

## **Children, Adults, Health & Wellbeing Panel – 19<sup>th</sup> January 2021**

### **Cabinet Member Update – Cllr Kevin Guy**

I want to acknowledge the hard work and commitment of the entire Children' Services Workforce, Early Years Settings, Schools and Colleges in their support for all children and young people in this ongoing Covid Period. They have been fabulous.

Schools in B&NES have reacted quickly to recent closing to all but children of critical workers and vulnerable children. Schools across B&NES have moved to remote learning and are providing home learning packs where necessary.

The Local Authority is assessing which of it's population of vulnerable children should be at school and which can safely remain at home. The Virtual School will once again be supporting both looked after children and children on Child Protection Plans and Children in Need.

### **Free School Meals (FSM).**

The government has reintroduced guidance for free school meals to advise on what should be provided if a school offers a food parcel. The government is also introducing a national voucher scheme that schools can opt into, although schools can continue to provide their vouchers and claim back its costs.

The council has not received any concerns about FSM provision during this lockdown period.

We have sampled schools to get a sense of the FSM provision provided. The majority of schools have indicated that they prefer to offer vouchers to enable food choice. Some schools are also making direct payments to families. Schools in B&NES are also supplementing FSM vouchers with additional food parcels if needed. Some schools are also providing breakfasts for FSM children as required.

Our maintained schools provide meals and vouchers and have received compliments on the quality of provision they are offering. Again our schools are likely to switch to the national scheme voucher when it is available.

Any family with a concern relating to food provision can be directed to the Wellbeing Hub for advice and support.

## **IT**

Throughout the pandemic, schools have been able to order additional IT equipment to loan out to families. Schools are again ordering more IT equipment during this lockdown, with primaries receiving their deliveries shortly. Any family who does not have access in the first instance should contact their school for assistance.

Schools have also been given the ability to support families with additional data to support IT access.

The council is looking at how it can assist with IT access if needed and will issue communications shortly.