

**Children's Services and Education
Scrutiny Board**

**Monday 21 September, 2020 at 5.00 pm
Virtual Meeting**

[Please click on link to view the meeting live](#)

Agenda

1. Apologies for absence.
2. Members to declare:-
 - (a) any interest in matters to be discussed at the meeting;
 - (b) the existence and nature of any political Party Whip on any matter to be considered at the meeting.
3. Minutes of previous meeting 20 July, 2020
4. Chairs Announcements
5. Reset and Recovery Update
6. Sandwell Childcare Sufficiency Report 2020-21
7. Youth Facilities Review - Executive Response

Date of next meeting – 16 November 2020

D Stevens
Chief Executive
Sandwell Council House
Freeth Street
Oldbury
West Midlands

Distribution:

Councillors Preece (Vice-Chair);
Councillors Ashman, Carmichael, Chidley, Costigan, Z Hussain, McVittie,
Millar, Phillips and Shackleton.

Co-opted Members:-

Charlotte Ward-Lewis (Church of England Diocese representative)
Vacant (Roman Catholic Archdiocese representative)
Tahira Majid (Primary School Governor representative)
Vacant (Secondary School Governor representative)

**Agenda prepared by Deb Breedon
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Minutes of the Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board

20 July, 2020 at 5.00 pm
Virtual Meeting

Present: Councillor Preece (Vice-Chair)
Councillors Ashman, Carmichael, Chidley,
Costigan, Z Hussain, Millar, Phillips and
Shackleton (Co-opted member).

Apologies: C Ward-Lewis (Co-opted member).

In attendance: Councillor Underhill Cabinet Member for Best Start
in Life;
Lesley Hagger, Executive Director Children's
Services;
Jacqui Smith, Chair Sandwell Children's Trust
(SCT);
Frances Craven, Chief Executive SCT;
Tara Malik, Director of Resources SCT;
Pauline Turner, Director of Operations SCT;
Sue Moore, Group Head Education Support
Services.

10/20 **Minutes**

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 22 June
2020 be approved as a correct record.

11/20 **Chairs Announcements**

The Vice-Chair announced that Councillor Rajbir Singh, Chair of the
Childrens Services and Education Scrutiny Board had been
appointed Cabinet Member - Skills and Employment with effect from
15 July 2020 and that he had resigned his position as Chair of this
Board. The Board wished Councillor Singh well in his new role.

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The Board noted that Councillor Liam Preece, Vice-Chair would be acting Chair until a new appointment was made at Council.

12/20 Sandwell Childrens Trust Update

The Chair welcomed representatives from Sandwell Children's Trust to the meeting. The Board received a presentation from the Chair and Chief Executive of Sandwell Childrens Trust to advise Members how the Children's Trust had worked during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Board noted that the presentation detailed how operations had adjusted and of the impact through this period, the progress that had been made on improvements to quality and some of the challenges of the work the Trust was doing now to recover closer to normal business. In addition, the Chair SCT advised that it was estimated there would be a surge in demand for children's services when schools returned in September.

The Board acknowledged that should the Trust have faced this disruption 18 months ago it would have been more challenging, but that the Trust now had a stable management team and had made considerable progress in the quality of services being offered, as recognised by Ofsted. The Trust had kept in close contact with the Council, the Department for Education and with the Chair of the Improvement Board and the Trust Board had been impressed how the leadership of the Trust had faced challenge and done what it needed to do.

The Chair of the Trust presented slides relating to:

- The key principles applied to inform decision making and the Trust's Business Continuity arrangements;
- Leadership and Governance;
- The impact of Covid-19;
- Changes to Core Practice;
- Increased Management Oversight and Quality Assurance;
- Relationship with Partners;
- Impact on future inspection outcomes;

The Chief Executive of the Trust presented slides relating to Performance:

- Key data: contacts, social care referrals, Domestic Violence notifications, assessments and visits;
- Visiting our children;

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- Quality assurance activities during the pandemic;
- Other key information and observations;
Improvement programme:
- Eight Improvement Priorities;
- Progress pre-covid-19;
- Areas of continued development;
- Improvement - Inspections;
- Recovery and surge planning;
- How we will address a surge;
- Opportunities.

The Chair thanked the Trust for the presentation, there followed a questions session.

The Board noted the following comments and responses to questions relating to the presentation:

Response to Councillor Costigan:

- The Chair of the Trust advised that there were concerns about the impact on demand for services when schools go back in September. The Trust had concerns about the increase of cases of domestic violence (DV) and that despite efforts to carry out visits virtually or otherwise children who were potentially at risk were more away from the eyes of professionals, whether in school or by social work visits. In normal visits check-ups and observation of the risks would have taken place, it was likely that there would be an impact.
- The Trust was concerned about the amount of work staff were putting in, they were tired, and they were being asked to continue with that level of work and respond to other ways of working. The Trust was very aware of staff wellbeing and had kept in touch and supported staff.
- The Trust gave assurance that planning was good, that different scenarios had been looked at carefully and plans were in place to deal with most scenarios, particularly if there were low levels of staffing. Partnership relationships had been built up and senior leadership team stepped up to the mark. There was confidence that good leaders respond well to crisis and that the senior management team had responded extremely well to this situation.

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- The Trust Management Board had the data they needed to know where the problems were and to be confident.
- There were concerns that this has cost money, the Trust had kept a separate budget line to identify costs that had come about as a result of Covid-19. The Council had also made clear that where there was money available for Covid-19 some would be passed to the Trust to support Children's Services.
- Plans were visited daily, the Chief Executive SCT participated in the daily Covid-19 response meetings which all linked into the business continuity plans. There had been weekly reviews which also fed into the Covid-19 plan at the Directorate meetings.
- Staff representative group had helped shape communications to staff and all staff were sent briefing about risks, ways of working and anything else relevant. The recovery group met twice a week and had action plan in place. Surge planning would be reviewed every 2 weeks. There had been daily dashboards and weekly data available but staffing resource was under pressure.
- In terms of the youth service, the service had, in the early days, delivered food packages to vulnerable families and homeless people or people facing eviction. Arrangements had been made for young people moving into independence and shielding for older foster carers.
- In regard to looked after children, some had attended school depending on shielding requirements. The Trust worked closely with families to build contact and monitor, and the Board was reassured that the Trust was working closely with health partners.

Response to Cllr Shackleton

- Many agency workers had worked for the Trust for some time and Sandwell continued to inform social workers of the benefits of permanency and the 12 reasons to work in Sandwell. Recruitment was moving in the right direction, but there were problems and it was recognised that the retention of social worker was as important as the recruitment. The Trust continued to work with social workers, to hold onto them by looking after their wellbeing and through support and training.

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- In relation to quality assurance and monthly audits the Trust advised that audits were not just based on data, face to face meetings were also carried out and checks on the quality of work.
- Virtual meetings were working well for the Trust and it was considering how to adopt these new ways of working. Social workers had been encouraged to make a note of the conversations held on the file and dip sampling was taking place to check that conversations were happening directly with families.

Response to Councillor Millar

- The Trust Board leadership structure was made up of executive and non-executive Members. Initially the Trust had inherited a high turnover of staff the management structure had been more stable since the appointment of permanent Directors and gradually that was becoming more stable moving down the structure. The Chief Executive agreed to circulate the current structure chart to members.

Response to Councillor Z Hussain

- The Chief Executive advised that when dealing with vulnerabilities the increase in contact for children and families was important, specifically for where a contact order was in place to have supervised contact. The Trust was working to prepare the supervised contact area, cleaning toys and keeping the space clean after each use. It would be a reduced service, but it would be up and running in a couple of weeks.
- The daily dashboard covered all children data, particularly children the Trust was most worried about. The Chief Executive SCT advised that there were concerns about recruitment and retention of social workers in relation to the surge and the fact that people had been working hard and would be asked to work harder still. The Trust would do all it could to keep and support staff through the surge. The new ways of virtual working were going well, a SWOT analysis showed they were working well in certain areas, however some social workers had indicated that they felt isolated, in summary virtual working worked for some and not for others.
- There were 2 different types of family time, there was supervised contact in the Hollies, where there was a lot of work to get

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buildings up and running again. Social workers were carrying out WhatsApp calls, foster carers were taking videos for moms and dads to share photograph or videos of their children crawling, taking first steps etc. to maintain virtual contact. All families had some form of contact depending on need. Community contact was now opening up where appropriate, there was a priority to get the visits to prepare for court hearing up and running.

- In relation to audits and 'near misses' the Trust advised that there had been some poor practice and some outstanding practice, all performance was monitored by managers. If poor practice had been identified in the audit there was a process to escalate the matter.
- There had been an increase in the number of families that would not have come to the Trusts attention if it had not been for Covid-19. Some families had been hard hit, financially and emotionally and there had been some significant issues, families under stress had not managed well.
- The Trust had not experienced pre-Covid referral levels for the first few months of lockdown, because a large majority of referrals came through schools, but referrals then started to increase again. The response had been a whole Trust response and there had to be a huge thank you to all staff who have done a great job in very challenging circumstances.

Response to Cllr Millar

- There were around 220 social workers in Sandwell with an average of 19.5 cases per worker. There was a range of experience and the cases varied considerably in relation to complexity and length of time.
- Each case would take the time it needed to take, when a young person came into the service they spent 2-3 weeks being assessed, then they were referred to the relevant part of the service where social work teams spent 3-6 months carrying out the bulk of work to support them and their families. If the case was related to a child protection matter it could take a year to put required processes in place. If a child was placed in care the case would remain open until they were 18 years and they would continue to be allocated a personal adviser until they were 21

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years. A child with special needs would receive support until they were 25 years. Some may be in care for their whole childhood and some for short periods of time when parent may be in crisis or in hospital.

Response to Cllr Carmichael

- The Board was advised that there was a whole section of the Trust responsible for audit, virtual training and development. Every visit required a pre-risk assessment. The Trust had to share different ways of working and has worked alongside Public Health and with the Trade Unions as well as staff to agree health and safety of staff. People had to work quickly to respond to and implement Government guidance which in Childrens Social Care had not been as clear as would have liked.
- There was a pre-visit risk assessment carried out for every visit, including repeat visits. PPE had to be worn if there was a physical risk, staff were anxious about going out and had to be protected, virtual visits were also used to safeguard staff.
- The Trust had to protect the family and the worker, and a full risk assessment had to take place each time to ensure nothing has changed health wise since the last visit.

Response to Councillor Preece

- The shortage of PPE was quite a challenge at the start of Lockdown but had been very well handled by Director of Resources, Tara Malik. The services were not impacted by lack of PPE, people were tenacious in sourcing PPE and it helped services to continue. The situation has stabilised now and there was a good supply of quality PPE.

The Chair thanked officers from the Trust for their presentation and responses to questions, he echoed all the comments of the meeting relating to the work of the staff and on behalf of the Board asked that an enormous gratitude to staff for the work they have done and continue to do through the Covid pandemic be placed on record.

The Board noted the presentation and comments.

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13/20 Elective Home Education

The Chair welcomed the Group Head Education Support Services who presented the report detailing trends and the current status of Elective Home Education (EHE) in Sandwell.

The Board noted the presentation which highlighted:

- that home education considered those children who were not on a school roll and whose parents were home 'educating other than at school' as described in the 1996 Education Act.
- that parents could choose how to educate at home and to register their children with the Local Authority. There was a duty on the Local Authority to maintain a register of children not registered at specified types of school and to provide support to parents. There was also a duty on proprietors of certain educational settings to respond to enquiries from the Local Authority;
- there was one full time Elected Home Education (EHE) Advisory Teacher who maintained communication with the EHE community, a second member of staff had recently been appointed to a peripatetic role;
- there were 408 children who were electively home educated and the reasons for choosing EHE were highlighted. It was emphasised that Multi-agency working was key in safeguarding children;
- a range of communication was used, and meetings held in libraries across the six towns to support parents;
- during the Covid-19 situation additional resources and links to on-line learning had been made available to parents.

The Board noted the following comments and responses to questions on the presentation:

Response to Cllr Z Hussain

- there was one member of staff for 408 children which did seem high, however there was a very engaged EHE Community. The Local Authority tailored support around the family needs. Many of the EHE groups were more engaged and the interaction could be light touch. When the frontline first makes contact with the family, it was about who to put them in touch with and to establish links.

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- Council staff cannot just turn up there is no authority to do so, some families do not want to talk to the Council. It was important to develop a relationship, contact was made and maintained through email, letters and leaflets telling families about the resource etc that was available to them. There were 8 families currently that did not engage with the Council, but most did engage at varying levels.
- The appointment of a peripatetic member of staff was pending and would be helpful to carry out more of the administrative work and free up frontline staff.

Response to Cllr Shackleton

- There was a challenge for every local authority to access information about attainment, training and career paths of children educated at home from the family. There was recognition that there was a need to talk to staff to engage with parents and find out more about attainment in exams. The only way to find out information was by active engagement;
- Families do have to register with the Local Authority (since 2019) and it was expected that an extra staff member would enable more engagement with families;
- It was acknowledged that some young people would be achieving higher outcomes than if they attended school, but that this was not the case for all children educated at home.

Response to Cllr Costigan

- It was hoped that by September 2020 the Sandwell Libraries would be open for families to resume sessions, and if not, other venues would be considered to get sessions up and running for the EHE Community.
- There was feedback from the staff that families were becoming more interactive and pro-active as a result of lockdown.

Response to Cllr Carmichael

- It was parental choice to home educate, at their own cost, which included exam fees.
- Out of 408 children home educated currently 25 had an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) which indicated special needs. Some parents felt that their child would not get the right support and provision in schools and did not feel confident sending them into a

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school environment. Some young people would have significant additional physical and personal needs and provision may fall outside the Borough which is why parents chose to home educate.

Response to Cllr Chidley

- The team had details of the reasons why they parents wanted to home school, but this could not be shared due to Data Protection. Sometimes the parent may not want to give reasons, however the main themes had been included in the report for information.
- More analysis was required to ensure that young people have a good future by receiving a good education.

Comments from Cllr Underhill

- The Cabinet Member for Best Start in Life had requested this item to scrutiny because she had observed a jump in the number of children in home education and that there was only one teacher for over 400 pupils. She highlighted that the Council had its hands tied and that it would be useful to bring matters arising from discussion about EHE to the attention of the Secretary of State for Education.
- Parents made the decision to home educate, the child's voice was not always heard in this decision.
- There was a need to get underneath the reasons why more parents were not sending children to school. The data showed that after 7 years old the numbers shoot up as children become teenagers.
- At this time, fewer than 1% of school aged children are home education, however this could rise again in September and the Council needed to know more to prepare, such as what exams they do, if they do them and how the Council can plan to be able to support families.
- The Cabinet Member highlighted that children are the future and that as a Council we had a responsibility to give young people the best start in life.

Response to Cllr Millar

- Tipton area had the highest number of EHE it would be interesting to analyse deeper to understand why;

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- Tipton had good schools, it would be interesting to consider the factors why parents may not choose a school in their area, whether that be by reputation or other.

The Chair thanked all members and the Group Head Education Support Services for their contribution to the discussion. He highlighted that there was consensus that there should be further analysis carried out by officers of the data, including:

- attainment levels of EHE students
- supply the numbers of EHE for each Town.

The Chair advised Board that he would meet with officers to consider the scope for a review for Elective Home Education by the Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board.


The Board noted the presentation and comments

(Meeting ended at 7.05 pm)

Contact Officer: Deb Breedon Democratic Services Unit 0121 569 3896

REPORT TO CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY BOARD

21st September 2020

Subject:	Reset and Recovery
Cabinet Portfolio:	Cabinet Member for Best Start in Life
Director:	Executive Director for Children's Services - Lesley Hagger
Contribution towards Vision 2030:	
Contact Officer(s):	Lesley Hagger – Executive Director for Children's Services

DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Scrutiny Board:

1. Receive the presentation which provides an up to date position on reset and recovery activity across children's services and education functions;
2. Consider the findings from the impact assessment work undertaken on communities in Phase One of the corporate reset and recovery programme.

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

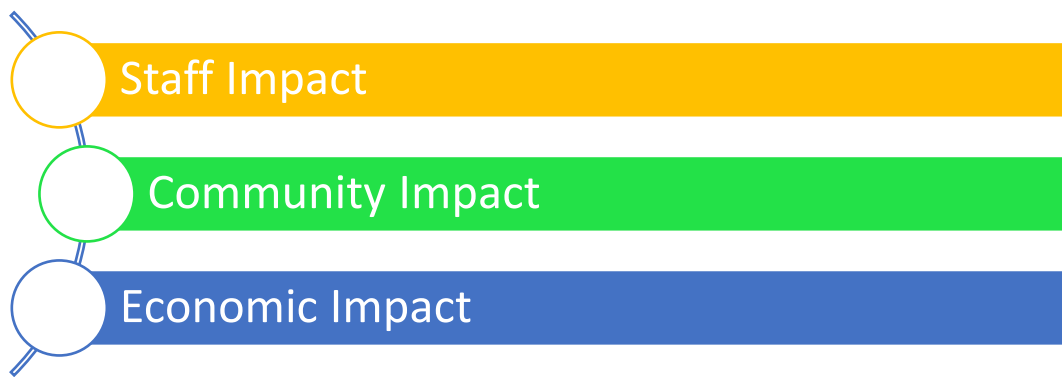
- 1.1 To provide the Scrutiny Board with the most recent position statement regarding the reset and recovery of services relevant to children's services and education.
- 1.2 To ensure that the Scrutiny Board is sighted on the activity undertaken in Phase One of the corporate reset and recovery programme and the findings from this work in relation to impact on the community.

2 IMPLICATIONS FOR VISION 2030

- 2.1 Recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic with our communities, stakeholders and partners will have an impact on all ten of the Vision 2030 ambitions.

