

Department Operations Centre – DE
SITUATIONAL REPORT 025

 All new information should be noted in **RED**

DOC DOC.Situationcell@education-ni.gov.uk

I&S

Information correct as of 15:00 hrs on 20.04.20

Overall DOC Assessment		
Overall Delivery Confidence		Departmental responsibilities are experiencing severe pressure and mitigations being implemented or actively developed.

Key Issues – Please detail your key issues or imminent risks only, that may require escalation.		
	Description	BRAG
1.	Support for vulnerable children and children of key/critical workers – school places	
2.	Ensure families do not experience hardship as a result of schools closures	
3.	Support for vulnerable children	
4.	Ensure continuity of learning for children and young people – summer exam arrangements	
5.	Ensure continuity of learning for children and young people – distance learning	
6.	Pay - Education sector staff	

Items for Escalation – Please confirm if the DOC has any items that require escalation to the Hub for support/assistance.			
	Description	CCG	
		For info	For action
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

DOC Status Update	BRAG
Staffing – Staff are in place and new people are coming on board.	
ICT/Remote Working – All staff have access to laptops to allow for working from home.	
Real Estate - DOC has moved to remote working.	

Liaison Officers – 3 Liaison officers in place from 8 April in Hub.

Forward Look for next 1-2 days.

- 1.
- 2.

Forward Look for this/next week.

1. Proposals for substitute teachers

Forward Look >2 weeks.

- 1.
- 2.

Expected Media Attention – Please confirm if the DOC has any items that will have expected media releases

1. Education Authority to write to schools on continuing availability of the Independent Counselling Service – will be publicised via Twitter. Due to issue 20/04/20 once schools return from Easter leave.
2. Further public information on schools that are open.

Detailed issue description: *Please provide additional information on issues mentioned above.*

Issue 1	Support for vulnerable children and children of key/critical workers – school places	BRAG Status	
Detailed description:			
1. The closure of schools to pupils other than vulnerable children and those of key workers.			
What are the specific impacts, including metrics?			
297 schools were open on 17/04/20 for 549 pupils.			
A further call for volunteers to support opening of schools for vulnerable children and those of key workers issued on 6 April 2020. As of 17 April 1,112 applications have been received and of these 982 have been cleared already by AccessNI. The Department is continuing to process applications.			
Funding of £12m confirmed to address a number of key issues relating to childcare provision in response to COVID-19. A package of measures was announced jointly by the Education and Health Ministers on 9 April.			
Education Authority (EA) have reported:			

- Admissions and SEN Transfers heavily reliant on on-going communication with schools – risk that schools are closed and unable to speak with them when necessary – this is likely to impact on ability to meet statutory timescales.
- Requests for guidance on use of PPE by staff in special schools and nursery schools where social distancing is not possible


What is being done about it? (Tolerate, Treat, Transfer): Treat

The registration of Covid-19 Clusters of schools (managed through the EA) has commenced. A geographical spread of C-19 Clusters is in operation and DE continues to work closely with the EA and schools to develop and encourage more.

A list of clustering arrangements is available on the DE website and is updated regularly. The EA’s key worker placement registration system (for key workers who face difficulty in getting their children placed) continues to receive requests. Measures in place to address this include EA helpline, school clusters, and request for volunteers. A link to the EA system is on the DE website.

Since 10 April, when the clusters register opened, we have seen 26 clusters involving 104 schools formally registered. A further 73 schools are interested in becoming involved in a cluster. The EA key worker helpline had 315 live cases and this has reduced to 92 as at 16 April and continues to reduce daily.


Updated guidance on social distancing in education settings published on 3/4/20. DfE Whitehall published revised guidance on social distancing in schools on 7/4/20 with further guidance to follow on use of PPE in settings where children and young people have complex needs. DE will liaise with PHA on equivalent guidance for NI schools.

<p>Issue 2</p>	<p>Ensure families do not experience hardship as a result of schools closures</p>	<p>BRAG Status</p>	
<p>Detailed description: 2. A particular impact on those children who are entitled to free school meals. For some of these children and young people, a school meal may be the only healthy meal they receive each day.</p>			
<p>What are the specific impacts, including metrics?</p>			
<p>What is being done about it? (Tolerate, Treat, Transfer): Treat</p> <p>A total of 56,607 families are now on the system representing around 101,000 children. People should expect the next round of payments into bank accounts on 29th April.</p>			

Issue with verification of Universal Credit income threshold for new applications for FSM - DE is seeking confirmation as to how the Education Authority currently verifies new claims. Issue will need to be raised with DfC.

