

# Agenda

## Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board

**Monday 10 October 2022 at 5.30 pm**  
**in the Council Chamber, The Council House, Freet Street, Oldbury, B69 3DB**

**1 Apologies for Absence**

To receive any apologies for absence.

**2 Declarations of Interest and Party Whip**

Members to declare any interests and party whip in matters to be discussed at the meeting.

**3 Minutes**

7 - 14

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 21 March 2022 as a correct record.

**4 Additional Items of Business**

To determine whether there are any additional items of business to be considered as a matter of urgency.

**5 Adoption@Heart Annual Report 2021/2022**

15 - 38

To receive and note the Adoption@Heart Annual Report 2021/22 and to provide summary feedback to the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board.



6	<b>Sandwell Children’s Trust Performance Update</b>	39 - 68
	To consider and comment on the performance of Sandwell Children’s Trust (SCT).	
7	<b>Covid Funding Update</b>	69 - 90
	To consider and comment on the Covid funding update.	
8	<b>Response from the Cabinet in respect of the recommendations of the Scrutiny Review of Elective Home Education</b>	91 - 112
	To consider the response from the Cabinet in respect of the recommendations of the Scrutiny Review of Elective Home Education.	
9	<b>Tracking and Monitoring of Scrutiny Recommendations</b>	113 - 128
	Standing item to consider and note the responses and updates to the action tracker log.	
10	<b>Forward Plan - Children's Services Items</b>	129 - 132
	Standing item to consider the Children’s Services and Education items on the Forward Plan.	
11	<b>Children's Services and Education Work Programme</b>	133 - 134
	Standing item to consider the future Children’s Services and Education Work Programme.	

**Kim Bromley-Derry CBE DL**  
**Managing Director Commissioner**  
Sandwell Council House  
Freeth Street  
Oldbury  
West Midlands

**Distribution**

Councillor Shackleton (Chair)  
Councillors Hinchliff, Akhtar, Chambers, Dhariwal, Dunn, W Gill, Mayo,  
McVittie, Preece, Uddin and Co-opted Member K Heeley

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## Minutes of Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board

**Monday 21 March 2022 at 5.30pm  
in the Council Chamber, Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

**Present:** Councillor Shackleton (Chair)  
Councillors W Gill (Vice-Chair), E A Giles, Hinchliff, McVittie,  
Millar, Smith, Webb and Co-opted Member K Heeley  
(Primary School Governor Representative)

**In attendance:** Councillor Simms

**Officers:** Melanie Barnett (Group Head Inclusive Learning Services);  
Sue Moore (Group Head Education Support Services);  
Dawn Maleki (Youth Service Manager);  
Matt Powis (Senior Democratic Services Officer) and  
Connor Robinson (Democratic Services Officer).

### 10/22 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Chambers and Chidley and from K Kujawa-Sogbesan (Secondary School Governor representative).

### 11/22 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.



12/22 **Minutes**

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 14 February 2022 were agreed as a correct record.

13/22 **Additional Item of Business**

There were no additional items of business to consider.

14/22 **Temporary Accommodation Elm Tree Primary Academy at Connor Education Centre, West Bromwich**

At a previous meeting of the Board, Members requested a report on the temporary accommodation Elm Tree Primary Academy which was due to be considered by the Cabinet.

The Group Head of Education Support Services outlined the report which sought approval for the Director of Children and Education with delegated authority, to procure and award a contract for the refurbishment of part of the Connor Education Centre to be used as a two-form entry Primary Special School for Children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder, alongside other associated learning needs for one school year.

Capital funding for the refurbishment of the Connor Education Centre would be provided by the Department for Education (DfE) with the Council consent to a work funding agreement.

Elm Tree Primary Academy would provide 126 spaces for children aged 5 to 11 years old with Autistic Spectrum Disorder alongside other associated learning needs. The school was due to be opened in September 2022 with Victoria Academies Trust as the school official sponsor. Qualifying pupils were required to have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) that specified a specialist provision to be placed at the school. The first cohort of pupils to be placed at the school in September 2022 had already been considered. It was understood that Sandwell had very limited specialist places to meet the identified needs of these pupils within the 5 to 11 years age group.



Following comments and questions from members of the Board, the following responses were made, and issues highlighted:-

- the location and school facilities would be fully accessible to the pupils who would be attending.
- the building assets would continue to be utilised to support those children and young people with SEND.
- discussions were ongoing about the future of the buildings following their temporary use.
- the capital cost of the project was being met by the DfE and contingencies had been worked into project costings. However, a work funding agreement was required for the project which would require the Council to accept all programme and costs risks.
- there was no waiting list for those pupils undertaking an EHCP assessment.
- it was sometimes necessary to seek out of borough provision for those with specialist and complex needs, where possible it was advantageous for children and young people with SEND to receive provision as close as possible to their home.

The Board thanked officers for their attendance.

15/22

### **Feedback from the SEND Operational and Strategic Boards and the Parent/Carer Forum**

Group Head Inclusive Learning Services outlined the role of responsibilities of the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Operational and Strategic Boards including the Parent and Carer Forum.

The Board noted the Council's vision for children and young people with SEND which required children to :

- achieve their aspirations for a healthy ordinary life through meaningful employment and fulfilling relationships within the community of their choosing;
- have choice and control over decisions about their health, education, employment, friendships and relationships;



- successfully participate in the community and access meaningful occupation, employment and life-long learning opportunities.

Since the introduction of the SEND reforms in 2014, the number of Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP) had nearly doubled. It was noted that the Council had currently maintained over 2,800 EHCP's and the number continued to grow. Officers noted that if the population growth continued to rise, it was predicted that there could be an estimated 3,500 children or young people, in Sandwell, with an EHCP by 2025. It was stressed that the increase was not unique to Sandwell but represented a national picture.

Following comments and questions from members of the Board, the following responses were made, and issues highlighted:-

- the increase in the number of assessments was a result of a recent influx of requests for assessments related to sociological and mental health difficulties presented through speech and language difficulties had been attributed to the ongoing impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic most notable amongst young children. It was noted that an EHCP would not be suitable for these children and instead alternative pathways would need to be sought.
- the ability of parents to get the information they required was an ongoing challenge, the service continued to work with schools and partners to ensure parents had access to all necessary information.
- the most vulnerable children were given priority through the pandemic. Referrals continued to be investigated and those already known to the service were contacted regularly. Food parcels and learning packs had been distributed among the most vulnerable children.
- those children and young people who were electively home educated with an EHCP had increased during the Pandemic. There were 18 reported children which had increased from 14 prior to the Pandemic. It was noted that the figures had increased nationally.
- the Council continued to ensure the Board was accessible and undertakes engagement via social media and schools to increase participation.



- team capacity to undertake EHCP assessments was an ongoing challenge. The increase in service demand was not just focused on SEND but on Health and Social Care as a whole.
- the Council continued to engage schools and SENCOs to ensure that no child or young person was missing out on necessary services.
- additional resources to meet the increasing demand was an ongoing consideration for the Council.
- schools across the Borough were still recovering from the Pandemic and a significant number of teachers remained on sickness leave due to contracting Covid-19. The impact on mental health was also an ongoing concern.
- the future of the High Needs Block was both a national and local concern, though Sandwell was better placed than other neighbouring authorities the increased demand on the service would cause challenges for the Service.

16/22

### **Question and Answer Session with the Cabinet Member for Children Services on Youth Service Provisions**

The Cabinet Member for Children’s Services had attended the Board and updated the Committee on the Youth Bus and provision across the Borough.

It was noted that the Youth Bus had been in service for 23 years and continued to undertake outreach programmes to Sandwell’s six towns and its communities. The bus had a multi-functional purpose and could be utilised as hub for community outreach programmes and general engagement activity.

Due to longevity of the Youth Bus programme, the bus was near the end of its working life. Therefore, discussions were ongoing about the replacement of the service. There were two options under consideration which included an electric or a diesel bus option. The cost of the electric bus was estimated at around £450k with a delivery time of 9 months and based at Taylors Lane, the bus would also require an additional £100k to tailor the bus to the needs of children and young people with additional equipment. In addition, the electric bus required a base and the facilities to charge the vehicle.





The options considered would be to expand the current facilities at Taylors Lane or establish a new facility with the necessary equipment at an additional cost.

The cost of a diesel bus was estimated at around £224k with a delivery timescale of 2 months. Whilst the bus would require £100k for upgrade costs there would be no new base infrastructure as required with an electric bus.

Following comments and questions from members of the Board, the following responses were made, and issues highlighted:-

- it was important that the service had a mobile outreach service which allowed community engagement and inclusion.
- the necessity of a bus was questioned, and it was suggested that the funds could instead be used to enhance a mobile provision that could engage more widely with the community.
- young people's engagement with the bus and the desire for a new one was questioned and debated.
- Public Health had expressed an interest in contributing to the procurement of the bus and enable it to become multipurpose and a vehicle for health outreach.
- the electric bus would demonstrate the Councils commitment to tackling climate change and advancing the Councils 'Green Agenda'.
- the procurement of an electric bus would be 9 months, the facilities to accommodate the bus at Taylors Lane would need to be enhanced, it was envisaged that the move to electric would extend across the Council's fleet.
- it was suggested that a survey be undertaken with young people across the Borough and communities to understand what they would want from a bus and wider Youth Service provision.
- the ability for young people to travel across the Borough to access youth provision in the different towns was questioned.
- the current diesel bus was 24 years old and was unreliable.
- there were a number of community centres that deliver youth services across the six towns, the youth bus would allow the service to go out into communities that struggle or cannot access critical services.
- access to youth services would be investigated further to ensure that the six towns had inclusive access to provisions.





- The bus allowed engagement with vulnerable young people in the Borough and the service allowed outreach into the community.
- The facilities at Coneygre and Tipton Malthouse were used to engage young people.
- The HAF provided school holiday and half-term activities and food to the community and plans were in place for Easter and Summer Holidays.
- The pandemic had impacted the engagement of young people with the Youth Service.
- Youth Services Officers had been active throughout the Pandemic engaging with communities across the towns, undertaking work to prevent, ASB and youth crime.
- the Council funds a number of youth organisations which were advertised on the Councils website.
- staffing continued to be an issue within the service and there were a number of vacancies that needed to be filled.

Members thanked the Cabinet Member and officers for their attendance.

## 17/22 **Action Tracker**

The Board noted the Action Tracker

## 18/22 **Forward Plan**

The Board noted the Cabinet Forward Plan.

## 19/22 **Work Programme**

The Board noted the Work Programme.

Meeting ended at 6.41pm

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## Report to Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board

**10 October 2022**

<b>Subject:</b>	Adoption@Heart Annual Report 2021/2022
<b>Director:</b>	Director of Children and Education, Michael Jarrett
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Michael Jarrett, Director of Children and Education <a href="mailto:Michael_Jarrett@sandwell.gov.uk">Michael_Jarrett@sandwell.gov.uk</a>  Mandip S. Chahal, Senior Commissioning Manager for Statutory Services <a href="mailto:Mandip1_chahal@sandwell.gov.uk">Mandip1_chahal@sandwell.gov.uk</a>

### 1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board receives the Adoption@Heart Annual Report 2021/22.
- 1.2 That the Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board considers the performance of the third year of the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) and provides summary feedback to the next meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board.


### 2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 At its meeting on 7 January 2019 it was agreed that the performance of the new arrangement for Adoption@Heart, the Regional Adoption Agency would be reported to and scrutinised by the Children's Services and Education Corporate Parenting Board.



- 2.2 Adoption@Heart has been operational since 1 April 2019 and a performance report was presented to the Scrutiny Board in November 2020 covering the first year of operation and subsequently in August 2021 covering the second year.
- 2.3 The third full year of performance is now set out in Adoption@Heart's Annual Report 2021/22.

### 3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	<p><b>Best start in life for children and young people</b></p> <p>Ensuring that children have the Best Start in Life is a key driver for Adoption@Heart; ensuring that children are safeguarded, protected and, when unable to live with their parents, are effectively cared for.</p> <p>High quality adoption services improve the life chances of vulnerable children and young people and ensure that all children are offered an equality of opportunity in the way that they are matched with an adoptive family. Adoption offers children a new start in life.</p>
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### 4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 The provision of an adoption service is a statutory requirement and the council is required to monitor the provision of adoption services. The government agreed that all local authorities (LAs) would be expected to deliver their adoption services through a RAA by 2020 and funding was provided by the Department for Education (DfE) to cover the costs of setting up these new arrangements.
- 4.2 On 12 December 2018, Sandwell Council's Cabinet gave approval to transfer adoption services to the new Regional Adoption Agency: Adoption@Heart. These arrangements were considered by the Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 7 January 2019 when it was also agreed that the Scrutiny Committee would undertake the role to scrutinise these



arrangements and report its findings to the Corporate Parenting Board, which is chaired by the Lead Member for Children and Education.

- 4.3 The RAA for the Black Country local authorities is called Adoption@Heart. The arrangement is a 'hosted' model, whereby the adoption service is hosted by Wolverhampton City Council on behalf of the four Black Country local authorities and commissioned on their behalf via Dudley Council. Contractual arrangements are in place for all partners. The adoption service has an operational interface with each local authority children's service; in Sandwell, this is Sandwell Children's Trust.
- 4.4 Adoption@Heart has now been operating for just over 3 years. The number of children adopted in the 12-month period 2021/22 has remained on par with the previous year's performance.
- 4.5 In the first year of operation, forty one percent of children placed were from Sandwell and consequently numbers placed for the other three partners were considerably lower. This was because more Sandwell children were waiting on Placement Orders at the point the service became operational. In 2020/21 this levelled out with twenty-seven percent of children placed being from Sandwell. This year's performance has been largely maintained with twenty-eight percent of children placed being from Sandwell
- 4.7 Panels have approved 54 Adopters and matched 103 children in the year 2021/22.
- 4.8 Key areas of focus for the third year, as set out in the Annual Report, have been on adoption support, early permanence in placing children, adopter sufficiency, and kinship care and practice development.
- 4.9 Adoption@Heart has adapted well to the challenges imposed by the pandemic and has continued to perform well, this is shown in the performance data contained in the annual review.



## 5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 The provision of an adoption service is a statutory requirement and the council is required to monitor the provision of adoption services. The government agreed that all local authorities (LAs) would be expected to deliver their adoption services through a RAA by 2020.

## 6 Implications

<p><b>Resources:</b></p>	<p>At the inception of the Regional Adoption Agency, the financial contributions were based on the budgets already in existence in the four individual local authorities.</p> <p>The contribution levels for each partner is based on an agreed formula and varies annually based on level of service provision. Sandwell's budget contribution for 2021/22 was £1.32m. Sandwell's contribution was higher than budgeted for as the budget had been set based on the 2020/21 contribution and not with reference to the agreed formula, this has been taken into account in setting the budget for 2022/23.</p> <p>This is monitored quarterly by the Strategic Commissioning Board.</p>
<p><b>Legal and Governance:</b></p>	<p>A contract is in place between the four Black Country local authorities to commission Adoption@Heart, and the organisation is hosted by Wolverhampton Council. A Strategic Commissioning Board meets on a quarterly basis to monitor the contract. The commissioning process is managed via Dudley Council. The Strategic Commissioning Board is chaired by Dudley Council.</p> <p>An Operational Board meets monthly to ensure high quality oversight of the operational business. A further meeting is also in place to ensure the successful interface between Adoption@Heart business and the social care practice in each local authority/Trust.</p>



	Annual scrutiny and assurance is provided in Sandwell via the Children’s Services and Education Scrutiny Board, which then makes its comments available to the Corporate Parenting Board. In Dudley, Walsall and Wolverhampton, the scrutiny and assurance process takes place within the Corporate Parenting Board meeting.
<b>Risk:</b>	The corporate risk management strategy has been complied with and has concluded that there are no significant risks that require reporting and that suitable measures are in place to mitigate the risks identified to acceptable levels. The risks associated with the RAA are included in the directorate risk register.
<b>Equality:</b>	An Equality Impact Assessment screening is not required for this report. However, Adoption@Heart undertakes its own equality impact assessments. Ensuring that diversity and equality has a prominent focus is a key feature of the RAAs work.
<b>Health and Wellbeing:</b>	The impact of COVID-19 on the performance of Adoption@Heart is set out in the Annual Report. It will be important to continue to monitor the impact via the Strategic Commissioning Board.
<b>Social Value</b>	Adoption@Heart supports children to achieve, feel safe, be supported and access opportunities. Adoption@Heart supports community resilience through the recruitment of local residents as adopters

## 7. Appendices

Adoption@Heart Annual Report 2021/22

## 8. Background Papers

Cabinet report -12 December 2018

Scrutiny reports – 7 January 2019, 11 November 2019, 19 November 2020



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Report title: **Adoption Service Report**  
**01 April 2021 to 31 March 2022**

Date of report: 21 June 2022

To: **Sandwell Council**

Produced by: Mark Tobin  
Head of Service

Service: Adoption@Heart

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## 1. Introduction and Purpose of the Report:

This report fulfils the obligations in Adoption National Minimum Standards (2011) and Adoption Service Statutory Guidance (2011) Adoption and Children Act 2002, to report to the “executive side” of the local authority. This has guided the structure and information set out in the report below.

The report jointly covers the full year 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022.

It is important to note that data and information within this report is accurate as of 31 March 2022.

Adoption@Heart is a Regional Adoption Agency, providing adoption services on behalf of Sandwell, Dudley, Walsall and Wolverhampton Councils. The service is hosted by City of Wolverhampton Council and became operational 1 April 2019.

**2. Number, type and age of children waiting for adoption and length of time waiting:**

As at 31 March 2022 38 children were waiting with Placement orders but not yet placed with adoptive families. 8 children have been subject to a change of plan and waiting revocation of their Placement Orders. . 3 children were on hold for family finding due to the need for further assessments of their needs following placement disruptions.

The service is therefore actively working with 27 children in need of adoptive families. 4 of these children were already linked with potential adopters but not yet formally matched or placed with them. The remaining 23 children were in active family finding and not yet linked or matched to adoptive parents.

The timescales for the 27 children waiting on Placement Orders are:

Less than 3 months:	4
Between 3 and 6 months:	6
Between 6 and 12 months:	7
Between 12 and 24 months:	6
Children waiting over 2 years:	4

**2.1 Children Made Subject to Placement Orders**

Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep
2	4	0	1	3	7

Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	<b>Total</b>
2	5	3	3	1	1	32

**2.2 Children Subject to Should be Placed for Adoption (SHOBPA) decisions as at 31 March 2022 (without Placement Order)**

15

**2.3 Number of Children who had a SHOPBA during the period**

Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep
2	6	2	4	3	1

Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Total
3	9	3	0	3	3	39

**2.4 The Numbers of Children with PO who had a Change of Plan (away from adoption) in the Period**

26

**2.5 Number of Children Placed for Adoption during the period.**

Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep
3	5	1	4	1	2

Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Total
2	5	1	1	1	3	29

Financial Year:	18/19	19/20	20/21
Children Placed:	36	41	35

### 3. Number of Children Adopted (April 2021 - March 2022)

Number of children adopted in the year

34

In year average timescale for children adopted

A10 – 553

A2 - 219

Adoption numbers have significantly increased this year following the delays in the previous year caused by Covid-19 and the impact on the courts. This factor together with the low number of children placed (14) in the year 2020/21 has led to the low number of children adopted in the reporting year.

The higher number of children adopted in the reporting year evidences the process of recovery in the courts, following the pandemic and the number of children placed has also increased from 14 to 22 in the reporting year.

The numbers of children leaving care nationally via adoption has reduced continuously since 2017.

Financial Year:	18/19	19/20	20/21
Children Adopted:	36	31	35

**Adoption Scorecard Performance:**

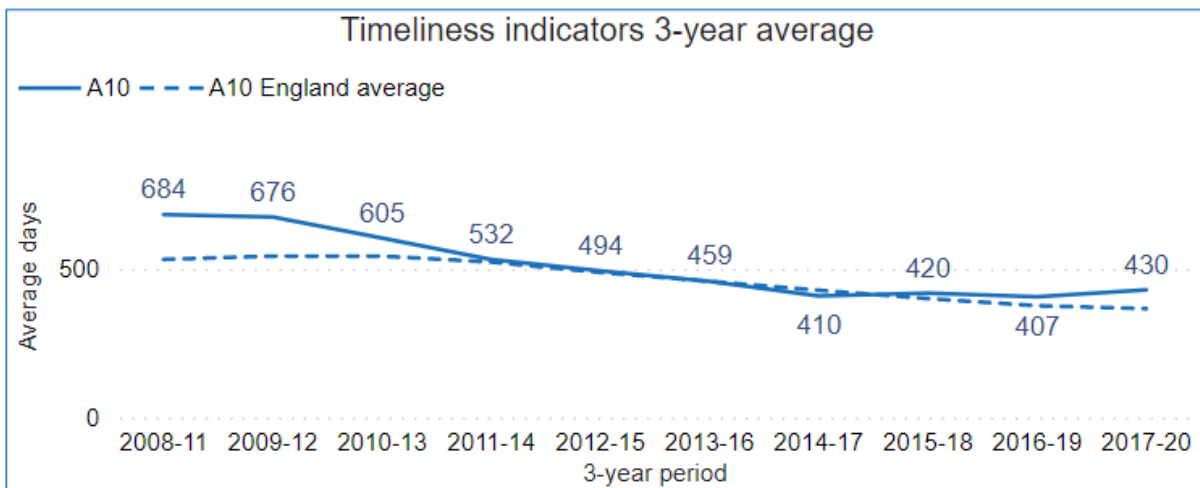
In 2014, as part of its' Adoption Reform Agenda, the government introduced Adoption Scorecards to track local authority performance and to tackle delay in the adoption system. Scorecards are produced for a 3-year rolling average, with the latest data being published for April 2018 - March 2019 (Published April 2020 as below).

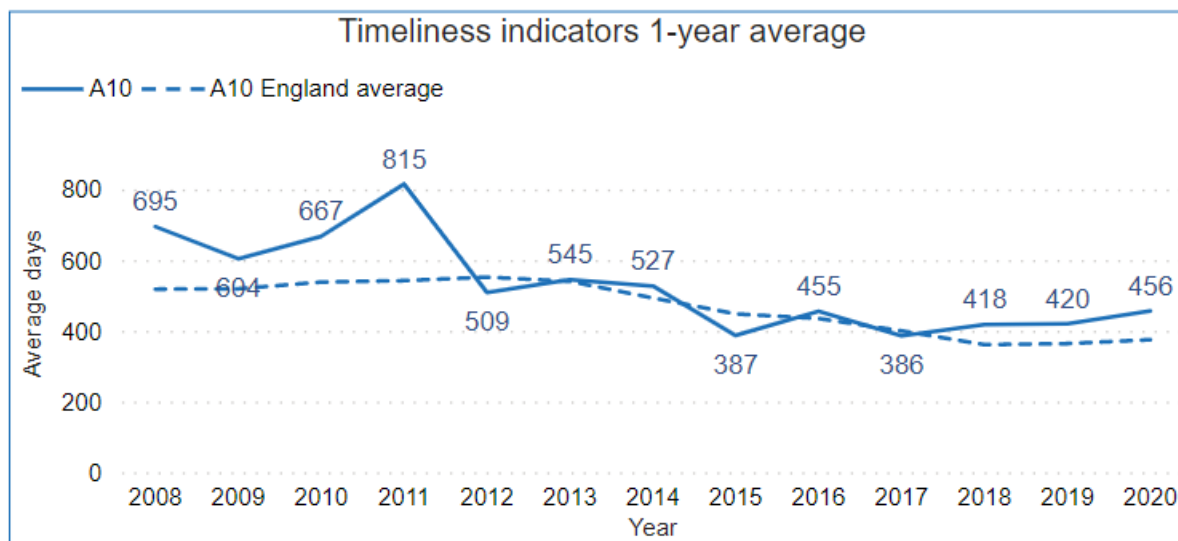
The current indicators are:

**A10** – number of days between a child entering care and moving in with their adoptive family. The current threshold is 426 days.

**A2** – the number of days between receiving court authority to place a child for adoption and the Agency decision about a match to an adoptive family. The current threshold is 121 days.

