News from schools and local authorities
Covid-19 school closures – Weeks 10/11

Schools

Infant School in Leicester
School is still using the voucher scheme to support FSM families. Not providing meals in school yet as only 30% of Reception and Year 1 will be coming to school from 4 June. Children will be attending for half days only. SBM placed order for three-weeks' worth of vouchers on 28 May (during half term). She reports that the ordering was extremely easy and quick, much more straightforward than her early orders. The orders were fulfilled within the day, which was the quickest return that she has experienced. SBM is keen to see whether the speed was due to staff not accessing the system over the half-term break, but she believes that the system is now much improved and better organised.

Primary School in LB Lambeth
The school has over 200 children across the returning year groups, but students are being reintroduced to school in phases. Headteacher reports that all pupils have been allotted a social bubble of up to 15 students. They are eating their lunches in the classroom. The school caterers are providing a packed lunch for all Nursery, Reception and Year 1 pupils and also FSM pupils in Year 6. All other students are bringing packed lunches from home. For the FSM children not yet attending, the school is reliant on support from Chefs in Schools and the vouchers scheme.

Primary School in LB Richmond
Parent reports that children returning to school are receiving a packed lunch consisting of a sandwich on white bread (tuna, ham or cheese), a biscuit and an apple. The children are eating in the classroom. Children are asked to choose one sandwich filling weekly.

Primary School in LB Lambeth
Assistant headteacher reports that school is only open for key-worker children until 15 June. These children are bringing their own packed lunches. From that point, the school will be open for approximately 30 Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 children in total. Once the number of children attending school increases it will use its caterer to provide meals. These will be eaten in the classrooms. The school continues to supply the FSM vouchers, breakfast boxes and fortnightly food bank deliveries to families in need. The assistant headteacher reports that many of its vulnerable families are finding the breakfast boxes a lifeline in the current conditions.

Primary School in LB Lambeth
The school now has its caterers back on site, preparing hot meals for those who want them. This has been welcomed by families. The Universal Free School Meal offer for KS1 children means that this is of particular benefit for families who are not eligible for FSM vouchers.
Primary School in LB Waltham Forest
At present the school is offering a morning or afternoon session for Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 children only. During these sessions FSM children are given a sandwich, a yogurt and a piece of fruit. The only children in school all day and accessing a school meal in the dining room are key-worker and vulnerable children as the school cannot accommodate more due to the social distancing restrictions. FSM children not currently attending school are still receiving food parcels. The school is only using the voucher scheme for families that live too far away from school to collect.

School Cluster Leads in LB Lambeth
Some sites in the borough are providing packed lunches. These are eaten individually on separate tables. Schools are also allowing students to bring their own packed lunches and water bottles. Other schools are using their school caterers if they are confident that they can manage appropriate social distancing and that there are sufficient students to make the service viable.

Caterers
Caterer working across England
Caterer reports that they are offering a hot meal to their schools, but are finding that most schools are opting for packed lunches due to:

- small numbers
- the warm weather
- focus on preparing for students’ return
- flexibility of where to eat (hot meals can only really be consumed in the dining room).

With the arrival of cooler weather, the settling down of schools into their routines, plus a gradual increase in confidence, the caterer believes that take up of the hot meal will increase, however, it is expected that packed lunches will be the favoured choice until the end of term.

Local Authorities
LB Camden
The health team is receiving enquiries from parents concerned that if they keep their Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 children at home rather than sending them to school they will lose their entitlement to FSM support. This is significant in Camden as 50% of parents have indicated that they will be keeping their children at home owing to anxiety around infection (high risk groups and high percentage of BAME). SFM directed them to the DfE guidance which clearly states that schools should continue to support children eligible for FSM who are at home. SFM had a similar enquiry from LB Islington.

Community Groups
Community Organiser, PACT
Community worker is currently working with parents with NRPFs, making sure they have access to FSM vouchers. She reports that she recently spoke to a mother who is finding the £15 voucher very helpful; she is hoping that the voucher scheme will continue over the summer.