3 BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 At its meeting on 22nd June 2020, the Scrutiny Board received a report about the impact of Covid19 and lockdown on children, young people and their families and the way that services have responded. This report provides a further update.
- 3.2 During the summer period, the council's support to vulnerable children was of particular focus whilst schools were not operating. This included providing food and supplies, learning and play resources, and other support, including increased online mental health and wellbeing support and increased detached youth work activities.
- 3.3 From the start of the new academic year, all children have been expected to return to school. Sandwell's schools, college and other learning providers, including our early years settings and childminders, have worked tirelessly to ensure that children can access education and care.
- 3.4 The assurance meetings with DfE and Ofsted, which were daily for the first few months of lockdown, have continued to take place several times each week, and have increased again to daily meetings since the start of the academic year. It is expected that Ofsted will undertake a focused visit in the next few months looking at the support provided to vulnerable children.
- 3.5 The priority for Phase One of the reset and recovery programme, our immediate post-crisis response, has been to move out of lockdown safely and ensure that we retain flexibility to respond to changes in the local infection rate to support the most vulnerable in our communities. The report to the Cabinet on 23rd September will outline more detail on Phase One.
- 3.6 In order to achieve the required outcomes from Phase One on understanding the impact of COVID-19, on 18 June 2020 the Reset and Recovery Board established three impact working groups:



3.7 Each group had the following remit: -

- i. to share impact intelligence (including service user/ community intelligence) from directorate areas and external contacts, discuss findings, themes and future implications
- ii. to agree the key messages from analysis of the intelligence to feed into the overall impact report, with particular focus on the following points: -
 - o The impact of COVID-19 on existing issues (negative/positive impact)
 - o Whether COVID-19 resulted in new issues for the borough/council?
 - o Suggest areas for the next stage (thematic working groups).

4 CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 Services for children and young people have continued to be provided with minimal reduction, however, it is expected that the full impact of lockdown on children and young people will not be fully realised for some months. Service areas are planning to respond to a 'surge' in demand, particularly as all children return to school.
- 4.2 Sandwell's schools are open for all children; some have taken a phased approach to the re-introduction of year groups. There have been a number of schools where pupils and/or staff have developed Covid19 symptoms or have had positive test results. Schools are very well-prepared to manage these situations.
- 4.3 The DfE has required a range of additional reporting during the Covid19 period and is producing a range of reports that set out the national impact of the pandemic on children and young people. The first report from the DfE is expected on 16th September.
- 4.4 The Impact Working Groups have now concluded their initial analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on our borough, although it is acknowledged that the effects of COVID-19 will continue to be felt by our communities for

some time to come. We will work to continue to understand this developing picture to ensure that the Council continues to respond to any new and emerging needs.

- 4.5 This Community Impact Working Group, led by the Executive Director - Children's Services and the Director – Housing and Communities, has met twice during July and August 2020 and has found that the effect of COVID-19 on our communities reflected that of the national picture, experiencing issues around mental health, food insecurity, digital exclusion, financial hardship and social stresses. Also, like the national picture our BAME communities have been affected greatly by the pandemic.
- 4.6 A more comprehensive view of the findings from the Community Impact Working Group is attached at Appendix 2 of this report.
- 4.7 The Economic Impact Working Group has considered the impact on employment and skills for young people; the Staff Impact Working Group has considered the impact on staff, our services and the finance of the council and details will be contained in the report to the Cabinet on 23rd September.
- 4.8 Phase two of the reset and recovery programme will take the findings from this impact analysis to inform the development of a revised corporate plan in order to ensure that the council continues to meet the needs of the communities we serve.

5 CONSULTATION (CUSTOMERS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS)

- 5.1 Town Workshops were held with elected members, this ensured that all members had the opportunity to participate, and add intelligence to, the impact analysis. Discussions that took place in this series of seven events were fed through to the impact working groups.
- 5.2 The Chief Executive held a series of staff focus groups, to both offer staff an opportunity to ask questions and to hear about staff experiences of lockdown, challenges in working from home and ideas they may have for the future. Again, this intelligence was fed into the Impact Working Groups.
- 5.3 Looking forward it is paramount that the key messages from the impact work are shared and discussed across our organisation and with our partners, so we can develop a shared understanding of the challenges we face and the positives we want to harness. There are plans to consult widely internally and externally with the findings of the impact analysis.

Consultation with the voluntary sector has been planned to take place during September through four separately themed workshops.

6 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 6.1 The framework set out in the report approved by the Emergency Committee will result in the development of plans to enable the organisation and the borough to recover from the impact of COVID-19, therefore alternative options are not required at this stage. When developing approaches and determining specific activities, it will be essential to consider alternative options to ensure the most appropriate way forward is agreed.

7 STRATEGIC RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The development of the Reset and Recovery Plan will not require specific resources over and above those already allocated to corporate planning activities within the 2020/21 budget.

8 LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1 Transparency in decision making and accountability for delivery of the Reset and Recovery Plan will be key to its success. Governance will feed into the existing democratic arrangements and develop over time as more functions come back online. Links to regional activity will be key to the recovery of the council and borough, working in partnership with others, sharing intelligence and maximising the opportunities for Sandwell as whole.

9 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 9.1 An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken on the reset and recovery process, no specific activity was required on the framework. However, the impact assessments of COVID-19 carried out as part of this framework will highlight if any specific groups have been impacted more than others. This intelligence will drive priorities and activity within the Reset and Recovery Plan.
- 9.2 Throughout the development of the Reset and Recovery Plan, equality impact assessments will be conducted on specific proposals at the appropriate time.

10 DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT

10.1 Any information used to compile this report is subject to information governance legislation and is managed in accordance with the council's policies and protocols. A Data Protection Impact Assessment is not required.

11 CRIME AND DISORDER AND RISK ASSESSMENT

11.1 There is no requirement to carry out a Crime and Disorder and Risk Assessment.

12 SUSTAINABILITY OF PROPOSALS

12.1 The information contained within the presentation that accompanies this report will be incorporated into specific plans developed as a result of this framework.

13 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOCIAL VALUE)

13.1 The immediate impact of COVID-19 on the health and wellbeing of both Sandwell residents and council staff has been captured through the impact assessments. These impact assessments have identified priorities for action that will be assessed further in Phase Two of the recovery framework. The longer-term impacts will not be understood for some time, particularly the impact on children's wellbeing and safety. It will be important to continue to update our impact assessments throughout the planning period to ensure any planned activity addresses the key issues.

14 IMPACT ON ANY COUNCIL MANAGED PROPERTY OR LAND

14.1 As part of the development of the Reset and Recovery Plan and in response to increased financial pressures on council budgets, we will need to review the council's corporate estate rationalise costs and ensure it accommodates the future needs of a more flexible workforce.

15 CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

15.1 The work carried out over the last few months has captured data and intelligence from a broad range of sources. This has enabled us to determine the impact of COVID-19 on the borough and on the organisation.

15.2 It is clear from our experiences of responding to the crisis that we work better by coming together. Therefore, the key messages from this

intelligence should be shared and discussed widely in order to identify the best activities and approaches to address the issues.

- 15.3 Members are asked to consider the findings from the impact assessment work in order to shape the future priorities for the council and Sandwell as a whole.

16 **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 16.1 Cabinet report – 23rd September 2020

17 **APPENDICES:**

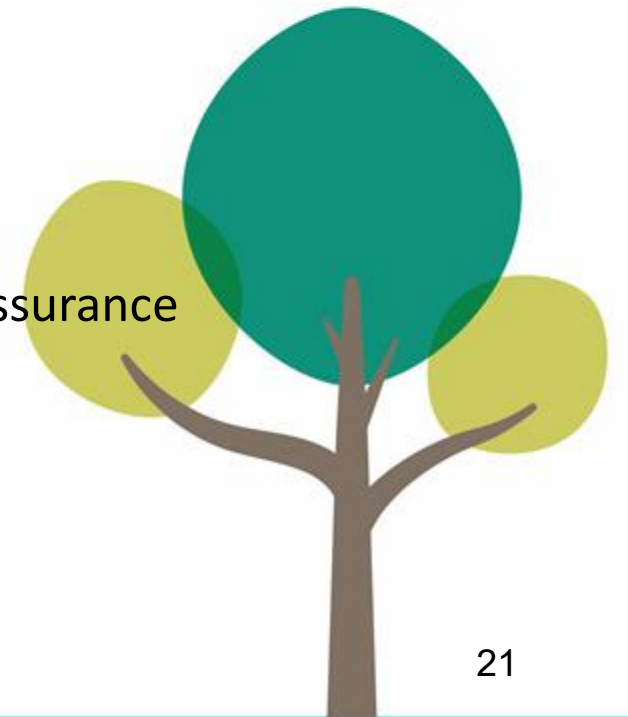
- Appendix A – Presentation to Scrutiny Board meeting
Appendix B - Community Impact outcomes

Lesley Hagger
Executive Director for Children's Services

SANDWELL CHILDREN'S SERVICES – Reset and Recovery update

COUNCIL SERVICES:

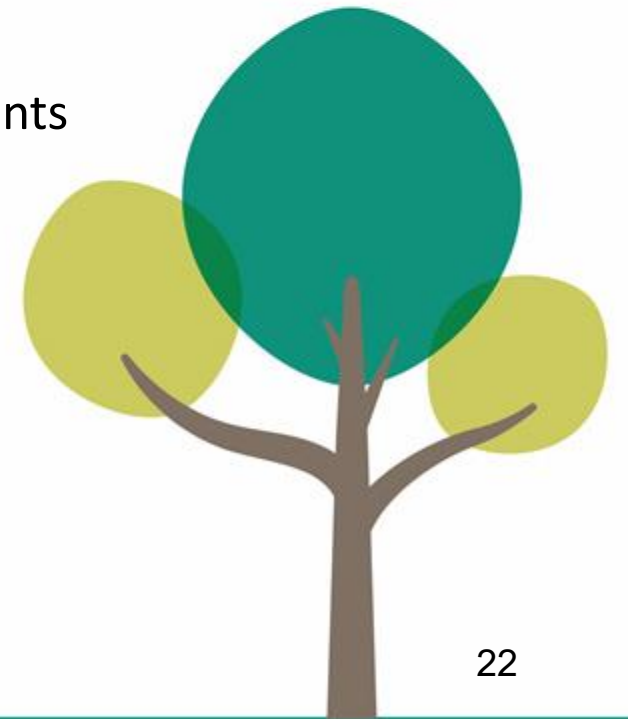
- Majority have continued with staff working in offices (eg Admissions) or at home – innovative approaches (eg careers interviews)
- Services that work directly with the public have been agreed via the Reset and Recovery Board – to date:
 - Sandwell Residential Education Services
 - Play Services
 - Sandwell Adult and Family Learning and Connexions
 - Inclusive Learning and associated transport for SEND pupils
 - Safeguarding, Attendance and Prosecution
 - School and settings advisory teams
- Services contracted have brought plans to the Reset and Recovery Board for assurance (eg Sandwell Children's Trust, Action for Children, Murray Hall)



SANDWELL CHILDREN'S SERVICES – Reset and Recovery update

SCHOOLS and EARLY YEARS:

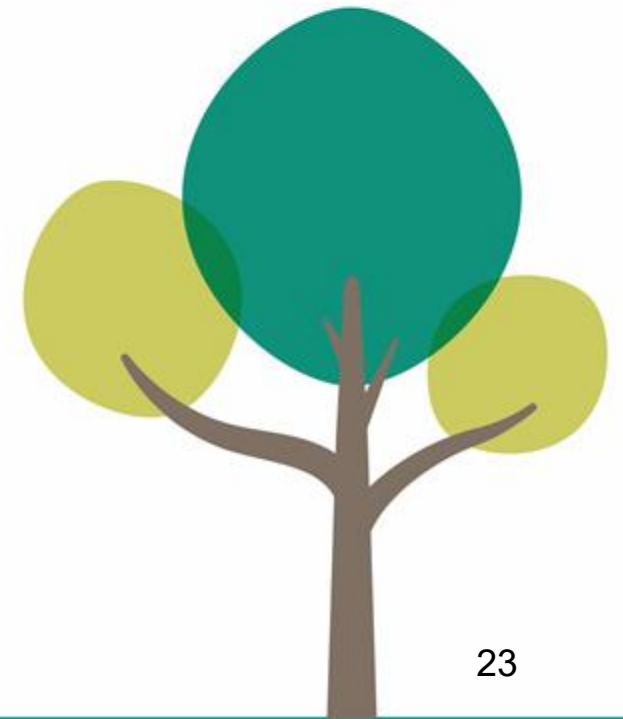
- All schools open – attendance good but Elective Home Education requests increased
- Excellent engagement from schools and academies
- Early Years settings and childminders increasing
- Early challenges – positive cases, testing, cleaning, digital learning offer
- Transport
- Catch up activities and tutoring
- Pupil wellbeing – new Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) requirements
- Pupil assessment, testing and examinations 2020/2021



SANDWELL CHILDREN'S SERVICES – Reset and Recovery update

VULNERABLE CHILDREN:

- Vulnerable Children Group meeting
- Shielded children
- Detached Youth Work
- Laptops and dongles
- Data returns
- Surge planning
- Strategic Commissioning
- Corporate Parenting



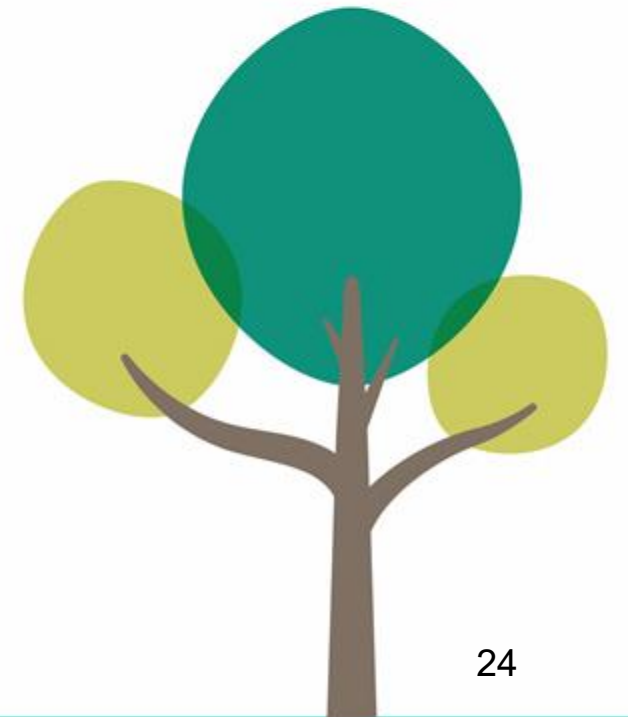
SANDWELL CHILDREN'S SERVICES – Reset and Recovery update

COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

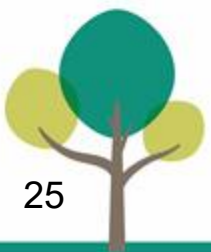
- Sitrep (including Sandwell Children's Trust), Reset and Recovery Board, Vulnerable People Cell meetings
- With partners (education providers, safeguarding partnership)
- Several times weekly with DfE and Ofsted
- Regional and national meetings and actions
- Voices of children, young people and families
- Staff meetings and other support

IMPACT

- On children, young people and families; on services; on staff; on budgets



Impact of Covid on the Community



Sources of intelligence

- This chapter focuses on the impact on people and place to the end of July
- Captures the national evidence
- Led by the Community Impact Working Group
- Drawn on local service provider experience, insights and caseload
- Town member workshops
- Public data on infections/ fatalities
- Neighbourhood level impact and vulnerability



National Context

- As well as the direct impacts of Covid, restrictive social distancing and lockdown measures have had major and unequal impacts on society
- Public Health England findings:
 - mental health and personal relationships have deteriorated
 - Disrupted delivery of NHS meaning long term conditions may worsen, delayed diagnoses
 - Unhealthy behaviours increasing – alcohol misuse, decreased physical activity
 - Exacerbating impact of poor quality housing – 12% had no access to a garden



National Context continued

- Food insecurity and financial hardship
- Children and young people hit hardest – by social distancing/lockdown, closure of schools and concern about increasing abuse in the home
- Increased civic participation in response to Covid and positive impact on social cohesion
- Decrease in car journeys shortlived and may be lasting damage on public transport system. More people are cycling
- Covid has exposed and exacerbated long standing inequalities in society



Sandwell evidence

- Evidence suggests Sandwell reflects the national picture

Mental Health

- SCVO survey identifies mental health as a significant widespread issue – due to isolation, lack of daily provisions, employment worries and this is expected to grow
- CAMHS referrals halved in lockdown but have since recovered and further rise is expected as schools return
- Pandemic has galvanised safeguarding partnerships



Sandwell evidence

Food insecurity, digital exclusion and financial hardship

- food security has been exacerbated
- Demand for food vouchers up 188% (358% in Smethwick) by early June
- 3,451 food parcels delivered to vulnerable households
- 1,586 laptops distributed from DfE for children and young people (some lacked broadband as well)
- The effects of digital exclusion have been exacerbated with reliance on online during lockdown – e.g. hindering benefit take up
- Eligibility for free school meals up 90% on previous year
- Mounting household debt – which has direct impact on Council's ability to support people. Housing arrears up 26.6%, council tax collection down 2.1% and cost of CTRS increased by £3m



Sandwell evidence

Social Stress

- Signs of neighbourhood stress have arisen due to the increase in mental health, wellbeing and financial issues
- Homelessness successes in reducing numbers and engaging with rough sleepers but homelessness is expected to increase because
- Households facing eviction once ban on evictions lifted in August
- ASB incidents increased by 50% in March and April and crime is expected to increase as financial hardship deepens
- Reports of domestic abuse have increased by 22% compared with the same period last year
- Concern about level of hidden abuse exacerbated by social restrictions



Sandwell evidence

Black Asian and Minority Ethnic Groups

- Public Health survey of BAME groups underlined that communities that are heavily interconnected have been affected more than others
- “Epidemic of loneliness, isolation, health fears, anxiety due to family separation”
- Challenges of living with other family members of all ages for long periods
- Fear has been deepened by language barriers
- Highlights need to understand BAME needs better
- Intergenerational housing- normally a strength but one of the reasons for being more vulnerable to the pandemic
- A concern that Covid has widened inequality and community leaders are determined to address this



Sandwell evidence

Young People

- 509 young people surveyed
 - A third were worried
 - A fifth were lonely
 - A quarter were stressed
 - A small number were angry, sad and having trouble sleeping
- Most difficult aspect was not seeing family and friends
- Half welcomed more time spent with their family in lockdown
- 652 children shielding and half of these are in West Bromwich and Smethwick
- Service providers concerned about long term impact on learning in younger children, especially those in challenging home environments



Sandwell evidence

Volunteering and the Voluntary/Community Sector

- Huge increase in volunteering- 732 residents signed up to the SCVO database
- 400 actively deployed, supporting 1000 residents, voluntary organisations and telephone befriending
- Almost all said they would do it again
- Third sector faces widespread pressure – increased demand from users at the same time as closure/depletion of services in lockdown
- Most have maintained service delivery by changing how they work, forcing innovation
- Medium sized organisations most affected – a third had suspended services altogether



Sandwell evidence

Town member workshops

- Reinforced our findings on community impact
- Particular concerns about mental health, financial impact on households, ensuring effective communication and digital exclusion