**A10**





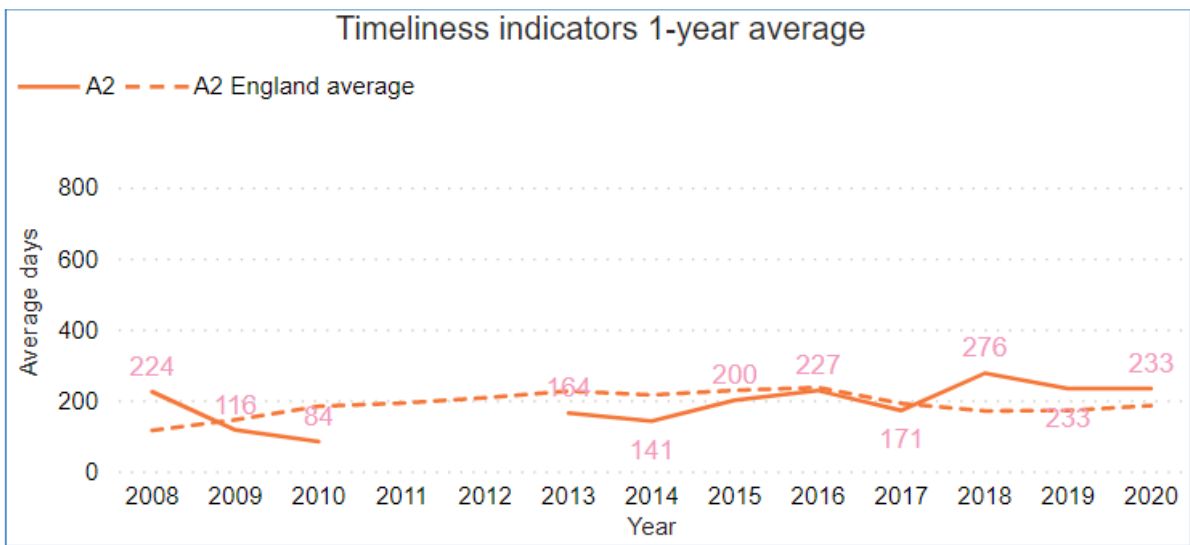
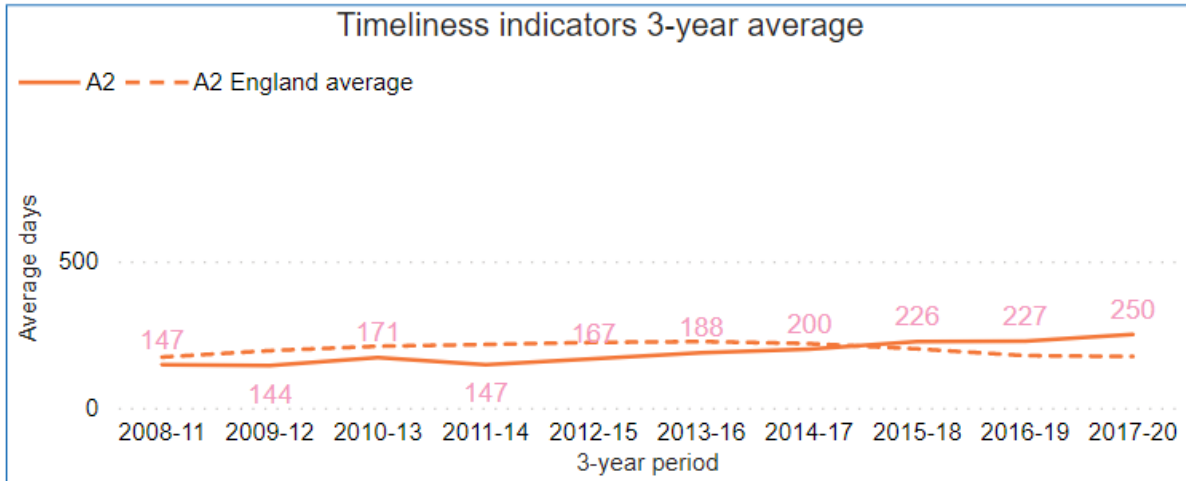
A10: Average time (in days) between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family adjusted for foster care adoptions:				
2020 average days:	2020 England average:	Average time in 2020 was longer than in 2019	2017-20 average days:	2017-20 England average:
<b>456</b>	<b>375</b>		<b>430</b>	<b>367</b>

**A10** performance for the single year is above threshold (426) and three year average is also above. Both are above the England average (375).

The single year performance is 30 days above threshold and 81 days above England average.

The three year average is 4 days above threshold and 63 days above the national average.

A2



A2: Average time (in days) between a local authority receiving court authority to place a child and the local authority deciding on a match to an adoptive family:				
2020 average days: <b>233</b>	2020 England average: <b>185</b>	Average time in 2020 was the same as 2019	2017-20 average days: <b>250</b>	2017-20 England average: <b>175</b>

Performance for A2 is significantly above threshold for both three year average and single year. It is also above England average for both indicators.

The three year average is 124 days above the threshold (121) and 75 days above the national average.

The single year performance is 107 days above threshold and 48 days above the national average.

**Please note that published scorecard data incorporate average performance over 3 years up to and including the year 2019/20. Adoption@Heart provided adoption services for Sandwell Council from April 2019, so currently the published scorecard data includes the 2 previous years.**

### 3.1 Early Permanency

There were 12 children placed in year in early permanence placements via Foster for Adopt.

## 4. Recruitment of Adopters:

### 4.1 New Enquiries

For the period from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022, 609 new enquiries were received by the Adoption@Heart Recruitment Team.

This is in comparison to 638 enquiries received last year.

### 4.2 Information Events

22 virtual information events took place with 311 people attending (262 units) and six phone consultations (mix of single and joint applicants). Therefore, 44 percent of people who made an enquiry went on to receive information.



## 5. Marketing Report:

Marketing figures for this period are:

- 609 enquiries
- Six phone consultations and 311 people attended virtual information events
- Between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 and 31 March 2022, we had a total of 20,656 website visits – made up of 15,503 unique visits
- 457 Twitter followers
- 2,142 Facebook likes
- 286 Instagram Followers

### **Marketing brief**

The beginning of the year saw the launch of the national 'You Can Adopt' sibling campaign. Along with local PR, social media posts and a targeted Google Ads campaign, Adoption@Heart placed digital adverts on screens across the region including a digital screen on the M6 (both directions).

In September and October, Adoption@Heart took part in a black adopter's campaign, a national campaign to encourage black people to find out more about adoption. Using a toolkit of messages and artwork, Adoption@Heart ran a campaign including targeted Google Ads, PR to regional media, digital 'page takeovers' on the Express & Star website, a sponsored story and Facebook post with the Express & Star, plus, a schedule of co-ordinated social media posts across Adoption@Heart's and partner social media channels.

In December, Adoption@Heart shared a story of two adopted brothers that wanted to donate their Christmas presents to children that go without during the festive period. The gifts were donated to Graiseley Strengthening Families Hub, which coordinated a donation drive for children in need and refugee families who had recently arrived in the city. Adoption@Heart helped coordinate the donation and shared the story with local press and via social media channels.

LGBT+ adoption and fostering week took place in March 2022 which saw the launch of the 'Be the Change' campaign, a recruitment campaign to encourage those from the LGBT+ community who are considering adoption or would like more information to come forward. Adoption@Heart had support from LGBT+ adopters to share their stories across multiple platforms including video, social media, blog posts, news articles and at a virtual information event.

Adoption@Heart has continued to offer virtual information events for prospective adopters using Microsoft Teams. These events have continued to work well and were attended by an average of 14 people per event across the year. Events are hosted by Social Workers, the Marketing Executive and an adopter, where possible. The format of video, a presentation plus

Adoption Service Report  
01 April 2021 to 31 March 2022

Q&A session continues to provide an interactive and engaging session. Conversion from attendance to submitted EOI, continues to remain high.

Regular meetings continue to take place with the Communications Leads across the three local authorities and the Trust. The meetings are used to discuss both national and regional marketing campaigns and activities, the marketing and communications support given to Adoption@Heart by the other comms leads (utilising the knowledge of their areas and resources) and what future support is needed and how the partnership can work going forward. Ongoing plans include the possibility of a joint campaign for adoption and fostering plus working more closely together on community event attendance across the Black Country.

This year will see the launch of a further national 'You Can Adopt' campaign aimed at increasing awareness of the types of children that wait the longest for a family. The new campaign is due to launch late June 2022. Adoption@Heart also aims to make improvements to its website and grow its social media channels in order to increase reach and impact.

## **6. Requirements on the Preparation of Adoption Report Regulations:**

### **6.1 Complaints**

There were three formal complaints about the service during the twelve month period.

One related to adopter applicants who were not recommended for approval by the agency. This is delayed in stage one due to a pending IRM hearing which found in favour of the service and a subsequent review by the Local Government Ombudsman also support decision making in the service and did not uphold the applicant's complaint.

A further complaint related to delayed applications to the Adoption Support Fund as well as a delayed later life letter (for a child placed by Wolverhampton prior to April 2019). An LGSCO referral has found against Adoption@Heart and the Council and resulted in financial compensation to the complainant.

Additionally, an adoptive parent has made a formal complaint about the level of support provided to her teenage adoptive daughter, who is estranged from her care with no plan of rehabilitation. The young person concerned does not live in the A@H region and the complaint is still in process of investigation.

**7. Staffing:**

The service employs 32 qualified Social Workers on a permanent basis, along with six agency Social Workers, who are providing additional capacity due to vacant posts, sickness, maternity leave and additional demand created by Covid-19. Two agency Social Workers have been funded by the partner agencies for twelve months, to provide additional family finding capacity.

There are three Team Managers, with one each covering the thematic service areas. The panel team have two Panel Advisors along with a Panel Co-ordinator and three Panel Administrators.

Management capacity has been increased with the addition of a Service Manager, funded within the existing budget. A successful applicant was appointed internally and started in post 1 March 2022.

The recruitment vacancy rates have remained low since the service went live and despite Covid-19, sickness and absence rates have been minimal during the full year period of 2021/22.

**8. Referrals to the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM):**

There has been one referral to the IRM in the period and this has not yet been heard by the IRM panel. It relates to a non-approval of an adopter application.

**9. Children's Family Finding Activity:**

The tables below contain the total numbers of children placed by the service during the year 2021/22.

**Children placed 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022**

<b>LA/Trust</b>	<b>Inhouse</b>	<b>Interagency</b>	<b>Total Placed</b>
Dudley	12	10	22
Sandwell	17	12	29
Walsall	13	5	18
Wolverhampton	22	12	34
<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>103</b>

Inter-agency usage for full year is 38 percent, thus 62 percent of children were placed in house.

**Children Placed Foster for Adopt**

<b>LA/Trust</b>	<b>FFA Inhouse</b>	<b>FFA Interagency</b>	<b>Total</b>
Dudley	2	1	3
Sandwell	9	3	12
Walsall	8	1	9
Wolverhampton	8	0	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>32</b>

Inter-agency usage for FFA placed in full year is 15 percent.

**Analysis – Children Placed**

The number of children matched and placed with adoptive families in the full year is 103. This is less than the number placed in the previous year (124).

38 percent of children placed to 31 March were placed inter-agency and this represents a significant improvement on end of the previous year performance (56 percent).

The spread of children placed/matched across the four partners is closer in consistency than in previous years, albeit numbers are higher for Wolverhampton and lower in Walsall. There has been a significant increase in children placed for Dudley.

More children have now been placed in house than inter-agency for all partners, without such significant variation as was evident in previous quarters.

It is very positive that 32 children have been placed via Foster for Adopt (31 in previous year) and that 85 percent of these were placed with in house adopters. Early Permanence practice in the partnership continues to improve and has significantly increased since the establishment of Adoption@Heart.

**10. Adoption Panels:**

During the year all adoption panels met virtually due to the constraints and restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic. This has continued and it is not likely that panels will return to a face to face format.

Virtual panels have been largely well received by adopters who have indicated that they feel more comfortable in their own homes. There have also been benefits for Social Workers and panel members who have not had to travel.

Panel activity approvals & matches per month 2020/21 & 2021/22

	2020/21	2021/22	2020/21	2021/22
	Approvals	Approvals	Matches	Matches
April	5	5	7	10
May	4	4	16	10
June	5	8	11	13
July	7	7	8	8
August	8	3	12	5
September	7	7	19	6
October	5	3	20	11
November	7	5	7	12
December	4	3	6	3
January	6	3	6	5
February	3	10	8	6
March	6	7	11	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>103</b>

Panel membership

The Panel continues to function and is well supported by its committed members and support staff. We currently have 36 panel members on the central list who can sit on the Adoption panel. In addition, six medical advisors for the three Local Authorities and the Children's trust sit on panels on a Rota basis. There are four Panel Chairs, following the recruitment of an additional chair.

The central list offers a good representation of members who have either been adopted or have adopted and this is seen as very positive in terms of the perspective they bring. Whilst a number have been recruited since last year, there is still further need to increase the number of males on the panel and people who are representative of the community we serve. The increase in the central list offers the opportunity to have a panel which reflects a professional perspective, independence, skill, knowledge and experience.

Panel training

In the period 21/22 panel members have had the opportunity to attend the following training event:

A@H Panel Development Day 02/02/2022. With the agenda items including, A@H performance, a legal update, learning reviews & disruptions, examples of matching done well and keeping in touch (KIT).

Panel business

Panel met on 53 occasions during 2021-2022, there are 50 panels a year for adoption matters to be heard. There is also flexibility within the panel system allowing for extra and special panels

to be arranged in order to enable additional cases and emergency matters to be heard, as and when directed by the courts. This means that children do not wait and matters are dealt with in a timely manner.

The Agency Decision Makers from Dudley make all the decisions regarding the suitability for approval of all prospective adopters. The SHOBPA decisions remain in the three Local Authorities and the Trust. Agency Decision Makers are very flexible regarding early decisions in relation to matches, in order to enable transitions that work best for the child/ren for example, using school holidays.

### Approvals

A@H is welcoming of adopters from all cultural and ethnic backgrounds, those in same sex relationships, single applicants and those with disabilities.

62 adopters were approved in this reporting period reduction of seven from the previous year. Not all adopters recommended for approval at panel were subject to Agency Decision in the year, thus 57 were formally approved in the year.

### Feedback from Adopters about their experience at panel

Feedback from Adopters is sought after every panel. 32 responses were collated from adopters who had attended panel.

Of those who responded, 100% said that they had received enough information about panel beforehand, felt they were given enough notice, found panel members friendly, were given opportunity to express their views, felt they were treated fairly and found the questions they were asked relevant.

94% rated their overall experience as excellent. 6% rated their overall experience as good.

Quotes from adopters include

- *'We both felt really nervous about panel beforehand but was made to feel less nervous by the friendly panel team. Was really helpful speaking to chair beforehand too.'*
- *'Despite feeling nervous before hand, the panel was a really positive experience and we felt at ease answering questions.'*
- *'We have now experienced a face-to-face and online panel. Doing it online was extremely convenient second time around and still had the same impact as face-to-face.'*
- *'Our meeting was online and although everyone was introduced to us, when we were told that individuals were going to ask us questions it was difficult to identify them on the screen which could detract a little from the question being asked. It might be helpful*

*for the person who is going to speak to put their hand up or wave for a very short period before starting the question, just so that we can identify the person speaking.'*

- *'Panel was an extremely positive and truly amazing experience.'*

## **11. Inspections:**

Two of the local authorities (Walsall and Wolverhampton) in the Adoption@Heart partnership were inspected in the year within the Ofsted ILACS framework. The first in Walsall was a full ILACS inspection and very positive feedback was provided by the inspectors about Adoption@Heart service and its effectiveness in meeting the needs of children and adoptive families. Inspectors in Wolverhampton, within a brief inspection process, raised no concerns about the effectiveness of the service.

## **12. Adoption Support:**

The team continues to provide all aspects of pre and post order adoption support on behalf of each of the four local authorities and now supports families pre and post order. The team commissions therapeutic services via applications to the Adoption Support Fund, plus post adoption contact, access to records and birth parent support.

It is recognised that early life adversity impacts children developmentally, emotionally, cognitively and socially and requires therapeutic support in order for children to thrive. Adoption@Heart operates a graduated approach, offering universal access to an adoption training programme and support groups delivered by staff; enhanced support includes an assessment of need and parenting support, individually or in groups and targeted support includes commissioning of specialist therapeutic intervention. We utilise the service of an Adoption Support Therapist employed by Adoption@Heart, as well as commissioning private and independent therapeutic services.

The starting point for accessing the Adoption Support Service is an Assessment of Need. The team undertook the following number of these in the twelve month period.

Dudley	69
Sandwell	43
Walsall	51
Wolverhampton	63
<b>Total</b>	<b>226</b>

The Adoption Support Fund was established in 2015 by the Government to help adoptive families access support and settle into their new lives following adoption. The Government committed ongoing funding for 2020-21 financial year in advance of the spending review settlement.

**ASF Applications completed in the year**

Sandwell	43
Walsall	51
Dudley	69
Wolverhampton	63
<b>Total</b>	<b>226</b>

**Post Adoption Contact**

Adoption@Heart is responsible for post adoption contact arrangements on behalf of Sandwell Council. There are three full-time Family Support Workers who are responsible for administering the service. They offer support to adoptive parents and birth relatives. The service has continued remotely during Covid 19, albeit there has been delay in the exchanges at this time as access to post is limited to once a week.

Dudley	425
Sandwell	598
Walsall	826
Wolverhampton	367
<b>Total</b>	<b>2216</b>

**Access to Records**

The provision of birth records counselling and access to information is of vital importance in enabling adopted adults to understand the circumstances of their adoption and enhance their sense of identity. The team supported the numbers of requests below within each area.

Dudley	20
Sandwell	12
Walsall	10
Wolverhampton	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>52</b>



**Birth Parent Support**

The team also provides support to birth parents affected by adoption and the following numbers were supported by the service in the twelve month period.

Dudley	2
Sandwell	5
Walsall	7
Wolverhampton	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>

**13. Accountability:****Management board**

The service has continued to have in place two key layers of governance with a Management Board attended by Assistant Directors and a Strategic Commissioning Board attended by Directors of Children's Service.

The Strategic Commissioning Board has continued to meet quarterly, supported by the commissioning lead from Dudley. The chairing of this board has remained with Dudley during the year 2021/22.

An Operations Group was established in the previous year, with a view to increasing engagement, oversight and operational involvement of Heads of Service and other Managers from each partner service. This group has continued to meet monthly, chaired by the Head of Service for Adoption@Heart. The Management Board has met bi-monthly.

Management Board is chaired by the Deputy Director for Children's Social Care in Wolverhampton, as host Local Authority for Adoption@Heart.

With effect from autumn 2022, it has been agreed that the governance arrangements will change with the establishment of a new board which will be titled the Strategic Partnership Board (SPB). This will replace both Management Board and Strategic Commissioning Board and representation will be from Assistant Directors, with a Director of Children's Services chairing. This decision to streamline the governance arrangements has been made in light of the continued positive progress of the service in becoming an effective and high performing Regional Adoption Agency for the region. The legal agreement and related documents supporting the current governance arrangements are being reviewed to reflect this change.

**Report completed by:**


Mark Tobin  
Head of Service

Adoption Service Report  
01 April 2021 to 31 March 2022

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## Report to the Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board

**10 October 2022**

<b>Subject:</b>	Sandwell Children's Trust Performance Update
<b>Director:</b>	Director of Children and Education, Michael Jarrett
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Michael Jarrett, Director of Children and Education <a href="mailto:Michael_Jarrett@sandwell.gov.uk">Michael_Jarrett@sandwell.gov.uk</a>  Mandip S. Chahal, Senior Commissioning Manager for Statutory Services <a href="mailto:Mandip1_chahal@sandwell.gov.uk">Mandip1_chahal@sandwell.gov.uk</a>

### 1 Recommendations


- 1.1 That the Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board consider and comment on the performance of Sandwell Children's Trust (SCT).

### 2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 Sandwell Children's Trust is required to report to the Scrutiny Board twice each year as part of the obligations set out in the contract between the Council and the Trust.
- 2.2 The purpose of the item is to provide an update for consideration and discussion regarding Sandwell Children's Trust.



### 3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	<p>Best start in life for children and young people</p> <p>Ensuring that children have the Best Start in Life is a key driver for Sandwell Children’s Trust; ensuring that children are safeguarded, protected and, when unable to live with their parents, are effectively cared for.</p> <p>SCT works with families, foster carers, schools, statutory and voluntary providers to support the achievements of vulnerable children and those in the care of the council</p> <p>SCT works to ensure that children in the care of the Council receive the support and opportunities that any parent would give their child</p>
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### 4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 The contract with SCT has a comprehensive programme of governance arrangements. The contract requires that the Director of Children and Education, together with council senior officers from finance and legal services, and the Chief Executive of the Trust meet on at least a monthly basis to consider performance and operational matters. In addition, each quarter, the Lead Member for Children’s Services and the Chief Executive of the council meet with the Chair of the SCT Board and the Chief Executive of SCT, at a Strategic Partnership Board.
- 4.2 The contract with the Trust specifies that representatives of the Trust should attend Council meetings when reasonably requested, specifically referencing attendance twice a year at the Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board and at the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board if requested.
- 4.3 The contract requires SCT to provide regular performance updates for consideration by the Operational Partnership Board, the Strategic Partnership Board and then by the Cabinet. Progress against the performance indicators is set out in the attached report, together with other updates.



- 4.4 Since April 2018 the Trust has been the subject of seven monitoring visits from Ofsted as well as a focussed visit, three inspection visits of the fostering service and most recent a full inspection under the Ofsted's framework and guidance for inspecting local authority services for children (ILACS) in May 2022, this inspection included children's services across the Council and partners.
- 4.5 The judgement following the inspection undertaken in May 2022 was one of 'requires improvement to be good'. When coupled with the judgement of 'good' received by the fostering service in August 2021 this judgement shows a trajectory of service improvement.
- 4.6 The Trust have undertaken a refresh of the Improvement Plan, utilising the feedback provided by Ofsted following ILACS inspection with an aim of becoming a 'Good' or better organisation.

## 5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 At its meeting on 19 October 2016, Cabinet was advised of the Government's Statutory Direction (under Section 479A of the Education Act 1996) to set up a new arrangement in the form of a children's trust to deliver children's social care services. As a result, Sandwell Children's Trust started operating on 1 April 2018. The Service Delivery Agreement includes a contractual requirement to attend Children and Education scrutiny twice per year. Any alternative to the current arrangement must be agreed by both the Council and the Trust and go through a formal contract variation process.