EA has identified 166 children of asylum seekers who qualify for free school meals who are unable to avail of the payment system put in place due to them not having bank accounts. Home Office (HO) has agreed to assist DE and EA in ensuring that these families receive FSM direct payments via their Home Office provided and managed Aspen card. **Payment will hopefully be made this week.** The HO will invoice DE for the value of the top ups, which will be in the region of £32k.

Working with DfC, EA Youth Service is delivering 'Eat Well Live Well' programme for c3,000 vulnerable young people. Mobile App to enable young people to locate food hubs to be available from 16 April.

Issue 3	Support for vulnerable children	BRAG Status	
Detailed description: 3. Vulnerable children, those with special needs and cared for children would not receive appropriate care.			
What are the specific impacts, including metrics? EA reporting pressures on families with children with severe and complex needs and associated family stress growing as families stay at home.			
What is being done about it? (Tolerate, Treat, Transfer): Treat DoH is leading on the development of a cross Departmental action plan for vulnerable children. DE along with DfC and DoJ will provide input on actions being delivered to support vulnerable children during Covid-19. Confirmation received from HSCB that CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service) operating and accepting referrals during Covid-19 DE working with Education Authority (EA) and Health and Social Care (HSC) officials to ensure processes are in place to maintain contact with vulnerable children and their families. Support is available for children and their parents through a range of EA services, the details of which are published on the EA website. These include, for example, the Child Protection Support Service for Schools, the Children Looked-After Education Service, the Intercultural Education Service, EOTAS services, the Education Welfare Service, Schools' Counselling Service and the Youth Service.			

Risk assessments are being carried out in relation to individual children. In some cases where requests have been made to take children, the risk assessments have deemed it unsafe. Schools are regularly reviewing risk assessments as circumstances change. Schools and the EA will continue to work with the HSC sector on individual cases. Special Schools remain in regular contact with families.

EA working on a process to track and report weekly contact with vulnerable children and young people.

The 'Safer Schools' app is now available to parents, carers and teachers. This focuses on safeguarding particularly in the online world.

Guidance on Vulnerable Children and Young People published on DE website, Press Release published and email issued to all schools on 10/04/20. Links to EA support services are included.

Conference call with EA & Special Schools Strategic Leadership Group held 10/4/20. Areas discussed included current status across Special Schools, risk assessments of pupils and remote support provided by the Special Schools. It was agreed that the contact had been useful and would be arranged as required in the future.

DE rep attended GPSMIG for update on UK wide approach to vulnerable children.

EA has PPE available for all schools including Special Schools.

Issue 4	Ensure continuity of learning for children and young people – summer exam arrangements	BRAG Status	
Detailed description: 4. This could have a major impact on the future prospects of young people, their examinations and entry into the next level of education or the workplace.			
What are the specific impacts, including metrics?			
What is being done about it? (Tolerate, Treat, Transfer): Treat On 16 April the Education Minister set out how qualifications will be awarded for GCSE and A level pupils in 2020. This will involve teachers using their professional judgement together with an extensive range of evidence held by schools, and statistical modelling. The development of an appropriate appeals mechanism is also under consideration as well as arrangements for private candidates. Pupils unhappy with calculated grades can sit exams as part of the normal 2020/21 exam series. CCEA is taking forward work to implement these decisions and to prepare more detailed guidance for schools, pupils and parents.			

DE and CCEA working with DfE regarding arrangements for vocational qualifications.

Issue 5	Ensure continuity of learning for children and young people – distance learning	BRAG Status	
Detailed description: 5. As children are unable to attend school remote learning is required.			
What are the specific impacts, including metrics? Impact child education and development.			
What is being done about it? (Tolerate, Treat, Transfer): Treat Designated link officers providing ongoing support to schools. Resources available via C2K Education Network media library covering range of topics e.g. ICT, STEM, Environment and Society. Support for parents and carers via CCEA's Home Learning link for Key Stages 1 -3 pupils. The daily stats report from EA on the performance of the system for 17 April 2020 are as follows: Over 13,300 individual students and teachers accessing the EA Education Network portal from home; In excess of 20,000 visits to the EA Education Network portal from home over a 24-hour period; 90,000+ emails sent / received by students and teachers within a 24 hour period.			

Issue 6	Pay - Education sector staff	BRAG Status	
Detailed description: 6. Ensuring that all staff in the education sector receive their pay during this period.			
What are the specific impacts, including metrics?			
What is being done about it? (Tolerate, Treat, Transfer): Treat DE has developed a proposal for a hardship fund for those substitute teachers who were providing day-to-day cover in recent months but whose regular work has now ended as a result of COVID-19. Proposal is being considered by the Education Minister and funding opportunities being investigated with DoF. Scheme cannot proceed without additional funding.			

Regular discussions with the trade unions are ongoing to keep them up to date with progress.