



Hampshire  
County Council

# Children and Families

**Stuart Ashley**  
**Assistant Director**

# Agenda

## 1. Our approach

- Phases, oversight and data

## 2. What we did

- Use of technology
- Children in Care, Foster Carers and Residential
- Partners
- Our staff

## 3. In practice

- Some examples

## 4. Lessons learned and in conclusion

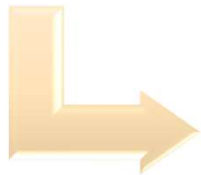
# Our approach through the lockdown:

As part of our contingency planning we developed a phased approach, with each phase based on having fewer staff available to work should the situation worsen

## Phase 1

*Business as usual but doing it differently*

- Statutory timescales for visits and meetings remain the same
- Using technology to ensure we see children and families through digital means i.e. WhatsApp, Teams
- Face to face visits undertaken where we know our staff can safely socially distance themselves, in relation to urgent child protection work
- Guidance provided for visits, meetings (with children and professionals), training, events etc



## Phase 2

*Pre-emptive planning for worse case scenario*

- Expressions of interest from staff willing to work in the business-critical services
- Staff drafted in from the Residential Children's Homes to ensure a minimum staffing levels at Swanwick
- 2 homes closed meaning that in the event of an unforeseen emergency there was additional resource to be deployed
- CRT/MASH – no essential work held back to enable prioritisation
- District teams – highest risk children and families identified



## Phase 3

*Managing the worse case scenario*

- Redistribution of staff available to work
- Delivery of services reduced to highest risk cases
- Implementing DfE flexibility of statutory requirements

**We have remained in Phase 1 throughout the current lockdown**

# Maintaining management grip

It was imperative, from the very start, to respond quickly, be agile, and maintain control:

- New guidance has been issued promptly
- Statutory timescales have been maintained
- Visits have continued - virtually
- Local level management has been enhanced
- Management oversight has remained...

... all whilst children have continued coming into care and less are leaving

Throughout lockdown there has been constant engagement and feedback to understand and capture how teams are responding to the crisis. We have done this through:

- Daily CFMT Covid meetings
- AD log/action tracker
- Weekly Covid specific DM and SM meetings
- BAU team meetings and supervisions
- Q&A process and comms
- Impact log – for TSC specific activity
- DM and SM Workshop



# Data:

Measure		Mar-19	Apr-19	Mar-20	Apr-20
No of referrals		1644	1563	1710	1180
Assessments completed (within 45 working days of referral)	Number	1041	1189	1511	1231
	Timeliness	94.0%	92.3%	93.4%	90.3%
ICPCs		95	91	163	160
RCPCs		336	285	280	194

Whilst there has been some reduction in referrals and assessments during April, by the end of May we were back to normal levels

Re: Child Protection conferences we have seen a significant rise through early 2020 because of the complexities of families needs magnified by Covid

Across March and April 2020, we completed 18,367 visits (Assessment, CIN, CP, CLA, LC)

In March 15% of visits were undertaken virtually, 85% in person

In April 53% of visits were undertaken virtually, 47% in person

# How we worked with children and families

We have continued to see children face to face when needed (**an essential and necessary part of keeping children safe**), however our teams have also been creative in how they are using technology to engage with children and families:



## Technology used:

- WhatsApp
- Zoom
- MS Teams
- Skype
- Twinkl
- Google Translate
- Team Talk App

## Used for:

- Visits
- Care planning and review
- Pathway planning
- Participation
- Building Rapport
- Life story work
- CLA Reviews
- TAFs
- EPMS
- Life story work
- Supervised contact
- Family Star
- Observing home conditions
- Translation
- Parenting programmes
- Nurture sessions