## 6 Implications

<p><b>Resources:</b></p>	<p>Sandwell Children’s Trust will receive £71.7m to deliver the Council’s statutory responsibilities for children’s social care, and also to provide targeted early help services in 2022/23.</p> <p>The Contract Sum amount that SCT receives is agreed annually in line with mechanisms set out in the Service Delivery Contract.</p>
<p><b>Legal and Governance:</b></p>	<p>The Service Delivery Contract between the Council and SCT is performance managed via a monthly Operational Partnership Board, a quarterly Strategic Partnership Board, and SCT is required to attend up to 2 Children’s Scrutiny Board meetings and 1 Budget Scrutiny meeting each year. There is a partnership Improvement Board independently chaired by a DfE appointed consultant. Additionally, the Trust is required to submit its Annual Review to the Council.</p>
<p><b>Risk:</b></p>	<p>The Council’s strategic risk register identifies a red risk relevant to this report, regarding improvements required in children’s social care services. This risk is regularly monitored and reported to the Council’s Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.</p>
<p><b>Equality:</b></p>	<p>An Equality Impact Assessment screening is not required for this report. However, the improvement in children’s services will have a positive effect on the lives of vulnerable children, young people and families in Sandwell, including those with protected characteristics</p>
<p><b>Health and Wellbeing:</b></p>	<p>SCT continues to support children and families in Sandwell and as the quality of service that they deliver improves so does the impact they have on improving the health and wellbeing of children and families.</p>



<b>Social Value</b>	SCT supports children to achieve, feel safe, be supported and access opportunities. SCT supports care leavers to access education, employment and training. Having strong governance and oversight supports SCT to achieve service improvement and better support children and families in Sandwell.
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## 7. Appendices

Sandwell Children’s Trust Performance Update

## 8. Background Papers

[Ofsted Inspection Report – Fostering Service Published 8<sup>th</sup> Sept 2021](#)



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**Key Performance – July 2022**  
**(indicators comparative to Statistical**  
**Neighbours, England and West**  
**Midlands)**

**Scrutiny 10 October 2022**



# Ofsted ILAC Inspection (9-20 May 2022)

<https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/44/80549>

# Ofsted Inspection Outcome



	<i>Judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
	The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families	Requires improvement to be good
	The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Requires improvement to be good
	The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers	Requires improvement to be good
	Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement to be good

# Summary

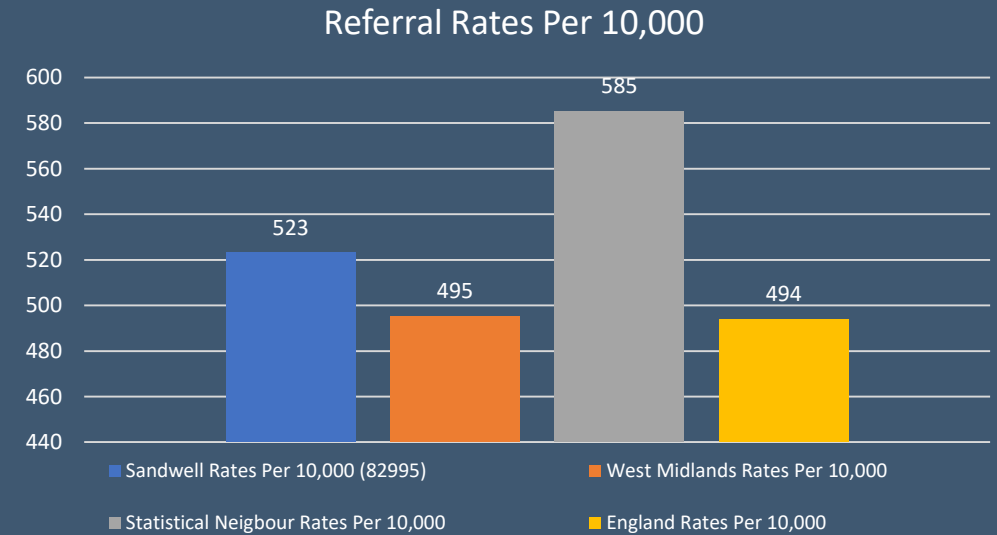
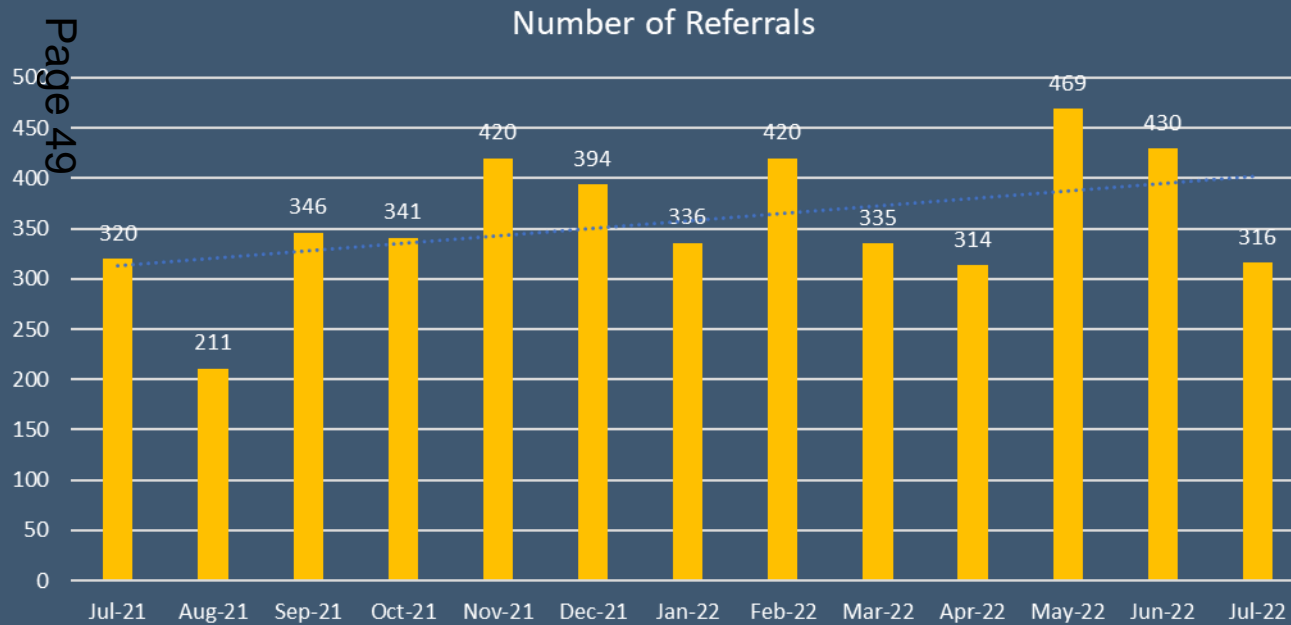


Sandwell  
Children's Trust



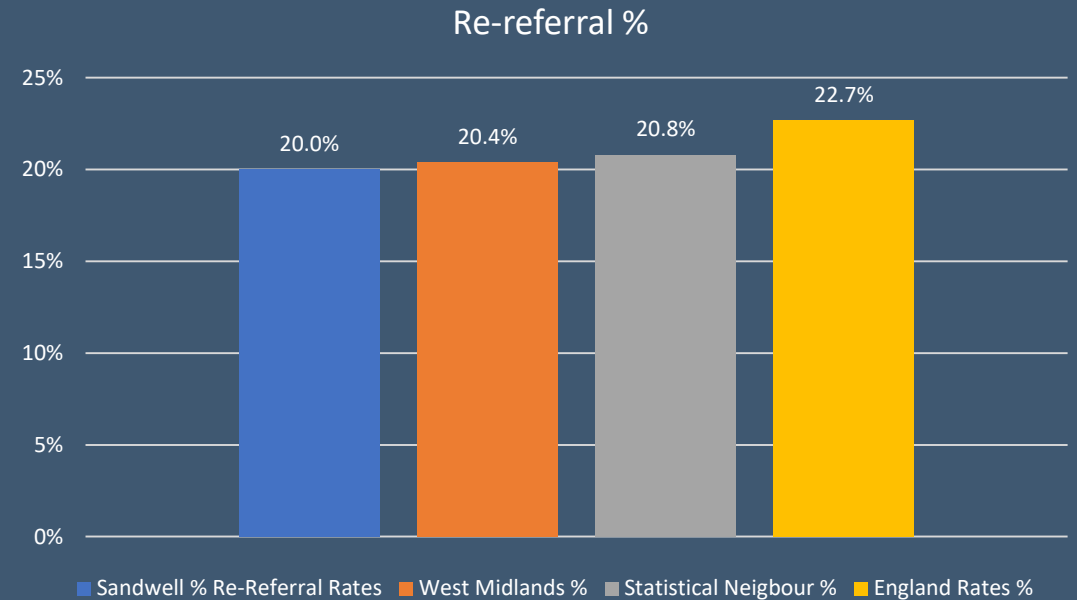
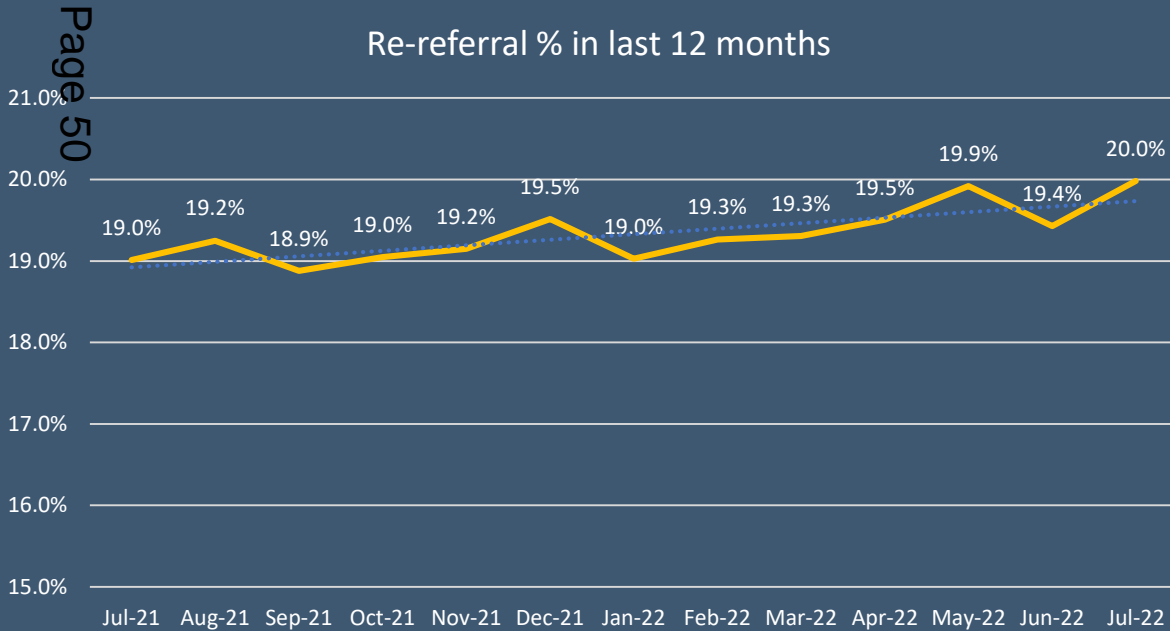
Services for vulnerable children and families in Sandwell have improved since the last inspection in November 2017, when they were judged to be inadequate. Since April 2018, children's services have been delivered by Sandwell Children's Trust on behalf of the local authority. New strategic leadership, which includes the chief executive of the Trust, has increased the pace and trajectory of improvement over the last year. Stronger strategic leadership has led to improvements in much of the service, through changes such as the move to a locality model, implementation of an early help strategy, a social work career pathway and high-quality specialist services. Many of children's needs are well met by social workers who collaborate effectively with partners in other services.

# Referrals



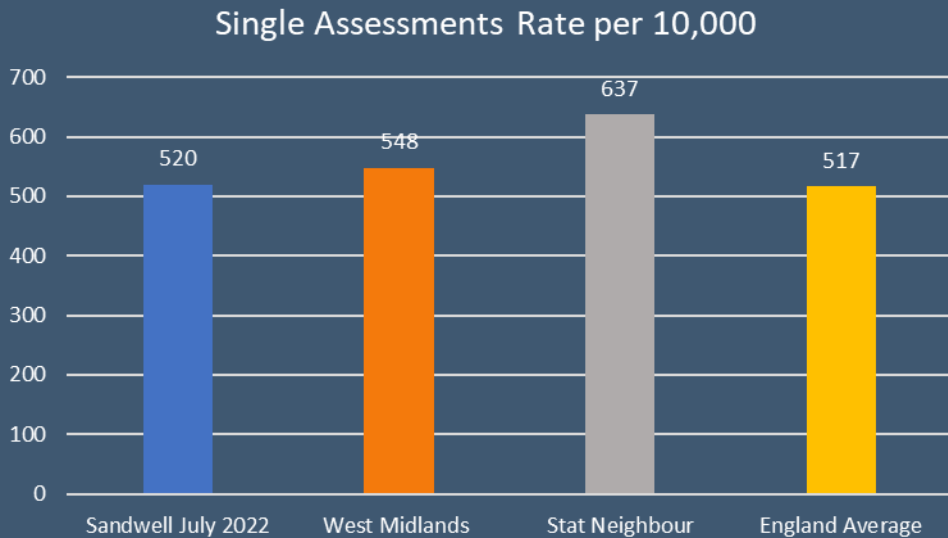
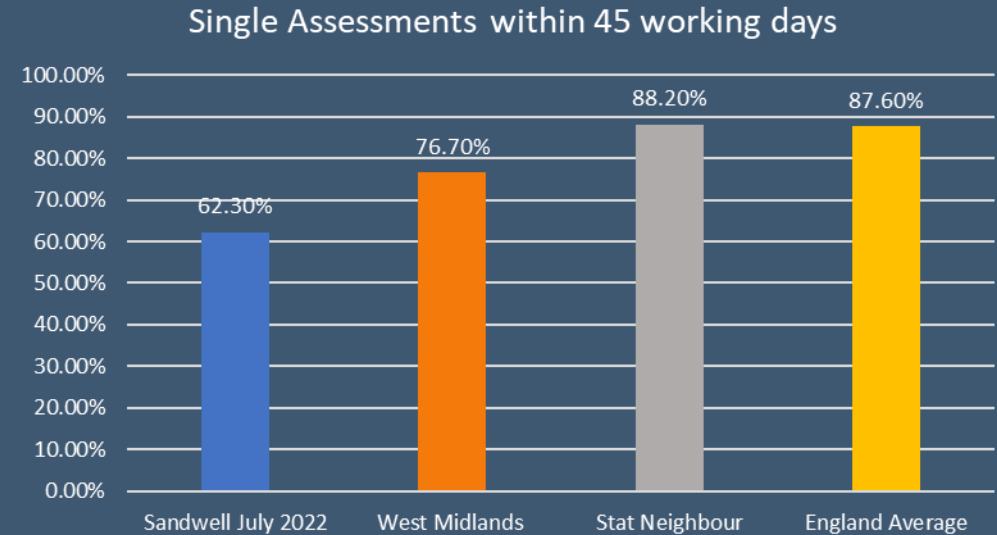
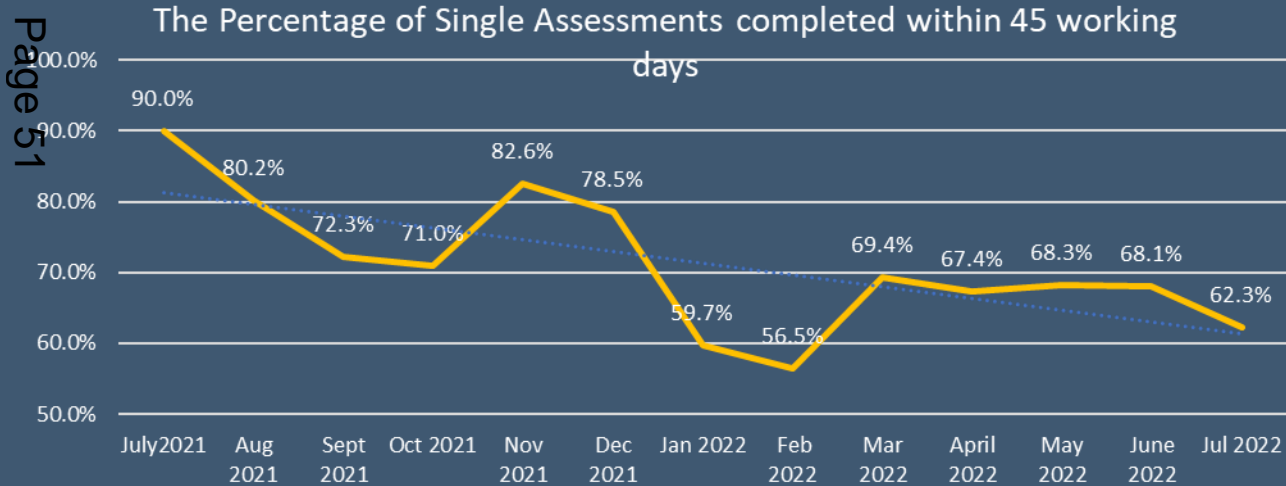
- Last 12 months- referrals decreased to 523 per 10,000
- Rate for the prior 12 month was at 650 per 10,000
- SCT now lower than SN average- more in line with England and West Midlands average

# Re-referrals



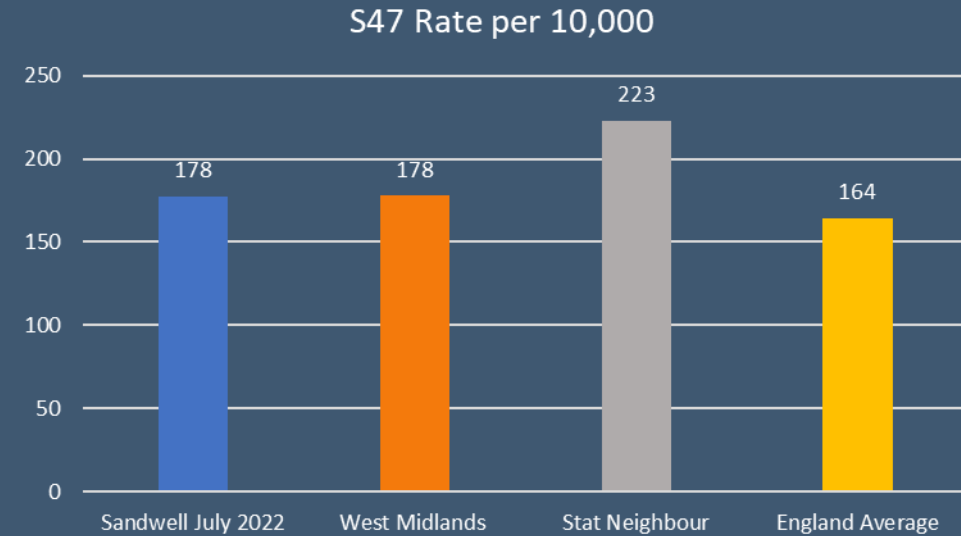
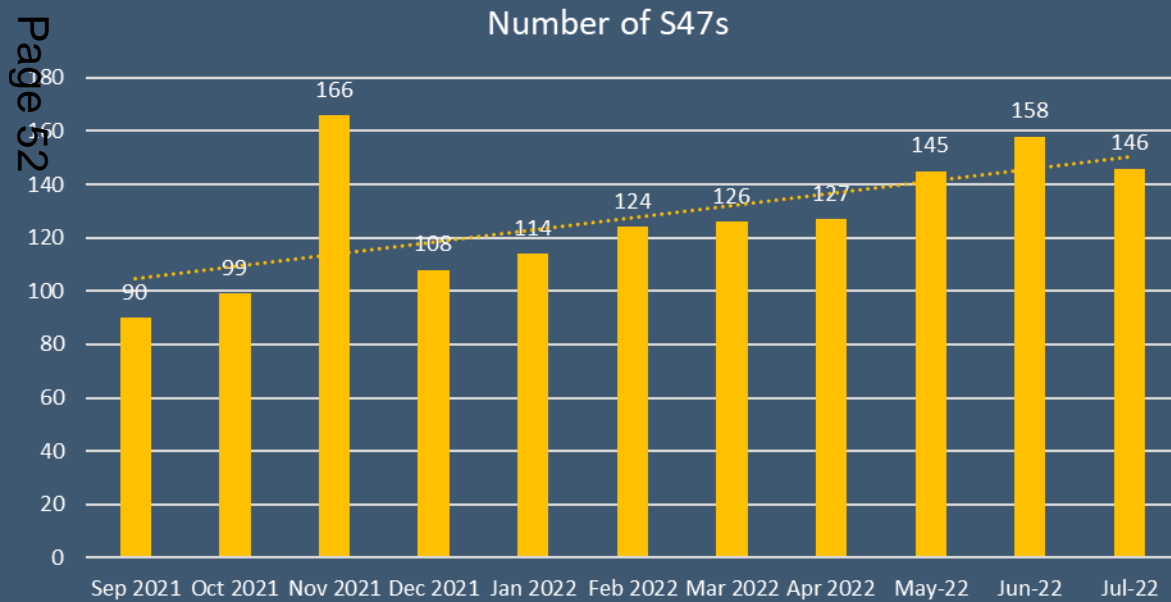
- Rates have reduced from 22.6% last year to 20% this year
- Now over 0.8% lower than our Statistical Neighbour comparators and 2.7% below England Average

# Assessments



- **Fluctuated last 12 months 56.5 to 90%**
- **July 2022- 62.3%**
- **Average over the last 12 months- 70% ( below SN, WM and England Average)**
- **Rate of single assessments per 10,000 over last 12 months has reduced from 718 per 10,000 (March 2021) to 520 per 10,000**
- **Last 6 months- 573 per 10,000**
- **Now below our SN comparators**

# Section 47 enquiries

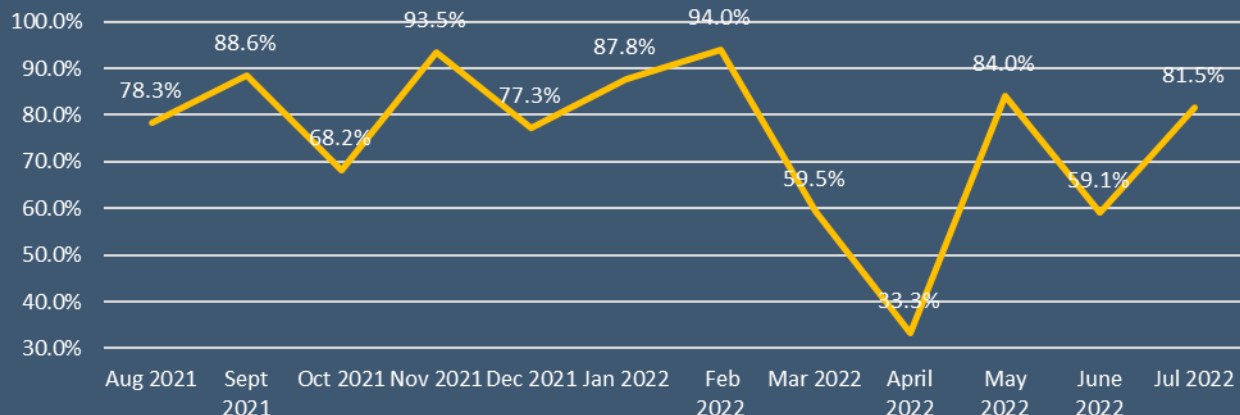


- Based on the 12 monthly rate- trajectory for the 12 months is a rate of 178 per 10,000
- Significantly lower than 2018-19 rate of 312 per 10,000
- Current rate is below SN average and in line with regional comparators

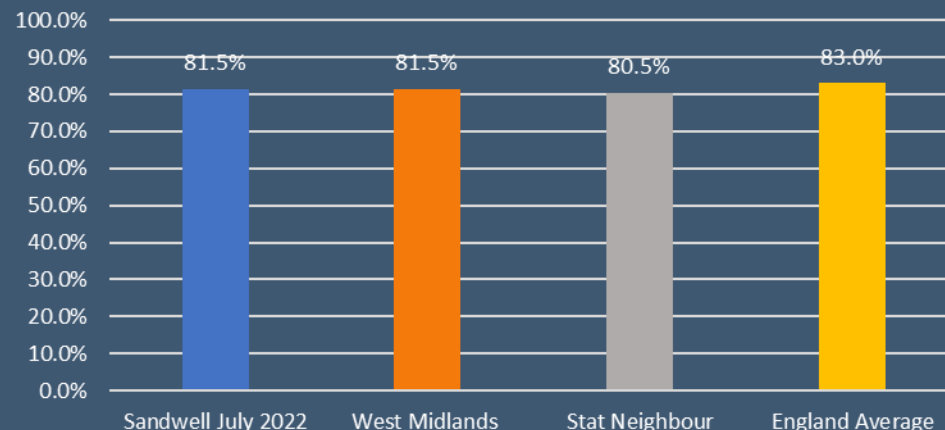


# Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPCs)

% Initial child protection conferences held within 15 days of the strategy discussion



Initial Child Protection Conferences within 15 working days

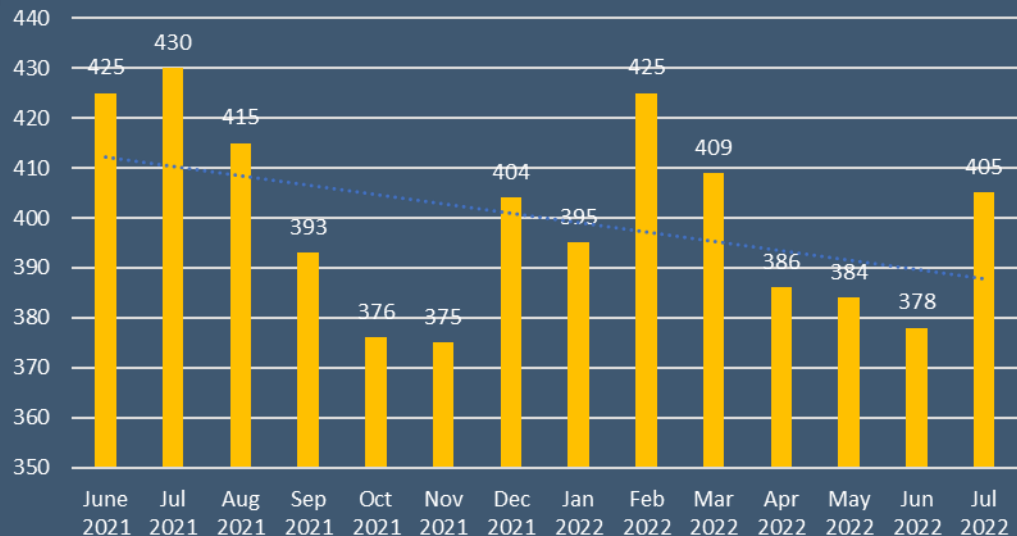


- July 2022 81.5% of ICPCs completed within 15 working days- slightly above SN
- Last 12 months- timeliness is 81%- in line with comparators.
- ICPC rate- now below SN comparators –from 96.9 per 10,000 to 56 per 10,000 (SN average 82.5)
- 87% ICPCs resulted in a CP Plan, threshold seems to be more in line with what we would expect.

