

Lancashire County Council

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday, 10th November, 2020 at 10.30 am in Skype Virtual Meeting

Agenda

Part I (Open to Press and Public)

No.	Item
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1.	Apologies
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2.	Disclosure of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests
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Members are asked to consider any Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests they may have to disclose to the meeting in relation to matters under consideration on the Agenda.

3.	Minutes of the meeting held on 14 October 2020	(Pages 1 - 4)
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4.	Education in Lancashire - Digital Challenges and Opportunities	(Pages 5 - 12)
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5.	Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2020/21	(Pages 13 - 18)
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6.	Urgent Business
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An item of urgent business may only be considered under this heading where, by reason of special circumstances to be recorded in the Minutes, the Chair of the meeting is of the opinion that the item should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency. Wherever possible, the Chief Executive should be given advance warning of any Member's intention to raise a matter under this heading.

7.	Date of Next Meeting
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The next meeting of the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee will be held on Wednesday 16 December 2020 at 10.30am.

L Sales
Director of Corporate Services

County Hall
Preston

Lancashire County Council

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday, 14th October, 2020 at 10.30 am
in Skype Virtual Meeting - Skype**

Present:

County Councillor Andrea Kay (Chair)

County Councillors

M Dad	J Mein
Mrs S Charles	E Nash
A Cheetham	J Potter
S Clarke	J Purcell
J Eaton BEM	M Salter
A Gardiner	J Shedwick
N Hennessy	B Yates
S Malik	

Co-opted members

Stephen Whittaker, Representing CE Schools
(alternate for Dr Sam Johnson)

County Councillors John Shedwick and Barrie Yates replaced County Councillors Peter Steen and David Smith respectively for this meeting.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Mrs Janet Hamid, representing Parent Governors; Simon Smith, representing Roman Catholic Schools; and Oliver Moores, representing the Youth Council.

2. Disclosure of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

None were disclosed.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 2 September 2020

Resolved: The minutes from the meeting held on 2 September 2020 were confirmed as an accurate record.

4. Preparing for an increase in demand in Children's Social Care

The Chair welcomed Sharon Hubber, Director of Children's Social Care, to the meeting. A presentation updating the committee on the plans in place to manage the increase in children's social care referrals was delivered.

Members were informed that at the beginning of lockdown all social workers and family support workers were supported to work remotely and all offices were closed. Risk assessments were undertaken on every case and RAG rated. All face to face family time was suspended. Visiting guidance was produced for social workers. All schools were closed and all court cases were suspended.

Regarding children's homes, they had not closed during the pandemic. Volunteers from across the county council were trained to cover shifts if required. All visits to homes were suspended. Children were unable to be discharged meaning beds quickly became full. Courts were unable to discharge care orders.

In terms of the recovery plan for when lockdown finished, it was reported that the MASH was fully staffed to ensure the front door was able to meet the demand and staff would be deployed if necessary. Level 4 referrals were directed straight to Duty and Assessment allowing for work to be allocated immediately. Where it was safe, discharge of cases was taking place. It was noted that courts were now sitting full time and able to discharge cases. There was now a pathway in place to step up cases from Early Help and step down with no referral. School cluster links were to be contacted before a referral was made ensuring the team around the school was known and being used.

Referrals to MASH had increased following the opening of schools. Members were informed there was an increase in Elective Home Education and an increase in free school meals applications. Social workers and schools were clear there was a need to follow up children not attending school. The county council had fewer children in external provision but it's spend had risen. This was due to providers needing extra measures during the Covid-19 crisis. There was an increase in children entering the social care system that had not been known beforehand.

Comments and questions raised by the committee were as follows:

- Concerns were raised over the backlog of court cases and the committee enquired was there any indication when the courts would catch up. Members were informed that technology has been put in place quickly to allow remote court hearings. Some cases were deferred due to some people not having the technology. Courts were now back functioning but it was taking longer than anticipated to catch up.
- Members enquired if there had been any bereavements of parents or grandparents of the children who were in Lancashire's children's homes. The Children's Services Team had been keeping a close eye on this and there had been no bereavements. The team was looking after and protecting older foster carers so that they were not put under undue risk.

