

Committee:	Schools Forum
Meeting Date:	7 th October 2021
Title:	Approval of Central School Services Block (CSSB) savings and budget 2022-23
Author:	Sonya Harban
Decision making / consultative / information:	Decision Making
Who can vote?	All members with voting rights

What is the Forum being asked to decide?

1. In response to the £0.847m grant reduction to be imposed by the DfE in 2022-23 in relation to services funded by the CSSB, agree the described savings proposals of £0.313m, which when added to the £0.534m savings already agreed by Schools Forum on their meeting on 22nd June 2021 will ensure a balanced CSSB budget.
2. Schools Forum are required to formally vote annually to agree the continuation of funding for each service from the historical commitments' element of the CSSB. On the assumption that paragraph 1 recommendation is agreed, the following recommendations are made (please note that descriptors of services are shown at Annex A):
 - (a) Agree the funding for the services described in Annex A delivered by the Education and Learning team of £0.872m
 - (b) Agree the funding for the services described in Annex A delivered by the Early Help team of £2.148m
 - (c) Agree the funding for the services described in Annex A delivered by the Virtual School for Looked After Children of £0.345m
 - (d) Agree the funding of any residual long-term redundancy costs of £0.023m.

Reason for recommendation

3. The DfE are reducing the on-going historical commitments element of the CSSB by 20% a year, with 2022-23 being the third year of such a reduction. Funding challenges for the local authority mean that this loss of grant income cannot currently be identified without savings made elsewhere within the Council. Therefore, the services provided to schools funded by the CSSB currently will need to be delivered potentially under a different model, or where this is not possible, the services would cease, and schools would need to source individually.

- The savings proposals do not lead to any reduction in services that schools currently receive and make best use of alternative grant funding available.

Alternative options

- Schools Forum could decide not to approve these savings proposals and ask the Local Authority to come up with different reduction options to be discussed at the next Schools Forum in November 2022.

Who will be affected by this decision?

- All schools and pupils in Suffolk.

Main body of the Report

- To recap, the CSSB block of funding was added to the DSG budget allocations following the removal of the Education Services Grant (ESG). This was the statutory services element which never in school budgets, and included the contribution to combined budgets element, which was initially resourced through a range of Standard Funds and Extended School Funds. In summary, it brings together:

- funding previously allocated through the retained duties element of the former Education Services Grant
- funding for ongoing central functions; and
- historic commitments previously held within the Schools Block based upon decisions made by Schools Forum's prior to 2013

- Current guidance suggests that the DfE intend to keep reducing the funding element related to historical commitments by 20% a year. The reasoning behind this decrease is that the DfE felt it wasn't fair to continue with disparities between Local Authorities with regards to funding levels agreed in the past that are now represented in the CSSB.

- The on-going historical elements of the CSSB grant as agreed by Schools Forum on 20th October 2020 are shown below:

2021-22	
On-going	
Commitments	Comments
Education & Learning	£1,287,045 (Includes some Business Support)
Early Help	£2,460,416 (Includes some Business Support)
Redundancies	£23,000 Based on 2019-20 spend
SEND Schools Support	£121,865 Transfer to HNB as fits DfE guidance of applicable spend. Total includes some Business Support
Virtual School (E&L)	£344,722
Total	£4,237,048

- The challenge set therefore for the 2022-23 financial year is to identify savings equivalent to a 20% reduction of the 21-22 budget i.e. £0.847m.

- At the Schools Forum on 22nd June 2021, savings of £0.534m were agreed as below:

Business Support	£136,948
Use of CSSB statutory non-committed budget	£307,000
Transfer of SEND costs to HNB	£89,823
	£533,771

12. Officers have reviewed how best the remaining savings of £0.313m can be made without any adverse impact on services received by schools.
13. In the Early Help teams, £0.091m of non-pay CSSB savings can be identified, with a further £0.140m from pay budgets. This is due to a combination of the level of turnover in the staff in the service, and less non-pay spend assumed from travel as ways of working change as a result of efficiencies found during the pandemic response. Should these not be achievable, the risk of covering the deficit will fall to the core funding available to the Local Authority, of which £6m supports the Early Help teams.
14. Education and Learning Leadership have agreed some changes to their staffing establishment, which would realise savings of £0.083m without impacting on the work that supports improvement across the sector, sharing strengths, identifying risks and providing support and intervention to mitigate risks and thereby preventing decline.
15. Should the above be agreed, the CSSB budget for 2022-23 would consist of:

	2021-22 CSSB budget	Savings agreed by Schools Forum 22/06/21	Additional Savings proposed	2022-23 Suggested CSSB budget
Business Supp	£136,948	-£136,948		£0
E&L	£1,263,906	-£307,000	-£83,000	£873,906
Early Help	£2,378,649		-£230,567	£2,148,082
Redundancies	£23,000			£23,000
SEND	£89,823	-£89,823		£0
Virtual School	£344,722			£344,722
Grand Total	£4,237,048	-£533,771	-£313,567	£3,389,710
Total Savings identified			-£847,338	

16. Officers have been engaged with the S151 Officer for Suffolk, and Cabinet Members to highlight the lack of any further savings being able to be made to these services without large scale impacts being felt by the most vulnerable of learners. As a result, the savings required in future years are recorded on the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan as a budget pressure that needs to be met, that cannot be mitigated from within CYP. As the budget setting process for 2022-23 and beyond is currently on-going, an update as to the support to fund this grant loss corporately will be shared with Schools Forum as soon as any can be confirmed.

Annex A

Early Help £2.148m

Education settings require timely responses, robust assessment and interventions and access to universal and targeted provision so that they can deliver high quality education and support for the children and young people.

This funding is used to part fund the staff team that manage the processes relating to Suffolk County Council's Early Help and Parenting offer who sit within a wider Early Help Service and deliver a range of evidence-based interventions for children, young people and families who do not meet the threshold for statutory intervention for example: video interactive guidance (VIG), family functioning and behavioural support.

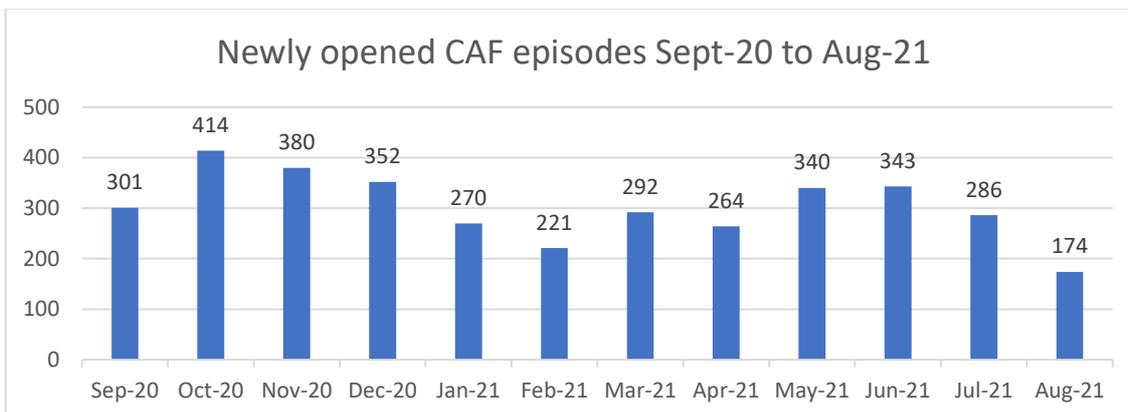
The Early Help Teams offer support predominately through the completion of a Common Assessment Framework (CAF), an individual and family led plan which is reviewed with key partners at a Family Network Meeting (FNM). The Signs of Safety (SoS) Framework is used to ensure everyone is clear about what needs to happen, and the Early Help (EH) Family Support Practitioners (FSP's) work within the family's home as with their community to build resilience and reduce or minimise risks i.e., family breakdown, domestic violence, and financial issues.

