

Agenda

Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board

Monday 13 November 2023 at 6.00 pm
in the Council Chamber - Sandwell Council House, Oldbury

- 1 Apologies for Absence** 7 - 8
To receive any apologies for absence.

- 2 Declarations of Interest** 9 - 10
Members to declare any interests in matters to be discussed at the meeting.

- 3 Minutes** 11 - 22
To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 11 September 2023 as a correct record.

- 4 Urgent Additional Items of Business**
To determine whether there are any additional items of business to be considered as a matter of urgency.

- 5 Post 16 Pathways** 23 - 52
To consider post 16 pathways.



6	Sandwell Virtual School	53 - 72
	To consider Sandwell Virtual School responsibilities and outcomes.	
7	ASEND Inspection Outcome and Next Steps	73 - 86
	To consider the ASEND Inspection Outcome and Next Steps.	
8	Scrutiny Action Tracker	87 - 96
	Standing item to consider and note progress on implementation of actions and recommendations.	
9	Work Programme and Cabinet Forward Plan	97 - 110
	Standing item to consider the Children's Services and Education Work Programme and future items on the Forward Plan.	

Shokat Lal**Chief Executive**

Sandwell Council House

Freeth Street

Oldbury

West Midlands

Distribution

Councillor Hinchliff (Chair)

Councillors Chambers, Allcock, Ashraf, Choudhry, Fitzgerald, W Gill, Mayo, Pall, Uddin and Weston

Barrie Scott - Church of England diocese representative;

Carmel Hinton - Roman Catholic Archdiocese representative;

Yvonne Ologbo - Parent Governor representative.

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Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board

Apologies for Absence

To receive any apologies for absence from the members of the Committee.



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Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board

Declarations of Interest

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



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Minutes of Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board

Monday 11 September 2023 at 6.00pm
in the Council Chamber, Sandwell Council House, Oldbury

Present: Councillor Hinchliff (Chair);
Councillors Ashraf, Pall and Uddin.
Barrie Scott Co-opted Member - Church of England dioceses
of Birmingham and Lichfield Representative.
Yvonne Ologbo - Parent Governor representative.

Officers: Michael Jarrett (Director of Children and Education); Emma
Taylor (Chief Executive, Sandwell Children's Trust); Jacqui
Smith (Chair of Sandwell Children' Trust); Mandip Chahal
(Senior Joint Commissioning Manager); Lisa Preston
(Adoption@Heart); Julie Andrews (Assistant Director -
Education Services) and Stephnie Hancock (Deputy
Democratic Services Manager).

26/23 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Choudhry, W
Gill, Mayo and Weston.

27/23 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.



28/23 **Minutes**

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 3 July 2023 are approved as a correct record.

29/23 **Urgent Additional Items of Business**

There were no urgent additional items of business to consider.

30/23 **Adoption@Heart Annual Report**

The Board received the Regional Adoption Agency's (RAA) Annual Report for 2022/23. The provision of an adoption service was a statutory requirement and the Council was required to monitor the provision of adoption services. The agency had been operating for four years, following a government direction for all local authorities to deliver their adoption services through a regional agency, funded by the Department for Education.

Adoption@Heart continued to be an active member of the Midlands Together Collaboration (MTC), which had a shared aim to enhance placement choice at the earliest possible opportunity for children and to ensure effective arrangements and protocols were in place for providing longer term adoption support. Placement figures for the MTC region were:-

- 145 interagency placements had been made for 206 children;
- 12 placements secured with RAAs for 13 children;
- 41 placements made with VAA partners for 60 children.

The focus this year had been the launch of the MTC Early Permanence Good Practice Guide. This followed the launch of the National Early Permanence Standards and was in recognition of the need to that early permanence was considered for all children with a likely plan of adoption. Since the launch of the Good Practice Guide in February and March 2023, referrals for Fostering to Adopt



(FFA) placements had increased. The challenge for Adoption@Heart and other RAA's was recruiting enough adopters to meet the increase in demand.

