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Please see below a personal message from Dominique Harvey, Head of Planning (Children's Services and North East Locality), GCHSCP, in which she gives an update on how Children's Services have been responding to the impact of COVID-19 and thanks staff for all their efforts in keeping the city supported.

### **COVID-19 Message from Dominique Harvey**

Hello, I'm Dominique Harvey and I'm the Head of Planning for Children's Services and North East Locality.

I started in post at the end of February, so just a few weeks before national lockdown. And I think one of the challenging elements for me of that, is that I've not been able to meet so many of the staff and teams that I've then ended up working quite closely with. I think also the onset of COVID-19 has probably changed my role and remit, and I'm really grateful to all the staff who've helped me and supported me in my role so far. I've been collating a lot of the information and reports, data from across Children's Services. So obviously, I'm going to draw on some of that, but that's not my work. And it's absolutely frontline practitioners that have been out there supporting families during this time.

One of the initial exercises that was undertaken was to identify families who required visits within their own home. And I think very quickly, we also then adapted our style of engaging with families so that we had a range of other options. And some families have fed back to us that they've actually really appreciated the opportunity to engage online.

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And we've been grateful to have worked recently with Health Improvement colleagues, which has allowed us to be successful in a bid for 850 laptops and Wi-Fi packages. So they'll soon be distributed to families on our priority basis, but we know that that's just the start of the digital inclusion work. And I think across the system, we've been making amendments to the way we work and support each other, and informally having catch-ups. And there's lots of good learning and inquisitive developments to come out of this challenging time.

I think one of the things that I found really interesting when I was supporting some of the lessons learned exercise was the work that's come out of the children's houses. So throughout the first week of the pandemic, the children's houses went through a really settled period. And I think some of the reflection around that was that staff and young people were going through something together for the first time that no-one really knew a lot about, they were facing the same anxieties for the first time. And I think that's really helped to strengthen our views about the direction of travel for the children's transformational change agenda, really thinking about what does strengths-based practice look like and how do we operationalise that across our services?

I think as well, the opportunity to work more closely with Specialist Children's Services, since they've been welcomed into our HSCP structure, again, has allowed us to think about how that improvement agenda aligns with the work we're trying to do in Children's Services and how together we can really strengthen the pathway of support for families through the system.

There's also been other pieces of work that have progressed really well in spite of some of the challenges. So the Parkhead Health and Social Care Centre is now in the next stage of planning and design. There's been a lot of staff that have been looking at the room layouts, which are nearly finalised for that.

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So I think overall we've pulled together some of the lessons learned across the Service, and we've really started to think about how some of the work that we were doing is strengthened through that learning.

So we did a consultation with children and young people for the Children's Services Plan, and two of the key themes to come out of that were in relation to poverty and mental health. And this aligns, too, with the learning coming from a range of partners in the event of our joined-up pandemic response. I think the initials that we're really starting to think about are how we ensure consistently high quality strengths-based practice, where we identify priorities for families and help families feel ready to engage with the helping support that is likely to bring meaningful change. And we hope that this work helps to bring us closer to increasing the number of families who can stay within their family homes and within their communities in Glasgow.

I'd really like to thank again all of the staff that have helped support my work and the work of our team across this really challenging time, and I do look forward to meeting more of you soon.

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