CAF assessments are completed by a range of local agencies and schools consistently remain the highest referrer. Despite the significant challenges during the pandemic where fewer pupils were physically attending educational establishments, approx. 40% of new CAF assessments were initiated by schools.

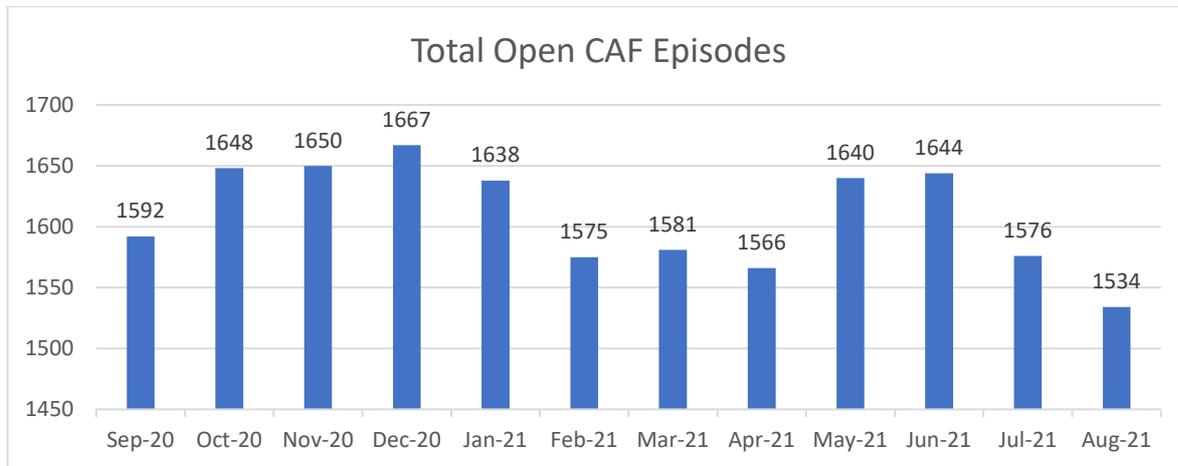
The assessments presented a wide range of issues that require targeted family interventions including:

- emotional wellbeing and emerging mental health issues
- behavioural concerns
- neglect
- bereavement
- risk of homelessness
- substance misuse

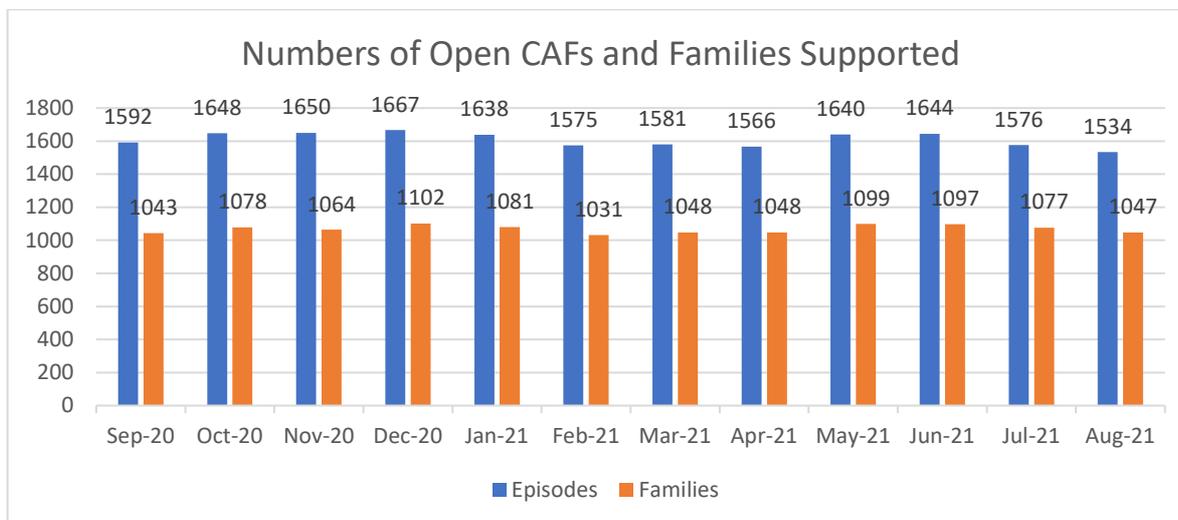
The Early Help team also provides interventions with families who no longer require a statutory intervention (i.e., Social Care), vulnerable families are transferred from Social Care to Early Help to ensure they continue to receive ongoing support and sustain the changes needed.



Between September 2020 and August 2021, a total of 3637 CAFs were completed, on average 303 new CAFs opened each month. Education establishments remain the main source of CAF referral requests (35-40 %) which are then assessed and worked by the Early Help Teams.

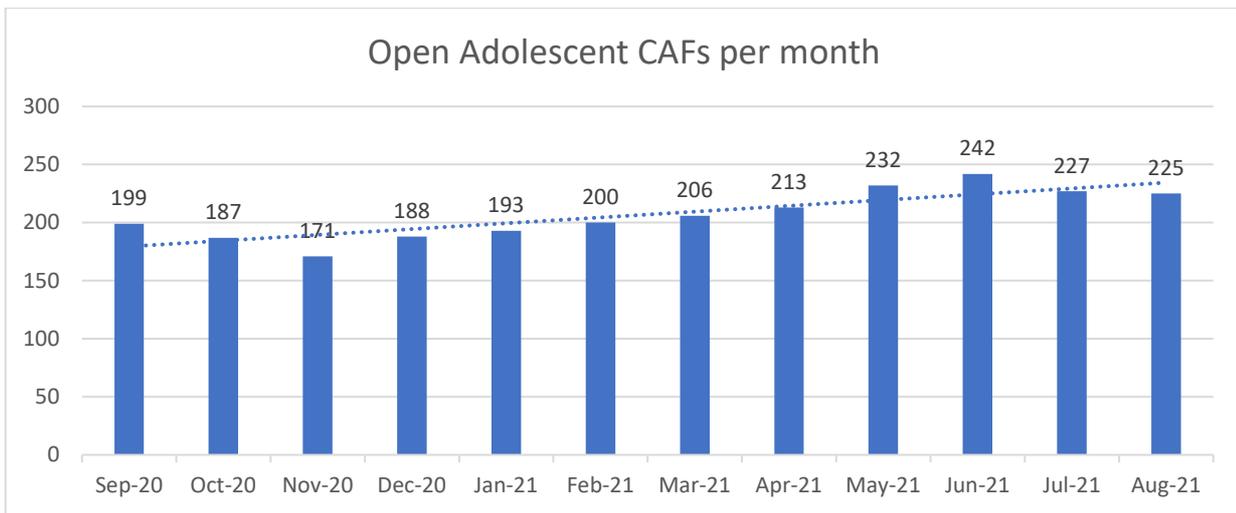


This graph represents the total number of open CAF episodes per calendar month. On average there are 1609 open episodes per calendar month. Looking at the figures more closely these are individual episodes, but they equate to 1068 families who are supported every month.