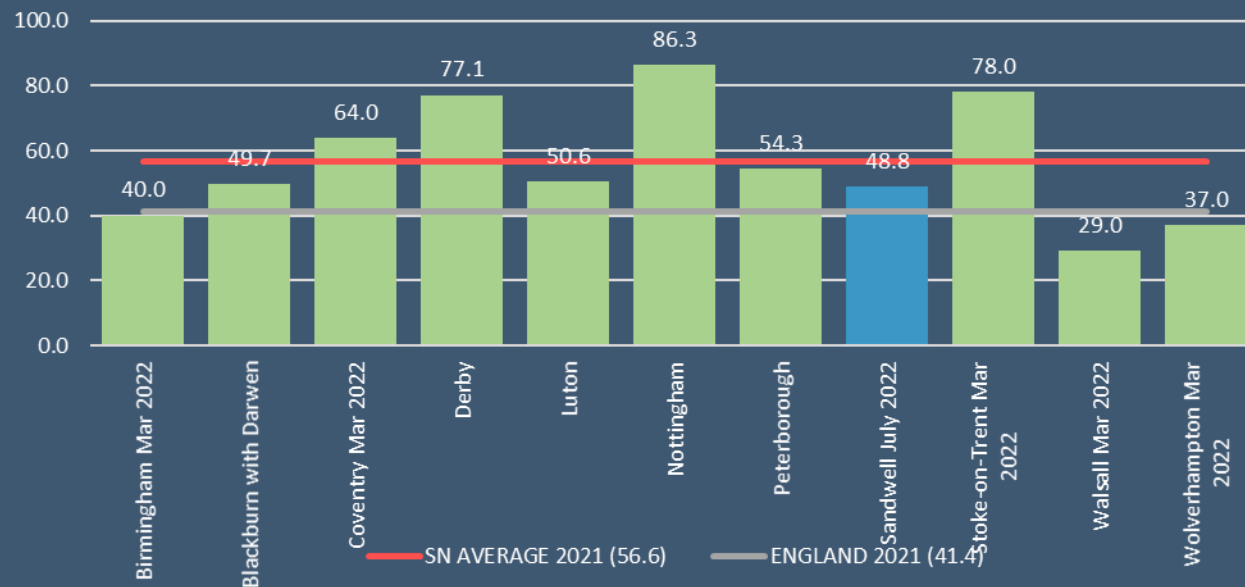
# Child Protection Plans (CPP)

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Number of Children with a Child Protection Plan

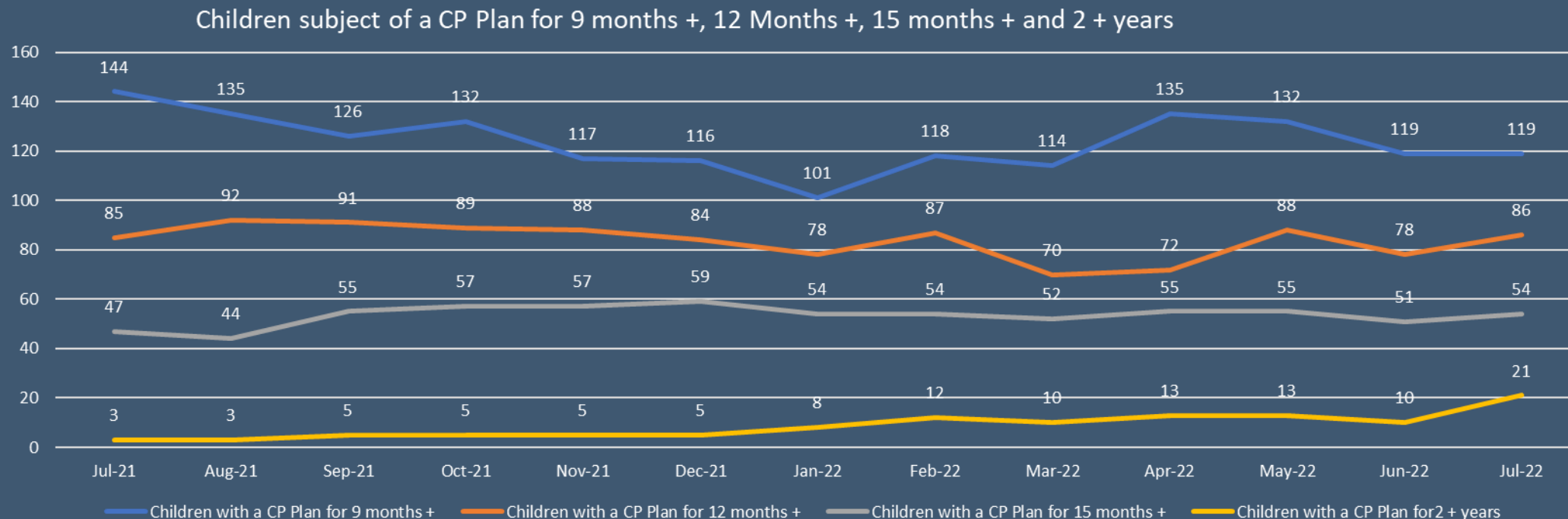


Rate of Child Protection Plans per 10,000 comparison to Statistical Neighbours (Latest SN data March 2021)



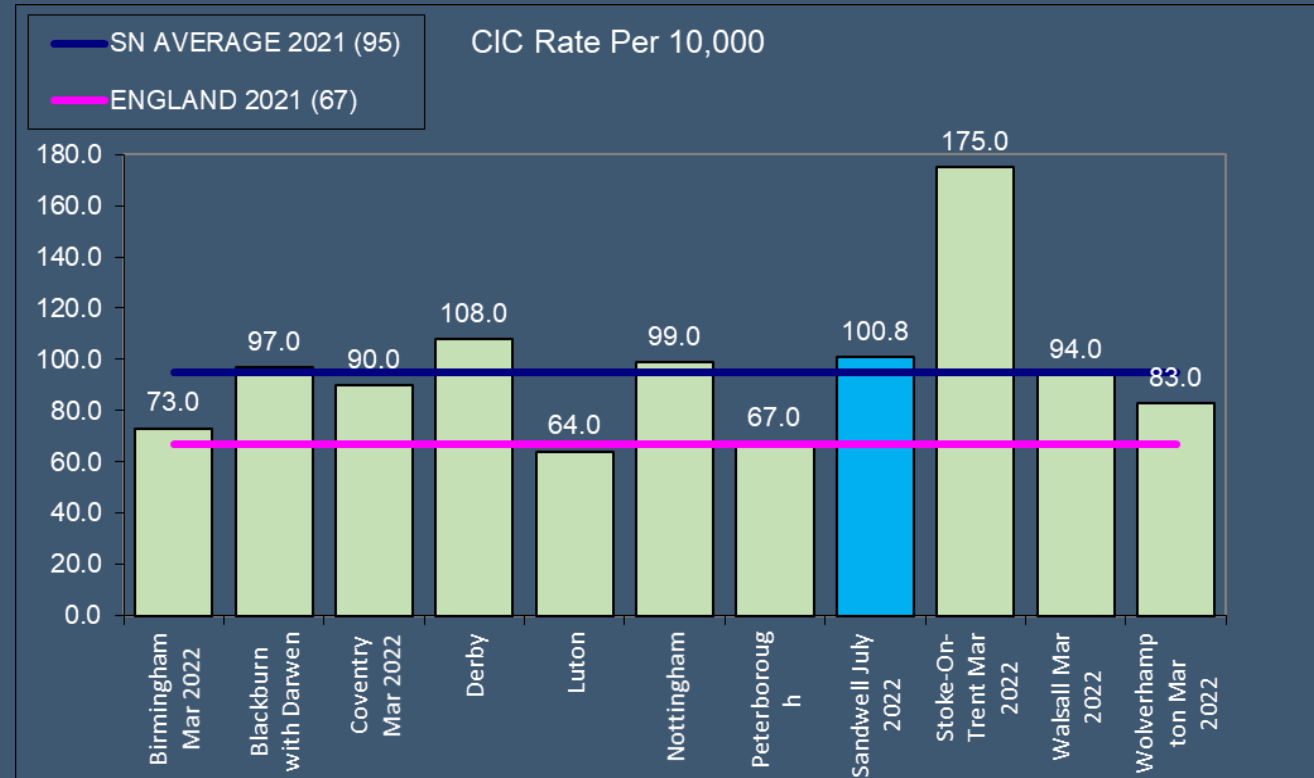
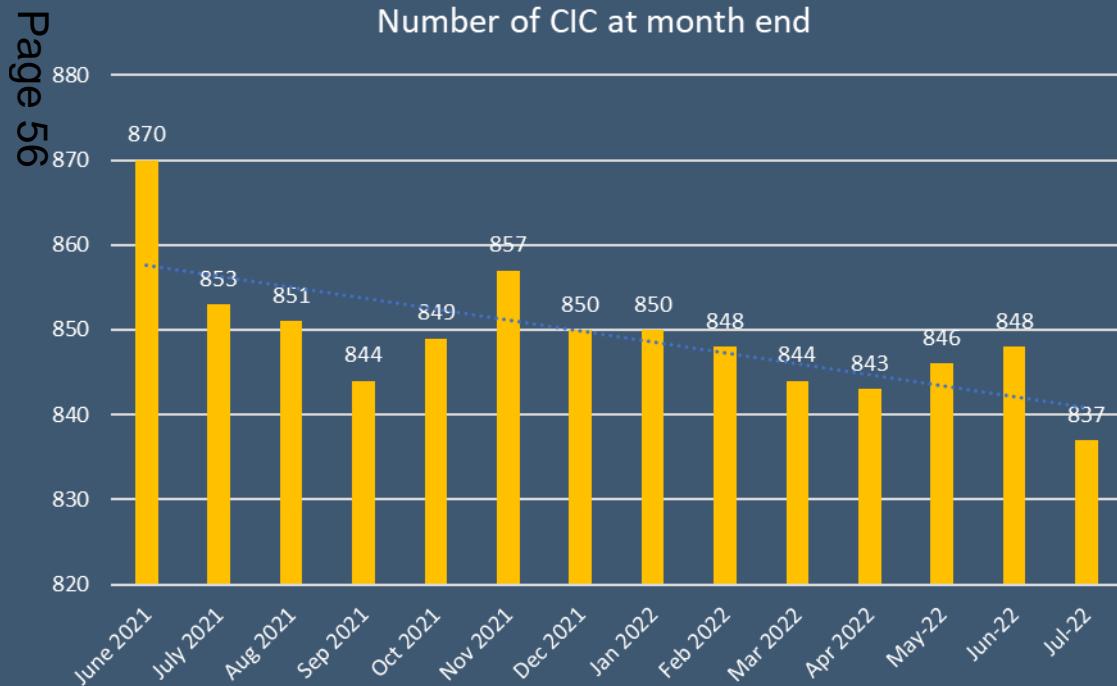
- Last 12 months- reduction in children on CPP - 430 to 405 (rates 52.2 to 48.8 per 10,000).
- Below SN average- more in line with West Midlands and England Averages.

# Child Protection



- **21 Children on a CPP longer than two years (equates to 5.2% of cohort)**
- **2.4% above our SN average**
- **Of our current cohort of children who have previously been on a CPP within two years equates to 43 - 10.6% -**
- **Compares well with March 2022 regional average of 11%**

# Children in Care

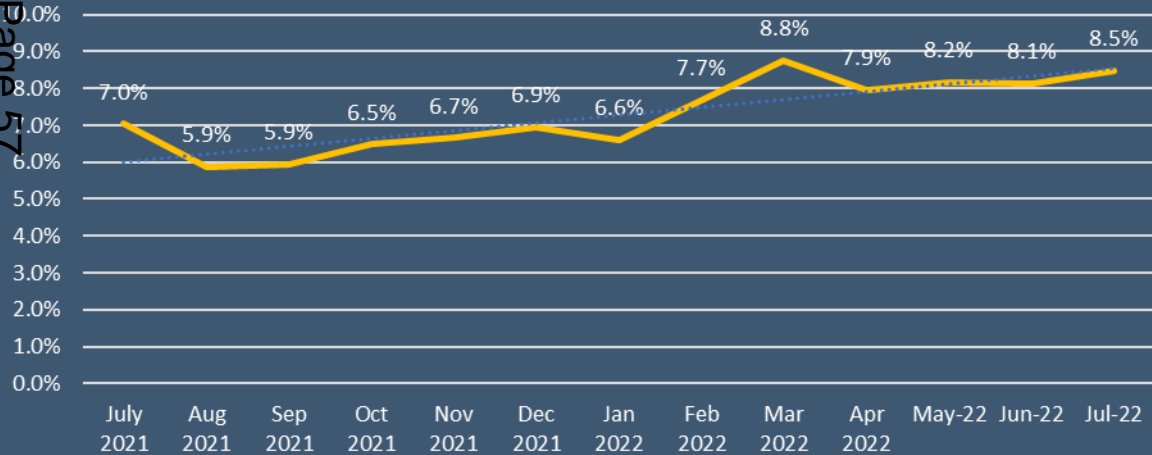


- **31<sup>st</sup> July 2022 - 837 children in care (100.8 per 10,000)- reduction from 853 previous year (102.8)**
- **Currently- SN average 95 per 10,000**
- **Over the last 12 months 187 Children have entered care with 192 Children ceasing care**

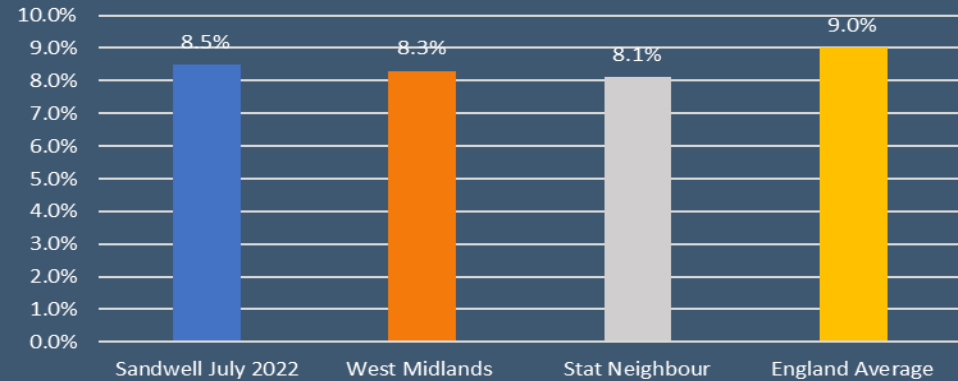
# Placement Stability

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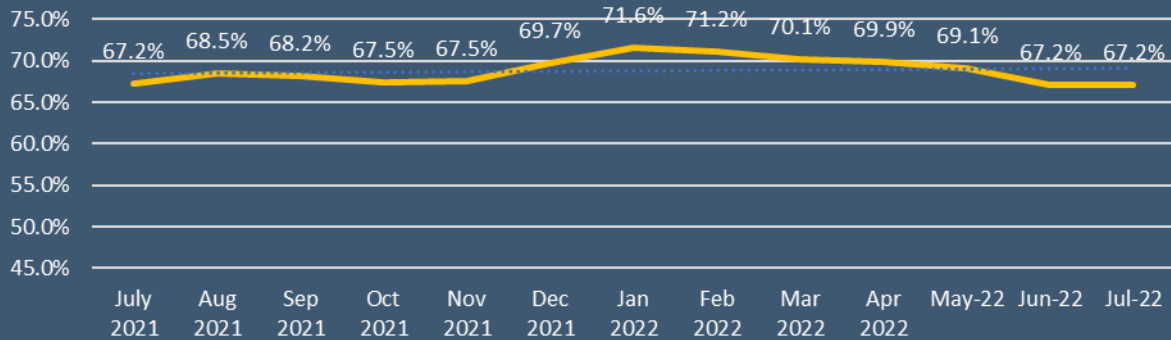
% Children in Care with 3+ Moves



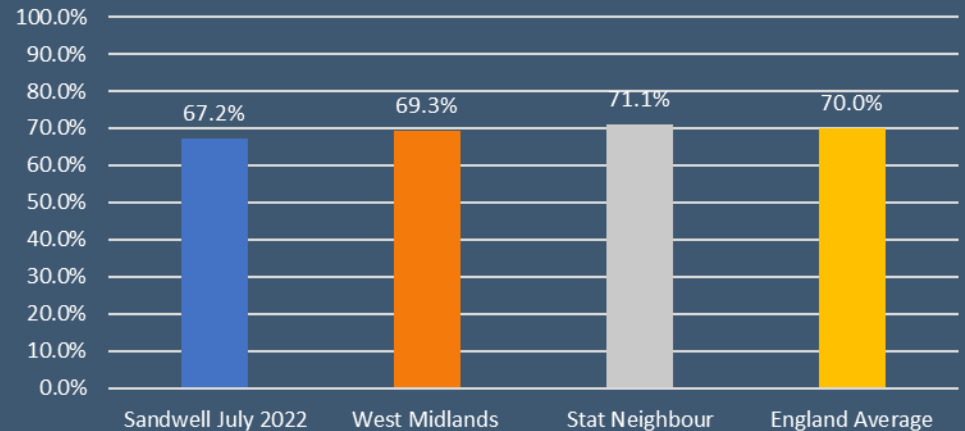
Children in Care with 3 or more placement moves in last 12 months



% Children in Care in Same Placement for 2+ Years



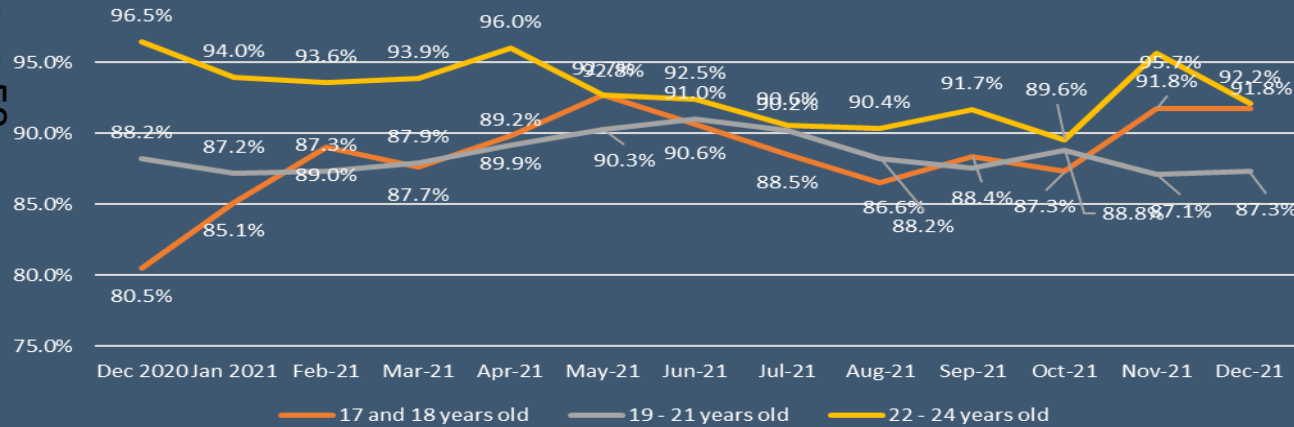
Children in Care in same placement for 2+ years



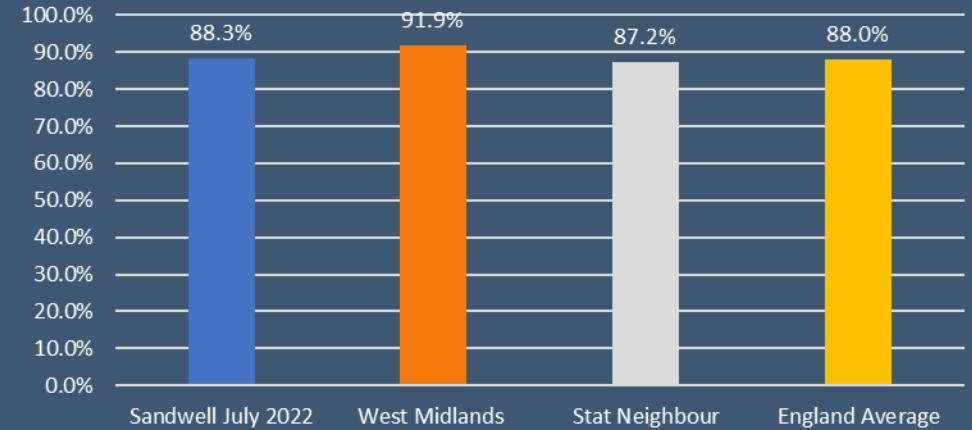
- 71 children had 3+ moves in last 12 months- equates to 8.5% - in line with SN average (8.3%) and West Midlands (8.1%) and slightly better than England Average (9%)
- 67.2% children in care for 2.5 years remaining in the same placement for 2 years- slightly below SN Average of 71.1%

# Care Leavers

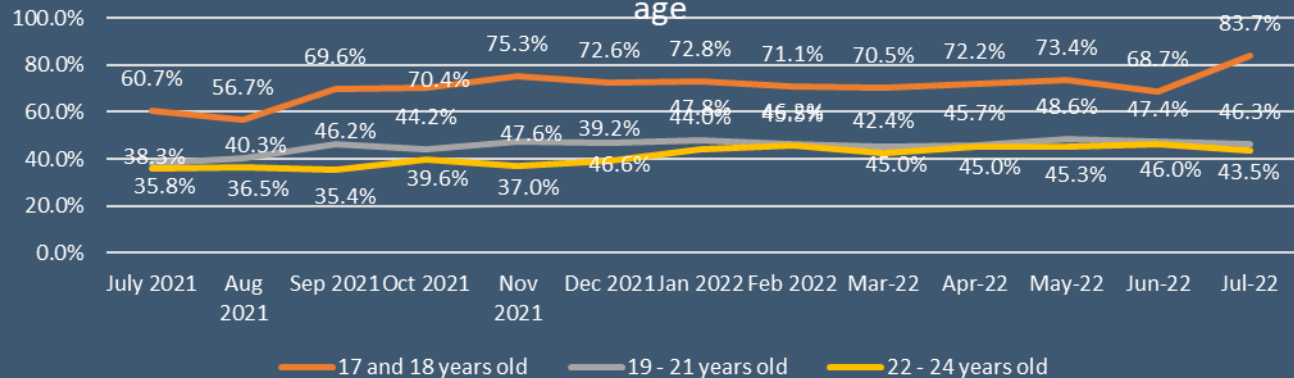
% Care leavers in Suitable Accommodation - by age



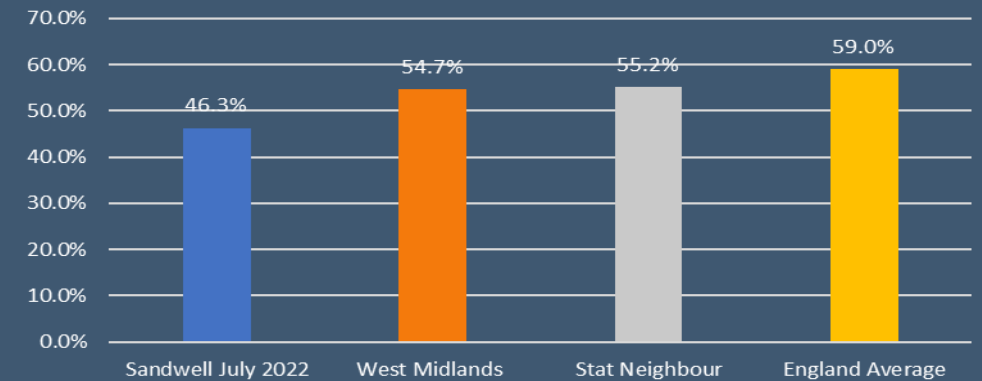
Care Leavers aged 19-21 in Suitable Accommodation



% Care leavers Engaged in Employment, Education or Training - by age



Care Leavers aged 19-21 Engaged in Employment, Education or Training



- 19-21yrs- 46.3% EET (53.7% NEET) - 8.9% below SN comparators and 8.4% below West Mids
- 17-18yrs- 83.7% EET
- Accommodation- in line with our comparators