The Board noted the following headline data for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023:-

- 541 adopter enquiries had been received, compared to 609 the previous year; advertising was now being done on a wider scale to increase numbers;
- there had been an increase in the number of complex assessments, which had adversely impacted on the completion of adoption assessments within six months;
- a survey carried out by Adoption UK indicated that the cost of living crisis was having an impact, with adopters seeking to adopt fewer and older children;
- 40 adopters had been approved, of which 15 were approved within the six-month statutory timescale, this also represented a reduction in 17 adopters compared to the previous year;
- as of 31 March 2023 there were 21 families approved and awaiting a match;
- the new adopters approved did not reflect the cultural and religious heritage of the children awaiting adoption, so adopters were being asked to consider widening their criteria to reduce waiting times;
- delays and waiting times were being closely monitored;
- there had been four formal complaints, learning from complaints continued to be a key feature of the service;
- staffing was stable and vacancy rates continued to be low;
- there had been one referral to the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) and the IRM had upheld the Agency's original decision;
- there had been one placement disruption and one placement that had not progressed beyond introductions, learning from both events had been fed back into the services and changes implemented where necessary;
- from Autumn 2023 governance arrangements would be streamlined, with a new Strategic Partnership Board,



replacing the Management Board and Strategic Commissioning Board;

- the management team had re-written key policies and procedures and developed an overarching business plan which identified the following key service development priorities:-
 - embedding early permanence from both a child and adopter perspective;
 - focusing recruitment activity on recruiting adopters for children who wait the longest;
 - improving timeliness of adoption assessments and matching;
 - improve the adopter and the child's voice;
 - Reinstating some activities that were suspended during Covid such as coffee mornings, adopter picnics and social gatherings for adoptive families to extend the adoption support offer;
 - embedding a quality assurance framework within the service, to include the need for regular themed audit activity across all aspects of the service and the collation of service user experience across all parts of the adoption journey;
- 31 Placement Orders had been granted;
- most children waited less than a year following a Placement Order, but 13 children had waited for over a year;
- 24 children had been made subject to Placement Orders;
- 25 children had been placed for adoption, of which 12 were boys and 13 were girls;
- National Indicator A2 (time from placement order to matching decision) stood at 195 days and was in line with national benchmarking data, and current in-year data was showing significant improvement on Sandwell's 3-year rolling average of 231 days.
- National Indicator A10 (time from entry to care to placement for adoption) stood at 465 days and was in line with national benchmarking data, and current in-year data was showing a



significant improvement on Sandwell's rolling average of 519 days.

- Six children had been placed in early permanence placements via Foster for Adopt, which placed Sandwell as the second highest in the region, and six of those children had been placed with in-house families;
- of the 2 children placed for adoption 18 had been placed with in-house adopters and 7 interagency.

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

- birth children were often a key factor in placement breakdowns and training was being targeted at those adopters;
- disruptions were always reviewed independently and learning points embedded across the board;
- some prospective adopters needed more time to think and so in these cases, the process was paused as it was important to ensure that adopters were as resilient as possible to meet the needs of vulnerable children;
- children who suffered placement breakdowns were returned to foster care and a review of the child's situation was carried out before considering further placements;
- whilst there were checks and balances in place to prevent placement disruptions, indicators were not always obvious.

31/23

Sandwell Children's Trust Performance Update

The Board received the Sandwell Children's Trust's Annual Review and Performance Update for 2022/23.

The Trust was contractually required to report to the Board twice a year. Progress against the performance indicators for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 was set out in the Annual Review 2022/23, together with information about financial, workforce, and other performance areas. The Review informed the Trust's business plan on an annual basis.



Since April 2018 the Trust had been the subject of seven monitoring visits from Ofsted as well as a focussed visit, three inspection visits of the fostering service, a full inspection under the Ofsted framework and guidance for inspecting local authority services for children (ILACS) in May 2022, and most recently an inspection of adoption services in December 2022. The judgement following the inspection undertaken in May 2022 was one of *'Requires Improvement to be Good'*. With the judgement of *'Good'* received by the fostering service in August 2021 and a judgement of *'Good'* for the adoption service in December 2022 there was a clear trajectory of service improvement.

The Trust had undertaken a refresh of its Improvement Plan, utilising the feedback provided by Ofsted following the ILACS inspection, with an aim of becoming a *'Good'* or better organisation.