In addition, the Young Persons Workers in the Early Help Teams also provide targeted support for young people who are NEET (not in employment, education or training) or at risk of NEET – and a proportion of these young people have also been supported with an Adolescent CAF which provided a specific plan to address the issues preventing them from accessing EET. Over the past year the numbers of Adolescent CAFs have continued to increase and the Young Persons Workers (YPW's) proactively work with Education settings to identify young people at risk of NEET.

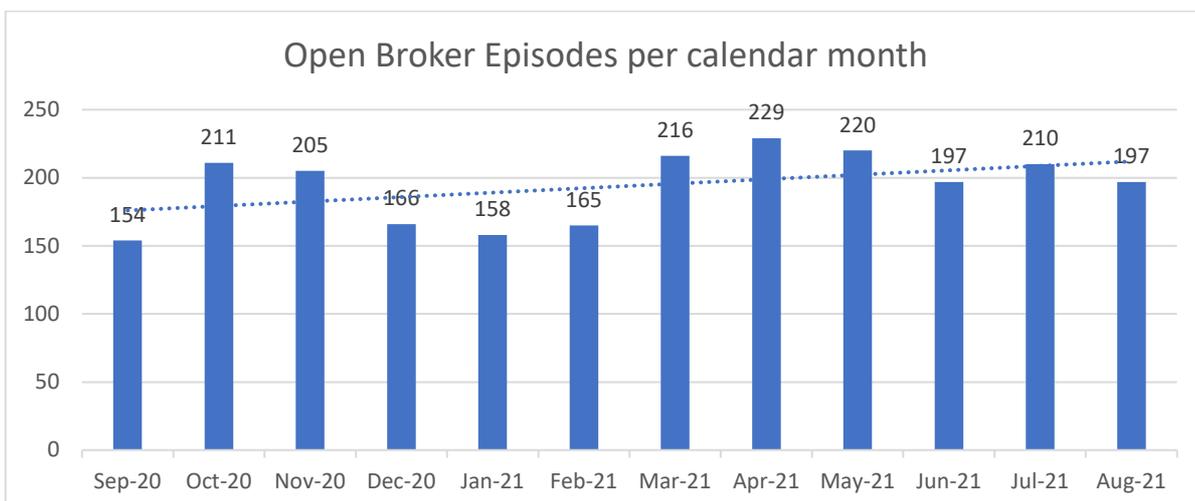
Not all the work carried out with this cohort of young people is captured via the Adolescent CAF's, as information and advice is provided, and activities to follow up on Intended Destinations, September Offer etc as part of the CCIS national reporting cycle is also completed



The figures for Suffolk continue to be positive in respect of our NEET/EET figures, and a comparison from last year's figures is shown below.

Overview for Year 12&13	Jul-20	Jul-21
NEET + Unknown %	7.84%	5.39%
NEET %	4.61%	3.91%
Unknown %	3.23%	1.48%
In Education %	80.53%	82.85%
In Work Based Learning %	9.11%	8.14%
In Learning %	89.64%	90.99%

In addition to the Open CAF/ACAF episodes, the Early Help teams' broker CAFs with partner agencies like schools, and these are cases where there are concerns or vulnerabilities identified that do not meet the threshold for a statutory intervention by Social Care. While a broker CAF request may not result in a CAF being opened, they provide opportunities for consultation with the referrer and family members around the areas of need that require support. Broker CAF discussions can be beneficial in assisting families to understand issues and implement an improvement plan, which often identifies help from within their own support network, and access help from other agencies or services such as Parenting Programmes and community providers.



During the pandemic, when many services were unable to provide face to face support, the requests to broker a CAF increased significantly. This trend has continued, with an average of 194 episodes open each month and enables families to explore issues and develop plans to ensure they have the necessary support. Not all broker episodes result in an open CAF episode but each one will assist a family to consider their circumstances and build resilience.

Recognising the impact Covid-19 has had on families, the Early Help Teams introduced a "Let's Talk CAF" service in January 2021, offering partners (including Education and the Emotional Wellbeing Hub) the opportunity to discuss concerns they had about families with a local EH Manager. This solution focussed discussion explored local community resources, different interventions and approaches that may be beneficial and whether a CAF assessment may be needed. The discussions led to expanding digital parenting offer (see below) and feedback from partners has been positive, it has also improved local communication and increase partnership working.

Local Early Help Teams routinely meet with pastoral and support staff in schools to offer consultation and advice as needed. This provides an enhanced and individualised approach to assessing family's needs and providing family support. Feedback has been positive both from a Schools perspective and the Early Help Team's evaluation as this has reduced the number of times referrers and families need to share their story and has improved the way the EH teams target support.

The majority of CAFs have underlying needs and risk factors which are multiple and complex and require a multi-agency response.

The main underlying needs on open cases were:

- CYP Mental Health/Emotional – 17.8%
- Educational Attainment – 12.8%
- Family Parental Boundaries – 9.3%
- Family Parent/Child Relationship – 7.8%
- Keeping Children Safe – 7.4%
- Health and Development – 6.2%
- Parental Mental Health – 5.6%
- Domestic Violence and abuse – Historic with current impact – 4.1%

Usually, families have more than one underlying need and this demonstrates the range of issues supported by Early Help Teams.

Interventions with parents and carers is complemented by individual and group work with children and young people focussing on:

- improving self-esteem
- reducing risks of sexual exploitation
- anger and behaviour management
- reducing the risk of offending
- transition to adulthood

Feedback from families and management oversight at the point of closure has shown that 72.1% of cases close for positive reasons (needs met, sustainable progress achieved, ready for EET etc), with an additional 13.4% closed for more neutral outcomes which may be positive (i.e., moved authority, transfer to another agency). 14.5% of cases are closed for a reason that could be considered negative, such as transfer to Social Care or family disengaged. This has remained constant over the past year. Work is now being undertaken to develop greater understanding of closure reasons and to provide a greater consistency.

Parenting Support Programmes

Evidence-based parenting programmes provide parents and carers with the skills and confidence to understand and enjoy their children's development, encourage positive behaviour, foster a child & young person's ability to self-regulate, and develop social and emotional wellbeing.

Resulting in C&YP who are school ready, emotionally stable, and able to take full advantage of their education – reducing school exclusion and emotionally-based school refusal.

Groups are a cost-effective early help intervention and have well-researched short and long-term benefits (e.g., reducing need for further services and interventions later in life, as well as promoting early learning in the home). The interim report on the future of social care, commissioned by the government, 'The Case for Change' (2021) recognises this:

A common feature of successful programmes is often clear eligibility criteria, sufficient 'dosage' (interactive time spent on the programme), and the opportunity for parents to develop a positive relationship with skilled practitioners. The need for a high degree of professional skill is particularly important in engaging with vulnerable families to achieve positive behaviour change and improve child outcomes. Investment in services which help families should be part of improvements we make to children's social care.

Examples of help for families include:

- **Parenting Support Interventions:** build parenting capacity to improve child outcomes, strengthen parent-child interactions and manage children's behaviour. Examples include but are not limited to, some versions of the Incredible Years and Triple P programmes.
- **Supporting the Parental Relationship Interventions:** focus on the quality of the relationship between parents (whether together, or separated/separating) to improve children's emotional, behavioural, social, and academic development.

