



# Children, Young People and Learning Cabinet Member Bulletin Councillor Alisa Flemming October 2020

## LATEST NEWS

### GCSE & A Level Results

This has been one of the most unsettling periods for pupils and their access to education in recent times. It is likely that pupils currently in years 11 and 13 will as a result of the impact of COVID, be closely monitored over the coming years. In Croydon we are pleased that pupils continued to work hard with their teachers during lockdown despite the difficulties that working from home posed for some students. Many of the students achieved the Centre Assessed Grades that were moderated and thought through by schools.



The National Government are not requesting that any school outcomes for exams be published this year, nor will OFSTED be looking at them. Our results were strong and in line with previous years and I am proud of our young people, teachers and carers for all that has been achieved.

Contact Officer: [Michael.McKeaveney@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:Michael.McKeaveney@croydon.gov.uk)

### Steps to Success

On GCSE results day, the Virtual School, Croydon Works, the Economic Growth team and the Post 16 Participation & Not in Employment Education or Training teams came together to host the Steps to Success event in Croydon town centre.

The aim of the event was to enable anyone aged 16yrs+ navigating their next steps after taking their exams, currently not in employment, education or training (NEET), or whose employment has been impacted by the COVID pandemic, to meet and engage directly with local training and education providers to discuss their current opportunities.



In order to ensure that the team adhered to COVID guidelines, the event was on a smaller scale than in previous years with 12 local providers in attendance. This was supplemented with a week long programme of virtual events. Despite the reduced presence, there was still considerable public footfall and the providers were delighted about the range of people they were able to engage with.

**AMBITIOUS FOR CROYDON**



# Children, Young People and Learning Cabinet Member Bulletin Councillor Alisa Flemming October 2020

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The success of the event and feedback signifies the importance of brokering contact between Croydon residents, our partners and our own services.

For any additional information on this update please contact: [Jo.Jack@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:Jo.Jack@croydon.gov.uk)

## Covid-19 & How Schools Supported Children & Young People

Despite all the challenges of lockdown. Croydon schools remained open throughout and continued to support our children, young people and families. Our Schools used flexible arrangements to encourage children into school – some offered morning or afternoon sessions; not the whole week and/or offering respite care (especially for children who were finding lockdown hard). Close partnership working with parents was provided to deliver a very short initial taster visit for any anxious children or young people who in turn then went on to stay for a whole session. School leaders and teachers who know their children very well, also worked hard to negotiate which days particular children attended school to support friendship groups amongst students and sometimes according to an attachment to a certain member of staff and when they are on the rota to be in school. Schools also offered short sessions to single-parent families so that parents were able to shop for vital groceries and household items (especially where supermarkets would not allow children into the stores).

Learning packs or learning platforms were modified to take account of pupils with additional needs. Sometimes differentiation was extensive and for children with EHC plans, personalised. SENDCo checked this provision was in place for all who needed it. Learning packs with home language instructions were also created. Many schools created videos and step by step instructions to help parents deliver home learning. Schools also offered remote Speech and language sessions for pupils, or session times where parents/carers can ring the speech and language practitioner for advice and also negotiated the opening of their sensory rooms for short periods for children with significant learning disabilities or the use of their outdoor estate where necessary.

Parents praised our schools for offering printed home learning packs to be delivered or collected. This was particularly vital where families had limited or no access to internet/devices. Schools and colleges also checked which families required devices to support access to online learning, not only where they had no access but being sensitive to demands on larger families and/or where parents are working from home. There was also follow-up by providing families with a device where needed and these being cleaned and checked for anti-virus software before delivery.

A significant number of schools supported well-being and literacy through staff reading stories to children (all staff contributing to the reading of a picture book, a member of staff reading a chapter each day from a longer book, sharing poems with children) on

**AMBITIOUS FOR CROYDON**



# Children, Young People and Learning Cabinet Member Bulletin Councillor Alisa Flemming October 2020

---

virtual platforms and Twitter Schools also used learning platforms, and use of Twitter, with warm and reassuring messages for all.

For any additional information on this update please contact [Michael.McKeaveney@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:Michael.McKeaveney@croydon.gov.uk)

## Covid-19 and preparation for return to school in September 2020

At the beginning of September 2020 and in preparation for September re-opening, Schools and colleges began to prepare, to welcome students back on a fulltime basis to nurseries, schools, colleges and university.

Throughout the Covid-19 Lockdown phase of the pandemic, the Education Directorate supported educational leaders from an organisational, strategic and pastoral starting point.

