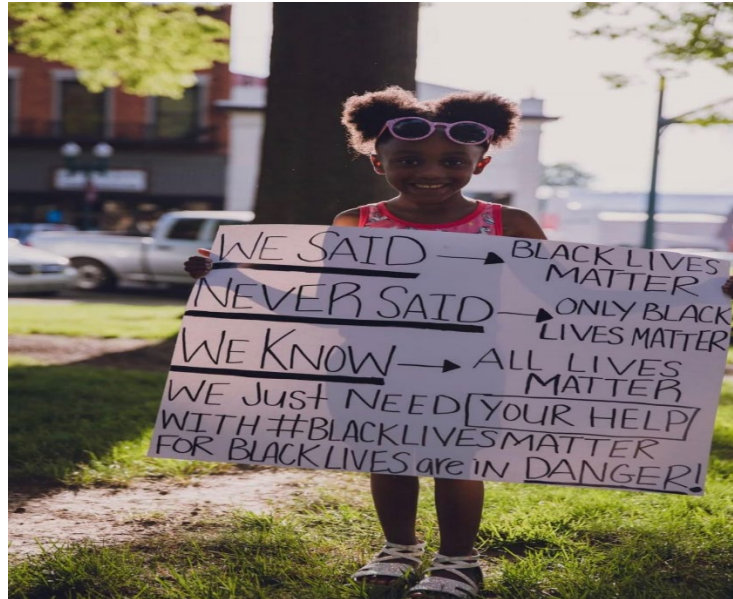




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LATEST NEWS

Black Lives Matter and Education



I recently wrote a reflective piece for MyLondon about the Black Lives Matter agenda highlighting the importance of eradicating hatred and promoting black advancement as a society which can be read via the following link: <https://twitter.com/myldn/status/1272815459671441409?s=10>

The recent murder of George Floyd is sadly one more precious life taken, in a line of many who have fallen before him whilst echoing the words “I can’t breathe”. We call the names of those who have died so that they will always be remembered Olaseni Lewis, Rashan Charles, Sarah Reed, Joy Gardener their deaths cannot and must not be in vain. From an education perspective much more must be done to tackle the disproportionate number of black children who are excluded from mainstream education and eradicate the school to prison pipeline that too many of our children have fallen victim to. A number of welcome discussions have been taking place between Croydon school leaders with the hope that we will find change this problem once and for all.

In one of the locality meetings the possibility of a working group on improving the curriculum was suggested by one of our Head teachers. Josephine Copeland from All Saints CofE Primary School who said the following:

“Although we are still working our way through the changing service provision in response to Covid-19, the ‘Black Lives Matter’ campaign is right now very close to our

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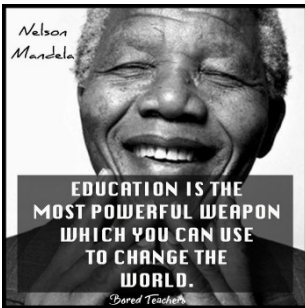


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hearts. As you will know, Croydon is one of the most diverse London Boroughs and as such it is right and proper that we play an active part in making a difference.

The proposal is that we work together as a collaboration of Croydon schools and the wider school / education communities to build on the great work in diversity, equality, inclusion and difference already done in a number of schools within the Borough to develop and implement a ‘flagship’ curriculum to celebrate diversity, difference, equality and inclusion. This is a positive response to very tragic circumstances that will go a long way towards creating and enabling lasting and transformation change within our very diverse communities.”

Response to Covid19 – Children, Families and Education



Ahead of the Secretary of States announcement on 20 March 2020 regarding the closure of schools to all but vulnerable children and children of key workers until further notice the leader and I met with Head teachers, the Director of Education and colleagues on 19 March 2020 in the Town Hall to discuss steps to radically redesigned the delivery of education provision Croydon in line with

national guidance. This transformation was required to be delivered almost overnight and I am grateful to all Croydon education and childcare settings who helped us as a borough to rise to the challenge.

