

**Measures to Strengthen and Maximise Support
For Barnsley's Exam Cohort 2020-21**

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the current context relating to the challenges faced, particularly in relation to schools and settings with pupils scheduled to take exams next summer, and to detail the support available to Barnsley pupils in Year 11 and students in Year 13 following consultation between the Barnsley Alliance and schools and further education (FE) providers.
- 1.2 The report also seeks to inform the committee of the range of stakeholder views in relation to the potential for disruption to exams and sets out a summary of the programme which has been developed, from within funding previously allocated, to further support the 2021 exam cohort.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Pupils currently in years 11 and 13 will be expected to sit GCSE and A Level / Level 3 assessments next summer.
- 2.2 The Government and Ofqual, the regulator for qualifications, examinations and assessments in England, have announced that exams will go ahead in summer 2021, with an extended exam season in operation.
- 2.3 The exam schedule has been delayed to that in previous years to allow some additional time to prepare. Clearly, there will need to be contingencies and dispensations in place to allow for the disruption already experienced and likely to be further experienced in the run up to summer 2021. It is important therefore, that we plan for the different eventualities involved in any late change in national policy.
- 2.4 As part of this, on 3rd December, the Department for Education (DfE) in conjunction with Ofqual announced further measures to support children and young people taking exams in England next summer.
- 2.5 For this reason, the proposals set out in this report to support pupils with preparation for exams would also pivot flexibly, if needed, to focus on how to ensure good outcomes in the event of a move to teacher-led assessments. This would involve focusing on the skills required to produce good quality coursework and assist with techniques to motivate pupils, particularly those most in need, and keep them engaged with the process throughout.
- 2.6 The eventual results will be announced to students between 24th and 27th August 2021 to allow pupils to start the 2021/22 academic year as normal but taking into account the delay to the exam schedule.
- 2.7 The current pandemic presents significant challenges to students and schools / FE providers to ensure they are as ready as they can be for their final assessments. Pupils and students in years 11 and 13 have already experienced significant disruption to their education during the 2019/20 academic year and this is persisting in 2020/21, despite the full return in September 2020, due to 'bubble' closures as a result of positive cases of Covid-19.
- 2.8 In early October the Council's Cabinet discussed the importance of ensuring that everything that can be done to support students in this respect was being done. Also, that consideration be given to anything further the Council could do or facilitate, to add value to the arrangements put in place by the education sector, to ensure our young people are not further disadvantaged as a result of the disruption to their learning caused by the pandemic.

- 2.9 This report sets out the results of an initial consultation with schools and FE leaders to establish the support that is currently in place and scope proposals as to how the Council could enhance and / or support these approaches without duplication and to maximise positive impact.

3.0 Context & Scale of Challenges

Attendance

- 3.1 As previously indicated, the Department for Education (DfE) have advised that GCSE and A levels will go ahead in 2021, on the basis that exams are the fairest way of judging a student's performance and that contingency planning by the DfE in consultation with the sector will be produced before Christmas.
- 3.2 Notwithstanding this, the impact of coronavirus on children's education and the 2020/21 exam cohort in areas in the north of England, including Barnsley, have seen increased and high rates of coronavirus, which has significantly affected children's education, many of whom are already from disadvantaged communities.
- 3.3 Since the start of the pandemic there has been a disproportionate impact on children's school attendance due to coronavirus, in the North of England. Between 5 July and 25 October 2020 there have been a total of 217,074 cases in the North, compared with 181,614 for the rest of England. That is despite the North having less than a third of the whole population.
- 3.4 New figures published in response to a parliamentary question show that on 15th October 2020, 17 out of the 23 local authorities where secondary school attendance had been below 80 per cent were in the North of England.
- 3.5 The three regions of the North (the North-East, North-West, and Yorkshire & the Humber) also have the lowest secondary school attendance in the country. Secondary schools in the North West and Yorkshire & the Humber had the joint lowest attendance rate at 81 per cent, followed by the North East at 83 per cent.
- 3.6 By contrast, secondary schools in the South West had the highest rates of attendance, with 90 per cent of pupils in school, while the South East and the East of England had 89 per cent attendance.
- 3.7 On Thursday 22nd October, according to data submitted to DfE via the daily submission form, attendance in Barnsley secondary schools was 73% in comparison to 83% nationally. Attendance was slightly higher in primary schools at 84% but still well below the 90% reported nationally and 11% of pupils were absent for Covid related reasons in comparison to the estimated 6% to 7% nationally.
- 3.8 Local attendance data for the first half term of the 2020/21 academic year showed that attendance for our Year 11 pupils had dropped to 92% in comparison to 94% for the same period in 2019/20. However, this figure does not include the high number of pupils who have been absent for Covid related reasons. When these are taken into account, actual attendance for Year 11 pupils in the first half term of 2020/21 was 85%.