**Sandwell**  
Children's Trust



# Scrutiny Committee

*Spotlight on children in our care*

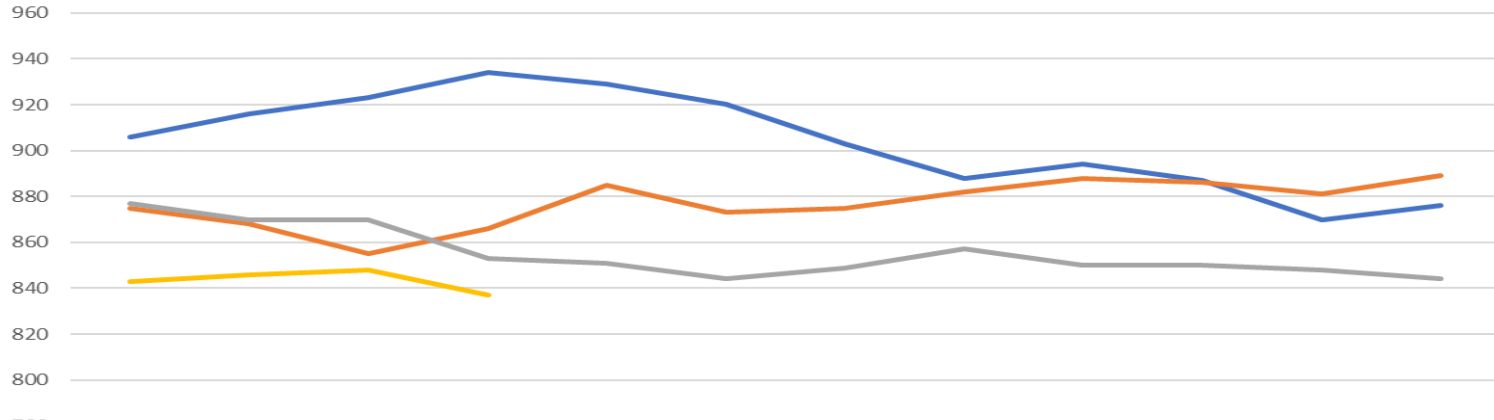
*10 October 2022*

# Our Children in Care- numbers



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Children in Care Population Trend



	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March
2019	906	916	923	934	929	920	903	888	894	887	870	876
2020	875	868	855	866	885	873	875	882	888	886	881	889
2021	877	870	870	853	851	844	849	857	850	850	848	844
2022	843	846	848	837								

— 2019 — 2020 — 2021 — 2022

- July 2019- peak number
- July 2022- 837
- Steady decline over 4 years

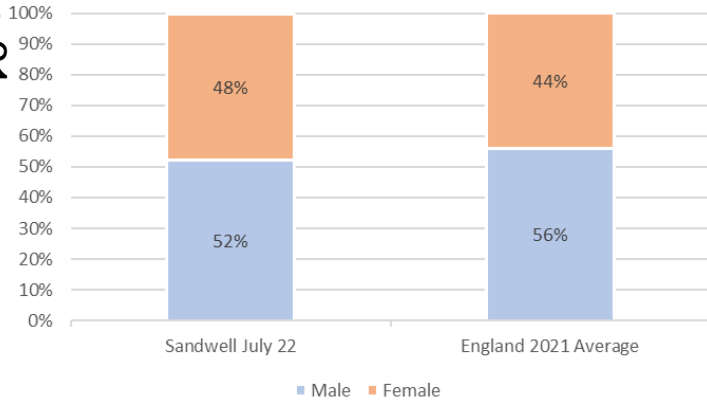


# Our Children in Care- demographics

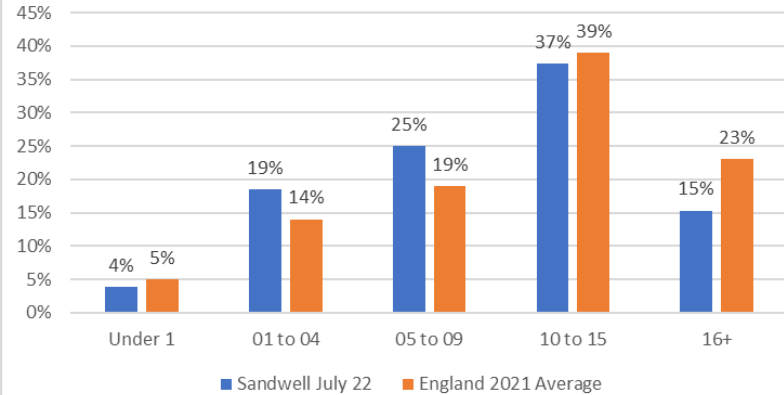


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Gender of CIC as at 31st July 22

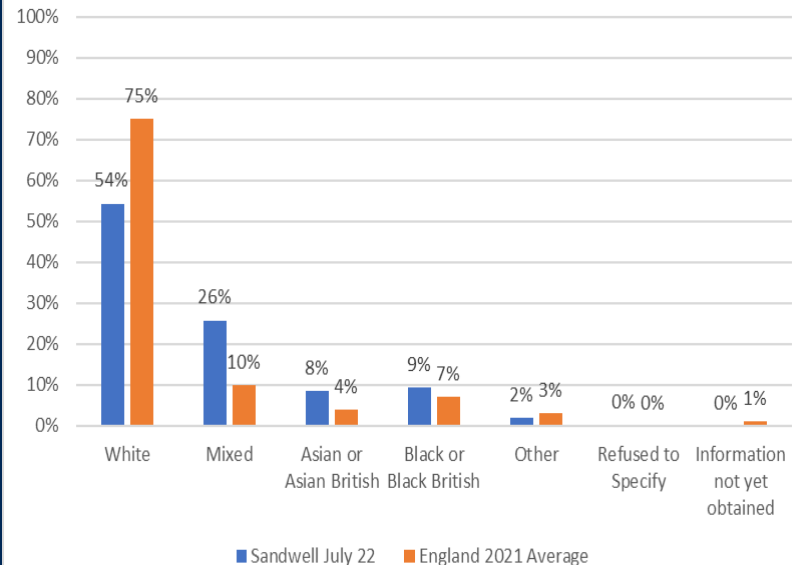


Age of CIC as at 31st July 22



Grouped Ethnic Origin	Ethnic Origin	Sandwell July 22	Sandwell July 22	England 2021 Average
White	White - British	415	54%	75%
	White - Irish	1		
	White - Other	39		
Mixed	Mixed - White/Asian	59	26%	10%
	Mixed - White/Black African	11		
	Mixed - White/Black Caribbean	97		
	Mixed - Other	49		
Asian or Asian British	Asian - Bangladeshi	13	8%	4%
	Asian - Indian	20		
	Asian - Pakistani	13		
	Asian - Other	25		
Black or Black British	Black - African	32	9%	7%
	Black - Caribbean	32		
	Black - Other	14		
Other	Arab		2%	3%
	Gypsy / Roma Count	5		
	Any Other Ethnic Group	11		
Refused to Specify	Refused to Specify	1	0%	0%
Information not yet obtained			0%	1%
<b>Total</b>		<b>837</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Ethnicity of CIC July 22



# Our Children in Care- demographics

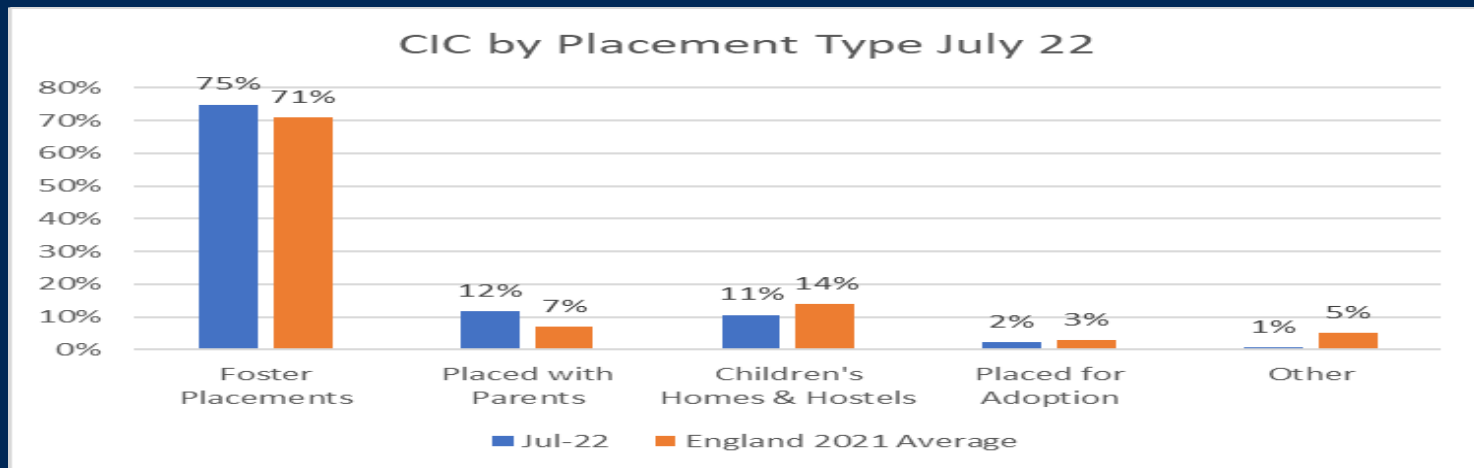
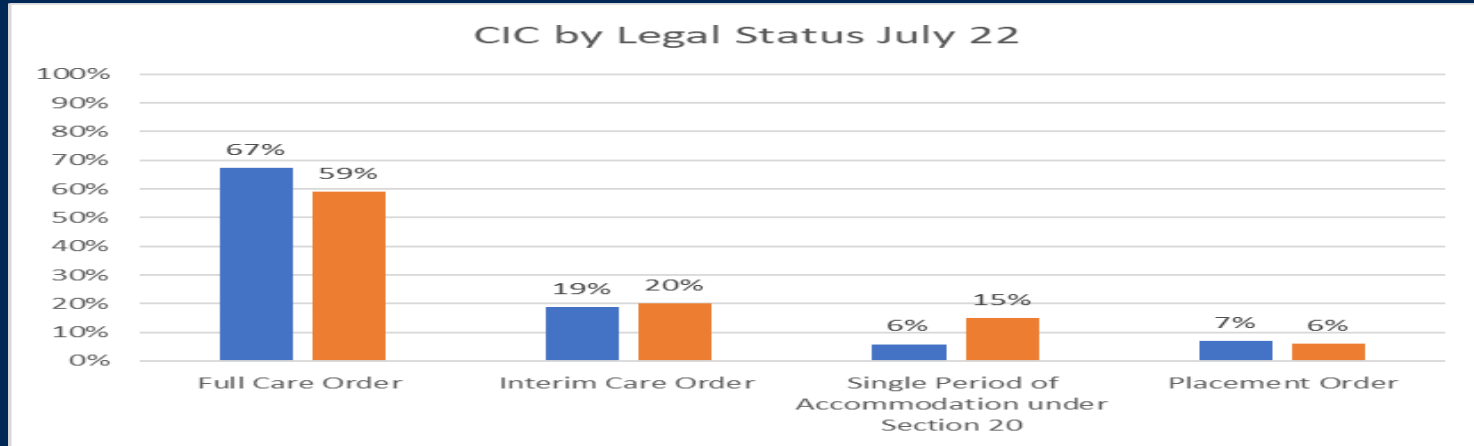


Sandwell

Children's Trust



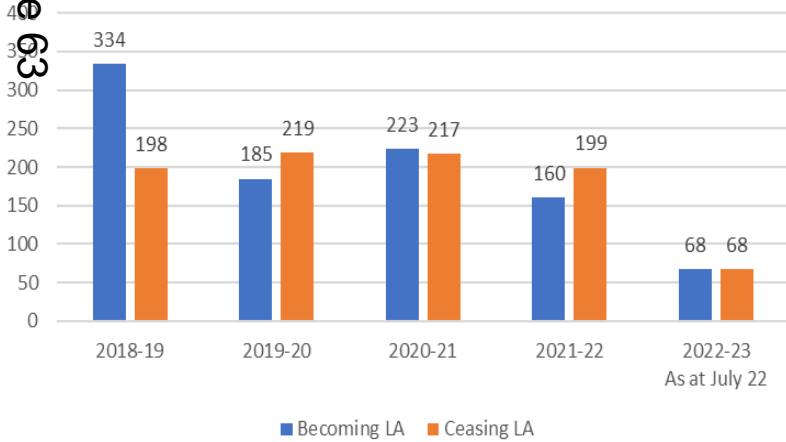
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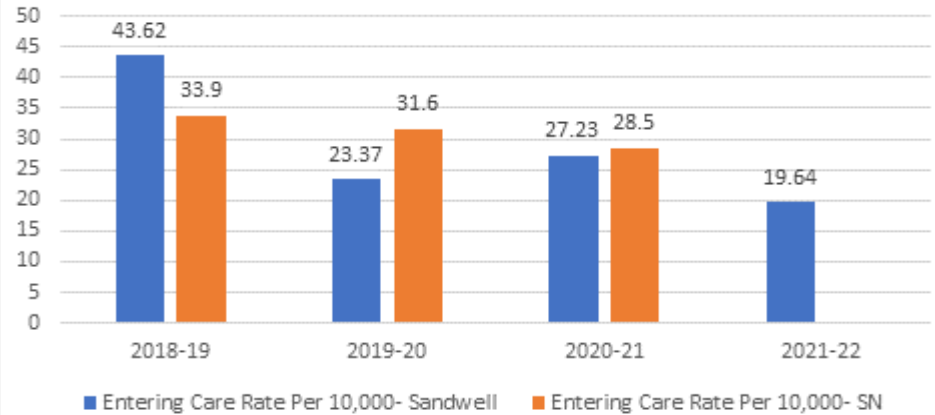
# Entering and Ceasing Care

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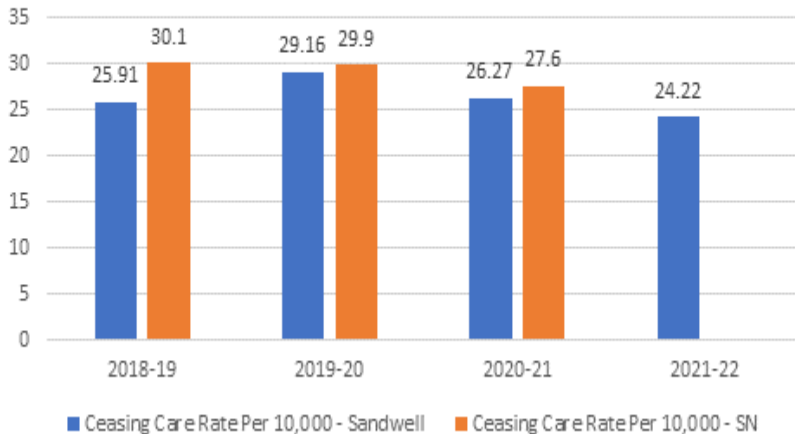
Children Becoming Looked After & Ceasing Care



Rate of Children Entering Care per 10,000 - Sandwell and Statistical Neighbour Average



Rate of Children Ceasing Care per 10,000 - Sandwell and Statistical Neighbour Average



The number of children becoming looked after has reduced significantly since 2018-19. With the exception of 2018-19 the number of children entering care is below Statistical neighbours.

The number of children ceasing care has remained fairly consistent over the last 3 years and on par with our statistical neighbours.



# Our Children in Care – placement types

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Type of Accommodation	Sandwell July 22	Sandwell July 22	% of Budget
Foster Placement - Internal Foster Carer and External Foster Carer	462	55.2%	74.9%
Foster Placement - Connected Carer (family and friends)	165	19.7%	
Residential Homes(including secure accommodation)	57	6.8%	36.0%
NHS/Health Trust or other Establishment Providing Medical or Nursing Care	1	0.1%	
Placed with Parents	97	11.6%	
Independent Living	33	3.9%	
Placed For Adoption	19	2.3%	
Other Placements	3	0.4%	
<b>Total</b>	<b>837</b>	<b>100%</b>	

# Focused Activity: Prevention

## Edge of Care Services November 2021 to April 2022

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**Family Group Conferencing - 100** FGC referrals- **177** children. 92 requests for FGCs- 45 completed. At the point of closure- 10 children stepped down from Child Protection to Children in Need, no increase in Children in Care, 5 children ended plans.

- **Family Solutions Team-** 91 children closed to Family Solutions Team (FST), 90 actively supported, 1 withdrawal. At point of closure, no children entered care (48). 100% success rate for this period.
- 11 children's placements ended during this period and a further 23 whose placements were maintained- 68% success rate in placement stability
- **Multi-Systemic Therapy Team-** 39 children supported. All children were on the edge of care or custody when referred- 89 % remained with their families at the completion of involvement.

# Focused Activity- Permanency

New Permanency Strategy- multi-agency approach- ‘permanency from the outset’

- Review of Court processes- improved practice and oversight
- December 2021 to July 2022- **117** children left care:
  - Adoption- 12.8%
  - Special Guardianship Order – 12.8% (SN average 11%)
  - 34 returned home so far (6 same period last year)
  - 2 Care Orders discharged
  - 42 children turned 18
  - 5 children in Staying Put Arrangements with current Foster Carers
  - 4 children under other (eg Child Arrangements Order)

# Focused Activity- Sufficiency

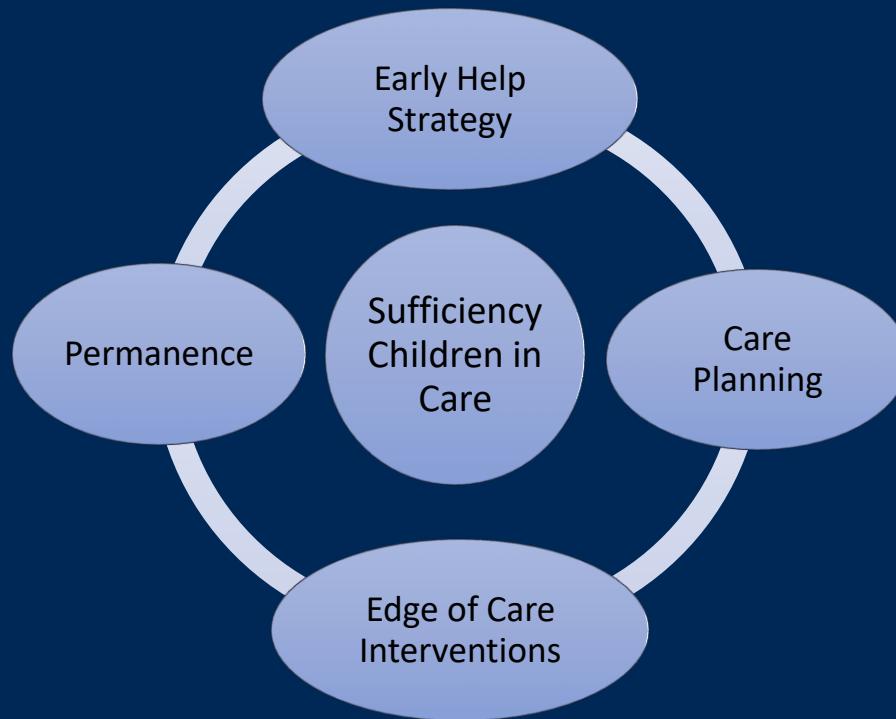


Sandwell

Children's Trust



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## National Challenges

- National shortage of foster care placements
- National shortage of SWs
- Complexity of children's needs
- Implications of Social Care Review

- Systemic approach
- Prevention- every level
- Sufficiency Strategy and action Plan- Strategic Lead
- Practice focus- Care Planning- keeping children and families together wherever possible
- Collaboration with providers in Sandwell and wider partners- shared decision making
- Closer alignment between Placement Team and Fostering Service
- Scrutiny and challenge of planning and decision making

# Participation Service



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## Our approach to participation

Participation is the means by which young people exercise their rights, where they join with adults to make decisions.

**Our principles of participation**

- is an ongoing process
- must enable young people to influence their outcomes
- values and supports collaboration

**Invest**

Everyone in the Trust family will understand the importance and value of participation

**Inform**

Children and young people will know their rights and have access to the information they need

**Influence**

Children and young people will make a difference, now and in the future

**Involve**

Children and young people will co-design and review the services they receive

## Children coming into care

Participation Team will make contact with all new children who come into care with an intro pack which will include a booklet informing of their rights, how to complain, advocacy services and more. They will also be invited to an introduction day to build positive relationships with the Trust.

## Voices of Sandwell

The Children in care council meet on a regular basis and discuss issues faced currently by children in care. Over the past 6 months the group have met with Ofsted inspectors, been consulted on Fostering Guidelines and matching processes, they have also hosted and organised the Queens Jubilee family event.

## Forum for Independent Young Adults

Young people who are care experienced come together regularly to discuss issues around the Local Offer. Recently it was highlighted care leavers who attend University struggle financially. A report has been produced with recommendations on how this can be improved. Young People have also been involved in filming what its like to be a care leaver for Neighbourhood Services, which will be used for training purposes.

## Summer Programme

The recent summer programme for children in care and care leavers has been linked to the Commonwealth games, HAF programme and other recreational activities for young people to develop their skills such as First Aid and Arts.

## Recruitment of staff & Induction

Young people have sat on Young People's Panels to recruit a range of roles such as Social Workers, Heads of Services and Team Managers, Corporate Parenting Coordinator and Independent Reviewing Officer. They have also been involved in the Induction of new staff within the Trust.

**Sandwell Children's Trust**

**Summer Programme**

25TH JULY - 26TH AUGUST 2022

TO RESERVE A SPACE CALL: 07582102210 OR BHM PARTICIPATION TEAMS@SANDWELLCHILDRESTRUST

WEEK 1	WEEK 2	
<p>25TH JULY - 30TH JULY 2022</p> <p>MONDAY 25TH JULY BATON RELAY PARADE SANDWELL VALLEY 9.30-11.30PM (ALL YOUNG PEOPLE)</p> <p>WEDNESDAY 27TH JULY FIRST AID TRAINING (FULLY BOOKED)</p> <p>THURSDAY 28TH JULY MALTHOUSE STABLES 10-12PM LIMITED SPACES (ALL YOUNG PEOPLE)</p>	<p>30TH JULY - 5TH AUGUST</p> <p>MONDAY 1ST AUG MAGICAL DAY @INGESTRE HALL 9-11AM PICK UP OLDDBURY</p> <p>TUESDAY 2ND AUG SHROPSHIRE WALK LONG WYD 9-11.30AM PICK UP OLDDBURY</p> <p>TUESDAY 2ND AUGUST COMMONWEALTH GAMES WOMENS CRICKET @BOSWASTON 6-8PM</p> <p>WEDNESDAY 3RD AUG 50 PLAY FESTIVAL 12-2PM @ SANDWELL VILL</p> <p>FRIDAY 5TH AUG COMMONWEALTH GAMES BOWLING @ BOWLEX 10-12PM (ABOVE ACTIVITIES ABOVE ALL YOUNG PEOPLE)</p>	
WEEK 3	WEEK 4	WEEK 5
<p>MONDAY 8TH AUG COMMONWEALTH CLOSING CEREMONY @SANDWELL VALLEY (ALL YOUNG PEOPLE)</p> <p>TUESDAY 9TH AUG DUDLEY ZOO 12-4PM (CARE LEAVERS ONLY)</p> <p>THURSDAY 11TH AUG BOWLING @BOWLPLEX DUDLEY 1-3PM (CHILDREN IN CARE ONLY)</p>	<p>MONDAY 15TH AUG BLACKPOOL PLEASURE BEACH 9-10PM (CARE LEAVERS ONLY)</p>	<p>TUESDAY 23RD AUG ALBUSHCRAFT SESSI @ SANDWELL VALLEY 1-3PM (ALL YOUNG PEOPLE)</p> <p>THURSDAY 25TH AUG THORPE PARK 9-10PM (CHILDREN IN CARE ONLY)</p>

PLEASE NOTE THE PROGRAMME CAN CHANGE AT ANYTIME



## Report to Children’s Services and Education Scrutiny Board

**10 October 2022**

<b>Subject:</b>	Covid Funding Update
<b>Director:</b>	Director of Children and Education, Michael Jarrett
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Michael Jarrett, Director of Children and Education <a href="mailto:Michael_Jarrett@sandwell.gov.uk">Michael_Jarrett@sandwell.gov.uk</a>  Sally Giles, Strategic Partnerships and Commissioning Manager <a href="mailto:sally_giles@sandwell.gov.uk">sally_giles@sandwell.gov.uk</a>


### 1 Recommendations

1.1 Scrutiny Board considers and comments on the Covid funding update.

### 2 Reasons for Recommendations

2.1 The purpose of the item is to provide an update for consideration regarding how Covid Emergency Funding has been used to support the emotional wellbeing and mental health of children and young people.