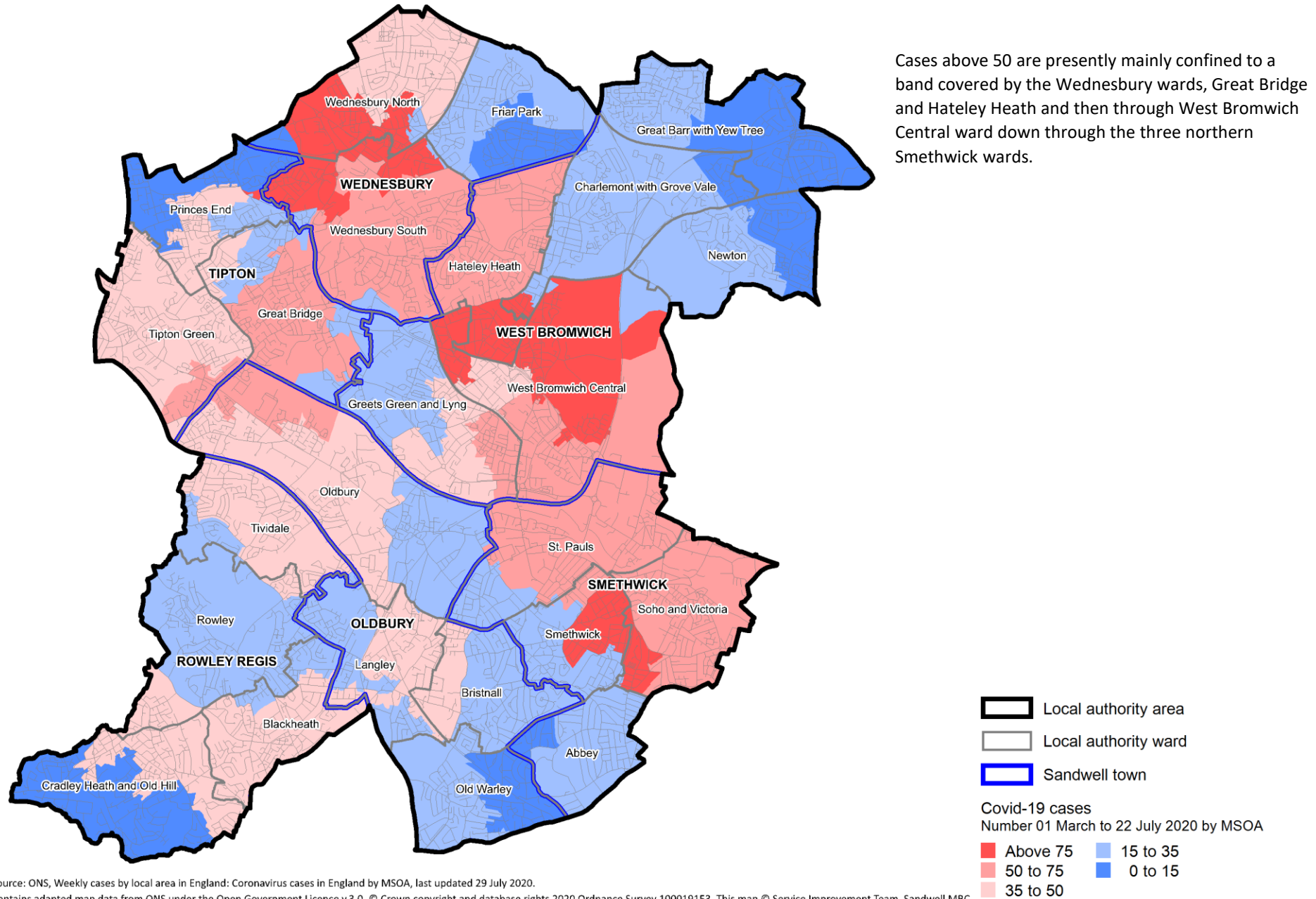


Direct Impact of Covid in Sandwell

- The following maps illustrate the impact of Covid across the wards in Sandwell
- These maps represent a snapshot in time at the end of June and do not reflect the most recent outbreak in Smethwick/ West Bromwich
- Note that the concentration of Covid infection and deaths is in the central band of Sandwell that reflects our areas of greatest deprivation

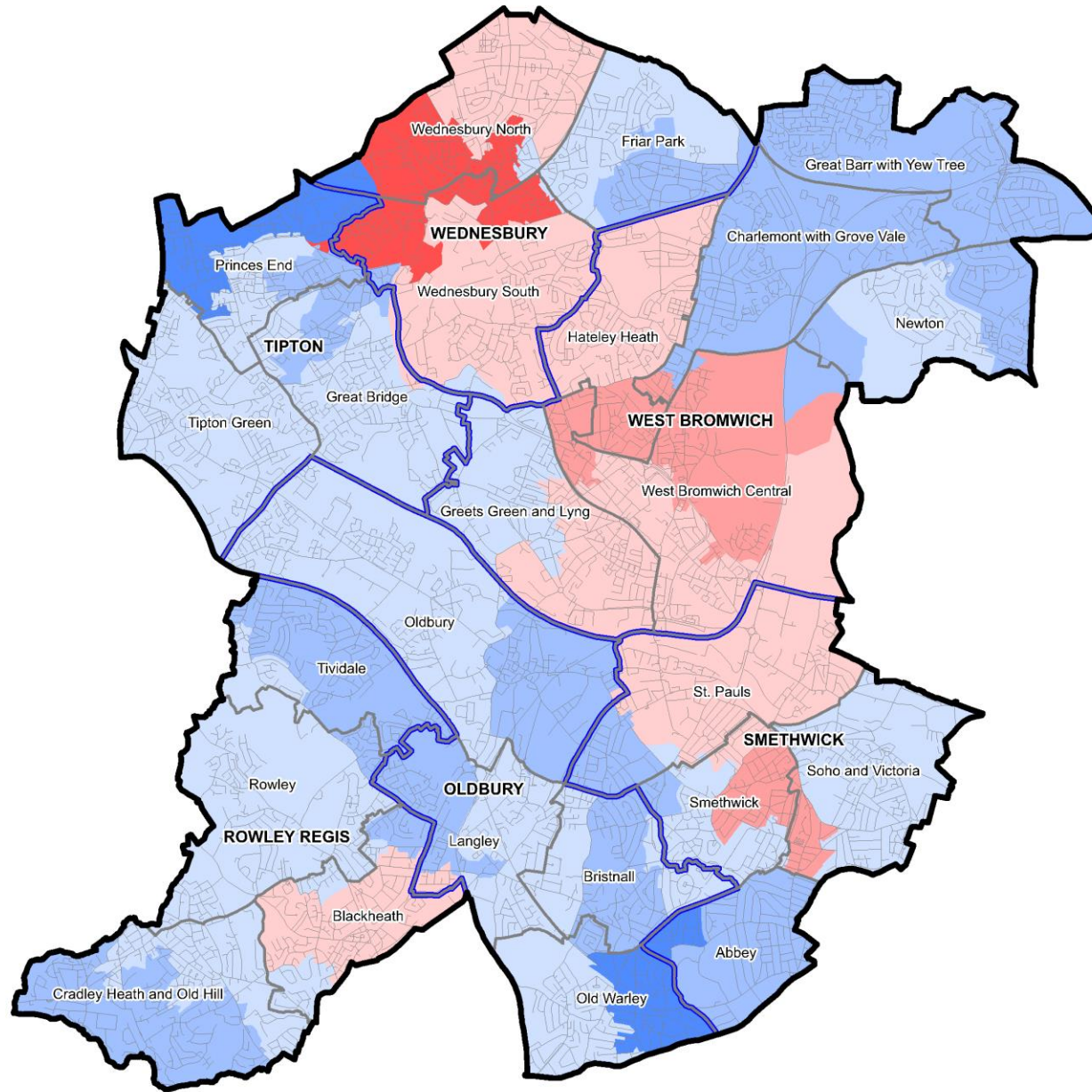


Number of Covid-19 cases to 22 July 2020



Source: ONS, Weekly cases by local area in England: Coronavirus cases in England by MSAO, last updated 29 July 2020.
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Rate of Covid-19 cases to 22 July 2020



Mapping the rate suggests that infection to date is more serious in Wednesbury and the West Bromwich core. Smethwick is presently less affected apart from the Uplands area. The principal hot spot is in Wednesbury with 75 cases and a rate per 100,000 more than three times the English average.

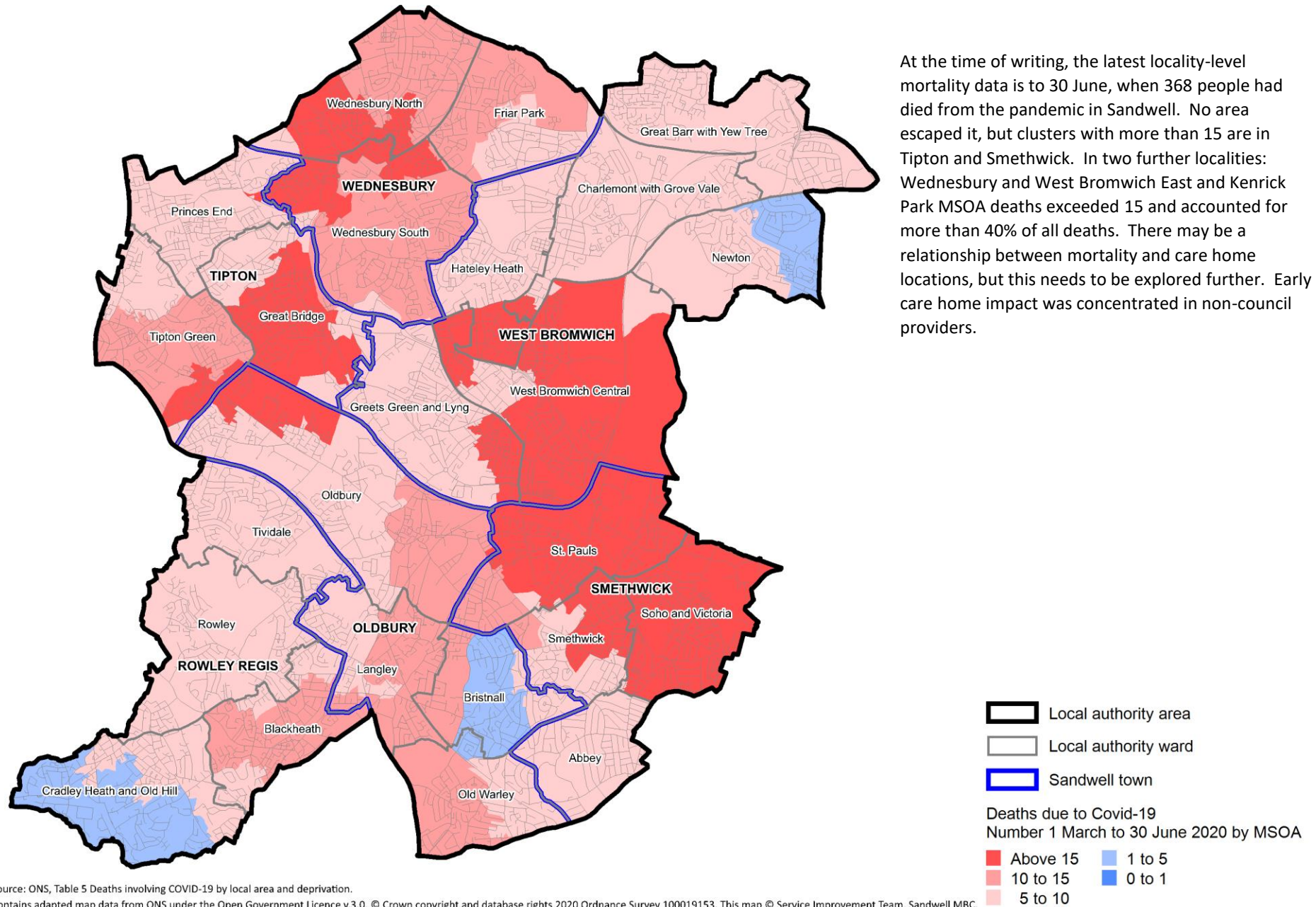
-  Local authority area
-  Local authority ward
-  Sandwell town

Covid-19 cases rate 1 March to 22 July 2020
Number per 100,000 population 2018 by MSA

- | | | | |
|---|------------|---|------------|
|  | Above 847 |  | 339 to 508 |
|  | 677 to 847 |  | 169 to 339 |
|  | 508 to 677 |  | 0 to 169 |

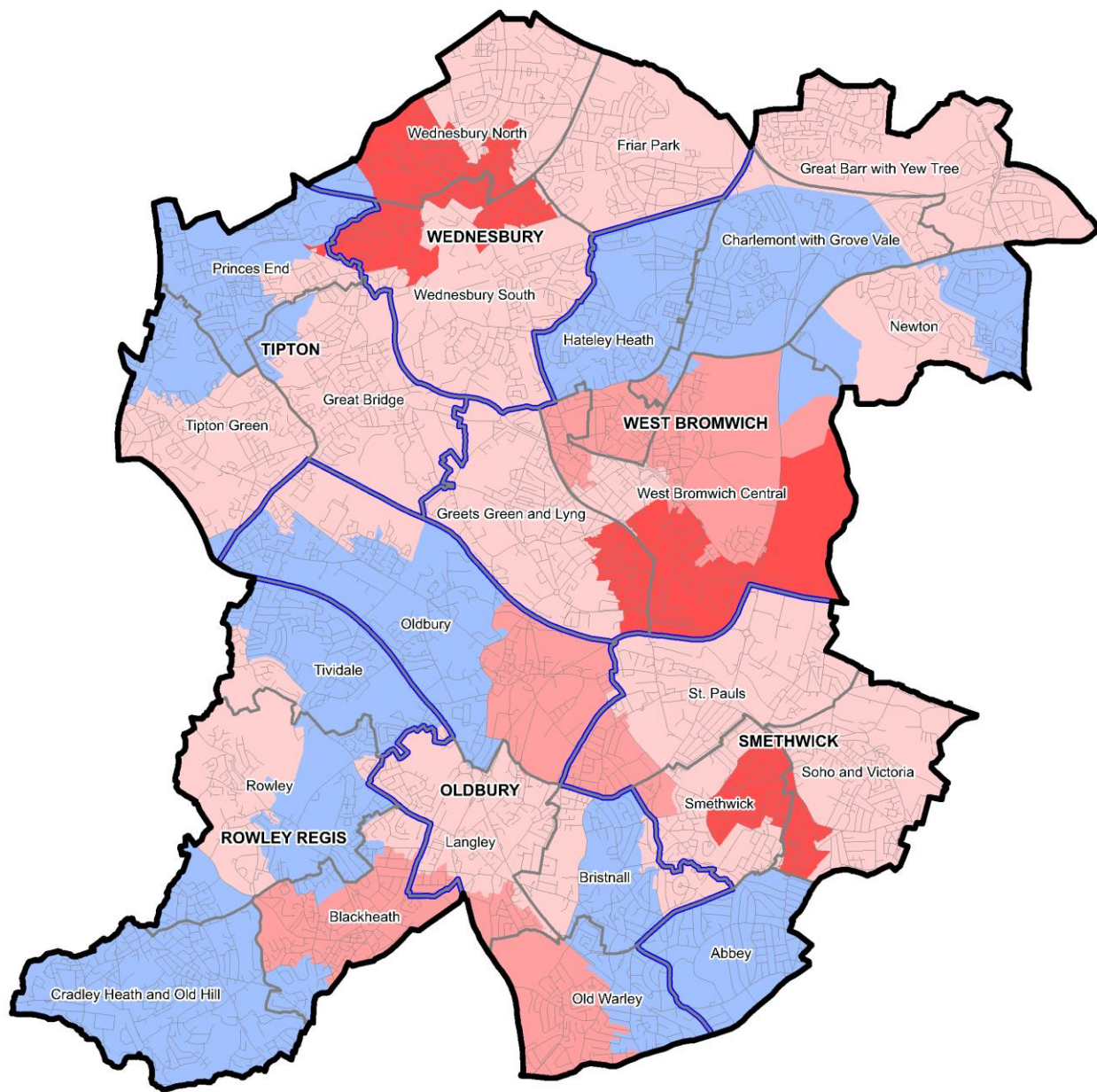
Source: ONS, Weekly cases by local area in England: Coronavirus cases in England by MSA, last updated 29 July 2020; Population estimates – small area based by single year of age E&W via NOMIS. Contains adapted map data from ONS under the Open Government Licence v.3.0. © Crown copyright and database rights 2020 Ordnance Survey 100019153. This map © Service Improvement Team, Sandwell MBC.

Number of Covid-19 deaths to 30 June 2020



Source: ONS, Table 5 Deaths involving COVID-19 by local area and deprivation.
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Rate of Covid-19 deaths to 30 June 2020



Mortality at the end of June is here mapped on a per 100,000 population basis. Three areas have a rate above 172, or twice the national average: Wednesbury, West Bromwich East and Kenrick Park, and Smethwick South (essentially the Uplands area). West Bromwich North (essentially Tantany, Lyndon and Hallam), and to the south, Blackheath, Langley Green and Brandhall fall in the 129–172 band.