- Regarding school cluster links and referrals there were concerns about children with SEN and transport to school. It was reported that there had been an enormous piece of work done regarding this. Transport had been made available for children with complex needs and it was working very well.
- Regarding school cluster links, these were put in place at the beginning of lockdown. The clusters were reported to be very responsive and within them there was Social Care, Schools and Early Help.
- It was noted that the adoption process had continued through Covid-19 crisis. Children's Services had made the process very safe.
- Members were informed that Elective Home Education was parental choice. However, the high number of home education children was a concern. Members enquired what was in place to support these families. It was confirmed that there was a legal requirement for Children's Services to visit these families and thorough assessments carried out. Support would also be offered to these families.
- There were concerns over the extra pressures being put on the Children's Services staff. It was confirmed that staff had been redirected to assist where required and support was provided. Praise was given to the staff for all they were doing and that a long term strategy was required.
- It was highlighted that schools were notifying the Children's Services Team everyday regarding children who were not attending school.
- The Children's Services Team was gathering data on the increase of free school meals and in what areas these increases were.

Resolved: That the information presented be noted.

5. Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2020/2021

The report presented provided information on the single combined work programme drafted for all of the Lancashire County Council scrutiny committees.

The topics included were identified at a work planning workshop for members of the Internal Scrutiny Committee held on 29 May 2020 and from a previous combined meeting of both Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Committees.

Members were informed that there would be an update on the recommendations of Schools Causing Concern Task Group for the February 2021 meeting.

At the April 2021 meeting there would be an update on the SEND Accelerated Progress Plan as well as an update on the Lancashire Breaktime.

For the November 2020 meeting on Digital Poverty and Lessons Learned, the committee requested invitations to go to headteachers to provide their views.

There was concern about the number of Afro-Caribbean and Black African pupils who were being excluded from schools. A request was made for this to be made

part of the SEND review or alternative provision. In addition, the subject of 'A' level students and their exams in 2021 was raised.

The committee was informed that information on school closures could be found on C-First.

Resolved: That the work plan presented be noted.

6. Urgent Business

There were no items of Urgent Business.

7. Date of Next Meeting

The next virtual meeting of the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee would take place on Tuesday 10 November 2020 at 10.30am.

L Sales
Director of Corporate Services

County Hall
Preston

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee

Meeting to be held on Tuesday, 10 November 2020

Electoral Division affected: (All Divisions);
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Education in Lancashire - Digital Challenges and Opportunities

Contact for further information:

Sarah Callaghan, Director of Education and Skills,
sarah.callaghan@lancashire.gov.uk

Executive Summary

This reports seeks to provide members of the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee with information on the digital challenges and opportunities faced by schools in Lancashire as a result of the ongoing Covid 19 restrictions.

Recommendation

The Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee is asked to:

- i. Recognise the continuing digital opportunities and challenges faced by schools across Lancashire.
- ii. Note and comment on the work undertaken by the county council to further support schools.

Background and Advice

Context

During the first stages of the lockdown it was quickly apparent that the education of children and young people would be impacted over time due to the extended gap in formal education. Once the wider lockdown was in place, schools were closed to all pupils, with the exception of children of key workers and those children and young people from groups that were considered to be potentially more vulnerable. This included looked after children and other children with involvement and support from Children's Social Care, as well as those children with additional special educational needs. The Department for Education (DfE) identified that all other children would be accessing education remotely from home.

Although the identified vulnerable groups were expected to attend school, a number were unable to due to parent's self- isolating or were only accessing part time due to restrictions schools had to put in place to keep staff and pupils safe.

Given that the move to close schools to all beyond those priority groups was done with relatively short notice, schools had little time at the start of the pandemic to prepare their pupils or families for remote learning. Initially schools provided paper

based tasks and resources, developing online materials over time, supported by Lancashire's Professional Development Services as well as a range of national and commercial providers.

Schools' duty to provide remote education

The DfE has stipulated that, where a pupil, class, group or small number of pupils need to self-isolate, or there is a local lockdown requiring pupils to remain at home, there is an expectation that all schools should be able to immediately offer learners access to remote education. Schools should also ensure that remote education, where needed, is of high-quality and aligns as closely as possible with in-school provision. Schools have had the first part of the autumn term to prepare remote learning continuity plans.

The Secretary of State gave a temporary continuity direction in order to require schools to provide remote education for state-funded, school-age children unable to attend school due to coronavirus (COVID-19). This came into effect from Thursday 22 October 2020. From this point forward, all schools need to have these remote curriculum learning plans in place.

Actions taken to address digital poverty and support remote learning

- 1) Provision of internet access and hardware: DfE Digital Access Scheme – Phase 1 – summer 2020

It was recognised by the DfE that many families may not have access to the internet and children may not have access to a suitable device.