During the 2020/21 school year the Parenting Team and Early Help practitioners adapted practice to deliver group-based interventions via Microsoft Teams so that by the start of the 2020 autumn term a full virtual programme of Triple P, Solihull and Caring Dads programmes was offered. Practitioners from the Health & Children's Centres, supported by the Parenting Coordinators have also delivered virtual Webster Stratton programmes for parents with babies and toddlers and additional sessions were provided ensure parents felt confident in using technology and could adapt to the different delivery methods.

Many parents referred themselves to courses, while others continued to be referred for support- i.e., CAF/Early Help, Schools, Health, Social Care, CAFCASS etc. Self-referrals are encouraged for all programmes except Caring Dads which is referral-only.

Parenting interventions offered Sept 2020 – August 2021

Type of course/event	Number delivered
Triple P Group	23
Triple P Teen	12
Triple P Stepping Stone	15
Triple P Family Transitions	9
Triple P seminars	13
Webster Stratton groups	2
Caring Dads	4
Parent Hub events	8
Saturday workshops	1

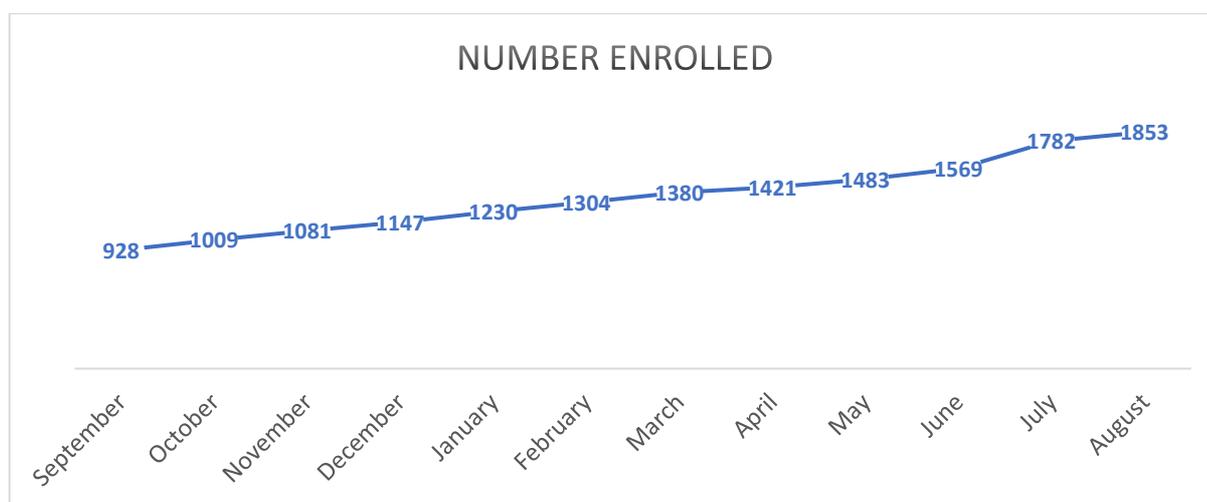
In December 2020 a rolling programme of webinar-style Triple P seminars was introduced (for parents of the under-11 and 12+ age-groups and additionally some specifically for parents of children with additional needs), which has and is proving very popular. Webinars provide strategies and tips for parents and can be accessed at any time as they are not restricted by numbers. They are also useful for parents who are waiting to attend a group programme. Some parents report they provide what they need so parenting group places can be offered to families with more complex issues. The seminars are also popular with professionals and offer principles and practical strategies to be used in work settings. These changes have increased the consistency of messages parents receive and encouraged greater joined-up working.

The team have resumed of face-to-face group work in a safe way and have learnt a lot about the benefits of delivering virtual groups. Parents tell us that for some, a virtual group is more accessible as they don't have to consider transport and childcare, others have spoken about feeling 'safer' in joining groups on-line a sense of greater control. Virtual programmes have also proved very popular in the evenings, and we have increased the proportion of these offered, so widening accessibility. In looking forwards, we will continue to offer a blend of virtual, face-to-face, and independent online courses for families.

Online and digital support: In addition to the virtual groups, all Suffolk residents are now able to access several free modular parenting programmes via computer or smart phone. This has been made possible by the Early Help Service investing in a 3-year countywide licence.

Solihull have significantly developed the content during 2020-21, and this now includes:

- Understanding pregnancy and birth
- Understanding your baby
- Understanding your child
- Understanding your teenager's brain
- The teenage brain (for young people)
- Understanding your child with additional needs - NEW
- Understanding your child's mental health and wellbeing - NEW
- Understanding your child's feelings (taster course) - NEW



Double the numbers of families have enrolling over the past year, and we are seeing considerable interest in the new courses. Communications to further develop school

awareness of this offer are planned for September 2021. There is also potential to use materials in a school setting with small groups of parents or with young people. For example, some LAs are successfully using the teenage brain materials with students as part of the PSHE curriculum, at no additional cost. The course materials are also helpful to a wide range of practitioners working with families, and by entering their Suffolk postcode they also have free access to them.

The Parenting Team have continued to offer Hub events online, covering aspects of positive parenting, and encouraging resilience, confidence and thriving in school and the community and face-to-face groups will resume from October 2021. WhatsApp groups continue to offer valuable, ongoing support for parents who have completed parenting courses; the team support their set-up, but they are very much parent-led.

Recording and evaluation: All referrals and recording for parenting programmes are fully integrated with the Liquid Logic (case management system) already used by Early Help and Social Care teams. Parents and carers can book courses through the CYP portal which has streamlined the process, and made it easier to see progress of referrals, as well as targeting or increasing provision when there are waiting lists. The self-referral process is well-used and empowers parents.

The groupwork module on Liquid Logic is currently being extended to cover the Freedom programme and Children's groupwork. A pilot is in progress for internal referrals, and it is hoped to extend this to self-referrals and external agencies from early 2022.

Our inbox parenting@suffolk.gov.uk is available for queries and advice and is monitored daily Monday- Friday.

The Parenting Team continue to offer training in the Solihull Approach to other practitioners, as well as to support pastoral support sessions with school staff.

Workforce development funding from the DWP allows us to purchase and cascade training for practitioners working with families affected by parental conflict. This includes early intervention for new parents and those with young children through the 'Me, You and Baby Too' programme, as well as extending capacity to offer the Triple P Family Transitions programme for parents going through divorce and separation, where this is having an adverse effect on children.

The team also offer 'Reducing Parental Conflict' training for practitioners across all agencies, including schools, and the team are developing toolkits and resources for practitioners and parents to support them with parental conflict.

Domestic Abuse:

The 17-week Caring Dads programme for fathers who have been perpetrators of domestic abuse has been offered virtually during the past year by the Parenting and Early Help Teams. Group leaders will offer a mix of virtual and face-to-face delivery in the Autumn term, and face-to-face courses will also be offered by the Waveney Domestic Abuse Forum in Lowestoft. The majority of referrals (80%) come from Social Care, with others from Early Help Teams and CAFCASS. 31 men attended, who were in contact with approximately 90 children (their own and those of their partners).