The Board noted the following key headlines:-

- 11 key performance indicators (KPIs) had been met, and three were within the contract tolerance;
- a provisional surplus of £39k had been generated;
- the key financial pressures related to the reliance on agency staff and placement pressures;
- between June and September 2022 there had been significant staffing issues, which was reflective of the national and regional picture in respect of recruitment and retention of social workers;
- to reduce the child of children not being allocated a social worker, the Council had supported the bringing in of five agency project teams during this period;
- caseloads were lower at the end of the year than the beginning, however, Sandwell was still higher than statistical neighbours;
- there had been an increase in the number of children working with the Strengthening Families Service;
- the number of re-referrals had increased, and a deep dive had revealed a need to get better at preparing partners to provide support to enable the Trust to step down;



- the rate of Section 47 enquiries continued to be lower than statistical neighbours and in line with England and West Midlands averages;
- the rate of initial child protection conferences was now below statistical neighbours', England and West Midlands averages;
- the number of children with a Child Protection Plan had increased, but remained below statistical neighbours and England and West Midlands averages.

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

- the positive judgments from Ofsted had changed people's view of Sandwell and the Trust had worked on its branding and values so social worker recruitment was in a better place than in previous years;
- office accommodation and IT had also been re-modelled based on staff feedback and leadership support had improved so there was more of a focus on wellbeing;
- 32 student social workers had joined the Trust from the ASYE (assessed and supported year in employment) Academy, reducing the number of vacancies from 27.36 to 13.36, out of an establishment of 187;
- currently 20.7% of the establishment was made up of agency social workers;
- average case loads had reduced from 20+ to 18.73 since March 2023;
- there continued to be a national crisis, impacted by agency rates of pay;
- evidence of good practice had been seen as part of quality assurance exercises in relation to the new Early Help offer, however it was important to increase capacity across the wider partnership (e.g. health visitors, designated safeguarding leads in schools) to take on the lead professional role and ensure that referrals were appropriate;
- Ofsted had identified strength in leadership, visibility, grip, and strategic direction, however examples of good practice in frontline social work were in-consistent but improving;



- the Horizons Team had won an award for its work in tackling child exploitation;
- a wellbeing strategy had been introduced for all staff and improvements had been made to supervision in terms of quality and focus, with a more reflective approach as opposed to task driven, and there was now more focus on wellbeing;
- the inspection had identified many aspects of “Good” practice, but inconsistencies remained, however the trajectory was good;
- domestic abuse was often a factor and the majority of referrals related to abuse or neglect, substance abuse was also a common issue;
- performance management meeting sought confidence that the child had been seen and there was sufficient detail to support referrals;
- other agencies needed to be ready to step in in case where the Trust stepped down.

The Board also noted an update on performance in relation to children in care and noted the following headlines:-

- 10-15 years was the biggest age group, an intervention hub had recently been launched to target this age group;
- the majority of children in case were with foster families, leaving 12% with parents;
- dedicated social workers were working on exit plans to reduce delay;
- foster carer recruitment and branding had been reviewed and there was a focus on increasing skills and resilience;
- bespoke advertising was taking place for foster carers for children with special needs and importance was placed on support for those carers;
- increasing the number of fosters carers would reduce the reliance on out of borough placements.

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



- when placing children with fosters carers, the need for and importance of a family setting often took priority over an exact cultural match;
- there were many myths around fostering and reassurance could be given to those interested, whilst still recognising however that standards need to be met;
- a range of support was provided by the Intervention Hub to help keep children at home, or return children safely to home, using evidence based interventions;
- everyone could play a role in promoting fostering across the borough to support Sandwell's aim to be a Fostering Friendly Borough and this was something that was being looked at by the Corporate Parenting Board, and the Scrutiny Board would have feedback on progress and impact in due course.

Resolved that a report detailing progress and impact in relation to Sandwell's journey to becoming a Fostering Friendly Borough is submitted to a future meeting of the Board.

32/23

Education Investment Area and Priority Education Investment Area Developments

Further to Minute No. 17/23 (20th March 2023) the Board received an update on developments in relation to Sandwell being selected as an Education Investment Area and Priority Education Investment Area.