- Local authority area
- Local authority ward
- Sandwell town

Covid-19 mortality rate March to June 2020
Number per 100,000 population 2018 by MSA

- Above 172
- 129 to 172
- 43 to 86
- 0 to 43
- 86 to 129

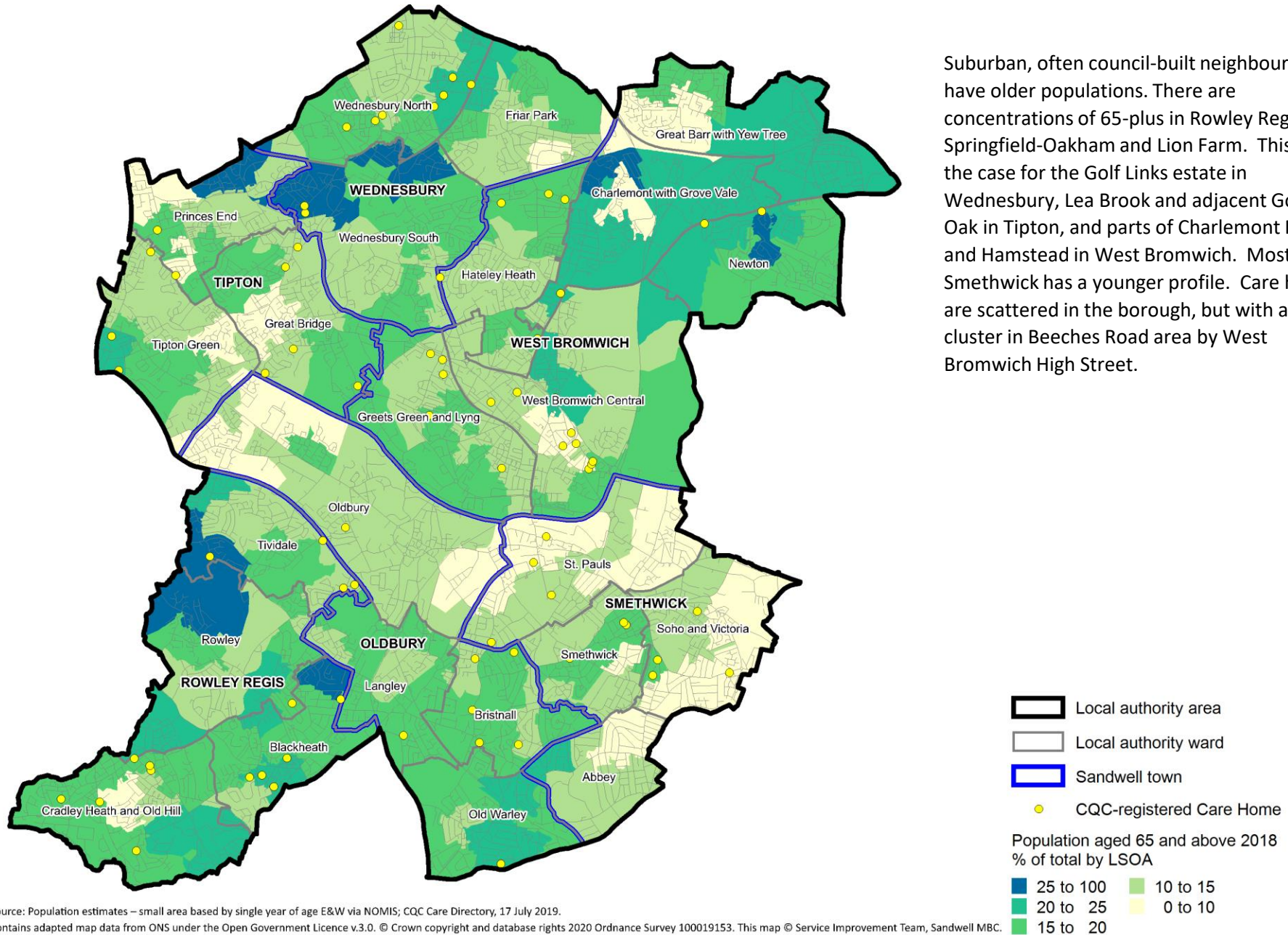
Source: ONS, Table 5 Deaths involving COVID-19 by local area and deprivation; Population estimates – small area based by single year of age E&W via NOMIS.
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Community Vulnerability to Covid

- Studies have shown that in addition to personal long term health issues, Covid risk factors also include gender, older age, deprivation, overcrowding and ethnicity
- Sandwell is a densely-populated inner-urban area
- Deprivation is widespread but concentrated in the central part of the borough
- Spatial impact in the Borough is highly uneven
- The following maps illustrate some of the known risk factors and therefore indicate where future vulnerability to Covid may lie – there is not necessarily a causal link
- Parts of Tipton, Central Wednesbury, Central West Bromwich and Smethwick emerge as areas vulnerable to Covid



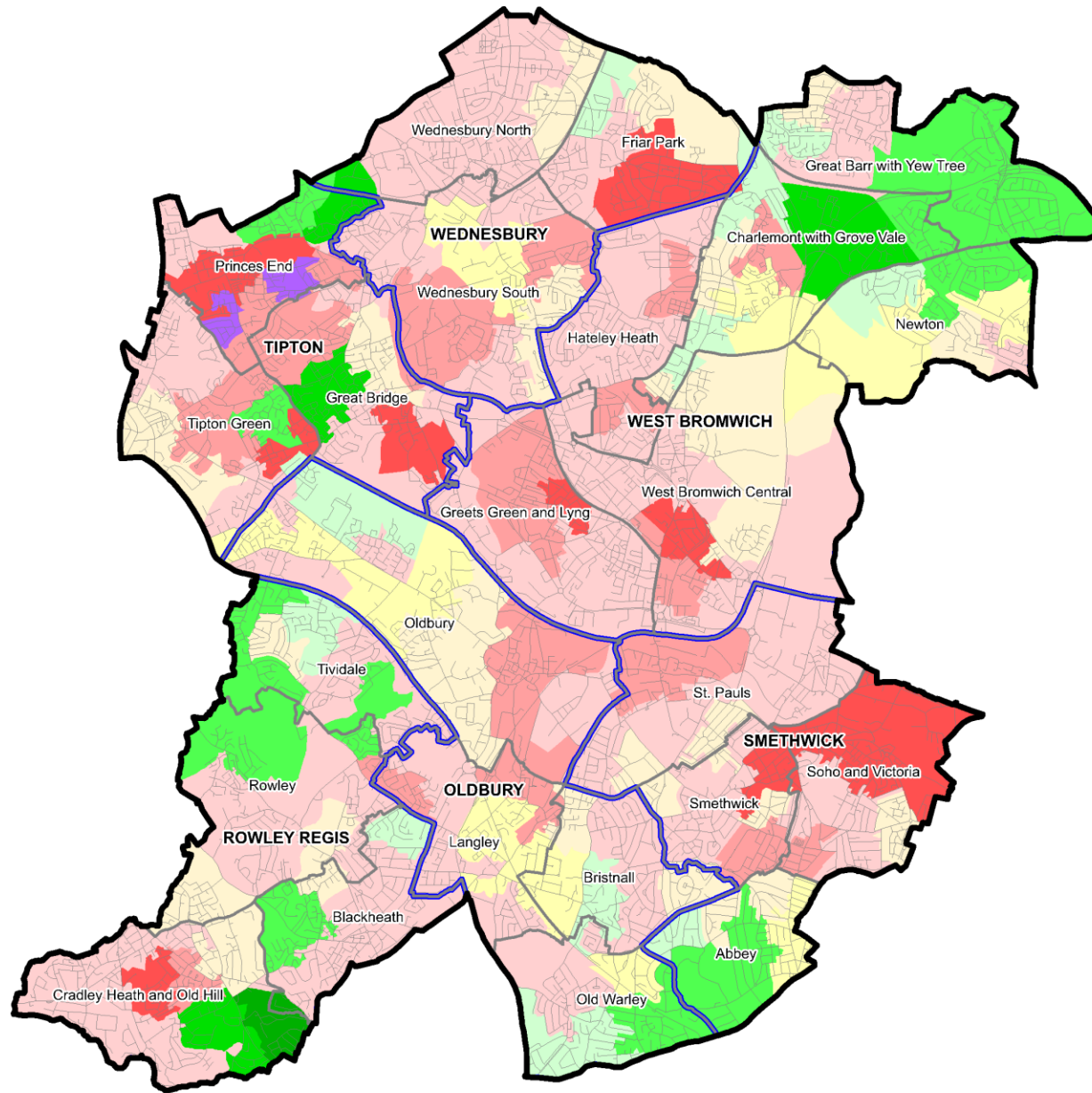
Risk Factor: Population Aged 65-plus 2018 and Care Homes 2019



Suburban, often council-built neighbourhoods have older populations. There are concentrations of 65-plus in Rowley Regis, in Springfield-Oakham and Lion Farm. This is also the case for the Golf Links estate in Wednesbury, Lea Brook and adjacent Gospel Oak in Tipton, and parts of Charlemont Farm and Hamstead in West Bromwich. Most of Smethwick has a younger profile. Care homes are scattered in the borough, but with a cluster in Beeches Road area by West Bromwich High Street.

Source: Population estimates – small area based by single year of age E&W via NOMIS; CQC Care Directory, 17 July 2019.
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



Risk Factor: Multiple Deprivation 2019



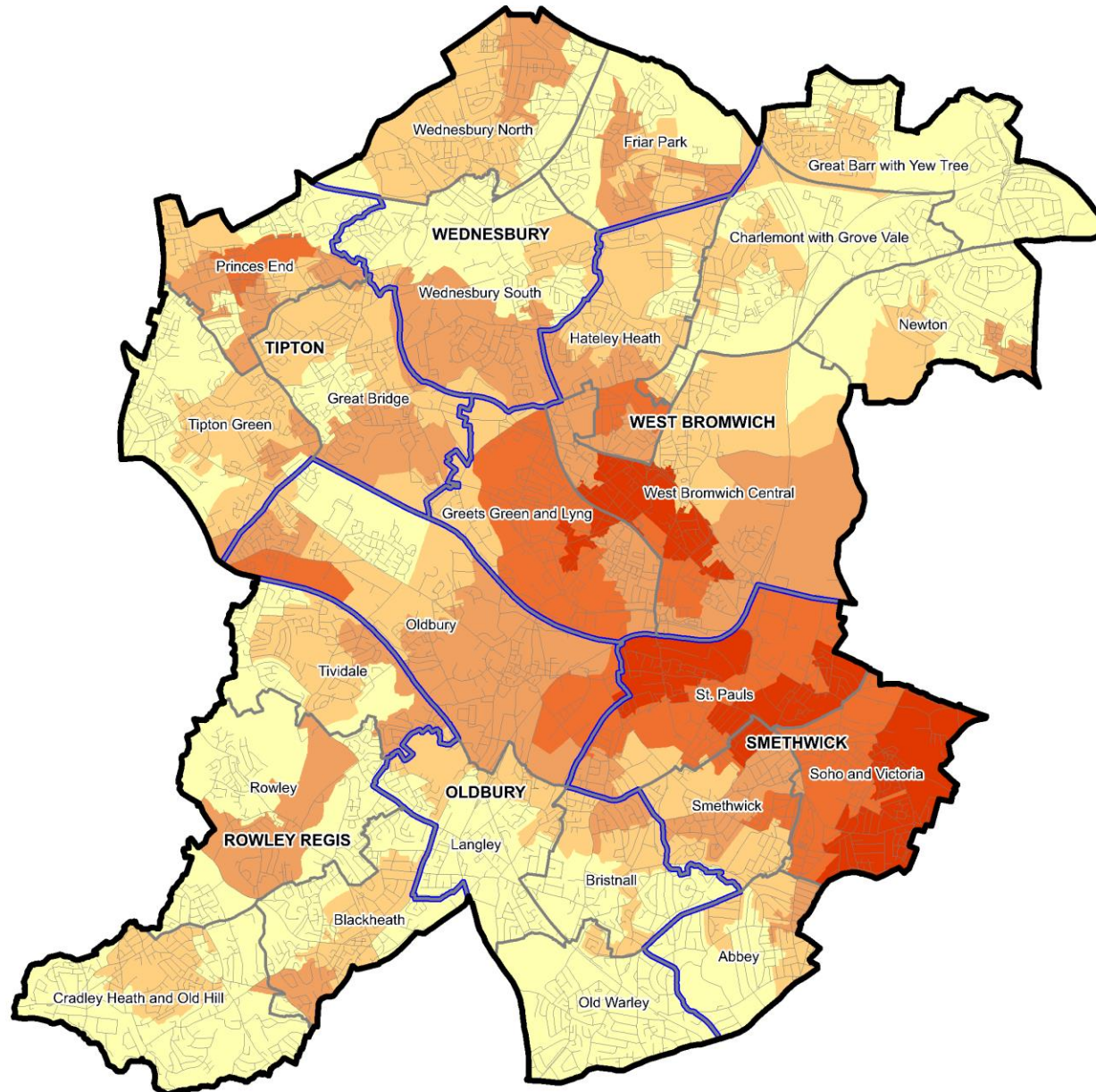
Although deprivation is widespread in Sandwell, a corridor of severe deprivation from Tipton to Smethwick and in major council estates was evident by 1981. Successive indices of relative English deprivation at locality level (IMD) show improvement between 2004 and 2019. Only parts of Tibbington in Tipton now fall in the 1% most deprived locality. However, Windmill Lane and Uplands in Smethwick; parts of Cradley Heath in Rowley Regis; Beeches Road and Hamblett's South in West Bromwich; and the large Friar Park estate in Wednesbury all fall in the worst 5%. So do further parts of Tipton, next to increasingly affluent Toll End, which has benefited from significant new housing. Otherwise the least deprived areas are all on the fringe of the borough, notably the North-East; Old Warley, Bearwood and Old Hill in the south and Oakham and Gospel Oak in the east. The map shows that although its severity is diluted, much of Tipton, Wednesbury, central West Bromwich and Smethwick fall in the most deprived 10% neighbourhoods in England and are therefore at risk from Covid.

-  Local authority area
-  Local authority ward
-  Sandwell town

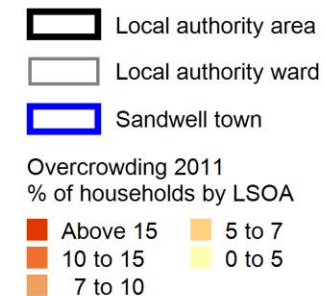
Indices of Deprivation 2019 - Overall IMD
Position in percentile ranking of 32,844 LSOA

- | | |
|--|---|
|  1% most deprived |  40 to 50 |
|  1 to 5 |  50 to 60 |
|  5 to 10 |  60 to 70 |
|  10 to 20 |  70 to 80 |
|  20 to 30 |  80 to 90 |
|  30 to 40 |  90 to 100 |

Risk Factor: Overcrowding 2011

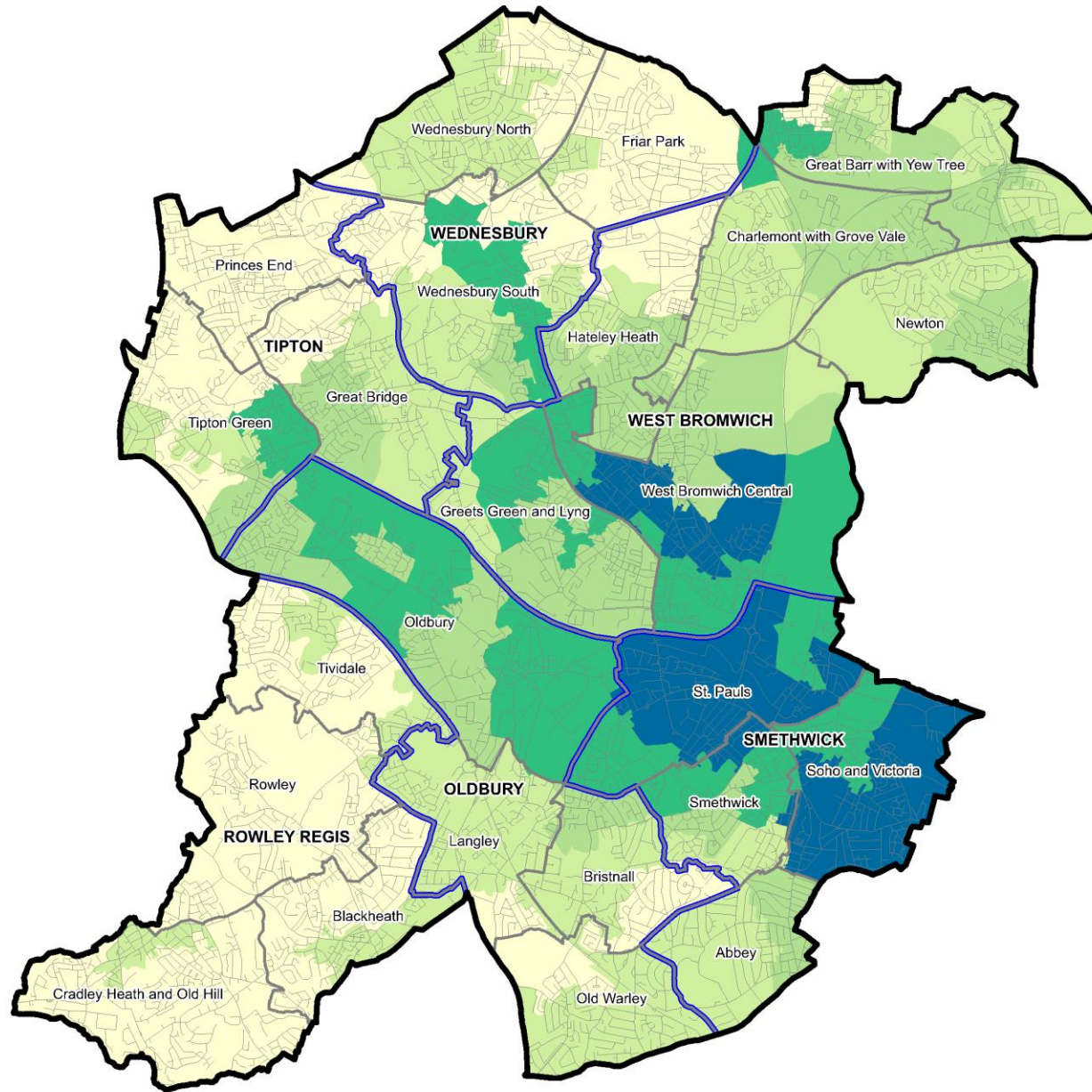


Housing density is about proximity and where it results in overcrowding it is especially problematic. In Sandwell it is concentrated in areas of pre-1919 housing and localities of mainly flats. This map examines overcrowding in 2011, affecting more than 15% of households in Lodge Road and Beeches Road in central West Bromwich; in Galton Village, the West Smethwick and North Smethwick neighbourhoods as well as Cape Hill and Windmill Lane. Analysis of localised population and dwelling change in areas overcrowded in 2011 suggests the problem has since worsened, especially in Cape Hill and Beeches Road. Overcrowding is particularly a Smethwick issue.



Note: A household with at least one bedroom too few for the number and composition of people living in the household is considered overcrowded by the bedroom standard.
 Source: Census 2011 Table QS412EW via NOMIS.
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Risk Factor: Black, Asian and Minority Ethnicity 2011



Older, cheap, private housing areas historically act as reception areas for immigration. Smethwick, which gained the UK's first Sikh temple as well as notoriety for race politics in the 1960s, is now strongly BAME as well as being ethnically diverse. This is also true of the neighbourhoods off West Bromwich High Street. BAME communities expanded strongly across Sandwell in the 2000s, and community cohesion activity is a continuing council focus. This is otherwise a risk factor for social stress and economic pressure after Covid. More immediately, areas mapped at above 75% BAME are at risk from Covid, especially given their pattern of deprivation and overcrowding. Fresh inflows have since generated 'super-diversity' in many of these BAME areas, often via the private rented sector. Net international migration in Sandwell in 2013-18 was 10,301 people and 37.3% of live births were to non-UK born mothers in 2018.

