

Kingston Parent Consortium 3 April 2020, notes of online meeting / conference call

This is the third online meeting / conference call with an agenda focused on updating parents and carers on COVID 19 related developments and receiving their feedback.

Attendees

Parents / carers:

Agnieszka Czerwinska (AC)
Kacper Rucinski (KR)
Louise Kearney (LK)

Elected member:

Cllr Diane White (Portfolio Holder for Children's Services including Education)

Staff:

Alison Danks (Associate Director for Health Services) (AD)
Ashley Whittaker (Programme Director) (AW)
Geraldine Burgess (Short Breaks Operations Manager) (GB)
Ian Dodds (Director of Children's Services) (ID)
Jess Thom (Director of Commissioning and Partnerships) (JT)
Karen Lowry (AfCinfo/SEND Local Offer Website Manager)(KL)

Apologies:

Charis Penfold (Director of Education Services)
Tatty Bowman
Louise Beattie

Actions in red

1. Cllr White thanked parents and others for joining the meeting and for all their work at this time. **Kingston Stronger Together / Kingston Community Hub** can be contacted for help and support or to volunteer to provide support. It's taken some time for things to be up and running but worthwhile investment and feeling is that things are now working well. If there are issues please let her know : diane.white@kingston.gov.uk
 - a. AC has registered with Kingston Stronger Together. It is / was not clear that Kingston Community Hub is actually called / the same thing as Kingston Stronger Together and this was initially confusing. Has registered online but received nothing. What she needs is signposting, and this is the same for other families. Several / many families have fallen through the net of the government list of vulnerable families. Children with symptoms that should be on the list are not. Eg severe respiratory conditions. Something is wrong with government recording. So the question to KST is about signposting. If families are not on the government list of vulnerable families and they should be what should they do? Many have registered online with the government and have had nothing. Eg still no access to deliveries. What should families who have been missed off the government list do? Also view that staff working at Kingston Stronger Together are not as well trained as they could be.
 - b. **ACTION: Cllr White will feed this back to Kingston Stronger Together**
 - c. ID confirmed that there are families who are not on the gov shielding list so it is correct that the list is not complete. The process is that families should register online to be added. What is meant to happen is that this info is then updated to the local authority on a regular basis. But if this is not working, then it needs to be taken up. Otherwise, for example, supermarkets would not know who is meant to be on the list. ID confirms important that if families are not appearing on the list, they should be. **ACTION: ID to raise with Council CEO**, who will raise on London wide basis, who will raise with government. **ACTION: AW add process to be added to shielding list to FAQs.**

- d. ID went on to explain that even if families are not on the official government shielding list, if support is needed, then families should still be able to access support. Kingston Stronger Together / Kingston Community Hub should pass cases where families are facing issues relating to children and young people to AfC's Single Point of Access who will then allocate either to their existing key workers or to Family Support Teams who will aim to find / allocate the support that is needed. This may be through a voluntary sector organisation. **ACTION: AW add this as a process to FAQs. ACTION: ID to make sure the process in Kingston Stronger Together is working correctly** ie that staff are putting all matters relating to children and young people through to SPA, who will allocate either to existing caseworkers or to the most appropriate place. Could be food, medical supplies, behaviour management for children etc.
2. ID addressed a previously submitted question regarding **communications**: *"It would be helpful to have some clarification on the ways AfC, LA and health authorities are communicating internally and externally. As we all work remotely, is there a coherent system which allows professionals to carry on their work, including access to paperwork and other data? Is there a system in place for professionals to communicate with families?"*
 - a. Vast majority of staff in Children's Services are working at home. They have access to all systems and information they need. Lots of use of technology, including with families and multi agency meetings. ID for example has three calls per week, across the council, across health providers, and across safeguarding partners eg with Police. So most work continues, mostly virtually. Still waiting for government guidance on potential relaxation of certain aspects of C&F Act. Delivery is becoming more challenging, particularly with less availability of health professionals who are being redeployed as part of the NHS' response to the current situation. AC asked about communications with families, pointing out that in the past there have been several secure systems. Do professionals have guidelines around communications with parents? **ACTION: AW to confirm the name of the current secure system?** (Answer is Egress. Some cases of a CISCO system when Egress not accessible to certain families. Many families receive password protected documents via email). ID explained that with regards to how frequently families are being contacted, all cases have been risk rated. Contact should be as frequent as it needs to be eg daily or monthly, via whatever preference is best for family. Eg video conference, phone, email. AC then asked about school staff, and if they are allowed to do face to face? ID responded that they are but that schools are waiting for more guidance on what such encounters should look like. There is info on this published but ID meeting with CP this afternoon and one item on the agenda is to give clearer guidance. AC stressed the importance of this eg that some children benefit from seeing the face of a known member of staff. **ACTION: ID to work with CP to issue more guidance to schools before the start of next term.**
3. **Short breaks** update. (GB and AD). Most families have now been contacted. Any families still not contacted should contact Geraldine (geraldine.burgess@achievingforchildren.org.uk). Lots of families have opted out of provision to keep themselves safe. If that's the case they will be contacted again in a couple of weeks. Team has worked hard to make sure they know the family's preferences. Working with Yorda for some bespoke sessions. Hope Warren Park (run by Action for Children) will be back up and running soon, so should then have that and Crofters in Richmond. In response to a question about adequacy of staffing, AD confirmed it is currently sufficient. Some staff have stopped working to keep themselves safe or are self isolating, but a core group continues to offer support over Easter, and workers have been matched with families as best they can. So AfC staffing is ok at moment. Warren Park has been closed due to staffing but hope to have that resolved soon. Things may change in the future as staff currently available go off and others come back.
4. Question re **Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) and testing** of staff. AD confirmed that PPE equipment is available and being distributed. All staff on all teams have access. The Moor Lane Centre is being used as a distribution site so staff can collect. There is also sufficient equipment in special schools. On testing, no update as per national picture, still awaiting guidance. Some testing is going on for example at the drive through facility in Chessington. This is believed to be prioritising acute care staff and understood that aim is to roll out to wider groups over next two to three weeks.