GCSE and A level Exams 2021 – Research Indications

- 3.9 Whilst there is a duty for schools to provide remote education during these periods, there is little available research on the quality of remote education. However, research from the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) reported in '*Learning during the lockdown: real-time data on children's experiences during home learning*' (May 2020) found that:
- Primary and secondary students are each spending about 5 hours a day on average on home learning. However, secondary school children are more likely to have online classes and to spend their leisure time online.
 - Higher-income parents are much more likely than the less well-off to report that their child's school provides online classes and access to online videoconferencing with teachers. 64% of secondary pupils in state schools from the richest households are being offered active help from schools, such as online teaching, compared with 47% from the poorest fifth of families. 82% of secondary school pupils attending private school are offered active help, with 79% being provided with online classes.

- Children from better-off families are spending 30% more time on home learning than those from poorer families. Children in the highest-income quintile of families spend 5.8 hours a day on educational activities, over 75 minutes more than their peers in the poorest fifth of households (4.5 hours). Over the 34 days (minimum) that schools will be closed, students in the best-off families will have done more than 7 full school days' worth of extra learning time. If schools do not go back until September 2020 and current rates of home learning continue, the gap would double to 15 full school days. This could have very substantial long-term consequences in light of evidence that even one extra hour a week of instructional time can significantly raise achievement.
- Better-off students have access to more resources for home learning. Within state primary and secondary schools, parents in the richest families are around 15 percentage points more likely than those in the poorest fifth to report that their child's school offers active resources such as online classes, or video or text chatting. More than half (58%) of primary school students from the least well-off families do not have access to their own study space.
- Many parents of both primary and secondary school students report struggling with supporting home learning. Almost 60% of the parents of primary school children and nearly half of the parents of secondary school children report that they are finding it quite or very hard to support their children's learning at home.
- School closures are almost certain to increase educational inequalities. Pupils from better-off families are spending longer on home learning; they have access to more individualised resources such as private tutoring or chats with teachers; they have a better home set-up for distance learning; and their parents report feeling more able to support them.

3.10 The report highlights the inequalities for children from disadvantaged and poorer backgrounds and the risk that for these children, the attainment gap will widen due to coronavirus.

4.0 Support Currently Offered Through Schools and FE Providers

4.1 Schools and FE providers have worked hard to ensure that students have access to appropriate technology to facilitate remote learning and to enhance learning through the additionality which remote resources can bring.

4.2 In addition, a range of approaches have been / are being applied in respect of Year 11 and Year 13 learners.

4.3 In schools and academies:-

- School leaders are confident that current pupil predictions remain broadly in line with trajectories
- Schools report that most pupils have returned to school with a high level of positive engagement, determination and focus – recognising the work they themselves need to do to avoid falling behind
- Pupils are being frequently assessed to ensure their progress remains on track
- Curriculum delivery has been reconsidered to take account of lost learning time and the knowledge that now needs to be built as a priority focus
- Schools are targeting support to pupils, based on subject trajectory / pupil ability – particularly in the core subjects of Maths and English
- Schools are using a range of interventions to support pupils including where necessary 1-1 support, additional lessons before and after-school, remote learning to enhance what's happening in school and ensuring pupil progress is closely tracked and monitored
- Barnsley schools have been supporting each other and drawing from best practice through the regular meetings of secondary head teachers with some really good examples of creative working such as online masterclasses, specific interventions in core areas of the curriculum and the increased use of remote facilities to enhance school-based learning activity. Some really good examples can be seen by following these links:
 - <https://www.northerneducationtrust.org/remote-learning-secondary/>
 - <https://www.dartonacademy.org.uk/online-academy3>
- Resources have been made available by the Government through the 'catch-up' Pupil Premium funding and a National Tutoring Programme, which is intended to support disadvantaged pupils identified by their schools and schools will focus this to ensure maximum impact
- In addition to the Government's access to technology scheme, some schools have identified pupils who require access to their own, dedicated device (Chromebooks, laptops, tablets) who wouldn't

have qualified under the Government scheme and have distributed devices accordingly. However, not all schools have the resources available to do this so there is likely to be disparity across the borough