The majority of schools remained open for vulnerable and key worker children, with some schools developing a ‘hub’ model across two or more schools. Schools in the borough have worked in partnership to ensure enough provision was available.



Local Authority Officer and Advisers supported schools, recognising that each school is unique, we followed a methodology of ‘walking alongside’ head teachers and school leaders to support the individual needs of each school. This involved (but is not an exhaustive list):

- Daily phone calls with Head teachers and school leaders – checking on their welfare and that of their staff.
- A dedicated email account set up for schools and families
- Supporting schools and vulnerable families with free school meals and food parcels
- Co-ordinating Healthcare guidance with PH colleagues
- Ensuring National guidance had a Croydon context
- Regular meetings with Trade Unions and Professional Organisations.

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- Twice weekly officers and advisers catch up meetings
- Devising recovery curriculum guidelines to support schools in the transition to wider provision
- Additional offers of pastoral care for head teachers to support their wellbeing
- Virtual locality meetings with school leaders
- Transition guidance developed with school leaders
- Lobbying the DfE to deliver the Digital Deviser rollout and provide the much needed IT equipment

Please note that the Local Authority make no distinction between the types of setting during the initial phases of the pandemic as we are supporting Croydon Children.

Schools have submitted attendance data to the department on a daily basis and we have been able to oversee provision in the borough. Numbers of pupils in schools have significantly increased since 1st June when primary schools widened their opening.

Tackling Food Poverty

At the first notification of school closures in March, the Education Directorate developed a plan to support schools and families to continue to access good food. The following steps were agreed:

- Schools should continue to cook for pupils still attending school.
- Where possible, schools will cook extra hot food for families to collect hot meals directly from the school gates or meals to be delivered to families most in need.
- Schools to provide food hampers for FSM pupils to support families for 1-2 weeks at a time – examples of healthy balanced foods to be included were provided.
- Schools purchase their own supermarket vouchers to issue to families in receipt of FSM (before the national scheme launched).
- Education directorate purchased £10,000 of emergency supermarket vouchers for those schools not able to issue their own.

In early April a dedicated support inbox was launched to offer advice, guidance and a referral service for schools and early year's settings worried about food provision, vouchers or families having limited access to food. The feedback from schools and families has been very positive.



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Education Support for Children Looked After

I am delighted to report that The Virtual school team have been able to maintain all functions as usual while working remotely.

- They have delivered focused weekly calls to foster carers and young people in semi-independent accommodation.
- They have issued their own online resources to support learning for our 450+ young people of school age. We have over 100 school age pupils signed up to Flash Maths academy online and similar numbers engaging with Britannica resources that we fund licenses too.
- Similarly, our careers advice information and guidance programmes have continued to run - accessible via our team and Social workers. Many of our young people have accessed our licenses to Kudos programme that offers a full careers interview and suggestion of next steps in the local area to our young people.
- They have also been able to process and issue over 100 laptops/tablets to young people via a combination of our own pupil premium grant funding and the governments' laptop scheme. This will continue over the coming months and we expect every child or young person in our care who has needed a device and/internet to have been given this by the end of the academic year. This has meant young people have been better able to stay in touch with schools and not lose out on learning and communication with their schools.

Support for Pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

- Since the introduction of COVID-19 pandemic measures the SEN Service has adapted practice to maintain performance and work virtually whenever possible.
- The Youth Disability Service has remained open three days a week and has been providing post 19 care, support and training for independence for young people with complex and severe learning difficulties; prioritising attendance for young people whose family circumstances are such that 'lockdown' and staying at home puts a strain on the family and the young person's well-being.
- The Early Years Inclusion and Intervention Team have worked hard to develop and publish resources on the Local Offer website for parents and carers of young children with SEN, in particular for those with autism. Team members are keeping in contact with parents and, for those children with special educational needs who will be starting school in September, team members have been arranging meetings between early years settings, schools and parents to support planning for the autumn term.

