

Record of operational decision

Decision title:	To change the approach for the absenteeism element of the Educational Catch up scheme within the Covid recovery plan
Date of decision:	26 November 2021
Decision maker:	Acting Deputy Chief Executive - Chief Finance Officer
Authority for delegated decision:	<p>Decision taken by Cabinet to approve the COVID 19 Recovery Plan on 24th June 2021: That authority be delegated to the Director of Economy and Place, Director Adults and Communities, Director Children and Families and Director of Public Health be authorised to take all operational decisions to implement recommendation including, but not limited to, the procurement and commissioning of the identified projects (as set out in the detailed action plan)</p> <p>http://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/ielIssueDetails.aspx?IId=50037702&PlanId=0&Opt=3#AI58109</p>
Ward:	Countywide
Consultation:	The COVID Recovery Plan was approved by Cabinet on 24 th June which provides funding of £6m to support the economy, community wellbeing and organisation with recovery. The plan provided an overview of the schemes for delivery, which included 'Educational catch up' and all appropriate consultation was undertaken at this time.
Decision made:	<p>In the original decision to support pupils and schools to aid post COVID recovery, in mental health and wellbeing and through this improve attendance it was agreed that 60K was to be allocated to the absenteeism element of the Educational Catch up Scheme. This was to commission a provider to support attendance in Herefordshire Schools by working with families and pupils across all Herefordshire schools to support anxious pupils, school refusers and persistent non-attenders back into the classroom post COVID.</p> <p>This initially went out to all schools across the county as an invitation to tender with the aim of the successful provider setting up a county wide service to support with absenteeism.</p> <p>Please see the below link to the original decision for further information:</p> <p>Decision - Support to pupils and schools to aid post COVID recovery in mental health and wellbeing and through this improve attendance - Herefordshire Council</p> <p>This 60K is now going to be allocated directly to the 15 secondary schools across the county with the amount based on the number of pupils within the school. Schools will then use this funding to directly support absenteeism within their setting and will report back at the end of the academic year on impact.</p>
Reasons for decision:	<p>Our ITT was unsuccessful as we received no applications, It was felt that this is because schools are already under increasing pressure due to COVID numbers within pupils and staff therefore do not have the capacity to set up a county wide service in the time frame required.</p> <p>Evidence shows that absenteeism rates across the county are higher within our secondary school aged children. The most recent attendance data Autumn 2020 shows that attendance for all of the secondary schools across the county are in the bottom quartile of performance (quartile 4)</p>

	<p>Evidence to support this can also be found in this work completed by the charity MIND:</p> <p>Mind's inquiry into secondary education and mental health - 'Not Making the Grade: why our approach to mental health at secondary school is failing young people' - released Wednesday 30 June revealed that almost all (96 per cent) of young people surveyed across England, reported that their mental health had affected their schoolwork at some point.</p> <p>As part of its inquiry, Mind consulted with over 2,870 young people, parents/caregivers of young people affected by mental health problems, mental health professionals and school staff across England. <u>The charity found that nearly seven in ten (68 per cent) young people reported being absent from school due to their mental health.</u></p>
<p>Highlight any associated risks/finance/legal/equality considerations:</p>	<p>In the initial decision the approach covered both primary and secondary schools. This new approach is focussed on secondary schools only. Due to the amount of funding it wouldn't be feasible to offer the funding to all schools across the county and the most recent attendance data highlights the greater need in our secondary schools.</p>
<p>Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:</p>	<p>A grant Programme was looked at but due to internal team's capacity and timeframes this was not possible therefore directly awarding the secondary schools the money is the most viable option at this point to ensure that it is spent within the given timeframes and able to directly support with absenteeism.</p>
<p>Details of any declarations of interest made:</p>	<p>N/A</p>

Signed

Chief Finance Officer

Date: 13 December 2021