- Schools are working with pupils and partners to identify and respond to any anxieties in respect of the pressures of examinations during this unprecedented time
- Support to the emotional health and wellbeing of pupils is also being offered through a number of initiatives through the Barnsley Alliance including trauma-informed practice training for school staff, the Return to Education Wellbeing project which has produced training resources and webinars for school staff and programmes of support and training developed through the Educational and Community Child Psychology Service

4.4 In further education:-

- Students are being assessed on a regular basis to identify gaps in learning with additional staff recruited in Barnsley College to support this
- Interventions include regular reviews, tracking and monitoring of student progress
- Additional sessions have been introduced by the College for some core subjects with these taking place during evenings and holidays
- The College has introduced a new pastoral and enrichment package
- Barnsley College has also ensured Year 13 students have access to appropriate technology and has distributed devices to help with this
- Additional funding has been made available to post-16 education providers to mitigate the impact of the pandemic

5.0 Challenges & Rationale

5.1 Given the scale of the challenges experienced so far this academic year, the winter months and beyond may bring even greater levels of disruption to learning and so our responses therefore need to be flexible and adaptive to a rapidly changing need among pupils and students.

5.2 School and FE leaders have reflected that they have worked hard to ensure disruption to learning is kept to a minimum and that learning can still be delivered when learners are unable to attend physical campus. There remains, however, a continuing concern that learners affected most, may well be those already significantly disadvantaged, and it is therefore potentially helpful to consider how the Council can support these cohorts from a central perspective.

5.3 Sector leaders have also reflected that subject-specific support is unlikely to be appropriate or particularly helpful for a variety of reasons including full understanding of pupil ability levels and that the sequencing of the delivery of curriculum objectives is likely to vary from setting to setting.

5.4 The proposals set out, particularly in paragraph 6.6 below, are therefore intended to maximise the Council's ability to support learning in a way that enables better engagement with learning tools and methods, improves access to study and revision skills tutoring and where necessary, helps to support with digital technology and connectivity.

6.0 Additional Support For Barnsley's Exam Cohort 2020-21

6.1 It is recognised that not all young people are able to access quiet study facilities, nor do all young people have access to appropriate technology. In addition, some young people struggle to maintain sufficient motivation to ensure they remain engaged fully with their learning.

6.2 Exams and other forms of assessment are known to create higher levels of anxiety among young people and this is even more the case currently, with pupils feeling anxious about the impact of the pandemic on their long-term life chances as well as the immediate impact on their family and friends. It is important therefore that support mechanisms are in place for young people to manage their anxieties and not allow this to impede their ability to engage with their education.

6.3 The challenge from the Council's Cabinet was to explore all possibilities to ensure Barnsley's young people are not disproportionately impacted by the effects of the pandemic on their education. While there

have been resources and funding made available to schools and FE providers for approaches such as one to one tuition, this is likely to be in high demand and we know that capacity is limited at national level.

- 6.4 The Sheffield Hallam University 'GROW' programme has a strong evidence base in motivating young people to study by using recent graduates from the local area to engage with young people directly, offering a tried and tested approach to ensure a large number of pupils receive the learning support they need. It has the added benefit of recruiting recent graduates locally, enhancing long-term employment prospects for this cohort.
- 6.5 There is the potential to maximise the use of community facilities by encouraging young people to seek out quiet study space as near to their homes and communities as possible. In addition to the proposals below we can work through our network of public libraries, subject to Covid-secure guidance at the time, to offer:
- Free access to public computers, bookable for 1-2 hours per day
 - Free Wi-Fi
 - Quiet study space – option to introduce as a bookable resource at some libraries
 - Free access to a range of online reference resources from home or library with library membership e.g. Encyclopaedia Britannica, Oxford Reference Online, Access to Research, British Newspaper Archive
 - Introductory online sessions to resources for mentors and teaching staff
- 6.6 The following proposals and ideas for development therefore are intended to blend a range of approaches to support pupils and students identified by their settings as in need of specific, targeted support while allowing young people, where appropriate, to self-identify and opt into the support available. In brief, these proposals are:
1. The introduction of a 'Support for Learning' Programme Manager
 2. Improved access to facilitated study space
 3. Additional Targeted Information, Advice and Guidance
 4. Improve access to technology
 5. Sheffield Hallam University to implement GROW student mentoring programme for year 11 pupils & develop and implement a programme for year 13 students
- 6.7 Appendix A shows a summary of each of these proposals, including the benefits, resource requirement and cost attached to each. It should be noted that these are non-recurrent costs in 2020/21 and will be funded from £0.5M earmarked reserves set aside by the Council for school improvement.