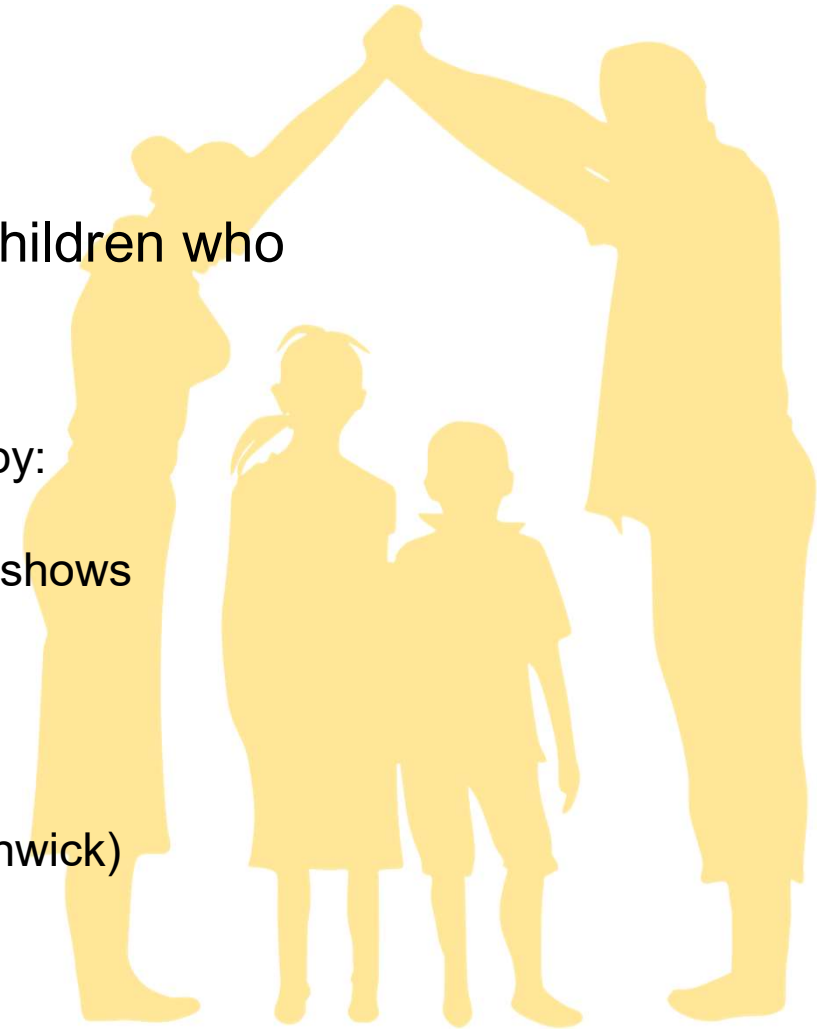


# Children in Care

Our staff have worked *relentlessly* to support our children who have all been seen either in person or virtually

We have been focussing on supporting our children in care by:

- Being (even more) creative in lockdown – quizzes, talent shows
- Stabilising placements
- Recruiting Volunteers
- Supporting our foster carers (i.e. staying put)
- The transition of care leavers to independence
- Keeping our remaining residential homes open (inc. Swanwick)





# Foster Carers and Residential

Early on we closed 2 homes to build resilience for our staffing levels across the residential estate

Support across all areas has been **Outstanding**

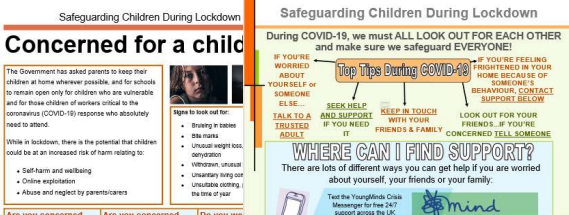
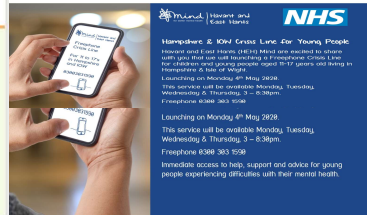
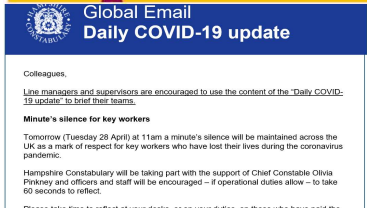
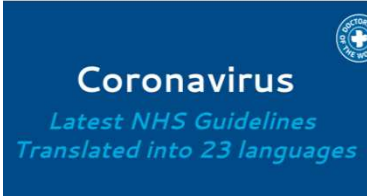
- Some children have been unwell
- Foster carers have taken children from homes where there has been infection
- We've had volunteers from the wider service offering help if staffing reduces
- Volunteers have also offered support for foster carers
- Further support is in place for foster carers if needed (i.e. financial)