- Local authority area
- Local authority ward
- Sandwell town

Black Asian and Minority Ethnicity 2011
% of population by LSOA

- 75 to 100
- 50 to 75
- 35 to 50
- 20 to 35
- 0 to 20

Key findings/recommendations

- Covid has exacerbated existing weaknesses in Sandwell's community, related to underlying poverty and deprivation
- We need to do something different to address these underlying vulnerabilities
- To do this well, we need to ensure:
 - Engagement is done in the right way and is culturally sensitive
 - Changes in our own organisation to do things more corporately
 - Focus more resources in areas of most need
 - Clear measures of success



Sandwell Childcare Sufficiency Report

2020 – 2021



Produced by:
Sally Dowie
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Sandwell Family Information Service
160 Beeches Road
West Bromwich
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INTRODUCTION

The Childcare Act 2006 gives local authorities a key role in shaping the childcare market in their area. Working with providers from the private, voluntary, independent and maintained sectors, the local authority aims to create a strong, sustainable and diverse childcare market ensuring there are sufficient places to meet the needs of parents.

The Department for Education published a revised [Early Education and Childcare Statutory Guidance](#) for local authorities in June 2018 which states that:

*local authorities **are required** by legislation to secure sufficient childcare, so far as is reasonably practicable, for working parents, or parents who are studying or training for employment, for children aged 0-14 (or up to 18 for disabled children).*

To secure sufficient childcare places, local authorities should consider what is 'reasonably practicable' when assessing what sufficient childcare means. They must consider the local childcare market, work force, quality and capacity of childcare, schools and expansion and sustainability of childcare provision in the local area.

The local authority must report annually to Elected Council Members on how they are meeting their duty to secure sufficient childcare and make this report available and accessible to parents.

This report is Sandwell's seventh annual Childcare Sufficiency Report for Elected Council Members and will be made available and accessible to parents and include the information required in the Statutory Guidance.

Sandwell's sixth annual Childcare Sufficiency Report (CSR) was completed and published in October 2019. A Childcare Strategic Action Plan (CSAP) was developed based on the recommendations of the CSR. The plan is monitored by the Early Years Strategic Group and achievements against the actions are detailed later in the report. This year the plan has also been monitored by the Director of Education, Employment and Skills Management Team on a quarterly basis and this will continue.

Upon completion and approval of this report, a CSAP will be developed, implemented and monitored termly by the Early Years Strategic Group. Any outstanding actions from the previous CSAP will be included.

For the 2020-21 report, however, the Childcare Act (2006) duties around Childcare Sufficiency must be placed within a global and local context.

The Covid-19 global pandemic and the national lockdown on 23rd March have had and continue to have a massive impact on families lives and childcare businesses.

The childcare market changed overnight and as the Covid-19 measures have gone through, and continue to go through, different phases, the local childcare market has also dynamically changed. The expectation is that these changes will continue throughout the lifetime of the virus.

Job Retention, business grants and sustainability funding, fluctuations in demand for childcare places as schools closed and then re-opened in phases, Government guidance on social distancing and PPE, keyworker, vulnerable children and shielding status, all these have had an impact on the childcare market in Sandwell.

It is impossible to predict how the local childcare market will look in the next 6 months. There are many uncertainties around the global pandemic which will certainly impact on the local economy. Demand for childcare and in particular 2,3 and 4 year old and 30 hours places is highly dynamic and is likely to fluctuate as we go through the phases of the pandemic from lockdown to post lockdown. Furlough and redundancy could mean family circumstances decline with an impact on demand for 2 year old places as more families claim Universal Credit and become eligible for the funding, which is allocated to the 40 % most disadvantaged children. Childcare providers will make business decisions on their viability and sustainability which will impact the local market. The ending of Government policy on job retention schemes, business grants and business rates holidays will also play a part in shaping childcare in the future.

Families changing needs will also shape the demand for childcare, especially as the economic impact of Covid-19 begins to be felt with likely rising unemployment and the increase in parents working from home in the next 6 months. The demand for paid for childcare and wraparound services may well be affected. However, new housing development in the borough could also mean regeneration and increased demand for childcare.

It is also difficult to predict how many families will return to using formal childcare after the lockdown and how many may choose to use informal childcare instead. Using informal childcare such as Grandparents will be impacted by Government direction on shielding. There may well be an increase in homeworking and part-time working which will also have an impact on demand for childcare places. We may also see a decline in the use of childcare because of parental confidence and a desire to keep their children safe by reducing the number of 'bubbles' they are in.

This report, therefore, can only consider what is already known about the childcare market in Sandwell. It can look at what childcare was available on 23rd March as the lockdown began and what happened through the early phases where keyworkers and vulnerable children were being supported, then the gradual re-opening of schools and the out of school and holiday provision during the summer. It can also consider what is likely to be the scenario as schools re-open in September although the situation is fluid, and these scenarios will inevitably come with a caveat that things may change and change rapidly. Local or National lockdowns may well be a feature of the next 6 months and the childcare market could then be as it was on 23rd March.

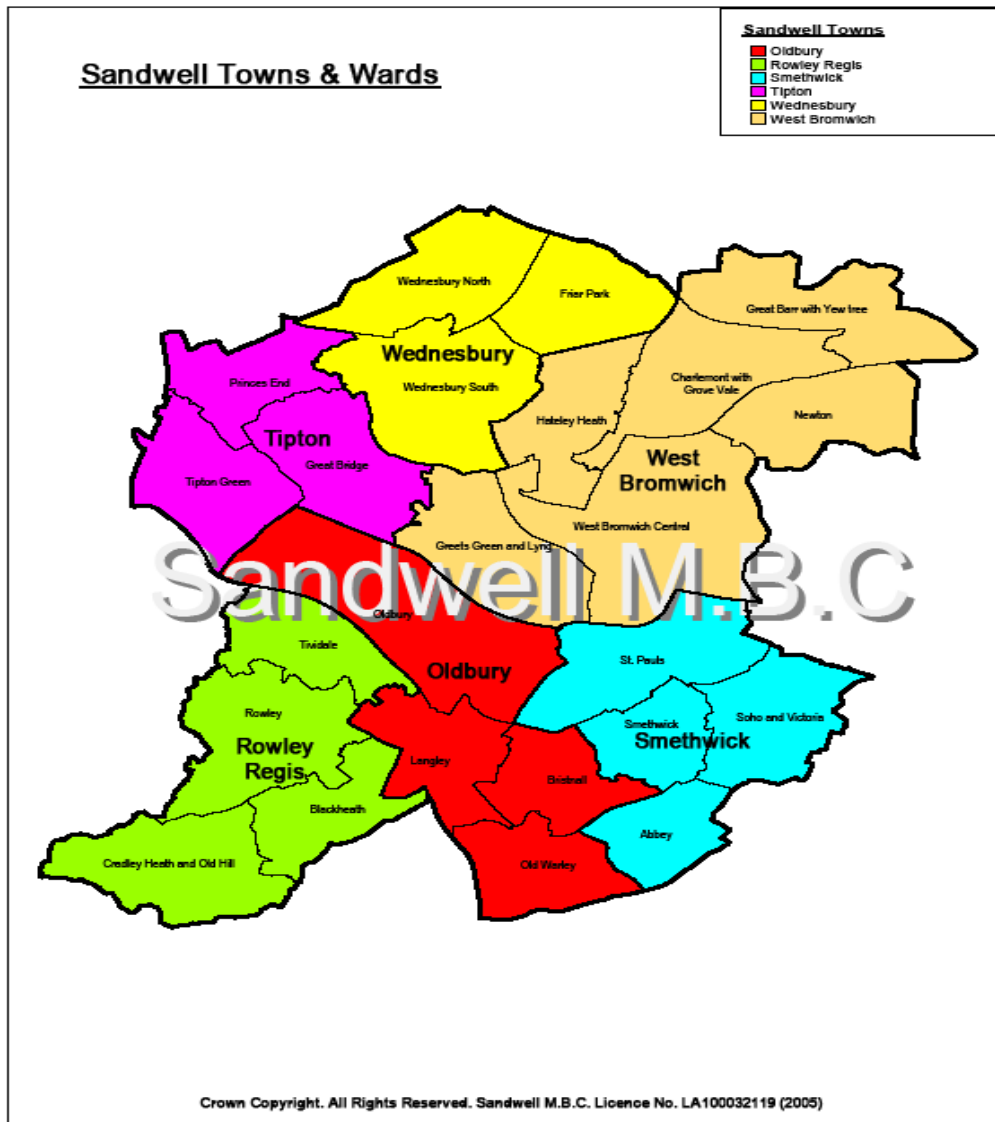
The aim of the report is to present a summary of childcare sufficiency in Sandwell and to consider what the childcare market might look like during 2020-21. The report will consider the ongoing impact and risks to childcare sufficiency. A Childcare Strategic Action Plan will then be developed from the findings of the report.

The objectives are to produce a baseline of childcare sufficiency in Sandwell on March 23rd, and report on how the supply of childcare places continues to be affected by the pandemic. The report will also show progress on the take up of 2,3 and 4 year old and 30 hours funded places and an update on previous recommendations from the 2019-20 Childcare Sufficiency Report.

In producing the report, the previous methodology has had to be revised. Public Health Sandwell were unable to provide current birth data as their staff resources were fully committed to the Covid-19 public health emergency. Previous year's figures have had to be used instead as a guide to allow estimates of demand for places. All other data is provided by the Family Information Service (FIS) and the Quality Early Years and Childcare Team (Early Years)

Sandwell Population Data and Ward Map

The 2018 mid-year estimates show that Sandwell has 327,378 residents. Under 5's now make up 9% of Sandwell's population (28,971).



6 Towns	24 Wards
Oldbury	Oldbury, Langley, Bristnall and Old Warley
Rowley Regis	Tividale, Rowley, Blackheath, Cradley Heath and Old Hill
Smethwick	St Pauls, Smethwick, Soho and Victoria, Abbey
Tipton	Princes End, Great Bridge, Tipton Green
Wednesbury	Wednesbury North, Wednesbury South, Friar Park
West Bromwich	Greets Green and Lyng, West Bromwich Central, Newton, Hateley Heath, Charlemont with Grove Vale, Great Barr with Yew Tree

2019 CHILDCARE SUFFICIENCY REPORT ACTION PLAN ACHIEVEMENTS

The 2019-20 Action Plan had 9 actions, as follows, all of which have been met.

1. To continue to support childcare providers to deliver high quality, sustainable provision

Early Years continues to provide:

- support visits to childcare settings
- advice and information under the Retained Function Duty - Childcare Act 2006,
- pre-Ofsted registration, unannounced and Ofsted feedback visits.
- Childminder Briefing Sessions
- termly Early Years Network Meetings

They also deliver mandatory courses on:

- Health and Safety, SCSP approved Safeguarding child protection,
- Quality Improvement and Narrowing the Gap
- the Early Talk Boost Project.

2. To improve the quality of the providers which are judged by Ofsted as Requires Improvement or Inadequate by working intensively with them and those that deliver early education funded places

During the first quarter (September-December 2019) there were:

- 19 support visits to Requires Improvement settings
- 23 support visits to Inadequate settings.

Between September 2019 and March 2020 there were

- 4 Inadequate funded settings.
- 1 Day Nursery became Inadequate and 1 remained Inadequate.
- 2 Childminders became inadequate.
- 3 Day Nurseries Requires Improvement

9 Ofsted inspections undertaken with funded provision during this period

- 1 Outstanding,
- 4 Good,
- 1 Requires Improvement
- 3 Inadequate

3. To extensively market and promote the Family Information Service Hub and the help available with childcare costs to families across Wednesbury. (Friar Park, Wednesbury North and Wednesbury South Wards)

- 2 events in Friar Park contacting 15 parents
- 3 events in Wednesbury North contacting 40 parents.
- FIS did not attend any events in Wednesbury South.

4. To work with schools and existing providers in Tividale and Wednesbury South wards to address the need for more holiday provisions.

- Early Years continues to work with schools in these wards funding Holiday Playschemes during October and February Half Term School Holidays.

5. To work with the school that has no access to out of school care - Hanbury in Greet Green and Lyng ward (before school club)

- From the Schools Survey carried out by FIS in February 2020, Hanbury Primary currently states there is no demand from parents for a breakfast club. However, Early Years have been supporting a new provider establishing a new provision in the immediate area. This is still to be registered with OFSTED

6. To use a wide range of direct and indirect marketing as well as extensive outreach, to increase the take up of 2 year old funding

- Job Centre outreach sessions in West Bromwich, Oldbury, Smethwick and Tipton to promote the take up of 2 year old funding.
- Outreach Event in King's Square West Bromwich to promote childcare options
- Job Centre outreach event in Wednesbury Hub

The Local Authority regularly receives DWP lists and sends out letters to qualifying families on these lists.

- 218 funded settings in December 2019:
- 43 schools funded
- 79 childminders funded
- 96 private and voluntary providers funded
- 1516 children accessing an ELT place
- 78% of eligible families took up a place

Early Years continues to promote the take up of the 2-year-old Offer (ELT). A marketing plan is in place with scheduled means of marketing and promotion at specific times. Facebook and Twitter are widely used to get across key messages.

7. To monitor the take up of 3 and 4 year old 15 hour funded places in the maintained sector (schools) and gauge the impact of 2 year old funding and 30 hours funding on school nurseries.

Data analysis shows that schools are seeing a decline in the take up of nursery places which may in part be due to families accessing 30 hours and 2-year old places in the private and voluntary sector. The PVI sector may be more flexible in meeting family's needs.

In December 2019:

- 282 funded 30 hours places allocated in schools
- 1849 30 hours funded places allocated in PVI sector
- Early Years are supporting 6 schools to offer 30 hours provision from September 2020

8. To monitor the take up of 3 and 4 year old 30 hours funded places to address any potential shortfall

- Early Years continues to support schools to identify any potential shortfall in funded places.

9. To prioritise the following wards which have been identified as having more than one childcare gap, Greet Green and Lyng and Wednesbury South, to increase access to childcare in these wards.

- Outreach event in Greet Green and Lyng to promote childcare options to parents.
- 1 new day nursery opened in Greet Green and Lyng Ward registered for 24 places
- 1 site visit undertaken in Wednesbury South ward to develop an out of school club.
- Proposed childminders in both wards

Quality Early Years and Childcare in Sandwell

Early Years provide information, advice, support and training to the early years and childcare sector.

The Early Years Workforce Strategy identifies that Ofsted results and improved outcomes for children are linked to a highly qualified workforce and high quality provision.

Childcare settings must have a well-trained, qualified and professional workforce who understand the needs of all families including the most vulnerable children and families.

The team offer advice and support on:

- career options in the early years and childcare sector
- childcare business start-up and sustainability
- childminder business start-up and Ofsted registration
- short course training programmes
- child protection and safeguarding concerns
- Ofsted registration and inspection

A termly online training programme supports quality of teaching practices, awareness of mandatory safeguarding requirements and ongoing development and sustainability of early years and childcare provision.

The training programme is produced in partnership with the Inclusion Support Early Years (ISEY) Team, Play Service and Sandwell MBC Health and Safety and is delivered by internal/ external local support agencies and professional training providers. All training reflects the local and national changing needs of the Statutory and PVI (Private, Voluntary and Independent) Early Years and Childcare sector. This enables providers to fulfil their legal duties as detailed in Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework, Ofsted registration and inspection and Local Authority requirements.

Childcare providers, schools, children centres, and foster carers can purchase training packages to suit their needs. Child Protection and SEND remain key priorities and are currently provided free of charge in partnership with Sandwell Children's Safeguarding Partnership (SCSP) and ISEY.

Sandwell continues to provide Level 4 progression modules focusing on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and supporting the most vulnerable 2-year olds.

Sandwell's early years recruitment web pages attract numerous people considering childcare careers.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, training courses and briefing sessions were offered online, and this is a trend that is likely to continue with virtual classrooms and web based training packages offering flexible learning. An audit of providers IT capabilities is being undertaken so that training and meetings can be conducted on the most appropriate platforms.

Quality Improvement

The Early Years team provide ongoing support, advice and guidance to new and established early years and childcare provision including:

- Support visits to settings Ofsted graded Inadequate and Requires Improvement.
- Good and Outstanding termly visits from the Local Authority area QTS
- Support from the Funding, Workforce and Development Team.
- New provider support from initial enquiry to final registration
- Advisory site visits and recruitment support
- Support with registering to deliver funded places
- 2,3 and 4 year old funding audits
- Advice on Local Provider Agreement to deliver funding
- Quality Support monitoring
- Safeguarding monitoring
- Child Development monitoring through supporting settings to make accurate assessments

Equality and Inclusion

The Early Years Foundation Stage sets the standards that all early years' providers must meet to ensure equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice, ensuring that every child is included and supported.

Early Years engage with childcare settings to promote and embed equality of opportunity into practice, as part of their legal duties under the Equality Act 2010. They do this by delivering a range of training programmes, giving one to one support, advice and guidance, holding network meetings and advising on social media and information accessibility.

