

Richmondshire Area Constituency Committee – 24 March 2021

Supplying schools, children and young people with digital devices during the pandemic

1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To inform Members of the work undertaken to provide schools, children and young people with digital devices during the pandemic.

2.0 Work undertaken

- 2.1 North Yorkshire County Council was allocated 989 digital devices and 238 wireless routers by the Department for Education in 2020 to distribute to eligible vulnerable or disadvantaged children and young people across the County. A child or young person needed to have a social worker or be a Year 10 student in receipt of free school meals to be eligible.
- 2.2 Devices were distributed according to requests from schools for these eligible students. 108 devices and 8 routers were distributed to schools in the Richmondshire district. More devices and routers have been allocated to children and young people in the district as looked-after children and care leavers were also eligible – this information has not been analysed at a district-level.
- 2.3 The DfE announced that schools would order any additional devices and routers directly from their supplier from the beginning of Autumn term 2020 onwards, with no ongoing involvement of the local authority in the process. However, we have supported schools to identify their allocation of devices and to order these through the DfE portal. We have focussed on this after a number of schools reported that they were unable to order devices and that this was a barrier to remote learning.
- 2.4 The DfE allocated each school a number of devices and routers based on their assessment of need. As of 9th March 2021, 4,134 devices (laptops and tablets) in total have been delivered or dispatched to North Yorkshire since the start of the scheme - this includes the 989 delivered directly to NYCC, with the rest to maintained schools. This does not include devices delivered to academy trusts. This information is provided for the County and it is not possible to say how many of these have been sent to schools in the the Richmondshire district. 1,250,738 digital devices have been distributed across England since the beginning of the scheme.
- 2.5 However, we are aware that there continue to be a significant number of children and young people who do not have access to a device. In response to this, Reboot North Yorkshire (<https://rebootny.co.uk/>) was launched to support individuals and organisations to donate IT equipment to be recycled and given to people in the county that currently lack access to these facilities. Devices will go to students, as well as other groups that may be socially isolated or do not have digital access.

3.0 Recommendation

- 3.1 The contents of the report are noted.

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