5. **Schools.** AW gave an update. Considerable work, led by Sarah Herbert, Lead School Improvement Partner for SEND is ongoing re working with schools on being more joined up, sharing best practice, sharing resources, and working with special schools to share their expertise across all schools. Schools are settling into a new way of working, and making good progress. They are becoming better at using technology and producing better online resources, and there is confidence that when schools come back after Easter holidays this improvement will continue. Re the point on reducing self isolation, Peter Cowley AfC's Lead Adviser for Online Services and Safety, has been issuing guidance to schools on how this can be used more / better, eg SENCO using daily or weekly video conferences with families and children and young people. Whether this be existing systems eg schools with Google using Hangouts or new systems eg Zoom. Two other points:
- There is also work in progress to open a new helpline for schools and families to offer help, advice and signposting. Aim is to have this in place for the new term.
 - If there are any concerns with particular schools, do flag this to AfC (charis.penfold@achievingforchildren.org.uk). Schools are responsible for ongoing support to all pupils, and whilst AfC is helping all schools to do this, if it is not working do please contact AfC, including for independent schools (a couple of these have already been highlighted as not providing adequate support).
 - Question from LK : On something that "*may seem premature*" but needs advanced planning. Some children will be less able / unable to access learning from home and others may find the return to the usual process of going to school, eg school refusers, more problematic eg leaving the house, going on transport, entering school, being with lots of other people / the noise etc. And the longer the current lock down goes on for the harder it will be for some children to go back, whenever that might be. LK has heard from parents and carers of children at both mainstream and special schools, that parents and carers, whilst doing what they can, see it as likely to be a problem in the future. LK gave the example of her daughter's school talking about offering half a day per week to go in for OT and some teaching and this kind of option could be hugely helpful in easing the change back to normal routine whenever that happens. ID answered to say he agrees and thinks that this has not yet been given sufficient consideration to date. He thanked LK for raising an excellent and important point. **ACTION ID to add to the list to discuss with Charis / Education Services and ask Education Psychology Service to contribute to this. ACTION KL to add any new resources to Local Offer to complement what already exists there on social stories about not going to school.**
6. **Direct payment policy,** JT updated on direct payment policy. Temporary Direct Payments Policy is now issued. Approach is one of greater flexibility, e.g. family members (not parents) can now be paid. This is on the Local Offer website.
<https://kr.afcinfo.org.uk/pages/local-offer/information-and-advice/assessment-and-education-health-and-care-planning/personal-budgets>
Any issues contact JT (jessica.thom@achievingforchildren.org.uk) or your social worker.
7. **Information on Local Offer.** KL updated on developments. New post 16 years FAQ section. Also important to highlight links to universal offer where large amounts of relevant online activity eg children centres (live broadcasts of story times), youth services and libraries. The Portage Team have added activities and stories using Makaton. KL is also working with colleagues across London to source and share useful resources (eg video added from East London NHS Foundation Trust posted at:
<https://kr.afcinfo.org.uk/pages/local-offer/information-and-advice/covid-19-updates-and-resources/easy-read-and-support-resources-about-covid-19> .
8. **AOB:** no items were raised as AOB.
9. **Next meeting:** First Friday on new term: Friday 24 April at 12.30pm. Any issues before then please get in touch via the usual email. **ACTION: KL to send out invite**