The Freedom Programme (for victims of domestic abuse) has also been delivered, mainly as a groupwork intervention but sometimes individually. The need for additional staff training for the Early Help teams was recognised and 35 additional staff have been trained across the county.

What will be the impact if Schools Forum does not agree to this proposal?

The DSG funding provides a large proportion of the funding for the Early Help teams and Parenting Service. Without this, the Early Help Teams would have to significantly reduce the amount of early intervention and preventive work they deliver to children, young people, and their families. Interventions would need to be refocused and prioritised to support the Social Care Fieldwork teams with families identified through Child in Need, Child Protection and Child in Care plans. The teams would also have to significantly decrease the numbers of parenting programmes provided and change the way support is provided to young people who are at risk or NEET or are NEET.

This would result in a reduction in capacity or ability to accept external CAFs from partner agencies (i.e., schools and the voluntary sector) and raises the question around the Early Help team's ability to offer continued support to families who need help once they are transferred from Social Care to embed and sustain effective safeguards, which equated to of 702 families last year. If the Early Help teams were unable to provide this work families would be reliant on universal services provided by other agencies including schools and the voluntary sector. This would have a direct negative impact on the casework led by school-based pastoral staff and have a negative impact on classroom support time and teaching capacity. Links to voluntary organisations, housing and financial support for parents would need to be made directly by schools. Advice and information would need to be accessed via the MASH professional consultation helpline and we anticipate the number of children who are school ready would reduce, and the behaviour of the more vulnerable children who are not in receipt of early help or intervention would have an impact on the attainment of children as a whole.

Virtual School (for Children in Care) £0.344m

The educational outcomes for Children in Care remain significantly below all pupils across every Key Stage. The funding provides a team to work with The Virtual School Head and our schools to diminish this difference in these pupil's outcomes. The impact of the Virtual School can be seen in the improved educational outcomes of this vulnerable group, which are publicly available via statistical first releases and are also summarised below:

1. Improved outcomes for Suffolk Children in Care in Key Stage 4:

Av. Progress 8	2017	2018	2019	2020
Suffolk CIC	-1.01	-0.99	-1.03	-
National CIC	-1.17	-1.24	-1.23	-

The average progress 8 score for Suffolk children in care has improved and is above that of children in care nationally.

% Achieving GCSE Maths and English at grade 4+	2017	2018	2019	2020
Suffolk CIC	14.9	19.4	19.7	26.3
National CIC	17.5	17.8	18	24.4

A higher percentage of children in care in Suffolk achieve passes in English and Mathematics than children in care nationally.

2. Improved outcomes for Suffolk Children in Care in Key Stage 2:

% Achieving expected standard RWM*	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Suffolk CIC	26	52	70	68	-
National CIC	44	57	61	60	-

**Excluding pupils with EHCPs in specialist provision*

The percentage of Suffolk CIC achieving the expected standard has increased and is above national level for children in care.

- Improvements to the Personal Education Plan (PEP) - Every child in care must have a Personal Education Plan (PEP) as a part of their care plan and it is the responsibility of each school's governing body to ensure that there is a designated teacher in place to implement this plan in school. In 2016 the Virtual School established an online PEP and has provided continued training to designated teachers to improve the quality of education provision for this vulnerable group.
- The Virtual School provides an extensive training offer to carers, school leaders and social workers. The training offer covers a wide range of issues ranging from trauma informed practice, effective use of the pupil premium plus grant and maximising achievement through effective interventions.
- Improved approach - Robust monitoring and evaluation were carried out in 2020/21 through a schedule of support and challenge visits to every education setting where a Child in care attends. This looked at how the setting was maximising their resources to best support this vulnerable group. A total of 310 school visits or virtual contacts to over 240 educational setting were carried out during the academic year 2020/21.
- Virtual School's Statutory Duties have been extended significantly - Firstly the Children and Social Worker Act 2017 extended the statutory duties of the Local Authority to support children who leave care on a relevant order (Adoption, Special Guardianship, Child Arrangement Orders). Secondly, promoting the education of children with a social worker (June 2021)

What will be the impact if Schools Forum does not agree to this proposal?

The duties of the Virtual School Head are clearly set out in the statutory guidance Promoting the education of looked after children (February 2018) and the Children and Social Worker Act 2017. The funding outlined in the proposal enables the creation of the team that supports the Virtual School Head to successfully carry out these statutory obligations. Reduction or withdrawal of this funding will reduce the Local Authority's capacity to fulfil the statutory duties as outlined. This would include the discontinuation of:

- the timely and accurate collection of attendance data for every child in the care of Suffolk County Council
- delivery of training to teachers, social workers and foster carers to better meet the learning needs of children in care.
- guidance, support and challenge towards achieving a high-quality Personal Education Plan for every child in care.
- a flexible approach to additional funding for personalised programmes of support for pupils in crisis or requiring funding in excess of the pupil premium plus.

- the provision of information and advice in relation to previously looked after children.
- the timely response by members of the Virtual School to ensure children in care attend a good school or setting that is able to meet their educational needs.
- the continued employment of a team whose interventions ensure the educational attainment and progress of children looked after by the local authority are monitored and evaluated as if those children attended a single school.
- the ability for the Local Authority to employ a team with sufficient skills and knowledge to provide the necessary support and challenge to ensure all children in care make good progress in school and achieve outcomes that are in line with their peers.
- the ability to meet the additional duties placed on the Virtual School in relation to previously looked after children would be significantly diminished. Whilst the Virtual School can manage the additional burden without requesting additional funding the additional duty does make the continuation of the existing funding even more important.

Education and Learning £0.874m

CONTEXT – WHAT IS THIS RESOURCE USED FOR?

Schools Forum agreement is sought, so that the council can continue to meet its statutory duties in respect of the quality of education for all Suffolk children and young people in publicly funded schools. These duties and responsibilities were formerly funded through the Education Support Grant (ESG). The DfE removed the ESG but retained the duties transferring funding for them to the Central School's Services Block (CSSB).

The Council retains significant roles and responsibilities for educational performance; pupil outcomes and the quality of education in all publicly funded schools – Local Authority (LA) maintained and academies. These roles and responsibilities have not reduced over time. It also retains significant roles and responsibilities to monitor, support improvement and intervene where needed in Local Authority maintained schools. Further detail of the roles and responsibilities are:

- The roles and responsibilities of the Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member of Children's Services include 'working with Headteachers, school governors and academy sponsors and principals to promote educational excellence for all children and young people and be ambitious in tackling underperformance.' (*Statutory guidance on the roles and responsibilities of the Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member for Children's Services For local authorities April 2013*)
- The statutory role for Local Authorities set out in section 13A of the 1996 Education Act remains and requires LAs to 'promote high standards for all pupils and to promote the fulfilment of learning potential'.

The statutory guidance does not specify how these responsibilities should be fulfilled. In Suffolk, the resource allocated by the DfE through the CSSB will be used by the council to provide school improvement resource and officers to ensure school leaders are supported in their essential work so that all children and young people in Suffolk attend a school that is judged by Ofsted as good or better. Also, so that the strong outcomes currently achieved by

some in Suffolk are more widespread and consistent across the county accelerating improvement overall to be at then above national.

This resource will be used to impact on all Suffolk children and young people across the sector regardless of the type of setting they attend.