### 3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	<p>Best start in life for children and young people</p> <p>The funding ensures that children and young people are able to access appropriate emotional well-being and mental health support to mitigate the impact of Covid e.g. prolonged periods of isolation due to lockdowns, reduced social interaction due to school closures and social distancing.</p>
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## 4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 The Covid pandemic has had a detrimental impact on children and young people. Proposals from Children and Education Service were put forward to tackle this and were approved by Cabinet for 2021/2022. Some initiatives started later than anticipated and some were not delivered in this financial year, there has been further agreement for these to be carried forward and used between 2022/23 and 2024/25.
- 4.2 To support the rising demand for services, additional proposals were made at the 22nd June 2022 Cabinet Meeting for further initiatives which will support the emotional wellbeing and mental health of young people and to deal with the increase demand for services, including for those with special educational needs and disabilities. These were agreed for 2022/23 and with longer-term demand to be reviewed at Budget Board post September 2022. See appendix 1.
- 4.3 A significant proportion of the Covid Recovery funding (£1.1m) has been allocated to supporting the increased emotional wellbeing and mental health needs of young people as a result of the pandemic before they escalated and required more intensive services.
- 4.4 The purpose of the funding was to expand capacity amongst voluntary and community organisations to enable them to meet increased need as quickly as possible. To this end, it has been managed by SCVO on behalf of the Council via a grant aid agreement. Provision is for those aged 5 -18 years with majority of projects running from June 2021 to August 2022. The projects are being delivered by Sandwell based voluntary and community organisations with funding managed through SCVO.
- 4.5 A multi-agency panel was set up to establish criteria for the programme, agree the projects and monitor programme implementation. It comprises representatives from CAMHS, SMBC, Public Health, Sandwell Children's Trust, Education Psychology and the Education Charter Mark team.



#### 4.6 The purpose of the funding was to:

- make available to all school aged children (5 – 18 years) in Sandwell support that enables them to address challenges with their emotional well-being and mental health, and to develop personal strategies that build confidence and resilience.
- target those children and young people who are identified as requiring additional support or access to specialist services where such support is currently not provided
- provide support for children and young people identified as being impacted by domestic abuse, including family support where possible.
- deliver immediate support in light of an expected surge in demand from Summer 2021 and to scale up, develop, test and refine the model during delivery up until end of August 2022

4.7 The funding has been allocated through three rounds, with providers being award grants between £20,000 - £120,000. The first round was launched in May 2021, followed by further rounds in Sept 2021 and January 2022. (see appendix 2 for grant allocations).

4.8 Thirteen providers have delivered or continue to deliver eighteen different projects to all ages of children and young people. This ranges from whole school assemblies and class sessions to smaller group work and 1-1 sessions for mentoring and counselling. Sports and creative activities with a therapeutic focus are also used as ways of engaging young people and there is also specialist provision for those at risk of domestic abuse, or likely to be involved in the criminal justice system as well as younger children with additional needs. Referrals may come through schools, parents, other agencies or the young person themselves.

4.9 Over 2000 young people have been involved in activities to date. There is ongoing analysis of data, but current findings show a 50/50 split between male and female participant's (with less than 0.1% identifying as another gender).



- 4.10 Whilst the programme's age range is 5-18, 50% of all individuals engaged in the projects to date has been delivered to those aged 9-13. Projects have been delivered across each of the 6 towns, with 47% delivery taking place in West Bromwich and 24% in Oldbury.
- 4.11 Alba Network have been appointed as the external evaluation partner to work alongside SCVO, providers and the Steering Group. They hold over 20 years' experience in providing research and consultancy to the public and third sector.
- 4.12 The focus of their role is to not only deliver a final evaluation but to provide ongoing learning for all partners from an independent, external viewpoint. They are working to a set of overarching evaluation priorities, as follows:
- Understanding the difference activities across the programme have made to Children and Young People in Sandwell
  - They are also looking at the impact and learning for the whole system of CYP support, including how SMBC, Schools, Children and Young People and the Voluntary and Community Sector work more effectively together in partnership.
  - Understanding the increase in capability, effectiveness, confidence and sustainability of local voluntary sector providers as a legacy of the funding programme.
- 4.13 As well as numerical data, the Programme is collecting outcomes so the benefits of the projects to individuals can be assessed. The evaluators will be collecting this data for the final report. A current example from Black Country Women's Aid: Our Future Project reveals the following:
- 100% understood healthy relationships
  - 80% experienced improved/good self-esteem
  - 80% felt school was important to them
  - 85% felt safe at home
  - 78% had improved school attendance
- 4.14 The projects have been widely promoted by the providers as well as SCVO ensuring key partners and stakeholders are aware of the Programme. Details of providers services also appear on the Sandwell Family Life website which is an information portal listing the universal offer of support accessible to children, young people, families and the wider community, together with Sandwell Early Help website which is designed to offer information, resources and support to practitioners.



4.14 SCVO holds regular provider meetings, where challenges, experiences and project delivery are discussed. There has been improved collaboration between providers which has led to cross project support. One significant example is where one provider had too many children and young people waiting for counselling provision. They were able to assess people on their waiting list and refer to other providers to minimize waiting times for the children and young people who required the service.

4.15 At 22nd June 2022 Cabinet Meeting, there was a further £550k of funding agreed to continue the programme in 2022/2023. SCVO in conjunction with partners will pause to reflect on the data and feedback currently available from providers, participants and partners to assess where the priorities are for future activity. There is ongoing work being undertaken to continuously improve data collection, evaluation partners are continuing to work with providers and partners to provide feedback and the Provider Group and Steering Group will continue to meet to maximise delivery and ensure all CYP can access the support they need.

## 5 Alternative Options

5.1 The alternative option would have been to not fund additional emotional well-being and mental health support for children and young people. The likely outcome of this would have been children and young people having to wait longer to access existing services, prolonged and detrimental impact on children and young people and the needs of children and young people escalating to the extent they need to access emergency or statutory care.

## 6 Implications

<b>Resources:</b>	<p>£1.1m was allocated for emotional well-being and mental health services from Covid funding. £1m was utilised for the grant programme with £100k being used for the administration and evaluation of the programme.</p> <p>A further £550k has been agreed by Cabinet to continue the work in 2022/23, this will come from Covid funding.</p>
<b>Legal and Governance:</b>	<p>There is a grant agreement in place between the Council and SCVO that details how the funding is to be utilised.</p>



	There is a steering group comprised of Public Health, CAMHS, Sandwell Children’s Trust, Sandwell Council and Charter Mark that oversee the programme.
<b>Risk:</b>	The corporate risk management strategy has been complied with and has concluded that there are no significant risks that require reporting and that suitable measures are in place to mitigate the risks identified to acceptable levels.
<b>Equality:</b>	An Equality Impact Assessment screening is not required for this report.
<b>Health and Wellbeing:</b>	The programme of activities will support the emotional well-being and mental health needs of children and young people in Sandwell. It will work to reduce escalation of need by providing quick and accessible services.

## 7. Appendices

1. List of £900K funds carried over 21/22 to 22/23 for Children and Educations services
2. List of grant allocations made under £1.1 Emotional Wellbeing Programme 21/22





## Appendix 1

## Children and Education Services

## Covid funds carry over 2021/22 in to 2022/23

Item	Reason funding required	Reason for carry forward	Carried forward from 2021/22
Online Safety and Trusted Adult Training	To continue to provide training and increase the opportunities to improve the whole school approach to the Trusted Adult model	These will be delivered throughout the academic year.	£21,550.00
Emotionally based School Refusal	For the recruitment of an assistant educational physiologist to support the research and mapping of roles and responsibilities of different agencies with regards to attendance. Develop a shared approach and provide understanding of EBSA. The role will support and facilitate interventions for children and young people in to remain in school.	Recruitment delays - aim for Sept 2022	£46,000.00
Virtual school education recovery work	The funding will continue to support education recovery work - Virtual School in partnership with EEF - literacy programmes.	To be completed within the new academic year.	£17,500.00
MASH School liaison	For funding to be allocated from September 22 onwards to support Mash senior officer working directly with schools to provide additional support, guidance and training to schools' designated safeguarding leads with regard to thresholds, early help and targeted services	Facilitate interventions to support CYP to attend and remain in school	£ 49,000.00
Complex Comms & Autism Team	To increase in capacity within the teach to include 2 specialist teachers for ASD and 2 specialist development officers for ASD. Data shows a rise in the population of CYP with ASD; this group has been disproportionately impacted by Covid.	Funding agree for a 2-year fixed term contract.	£292,378.00

<b>C19: SST EY Development Worker</b> Page 76	<p>Due to the impact of COVID restrictions there has been an inability to conduct home visits or successfully meet virtually with over 53 families where there has been significant disruption of our specialist services This has caused a significant delay in each child's development and progress. Recruitment of an experienced Early Years Practitioner to support parents who have children under 5 years old, with Sensory SEND Needs.</p>	<p>Post filled from April 2022- Fixed Term post, costs expected up until March 2023.</p>	<p><b>£33,000.00</b></p>
<b>C19: Assistant Educational Psychologist Support</b>	<p>AEP time used to research/undertake a mapping of the roles and responsibilities of different agencies within the LA with regard to attendance – with the aim of building links and developing a shared approach and understanding of EBSA, particularly in relation to COVID-19 related anxiety refusal to attend school. Develop and carry out central training for schools, families and other professionals to attend to address anxieties around school attendance and Covid-19. Facilitate interventions to support CYP to attend and remain in school.</p>	<p>Post filled from February 2022 (FHI) - Fixed Term post, costs expected up until January 2023 - (MAF 2056)</p>	<p><b>£ 44,300.00</b></p>
<b>C19: SRES - Secondary school support</b>	<p>Targeted interventions for groups of up to 30 students and school staff including transport of a minimum of 10 courses between March -November supporting all secondary schools. Further sessions will be offer to be targeted interventions for specific sections of the local community and workplaces.</p>	<p>Session have started and will continue across the summer and new academic year.</p>	<p><b>£ 103,440.00</b></p>
<b>C19: School Improvement</b>	<p>2 SEND school improvement projects and for on-going peer-to peer support for schools.</p>	<p>To start running from September 2022 for the academic year.</p>	<p><b>£160,000.00</b></p>
<b>C19: Out of school hours services support</b>	<p>To support the transformation and sustainability of Sandwell private and charitable Out of School sector, using funds to access group training and consultancy focussed on having a website presence and business marketing strategies.</p>		<p><b>£25,000.00</b></p>



C19: SAFL	Funding to support additional community-based course tutor and learning support to offer courses in wellbeing and employability as part of the reset and recovery of COVID.	Recruitment and start for Sept 2022.	£4,626.00
C19: Connexions targeted support y10 to y13	To provide targeted careers support provided for Year 10 to Year 13 students who have had reduced accessed to planning for their future due to COVID 19.	To be delivered throughout the academic year.	£77,500.00
C19: Learning Team	Following COVID, there has been a surge in referrals of pupils displaying learning difficulties. Funds to support additional members of the Learning Team to provide additional hours to support schools to assess pupils learning needs in order to making provision within the learning environment.	The Teacher will be in post from Sept 22- unable to recruit any sooner and role will be over an academic year	£39,677.00
C19: Attendance & Prosecution Team	Funding to be used to purchase resources to support the Elective Home Education and Children Missing from Education teams during 2022/23 academic year.	To be utilised throughout the academic year.	£9,369.00
C19: Preventing Primary Exclusions	To recruit 2 additional Preventing Primary Exclusions Officers following a significant surge in requests for support for pupils at risk of permanent exclusion. The impact of COVID on pupils' mental health, schools are requesting increased levels of support for more pupils with increasing complex needs and support those pupils on reduced timetables.	Staff are being recruited into roles which will run over the next 2 academic years.	£63,083.00

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Appendix 2  
Emotional Wellbeing Programme  
Providers allocated grants in Phase 1 2021-2022

Provider	Projects	Project Content	Target Group	Commenced
Action for Children	Blues School/Bouncing Back/The Approach	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Blues School Programme</b></p> <p>6x 1-week EWB sessions for children reaching criteria. Delivered in Schools.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Bouncing Back</b></p> <p>Whole class 1 hour for 2 weeks Years 5,6&amp;7</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>The Approach Training</b></p> <p>For staff involved in Blue Schools Programme. Max of 12 in group.</p>	<p>13-19-years</p> <p>Years 5,6&amp;7</p> <p>Staff</p>	September 2021
Albion Foundation	Extra Time	Targeted Mentoring Plus Programme for those in or at risk of being involved in Criminal Justice System	Aged 9-18 years	September 2021
Aspire4U	Lyfeproof	<p style="text-align: center;">Youth-Led Mental Health Support</p> <p>10x 1 hour Counselling Sessions with target audience of YP from ethnic minorities including those at risk of youth offending.</p>	Aged 12-18	March 2022
BCWA	Our Future	<p style="text-align: center;">Targeted intervention for CYP living with DA at home.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">1-1 and Group Support</p> <p>Training and advice for schools to identify potential CYP living with DA.</p>	Aged 5-18	November 2021

BCWA	Counselling for Children in Refuge	For those in Refuge affected by Domestic Abuse This includes Therapy Dog sessions, Parent-child art therapy and 1-1 counselling depending on age of CYP.	Aged 0-18 but majority will be aged under 11.	March 2022
BCWA	Child ISVA	Providing 1-2-1 support to Children who have suffered sexual violence	Under 18	April 2021
Children's Society	BEAM Service	EWB support via telephone, online or face to face for low level brief nonclinical interventions.	Age 5-18 or 18-25 if LAC.	July-October 2021
Children's Society	BEAM Service	EWB support via telephone, online or face to face for low level brief nonclinical interventions.	Age 5-18 or 18-25 if LAC.	November 2021
Creative Academies	EmpowHER	10 hours 1-1 mentoring =social action project and 2-day trips as part of Mental Toughness Programme.	Girls aged 9-12 Girls aged 13-16	July-September 2021
Creative Academies	GirlsCAN	10 hours 1-1 mentoring =social action project and 2-day trips as part of Mental Toughness Programme.	Girls aged 9-12 Girls aged 13-16	October 2021
Family Action	Sandwell Helping Hands	Supporting Children who have or are waiting for a diagnosis of ASD or ADHD and their parents and carers. Receive Group Training in Managing and dealing with emotions and or 1-1 Counselling	Aged 5-11	March 2022
Kaleidoscope Plus Group	B Cre-8tive	4 sessions of EWB support via creative activities. 1-2 hours so max of 8 hours support per child.	Aged 8+	August 2021
Krunch	EWB Mentor	1-2-1 Mentoring within a school environment.	Aged 9-19	September 2021

Krunch	R.E.A.L. Relationships	Respect, Emotions, Awareness, Learning about all types of relationships. Group sessions.	Aged 9-19	November 2021
Murray Hall	Future Foundations	1-1 counselling for CYP	Ages 5-18	March 2022
Relate	Time for You	1-1 Counselling for CYP whose wellbeing and mental health has been negatively affected by Covid.	Age 8-18	March 2022
Sport4Life	Be Positive	Targeted intervention for those with SEMH needs. Offering 1-1 mentoring and structured sport and physical activity.	Age 11-16	October 2021
4 Community Trust	Making a Difference	Lego/Art/Music Group Therapy in 2-hour sessions over 6 weeks. Sessions according to need may include stress reduction, resilience, confidence and selfcare, etc.	Primary and SEND children	October 2021

Following 3 rounds of funding, 13 providers have been awarded a total of £993,492:

Round One: £231,909

Round Two £456,783

Round Three £217,871

Round Three plus £86,929

Total grants paid at July 2022: £735,128

Remaining funds owed will be paid in September for programme's continuing in the Autumn Term.

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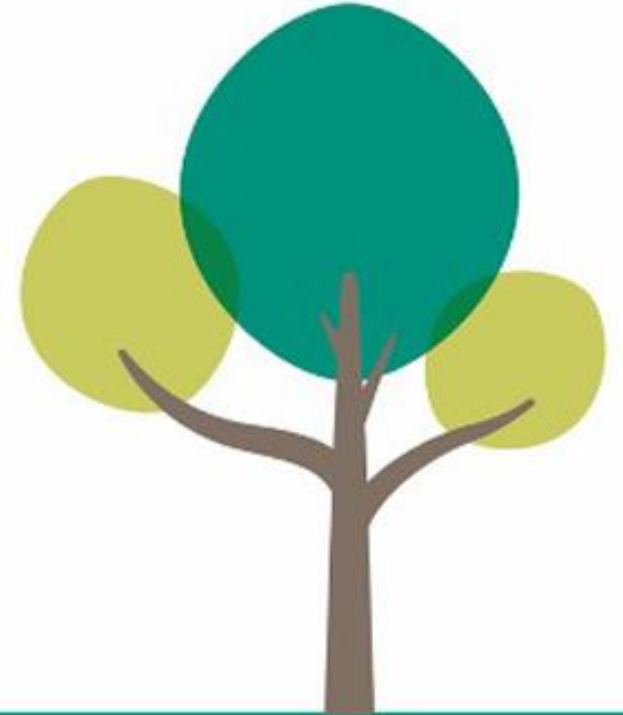
# COVID FUNDING UPDATE

Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board  
10 October 2022



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Sally Giles, Assistant Director, Children's Commissioning,  
Partnerships and Improvement





# Context

- Children and Education has received Covid Emergency Funding for a range of initiatives to deal with increased demand or promote recovery from the pandemic. Details are set out at Appendix 1.
- A significant amount has been allocated to improving children and young people's emotional wellbeing.
- There has been a significant impact on children and young people's education, mental health and emotional wellbeing due to the pandemic.
- One in six children aged five to 16 were identified as having a probable mental health problem in July 2021, a huge increase from one in nine in 2017. That's five children in every classroom ***Young Minds (January 2021)***





# The voice of Sandwell's children and young people

**Consultation and engagement with our young people has told us how the pandemic has impacted on them:**

- ✓ They have missed out on their education – worried about exams and their work
- ✓ They felt their mental health dipped
- ✓ They felt more anxious – in social settings and returning to school
- ✓ They are worried about their physical appearance due to increased use of social media
- ✓ They missed socialising and interacting with friends
- ✓ They felt isolated
- ✓ They were worried about being bullied



# Strategic approach

- In 2021, SMBC identified £1.1m Covid Emergency Funding to increase capacity within the voluntary sector to meet the emotional wellbeing needs of children and young
- To achieve a rapid increase in capacity, the money was grant aided to SCVO and first round rolled out at speed last summer, followed by two more rounds in September 21 and January 22
- A multi–agency panel with representatives from CAMHS, SMBC, Public Health, Sandwell Children’s Trust, Education Psychology and the Charter Mark team provide expertise, make funding decisions and oversee the grants being awarded.



# Overview of EWB Programme

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- The purpose of the funding:
  - ❖ *To make support available to school aged children to enable them to address their challenges.*
  - ❖ *To target those who are identified as requiring additional support or access to specialist service which are not provided.*
  - ❖ *Provide support for children and young people identified as being impacted by domestic abuse, including family support where possible.*
- Target group - Children and young people aged 5-18





# Activity and Impact

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- Progress to date:
  - ✓ 13 providers received grant funding to delivery a range of activities
  - ✓ Activities taking place in all 6 towns
  - ✓ Over 2000 individuals have accessed support sessions
  - ✓ Largest cohort receiving support - 9-13 years old
  - ✓ Improved cross provider engagement and support
- Feedback from children and young people:
  - “This is the best because it helps me control my feelings.”
  - “I love doing this because it helps with stress and anger.”
- Feedback from teachers:
  - “They are asking to talk to trusted adults in school if they need to.”
  - “We’ve now implement self-care jars/positivity jars in classrooms as a result.”





# Next Steps

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£550k approved at June 2022 Cabinet for Phase 2 in 22/23; review the need thereafter

Partners working together to identify how to target this funding

- ✓ Mapping has been carried out by Children and Education and Public Health – there is clearer understanding emerging of schools who have not received as much support
- ✓ Public Health have also undertaken a needs assessment to support commissioning
- ✓ An external evaluation partner has been appointed to work alongside SCVO, providers and the Steering Group. The final evaluation will assess the impact of the programme, including the legacy of provider relationships and networks
- ✓ Feedback from young people's engagement on mental health and wellbeing sessions (SHAPE report), delivery and key partners such as education and NHS about what is needed for the future.
- ✓ Broader governance of emotional wellbeing and mental health established through the Thrive Board/Partnership



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## Report to the Children’s Services and Education Scrutiny Board

**10 October 2022**

<b>Subject:</b>	Response from the Cabinet in respect of the recommendations of the Scrutiny Review of Elective Home Education
<b>Directors:</b>	Director – Children and Education, Michael Jarrett
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Senior Democratic Services Officer, Matt Powis Group Head for Education Support Services, Sue Moore


### 1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Board considers the response from the Cabinet in respect of the recommendations of the Scrutiny Review of Elective Home Education.

### 2 Reasons for Recommendations

In accordance with the Council’s Constitution and the Localism Act 2011, the Cabinet were requested to respond to the recommendations of the Scrutiny Board within two months, setting out any approved recommendations accordingly. The Cabinet considered the Review’s findings and recommendations on 12 January 2022.

### 3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	<p>Best start in life for children and young people Every child and young person whether educated in a school setting or at home deserves to have access to high quality support and resources to support their education. The report seeks to develop current practices and enhance the offer provided.</p>
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## 4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 The Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board formed a cross-party working group to investigate education outside of the school system and the available support to children and families.
- 4.2 Over a number of weeks, the Working Group carried out a range of research and interviewed witnesses in accordance with their terms of reference. As a result, a number of recommendations were identified which were approved by the Board on 29 November 2021 as attached in Appendix 1.
- 4.3 The Cabinet considered each proposal presented by the Board at its meeting on 12 January 2022 and resolved to respond to each recommendation within two months. Each recommendation and subsequent Cabinet response is set out in Appendix 2 for the Board to consider.

## 5 Implications

<b>Resources:</b>	There are no resource implications as a result of this report.
<b>Legal and Governance:</b>	The Board will have due regard to the responsibilities of Overview and Scrutiny Committees in respect of the Local Government Act 2000
<b>Risk:</b>	Scrutiny will consider risk implications, including any safeguarding measures
<b>Equality:</b>	Scrutiny will consider implications for equality (all aspects and characteristics) including how the Equality Duty is being met.
<b>Health and Wellbeing:</b>	Scrutiny will consider the health and wellbeing implications as appropriate.
<b>Social Value</b>	There are no social value implications as a result of this report.





## 6 Appendices

Recommendations of the Scrutiny Review of Elective Home Education Working Group report – 29 November 2021 – Appendix 1.  
Response from the Cabinet - Elective Home Education – Appendix 2



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# Report to Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board

**Monday 29 November 2021**

<b>Subject:</b>	Elective Home Education Working Group Report
<b>Director:</b>	Interim Strategic Director Children and Education Katharine Willmette  Acting Operational Director Children and Education Melanie Barnett
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Democratic Services Officer, Matt Powis <a href="mailto:matt_powis@sandwell.gov.uk">matt_powis@sandwell.gov.uk</a> Democratic Services Officer, Connor Robinson <a href="mailto:connor1_robinson@sandwell.gov.uk">connor1_robinson@sandwell.gov.uk</a>

## 1 Recommendations

1.1 That the Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board considers the Elective Home Education Scrutiny Working Group report and debate whether to make any recommendations to the Cabinet on the following:

- (a) The EHE resource pack be reviewed and edited to make it more accessible to parents;
- (b) The EHE website be refreshed to provide information, guides and links to other information and links to EHE forums for advice and support;
- (c) To identify resource and support within the council to facilitate the refresh;
- (d) That additional spaces and facilities be identified for EHE groups to meet and carry out activities, and that competitive rates for use of those facilities be negotiated for EHE group use;



- (e) That the Council develop a mechanism for resources to be shared for EHE, such as a hub for books or other educational material to be kept;
- (f) That youth social networks, such as 'Just Youth', be promoted on the EHE website for users to find out what's on in Sandwell for young people and to encourage engagement;
- (g) To raise awareness of the SEN and EHCP support available and access for children.
- (h) That the Cabinet Member for Best Start in Life and the DCS, on behalf of the Council, be requested to write to the Secretary of State for Education, Gavin Williamson and to the Parliamentary Select Committee Inquiry of Home Education, to register this council's findings from the Elective Home Education review which highlights the need for regulation and resources for Elective Home Education; and to endorse a letter from the Association of EHE Professionals which asks whether consideration is being given to strengthening the legislation to provide further safeguards for children who are EHE.