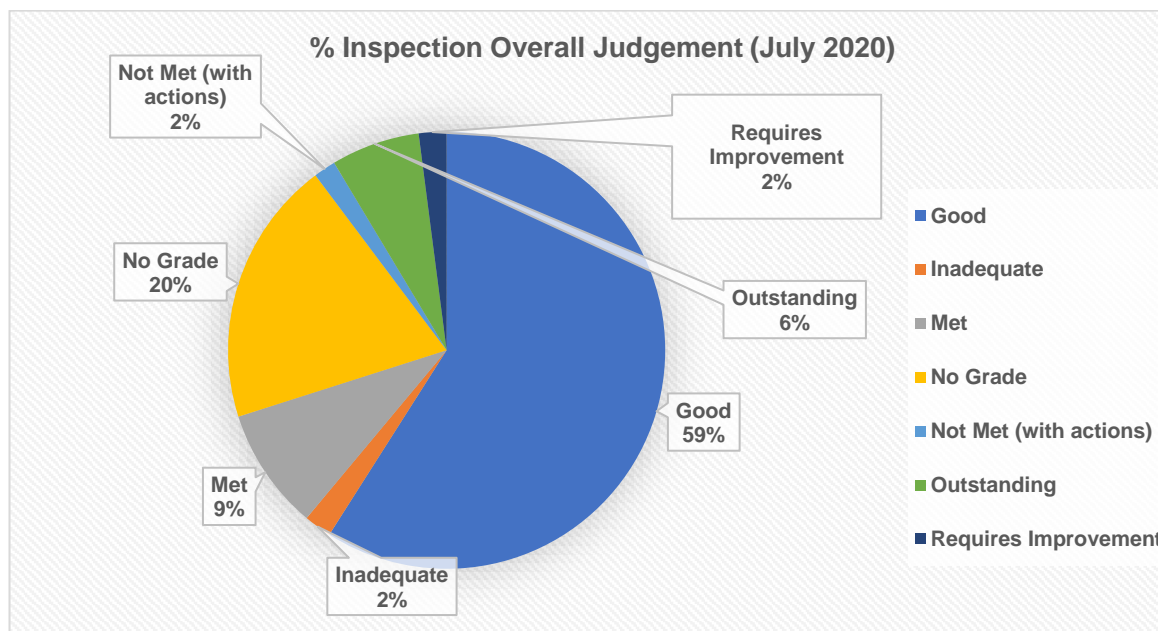
Grant Funding

The Local Authority provides funding to settings who need sustainability support. This is limited and based on an assessment process relating to quality and including Ofsted judgements. The funding is an application process which is administered through our Early years Grant Panel which was established to assess grant applications received from childcare providers.

Ofsted Inspections

Ofsted inspections were suspended on March 23rd, 2020. The last inspection report received by the Local Authority before lockdown was on 16th March 2020. No inspections were carried out up to the point on 17th July 2020 when the data was collected. The below inspections are therefore pre 23rd March 2020.

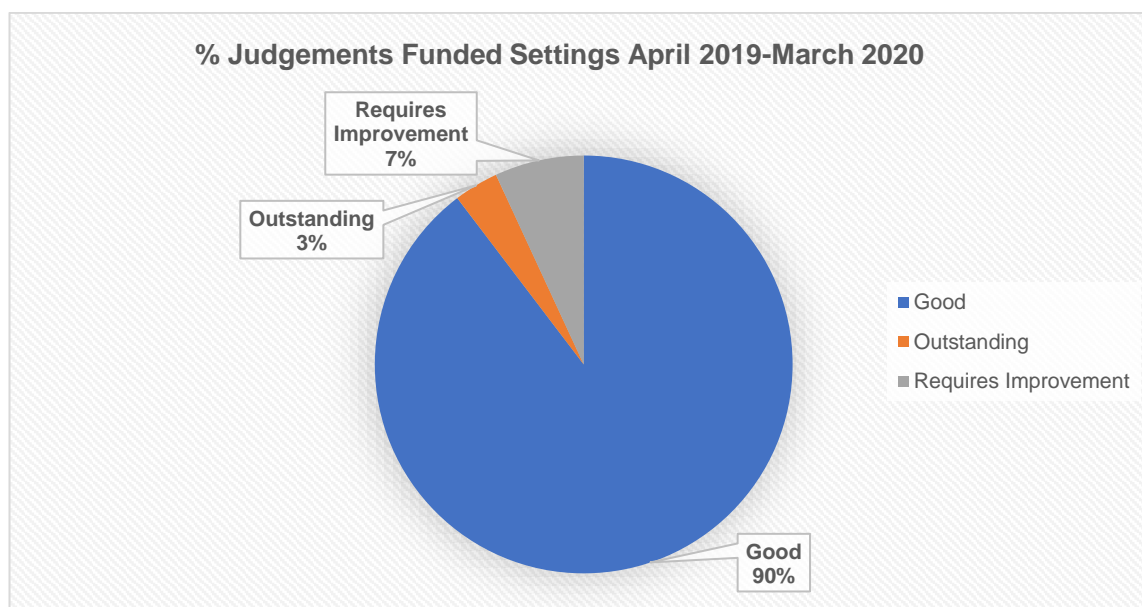
65% of all Ofsted registered providers are rated Good or Outstanding.



Funded Providers Inspection

29 providers offering 3 & 4 year old funding were inspected between April 2019 and March 2020.

93% of Funded Providers are rated as good or outstanding



Ofsted Early Years Inspections data is published on gov.uk website.

Currently data is available up to 31 March 2019.

Tables on page 10 use Ofsted data received by the Family Information Service in their daily feed between April 2019 and March 2020. The 2 data sets are sourced differently and therefore should be examined separately.

Number and % of Ofsted Early Years Inspections at 31 March 2019

Overall effectiveness: The quality and standards of the provision	Number of providers					
	EYR providers	Total number inspected	Outstanding	Good	Requires Improvement	Inadequate
All England	61,652	50,774	10,103	38,367	1,808	496
West Midlands	5,143	4,350	783	3,351	175	41
Birmingham	945	782	108	615	49	10
Dudley	214	185	41	136	7	1
Sandwell	239	203	25	168	10	0
Walsall	160	132	16	109	7	0
Wolverhampton	157	133	13	102	11	7

Overall effectiveness: The quality and standards of the provision	Percentage of inspected providers			
	Outstanding	Good	Requires Improvement	Inadequate
All England	20	76	4	1
West Midlands	18	77	4	1
Birmingham	14	79	6	1
Dudley	22	74	4	1
Sandwell	12	83	5	0
Walsall	12	83	5	0
Wolverhampton	10	77	8	5

Childcare in Sandwell at start of lockdown 23rd March 2020.

In March 2020 Sandwell had sufficient childcare for 0-11yrs

Tables 1 and 2 show the number of childcare settings and total childcare places for 0-8 yrs. at the start of the lockdown on 23rd March 2020. These tables form the baseline from which comparisons can be made as the lockdown progressed.

Table 3 shows the ratio of early years places to children on 23rd March 2020. Overall, the ratio remained 2 children to 1 place for 0-4 yrs. in Sandwell.

Table 4 shows wraparound and pre-school provision in Primary Schools in Sandwell. On March 23rd, 2020 there was sufficient provision for 3-11 year olds.

Only 1 Primary School, Sacred Heart Primary in Tipton Green ward, has no wraparound provision. However, from the School Wraparound Survey carried out by FIS in February 2020, Sacred Heart Primary indicated they may start a breakfast club in September 2020 and currently they direct parents to Tipton Toddlers Day Nursery for wraparound.

Only 1 school in Tividale ward and no schools in Wednesbury South ward run activities during school holidays. The gap is currently filled by day nurseries and childminders in these wards. Recommendation 4 in the 2019-20 Childcare Sufficiency Report was to work with schools and existing providers in Tividale and Wednesbury South wards to address the need for more holiday provision. The recommendation remains to work with existing providers in these wards.

Table 1 Childcare Settings (0-8yrs.) 23rd March 2020

Ward	Childminder	Day Nursery	Pre-School Playgroup	Before School Club	After School Club	Holiday Playscheme	Total Settings
Abbey	10	4	0	2	3	2	21
Blackheath	11	3	0	0	1	2	17
Bristnall	11	6	0	4	4	4	29
Charlemont	5	2	2	0	1	2	12
Cradley Heath & Old Hill	2	2	0	0	1	1	6
Friar Park	3	2	1	0	1	1	8
Great Barr	4	5	0	3	4	5	21
Great Bridge	1	5	1	3	4	3	17
Greets Green and Lyng	4	4	0	0	1	3	12
Hateley Heath	4	2	0	1	1	1	9
Langley	7	2	0	2	3	3	17
Newton	8	2	0	0	1	3	14
Old Warley	5	1	1	0	0	2	9
Oldbury	4	4	0	1	1	2	12
Princes End	6	3	0	2	2	1	14
Rowley	6	2	1	1	1	1	12
Smethwick	5	4	1	1	1	1	13
Soho and Victoria	5	6	2	4	4	5	26
St Pauls	1	2	2	0	1	3	9
Tipton Green	1	4	0	1	1	1	8
Tividale	3	2	0	0	0	0	5
Wednesbury North	0	3	0	1	2	2	8
Wednesbury South	1	1	0	0	0	0	2
West Bromwich Central	2	6	0	0	2	1	11
Total	109	77	11	26	40	49	312

Source: FIS Database March 2020

Table 2 Childcare Places (0-8yrs.) 23rd March 2020

Ward	Childminder	Day Nursery	Pre-School Playgroup	Before School Club	After School Club	Holiday Playscheme	Total Places
Abbey	162	386	0	125	260	125	1058
Blackheath	130	198	0	0	20	94	442
Bristnall	144	544	0	204	322	148	1362
Charlemont	62	155	80	0	52	38	387
Cradley Heath & Old Hill	24	200	0	0	100	32	356
Friar Park	24	119	24	0	45	45	257
Great Barr	62	494	0	113	326	187	1182
Great Bridge	6	421	25	117	186	117	872
Greets Green and Lyng	36	248	0	0	25	198	507
Hateley Heath	48	183	0	30	60	30	351
Langley	96	272	0	136	272	136	912
Newton	96	144	0	0	84	142	466
Old Warley	72	148	32	0	0	64	316
Oldbury	72	554	0	68	136	125	955
Princes End	62	168	0	89	66	49	434
Rowley	72	298	20	112	112	112	726
Smethwick	54	248	30	44	88	44	508
Soho and Victoria	66	610	44	187	374	159	1440
St Pauls	24	141	70	0	89	115	439
Tipton Green	12	384	0	56	112	56	620
Tividale	60	216	0	0	0	0	276
Wednesbury North	0	454	0	74	354	177	1059
Wednesbury South	12	200	0	0	0	0	212
West Bromwich Central	24	694	0	0	88	32	838
Total	1420	7479	325	1355	3171	2225	15975

Source: FIS Database March 2020

Table 3 Estimated Childcare for 0-4 Year Olds 23rd March 2020 by ward based on 2019 Birth Data

Ward	Estimated CHDMD Places	Estimated DN places	Estimated PG Places	Estimated MSN Places (Jan 2020)	Estimated Places 0-4 years (2020 fig)	Birth 0-4 (2019 fig)	Ratio of Children to 1 estimated 0-4 place in Sandwell (Sandwell benchmark 2:1)
Abbey	81	211	0	208	500	1020	2
Blackheath	64	154	0	120	338	888	3
Bristnall	72	315	0	208	595	828	1
Charlemont with Grove Vale	31	103	80	134	348	792	2
Cradley Heath and Old Hill	12	100	0	224	336	1003	3
Friar Park	12	87	24	256	379	981	2
Great Barr with Yew Tree	32	247	0	156	435	861	2
Great Bridge	6	267	25	320	618	979	2
Greets Green and Lyng	18	144	0	242	404	1146	3
Hateley Heath	24	131	0	224	379	1091	3
Langley	48	136	0	180	364	950	3
Newton	48	102	0	130	280	776	2
Old Warley	36	74	32	104	246	759	2
Oldbury	36	277	0	320	633	1337	2
Princes End	31	102	0	182	315	1033	3
Rowley	36	186	20	138	380	804	2
Smethwick	30	180	30	254	494	1201	2
Soho and Victoria	36	325	44	296	701	1723	3
St Pauls	12	141	70	164	387	1271	4
Tipton Green	6	200	0	160	366	1134	3
Tividale	30	108	0	190	328	921	3
Wednesbury North	0	227	0	260	487	923	2
Wednesbury South	6	100	0	60	166	826	5
West Bromwich Central	12	358	0	190	560	1077	2
Totals	719	4275	325	4720	10039	24324	2

CM= Childminders; DN = Day Nurseries; PG = Pre-school Playgroup; MSN= Maintained School Nursery

Ward	Total Primary Schools	Total Schools registered for 30 Hours	Total Schools registered to receive 3 and 4 year old funding?	Total Schools with On Site Pre-School	Total School Site Breakfast Clubs (run by school)	Total School Site After School Clubs (run by school)	Total School Site Holiday Playschemes (run by school)	Total School Site After School Activities (run by school)	Total External Breakfast Clubs	Total External After School Clubs	Total External Holiday Playschemes	Sufficient Childcare Pick-ups for Schools	Sufficient Wraparound for Schools
Abbey	4	2	2	1	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	Yes	Yes
Blackheath	2	1	2	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	Yes	Yes
Bristnall	6	3	4	1	6	3	1	1	0	2	0	Yes	Yes
Charlemont with Grove Vale	4	2	3	1	2	2	0	0	2	2	1	Yes	Yes
Cradley Heath and Old Hill	5	2	4	2	4	1	0	2	1	1	1	Yes	Yes
Friar Park	4	0	4	0	4	0	0	3	0	1	0	Yes	Yes
Great Barr with Yew Tree	4	2	2	1	0	0	0	0	3	3	1	Yes	Yes
Great Bridge	6	4	6	0	4	3	2	1	2	2	1	Yes	Yes
Greets Green and Lyng	4	1	4	0	3	0	0	3	0	1	1	Yes	Yes
Hateley Heath	4	2	4	1	2	1	0	0	1	1	1	Yes	Yes
Langley	3	2	3	0	3	1	0	2	0	0	0	Yes	Yes
Newton	3	2	2	0	3	3	2	0	0	0	0	Yes	Yes
Old Warley	3	1	1	3	3	3	2	0	0	0	0	Yes	Yes
Oldbury	5	4	5	1	3	0	0	2	2	3	0	Yes	Yes

Princes End	4	1	3	0	3	0	0	2	0	0	0	Yes	Yes
Rowley	3	0	2	0	3	2	0	1	0	0	0	Yes	Yes
Smethwick	4	4	4	2	3	3	0	0	1	1	0	Yes	Yes
Soho and Victoria	6	2	6	0	6	1	0	5	0	0	0	Yes	Yes
St Pauls	3	1	3	0	3	0	0	3	0	0	0	Yes	Yes
Tipton Green	4	2	3	0	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	Yes	Yes
Tividale	3	3	3	0	3	2	0	1	0	0	0	Yes	Yes
Wednesbury North	6	1	4	0	6	4	0	0	0	1	0	Yes	Yes
Wednesbury South	2	1	2	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	Yes	Yes
West Bromwich Central	3	1	3	0	3	0	0	0	0	2	0	Yes	Yes
Mar-20													

Table 4 School Wraparound and Pre-School Provision (3-11 yrs.) by ward 23rd March 2020

Demand is currently met in Tividale and Wednesbury South wards, but these wards could become an area of concern in the future.

Wraparound Provision in Schools

Results of School Wraparound Survey carried out by Sandwell FIS February 2020

72% of schools responded to the survey carried out in January and February 2020

- 62 respondents have a breakfast club
- 53 respondents have an after school club or after school activities
- 49 of the breakfast clubs are run by the school and 13 are run by external providers
- 32 of the after school clubs are run by the school and 21 are run by external providers
- On average breakfast clubs are open for 1 hour each day
- On average after school clubs are open for 2 hours 30 mins each day
- 100% of respondents said the breakfast club opened every day
- 89% of respondents said the after school club opened every day
- The average cost of a breakfast club is £3.25
- The average cost of an after school club is £5.69

The most expensive breakfast clubs are in Charlemont with Grove Vale and Great Barr with Yew Tree wards at £6 per session

The most expensive after school clubs are in West Bromwich Central, Bristnall and Soho and Victoria wards at £10-£12 per session

9 schools indicated they have a holiday playscheme in Abbey, Charlemont with Grove Vale, Great Bridge, Langley, Oldbury, Soho and Victoria and St Pauls wards.

- 1 school runs a playscheme and the other 8 are run by external providers
- 7 of the playschemes run all week and 2 run some of the week
- 6 of the playschemes run during half terms, Easter and Summer.
- None opened at Christmas
- On average holiday playschemes are open for 7 and a half hours per day
- The average cost for a holiday playscheme is £19 per day
- 20 schools are registered for Tax Free Childcare with 48 families accessing TFC
- 11 schools have a parent and toddler group on their school site
- 51 schools indicated their wraparound care would continue in the next 12 months.
- Schools in 5 wards indicated their wraparound would not continue in the next 12 months: Princes End, Soho and Victoria, St Pauls, Wednesbury North and West Bromwich Central.
- Schools in 3 wards didn't know if they would carry on with wraparound care in the next 12 months: Bristnall, Hateley Heath and Oldbury.
- Sacred Heart Primary in Tipton Green ward said they may open a breakfast club in September 2020.

65% of schools indicated they would direct parents to other services if they could not provide wraparound care. 37% would direct families to the Family Information Service

Childcare Costs in Sandwell

Tables 5 and 6 Coram Family and Childcare Costs [Survey](#) 2019, which was carried out in December 2019. It shows the average cost of childcare in Sandwell and the West Midlands.

Table 5

Average Childcare Costs in Sandwell 2019		
Type of provision	Average weekly costs (part time place = 25hrs)	Average weekly cost full time = 50hrs
Childminders = under 2's	£106.25	£212.50
Childminders = over 2's	£87.50	£175
Day nurseries= under 2's	£113.65	£227.30
Day nurseries= over 2's	£107.50	£215
Out of school care		£81.90
Childminder after school		£72.49
Holiday Playscheme		£125

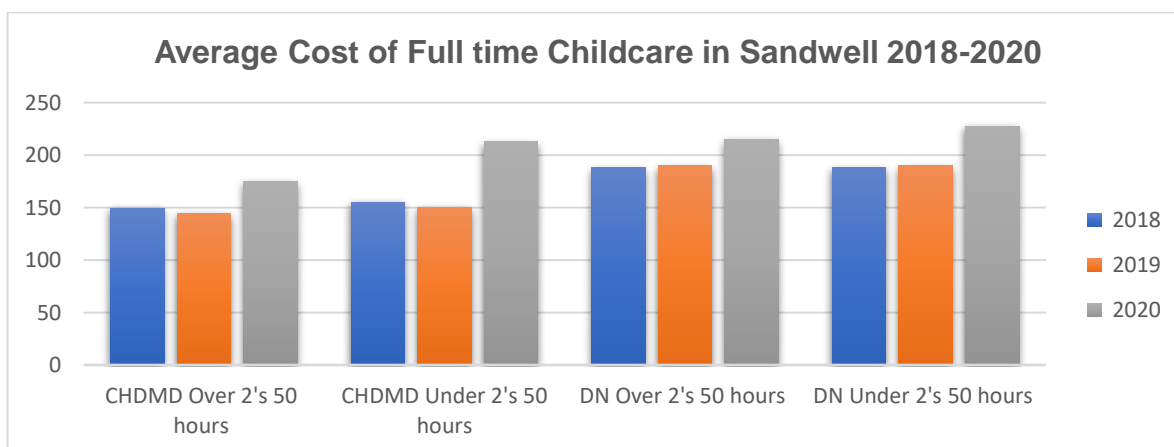
Source: Coram Family & Childcare Survey 2020

Table 6

Average Childcare Costs in the West Midlands 2019		
Type of provision	Average weekly costs (part time place = 25hrs)	Average weekly cost full time
Childminders = under 2's	£104.47	£204.67
Childminders = over 2's	£101.77	£201.49
Day nurseries= under 2's	£116.25	£238.19
Day nurseries= over 2's	£113.02	£219.76
Out of school care		£59.90
Childminder after school		£65.36
Holiday Playscheme		£130.66

Source: Coram Family & Childcare Costs Survey, 2020

The average cost of a full time place in a Day Nursery or Childminder for a baby or toddler before universal entitlement at 3 years has risen significantly in the last year. Reasons for this rise in Sandwell are not known, but in general increased staffing costs and overheads, funding structures which don't cover the cost of delivering childcare, business profitability, all play a part in setting a pricing structure. Even with increased charges, few childcare providers do more than break even.