7.0 Invited Witnesses

- 7.1 The following witnesses have been invited to today's meeting to answer questions from the committee:
- Nick Bowen, Head Teacher at Horizon Community College and Joint Chair of Barnsley Alliance
 - Paul Crook, Principal at Penistone Grammar School and Chair of the Barnsley Alliance Secondary Heads Group
 - Yiannis Koursis, Principal, Barnsley College
 - Mel John-Ross, Executive Director Children's Services, BMBC
 - Nina Sleight, Service Director, Education, Early Start & Prevention, BMBC
 - Darren Dickinson Interim Head of Barnsley Alliance, BMBC
 - Liz Gibson, Virtual Headteacher, Looked After Children & Vulnerable Groups, BMBC
 - Cllr Margaret Bruff, Cabinet Spokesperson for Children's Services, BMBC

8.0 Possible Areas for Investigation

- 8.1 Members may wish to ask questions around the following areas:
- How did you decide upon the activities chosen to support this year's exam cohort? What information did you use?

- How have you involved young people in deciding how they would be best supported?
- What alternative approaches have you considered to boost this year's exam cohort and why were they discounted?
- How will you manage the balance between pupils' progress and their wellbeing?
- Can you give examples of what the catch-up premium is being spent on and how this will improve outcomes for pupils?
- How will support be tailored to address the needs of different types of pupils, so that it is equitable across the cohort and every child has the chance to achieve their potential?
- Are there any barriers to pupils accessing the proposed support, such as travel to learning centres?
- When will the plan be fully operational given that staff may have to be recruited?
- How are teachers being supported to manage their own wellbeing?
- How can Elected Members assist the work to strengthen and maximise support for Barnsley's 2020-21 exam cohort?

9.0 Background Papers and Useful Links

Government Press Release, October 2020: Students to be given more time to prepare for 2021 exams:-
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/students-to-be-given-more-time-to-prepare-for-2021-exams>

Government Press Release, December 2020: Extra measures to support students ahead of next summer's exams:-
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/extra-measures-to-support-students-ahead-of-next-summers-exams>

Government Guidance on the Covid 19 Catch-Up Premium:-
https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-catch-up-premium?es_c=CB00C9611C363D90552209427917D344&es_cl=64F463847F765BE92A7AB17926EA6188&es_id=9d%20a303

Government Guidance on the Covid 19 Tuition Fund for 16-19 year olds:-
https://www.gov.uk/guidance/16-to-19-funding-16-to-19-tuition-fund?es_c=CB00C9611C363D90552209427917D344&es_cl=027EF797DE4FD25B5271E35D19572D7F&es_id=9d%20a303

Institute for Fiscal Studies Report - Learning During the Lockdown; Realtime data on Children's Experiences During Lockdown, May 2020:-
https://www.ifs.org.uk/uploads/Edited_Final-BN288%20Learning%20during%20the%20lockdown.pdf

Sheffield Hallam University 'GROW' Mentoring Programme:-
https://blogs.shu.ac.uk/grow/our-programme/?doing_wp_cron=1607514260.8647170066833496093750

10.0 Glossary

BMBC	Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council
DfE	Department for Education
FE	Further Education

11.0 Officer Contact

Anna Marshall, Overview & Scrutiny Officer, Scrutiny@barnsley.gov.uk 21st December 2020