The DfE launched a Digital Access Scheme in April 2020. This provided routers and/or a device (laptop or tablet) to three groups of children and young people:

- Children with a social worker
- Care leavers
- Year 10 pupils

The local authority (LA) collated nominations from social workers and schools for the first two groups. Schools were responsible for identifying and nominating Year 10 pupils. This meant that allocations were informed by need.

It is important to note that not all children in these groups would be allocated a device - only those who were known to have no access to the internet and/or a device at home and were not attending school full time. In addition, Lancashire's Virtual School had previously identified that some Children Looked After (CLA) learners did not have access to digital devices and already had developed a scheme using CLA pupil premium top up funding to provide laptops for these pupils. This meant that the DfE project enabled us to extend the reach of this offer.

In Phase 1 of the national offer, the LA provided forecast numbers to the DfE. The DfE had calculated a maximum number of devices that could be claimed by each LA. This calculation was based on school census data.

Lancashire requested and was allocated:

- 2163 lap tops and 446 routers for children with a social worker.
- 2582 laptops 60 and routers for year 10 pupils in maintained schools.
- Allocations were made according to identified pupil need, and in the case of CLA learners extended to those young people placed outside of Lancashire.

Several special schools requested iPads as it was felt that these would be more accessible for their children with more complex needs. As the DfE scheme did not provide these, LCC exchanged a number of laptops for iPads and then allocated the spare laptops to care leavers and looked after children who were not nominated or in care when the scheme started. LCC allocated 81 iPads. These remaining laptops will be provided to additional children looked after as required.

The DfE also provided 4G wireless routers to support learners who could not access the internet otherwise.

LCC set up a reserve list for any spare devices allocated by the DfE. Of the 124 on the reserve list all but 14 learners now have a device allocated.

All hardware provided had a firewall and other security measures installed prior to distribution by the DfE. The laptops provided to Year 10 pupils have been identified as the property of the school or setting, however in the case of children looked after these are nominally held by the LA but will be gifted to older learners to support continuity of learning post 16 and post 18.

DfE Digital Access Scheme - Phase 2 - Sept 2020

Phase 2 of the DfE scheme to address digital poverty was designed to support those pupils who were self-isolating or shielding due to complex medical conditions. This would include pupils with other medical needs that prevented them from attending school and who were also in circumstances of a local or national lockdown that prevented them from attending school.

This scheme targets pupils in year groups 3-11. The scheme is based upon the LA collation of contact details for a lead person in all maintained schools. These were submitted to the DfE. The school would be then contacted directly by the DfE in order to request devices directly. A recent example of this is St Bede's Catholic High School, Lytham St Annes who were allocated 34 laptops.

LCC continues to support schools to access devices via the DfE Phase 2 scheme and provides support with technical issues for children supported by social care and care leavers who were allocated devices in Phase 1. In addition, the DfE have provided a range of services to support schools to address issues of digital poverty including:

- Supporting access to the internet: a pilot scheme to support disadvantaged and vulnerable children and young people when schools are affected by disruption to face-to-face education due to COVID-19 offering free access to BT Wi-Fi hotspots and increased data allowances on mobile devices.

- Providing guidance to schools on how to secure government funding to set up a digital education platform, which has been supported through 'The Key' – a digital school improvement platform for schools leader. This enabled schools to access one of two free-to-use digital education platforms: G Suite for Education or Office 365 Education.
- Support for schools to source peer to peer support to make effective use of technology via the EdTech Demonstrator Programme. This platform supports schools and settings to engage with a wider network of schools and colleges who are already using remote education technology resources for help and support.

The full range of national support to address digital poverty and to strengthen remote learning has been shared with schools through LCC's regular COVID-19 bulletin, currently issued twice weekly via the Schools' Portal.

2) Connected Kids Programme

This is a programme based in Lancaster area and coordinated by Lancaster University.

It is collaborative programme involving schools and the Eden North Partnership and focuses on providing targeted support to secondary age pupils in the most deprived areas of Lancaster and Morecambe through the provision of devices and data. To date this project has supported approximately 320 young people.

In addition primary school pupils have been given resources and home activity packs designed by Lancaster University staff and sponsored by Wilkinson's; these were distributed to those pupils who were not able to access resources online.

3) Lancashire Digital Skills Partnership Group

Lancashire have a Digital Skills Partnership Steering Group which is looking at the wider population and digital need, with the aim of providing digital equality. A lottery bid for funding to support this work was submitted but was unfortunately unsuccessful. However the Lancashire Digital Skills Partnership Steering Group are looking at a Lancashire wide campaign to engage businesses to make donations to supply devices and data to young people. It is hoped that this project will be launched during the second half of the autumn term.