Monitoring early years and childcare provision during the Covid-19 pandemic

The Department for Education (DfE) launched a data collection process in April 2020 to ensure there was up-to-date information on early years and childcare provision during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. The data was published as a [summary](#) on GOV.UK. The data continued to be collected beyond 1st June, to ensure that Local Authorities had information on which children were accessing provision and if there were sufficiency issues in particular areas.

DfE also asked Ofsted to monitor which providers on the early years register were open or closed. This information from registered early years and childcare providers during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak gave setting-level data required by Ofsted to fulfil its safeguarding requirements as a regulator.

Tables 7 and 8 Early Years Childcare (0-4 yrs.) on 18th May and June 1st, 2020 from DfE data collection surveys.

Table 7 Early Years Childcare (0-4 yrs.) on 18th May 2020

Type of Provision	Available for keyworkers during Coronavirus Epidemic	Closed until further notice during Covid 19 Epidemic	Regular Keyworker Children	% Open to Keyworkers
Childminder	47	38	23	65%
Day Nursery	28	46	3	40%
Pre School Playgroup	1	10		9%
Grand Total	76	94	26	52%

Town	Available for keyworkers during Coronavirus Epidemic	Closed until further notice during Covid 19 Epidemic	Regular Keyworker Children	% Open to Keyworkers
Oldbury	20	13	5	66%
Rowley Regis	12	11	6	62%
Smethwick	16	24	3	44%
Tipton	6	15	4	40%
Wednesbury	5	4	1	60%
West Bromwich	17	27	7	47%
Grand Total	76	94	26	52%

Type of Provision	Available for keyworkers during Coronavirus Epidemic	Closed until further notice during Covid 19 Epidemic	Regular Keyworker Children	% Open to Keyworkers
Maintained	5	1	1	86%
PVI	71	93	25	51%
Grand Total	76	94	26	52%

Table 8 Early Years Childcare (0-4 yrs.) available on 1st June 2020

Type of Provision	Open June 1 st 2020	Closed June 1 st 2020	Grand Total	% Open
Childminder	74	33	107	69%
Day Nursery	51	26	77	66%
Pre School Playgroup /School Site Nursery	14	12	26	53%
Grand Total	139	71	210	66%

Town	Settings Open June 1 st 2020	Settings Closed June 1 st 2020	Grand Total	% Open
Oldbury	34	10	44	77%
Rowley Regis	21	10	31	68%
Smethwick	29	16	45	64%
Tipton	13	12	25	52%
Wednesbury	8	2	10	80%
West Bromwich	34	21	55	62%
Grand Total	139	71	210	66%

Day Nurseries	Settings Open June 1 st 2020	Settings Closed June 1 st 2020	Grand Total	% Open
Maintained	7	0	7	100%
PVI	44	26	70	63%
Grand Total	51	26	77	66%

- **52% of Early Years Settings were open on 18th May 2020**
- **66% of Early Years Settings were open on 1st June 2020**
- **88% of childcare settings will be open on 1st September (based on information from FIS database 25th August 2020)**

Government Guidance updated on 27th July stated

It is our plan that all pupils, in all year groups, will return to school full-time from the beginning of the autumn term.

In addition to schools re-opening, employers were also given updated guidance on safe return to the workplace. It is therefore anticipated that in September 2020 there will be an increase in take up of childcare places for early years (0-4 yrs.) as parents take up their funded entitlement or look for wraparound childcare.

DfE guidance 20 July 2020 also states that local authorities do not need to pass on universal funding to settings that do not open in September.

Table 9 88% of childcare settings will be open on 1st September.

It is difficult to predict likely demand from parents in September, but this figure could indicate there will not be sufficient childcare.

The recommendation is to work with childcare providers who do not open on 1st September to help them re-open safely and sustainably.

The DfE will continue to monitor the Early Years sector through its weekly data collection of settings that are open and closed and the numbers of children attending

Table 9 Early Years Childcare (0-4 yrs.) open or opening on 1st September 2020

Type of Provision	Open or Opening 1 st September 2020	Closed Until further notice	Total Settings	% of settings open
Childminder	89	20	109	82%
Day Nursery	74	4	78	95%
Pre School Playgroup /School Site Nursery	23	2	25	96%
Grand Total	186	26	212	88%

Town	Open or Opening 1 st September 2020	Closed Until further notice	Total	% of settings open
Oldbury	44	3	47	94%
Rowley Regis	28	2	30	93%
Smethwick	37	10	47	78%
Tipton	17	7	24	71%
Wednesbury	10	1	11	100%
West Bromwich	50	3	53	94%
Grand Total	186	26	212	88%

FIS database 25th August 2020

Table 10 only 60% of childcare providers offering before and after school clubs and holiday provision will be open on 1st September 2020. This figure does not include clubs and activities based on school sites as this data was unavailable.

Government guidance on managing school classes and health and safety will have an impact on how wraparound services can be safely delivered. This, in turn, will impact on sustainability of clubs and childminders. Again, it is difficult to predict likely demand for breakfast and after school club places in September as more families return to work, but this figure indicates there may be insufficient places. The recommendation is to work with wraparound providers to ensure they can re-open safely and sustainably.

Table 10 Wraparound Childcare open or opening on 1st September 2020

Town	Open or Opening 1 st September 2020	Closed Until further notice	Total	% of settings open
Oldbury	13	7	20	65%
Rowley Regis	5	2	7	71%
Smethwick	11	17	28	39%
Tipton	12	5	17	71%
Wednesbury	12	2	14	86%
West Bromwich	15	13	28	54%
Grand Total	68	46	114	60%

FIS database 25th August 2020

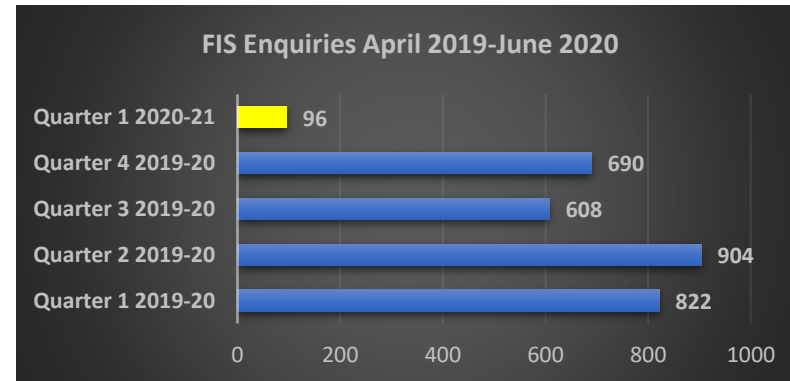
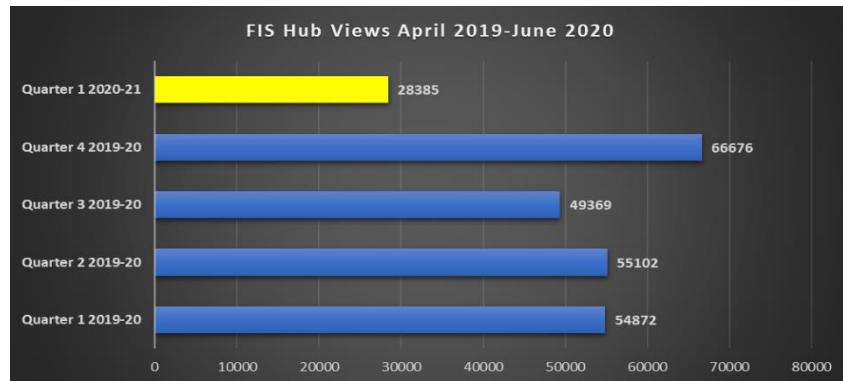
Support given to Childcare Providers and Parents during Covid-19 Pandemic.

Support given by Family Information Service

FIS continued to support Early Years throughout the lockdown.

Although total enquiries and website views fell dramatically during this period, FIS successfully adapted to new ways of delivering information to families. New pages were created on the FIS Hub with childcare information for keyworkers and learning and resources for families and providers. These pages were constantly updated. The FIS telephone helpline did not continue but an online helpline was available throughout the lockdown period.

Social media, specifically Facebook and Twitter were used extensively to get information out to families and providers, including important Government messages. Between March and May 47% of enquiries related to 2,3 and 4 year old funded places, 23% of enquiries related to keyworker childcare and 6% of enquiries were advice on other council services, including housing and school's admission. Brokerage continued with one to one support given to 10 keyworker families during April and May. The FIS team also made 40 calls to vulnerable families to assess their food and essential supplies needs.



FIS Hub website views and enquiries showing effect of lockdown in March 2020

Support given by Quality Early Years and Childcare Team during the Coronavirus Pandemic

Early Years and the Family Information Service continued to provide support for childcare providers and families during the lockdown.

Support given to Childminders

Ofsted Registered Childminders are supported with visits from Early Years. In the period from January to March 2020

- 3 childminders had a support visit 6 months post registration
- 1 childminder had a support visit 12 months post registration
- 1 childminder had a support visit 18 months post registration
- 3 childminders had a support visit pre-Ofsted inspection

After 23rd March 2020 all visits were cancelled. Childminder support carried on by phone, email, text and use of platforms such as Skype and Microsoft Teams. As the Covid-19 pandemic continues it is likely that childminder recruitment and support will carry on using these methods.

The type of support given during lockdown included advice on accessing Government grants, Government guidance on Covid-19, supporting keyworker families, emotional well-being and re-starting their business post lockdown.

Childminders are always the most flexible part of the childcare workforce and they continued to be flexible during the lockdown, maintaining contact with their families and supporting the local community with activities such as mask making, and washbags for children in hospital.

Prospective and new childminders were also supported as they worked towards full registration. 17 prospective childminders were supported towards registration and 4 new childminders were registered in Soho and Victoria and Langley wards in June and July 2020



Childminder using Zoom to keep in touch with families

Support given by Quality Early Years and Childcare Team

The Quality Early Years and Child Care Team provide a local authority statutory duty to provide advice, guidance and support to child care providers in the borough.

Between January – 23rd March 2020 the following support was given;

Support visits to Sandwell providers, including new providers, settings rated Inadequate and Requires Improvement, Ofsted preparation, quality improvement and new funded settings	215 visits Including; 19 to RI settings 23 to Inadequate
Duty calls take under the retained function to give advice, guidance and support	60 duty calls
Network meetings for all Sandwell providers	2
Training	
12 x Health and Safety mandatory courses	224 delegates
7 x SCSP approved Safeguarding courses	171 delegates
33 x Quality Improvement and Narrowing the Gap courses	624 delegates

Following the national lockdown on 23rd March our immediate concern was ensuring that sufficient child care would remain open, across the 6 towns, for key worker and vulnerable children who needed or wanted places.

To encourage settings to remain open, despite rapidly declining attendance figures and loss of paid fees, we established an emergency sustainability fund to support settings that remained open throughout the lockdown period. An approved COVID 19 sustainability plan supported;

- 5 new Child Minders who were not eligible for the Government support for the self-employed.
- 8 standalone Out of School clubs who were not able to open during the Easter and May half term holidays.
- 32 Day care nurseries who remained open but were catering for very low numbers of key worker and vulnerable children.

The early years team and the Children's Centre teachers remained in email and telephone contact on at least a weekly basis. All settings that closed were asked to work with the open settings to transfer children who still required a place. All closed settings were reminded that the children they were concerned about remained their responsibility. Settings rose to the challenge using video calling, telephone calling, social media platforms, educational electronic systems to regularly contact families and share home learning ideas. All closed settings were asked to remain in contact with the early years team and to ensure that we could contact them if we needed to.

86 recorded duty calls have been recorded during lockdown, however, the reality will be considerably higher as the vast majority of contact the team has had with the team has been made by email. The subject matter of the contact has included; advice on interpreting DfE guidance, staffing arrangements, future sustainability concerns, health and safety of children and staff, funding, safeguarding concerns, assessments of children not seen in the setting since Lockdown began. This list is not exhaustive.

To support with business and sustainability issues the team engaged with the West Bromwich based social enterprise team at Skills Work and Enterprise Development Agency (SWEDA) to provide some online advice and guidance and 1:1 business reviews for settings requiring this type of support. They also supported settings with applications made to Government funding.

During lockdown the team have ensured that all new DfE guidance was received by all providers. This often involved devising generic documentation for settings to adapt according to their individual needs. A number of support materials were produced to support schools and settings with planning an appropriate curriculum and learning environment following, and to be used alongside, Government guidance.

From May 2020 the Early Years teams adapted the training plan that was in place to enable the courses to be delivered on line.

The following Training and support sessions were delivered;

Early Years Foundation Stage Profile moderation in schools	10 schools
6 x Chat Surgeries. Schools and settings set the agenda	42 attended
Cluster meetings 1 x Oldbury & Smethwick 1 x Rowley & Tipton 1 x Wednesbury & West Bromwich	49 attended in total
3 x Transition support	41 attended
17 training events	154 delegates
Totals = 29 events	286 practitioners supported

Autumn 2020 training has now been planned to be delivered on line.

Early Years Funding for 2,3 and 4 Year Olds

In April 2020, there were 9275 funded childcare and early years places being offered by 227 early years and childcare providers (including 41 schools offering 30 hours). This compares with the 2019 figures of 12160 funded places offered by 267 providers.

	Schools	PVI's	Childminders	Total
2 year olds places	129	1247	38	1414
3 and 4 year olds (15hrs Universal)	4720	1448	27	6195
3 and 4 year olds (15hrs Extended)	384	55	29	468
3 and 4 year olds (30hrs)	N/A	1152	46	1198
Total	5233	3902	140	9275

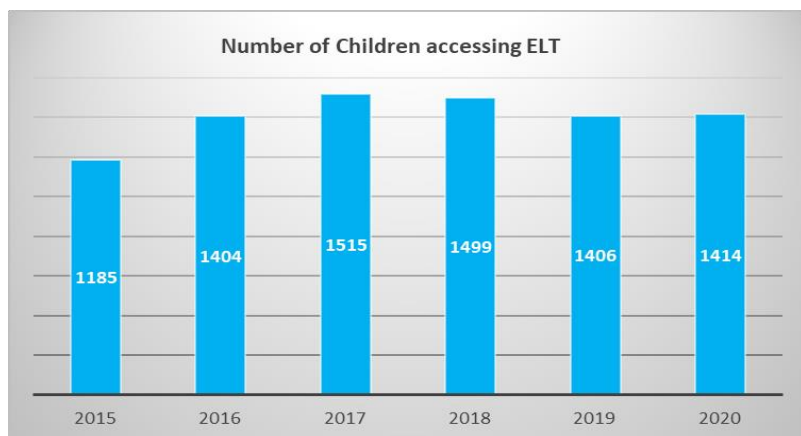
Free funding for 2 year olds

The Department for Education (DfE) in conjunction with the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP) provides a list of eligible families with 2 year olds every 6-8 weeks for the academic year 2019/20.

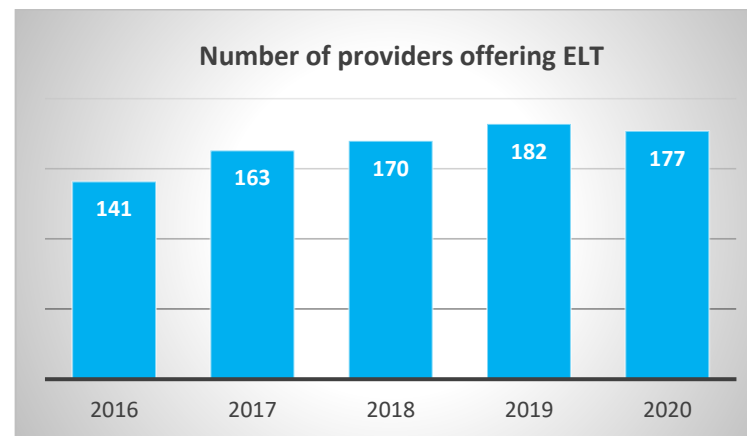
- The local authority was sent the contact information for 2067 eligible families in the 2019/20 Academic Year
- 1414 children accessed free funding for 2 year olds in Spring Term 2020 (April)
- 68.5% of eligible children were accessing 2 year old funding in April 2020
- 1.5% increase in take up of 2 year old funding from 2018-2019
- 177 Providers currently offer 2 year old funded places
- Bristnall, Cradley Heath and Old Hill, Friar Park, Princes End, Rowley, Tipton Green and Wednesbury South wards had little or no surplus capacity. However, there were places in neighbouring wards

Overall there were sufficient places for Children accessing 2 year old funding





2 year old funding take up in Sandwell 2015-2020



Providers offering 2 year old funding in Sandwell 2015-2020

		England				Sandwell			% +/- change from 2018-2020
		2018	2019	2020	% +/- change from 2018-2020	2018	2019	2020	
Extended entitlement	Number of four year olds benefiting	80,828	92,040	97,305	20	359	414	477	33
	Number of three and four year olds benefiting	296,924	328,127	345,704	16	1,370	1,544	1,675	22
	Number of three year olds benefiting	216,096	236,087	248,399	15	1,011	1,130	1,198	18
Funded entitlement	Number of four year olds benefiting	656,129	651,479	650,193	-1	4,847	4,655	4,798	-1
	Number of three and four year olds benefiting	1,284,632	1,277,137	1,271,544	-1	9,304	9,186	9,269	0
	Number of three year olds benefiting	628,503	625,658	621,351	-1	4,457	4,531	4,471	0
	Number of two year olds benefiting	154,962	148,751	143,439	-7	1,517	1,471	1,422	-6

Table showing 'Children benefiting by age and provider type (2018 - 2020)' from 'Education provision: children under 5 years of age' in England and Sandwell between 2018 and 2020. Source [DfE Data](#) (Gov.UK)

3 and 4 Year Olds Universal Entitlement (15 hours free funding)

All 3 and 4 year olds are entitled to 15 hours per week for 38 weeks of free funding from the term following their third birthday until they start in Reception Class in the September following their 4th birthday. Therefore, some children will access up to 5 terms of early education.

