monitoring the system wide response for children and young people who have social, emotional and mental health needs in response to or exacerbated by the adverse social and environmental factors linked to the pandemic (e.g. increasing domestic violence, poverty and isolation). The Chief Operating Officer of CNWL (Brent CAMHS provider) joined the Children's Trust in October 2021 to ensure there is senior officer oversight of service development.

7.2 Referrals to mental health and wellbeing services have increased during the pandemic, with a 35-45% increase in referrals in 2021 to specialist CAMHS for those presenting with a range of needs, including emotional well-being concerns, autism, learning disabilities and eating disorders. This has put pressures on CAMHS crisis support as well as routine appointments. A local CAMHS Service Recovery Plan has resulted in additional resources being deployed to manage assessments during working hours, evenings and weekends to reduce waiting lists. There remain waiting lists of several months for treatment and Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) assessment. There is an agreement by the NWL CCG of the need to increase specialist clinical capacity to provide more timely assessments and interventions. Local pathways are being reviewed and aligned to ensure a more comprehensive system-wide response to needs.

7.3 To meet the increasing demand from children and young people whose needs do not meet the threshold for specialist services, from September 2021 the local authority has expanded the Wellbeing and Emotional Support Team (WEST), commissioned by the LA and delivered by the Anna Freud Centre. The service is supporting children and young people with mild to moderate mental health and wellbeing needs in identified vulnerable groups (such as Looked After Children, children and young people at risk of exclusion or displaying complex behaviours, and children with disabilities). The School Nursing Service continues to provide advice on children identified to have low level mental health needs. Schools are continuing to offer established support for pupils' wider well-being e.g. delivering nurture provision, commissioning access to services provided by organisations such as 'A Place to Be' and referring children to the WEST service provided by The Anna Freud Centre. The Educational Psychology Service is continuing to support schools to access initiatives aimed at increasing school capacity to support the mental health and well-being of children and staff:

- Grants for Senior Mental Health Leads Training for someone in a strategic leadership role in school or college (a headteacher, deputy head, pastoral lead, SENCO or teacher), who will support development of a whole school or college approach to mental health and wellbeing in the setting. The recently established Brent MH Leads network met for the first time in November 2021.
- Following the Wellbeing for Education Return Programme launched by DfE in August 2020, the DfE launched Well-being for Education Recovery programme, backed by a further £7m of investment. The programme provides funding for Local Authorities to set up a tailored local programme, including support and guidance. In Brent this funding is being used to build on the Wellbeing for Education Return training delivered by Brent Educational Psychology Service, which includes parent drop-in sessions and workshops and focussed sessions for school staff on topics such as managing transition.
- To support staff wellbeing, the DfE published an Education Staff Wellbeing Charter. Brent Educational Psychology Service have offered support to all Brent school staff through drop-in sessions based on the charter.
- In 2021, Brent secured funding to be part of the national Link Programme, delivered by the Anna Freud Centre, which aims to bring together MH professionals and schools to support children and young people's mental health and wellbeing by ensuring they can get the help and support they need, when they need it. The Link Programme offers structured sessions to identify local priorities and agree goals to promote and support good mental health and wellbeing. The programme commenced in January 2022 and will deliver tailored support sessions focussed on improving joint working between education and mental health professionals, based on the local needs assessment.
- There are currently Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs) working in 8 Brent schools – one is a locality team based in Harlesden/Stonebridge and one works across 4 secondary schools. They deliver brief evidence-based interventions to

support children and young people with mild-moderate mental health problems and support schools in developing their whole school approach to mental health. An additional team is being rolled out in January working with 2 primary and 2 secondary schools. The scaling up of the programme will commence from September 2022.

- Since September 2020, it has been a statutory requirement that all schools in England and Wales are teaching Relationship and Sex Education (RSHE) as a fundamental part of the curriculum. Recently, the DFE have added a new module to the curriculum for primary and secondary schools specifically designed to focus on mental health. This important addition will enable much-needed conversations about mental health to happen inside the classroom. Brent's Inclusion Service is supporting Brent schools with development and delivery (network meetings, sharing resources, training)
- Mental Health First Aid Training developed by Public Health England provides online training for all school and college staff that provide resources and content to teach young people about managing their mental health and wellbeing, including clear examples of good practice.
- As part of the recovery curriculum, nurseries have been supporting children's wellbeing through the personal, social and emotional development strand of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