4) Support for education for pupils learning at home

At a national level the DfE have provided an extensive list of on-line learning platforms that parents, carers and schools can access free of charge. In addition, school-led webinars have been made available for teachers to provide guidance on how to adapt teaching practice for remote education. Teachers can access examples of annotated lesson plans for remote teaching and read case studies and webinars on curriculum content choices and sequencing. In addition a resources package has been provided including guidance on selecting the right educational resources for individual schools.

Schools can also access a self-assessment framework via the DfE, to help school leaders and governors consider how to strengthen their remote education offer.

Lancashire's Professional Development Service

LCC has published regular bulletins and newsletters to schools and parents throughout the pandemic to provide advice and guidance on home education, learning activities and links to on line platforms. Subject specific consultancy support for primary and secondary schools to support the planning and delivery of remote learning has been provided by Lancashire Teaching and Learning Consultant teams and a range of resource materials produced such as new English Bridging Units to support planning for primary schools.

The Virtual School has provided links to free learning platforms on the website and access for all looked after children and previously looked after children to the Britannica Learning Platform.

Schools and colleges

Work is underway to collate and share good practice examples of support for remote learning through advisory contact with schools. Schools who buy into school improvement support with LCC via the Setting Support Guarantee (SSG) will be supported to review and evaluate their remote learning provision. Early feedback indicates that schools have a wide range of platforms and approaches to remote learning that are tailored to the needs and capacity within their school.

One example of good practice in establishing the nature of take up of remote learning came from Mount Carmel school:

The school held an afterschool online assembly with Year 7 and Year 8 to find out who had access to technology then followed up those students who did not engage. This enabled them to confirm that approximately 75% of pupils (120/160) had the access and commitment to engage. Following this, the school has developed a strategy for following up on those students who do not access the expected remote learning when isolating. This involves the learning mentors or teaching assistants linked to the year group contacting the pupil(s) and supporting them to access /complete the learning at the end of the notational school day.

Early indication suggests that this has been well received and is supporting pupil engagement. However a school's capacity to sustain such a model may be tested in the event of increasing numbers of pupils and / or staff being required to self-isolate. An LCC audit of schools' engagement with and experiences of developing online learning has identified the following:

Strengths:

- Use of a range of external learning platforms.
- Good virtual training and telephone support for families to access remote learning.
- Schools having a bank of laptops that they can lend out to different pupils as isolating bubbles change.

- Schools analysing uptake, engagement and impact of remote learning.

Barriers:

- Schools still need to invest in technology to support non eligible pupils.
- Larger families find it difficult to provide separate devices for all children to access remote learning.
- Some families find it difficult to navigate learning sites, user names and passwords.
- Parental access to broadband or broadband of sufficient quality.
- The time that is required of parents to ensure that children can engage meaningfully with remote learning, particularly in primary.

Summary

- A range of national and local initiatives are being utilised in a coherent manner to ensure that where schools identify pupils who cannot access digital learning, the need is swiftly addressed.
- There is a wide range of remote learning provision across Lancashire schools.
- The remote learning provision is challenging for schools with significant levels of infection.
- The planning for and provision of quality remote learning is a priority for all schools and settings and will be a focus for ongoing school review and development work on both a local and national level.
- There remains a need to improve local connectivity and to support access to the internet for some families.

Consultations

NA

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Risk management

Finance

There was no direct grant that came into the LA, request for laptops were made against specific criteria and were either applied for by the LA or directly by schools (dependent on the DfE prescribed criteria and process).

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985
List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
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NA		
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Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate		
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NA		
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Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee

Meeting to be held on Tuesday, 10 November 2020

Electoral Division affected: (All Divisions);
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Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2020/21

(Appendix 'A' refers)

Contact for further information:

Samantha Parker, 01772 538221, Senior Democratic Services Officer (Overview and Scrutiny), sam.parker@lancashire.gov.uk

Executive Summary

This report provides information on the single combined work programme drafted for all of the Lancashire County Council scrutiny committees. A copy of this work programme is set out at Appendix A.

Recommendation

The Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee is asked to review and agree the work programme items for the committee (as at Appendix A).

Background and Advice

The Covid 19 pandemic has required members and officers to work differently and the wider context has also meant that priorities have changed or shifted in emphasis.

The work programme for this year has been combined with the other scrutiny committees given that the primary focus of the scrutiny work programme as a whole is dedicated to the response to the Covid 19 pandemic. For the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Committee, the emphasis is on the impact to services supporting children and young people and the lessons learnt as the county council moves forward.