In July 2020, towards the end of the Summer Term, weekly contact with Head teachers from School Effectiveness Partners took place. This was to feedback on anxieties of school leadership teams around re-opening. These focused around child and adult Covid Safety and routines that could be established. This intelligence was then discussed at a weekly Officers' & Advisers' meeting where support plans were devised and enacted. A toolkit for transition to September was published in July and was based on the Government Guidance that was published at the time. This toolkit was produced by the Learning Access team in the Education Directorate and included a checklist of activities, risk assessment guidance and also set out the offer of support that the Directorate could provide over the coming months. Head teachers were briefed on this throughout July in virtual Locality Meetings. Chairs of Governors were briefed by the Interim Head of Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion on 16 July 2020 and concerns from Governors noted. It was agreed that all Governing Bodies would approve the re-opening plans of their schools. Summaries of these plans were then submitted to the Education Directorate.

Our schools have taken a contextual approach to their opening, finding ways of securing bubble integrity and also in supporting staff as they return to schools. They are working closely with the Education Directorate and Public Health England on testing any suspected cases. While we cannot guarantee that there will not be another outbreak, either locally or nationally, we are doing all we can to meet Government Guidance. We ask that local communities check their local school websites for specific news and updates. Throughout this term we will be tracking attendance, safeguarding and supporting pupils in overcoming any adverse lockdown experiences.

**AMBITIOUS FOR CROYDON**



# Children, Young People and Learning Cabinet Member Bulletin Councillor Alisa Flemming October 2020

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For any additional information on this update please contact:  
[Michael.McKeaveney@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:Michael.McKeaveney@croydon.gov.uk)

## Healthy Eating in Croydon Schools

Local schools have worked hard throughout the coronavirus pandemic to support children and their families to continue to access healthy, balanced food. By issuing the National Free School Meal Vouchers, issuing their own school vouchers, distributing food parcels and cooking meals for collection, thousands of local families have accessed good food from schools, over the past few months.

14 local schools have partnered with the charity FareShare and collected weekly food supplies which were then parcelled up and distributed to families. This continued over the summer holidays for some and into the autumn term. At Thomas Moore Catholic School, a large delivery from FareShare enabled them to hold a food parcel day in July where families were encouraged to come and stock up on store cupboard ingredients, to enable them to then use their Covid Summer Food Fund Vouchers (national government scheme) to buy fresh healthy produce on a weekly basis.

This term, the focus for schools is on adapting the food service to ensure that it is Covid safe, whilst still providing quality, balanced meals for all pupils choosing a school meal. Schools are staggering lunchtimes, increasing serving points around school, transporting food to classrooms and making healthy food parcels available for any pupils unable to attend school.

To ensure that the importance of healthy, balanced food is at the forefront of provision this term, schools have been provided with local guidance on running an adapted food service, they have been given food lists for providing healthy food parcels and have access to online training and networking opportunities.

For any additional information on this update please contact:  
[Michael.McKeaveney@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:Michael.McKeaveney@croydon.gov.uk)



# Children, Young People and Learning Cabinet Member Bulletin Councillor Alisa Flemming October 2020

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## EMPIRE

When the Children in Care Council was relaunched in 2017, the young people fed back that they did not feel comfortable being referred to as a children in care council as they are more than just children who are in care. Following a six month consultation with children and young people the name E.M.P.I.R.E was chosen.



The purpose of EMPIRE is to empower young people who are children looked after and care leavers with the confidence and power to influence policy change, shape the service and have their voice heard.

The offer is that all children and young people automatically become an EMPIRE member from the day they become looked after by the Local Authority. I am proud to chair one of the few Corporate Parenting Panels in the country who has an open invitation for all EMPIRE members to attend the panel so that we as corporate parents can hear their voices directly and receive their input on reports.

EMPIRE have been super busy during Covid-19 running virtual sessions for children looked after & care leavers since March 2020 and have now delivered over 300 virtual sessions including a summer programme which included face to face sessions following the government guidelines.

In celebration of Foster Care Fortnight, we asked some of our EMPIRE members to give their thoughts on two important questions

- Why is it important to foster children?
- What makes a great foster parent?

Check it out here: <https://vimeo.com/423081504>



- EMPIRE Members sat on the interview panel for the new Head of Children Looked After & Care Leavers
- EMPIRE Senior Members are now part of the 'Skills to Foster' Training programme and ran their own Q&A session in August for potential Foster Carers
- Two EMPIRE members have started a 10 weeks Arts Award qualification and weekly free private music studio sessions following our virtual talent show
- EMPIRE Senior Members will now be on the panel for the Fortnightly Fostering Information Sessions as a panel members.