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- All our special schools are now open with increasing numbers of children returning week on week. Attendance at Enhanced Learning Provisions (ELPs) is also increasing; most ELP provisions have remained open throughout with an offer of places to all ELP pupils.

Schools have commented positively on the:

- Support from Croydon school transport service with willingness to adapt to changing demand for school places and offering flexibility to reflect part-time attendance and different drop off and pick up times
- Guidance and resources from the ELP service as well as access to the parent advice line.
- Support from the speech and language service.

Support for Vulnerable Pupils

- Learning Access has continued to have the safety and wellbeing of pupils at the heart of its work throughout Covid-19. Officers have continued to stay in touch with families and have liaised with their schools and other services where needed. Examples of this work include securing food support for a family who was struggling to secure food; online mentoring for a young man who was becoming increasingly anxious about Covid-19; and continuing to liaise with the schools and other services in respect of a pupil who has been out of education for some time to ensure he has education.
- Other aspects of the teams work such as SPOC; complex admissions applications; children missing from education and elective home education have continued to be business as normal but working from home. We have switched to engaging with parents of electively home educated children remotely. This has been well received by families. We are also carrying out wellbeing calls to our more vulnerable families. One of these calls identified a safeguarding concern that led to a SPOC referral.
- Prosecutions and fines for absence from school have stopped as a result of Covid-19. As schools widen their attendance the service is now focused on providing support to schools to ensure vulnerable children resume attendance and do not become missing from education.
- Finally the service has supported the wider directorate's response to Covid-19 by providing supplementary guidance to schools; delivering PPE; and assisting colleagues in SEND.

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Education support for Post 16 Transitions and NEET

- There are a huge range of services on offer to young people in Croydon to support them to find employment and training opportunities, and many have adapted their offer to meet the needs of our young people during the crisis. Introducing new ways of engaging, new virtual and online methods of delivery, and stepping up their health and mental wellbeing support.
- The NEET Team continue to work with schools to ensure that all pupils in years 11 and 12 are applying for places for the next academic year and receiving offers. To support this work, details of local providers who are able to support pupils with their post 16 transition were shared with schools and also posted on the Young Croydon website. Furthermore, virtual appointments have been offered for pupils and / or their parents / carers who have any concern or would benefit from personalised information and advice.

NEET Support (16-18 year olds and up to age 21 for care leavers)

- An Instagram video has been created and posted on the Youth Service's Young Croydon platforms, signposting the website for information and also to the NEET team's inbox to request transition into EET support.
- An Opportunities Bulletin is distributed (at the beginning of each month) to all young people on our database whose is recorded as either NEET or Not Known. This bulletin is also circulated to professionals working with the cohort, likewise posted on the Young Croydon website. We continue to deliver our 'Local Offer for Care Leavers' which sets out the services Croydon Council provides to care leavers. This is given to all care leavers. The document was produced in consultation with care leavers, understanding their perspectives and designing a system which responds to their needs.

School Place Planning and Admission & Early Years

- The council continues to meet its planning duties (s13-14 Education Act 1996) to promote high standards of education and fair access to education; secure provision for children with SEN; and respond to parental preference.
- All children who applied for a reception place for September 2020 have received an offer of a place, with 84% being allocated a place at their 1st preference school on national offer day – 16 April; and 96% receiving one of their first three preference schools.

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- In-year applications are being processed and offers made in line with current processes. School admission appeals will take place in line with the temporary changes to the School Admission Appeal Regulations 2012, during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. If you need assistance in this regard please note the contact officer below:

Single Point of Contact and Assessment Service

- The Front Door continues to manage all referrals into Early Help and Children's Social Care. The Service is working remotely and ensuring all referrals meet the agreed timescales for response and action. Strategy Meetings are taking place by phone and partners dial in to support the planning for children and young people at risk of or who have suffered significant harm.
- SPOC and Assessment managers continue to work together closely to ensure that those children most at risk are responded to in a timely manner
- SPOC staff have been provided with details of resources and support that families can access, linked to COVID 19 needs. Our Emergency Duty Team (EDT) covering adults, housing and children continues to manage out of hour's emergencies, we have supported the team with back up workers when necessary.
- EDT staff have been provided with comprehensive details of support services available to vulnerable families and adults and are provided with weekly updated information around emergency accommodation for children, families and vulnerable adults

Visiting Children & Families

Social workers and their managers are continuously reviewing and assessing risks and protective factors for the families they work with, and visits against the three priority groups are reported and monitored on a weekly basis.