# Partners

We have maintained a constant dialogue with our partners

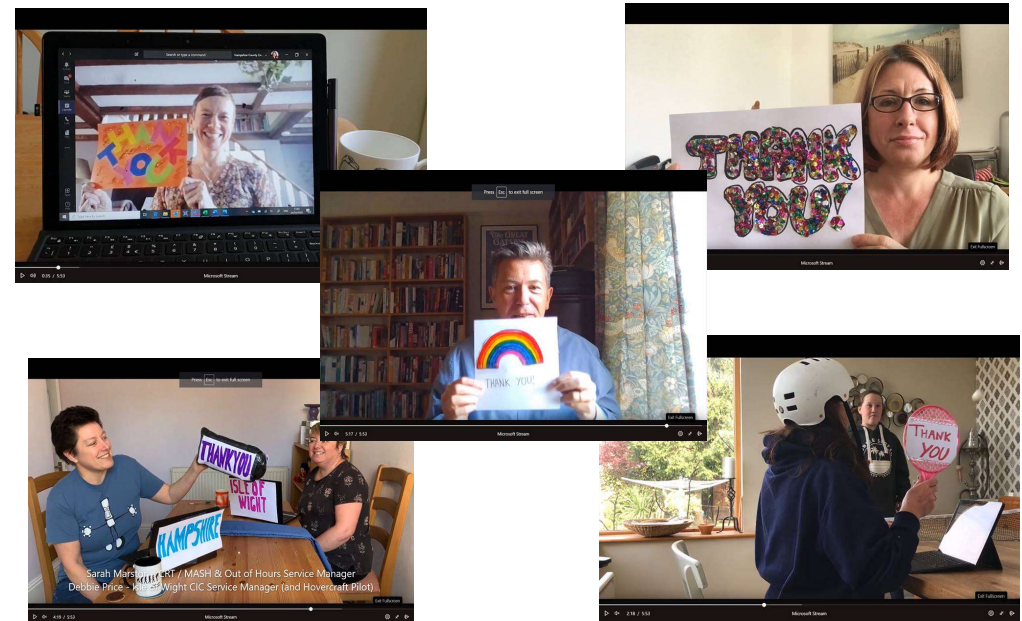
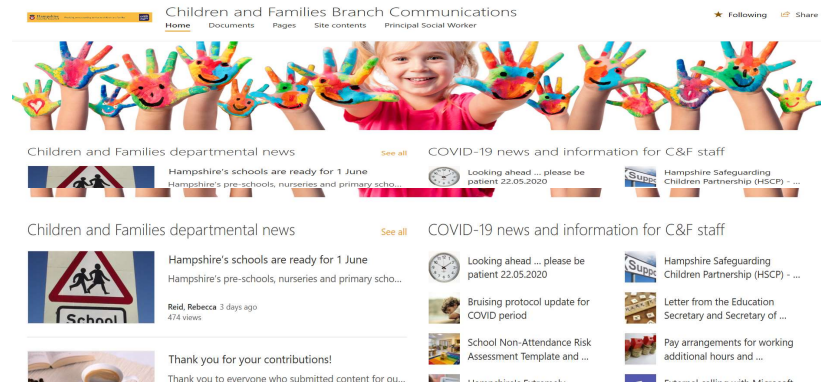
- Business as usual meetings have been unchanged
- Daily contact between Assistant Director and Head of Public Protection (the police) if needed
- We are proactively sharing our important updates
- Shared high risk cases with police and vice versa to focus on right children
- We are sharing updates from partners with our staff



# Our staff

Due to the dynamic situation throughout Covid-19, we quickly reviewed how we communicate and support our staff.

Following a refresh, our internal comms channels across Children and Families have seen a 100% increase in engagement, meaning staff are accessing important COVID-19 practice updates quickly and easily



We've been creative in use of all channels and messaging to maintain constant contact and provide reassurance

# Connectivity: Our staff *(not WiFi!)*

We are hearing that some staff are feeling more connected. This is because Covid-19 has meant:

Sustain after Covid-19

- More frequent meetings/catch-ups/touchpoints in response to the ever-changing situation
- Watching out for staff welfare, checking in on colleagues, looking out for each other
- Streamlining and more efficient communications
- Trying new and creative ways of engaging workforce through Teams/videos/other channels



But this will never fully replace the face to face interactions and meetings, both formal and informal, that make us outstanding. We need to do both and use a blend of all channels available to us.

