

Update from Cabinet Member for Children's Services July 2020

Covid

I would like to acknowledge the way in which children, young people and their families have responded to the enforced change of daily routine and educational experience that has been necessary as a result of Covid. A sudden switch to home learning and lockdown will have been traumatic for many and of course we are concerned to ensure there is good ongoing support to help young people to get back to the classroom and that we are ready to offer help where needed as emotional and care needs become apparent. Schools and Early Years settings have adapted brilliantly to the evolving situation and our own teams have found new ways of working, such as introducing a rotating social care duty arrangement, expansion of the role of the virtual school to support a much wider group of vulnerable children to continue to engage in education (we have seen good attendance rates for eligible pupils during Covid) and the rapid roll out of on-line music lessons.

Partnership working

While we have had to make some very tough decisions to recover our financial position due to the impact of Covid-19 we have also worked hard on some innovative solutions with many partners. The council's aim is to improve people's lives and that means, in these challenging times, working with partners to find new ways to support children and young people. We commission services from a range of charities and organisations to support vulnerable children and young people and the financial recovery plan agreed by cabinet included a reduction in the amounts available for some of these services. I am delighted that the St John's Foundation has agreed in principle to use its resources to benefit vulnerable children who might have been affected by these reductions. This support will be formalised with the relevant providers and will form part of the wider work, which St Johns will be implementing in Bath and North East Somerset as part of its recently-launched Foundation Fund to ensure we continue to protect and support children and young people in our community.

Young People's webinar

I was delighted to join a webinar with the Leader, Chief Executive and some of our Directors last Monday, where a panel of young people shared their experiences and views on lockdown and some of their priorities for moving forward. It is important for us to hear the voices of our younger residents and we need to make sure we are responding to the issues that they raise and that we continue to listen.