Summary of Proposal	Approach and Summary of Benefits	Resource Requirement	Cost				
1. Support for Learning Programme Manager	Co-ordinate and support implementation of the programmes to support schools and colleges – ensure resources targeted to right pupils and students	One full-time, temporary post to end of 20/21 academic year	£34,000				
2. Improve access to facilitated study space through a combination of opening dedicated spaces within libraries, family centres, community resource centres and IKIC centres.	<p>Aim to facilitate supported study space within our network of Family Centres and IKIC centres for Year 11 students for a period of 23 weeks between February 2021 and July 2021</p> <p>Supportive environment that will provide access to the internet and IT equipment, a warm study friendly environment, access to healthy study foods, provision of mindfulness/meditation activities, information and advice around specific related issues (e.g. managing stress and emotional wellbeing) provided by suitably trained staff.</p> <p>Six three-hour sessions per week – one in each area council area, hosted at either a Family Centre or IKIC Centre. Each session would be held either on a weekday evening or on a Saturday morning and the sessions would rotate across each area council locality to ensure that there is both a weekend and evening offer available.</p> <p>Provided from alternating spaces / ensure access is equitable across borough – one in each Area Council area – to ensure Covid-secure practice.</p> <p>Installation of corporate Wi-Fi at two sites to ensure access to good, reliable internet.</p>	<p>Fit for purpose, accessible community venues</p> <p>Bank of suitably skilled sessional staff</p> <p>Rollout of Wi-Fi</p> <p>1 Grade 9 EIP worker, 1 Grade 3 Outreach Worker and 1 Grade 4 TYS Support per session</p> <p>Summary of costs:</p> <table><tr><td>Staffing Costs</td><td>£30,503</td></tr><tr><td>Facilities Management</td><td>£7,820</td></tr></table>	Staffing Costs	£30,503	Facilities Management	£7,820	£84,703
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3. Improve access to technology including hardware for disadvantage pupils and provide 4G connectivity for those without internet access at home– 4G connectivity addresses barrier to learning where no internet access is available in family home	<p>Schools / college identify additional pupils where access is limited - most schools / academies have already done this – propose a contingency fund for cases where access is limited but pupils wouldn't qualify under the Government scheme and their school / academy doesn't currently have the resources to plug the gap.</p> <p>A Y11 fund that parents / carers can apply to in order to secure Wi-Fi access</p>	<p>£180 - £200 per device (estimate 550 required)</p> <p>Approximately £6 per month per device (7 months x 550)</p>	<p>£50k</p> <p>£25k</p>								
4. Additional Targeted Information, Advice & Guidance	<p>Focus on the mental health and resilience of young people in Y11 / post – 16 learning and motivations to remain engaged with learning.</p> <p>Build on TIAGs current ESF Pathways offer to schools and young people in Y11. Working alongside schools it has identified and targeted students at risk of becoming NEET and put in place additional IAG to that already delivered. This offer will be extended to provide support for young people in Y11 and Y13 struggling with their emotional and mental health and wellbeing</p>	2 additional TIAG Advisors @ £45k each	£90k								

	<p>as a result of current covid-19 restricted delivery models of learning.</p> <p>Intervention and support would be provided to identified young people to help them overcome the challenges they face and to re-engage and/or keep them engaged in learning.</p> <p>An additional resource of 2 Advisors experienced in working with young people who have low level mental health issues would be required.</p> <p>The beneficiaries of this would be young people who are likely to fall through current gaps in support but are vulnerable for a myriad of reasons and often go unnoticed.</p> <p>Utilising existing resource within the Education Welfare Service to undertake targeted home visits to families to direct them to study support within the school and community.</p> <p>Good study info guide to be hosted on the family services directory – advice around good study environments, study foods, importance of sleep with tips to getting enough sleep and rest - aimed at both young people and their parents and carers. To include hints and tips from previous Y11 students. What helped them focus what supported and motivated them.</p>	<p>Term time staff working additional hours in the Feb/Easter break</p> <p>Commissioned</p>	<p>£15k</p> <p>£20K</p>
5. Strategic partnering with Sheffield Hallam University to implement GROW student mentoring programme for year 11 pupils	7-week programme = 300 pupils x 2 = 600 pupils in total. Pupils mentored by recent graduate. Evidence-based programme already delivered through pilot in some South Yorkshire schools (Horizon in Barnsley). Scale-up and roll-out at pace.	Detailed costings provided by SHU (£88k to deliver two cohorts)	£88k
6. Develop and implement GROW programme for year 13 students	<p>Programme currently targeted at year 11 could be quickly developed for year 13.</p> <p>Additional advantage of recruiting graduates from Barnsley, would support Contingent on recruitment of graduates</p>		£88k
TOTAL			£494,703