In priority 1 cases, where children and young people are subject to child protection plans or where there are safeguarding concerns social workers continue to carry out face to face visits to the required timescales. For priority 2 and 3 every other visit, subject to the risk assessment described above is virtual social workers and family support workers continue to complete virtual visits video/face time every two weeks. Close liaison between the education directorate and children's social care is supporting the promotion of school attendance for vulnerable children, although this continues to reflect the national picture of lower levels than we would like. Families

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that are self-isolating have been identified and their specific needs recorded, working closely with the Council's response to shielded residents.

We anticipate rising demand for services from the autumn as more children and young people attend school and partner agencies, such as health, have more contact with residents. Activity levels are monitored and discussed on a weekly basis to ensure the service is ready to respond

Back to school plan

The Education Directorate has produced a working action plan outlining the key priorities and actions that will need to be taken as schools widen their opening and in preparation for September.



Priority areas include:

- Ensuring pupils do not become missing from education
- Identifying vulnerable pupils who are at risk of CME or do not resume education
- Ensuring that pupils without a school place can obtain one
- Curriculum
- Providing advice and guidance to parents about arrangements but also their children's well-being
- Managing children's emotions about the return to school
- Helping schools provide emotional support for children and staff returning to school from this period of absence.
- Supporting successful transition for pupils, including those with special educational needs and disabilities, starting reception, year 7 and post-16 destinations.
- Ensuring risk of NEET year 11 – 13 leavers are identified and aware of support available.
- Children with and EHC Plan are supported back into school

We will work closely with our schools and families to ensure that our children and young people's transition back to school is as smooth as possible.



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Integrating emotional wellbeing and mental health support within Children's Services



health support

One of our top priorities is to improve children, young people and families' access to emotional wellbeing and mental health support. That is why in February 2020, working closely with our South London and Maudsley (SLAM) NHS Trust and Child and Adolescent Mental Health service (CAMHS) colleagues we took steps to integrate emotional wellbeing and mental health support within Children's Services.

All services for children and young people are now managed through Croydon's Single Point of Contact (SPOC), a multi-agency service which works with a wide range of teams and partner agencies to agree the right support for children and families depending on their needs. The integration of emotional wellbeing and mental health support with Children's Services, including co-located CAMHS practitioners, ensures that there is easier access to advice and targeted support for these concerns.

We have been working closely with GPs, schools and other referrers to ensure they are aware of the benefits this development brings - a more responsive service that provides the right help at the right time. We will continue to work in partnership to monitor the impact of this service and make further improvements, where we need to. We would like to thank our partners for their continued commitment to securing the best outcomes for our most vulnerable children, young people and families.

Improvement Update

Following the successful inspection of early help and children's social care that was published in March 2020 the children's improvement Plan has been updated for 2020-22. The refreshed continuous improvement plan addresses the inspectors' recommendations and sets out the priorities for further service innovations. These include:

- Introducing the PAUSE project, working intensively with women and their families to prevent children coming into our care
- The development of a new clinical service led by our systemic and clinical practice team, to support children's Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health (EWMH) needs
- Launch the Safe Families project, offering bespoke packages of support to families in crisis or in need, delivered through a network of local, trained volunteers.

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We Are Excited To Announce Our 2020 Summer Offer

What's on offer?

Subject to local guidance, Public Health England and Health & Safety Executive Advice, we are hopeful that we will be able to facilitate a varied **Summer Offer** that has been informed by our children and young people. We aim to include Creative Expression through poetry, relationship identity, arts & crafts and clothes design. Where possible the facilitation of physical activities, will include table tennis, boxing and yoga. Our music strand will aim to offer a space for creative writing and lyric design and informal and formal activities, will include Pool, Charades and other well-known games.