- 7.4 Brent was awarded funding (along with Newham) from the Youth Justice Board to set up the Brent BAME / Covid Pathfinder project, which offers a range of targeted services for young people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic heritage groups aged 10 to 17 years who have been adversely affected by Covid-19. The project is funded by the Youth Justice Board until 31 March 2023 and aims to support young people to re-engage or engage with education; support their emotional wellbeing; implement whole family interventions to reduce risk of issues escalating (safety and peer mapping); empower young people to offer feedback on the services they have used and provide young people with access to a range of positive activities. 160 children and young people accessed the outreach project in the period October 2020 to October 2021 (with a target of 375 children by 2023). 80 young people completed safety mapping in the period January to September 2021, which reduces the likelihood of young people being inadvertently exposed to contextual safeguarding risks as a result of their participation in the Pathfinder or other community engagement. As part of the Brent Pathfinder Young People's Panel, 26 Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic heritage group children and young people are supported by a Youth Participation Worker to share their experience of Covid-19 and identify activities and interventions that can reduce its impact.
- 7.5 The Council has provide additional recovery initiative funding of £270K to extend the capacity of mental health specialist expertise in Brent schools, building on and extending the Mental Health Support Teams model. In consultation with schools, a package of training is being developed for support staff and some specific whole school training to help with resilience building, that will cover trauma informed practice for schools, children's anxiety about COVID-19, exam anxieties, self-harming, eating disorders, and suicide prevention. Specialist ASD pre-diagnostic support has been jointly commissioned with the NWL CCG providing support for children and families both in schools and Family Wellbeing Centres. Autism training in schools is being piloted in two Brent schools funded by NHSE and a full training programme to support schools to build capacity in meeting SEND needs earlier and to implement a new Brent Graduated Approach is being piloted via funding from the Dedicated Schools Grant. .
- 7.6 The Council has also provided £180K of recovery initiative funding to develop community based mental health and wellbeing peer support. Plans have been developed to train young people (aged 16+) as Mental Health First Aiders with young people identified via community groups and voluntary sector providers and to train

youth workers in the voluntary and community sector as Mental Health First Aiders. An expansion of a pilot project of peer to peer support in schools is also being progressed. This complements work being undertaken in the BCAP steering group regarding targeted peer support. Funding has also been made available to put in place direct interventions and support for former UASC with low-level mental health and emotional wellbeing issues.

8.0 Financial Implications

- 8.1 The council has provided recovery initiative funding for the following projects: £520K for education recovery which will be devolved through school cluster groups; £270K to commission services that provide mental health support in schools and £180K for community based mental health peer support.

9.0 Legal Implications

- 9.1 Changes to regulations during the Covid-19 pandemic have now lapsed and the local authority is operating under the standard regulatory framework.

10.0 Equality Implications

- 10.1 The council's responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty as set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires the Local Authority when exercising its functions to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who have a protected characteristic and those who do not share that protected characteristic. Protected characteristics include ethnic or national origins and colour or nationality. The Council has paid due regard to children and families' protected characteristics in providing targeted and risk assessed support based on child and family need throughout the pandemic period.

11.0 Consultation with ward members and stakeholders

- 11.1 During all phases of the pandemic period, the Strategic Director CYP has participated in the regular Member webcast briefings to provide answers to any questions members have had regarding children, families and schools. The Lead Member for Children's Safeguarding, Early Help and Social Care, and Cabinet Member for Schools, Employment and Skills are regularly briefed on children and young people's education and wellbeing recovery.
- 11.2 Early years settings and schools in Brent have been actively supported and engaged throughout different phases of the pandemic. The Strategic Director has met regularly with headteachers and Chairs of Governors as described in Section 3 of the report. Engagement with settings and schools has shaped and will continue to inform the development of education recovery and wellbeing recovery projects, funded by the Council.
- 11.3 The Children's Trust, chaired by the Strategic Director CYP, has been the formal governance structure for engagement with health partners to ensure that services for vulnerable children are supporting their wellbeing recovery. The Setting and School Effectiveness Partnership Board has been the formal governance structure for engaging with settings and schools in relation to education recovery.
- 11.4 Union representatives have been regularly engaged in regular meetings with the CYP Operational Director to discuss operational issues in settings and schools.

12.0 Any Other Implications (HR, Property, Environmental Sustainability - where necessary)

12.1 There are no specific HR, Property or Environmental Sustainability implications.

Report sign off:

Brian Grady

Operational Director, Safeguarding, Partnerships and Strategy