1.2 That Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board receive an update report to consider the position in relation to post Covid fluctuations and the Education Committee Inquiry on Home Education as detailed in Appendix 4.

## 2 Reasons for Recommendations


2.1 The Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board requested regular update reports relating to the work of the Elective Home Education Scrutiny Working Group. A progress update was presented to the Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board on 11 January 2021. Since then, the Elective Home Education Scrutiny Working Group has carried out a review of the current arrangements and support for EHE in Sandwell.

2.2 The findings and recommendations are based on evidence gathered in Sandwell between October 2020 and February 2021, relating to the Sandwell EHE offer and a report dated 21 June 2021 was prepared.



- 2.3 The findings reflect wider national concerns that the Association Directors of Children’s Services (ADCS) and Association of Elective Home Education Professionals (AEHEP) have made to the Government relating to the need to strengthen the legislation, to provide further safeguards for children who are EHE and the need to provide funding to local authorities work with EHE children through Designated School Grant (DSG).

### 3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	<p>Best start in life for children and young people Every child and young person whether educated in a school setting or at home deserves to have access to high quality support and resources to support their education. The report seeks to develop current practices and enhance the offer provided.</p>
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### 4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 An update report was previously submitted to the CSE Scrutiny Board on 11 January 2021.
- 4.2 Appendix 3 to this report (ADCS notifications October 2020) the ADCS continues to raise EHE issues and concerns with the Government contributing to the ongoing conversation both locally and nationally, recent press releases have highlighted the continued considerations around EHE. There continues to be concerns around those with SEND becoming EHE with a continued increase for those with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP). There is also a concern following the ADCS survey finding that 9% of pupils presently EHE being known to Children’s Social Care.

The ADCS had raised a number of points with government which it regarded as needing greater consideration:

- No definition of a ‘suitable education’. School Attendance Order (SAO) processes are slow, expensive and a blunt instrument and may not be necessary if there was a definition of, and framework against, which to judge a ‘suitable education’
- Potential confusion amongst parents/carers about access to a school’s remote education offer and EHE



- Lack of oversight of vulnerable children – LA has no power nor a right to see the child being home educated
- Most common reason cited (pre Covid-19) by parents for requesting EHE is dissatisfaction with school.

A response to the 2021 ADCS survey was submitted during the October (2021) half term break. National data based on the latest submissions from local authorities is not due to be published until late November / early December 2021.

The latest ADCS survey confirms that the government is considering a statutory duty on LAs to provide support to EHE families including an annual visit. The DFE is aware that LAs may require additional staff / resources.

### 4.3 The Elective Home Education Working Group

4.4 The rising numbers of EHE over the last 5 academic years in Sandwell prompted the Cabinet Member for Best Start in Life to ask the Scrutiny Board to take a closer look at the situation. The Elective Home Education (EHE) Working Group formed in November 2020.

4.5 The review aimed to gather evidence to understand about education outside the school system and the ‘have, needs and wants’ for EHE support in Sandwell:

- To understand the current numbers and consider whether support for Elective Home Education in Sandwell is sufficient.
- To capture parents and young people’s perspective on education at home.
- To consider the attainment levels, and further education and employment trends for children educated at home.
- To raise awareness of the limitations placed on the LA and bring findings to the attention of the Secretary of State for Education.

4.6 The Membership of the Working Group was Councillors Preece (Chair), Z Hussain, McVittie, Millar and Shackleton.



4.7 Evidence gathering took place between December 2020 and March 2021 provides a snap shot of the EHE picture nationally and in Sandwell:

- 08.10.2020 – Discussion and scope
- 09.11.2020 – Research, data, EHE case studies, draft surveys
- 25.11.2020 - Focus group with Parents, children and EHE advisory teachers
- 02.12.2020 – Survey feedback, focus group feedback, detailed data analysis and costs
- 27.01.2020 – Update report, emerging themes and findings
- 10.03.2020 – Comparator data, alternative provision/ safeguarding case study and findings summary

4.8 The Working Group had reported progress to Scrutiny Board on three occasions and the DfE Senior case lead attending two of the Board meetings. It was important to monitor the National picture and emerging information during the review.

#### **4.9 The Evidence Base as confirmed by Governance See Appendix 1**

4.10 Nationally concerns were raised about the rising numbers in EHE. This was highlighted in the Association of Directors of Childrens Services (ADCS) Elective Home Education Survey 2020 which captured the number and characteristics of children and young people who were known to be home educated.

The survey also aimed to understand the reasons behind a family's decision to electively home educate, how LAs across the country were supporting these families, and how any available resources were being deployed in this area.

Sandwell's increase in EHE was higher than the 38% National average. As at 30<sup>th</sup> October 2020, Sandwell had received 220 new EHE referrals (including 90 citing Covid as the primary reason) representing an increase of 49% in comparison with the previous academic year.

4.11 The Working Group requested a Sandwell survey to find out more about why families were choosing EHE as an alternative to school





and why there was a rise in numbers. The survey was distributed to all home educating families registered in Sandwell, which represented 561 young people as at October 2020.

- 4.12 Parents and children were invited to fill in separate surveys. The survey response rate was low, however analysis of the feedback from 15 adult surveys and 19 children surveys completed was very positive about EHE support in Sandwell and provided some useful comments.
- 4.13 The working group reviewed evidence that Ofsted had reprimanded a council after discovering potential off-rolling of children in care, the number of pupils educated at home had increased by more than 20 per cent. Ofsted analysis had found that nine of the ten children's services visits conducted since September mentioned a rise in the number of children being home-educated, Ofsted recognised many councils had effective processes in place to track such changes.
- 4.14 The Working Group welcomed that Sandwell processes were working very well and since September 2020, Ofsted has been carrying out assurance visits to local authorities to consider if they are making the best decisions for children in care during the pandemic. There had been eleven satisfactory visits to Sandwell schools by mid-November.
- 4.15 The working group gathered and considered evidence including case studies, analysis from EHE surveys, feedback from a focus group with parents, children and EHE advisory teachers, the cost of home education in Sandwell and how EHE was funded.
- 4.16 The Focus Group with parents, children and advisory EHE teachers was held virtually. From the evidence gathered the working group has identified that Sandwell EHE support was 'strong' and that parents value the commitment and passion of the advisory teachers.
- 4.17 Key messages raised by the focus group in relation to wants and needs:
- The cost of home education – consider funding for EHE support (Note: Parents are responsible for direct costs)
  - Issues about EHCP, identifying issues earlier and access to support if the child was not in a school setting;





- Free spaces to use for EHE group activities, mutual spaces;
- Resource library / bank for EHE parents to share their books and educational materials;
- Safeguarding: parents protecting their own child from school bullies and safeguarding children who were not in school.

4.18 There were several matters highlighted for consideration by the Scrutiny Board which may improve the Council Offer and that could be investigated quite quickly as actions.

- That additional spaces and facilities be identified for EHE groups to meet and carry out activities, and that competitive rates for use of those facilities be negotiated for EHE group use;
- That the Council develop a mechanism for resources to be shared for EHE, such as a hub for books or other educational material to be kept;
- That youth social networks, such as 'Just Youth', be promoted on the EHE website for users to find out what's on in Sandwell for young people and to encourage engagement;
- To raise awareness of the SEN and EHCP support available and access for children.

4.19 The DfE Senior Case Lead for this area provided an update on the Education Committee Inquiry. The parliamentary policy team had indicated it would welcome Sandwell Council's EHE Working Group evidence to help inform the national picture, especially as the views of children, families, and advisory teachers were being gathered and there may be opportunity for representatives from Sandwell to re-engage with Westminster and the All Party Parliamentary process as previously attended by the Service Manager in his capacity as a member of the Association of EHE Professionals.

4.20 The Working Group had planned a second focus group with head teachers and teachers to further explore the support and advice in schools for pupils and parents and to establish if bullying was an issue, what measures were taken to prevent and protect against bullying. The timing of the review impacted on the capacity of the teaching staff who were providing remote learning during school closures. This activity can be carried out post Covid and when more is known from the parliamentary Inquiry of Home Education.



## 4.21 Evidence Summary

A table of evidence is included as appendix 1 to the report  
The table contains a summary of the information and data gathered during the review.

1. EHE Notification Trends
2. New EHE by area since April 2020
3. EHE wards/ towns
4. EHE Summary - Additional HMI information since April 2020
5. Active EHE in the period
6. EHE Equality characteristics
7. Survey Parents and children
8. DfE
9. LA Comparison data
10. Association of Directors of Children's Services and Education
11. Estimated cost of EHE in Sandwell
12. Funding streams
13. Safeguarding
14. Off rolling / backdoor exclusions
15. SEND / EHCP
16. EHE Support
17. Parent School discussions
18. Bullying
19. College
20. Case Studies

## 4.22 Consultation

The working group have conducted two surveys to consult with Parents and children who are educated at home.

## 4.23 Alternative Options

The purpose of the review is to consider current support for Elective Home Education and if it meets the needs of young people and parents, findings will inform if the Council should consider alternative options.



## 4.24 Conclusions

The Working Group agreed that an initial response report should be prepared for submission to the Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board on 21 June 2021. The report would summarise the process and findings of the work group in order to make recommendations to Cabinet. However, the CSE Scrutiny Board meeting did not take place.

- 4.25 The report would focus on the improvements the Council could consider making quite quickly and highlight the need to pause the review to allow time for the numbers of EHE children to stabilise post Covid. There was also a need to wait for the government's response to the Select Committee Inquiry on Home Education later this year.
- 4.26 The EHE Working Group has identified areas where the Council can start to consider making improvements to its current working practices to better support EHE families in Sandwell. These identified areas have been included in the EHE team's delivery plan for the 2021/22 academic year. After only 1 term of the current academic year, it is too soon to report on the progress made to date.
- 4.27 The EHE Working Group consider that the current regulations are insufficient, in respect of EHE children's welfare and safety, and in terms of checking progress on educational attainment. It is recognised that many EHE families are happy with their independence from regulation, however the Council has a duty to safeguard children and the working group feel strongly that Government must strengthen regulation to safeguard all children.
- 4.28 The Association of EHE Professionals (AEHEP) has recently written a letter to Government asking whether consideration is being given to strengthening the legislation to provide further safeguards for children who are EHE (Appendix 2).

The working group welcome the letter and highlight that it reflects their findings highlighting the need for regulation and resources for EHE.

The working group agreed to ask Cabinet to send a letter to the Secretary of State for Education, Gavin Williamson and the Home Education Inquiry select committee to endorse the comments of the



letter and indicate that the findings of the EHE Working Group reflect the AEHEP comments at a local level.

4.29 It was agreed that the Scrutiny Board would consider the Cabinet response, the EHE Trends and the outcomes of the parliamentary Education Committee Inquiry on Home Education in Autumn 2021.

4.30 Please see appendix 4 for summary update report - November 2021.

## 5 Implications

<b>Resources:</b>	There continues to be increasing demands on the EHE service due to increasing numbers of children being educated at home.
<b>Legal and Governance:</b>	There is a statutory requirement to ensure that all children in Sandwell receive efficient full-time education appropriate to their age, aptitude and special educational needs
<b>Risk:</b>	Scrutiny will consider risk implications, including any safeguarding measures
<b>Equality:</b>	Scrutiny will consider implications for equality (all aspects and characteristics) including how the Equality Duty is being met
<b>Health and Wellbeing:</b>	Good education and attainment levels increase the wellbeing of children and young people and contributes to them having the best possible start in life.
<b>Social Value</b>	Sandwell is more likely to enhance the future employability of children who have been electively home educated by ensuring that sufficient resources are in place to adequately support the EHE community in fulfilling their responsibility to provide a suitable education for all EHE children and young people.



## 6. Appendices

Appendix 1 – summary of evidence table (prepared by Governance)  
Appendix 2 – AEHEP letter to Government re EHE  
Appendix 3 – ADCS Notifications (November 2020)  
Appendix 4 - Summary update report - November 2021.  
Appendix 5 - Strengthening Home Education: Government Response to the Committee's Third Report

## 7. Background Papers

Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board [20 July 2020](#)  
Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board [16 November 2020](#)  
Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board [11 January 2021](#)

## 8. Lead Officers

Group Head for Education Support Services, Sue Moore  
[Sue\\_moore@sandwell.gov.uk](mailto:Sue_moore@sandwell.gov.uk)  
Service Manager, Ramsey Richards  
[Ramsey\\_richards@sandwell.gov.uk](mailto:Ramsey_richards@sandwell.gov.uk)




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<b>Scrutiny Review Recommendations</b>	<b>Response</b>
The EHE resource pack be reviewed and edited to make it more accessible to parents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Elective Home Education (EHE) resource pack has been reviewed and edited to make it more accessible to parents;</li> <li>• Sandwell exam centres included</li> <li>• <a href="#">Welcome Pack provided for all new families</a> <a href="#">Home education Resources</a> <a href="#">FAQ</a></li> </ul>
The EHE website be refreshed to provide information, guides and links to other information and links to EHE forums for advice and support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Website reviewed, updated, and regularly refreshed to ensure all information, support and opportunities are included and relevant. See sample links below.</li> </ul> <p><a href="https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/info/200295/schools_and_learning/4812/elective_home_education_welcome_pack_for_parents">https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/info/200295/schools_and_learning/4812/elective_home_education_welcome_pack_for_parents</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/info/200295/schools_and_learning/4813/elective_home_education_resources">https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/info/200295/schools_and_learning/4813/elective_home_education_resources</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/info/200295/schools_and_learning/4814/elective_home_education_-_frequently_asked_questions">https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/info/200295/schools_and_learning/4814/elective_home_education_-_frequently_asked_questions</a></p>
To identify resource and support within the council to facilitate the refresh.	Team liaised with colleagues within corporate communications team.

<p>That additional spaces and facilities be identified for EHE groups to meet and carry out activities, and that competitive rates for use of those facilities be negotiated for EHE group use.</p>	<p>During the academic year 2021/22, we:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• consulted with families via regular newsletter updates etc.</li> <li>• organised a series of (covid) funded community engagement activities utilising several venues including Hatley Heath.</li> <li>• launched a goodwill -box at the Bear Bookshop to share books etc. Others will be explored and rolled out in future if demand requires.</li> </ul>
<p>That the Council develop a mechanism for resources to be shared for EHE, such as a hub for books or other educational material to be kept.</p> <p><a href="https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/info/200295/schools_and_learning/4846/elective_home_education_-_newsletters">https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/info/200295/schools_and_learning/4846/elective_home_education_-_newsletters</a></p> <p>Access to newsletters is password protected and limited to the EHE community / Sand</p>	<p>Comprehensive range of resources from Early years to KS4 made available in community settings for families to borrow.</p> <p>Link to Black History Month website provided via EHE newsletter.</p> <p><b>Pages in "Elective Home Education Welcome Pack for Parents"</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <a href="#">Part 1 - Starting the home education journey what you need to know</a></li> <li>2. <a href="#">Part 2 - Special Educational Needs</a></li> <li>3. <a href="#">Part 3 – Examinations, revision and marking</a></li> <li>4. <a href="#">Part 4 - Tuition Centres, Tutors and Home School Tutoring</a></li> <li>5. <a href="#">Part 5 – Generic Resources Links</a></li> <li>6. <a href="#">Part 6 - Functional skills</a></li> <li>7. <a href="#">Part 7 - Other Support Services</a></li> </ol>



<p>That youth social networks, such as ‘Just Youth’, be promoted on the EHE website for users to find out what’s on in Sandwell for young people and to encourage engagement;</p>	<p>The team organised various activity days/community events supported by youth services, leisure, and libraries</p> <p>EHE families were invited to the Just Youth SHAPE conference through a dedicated day on 29<sup>th</sup> June – see link <a href="https://www.justyouth.org.uk/">https://www.justyouth.org.uk/</a></p> <p>Just Youth is the go-to place for children and young people in Sandwell to find something to do, someone to talk to and somewhere to go. Designed with and for young people, the website provides: Advice, guidance and sign posting on a wide range of topics. Finding someone to talk to if they have an issue.</p> <p>We continue to ensure that families are sign-posted to appropriate support services plus other relevant learning resources and websites.</p> <p>E.g. <a href="mailto:youngpeople_services@sandwell.gov.uk">youngpeople_services@sandwell.gov.uk</a> and the Strengthening Families teams etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As above, we ensure that families are encourage and supported to take part in national /local events.</li> <li>• As stated, links provided to support “Marking Black History Month- Proud to Be”</li> </ul>

<p>To raise awareness of the SEN and EHCP support available and access for children.</p>	<p>Welcome pack revision includes specific section on “special educational needs” including links to:          SENDIAS - The Sandwell SEND Information, Advice and Support Service          Autism West Midlands          National Autistic Society / British Dyslexia Association etc.</p> <p><a href="https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/info/200295/schools_and_learning/4812/elective_home_education_welcome_pack_for_parents/3">*https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/info/200295/schools_and_learning/4812/elective_home_education_welcome_pack_for_parents/3</a></p> <p>We have employed a specialist (SEND) HLTA who will further develop this area of work and build relationships EHE families, Inclusion Support colleagues &amp; other relevant partners.</p>
<p>That the Cabinet Member for Best Start in Life and the DCS, on behalf of the Council, be requested to write to the former Secretary of State for Education, Nadhim Zahawi and to the Parliamentary Select Committee Inquiry of Home Education, to register this council’s findings from the Elective Home Education review which highlights the need for regulation and resources for Elective Home Education; and to endorse a letter from the Association of EHE Professionals which asks whether consideration is being given to strengthening the legislation to provide further safeguards for children who are EHE.</p>	<p>Letter sent, but no response received</p> <p>          SoS 5.1.22 NZ - EHE          Scrutiny.pdf</p>

### Additional activity

A new EHE Team Structure now in place from September 2022, to increase capacity with the appointment 2 higher level teacher assistants (HLTA's) to support the EHE Advisory Teacher. The team will also get additional support from the School's Attendance Support Service with an allocated "children not in school" officer, who will support with initial consultations etc.

Please table below for comparative data for the last 2 academic years for the period half-terms 1-5

	2020/21- HT5	2021/22- HT5	% Difference
Closed	53	19	-64.15%
Opened	33	27	-18.18%
Current	549	553	0.73%

### **Commentary**

- When closed cases are compared for the period 2020/21- HT5 to 2021/22- HT5 it shows a 64% decrease, 34 less cases than before.
- When opened cases are compared for the period 2020/21- HT5 to 2021/22- HT5 it shows a 18% decrease, 6 less cases than before.
- When current cases are compared for the period 2020/21- HT5 to 2021/22- HT5 it shows a 1% increase, 4 more cases than before.

Following on from last year's Kit Award for Excellence Suzanne Starr, the EHE Advisory Teacher has won another Gold Award in recognition of her passion and commitment to excellence in support of home education.

Working in partnership with STEPs, the team have been able to extend support to families who are “New to the UK”.

### **Safeguarding**

It should not be assumed that a child who is “educated otherwise than at school” presents a greater safeguarding risk than any other child. They may, however, be less visible to a range of universal services and professionals because they do not attend school.

As noted during the ILACS review (May 2022), safeguarding and the concept of “professional curiosity” is regularly promoted by the safeguarding team situated within the Schools Attendance Support Service.

An EHE fact sheet is available for partner agencies (i.e. social workers, housing officers and & other professionals) who may have contact with, and/or be less familiar with the requirements / expectations relating to “children not in school” including those who are electively home educated.



Professional  
Curiosity and EHE fact

Where required, EHE team members continue to work in partnership with other professionals to deliver support that is needed on a case by case basis including children experiencing neglect and/or domestic abuse etc. The team also works with health colleagues to ensure that EHE children have access to school nursing services including vaccinations and eye tests.

A recent example of professional curiosity and successful inter-agency safeguarding practice was confirmed during the school summer holidays: We received a report from housing colleagues of two children (not EHE) in a home in disrepair where the tenants refused entry for essential repairs to be completed. This matter was appropriately referred.

## Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Scrutiny Board

**10 October 2022**

<b>Subject:</b>	Tracking and Monitoring of Scrutiny Recommendations
<b>Director:</b>	Law and Governance Surjit Tour <a href="mailto:Surjir_tour@sandwell.gov.uk">Surjir_tour@sandwell.gov.uk</a>
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Matt Powis Senior Democratic Services Officer <a href="mailto:Matt_powis@sandwell.gov.uk">Matt_powis@sandwell.gov.uk</a> Democratic Services Unit

### 1 Recommendations







- 1.1 That the Board notes the responses from the Executive/Directors on recommendations referred since the Board's last meeting, as set out in the Appendix.
- 1.2 That the Board notes the progress on implementation of those recommendations approved by the Executive/Directors, as set out in the Appendix.
- 1.3 That the Board identifies any recommendations where progress is unsatisfactory and determines what action it wishes to take.
- 1.4 That the Board determines which recommendations no longer require monitoring.



## 2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 To facilitate the effective monitoring of progress on responses to and press with implementation of recommendations made by the Board and identify where further action is required.
- 2.2 Effective monitoring of recommendations facilitates the evaluation of the impact of the scrutiny function overall.

## 3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	Best start in life for children and young people	<p>The scrutiny function supports all of the objectives of the Corporate Plan by seeking to improve services for the people of Sandwell. It does this by influencing the policies and decisions made by the Council and other organisations involved in delivering public services.</p> <p>Effective monitoring of recommendations made supports this and allows scrutiny to evaluate its impact.</p>
	People live well and age well	
	Strong resilient communities	
	Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods	
	A strong and inclusive economy	
	A connected and accessible Sandwell	

## 4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 The attached Appendix details the responses to and progress on the implementation of recommendations made by the scrutiny function.