The Local Partnership Board had held a launch event in June 2023 for all Sandwell schools and academies. This had detailed the universal offer available to all Sandwell schools and the that for priority schools. The event had been well attended, with positive engagement from stakeholders.

Priority schools for each of the workstreams had now been contacted and invited to take up the support offer. Other schools could be added in the autumn term, subject to the outcomes of 2023 Key Stage 2 tests and Key Stage 4 examinations.



Procurement of delivery partners was currently taking place. Delivery of Key Stage 2 and 3 maths workstreams would likely commence in September 2023 and was being delivered by The Maths Hub. Bids were currently being assessed in relation to the SEND workstream, however, no bids had been received for any of the other workstreams, which mirrored neighbouring LA's positions, and tenders had therefore been re-issued.

33/23

Scrutiny Review – Cost of Living Crisis and its Impact on Attainment and Attendance

That the Board considered the draft scope in relation to its review into the cost of living and its impact on educational attainment and attendance in Sandwell.

The scope document set out the proposed areas of inquiry for the review and the methods to gather evidence. The scope was not set in stone and could be revised according to the evidence gathered as the review progressed.

Resolved

- (1) that the scope for the review into the cost of living and its impact on educational attainment and attendance in Sandwell is endorsed;
- (2) that a working group is established to progress the review, comprising councillors Ashraf, Hinchliff and Pall; and co-opted members Barrie Scott and Yvonne Ologbo.

34/23

Scrutiny Action Tracker

The Board noted progress on actions and recommendations from previous meetings.



Work Programme and Cabinet Forward Plan

The Board noted the Cabinet Forward Plan as it related to Children, Young People and Education.

The Director of Children and Education reported that the draft report had now been received, following the SEND area inspection and the final report was due to be published shortly. The full report would be brought to a future meeting.

Members requested a report to a future meeting on the operation and success of Operation Encompass in Sandwell.

Resolved that the following items be added to the Board's work programme for 2023/24:-

- Outcome of SEND Area Inspection.
- Operation and Success of Operation Encompass in Sandwell.

Meeting ended at 7.57pm

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Report to Children’s Services and Education Scrutiny Board

13 November 2023

Subject:	Post 16 Pathways
Director:	Director of Children and Education Michael Jarrett
Contact Officer:	Skills and Employability Service Manager, Kelly Harris Kelly_harris@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations



- 1.1 That the Board considers and comments upon the post 16 pathways available to Sandwell young people.
- 1.2 That the board considers what other measures could be put in place to tackle NEET or youth unemployment particularly for those aged 19-24.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 It is essential a variety of post 16 pathways are available to young people in Sandwell.
- 2.2 The period of transition from full time education to post 18 destinations is important to help guide young people to achieve their aspirations. Education, Employment and Training figures are generally good in Sandwell at 16-18 but are more of a challenge post 19.



3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	Best start in life for children and young people – Post 16 pathways are a key transitional period in young people’s lives. Good quality advice and guidance along with a range of educational and employment pathways are integral to career and aspirational prospects.
	A strong and inclusive economy – Labour market information is used to help shape advice and guidance and provision delivered as part of the post 16 offer for young people

4 Context and Key Issues

4.1 Education, Employment and Training monitoring

4.2 The Council has a statutory duty to provide targeted careers support to vulnerable young people (Section 68 of the ESA 2008). Connexions Sandwell provides a career service for young people which has a particular focus on 16-17-year-olds and those who are NEET. Within the overall cohort of young people supported, some groups are vulnerable and more likely to be unemployed due to their personal circumstances. This includes young people involved in the youth justice system, those with attendance issues, Children in Care, children with SEND and those with family issues.

4.3 The Council has a duty to ensure that young people are participating in education or training as a result of the raising of the Participation Age (RPA). This is under sections 18 and 68(4) of the 2008 Education and Skills Act (ESA 2008) in relation to sections 10, 12 and 68 of that Act. Connexion’s data relating to participation, NEET and delivery of the September Guarantee are statutory returns and are made available on the DfE website. (www.explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk)

4.4 **Connexions Sandwell** provide a targeted careers guidance service to the most vulnerable (5-10%) Year 11 young people in every Sandwell school including Pupil Referral Units and special schools. Connexions personal advisors also offer support to young people who are Children in Care, Youth Justice Service and have Special Education Needs. Many Sandwell schools also receive a traded service which enhances the



careers education students receive and supports the schools to fulfil their statutory obligations.