Our Instagram offer officially launched in April 2020 and will be available throughout the summer period. The **virtual platform** will provide informal education through activities that assist to develop social skills, building on strengths, promoting aspiration and community cohesion.

We will continue to provide a virtual platform for **EMPIRE**, a bespoke offer for Children and Young People in Care and Care Leavers, which will combine fitness, dance, music, business and personal development sessions. However, we are optimistic that face to face activities will resume, as noted above, subject to National and Local Advice and Guidance.

Last month, a **Mental Health and Wellbeing** Youth Forum Sub Group was developed, to promote peer to peer support for young people in Croydon struggling with their mental health and wellbeing. We recognise how vital this assistance is during this uncertain time, so we will ensure that themed Virtual Youth Forums continue throughout the summer to ensure support beyond the academic year.

Our **Locality, Detached and Outreach Team**, have resumed Socially Distanced engagement within the community, currently offering a pro-active way of engaging with children and young people within their own space.

At all times we will follow local guidance and current Public Health England and Health & Safety Executive Advice. We recognise that the level of lockdown will vary over time and potentially by location however, we will ensure that children, young people and our followers are **continually updated**.

The Whitgift Community Summer School project

Croydon Council is very pleased to be working in partnership with Whitgift Independent School on this project. The Whitgift Community Summer School will be a great opportunity for some of our year 5 pupils to take part in this project which aims to

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reduce the achievement gap caused by the COVID 19 Pandemic and the extended time out of school.

The School will seek to support Croydon pupils to achieve their full academic potential and help them look beyond the pressures they and their families may have encountered over the past term. As well as encouraging academic progress, the programme aims to inspire confidence and a sense of community, offering pupils a chance for wider social interaction, on Whitgift's grounds in Haling Park which have been made Covid-19 secure.

CMA online: A New Digital Arts Programme for Young People

Croydon Music and Arts has continued working with young people during lockdown through digital versions of all its activity. From instrumental lessons via Zoom to producing Time Capsule films documenting young people's experiences using the Seesaw Home Learning app we have created ways to engage with young people.

We are now launching CMA Online, a new digital arts programme available for all young artists aged 8-18 in Croydon. This will be the basis of a new blended learning offer as we emerge from lockdown. The features of the programme are:

- We can personalise it for each young artist, to help them "develop and discover their interests and talents" (a quote from the latest Ofsted framework)
- We can signpost relevant face to face classes, projects and events provided by CMA or our cultural partners
- Young artists can work their way through the five levels of the new Star Award qualification CMA is developing with RSL Exam Board
- We can offer activity which allows them to express themselves in a safe space, explore issues in their lives and support their well-being
- We can provide a platform for them to present their work to their families, friends and communities

We are using our Arts Council grants to make this affordable for all young artists. Courses which would normally attract a charge will be free for children who are Looked After or Pupil Premium.

We are launching the programme with ***Your Story, Your Heritage, Your Croydon***. Young people are asked to explore their family heritage and send us a video of a poem, song, dance or story from that heritage. Those who wish to share it more widely will be included in a digital mosaic which CMA will create to be displayed in Croydon Museum and Libraries to celebrate Croydon's cultural diversity.

Your Story, Your Heritage, Your Croydon is the starting point for:

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- Our Creative Ways to Well-being course, based on The Children's Society Five Ways to Well-being, to help young people cope with the losses experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic
- Our Star Award journey of exploration. We start by valuing young people's family heritage and give them choices to explore popular art, formal arts traditions and how we have all been enriched by practice which combines different traditions
- Our support for schools to create a curriculum which responds to the needs of their school community. The arts are a safe space to explore the issues around them. By giving children and young people a voice through the arts we can empower them to be part of the generational change which Black Lives Matter is calling for.