## 5 Implications

<b>Resources:</b>	The resource implications will be detailed in the responses to recommendations as detailed in the appendix.
<b>Legal and Governance:</b>	<p>The duty to undertake overview and scrutiny is set out in Part 1A Section 9 of the Local Government Act 2000.</p> <p>The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 places a duty on the Executive to respond to Scrutiny recommendations within two months of receiving them.</p>
<b>Risk:</b>	<p>Any risk implications have been considered with the relevant Officer/Director/Cabinet Member/Risk Owner at the time the recommendations were referred to them by the Board.</p> <p>Any specific risks for the Board’s attention are detailed in the Appendix.</p>
<b>Equality:</b>	<p>Any equality implications have been considered with the relevant Officer/Director/Cabinet Member/Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team at the time the recommendations were referred to them by the Board.</p> <p>Any specific equality implications for the Board’s attention are detailed in the Appendix.</p>
<b>Health and Wellbeing:</b>	<p>Any health and wellbeing implications have been considered with the relevant Officer/Director/Cabinet Member/Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team at the time the recommendations were referred to them by the Board.</p> <p>Any specific health and wellbeing implications for the Board’s attention are detailed in the Appendix.</p>



## 6 Appendices

### Appendix – Monitoring Table





<b>Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board 22/23</b>				
<b>Scrutiny Board Date</b>	<b>Agenda Item Title</b>	<b>Action/Recommendation</b>	<b>Responsible Director /Body</b>	<b>Activity Log as at 12 Sept 22</b>
27 AUG 21	Scrutiny Review of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Transport Models	1 That the Director – Law and Governance arrange for the following recommendations to be submitted to the Cabinet for consideration	Cabinet	
		(1a) That the Cabinet reviews the administration of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Transport to ensure consistency of approach and that resourcing is adequate in light of increasing demand on the service.	Cabinet	14/02/22 - As the new procurement process is worked the service will continue to be reviewed to ensure consistency, transparency and robustness of service delivery and that there is a sustainable structure in place to support future demands.
		(1b) That the Cabinet ensures that the Parent Group for Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities is communicated and consulted with on any changes to the Transport service and, where possible, the views of affected children and young people are also sought.	Cabinet	14/02/2022 - Regular meetings with Parent Carers Voices United (SEND Parent Carer Forum) are in place and it has been agreed that a member of the Travel Assistance Service office will attend the forum.
		(c) That the Cabinet ensures that Education Health Care Plan assessments are carried out without delay to ensure early identification of recommended provision, including Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Transport requirements.	Cabinet	14/02/2022 - Not all children who have an EHCP are eligible for transport as detailed in the Home to School and Adult Learner Policy. In terms of EHC assessments once the LA has received a report from the Community Assessment Meeting (CAM) that a statutory assessment may be needed it will take that report to the next Assessment and Moderation Panel (AMP). At the AMP a decision will be made as to whether to accept the recommendation of the CAM to proceed with a statutory assessment. The process is the same if the LA has received a request directly from a parent or young person. Parents/Carers will be informed of the LA's decision within 6 weeks of receipt of the CAM report or the parent/young person request. If the

				decision at AMP is to proceed with a statutory assessment then the LA will begin the process of gathering information and advice which will inform its decision as to whether to issue an Education, Health and Care Plan. The assessment process will take about 10 weeks. Local Authorities then have a statutory duty to finalise and issue the EHCP within 20 weeks of the start of the process.
		(d) That the Cabinet re-evaluates child to adult ratios for minibuses to ensure that they are appropriate and reflect assessed risks and needs on a case by case basis.	Cabinet	14/02/2022 - This will form be reviewed as part of the new procurement exercise to ensure that the needs of the child are meet
		(e) That the Cabinet continues, and seeks to increase, the Independent Travel Training Programme.	Cabinet	14/02/2022 - Both SEN and the Travel Assistance Service will continue to promote the Travel Training Programme to parents/cares and schools to encourage take up and help provide life skills
		(f) That the Cabinet refreshes awareness campaigns relating to Personal Budgets and the Independent Travel Training Programme to ensure all families are aware of the options available.	Cabinet	14/02/2022 - SEN will continue to promote both Personal Budgets and the Independent Travel Training Programme as part of the initial EHCP assessments and at the annual review.
		(g) That the Cabinet reviews Early Years provision in each town, which may help reduce transport costs.	Cabinet	14/02/2022 - The Early Years Transformation Academy (EYTA) is an intensive year long Leadership and Management programme set up by the Early InterventionFoundation (EIF) funded through the DfE to provide strategic vision in Systems Change Management using the theory of change model. The team was made up of a Public Health commissioner, Health Commissioner, Early Years lead for Public health, Health Visiting Lead, Children Centre Commissioner, Quality Early Years Manager, Inclusion Support Early Years Manager and Midwifery Lead. The team mapped the services and provision across the pre-conception to end of reception years, undertook 150 parent interviews with Sandwell families to understand what it is like being a family with young children living in Sandwell and completed the data analysis Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) 0-5 Years. The key findings/actions taken from this piece of work were: 1. Speech, language and communication was a key feature of the needs of young children and a barrier to learning and good outcomes in adulthood.

				<p>2. There was a gap for children after the age of 12 months up to 2.5 years from universal services such as Health Visitors.</p> <p>3. A Speech, Language and Communication Pathway was developed using existing pathways.</p> <p>4. Additional funding was secured from Health for a consultant model for SALT - dedicated Speech and Language Therapist.</p> <p>5. Wellcomm screening is available from 18months through Children Centres and day-care settings.</p> <p>6. Re-visit developmental check on or before 18mths by a Health Visitor Team showing emerging delay in development.</p> <p>In addition, there is involvement with the Black Country Outcomes project which is focussing on SLCN for all children. All of the above work will support future mapping of need across the borough and inform place planning.</p>
		(h) That the Cabinet reviews time lengths of journeys to ensure that children are not needing to travel for more than 50 minutes in normal circumstances.	Cabinet	<p>14/02/2022 - All contracts will continue to be regularly monitored to ensure that no journey time exceeds 50 mins.</p> <p>All tenders will be evaluated to ensure that journey times are kept to a minimum prior to awarding new contracts.</p>
		(i) That the Cabinet considers how place provision strategically located throughout the borough can be used to minimise journey times.	Cabinet	<p>14/02/2022 - Place provision is reviewed and where ever possible provision is strategically located in the borough. Projections for mainstream schools are produced by our Data Intelligence team to support the sufficiency analysis for new places. We predict that the number of children and young people with EHC plans within Sandwell schools will increase by an average of 5.3% each year over the next 5 years and the general population number of pupils will increase by 1.4%. This prediction estimates that there could be an additional 500 – 630 statutory school aged pupils with an EHC Plans within 5 years. This as well as other data is considered when planning provision.</p>
		(j) That the Cabinet considers the following in relation to the contracting of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Transport for February 2022:- (i) providers should ensure drivers and Passenger Assistants are trained, and accredited where appropriate, in First Aid,	Cabinet	<p>14/02/2022 - All new contracts (New framework) from September with require all drivers and all passengers assistants to have a first aid accreditation.</p> <p>Where a child requires specialist support during the journey we will continue to enable their carer and/or nurse to travel with them on their own (single occupancy vehicle)</p> <p>The new framework will build in greater financial and service resilience</p>

		<p>non-verbal communication, use of safety harnesses and manual handling. In addition there should be Advanced Passenger Assistants who are specifically trained to provide emergency medication on transport, including but not limited to administering pre-loaded EpiPens or pre-loaded buccal midazolam devices;</p> <p>(ii) a market position statement be prepared, encouraging competition from a wide range of suppliers;</p> <p>(iii) small and medium enterprises should be afforded opportunities to tender for the contracts;</p> <p>(iv) mainly whole school provision should be the preferred approach;</p> <p>(v) some harmonisation of provision should be considered to balance effective management of contracts whilst retaining a diversified group of providers;</p> <p>(vi) the model for provision should avoid the increased risk associated with awarding contracts to a small number of providers.</p>		<p>for the council by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• increasing the total number of Lots awarded</li> <li>• limiting the total amount of work a single operator can be awarded</li> <li>• reserving the right not to accept the lowest tenderer for a respective Lot to ensure the most economic advantageous award of contract is made</li> <li>• adopting an appropriate evaluation matrix to manage the equitable award of contracts to individual operators</li> <li>• selecting a wide range of operators to minimise the risk of service disruption through the failure of a single operator</li> <li>• securing satisfactory evidence of the ongoing financial resilience of the operators admitted to the Framework</li> <li>• ensuring adequate contingency plans are in place to ensure continuity of service</li> <li>• this will help to provide opportunities for existing and new SME operators</li> </ul>
		<p>(k) That the Cabinet undertakes a trial scheme for providing Passenger Assistants in-house, or in partnership with schools, as part of the contracting of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Transport and that a full analysis is carried out on the trial scheme to determine its effectiveness.</p>	Cabinet	<p>14/02/2022 - A pilot scheme to be developed to consider; • role and responsibilities of the passenger assistant • uptake of the role • the cost to the Council • Impact on children and their families • Impact for operators • how other Council who directly employ passenger assistants operate</p>
		<p>(l) That the Cabinet investigates the feasibility of taking Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Transport provision in-house, this should include risks, costs, benefits, potential timescales and suitable performance</p>	Cabinet	<p>14/02/2022 - This will be considered as part of a wider review of transport services in the Council and will consider;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost</li> <li>• Capacity</li> <li>• Quality of provision</li> </ul>

		<p>indicators, and it should include the following options:</p> <p>(i) full Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Transport service in-house;</p> <p>(ii) combined provision with existing Adult Social Care Transport;</p> <p>(iii) only Passenger Assistants service provided in-house.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexibility of service to meet demand</li> <li>• Continued service improvement</li> <li>• Alternative delivery models</li> <li>• Ability to maintain a sustainable service</li> <li>• Mitigation of risk</li> </ul>
		<p>(m) That the Cabinet ensures that, however the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Transport service is provided in future, Passenger Assistants:-</p> <p>(i) must be trained, and accredited where appropriate, in First Aid, communication with non-verbal children; and</p> <p>(ii) during their induction and onboarding a clear and strong emphasis should be placed on relationship building between the Passenger Assistant, the family, the school and the transport provider;</p> <p>(iii) also include Advanced Passenger Assistants who are specifically trained to provide emergency medication on transport, including but not limited to administering pre-loaded EpiPens or pre-loaded buccal midazolam devices;</p>	Cabinet	<p>14/02/2022 - Covered in previous responses. The Travel Assistance Service will continue to promote and encourage the building of relationships between the child, their family, driver and passenger assistant to foster trust and ensure the journey is always a good experience .</p>
		<p>(n) That the Cabinet investigates with partners how children with Autism Spectrum Disorders can receive earlier diagnoses which can help improve outcomes, including around transport needs, for that group.</p>	Cabinet	<p>14/02/2022 - Sandwell has a multi-agency assessment pathway for Autism Spectrum Disorder. The Multi Agency Assessment (MAA) pathway investigates whether a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder would be appropriate for a child or young person. The MAA is completed by three different agencies which will include a Consultant Paediatrician or Consultant Psychiatrist, a Speech and Language Therapist and a Specialist Advisory Teacher, it can also include an Occupational Therapist.</p> <p>Sandwell' autism diagnostic pathway is a partnership between</p>

				<p>Children’s Therapies, Inclusion Support’s Complex Communication and Autism Team and Early Years Team, The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and Child Health – Paediatrics. Assessments are carried out with regard to the diagnostic criteria set out in the ICD 10/11. Best Practice guidelines are set out in the NICE Guidance- Autism spectrum disorder in under 19s: recognition, referral and diagnosis (CG128).</p> <p>The assessment period is around 30 weeks; Sandwell does not have a ‘waiting list’, children and young people are under assessment from the point that the referral is processed following the completion of the required NHS checks. In the academic year 2020-21, over 240 diagnostic assessments were completed. In the period July 2018- July 2021 there has been a 64% overall increase in Sandwell of the number of autistic children and young people. Our mainstream primary schools have seen a 112% increase.</p> <p>The MAA Pathway is held under review by the ASD Steering Group who monitor number of referrals and completion times. The Steering Group works to improve access to the pathway with information for parents and professionals. Information on the Local Offer is currently being revised and amended by the Steering Group. It is important to note that multi- agency partners do not have additional resources to provide this pathway.</p> <p>The MAA pathway is separate to the identification of transport needs. Transport needs will be considered in line with the Sandwell Home to School and Adult Learner Transport Policy.</p>
		(o) That the Cabinet ensures that research relating to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities is considered whenever it is available to identify potential areas of improvement in Sandwell’s service provision.	Cabinet	<p>14/02/2022 - The SEND strategy 2021-2024 details the Sandwell vision for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities The priority area’ for development are: 1. Quality Assurance of Statutory responsibilities: 2. Workforce Development 3. Improving Provision 4. Improving Progress and Attainment The SEND Strategic Board is responsible for the governance and commissioning of services to support children and young people with SEND across the Sandwell Local Area and will be key to the delivery of this strategy. As a multi-agency group the latest evidence and research</p>

				is constantly reviewed to inform and ensure improvements are continual.
		(2) That the Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board is kept informed about the process for commissioning Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Transport in Sandwell.	Cabinet	14/02/2022 - the Board would continue to receive updates as required.
		(3) That Post-18 Provision for young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities be included in the work programme for the Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board.	Scrutiny Board	14/02/2022 - Update presented to the Scrutiny Board
29 NOV 22	Elective Home Education Working Group	(a) The EHE resource pack be reviewed and edited to make it more accessible to parents	Cabinet	12/01/21 - Agreed that the response to the findings would be submitted to the Scrutiny Board within two months.
		(b) The EHE website be refreshed to provide information, guides and links to other information and links to EHE forums for advice and support	Cabinet	12/01/21 - Agreed that the response to the findings would be submitted to the Scrutiny Board within two months.
		(c) To identify resource and support within the council to facilitate the refresh	Cabinet	12/01/21 - Agreed that the response to the findings would be submitted to the Scrutiny Board within two months.
		(d) That additional spaces and facilities be identified for EHE groups to meet and carry out activities, and that competitive rates for use of those facilities be negotiated for EHE group use	Cabinet	12/01/21 - Agreed that the response to the findings would be submitted to the Scrutiny Board within two months.
		(e) That the Council develop a mechanism for resources to be shared for EHE, such as a hub for books or other educational material to be kept;	Cabinet	12/01/21 - Agreed that the response to the findings would be submitted to the Scrutiny Board within two months.
		(f) That youth social networks, such as 'Just Youth', be promoted on the EHE website for users to find out what's on in Sandwell for young people and to encourage engagement;	Cabinet	12/01/21 - Agreed that the response to the findings would be submitted to the Scrutiny Board within two months.

		(g) To raise awareness of the SEN and EHCP support available and access for children.	Cabinet	12/01/21 - Agreed that the response to the findings would be submitted to the Scrutiny Board within two months.
		(h) That the Cabinet Member for Best Start in Life and the DCS, on behalf of the Council, be requested to write to the Secretary of State for Education, and to the Parliamentary Select Committee Inquiry of Home Education, to register this council's findings from the Elective Home Education review which highlights the need for regulation and resources for Elective Home Education; and to endorse a letter from the Association of EHE Professionals which asks whether consideration is being given to strengthening the legislation to provide further safeguards for children who are EHE.	Cabinet	12/01/21 - Agreed that the response to the findings would be submitted to the Scrutiny Board within two months.
	Youth Facilities Review	<p>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 joined-up plan that compliments services across the local authority.</p> <p>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</p>	Youth Officers	<p>14/02/2022 - Working with the Shape programme and Public Health, investment was secured in 2020 for an apprentice role to lead the work on communications and marketing both for the Shape Programme and for Just Youth. This has led to a range of improvements to the website and an increased usage of social media platforms resulting in increased traffic on the website and engagement with social media channels.</p> <p>The Black Country &amp; West Birmingham Clinical Commissioning Group has provided funding to support ongoing development of the website with internal and external partners and promotion of this in community venues, as part of their ongoing commitment to the delivery of the Children &amp; Young People's Engagement Strategy and the Shape Programme.</p> <p>The Children &amp; Young People's Engagement Strategy has been developed with young people and stakeholders and was launched in April 2021. This brought together young people, stakeholders and enabled some key partners to showcase their youth offer. However, to do this justice and deliver a meaningful Youth Symposium a face to</p>



		<p>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>face event is required to explore what a co-ordinated and renewed youth offer would look like. Alongside the Strategy, a communications plan has been developed to ensure key messages targeted at young people are shared through existing social media channels. To develop this further young people have been trained as Digital Leaders and will be looking to lead the development of content on both the website and social media, including looking at TikTok.</p>
		<p>Young people should be afforded safe, flexible, space of their own, with 'Wi-fi &amp; 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"> <li>i. Use of libraries within extended opening times – rethinking their use in the community</li> <li>ii. Mobile provision (through a bus or support vehicle).</li> <li>iii. Pop up shops and underused town centre units.</li> <li>iv. Leisure &amp; Activity Centres.</li> <li>v. Other council properties and schools.</li> <li>vi. New build, where no existing options are deemed suitable.</li> </ul>	<p>Youth Officers</p>	<p>14/02/2022 - In terms of mobile youth provision, the Service has 2 youth buses (double decker and single decker). This provision has not been operational during Covid due to social distancing restrictions but has been much sought after by young people. The Council is currently pursuing funding to purchase a new electric double decker youth bus which will require an investment in infrastructure.</p> <p>The Town's Fund programme has prioritised a number of projects that will provide young people with places to go including a new skate park and community hub in Britannia Park. In Smethwick additional multi use classrooms are to be added at the Ron Davis Centre and improvements made to outdoor sports facilities in Lewisham Park. Additionally, plans for West Bromwich include improved facilities at West Bromwich Town Hall and Library including the development of a Cultural Quarter.</p> <p>After a successful pilot of sports based youth activity at Tipton Sports Academy, The Service is exploring the use of other Leisure Centre Facilities in Oldbury and West Bromwich, however these come with a cost that the Service is currently not budgeted for.</p> <p>Not with-standing the restrictions imposed by Covid 19, the Service has been able to explore some alternative models of delivery where we have gaps in provision across the 6 towns. In addition to provision currently open in Tipton, West Bromwich and Smethwick (see Appendix 3 for current youth provision list), we are currently exploring options for open access youth provision within libraries particularly in West Bromwich, Oldbury and Rowley Regis. We have re-located our SEND youth club from the Meadows School to Wednesbury Museum &amp; Art Gallery, our detached youth work team in Lightwood Park is</p>

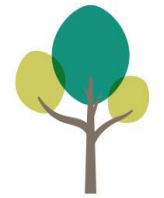
				<p>exploring the use of Lightswood House to facilitate a young Friends of the Park group, and we are exploring other museum facilities which may be suitable for young people's provision. In Wednesbury we are also exploring the option of developing open access provision with the voluntary sector at Wednesbury 2000.</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. Whilst the Service is exploring many options for creating accessible youth spaces, the challenges still remain around multi use shared spaces and young people having some ownership and ability to make the space their own.</p>
		<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>	Youth Officers	<p>14/02/2022 - Although there are some concessionary travel discount schemes for young people up to age 18 to support them with subsidised travel to education or work, none of these extend to leisure time use. This is a wider issue that needs to be championed with the West Midlands Combined Authority.</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 and funding is identified from the Town's Fund to further develop infrastructure across West Bromwich, Smethwick and Rowley Regis to support cycling.</p>
		<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</p>	Youth Officers	<p>14/02/2022 - The Service has been successful in getting funding for additional targeted work in West Bromwich through the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) and the Safer Streets Fund (SSF). VRU funding is targeted at addressing under 25's youth violence through detached youth work, mentoring and diversionary activity. The SSF is part of a more collaborative bid across the Council and with partners addressing issues of harassment and violence against women and girls.</p>

		corporate social responsibility objectives of local businesses		<p>Additionally, the Government's Holiday Activity &amp; Food programme has enabled holiday activity programmes for young people to be delivered during key school holiday periods.</p> <p>As part of the Government's Spending Review, a commitment has been made to the Youth Investment Fund over the next 3 years. This will provide capital and some revenue funding for youth provision in left behind areas, these are yet to be announced.</p> <p>The Children and Young People's Strategic Commissioning Partnership has facilitated a collaborative approach to funding bids, ensuring that partners work together when drafting and submitting bids for funding, a good example of this is the recent bid for Family Hubs funding that bought together the Council, CCG and Sandwell Children's Trust.</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.	Youth Officers	<p>14/02/2022 - During the Covid19 lockdown, the youth offer has been via detached youth work and online support, including a weekly agony aunt session on facebook. As Covid restrictions have eased some face to face open access youth provision has re-opened. In addition, we have continued to provide support to vulnerable young people through our Enhanced Youth Support team.</p> <p>Due to Covid19 it has not been possible to progress the NYASQMF. However, whilst plans are in place to progress this between April 2022-March 2023, we have progressed work on a theory of change model for the Service. This model sets out the areas of focus for the Youth Service and what support young people can expect.</p> <p>During Covid we have also invested in training and development for youth workers with 14 achieving a level 2 and 8 achieving a level 3 Award in Youth Work Practise.</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 required to deliver the provision would need to be reviewed.	Youth Officers	<p>14/02/2022 - The Council's Corporate Plan and the budget setting process will consider this recommendation alongside other priorities for the council's budget, aligned to the Corporate Plan.</p> <p>In the absence of any national statutory benchmark or guidance on what a sufficient youth service would offer, the National Youth Agency suggest each Local Authority (including any voluntary and Community sector provision) would provide at least two, full-time equivalent professionals who are JNC qualified youth workers be located in a secondary school catchment area, along with an equivalent team of at</p>

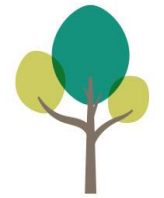
				<p>least four youth support workers, and trained volunteers, to ensure minimum access to quality youth services. Sandwell Youth Service currently employs 27 number of FTE and 7 of these are JNC qualified. It is difficult to assess what is currently available in the voluntary and community sector as this data is not captured.</p>
		<p>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.</p>	<p>Youth Officers</p>	<p>It had been hoped that this would be possible from autumn 2020, however, the ongoing Covid19 restrictions mean that a physical meeting is not possible at the current time. Contact with young people throughout this period has demonstrated that very few have access to the Teams environment and many are uncomfortable meeting in this way. With face to face meetings only resuming in September 2021, there is much work to be done in re-establishing the forum and getting everyone at a level of confidence to re-engage. It is proposed that the Question Time events are re-established to start in the 2022 summer term and then take place on a quarterly basis. Also, Scrutiny alongside the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services and Education and the Cabinet Advisor for Young People &amp; Skills need to consider the outcomes they want and the scope of the Question Time sessions.</p>

The following items set out key decisions related to Children’s Services and Education to be taken by the Executive in public session:-

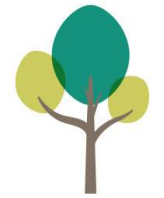
	Title/Subject	Cabinet Portfolio Area	Decision Date	Pre-decision Scrutiny to be carried out? (Board and date)	List of documents to be considered
1	<p><b>Sandwell Children’s Trust – Contract Review</b></p> <p>Contact Officer: Mandip S. Chahal</p> <p>Director: Michael Jarrett, Director of Children’s Services and Education</p>	Children & Education (Cllr Hackett)	28 September 2022		<p>Report by:</p> <p>Director of Children and Education</p> <p>Contract Review Report</p>



	Title/Subject	Cabinet Portfolio Area	Decision Date	Pre-decision Scrutiny to be carried out? (Board and date)	List of documents to be considered
2	<p><b>Residential Education Service Tutorial Staffing</b></p> <p>Contact Officer: Richard Oakes</p> <p>Director of Children’s Services and Education, Michael Jarrett</p>	Children & Education (Cllr Hackett)	28 September 2022		Report
3	<p><b>School Organisation Plan 2021-26: outcome of consultation and approval to publish</b></p> <p>Contact Officer: Rachel Hill</p> <p>Director of Children and Education, Michael Jarret</p>	Children & Education (Cllr Hackett)	28 September 2022		Report

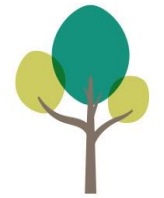


	Title/Subject	Cabinet Portfolio Area	Decision Date	Pre-decision Scrutiny to be carried out? (Board and date)	List of documents to be considered
4	<p><b>Application to Secretary of State for Education for change of use/appropriation of Denbigh Drive</b></p> <p>Contact Officer: Rachel Hill</p> <p>Director of Children and Education, Michael Jarrett</p>	Children & Education (Cllr Hackett)	12 October 2022		Report
5	<p><b>Sandwell Residential Education Centres Fees &amp; Charges 2023-2024</b></p> <p>Contact Officer: Richard Oakes</p> <p>Director of Children’s Services and Education, Michael Jarrett</p>	Children & Education (Cllr Hackett)	12 October 2022		Report












**Annual Programme Reminder (these items are not added automatically)**

Title/Subject	Cabinet Portfolio Area	Decision Date	Pre-decision Scrutiny to be carried out? (Board and date)	List of documents to be considered
Review of Fees and Charges		January		
Determination of Admission Priorities for Sandwell’s Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools		January/February		
Schools Funding		December/January		
Schools Capital Programme		April to June		
Review of Fees and Charges Sandwell Residential Education Services Centre Charges		May – July		
Childcare Sufficiency Report		July - September		
Model Schools Pay Policy		October/November		






## Work Programme 2022/23 Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board

Meeting Date	Item	Links with Strategic Aims	Notes
12 September 2022	Sandwell Children's Trust Annual Review		Emma Taylor (CEO of SCT)
	Elective Home Education Report – Cabinet Response	 	Sue Moore (Group Head for Education Support Services)
	Annual Regional Adoption Report	 	Lynn Noble (Adoption at Heart)
	Children's Services COVID Recovery Funds	 	Sally Giles (Strategic Partnerships and Commissioning Manager)  Claire Tate (Senior Transformation Lead for Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health)
14 November 2022	Virtual School and STEPS Centre	 	Michael Jarrett (Director for Children's Services)  Balwant Bains Head of Virtual Schools. (STEPS)



9 January 2023			
20 March 2023	Sandwell Children's Trust 6 month review		Emma Taylor (CEO of SCT)

<b>Items to be scheduled</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The impact of the lockdown on Children and Families – findings report following substantial work and investigation in 2021/22.</li> <li>• SEND Transport – updates to the Board.</li> <li>• Outcome of trial of 16+ provision at the Westminster School and The Meadows.</li> <li>• Children's Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health.</li> <li>• Government White Paper - Opportunity for all - strong schools with great teachers for your child</li> <li>• Government Green Paper - SEND &amp; Alternative Provision - Summary of the SEND review: right support, right place, right time</li> <li>• Education Investment Area and Priority Investment Area developments</li> <li>• Youth Service Offer and Youth Facilities</li> <li>• Childhood Obesity</li> </ul>