# In practice: some examples

Social workers have used technology to observe relationships, home conditions and to engage with children and families in a virtual way

Young people see social media and video communication as part of their daily lives and have enjoyed their personal advisors becoming more engaged with this

*Video calling very useful for offering nurture sessions to families. I have emailed them sheets and tasks to complete before a session for us to then discuss and go through together via video. It keeps the sessions focused with really good time. It also seems to help record keeping as I can immediately write notes after talking with them rather than waiting until my next admin slot in my diary.*

*...how lovely it's been to face time my clients .... Wow - it has been amazing - they have loved it! It seems that a lot of mine have valued this more than when i trek miles to see them face to face. They have been so much more relaxed and definitely this is in their comfort zone - they seem to have taken it as a huge personal compliment that I am contacting them this way. I've been shown around their homes, met their cats and dogs, seen their gardens and relatives and it was all so relaxed too.... I hope it can play a part in the normal world when we come through this.*

*The use of video has been very helpful as the child has been able to show me things which they have been doing during the lockdown. They have also enjoyed meeting my puppy which was very helpful in engaging a child that is new to my caseload so haven't built as much rapport with him yet*

# What we have learnt

## Worked Well (Continue)

- **Adaptability of staff - Agile working has become the norm we can do things differently/people adapt**
- Staff have picked this up and run with it - Staff have been up for the changes and worked hard to make children safe, good can do
- **Leadership is key**
- NO TRAVEL!
- Use of estate creatively – use this as a ‘coming together’ space
- **Use of IT - MS teams has become BAU**
- Better engagement/attendance in meetings. Staff have enjoyed seeing “the person”
- Staff feedback on clear messages from Senior Managers
- **Staff creativity, improved working relationships**
- OP MET meeting – SWs dropping in to the meeting rather than travel
- HSCP meeting working well – look at Hybrid model? (different speeds of different agencies etc.)

## Didn't Work Well

- Courts appear to be out of step with current circumstances of staff
- **Sensitive meetings e.g.: HR**
- Fostering health and safety checks
- Newly qualified staff not having experiential working
- Amount of MS team meetings, the need to plan diary well
- **Equipment, making sure people equipped to do the role**
- Not having face to face training how we introduce again , mixture of virtual and face to face?
- Not all large meetings work as well virtually, need to practice how to improve
- CWD cohort – **non communicative children virtual is not better.** Face to face needed when safe to do so.
- **Parenting assessments**

# What next:

As lock down eases we must continue working in an agile and responsive way

We are planning for:

- Reviewing building use-incremental increase based on maintaining social distancing, consideration of rotas for staff
- Increasing demand: both referrals and for placements
- Constantly assessing risk for face to face visits & contact
- Reporting and monitoring to continue daily/weekly. This will play an important role in assessing impact and analysing areas of need so we can deploy resources effectively
- Ensuring that staff and foster carers are accessing testing swiftly and appropriately



# New ways of working

There are some great examples of how we have worked differently

- Together as teams
- In a mobile and flexible way
- With children and families

**We can learn from this and must ensure the good bits are sustained in the service of the future**

However, we will always be mindful that new opportunities must not compromise basic social work practice that cannot be done virtually.

Adoption of new ways of working need to be incorporated into what we already do that makes us outstanding. There are fundamental tasks that will never change and they are an integral part of keeping children safe





# In conclusion



Business as usual but doing it differently



We have maintained constant and solid management oversight of service



Our practitioners, managers and foster carers have been Outstanding in adapting and going above and beyond



Our work with agencies has been collaborative and responsive

We will transition the ease of lockdown by continuing to operate in an agile way. This will enable us to continuously maintain services if we need to go back into lock down at a later stage.