The Education Skills and Learning team's work reflects the principles of:

- respect for the autonomy of school leaders
- the recognition of school leaders as the drivers of school improvement
- the council's role as champions for all children in state schools
- evidence based practice around school improvement, so that national and local approaches that have a positive impact are shared wider
- the bespoke nature of the different schools Suffolk children and young people attend whilst applying the principles of effective school improvement to support the leaders of each school, including governors, with their improvement work.
- supporting school leaders including governors in realising their own school's aims and visions.

Crucially, the use of this resource:

- models a proactive, bespoke approach – to support improvement across the sector working with school leaders including governors and using a range of evidence in their setting to identify and validate strengths, confirm priorities, evaluate the impact of the school's actions in addressing priorities and plan next steps, and to adapt support to any early indicators of risk and vulnerability.
- takes an evidence-based approach to school improvement support, Officers implement the school improvement strategy and use proven approaches when working with schools to secure sustainable improvement and sign-post school leaders to evidence-based practice in other schools across the county.
- enables LA officers to facilitate school leaders including governors connecting, working with leaders from other schools and networking across the county so that leaders can share and learn from what others are finding is working, to collaborate on approaches to address priorities and to keep up to date with initiatives and guidance.

In summary, this resource is used to promote the conditions for a self-sustaining school improvement system –bespoke school improvement support for individual schools; identifying effective practice to share wider and contribute to a system led approach of school-to-school support and locality-based collaboration across all publicly funded schools.

The design of the school improvement system in Suffolk must take account of Suffolk's characteristics. Suffolk covers an area of 1468 square miles. It has schools ranging from large urban to small, sometimes geographically isolated, rural with travel time between. Suffolk has a higher than national average percentage of children and young people who go to academy schools and 43 different Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) responsible for educating Suffolk children and young people.

This resource supports the LA is facilitating collaboration and joint work across the county to ensure all leaders who impact on Suffolk children feel supported and not isolated. Approximately 26000 Suffolk children and young people attend schools maintained by the Local Authority and 76000 attend academy schools. Local Authority officers can adopt a

county wide view, provide a county wide service, and gather essential, evidence-based intelligence about the strengths that exist in Suffolk schools.

During the pandemic officers have continued to support school leaders in their work to respond to the challenges of the covid situation, and to support them with their improvement work.

The team of Officers currently work with school leaders including governors in 186 schools in Suffolk, in all phases from infant to secondary schools. 110 schools, out of the 324 schools with children and young people in the age range of 5 to 16, are local authority maintained receiving bespoke support and challenge to strengthen the leadership of improvement. 76 academy schools take up the offer to work with the team to receive bespoke support and challenge visits, with 59 primary, 11 secondary, 3 alternative provision and 3 special schools.

THE SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF SUPPORT PROVIDED THROUGH THIS RESOURCE ARE:

- bespoke improvement support for individual schools
- facilitating collaboration between all publicly funded schools
- support for governance including governor networks; guidance; support.
- support for leadership development- Headteacher recruitment and future strategic leadership planning
- Supporting leadership of inclusive schools
- Elective Home Education (EHE)
- supporting school leaders including governors work to meet their equalities duties and to champion racial equality
- regular liaison and links with every MAT that educates children and young people
- support for school leaders in responding to Covid 19

BESPOKE IMPROVEMENT SUPPORT FOR INDIVIDUAL SCHOOLS

Funded by this resource, officers use proven, evidence-based approaches to work with school leaders including governors to:

- provide an external objective view and work with school leaders to monitor and evaluate their schools to ensure a holistic, accurate view of the school which reflects a wide range of evidence, matching the criteria in Ofsted's inspection framework
- identify evidence-based strengths to share wider
- signpost school leaders to strengths in other schools to support them in their work
- support school leaders in their planning and improvement work to achieve their aims and vision for the school
- support school leaders to be in the best place for Ofsted to validate their work
- where the criteria are met, to inform the use of LA intervention as champions for children.

Our evidence tells us that where schools have the support of officers' bespoke visits, they are more likely to improve to or retain good in Ofsted inspections.

With the absence of published performance outcomes in 2020 and 2021, the support for school leaders including governors to use first-hand evidence to monitor and evaluate the school's work is even more significant and LA Officers are able to support school leaders in their unique settings with this work. Using the wide range of evidence including evidence of the current quality of education for all year groups, all vulnerable groups and in all subjects, as well as published information such as performance data and Ofsted inspections means support is able to model a proactive approach and not rely on historic evidence or one strand of evidence which may not give an accurate picture.

LA responsibilities for intervention

The DfE school improvement offer uses Ofsted criteria to identify schools for support. The amount of support is determined by the number of Requires Improvement (RI) judgements a school has received. This support responds to an RI judgement. It is not designed to prevent decline to RI. This support is delivered by National Leaders in Education (NLEs).

The DfE Schools Causing Concern 2019 guidance sets out the expectation of LAs to use their statutory powers and intervene in schools which meet the criteria which include:

- the standards of performance of pupils at the school are unacceptably low and are likely to remain so; or
- there has been a serious breakdown in the way the school is managed or governed which is prejudicing or likely to prejudice such standards or performance; or
- the safety of pupils or staff at the school is threatened.

In Suffolk we adopt a proactive and preventative approach to mitigate the risk of needing to use statutory powers and issue warning notices and highest-level intervention. We also reflect the importance of using current, first-hand evidence and not solely historic published data. We implement a process of early challenge and support called the High-Level Action (HLA) process.

HLA is taken where evidence indicates that there is a risk of decline to meet the criteria for a warning notice and intensive and targeted activity must happen to ensure that the pace of improvement accelerates. This support and challenge has tackled the factors putting schools at risk of poor Ofsted outcomes often enabling school leaders to secure rapid improvement and evidence 'good' or preventing a decline to inadequate. 100% LA maintained schools who had been supported through the HLA process and had a section 8 at risk of decline' inspection, secured improvement to be judged good in their subsequent section 5 inspection in 2019/20. Pupil outcomes in these schools have also increased at a rapid pace and sustained those improvements over time.

This resource is and will be used to ensure schools at risk of statutory intervention are identified based on a wide range of current evidence, not just on historic published data and in response to Ofsted judgments. Eligible schools at risk of intervention will continue to receive additional support as part of the HLA process to mitigate the risk of the use of statutory intervention and Ofsted decline.

In this way, the LA fulfils its responsibility to 'know its schools' and to support school leaders with their improvement work; identifying strengths to share wider and identify early any risks of decline and take a proactive approach to preventing that decline in LA maintained schools.

FACILITATING COLLABORATION BETWEEN PUBLICLY FUNDED SCHOOLS

This resource will also continue to be used for LA Officers to facilitate school leaders in all publicly funded schools working together on shared priorities, bringing together Headteachers, senior leaders, middle leaders, and governors to collaborate and share

approaches that have worked or trial new ideas. This working reflects the unique features of each of the 6 localities within Suffolk and the different characteristics of each. The features and contexts of the localities are very different, and solutions must reflect the contexts including school characteristics in each locality.

Headteacher networking meetings have enabled leaders from a variety of schools to work together and share ideas and needs. For example, steering groups of Headteachers from academy and LA maintained schools are working together to drive Headteacher focused groups and address priorities that the Headteachers have identified. A network for Executive Headteachers has also been established to facilitate sharing and collaboration across the county.