To enable the committee to have the time to review and scrutinise the key areas highlighted in the work programme, it is recommended where possible that one substantive item is tabled per meeting. However, it is important to note that the work programme needs to be flexible in order to accommodate any urgent items that may arise. In addition, the work programme will form a standing item on the committee meeting agenda for regular review and to ensure it is still fit for purpose.

To further enhance the work programme, members are asked to reflect on key discussion areas or questions they would like to consider for each of the topic areas.

This will ensure that the senior officers have a clear focus in order to provide the relevant information.

Further to this, members are asked to consider who they would like to invite to future meetings to help provide a more holistic picture for scrutiny to understand the challenges and produce meaningful but achievable recommendations.

Members are asked to review and agree the work programme items for the committee (as at Appendix A).

Consultations

NA

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Risk management

This report has no significant risk implications.

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
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None		
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Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

NA

Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2020-2021

Scrutiny Committee					
Month		Education and Children's Services	External	Health	Internal
	June			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update from the ICS on NHS Cells for Lancashire and digital and engagement with local people. Temporary changes to clinical services across the ICS during the COVID-19 pandemic 	
	July	Response to the COVID 19 pandemic in Lancashire - perceptions of the experiences of children and young people, and headlines from the operation of service during the COVID-19 emergency period.	Strengthening flood risk management and preparedness		1. RIPA annual report 2. The impact of Covid 19 on county council services Highways – challenges faced following pandemic and resuming 'normal' work programmes
	September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What powers do we have as a county council/what can we do to support schools and parents. - Position update on the wider reopening of schools Schools Causing Concern Task Group report – response to recommendations SEND Ofsted inspection report Review of work programme 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adult social care – winter preparations (Supporting the social care sector including domiciliary care workers) NHS 111 First 	Covid 19 – what comes next? Including building pan-Lancashire working and Democratic involvement in resilience forums and maintaining democratic leadership during a crisis

Appendix A

	October	Children's Social Care - protecting vulnerable/valuable children – plans in place to manage spikes in referrals. Child poverty increase and the impact on the demand on social care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Universal credit Decarbonisation pathway – Lancashire, Electricity North West (tbc) 		
Month	November	Education – digital poverty and lesson learned. Digital aspirational views – turning challenge into opportunity.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suicide prevention in Lancashire LCC Adult Social Care Winter Plan 	Speeding Traffic and the lack of enforcement
	December	Impact of the pandemic on children and young people's mental health – plans in place to support and an update on CAMHS including managing increase in contacts, anxiety of YP on return to school and availability of more online support		Housing with Care and Support Strategy 2018-2025	
	January	Early Years sector – impact on private providers supporting vulnerable children and families (including update on the EY Strategy and School Improvement Model)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthening flood risk management and preparedness – update on implementing recommendations. Canal & Rivers Trust (tbc) 		Covid 19 – Further update following the update provided at the September 2020 meeting
	February	Lancashire schools attainment report (standing item) Schools causing concern task group - update on recommendations		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NHS 111 First – update (tbc) OHOC Task and Finish Group report (tbc) 	

Appendix A

	March	**Family Safeguarding Model – update on implementation of model in Oct/Nov 2020			Youth Employment and Skills – impact on youth as one of the hardest hit groups during the pandemic (consideration to be given to which scrutiny committee will be most relevant to consider this topic)
	April	**SEND: Lancashire Breaktime update SEND Accelerated Progress Plan update Progress update on Pupils in special schools with medical conditions task group recommendations	Review of Community Safety Partnerships Governance arrangements	-	Scrutiny of the Council's response to the Government's call for local councils to invest in street safety
Other Topics	Topics from work programmes 2019/20 not scheduled	Participation strategy update Independent children's homes Getting to Good plan update NEET SEN equipment in schools School transport Maintained nurseries update Parking at schools/road safety Childhood immunisation programme 0-19 Healthy Child programme	Lancashire energy strategy Review of Community Safety Partnerships and governance arrangements (2021 tbc) Greater Lancashire plan LCC Carbon Plan/Internal Energy and Water Management Policy LEP – response to the pandemic – economic recovery plan incorporating 'green' principles Impact of pandemic on road safety and lessons learnt	Urgent Mental Health Pathway Transforming Care (Calderstones) Social Prescribing Cessation of the Lancashire Wellbeing Service Tackling period poverty Delayed transfers of care Stroke Programme Vascular, head and neck Review of Primary Care Networks and Neighbourhoods Transforming hospital services and care for people in Southport, Formby & West Lancs Disabled Facilities Grants	Local Government Funding and Income Generation Task Group Update on Reducing Single Use Plastics in Lancashire