# Schools

We have maintained a constant dialogue with our schools

- Our schools remained opened during the crisis for children of key workers and those classed as vulnerable
- We have monitored attendance closely for our vulnerable children, and continue to do so
- We have risk assessed each vulnerable child who has not attended school
- We have worked with Education and schools to provide laptops to eligible vulnerable children
- Children & Families and Education & Inclusion have worked together in close collaboration



# Impact of Covid-19 on Education



**Brian Pope**  
**Assistant Director**

# PM announcement - Schools closed from end of Friday 20 March 2020

- Open for children of critical workers and vulnerable children
- List of critical workers produced by the DfE
- Definition of vulnerable children produced by DfE but extended in Hampshire
- Vulnerable:
  - Open to social care – early help, child in need, child protection plan and looked after children
  - Education Health and Care Plan

# PM announcement - Schools closed from end of Friday 20 March 2020

- **Critical workers** – conflicting advice, one parent or two
- **Vulnerable children open to social care** – partnership system put in place, schools, social care and school improvement teams
- Built up numbers over time – 260 up to 1,835
- **EHCP** – risk assessment, “as safe or safer in schools”
- Education team sampling and quality assuring risk assessments

# Home Learning – rapid adaption

- School autonomy to determine approach
- First-hand experiential learning.
- Daily blog, resource pack, e-mail
- Manageable chunks, quality over quantity
- Family friendly – parents aren't subject specialists
- Emphasis on enjoyment as well as learning
- Some on-line learning
- Regular feedback key
- Support from DfE, HCC, BBC, etc

# Support to Schools

- School Improvement Team - frequent coaching conversations with headteachers
- Governor Services – support to governors
- DfE guidance, based upon public health guidance, should be followed
- Advice rapidly produced to exemplify DfE guidance within Hampshire context
- FAQs – 70 pages
- Think pieces drafted to support recovery in primary, secondary and special school contexts

# Support to Schools

- Major focus on well being and mental health with good signposting to a raft of support (staff and pupils)
- Laptops for children open to social care and disadvantaged in Year 10
- Info cell set up – enquiries from parents, heads, county council staff, governors. Matters addressed - HR, FSM, finance, buildings, PPE, PH, media, legal etc



# 1 June 2020. Wider reopening in primary

- Extensive advice from DfE to schools
- Bubbles of no more than 15 children plus staff
- Separate bubbles – start, finish, play and lunch times
- Good hygiene and cleaning
- No rotas
- Priority order for return – children of critical workers, vulnerable, Year R, Year 1 and then Year 6
- Headteachers supported by Education Team to help work through risk assessments

# 1 June 2020. Wider reopening in primary

- Challenging circumstances – staff, professional associations, parents, DfE, media etc
- Call for patience
- 25,000+ pupils return

# 15 June 2020. Wider reopening in secondary

- Year 10 only
- Some face to face supplemented by home learning
- 25% of Year 10 on site at any one time
- Supporting national system for awarding GCSE grades for current Year 11

# Business as usual but doing things differently...

- Special Educational Needs Team
- Educational Psychology Team
- Music Service
- Specialist Teaching Advisers
- Inclusion Team
- Virtual School
- Careers advice
- Post 16 team – support to colleges, continued learning
- Primary Behaviour Service
- Swanwick, Leigh House, Bluebird, Austen and Place2Learn



**Peter Colenutt MBE**  
**Assistant Director**  
**Strategic Development and Capital Delivery**  
**Children's Services and Adults' Health & Care**

**Barton Farm** (2 FE primary)



**Stoneham Park** (1.5FE primary)

- Majority of construction sites remained open adhering to government guidance “ Construction can continue where it is done in line with public health guidance“
- A few sites closed initially to review H&S plans and then reopened
- All sites now open with contracts closely monitored
- Non essential school repair and maintenance work - suspended at first but projects now restarting – all schemes reviewed on a case by case basis



### **Austen Academy (125 place SCD Through School)**



- Productivity likely to be lower than before the crisis
- All schools and governing bodies are being fully consulted about the scope of works and planned delivery
- New school places schemes (basic need) on track for delivery for September 2020
- Weekly liaison with the DfE Capital Directorate



### **Deer Park (7FE Secondary)**

# **Access, Resources and Business Development**

**Suzanne Smith  
Assistant Director**



# Immediate Impact



Business as usual but doing things differently:

Support functions  
School admissions  
Commissioning & placement finding  
Workforce development



Suspension of some activity:

Complaints  
Some statutory returns  
Some tender processes



Close working with CCGs around planning and risks



Some tenders halted, others continued



Work to establish payments to providers during lockdown



New contact arrangements for providers including Early Years settings implemented