In addition, facilitated by LA officers, pods of approximately five primary schools (a mix of LA maintained and academy schools) have been formed in the Central locality and have established subject leader networks to share practise, take part in joint planning, moderate pupil outcomes and provide each other with constructive feedback. The pods have started with English, Maths and Science. The headteachers of the schools, facilitated by LA officers, meet termly to steer the work of these groups, agree how they will operate and evaluate the impact of the activity on the quality of education in each school. New pods of schools are due to be established during the autumn term 2021. LA officers, working with a steering group of primary headteachers from the Central locality, facilitate opportunities for headteachers in the locality to meet and network, focusing on specific areas of school improvement. Feedback from those who attend is positive and SEOs have noted the impact of the strategies that are subsequently integrated into the work of each school to improve outcomes for children. The learning from this model will be used to develop similar 'pods' across the county.

SUPPORT FOR GOVERNANCE

This resource is used to provide support for governing bodies including to meet their statutory governance roles and responsibilities, for example:

- awareness of, and adherence to, responsibilities under education and employment legislation and where applicable, charity and company law
- plans to ensure that key duties are undertaken effectively such as safeguarding, inclusion, special education needs and disability (SEND), and monitoring and oversight of the impact of pupil premium and other targeted funding streams
- understanding of, and adherence to, responsibilities under the Equalities Act, promoting equality and diversity throughout the organisation including in relation to its own operation.

Support for individual governing bodies, individual governors and system wide governance provided from this resource includes:

- telephone support and advice for governors, particularly chairs
- provision of mentors for new chairs of governors
- support for governors in fulfilling their strategic roles and responsibilities and linked to the Education inspection framework for example, self –evaluation; identifying strengths and priorities
- communication of local and national updates through Governor Headlines and Governor Headlines live
- support for governor recruitment

- facilitating networking and governor to governor support.

This impacts on improving the quality of governance in Suffolk with the aim that every school is supported by governance as good as the best.

In addition, The Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that every maintained school has a fully constituted Governing Body with an Instrument of Government which ensures that each Governing Body is legally constituted, clerked, and supported in order to meet its statutory duties. This responsibility includes facilitating the appointment of Local Authority Governors and supporting Governing Bodies in their endeavours to recruit suitable candidates to fill other categories of vacancies.

SUPPORT FOR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

This resource is also used to support school leadership teams and governors with leadership development; planning and activity to achieve strategic, sustainable future leadership arrangements. This includes the provision of professional advice and guidance for governors before, during and after the Headteacher recruitment process; support for Headteacher induction and arrangements for Headteacher mentors.

It also includes support for governors in their longer-term strategic planning when considering the options for future structural solutions to secure sustainable schools.

SUPPORTING THE LEADERSHIP OF INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS

This resource is used to support school leaders in their engagement with other teams in Suffolk County Council (SCC) to strengthen work around Inclusion. For example, this resource has been used to coordinate joint work between school leaders and LA officers to strengthen the leadership of inclusion and the effective use of the school's resource to meet the needs of children with special educational needs. It will be used to support school leaders' engagement with the recently established Specialist Education Services team. Officers will be able to support and signpost schools in making referrals and will be able to refer directly into the service where the evidence indicates that the school leaders and children in the school would benefit from support with whole school approaches to inclusion.

This resource also supports the work to improve exclusion. Where rates have been increasing or are high, Officers have been able to act quickly and have meaningful dialogue with school leaders, CEOs, and the Regional Schools' Commissioner (RSC), working collectively to identify issues and improve the situation going forward.

ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION (EHE)

This resource is used to support the work of the EHE team. This team takes the lead in ensuring that the LA duties for this cohort are met.

The LA have 2 statutory duties within EHE:

- to provide support for home educating families (at a level decided by LA themselves) and if families wish it
- to intervene with families if the LA is given reason to believe that a child is not receiving a suitable education.

In addition, the LA has a duty under Section 436A of the Education Act 1996 to plan to establish the identities of children in their area who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving a suitable education otherwise than at school.

There are currently over 1300 pupils EHE. Of these approximately 52% currently or have previously been open to Early Help or Social Care services and 7% Have an EHCP. The pupils in these categories are vulnerable and are without the protective factors of a school.

Without this team it would not be possible to have oversight of the education and, more crucially, fulfil their safeguarding duties.

EHE numbers have seen a steady rise over the past 6 years nationally and in Suffolk. In Suffolk figures showed 510 EHE children and young people in 2015/16 to over 1300 in 2020/21. Covid has had an impact in Suffolk over the past 18 months and this is a mirror of the national picture.

It is also important to note that the government are looking carefully at the increase in numbers and are currently reviewing duties and systems in this area. We are awaiting changes to guidance/duties in the Autumn term 2021. One new measure that is being considered is an EHE register. This, along with other new duties or guidance will have impact on the team's capacity to carry out work in the appropriate timescales.

EQUALITIES DUTIES INCLUDING RACIAL EQUALITY

This resource is used to provide support for school leaders including governors, in meeting their equalities duties. This includes producing tools to support school leaders in their work such as an Equalities Tool which was circulated to Suffolk schools in February 2021. The purpose of the document is to i) aid schools in meeting its statutory duties within the Equality Act 2010 and ii) to support school's self- evaluation to enable effective and appropriate equality objective/s to be published, to ensure a growing culture of equality within Suffolk schools. This resource will continue to be used to support school leaders in meeting their duties to ensure continual improvements take place within this area, for example, continuing to support new head teachers in Suffolk through CPD to ensure they were aware and actively fulfilling their duties and through work with school leaders, promoting diversity within the curriculum and probing to ensure schools' curriculum intent, implementation and impact are highly effective for all pupils.

The LA Officers funded by this resource have been actively championing racial equality in their work. Since May 2020 the important work that is needed around racial equality has again been highlighted nationally and globally. The work carried out with this resource includes supporting school leaders to ensure their curriculum reflects the achievements of people from all races that have shaped our society; prepares children and young people for life in modern Britain; models aspiration and provides role models that are recognisable to children from all backgrounds. A specific piece of work is around increasing the diversity of governing bodies. For example, this resource enabled a governance webinar facilitated by Sharon Warmington, CEO of the National Black Governors Network and attended by more than 90 governors.

REGULAR LIAISON AND LINKS WITH EVERY MAT THAT EDUCATES SUFFOLK CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

There are 43 MATs who run Suffolk schools that are attended by approximately 76000 Suffolk children and young people. This resource is used to support links between each MAT and the LA who both want the best education and preparation for later life for the children who attend schools in their trusts and have a shared commitment and responsibility/ accountability for the outcomes. Each MAT has a named senior officer link who meets frequently and

regularly to support collaboration and joint working across all Suffolk schools for all Suffolk children and young people.