4.5 Connexions track all 16 - and 17-year-olds (over 9,000) in Sandwell. There are data sharing arrangements in place with regional Local Authorities and local/regional training providers and colleges who notify Connexions of starters and leavers. Connexions contact young people at least once per year to confirm their destination, and whether they are in Further Education, apprenticeships or employment. Young people who enter employment without recognised training are contacted within 6 months of their start date because research shows that they are likely to leave within 6 months.

4.6 Connexions have a strong engagement programme with young people and parents including the New year New Start annual event, which this year had over 50 stands and attracted over 1800 attendees.

4.7 **NEET and EET Statistics for Sandwell**

4.8 Sandwell's 16/17-year-old NEET/Not Known percentage performance is ranked in Quintile 1 (the top 30 LAs in England, out of 150) for the 3rd year in a row. Over the last 3 years the percentage figure has improved from 2.6% NEET/Not Known in 2020-21 to 1.7% this year. This has also meant that in terms of actual ranking, Sandwell has moved from 13th in 2020-21 to 7th this year. In comparison to statistical neighbours, Sandwell is the best performing with the average for the statistical neighbours at quintile 3.

4.9 Sandwell's performance for 2022 for the Government's September Offer of a suitable place in Learning for Y11 and 12 is below:

	Total Y11 Guarantee	Offer made	% Offer made	Total Y12 Guarantee	Offer made	% Offer made	Combined %
ENGLAND	609273	590123	96.4%	608035	563617	92.6%	94.5%
WEST MIDLANDS	68515	67029	97.8%	68751	64935	94.4%	96.1%
Sandwell	4371	4357	99.7%	4561	4530	99.3%	99.5%

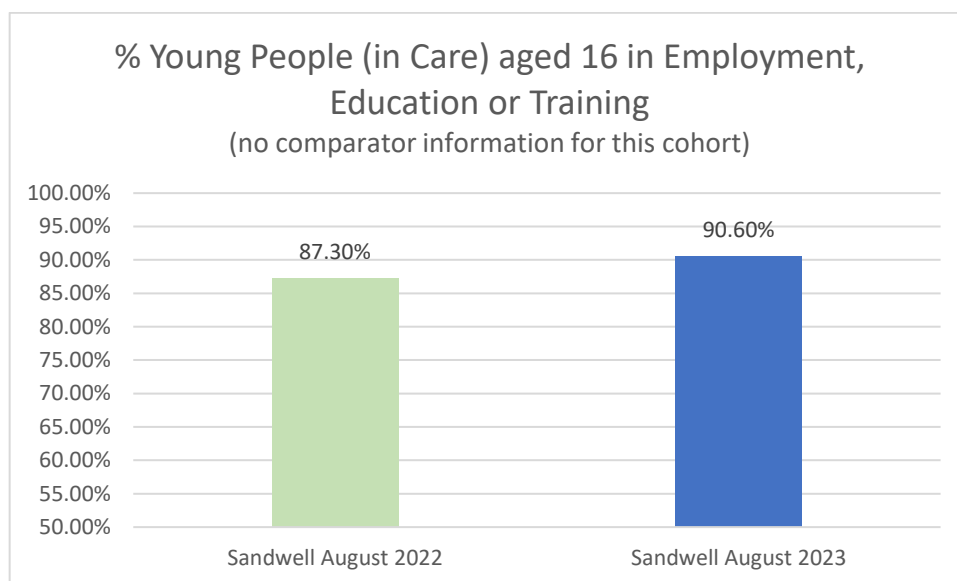
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5.0 Children in Care/Care Leaver NEET