Areas most significantly affected are Early Years and Home to School Transport

# HtST - Lockdown

Pre-Covid	Lockdown
<p><b>Mainstream Children:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1,635 Primary Age Pupils transport each day</li> <li>• 7,390 Secondary Age travellers</li> <li>• Service at the beginning and end of school day</li> <li>• Mostly single, double decker bus and coach services</li> <li>• Loadings to utilise vast majority of seats</li> </ul>	<p><b>Mainstream Children:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Variable numbers of children attending – transport arranged for 170 key worker children, 110 year R, 1&amp;6 and 270 Year 10</li> <li>• Variable number of routes running daily due to increase for Year 10 students</li> <li>• Social distancing has to be maintained requiring more vehicles for fewer children</li> <li>• Service Beginning and End of School Day, but some requests now being made for early pick ups</li> <li>• Small numbers of non-eligible children being transported as part of being a flexible service.</li> <li>• DfT advice promoted 100% retention payments to bus and coach operators</li> </ul>
<p><b>SEN Children:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 995 Primary Age Pupils</li> <li>• 1,614 Secondary Age HtST travellers</li> <li>• 291 FE College students</li> <li>• Service Beginning and End of School Day</li> <li>• Almost entirely smaller vehicles, fewer than 17 seats; Cars, MPV, Minibuses and Specialised Vehicles</li> <li>• Some solo routes but grouping whenever possible</li> <li>• ~ 600 escorts provided based on individual needs and to make grouped arrangements safe</li> </ul>	<p><b>SEN Children:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Variable numbers of children attending – circa 523 pupils over the course of a week</li> <li>• Variable number of routes running – now more than 400 arrangements</li> <li>• Circa 10% of escorts in shielded groups</li> <li>• Average of 150 escorts being used each day</li> <li>• Service Beginning and End of School Day</li> <li>• 50% retention payment paid to other providers, with a separate process to consider financial support for operators experiencing exceptional financial difficulties</li> </ul>

# HtST Recovery

- Year R, 1 and 6 returned on 1 June – total of 550 eligible children in these year groups (110 being transported)
- Year 10 return 15 June – total of 1,507 eligible children (273 requests so far)
- Transport principles shared with schools to aid their planning, including:
  - Parents should take children to school wherever possible;
  - Public transport to be avoided;
  - 15-25% of capacity can be used of vehicles due to social distancing;
  - Limited capacity and flexibility in the system;
  - Schools will need to support safe loading of children on to transport.
- Some uncertainty regards numbers returning on 15 June – likely to try and ensure arrangements available to all eligible children unless schools confirm otherwise
- Attendance variable and constant need to adjust transport provision
- Circa 400 SEN and 50 mainstream routes now running and 150 escorts
- Escorts and drivers wear face masks



# HtST – Future Challenges



Impact of maintaining social distancing upon available capacity – there is not enough transport to support all year groups returning to school (we estimate capacity is used at most 40% attendance)



Market sustainability, particularly as the furlough scheme winds down



Need for DfT and DfE to ensure guidance is consistent where it needs to be and differentiated where it makes sense to be



T21 HtST savings programme will be delayed



Churn in school escorts will require recruitment to maintain numbers



Potential for greater use of parental mileage allowances and possibly spend to save minibuses