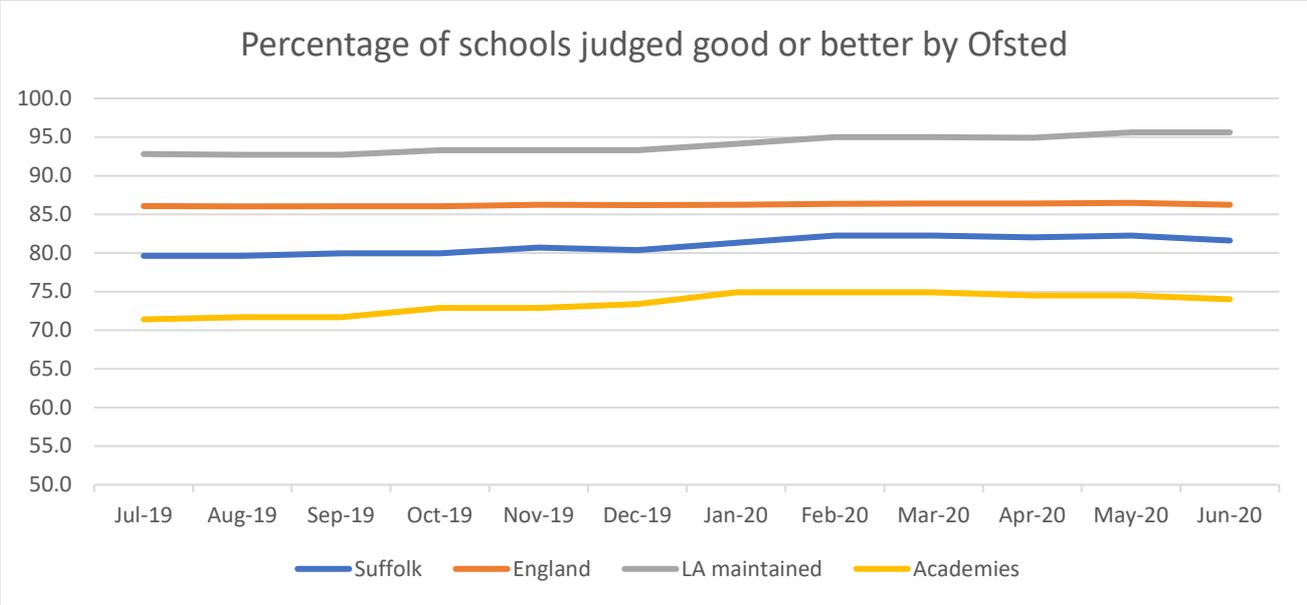
SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL LEADERS DURING COVID

Reflecting changing circumstances as school leaders implemented national policy in the light of the Covid 19 pandemic this resource has and will be used to support school leaders in their responses, so that no school leader feels isolated; that Suffolk teachers are supported to continue the activity of high-quality teaching and learning so that all Suffolk children and young people are supported to continue their learning and thrive, develop, and achieve. The resource supported officers who immediately adapted to work in task groups to respond to the needs of school leaders and to fulfil the expectations and requirements given to Local Authorities at the start of the pandemic to coordinate the response in their areas, working alongside sector leads to produce guidance and principles documents to support school leaders, for example, transition support materials and risk assessment materials. This approach will continue to ensure support is provided for school leaders to apply in their own school settings.

This resource will continue to be used to work with school and sector leads so that school leaders can access support for to meet their children’s needs and reflect the impact of covid on their education, social, mental, and behavioural needs, particularly for vulnerable learners and those children who have new vulnerabilities because of the covid situation.

THE STRATEGIC HEADLINE POSITION

Many, but not all Suffolk children and young people experience a good education. In July 2021 Ofsted had judged 81.7% Suffolk schools and settings as good or better. This is below national. The most recent figures released by Ofsted in June 2021 show that 86% schools nationally were judged good or better. In Suffolk 95.5% LA maintained schools have been judged by Ofsted as good or better and 74.3% of academies.



The % in Suffolk has improved compared to the national %. Data shows that in July 2018, 79% Suffolk schools were judged by Ofsted as good or better compared to the national of 86%. Indeed, the national % of good or outstanding schools has remained static between July 2018 and June 2021, and the % in other Eastern region large LA’ s has also remained static or declined, whilst in Suffolk the % has improved.

Whilst the gap is narrowing - from 7% in August 2018 to 4.3% in July 2021- the rate of closing the gap needs to accelerate and reflects the need for timely and effective support for improvement, working with school leaders to proactively prevent decline

Pupils in schools with historic good or outstanding judgements are at risk of not receiving a good or better education. In the academic year 2019-20 73% of Suffolk schools inspected improved to or retained good or better. (89% LA maintained schools; 64% academy schools) This has declined from 2018-19 when 76% of all schools inspected improved to or retained a good or better judgement. The percentage of LA maintained schools improving to or retaining a good or better outcome has risen year on year.

	Suffolk schools improving to or remaining good or better					
	All Schools		LA Maintained		Academies	
2020/ 21	1/1	100 %	0/0	0	1/1	100%
2019/ 20	37/ 51	73%	16/ 18	89%	21/ 33	64%
2018/ 19	53/ 70	76%	24/ 29	83%	29/ 41	71%
2017/ 18	59/ 85	70%	35/ 45	78%	24/ 40	62%

The percentage of schools judged outstanding in Suffolk is lower than that nationally (13.4% of Suffolk schools as at July 2021; 19% nationally as at June 2021). This compares to 17 % in Suffolk in July 2018 and 21% nationally at the same time. As Ofsted reinspect schools with historic outstanding judgements, there is a risk of further decline. This resource is used to support school leaders including governors have an accurate and evidence-based view of their school against the current inspection framework.

It should be noted that Ofsted did not carry out routine section 5 inspections between March 2020 and September 2021.

WHAT WILL BE THE IMPACT IF SCHOOLS FORUM DOES NOT AGREE TO THIS PROPOSAL?

The LA will not fulfil its statutory roles and responsibilities informed by current and up to date evidence. The service and school improvement strategy will require immediate and significant change. The aim for all children to receive a strong education and attend a good or better school will not be achieved.

School leaders including governors, will not receive bespoke support for their leadership of their school's improvement. Some school leaders will be isolated as they carry out this work.

The capacity to work with school leaders including governors in their schools to identify strengths based on first- hand evidence will be removed and sign posting for school-to-school support will be impacted.

The LA will retain its statutory roles and responsibilities and not have access to first-hand or current evidence to inform its decisions and actions. Therefore, the LA will not have this evidence to inform its view of its schools. Historic published evidence such as published pupil

performance information and Ofsted outcomes will be the evidence which would need to be used to fulfil the LA statutory responsibility and intervention. Identification of risk of decline will therefore be neither proactive nor timely and may not represent an accurate, up to date or comprehensive view. Support to mitigate the risk of decline will need to be sourced and funded by school leaders in their settings, using their knowledge of where these support and strengths exist.

Local collaboration between leaders, teachers, and governors of publicly funded schools across the county will not be facilitated. Therefore, the opportunity for leaders to work together in a joint approach to sharing strengths and trialling approaches to secure improvement will not be coordinated. School leaders could feel isolated and unsupported if this resource is not available to sustain a system that has been there for all to access.

There will be an inequality between the outcomes for Suffolk pupils. There will continue to be a gap between where Suffolk pupils are achieving strongly and where Suffolk pupils are underachieving. Overall, Suffolk children and young people will continue to achieve less well than they may do if they were educated in other parts of the country.

Without the support of an external, objective school improvement professional, there is a risk that school leaders including governors, will not be confident to show inspectors evidence to support a good or better judgement and the improvement seen in the percentage of good or better schools will not be sustained. More outstanding schools will be at risk of declining.

The statutory duties regarding elective home education will not be met. It would not be possible to have oversight of the education and, more crucially, safeguarding duties for electively home educated pupils.

Governors will not receive support or guidance to fulfil their roles and responsibilities including how they support the leaders of their schools in their school improvement journeys and to ensure compliance with statutory expectations.