5.1 16 Year Olds

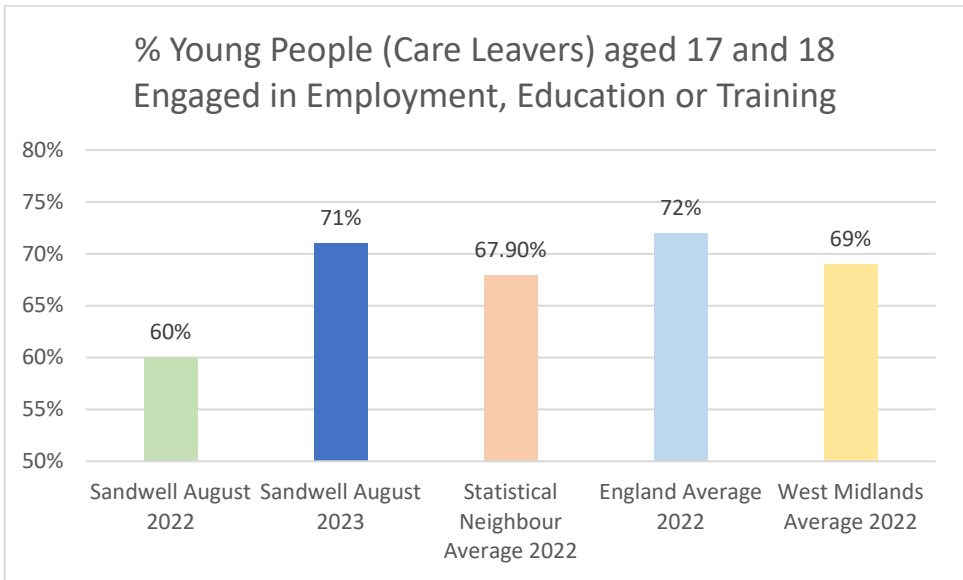
- As of 31st August 2023, there are 75 Children in Care aged 16; of these 68 are engaged in employment, education or training which equates to 90.6%, an increase of 3.3% since August 2022 when the figure was 87.3%. There is no comparator information for 16-year olds against England, Statistical Neighbour Average or West Midlands



5.2 17 – 18-Year-olds

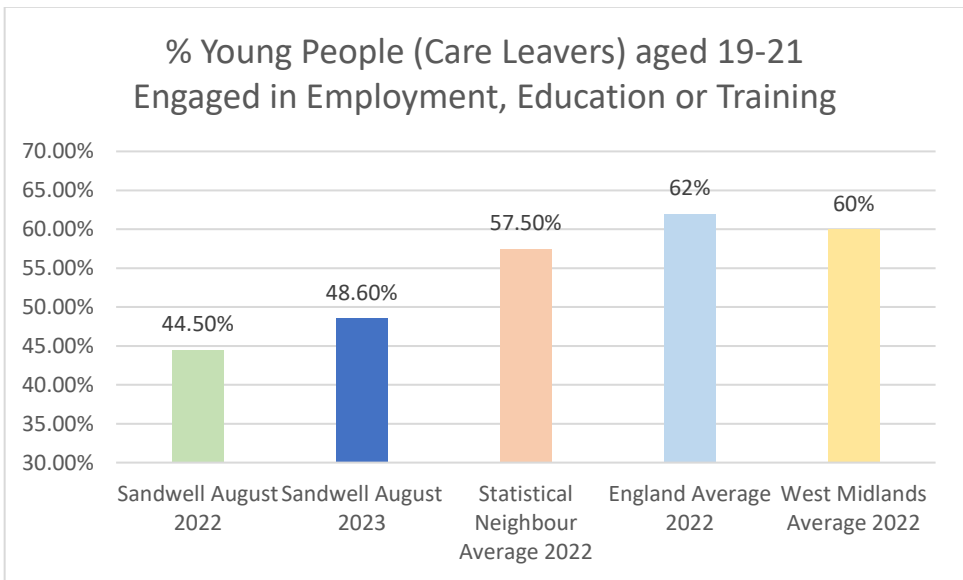
- As of August 2023, there are 152 Children in Care/Care Leavers aged 17-18; of these 108 are engaged in employment, education or training which equates to 71%. This represents an 11% increase since August 2022, when the figure was 60%.
- There is comparator data for this cohort, showing that Sandwell is currently 3.1% above (better) Statistical Neighbour Average, 2% above West Midlands Average, although 1% below England Average.