In the Spring term 2020 there were;

- 4800 children eligible for the Universal Entitlement (based on available birth data)
- 3533 children accessing the funding (74%)
- Bristnall, Charlemont with Grove Vale, Great Barr with Yew Tree and Old Warley wards had little or no surplus capacity. However, there were places in neighbouring wards

Overall there were sufficient places for 3 and 4 year olds for Universal Entitlement



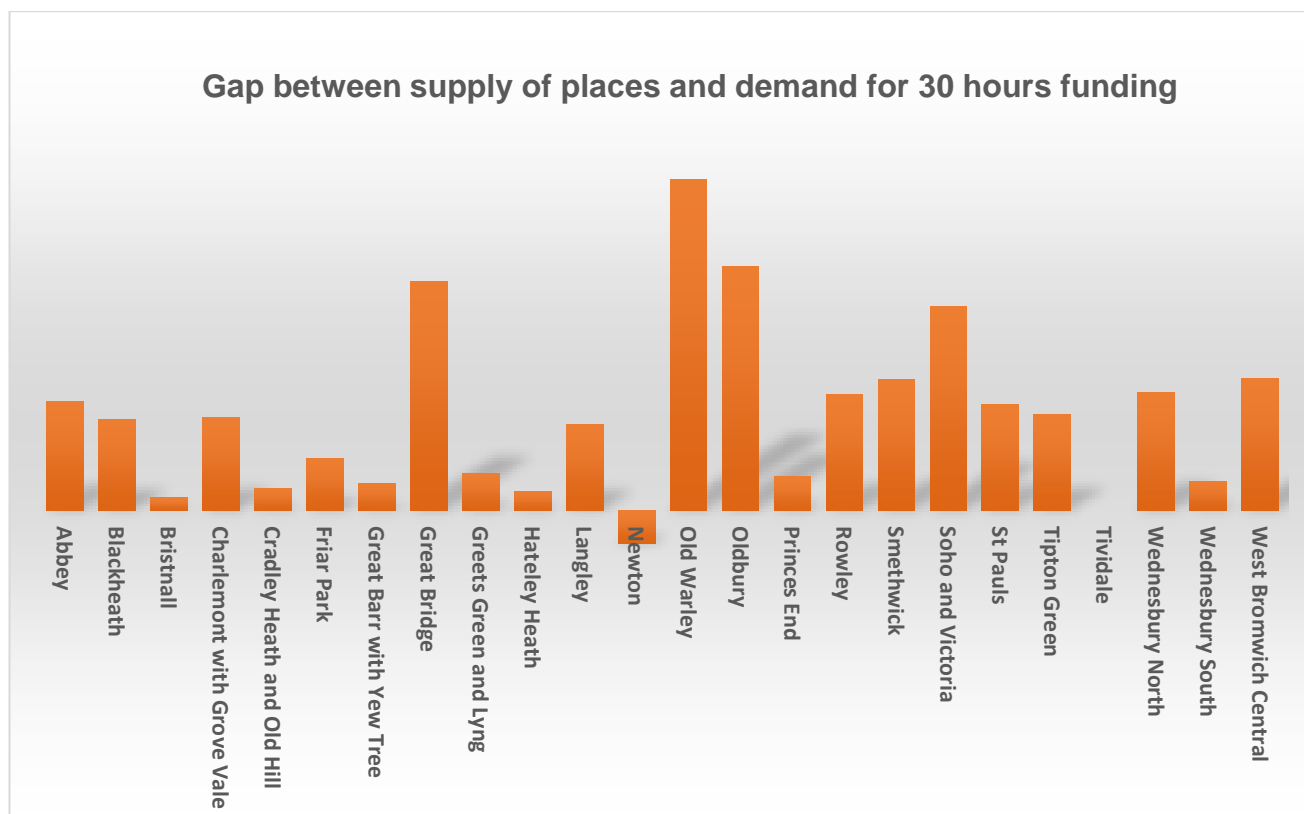
3 and 4 year olds Extended Offer (30 hours free funding)

The 30 hours free funding came into effect in September 2017 and is aimed at working families. Families who are eligible for free 30 hours are issued with a code from HMRC.

In the Spring term 2020 there were;

- 861 children accessing 30 hours
- 229 PVI and Maintained Providers offering 30 hours
- Bristnall, Cradley Heath and Old Hill, Great Barr with Yew Tree, Hateley Heath, Newton and Tividale wards have little or no surplus capacity. However, there were places in neighbouring wards.

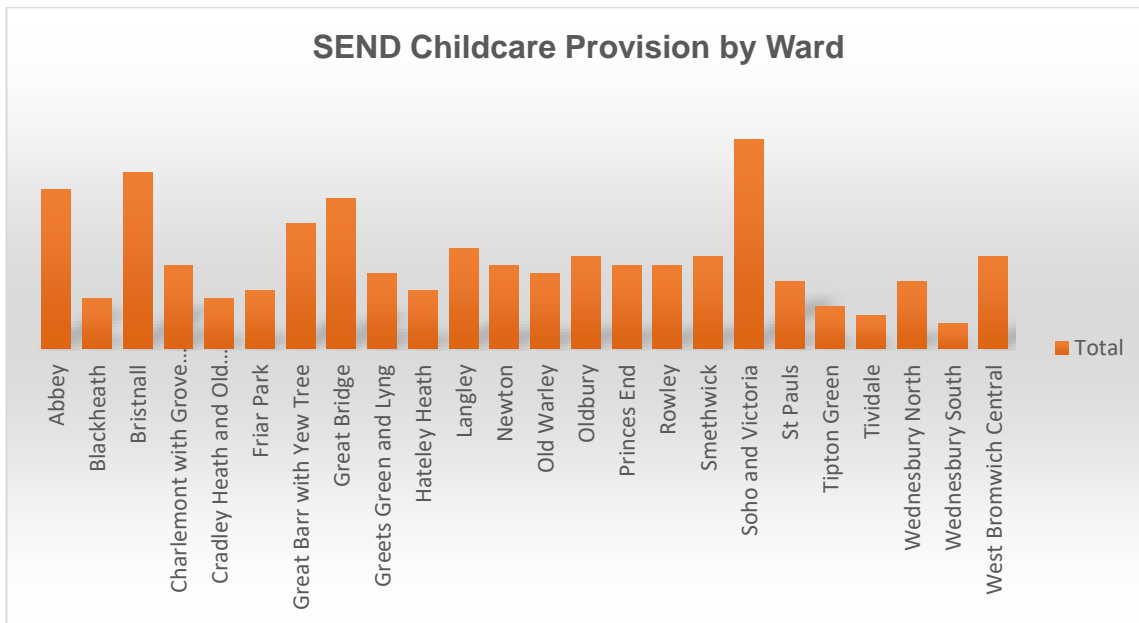
Overall there were sufficient places for 30 hours



Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Provision

82% of childcare providers indicate that they would care for children with SEND.

All wards have providers that would care for children with SEND



The Inclusion Support Early Years (ISEY) Service works with providers to support children to integrate into childcare and early settings. They also administer the Inclusion Support Grant and the High Needs Block Funding which enables children with SEND to have one to one support in a setting depending on the child’s level of need.

There are also 17 short break services for children with a diagnosis / Education Health Care Plan who can access these services.

From September 2020, the Local Offer website will be integrated into the Family Information Service Hub, giving families and professionals all Local Offer information on one website.

Findings and Recommendation of the Childcare Sufficiency Report 2020-21

Findings

- There is sufficient childcare in Sandwell based on current data
- Covid-19 Pandemic will have an ongoing effect on supply and demand of childcare
- 88% of early years childcare providers (0-4 yrs.) are likely to be open on 1st September
- 60% of wraparound childcare providers (4-11 yrs.) are likely to be open on 1st September
- Demand for childcare in the next 6 months will fluctuate
- There is a risk the Local Authority may not be able to secure sufficient childcare in next 6 months
- Take up of 2 year old funded places increased by 1.5% on previous year's data
- There is a lack of School Holiday provision in Tividale and Wednesbury South wards
- All wards have providers who would care for children with SEND.
- Overall, the cost of childcare in Sandwell is lower than the West Midlands
- All wards have childcare providers offering evenings, weekends and emergency childcare

Recommendations

To ensure the Local Authority meets the Statutory Duty to secure sufficient childcare, *so far as is reasonably practicable*, a detailed and comprehensive action plan will be developed to address the following 7 recommendations. The recommendations are:

1. To continue to support childcare providers to deliver high quality, sustainable provision.
2. To improve the quality of the providers which are judged by Ofsted as Requires Improvement or Inadequate by working intensively with them and those that deliver early education funded places.
3. To ensure there are sufficient childcare places during the Covid-19 pandemic by working closely with childcare providers, giving them support to open safely and remain viable.
4. To monitor demand for childcare places through FIS helpdesk and childcare providers
5. To work with schools and existing providers in Tividale and Wednesbury South wards to address the need for more holiday provisions.
6. To continue to promote the take up of 2,3 and 4 year old funding, including 30 hours.
7. To continue to promote the Family Information Service Hub and Local Offer.

REPORT TO CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION SCRUTINY BOARD

21 September 2020

Subject:	Youth Facilities Review - Executive Response to Recommendations
Cabinet Portfolio:	Councillor Joyce Underhill - Cabinet Member Best Start in Life
Director(s):	Executive Director of Children's Services – Lesley Hagger
Contribution towards Vision 2030:	
Contact Officer(s):	Executive Director of Children's Services - Lesley Hagger

DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board:

1. Consider and comment on the Executive response to the recommendations of this Board, relating to the Youth Facilities Scrutiny Review.

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board established a working group in January 2020 to carry out a Review of Youth Facilities in Sandwell.
- 1.2 Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board [20 June 2020](#) agreed the Working Groups report and recommendations and referred them to Cabinet for consideration.
- 1.3 The Youth Facilities Working Group report was considered by Cabinet on [22 July 2020](#). Members of the Cabinet thanked the Working Group for its

work on the review and acknowledged and thanked youth workers for the hard work and dedication during this difficult time, and with ever decreasing budgets.

- 1.4 It was agreed that the findings and recommendations of the Youth Review Working Group be noted and the Executive Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Best Start in Life, respond to the findings to a meeting of the Children and Education Scrutiny Board in September 2020.
- 1.5 The Executive response is attached at Appendix 1 for consideration of the Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board.

2. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 2.1 Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board 20.06.2020
- 2.2 Cabinet 22.07.2020

3. APPENDIX:

Appendix 1 – Executive Response - Youth Facilities Review

Executive Director of Children's Services – Lesley Hagger

Cabinet resolved to:

- (1) receive the report and recommendations of the Youth Facilities Scrutiny Working Group which was agreed by the Children’s Services and Education Scrutiny Board on 22 June 2020;
- (2) respond to the recommendations of the Children’s Services and Education Board within two months in accordance with the Localism Act 2011, setting out any approved recommendations, and how they will be implemented;
- (3) agree that young people are represented on Town Deal Boards and that young people are consulted on the development of Town Investment Plans in Summer 2020.

Section 9FE of the Localism Act requires the executive to respond to the overview and scrutiny committee indicating what (if any) action the authority, or the executive, proposes to take on the recommendations put before it. A period of two months is allowed for the executive response to scrutiny.

The table below set out a summary of the executive response to Children’s Services and Education Scrutiny Board:

	Recommendation	Comments	Lead
1.	A Partnership Framework (to include a Communications Plan and Multi-agency approach) is developed with young people, for young people and is specifically targeted to promote current activities and future opportunities using the experts within the council to provide a	The channel selected for communication is a web-based platform hosted independent of the Sandwell Council site but is linked to and from this site. Just Youth can be found at: https://www.justyouth.org.uk	

<p>joined-up plan that compliments services across the local authority. This should consider how we currently communicate, what we currently communicate and the most effective platforms to use across a range of media.</p> <p>A Youth Symposium should be held in early 2021 for all partners in the borough to help build a clear picture of what is available, build upon key themes arising from the Scrutiny Review, the multi-agency approach and develop closer partnership working for a joined-up offer for Sandwell. The youth symposium should draw together a joined-up approval to youth work and young people in Sandwell.</p>	<p>A new section of the site enables all activities taking place in the Borough to be included and there is a calendar setting out when and where activities take place. The website is also linked to Discover Sandwell https://www.discoversandwell.co.uk/explore/, Sandwell Family Life (voluntary sector) https://www.sandwellfamilylife.info/ and Sandwell Family Information Service https://fis.sandwell.gov.uk/kb5/sandwell/directory/home.page websites. As the result of the Covid19 lockdown, events and activities for young people have been halted but these areas of the site will be populated in the future. In the meantime, a wide range of online activities and events are being publicised through social media including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.</p> <p>A young apprentice role has been created to keep the website up to date and to publicise it as the place for organisations to send their information.</p> <p>Work on establishing the Youth Symposium will be progressed in 2021 due to Covid 19. It has been difficult to find a digital platform that</p>	
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		<p>can move this forward because most young people do not use or have access to the Council's preferred platforms: Teams and Skype. The Council's position on the use of Zoom, or other such sites, is not allowed from council devices. The council's policy enables staff to use their own devices for this purpose, but this is not advised from the perspective of staff safety and safeguarding:</p> <p>https://intranet.sandwell.gov.uk/downloads/file/11802/audiovideo_conferencing_statement_-_june_2020_update</p>	
2.	<p>Young people should be afforded safe, flexible, space of their own, with 'Wi-fi & Dry' as the basic offer in Sandwell. The council should take a strategic approach and consider modelling 'space options' across the Borough's 6 towns, these could test:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Use of libraries within extended opening times – rethinking their use in the community ii. Mobile provision (through a bus or support vehicle). iii. Pop up shops and underused town centre units. iv. Leisure & Activity Centres. v. Other council properties and schools. vi. New build, where no existing options are deemed suitable. 	<p>Through the Towns Fund process, a bid has been made to increase mobile provision via a new youth bus. Discussions are also in place regarding the potential to use the Community Infrastructure Levy to fund a new bus.</p> <p>In partnership with the Albion Foundation, a bid has been created to develop West Smethwick park as a youth hub. This is also dependent on a successful bid to the Towns Fund.</p> <p>Sports based youth provision has been piloted in partnership with Sandwell Leisure Trust at Tipton Sports Academy and Portway Lifestyle Centre but due to Covid 19 has stalled.</p>	

		<p>Whilst the council's services are not fully operating it has not been possible to move forward the conversation about libraries or other council buildings.</p> <p>Young People have been engaged in the Towns Fund consultation and one of the key asks has been for dedicated youth facilities.</p> <p>There are potential opportunities to re-develop the Coneygre Youth Centre – see below.</p> <p>During the Covid19 period, the value and importance of detached Youth Work has been even more pronounced and the relationship between this work, and access to 'Wifi and Dry' spaces even more important.</p>	
3.	<p>The council explores the option of providing free or concessionary public transport for young people to enable better access to local youth activities, opening up Sandwell and all it offers. Targeted provision should be considered in relation to vulnerable young people and those with Special Educational Needs (SEN).</p>	<p>This action has not yet been specifically progressed and is dependent on engagement with the WMCA Strategic Transport Plan. There have been some statements from the WM Mayor that subsidised travel may be made available to encourage the use of public transport post Covid19, but it is unlikely that these subsidies will be available to under 18 year olds.</p>	

		<p>However, the development of the Metro site in Tipton, as part of the Strategic Transport Plan, is immediately adjacent to Coneygre Youth Centre. This will provide an opportunity for the council to develop the Coneygre Youth Centre as a 'hub' because young people will be able to get to it more easily, although there is still a cost attached. It may be possible to consider a scheme that would compensate the cost of travel to Coneygre and Malthouse.</p> <p>Additionally, the Strategic Transport Plan prioritizes cycle routes, which will come through Sandwell. The Youth Service has established a Youth Bike Project with a small grant from UK Cycling. The Project has been over-subscribed and plans are in place to extend it – it is hoped that Public Health funding may be able to support more activities and dedicated posts.</p>	
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4.	<p>The council should take a more strategic approach to funding and explore existing funding pots through a better use of regional partnerships and directories. Better alignment could be made to complimentary activity within the voluntary sector (such as SVCO's community grants) and to the corporate social responsibility objectives of local businesses</p>	<p>A new strategic process has been agreed through the Children and Young People's Strategic Commissioning Partnership to enable more high-quality funding bids to be made – this is attached. A review of voluntary sector grants has been established.</p>	
5.	<p>The Council should develop a renewed 'Youth Offer' which clearly identifies the very positive activities that are currently on offer and addresses those gaps which would enable a more bespoke approach. The National Youth Agency's Standard Quality Mark Framework should be used to measure the capacity, quality and sufficiency of youth facilities in Sandwell.</p>	<p>During the Covid19 lockdown, the youth offer has been via detached youth work and online support, including a weekly agony aunt session on facebook. In addition we have continued to provide support to vulnerable young people through our Enhanced Youth Support team and through delivering education packs.</p> <p>Due to Covid19 it has not been possible to progress the NYASQMF. However, plans are in place to progress this between October 2020-March 2021. Prior to Covid 19, we were delivering our own inhouse peer review process.</p>	
6.	<p>A renewed youth offer would aim to close the gaps in provision and ensure sufficiency of youth facilities, but in order to do this would require an increase in capacity and therefore the resources</p>	<p>The Council's Corporate Plan and the budget setting process will consider this recommendation alongside other priorities for</p>	

	required to deliver the provision would need to be reviewed.	the council's budget, aligned to the Corporate Plan.	
7.	Following the success of the Question Time session held during the review, it is recommended that quarterly Question Time sessions be scheduled into the Scrutiny Work Programme, with Shape forum the Cabinet Member / Champion for Children and Young People.	It had been hoped that this would be possible from autumn 2020, however, the Covid19 restrictions mean that a physical meeting is not possible at the current time. Contact with young people has demonstrated that very few have access to the Teams environment and many are comfortable meeting in this way. However, a solution is being considered to enable young people to join a Scrutiny meeting later in the year via a virtual platform, but this is impacted by current council policy.	