**AMBITIOUS FOR CROYDON**



# Children, Young People and Learning Cabinet Member Bulletin Councillor Alisa Flemming October 2020

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For any additional information on this update please contact:  
[Sarah.Bailey@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:Sarah.Bailey@croydon.gov.uk)

## Legacy's – 1st Birthday

Legacy Youth Zone have had an exciting first year, with the support of their fantastic members, founder patrons and the local community. With over 5,600 young people signed up and counting, young people now have somewhere to go, something to do and someone to talk to.

Legacy have exceeded our expectations which has given them a real opportunity to deliver fantastic activities to their members throughout the year and have been able to support families and vulnerable members of the community with over 7,000+ meals during and after the nationwide lockdown.

To celebrate this success Legacy held their first birthday party on 7 September 2020, and focussed on young people and their experiences. From live television presenting via our streamed party, to dancing and singing acts it was a real opportunity for Croydon to see the impact that Legacy is having on young people and their families.

Our Young People's Development Group, some of whom have been with us from the planning phase have supported in the growth and development of Legacy through their vision on how to change lives of young people in Croydon. Together, they helped to bury items in our time capsule which is to be opened by Legacy Youth Zone members, staff and volunteers in 2119.

The party was streamed live on YouTube due to the lockdown restrictions, but a select number of members were able to attend the centre to enjoy some socially distanced festivities. [Watch Legacy's first birthday here.](#)

For further information on Legacy Youth Zone please contact: Queenie Chizea –  
Legacy Youth Zone [Queenie.Chizea@legacyyouthzone.org](mailto:Queenie.Chizea@legacyyouthzone.org)  
Chantelle Williams [chantelle.williams@legacyyouthzone.org](mailto:chantelle.williams@legacyyouthzone.org)

**AMBITIOUS FOR CROYDON**



# Children, Young People and Learning Cabinet Member Bulletin Councillor Alisa Flemming October 2020

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## Skill Mill

Croydon's Skill Mill is a social enterprise project which helps to support reintegration and employment opportunities for ex-offending young people. The enterprise provides 6 months environmental/construction paid employment under the supervision of a Skill Mill Supervisor.

Croydon are the first and only Youth Offending Service in London delivering this project and all Skill Mill employees have undertaken an induction in addition to a health and safety training course which included COVID-19 guidance and they have all been provided with appropriate PPE.

With the help and support of Croydon Works, Mel Comber (Croydon Skill Mill Supervisor) and his team commenced a project on 18/08/2020 for 2 weeks at Thornton Heath Community Garden, work included: Measure, cut and finish wood; assemble and paint and line the planters; fill the planters with gravel, soil and bark and planted vegetation.

On 30/09/2020 Mel and his team commenced weekly work at the Hutchinson's Bank Reserve in Addington working with Wild London including clearing vegetation; repairing fences; installing signs.

For further information please also refer to: <https://www.theskillmill.org/staff>  
For any additional information on this update please contact: [Emma.Carter@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:Emma.Carter@croydon.gov.uk)



## Social Workers in Schools Programme

We are delighted our bid for the 'What Works for Children's Social Care' (WWCSC)'s Social Workers in Schools (SWIS) programme has been successful and we have secured funding to implement this one year programme in Croydon.



WWCSC is also funding an independent evaluator to design the trial, conduct the randomisation, and assess the impacts of the intervention on both social care involvement and educational attainment.

**AMBITIOUS FOR CROYDON**



# Children, Young People and Learning

## Cabinet Member Bulletin

### Councillor Alisa Flemming

#### October 2020

---

An implementation and process evaluation will look at mechanisms and the lived experiences of participants, and cost analysis will consider whether the intervention represents value for money.

Sixteen secondary schools across the Borough will be part of the programme, eight will have a social worker located in their schools and a further eight will be part of the controlled group.

A Team Manager has been recruited and we are in the process of recruiting the social workers.

- Social workers will be physically based in schools as much as possible, and integrated into the life of the school.
- Social workers will be employees of the local authority.
- Social workers will be conducting direct work with young people, focusing on early intervention, working differently and creating change.
- Social workers will also work with staff in the school to develop a deeper understanding of safeguarding and child protection, and to increase mutual understanding of the goals and ways of working of both schools and social care.

For any additional information on this update please contact:  
[Iain.Low@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:Iain.Low@croydon.gov.uk)