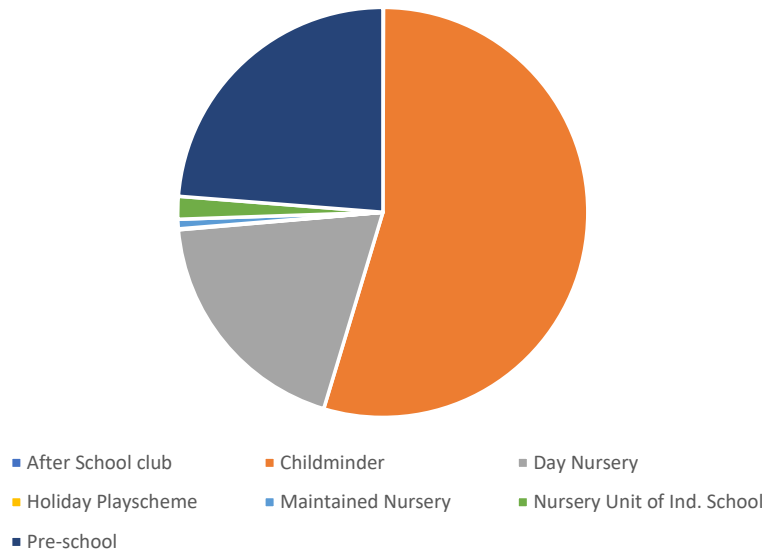


# School Admissions

- National primary offer day on 16 April 2020 - 22,500 applications processed
- Supported schools by introducing step for parents to confirm online acceptance of offer to HCC rather than through the school
- Just under 98 per cent (97.77 per cent) of parents have been offered a reception year place for their child in one of their three preferred choice schools, with 90.96% being allocated a place at their first choice of school
- Of pupils transferring from infant school to junior school (Year 3), 99 per cent (99.07 per cent) received a place at one of their three choices – with just under 98 per cent (97.88 per cent) obtaining a place at their first choice school
- In response to the current Covid-19 situation, parents of children starting school in September 2020 have been advised to wait to be contacted by the school about how to present their proof of address and children's birth certificate
- Temporary changes to legislative arrangements made on 24 April allows for admissions appeals to be heard virtually or as a paper based process. HCC adopted a paper based process with appeals commencing 1 June 2020. First outcomes of paper appeals being received

# Early Years – Childcare Market Context

Hampshire Childcare Market  
(excluding wraparound care)



Range of children privately funded	Number of providers
all EYE funded	69
all privately funded children	161
greater than 0% up to 5% privately funded for 1 to 4 children	32
greater than 10% up to 20% privately funded 1 - 16 children	146
greater than 20% up to 30% privately funded 1 to 42 children	122
greater than 30% up to 40% privately funded - 1 to 43 children	86
greater than 40% up to 60% privately funded - 1 to 132 children	244
greater than 5% up to 10% privately funded 1 to 9 children	47
greater than 60% up to 80% privately funded - 2 to 180 children	274
greater than 80% and less than 99% privately funded - 5 to 410 children	199
Misc data	91
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1471</b>

The market is relatively unstable, with many providers locally based and with little by way of reserves or organisational infrastructure to support them with complex financial issues. There are significant risks to ensuring future sufficiency of the market if we (central and local government) are unable to support the sector with both advice and finance.

# Early Years Lockdown

- 17 March 2020, Government confirmed that local authorities should continue to pay for free early years entitlement places for 2,3 and 4 year olds even if settings were closed
- Hampshire made an advance payment to providers to support cashflow. All Early Years Entitlement funding paid until the end of the summer term
- Childcare settings closed from 23 March for all bar vulnerable children and those of keyworkers
- Created a brokerage service within 24 hours
- 50-100 enquiries per day
- Confusion within the sector regarding furlough
- Financial support for setting experiencing exceptional financial difficulties/falling though the gaps in Government financial support – four settings have received payments, four pending
- Additional costs of c.£158k double funding for keyworkers during lockdown, more to come
- Regular FAQs produced and circulated to help sector navigate and understand guidance
- Webinars with sector to explore their concerns, provide guidance and encourage peer to peer support
- Frequent engagement with government to raise questions, explore issues

# Early Years Recovery – DfE Return 11/6/20

	Total	Open	Closed
How many childcare settings are in your area?	1829	1090	242
How many are group-based early years providers?	632	492	136
How many are school-based early years providers?	36	34	1
How many are childminders?	1161	564	105
Are any childcare settings planning to close next week?	Not sure		
Approximately how many children are attending childcare in your area?	3663		
How many are children of critical workers?	1638		
How many are vulnerable children?	225		
Are there enough places for all children of critical workers and vulnerable children who need one?	Yes		



# Early Years Future Challenges

- Financial challenges and sector sustainability
  - Continued need to double fund
  - Autumn term issues
  - Parental demand
  - Interplay with capacity
  - Withdrawal of furlough
- Capacity
- Wraparound care
- Community run provision
- Sector confidence and infrastructure
- Parental update
- Access and cost of hygiene supplies
- Business Planning
- Longer term changes to working patterns and employment



Thank you  
and  
any questions

