# **Post-Covid Recovery Planning – Partnerships**

# **Education & Skills**

The crisis presented by Covid-19 and the consequent lockdown have had a huge and long-lasting impact across all services, including those relating to education and skills. Brighton & Hove City Council could face as much as a £50million deficit, and other services are facing their own economic challenges. There will also be considerable cost in maintaining a Covid-secure environment (preventing transmission and ensuring containment). Moving forward, the Council will seek to collaborate with partners to achieve the best recovery possible for the city, within the constraints of the difficult financial legacy of the pandemic.

All recovery planning is dependent on the overarching need for effective infection control, and the risk of a second ‘spike’ resulting in further site closures remains an ongoing concern.

With collaboration in mind, we recently sent out a request to partners and stakeholders to feed back to us. This involved identifying implications of the pandemic and lockdown on different sectors, and planning around different potential scenarios (a ‘smooth’ exit, and a ‘bumpy’ exit from lockdown – one involving further outbreaks/lockdowns). We sought to understand the issues faced, and the thoughts and ideas of partners in planning actions to support recovery. The overall aim was to establish a coherent approach to the city’s recovery, by developing a partnership approach to education and skills through maintaining strategic dialogue.

Contributors;

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Sussex Council of Training Providers (contributions from SCTP members via SCTP)

CXK

DWP

Schools – ongoing issues

* Continued social (physical) distancing leading to pressure on classroom teaching, safe drop-off and pick-up arrangements, and school playground provision.

ACTION: Focus on infection control; robust risk assessment and management carried out by individual schools; effective containment measures.

* Vulnerable students may be less likely to access facilities without reassurance / support.

ACTION: Reassurance work to be carried out centrally by BHCC in terms of city-wide messaging, and by schools to meet individual needs of vulnerable students.

* Disruption to teacher training may lead to skills shortage / lack of newly qualified teachers.

ACTION: BHCC to maintain open communication with local schools to monitor any skills shortages.

* Potential for increased safeguarding concerns due to impact of lockdown on children and families. This could relate to; increased mental health concerns; increased risk of exploitation; risks from relationship breakdown in families; increased substance misuse by parents; increase in poverty.

ACTION: Front Door for Families to monitor new referrals, and schools to ensure staff are currently trained in safeguarding referral protocol. Pastoral staff to be aware of increased risk.

* Worsening of the attainment gap for disadvantaged students due to lockdown.

ACTION: Appropriate funding to be sought from central Government to address any attainment gap, as this is unlikely to be resolved locally due to the financial challenges faced by BHCC (the DfE has already indicated there will be funds available that could be allocated for this).

* Some year groups will be more severely impacted than others; years 10 and 12 have missed a lot of face-to-face schooling and now face hard deadlines of exams less than a year away.

ACTION: Schools to prioritise these year groups in providing remedial teaching to address months of missed face-to-face teaching; BHCC to explore practicalities of lobbying central Government to briefly delay exam timetable for 2021.

Main issues identified for partners in Further Education, Higher Education, and private language schools

* Lack of confidence in using public transport, leading to fewer students attending.

ACTION: Reassurance work by BHCC, all education providers, and transport providers to promote confidence in air travel and local public transport.

* Loss of revenue due to decrease in students (local and international) leading to long-term financial uncertainty.

ACTION: Online classes may remain part of provision for some time. Training for staff and investment in tech may be required. Education providers, and potentially local tech providers to consider educational software.

* Loss of student spend in local economy (including rental sector)

ACTION: Reassurance work to be carried out to ensure student confidence in the city as a Covid-secure environment with safe transport options, to encourage physical attendance.

* There is some potential opportunity for FE provision; increased demand from people looking to retrain following job loss.

ACTION: Chance to develop online programmes, potentially with particular focus on coding and data analysis; two of the region’s strengths.

* Risk that apprenticeship opportunities will reduce, with some apprentices losing placements months from achieving qualifications.

ACTION: Preparatory work to be undertaken by local providers and BHCC to maximise access to funding for apprenticeships etc. Maximising use of Levy Transfers and promoting government schemes i.e incentives, provider and employer support mechanisms for redundant apprenticeships to continue learning

* Lack of Adult Learning provision

ACTION: BHCC to review own provision, and work with other providers in the city to ensure a programme effectively supports our city’s disadvantaged and vulnerable learners and meets current and emerging priorities.

# Skills-related concerns

* Increased unemployment following job losses due to pandemic.

ACTION: Programmes for the unemployed may serve to mitigate impact of job loss. Liaison and cooperation between JobcentrePlus, BHCC, local providers, SCTP and Sussex Learning Network is needed to determine what provision needs to be invented or scaled. Clear guidelines, information and signposting to all areas of support could provide clarity around provision. This could involve the co-production of a guide/website, by BHCC, education, training, and skills providers that provides easy access to young people and adults requiring support.

* Due to the sudden and unprecedented nature of the pandemic, there is likely to be a lack of reliable data for unemployed and disadvantaged adults.

ACTION: DWP, National Careers Service, and BHCC should seek to establish a good understanding of numbers, locations, sectors and age groups of unemployed and disadvantaged adults. Educational establishments should agree a protocol for data sharing to ensure a targeted approach. The ALSP to identify the scale and nature of the problem could be useful to organise an action plan and agreed protocols.

* Youth unemployment is likely to be a significant issue for the city, especially given the sectors that have sustained the most job losses.

ACTION: The Youth Futures Foundation has published details of their current Youth Futures funding opportunities. They are looking for approaches that can be tested, evaluated and, where proven to be effective, expanded to more young people. Partners could explore funding potential projects in the city. WSCC and BHCC already have a joint bid to this, to extend the current ESF Think Futures project that ends in Dec 2020. BHCC is also collaborating with DWP to consider viability of a Youth Hub.

* Loss of skills for local workforce

ACTION: Alongside establishing a good understanding of numbers of individuals experiencing unemployment, it would be useful to monitor and map skills deficits in the city, and ensure that appropriate skills training is on offer to encourage local take-up.