5.3 19 – 21 Year olds

- As of August 2023, there are 206 Care Leavers aged 19-21, of these 100 are engaged in employment, education or training which equates to 48.5%. Performance has improved by 4.1% since August 2022, when performance was 44.5%, but is still a concern as emphasised by the comparator figures below.
- When comparing the August position against latest comparator averages Sandwell is currently 8.9% below (worse) Statistical Neighbour Average, 11.4% below West Midlands Average and 13.4% below England Average.



5.4 Children in Care/Care Leavers EET Activity

- 5.5 The Connexions Service provides a bespoke **careers advice and guidance programme for Children in Care**, including those who are transitioning from post 16 education. Careers are also highlighted at an early age, with career options discussed from year 7 onwards. The Aspire to HE offer for Children in Care is aspirational and showcases HE pathways to Children in Care at year 8 and 11. As of 31st August 2023, 343 Care Leavers aged 17-21, 108 are attending further education (College/University), which equates to 31.5%. This compares to a statistical neighbour average of 35.5% and 39% England average.
- 5.5 Care experienced young people are offered apprenticeship opportunities within the council that are generated to match their individual aspirations through 'ring fenced' vacancies. These are made accessible by a relaxation of the Maths and English requirements (if necessary), and by an individualised application process. Where an opportunity is matched to a young person, working with an advisor, they can access a period of work experience, and receive support to complete the application form and undergo an informal interview.
- 5.6 A multi-agency approach is taken when supporting Care Leavers who are NEET to become EET. **NEET Panel** meets monthly and is well attended by partner agencies including Sandwell Children's Trust, Connexions, LACES, Employment and Skills, Think Sandwell, Urban Regeneration, Participation Team and Youth Offending. The main focus of the panel is to support an action plan for young people who are NEET. The panel is chaired by a CIC or Care Leavers Team Manager from the Trust and each manager including partner agencies is responsible for identifying any young people who are NEET or who may be EET and need additional support to fulfil their aspirations. Young people referred to the panel are regularly reviewed, and panel members may be set tasks to complete in order to prepare and promote individuals access to EET. The nature of the panel enables individual needs to be considered in order to maximise success and this includes the exploration of bespoke plans. The panel is attended by the allocated social worker or SCT Personal Advisor, who will then feedback any ideas, actions or advice directly to the young person.



6.0 SEND NEET/EET

	In-learning	NEET	Not Known	NEET/NK combined
Sandwell (SEND)	85.5%	5.6%	2.6%	8.3%
West Mids. (SEND)	87.3%	7.8%	1.6%	9.4%
England (SEND)	87.2%	8.2%	1.5%	9.7%
Sandwell (SEN Support)	88.4%	5.3%	1.0%	6.3%
West Mids. (SEN Support)	84.8%	6.6%	4.3%	11.0%
England (SEN Support)	85.9%	6.3%	2.9%	9.1%

Source: Sandwell data is from our CCIS client database. Regional, statistical neighbours and national data is from DfE monthly releases and based on Local Authority statutory monthly returns.

- 6.1 Sandwell has lower numbers of combined NEET and Not Known across Y12 and Y13 compared to West Midlands, England and our statistical neighbours.
- 6.2 Sandwell has a slightly lower percentage of SEND in Learning in both Y12 and in Y13, compared to the West Midlands and England.
- 6.3 Sandwell has the highest percentage of young people (Y12 and Y13) with SEN support in Learning, across each age group and against West Midlands and England comparators. Sandwell has lower SEN support young people (in both Y12 and Y13) who are NEET/NK (6.3%), compared to the West Midlands and England.
- 6.4 The employment data on current employment for 18 to 25-year olds with SEND is not currently collected in one place and national data is not available. This includes young people aged 18+ who are in employment, those who go into employment from college, training, supported internships or those who are NEET.
- 6.5 Schools have the statutory responsibility for ensuring that young people with SEND are able to access personal careers guidance. Connexions provide a targeted service to children where they are identified as being



most at risk of NEET in year 11 in school. Young people in the target group are identified and agreed between Connexions and the school based on risk of NEET data. In addition, some schools commission a traded service from Connexions to meet the careers guidance needs of other students. If a young person with SEND is in the Connexions target group, they will be offered one to one independent careers guidance to identify short, medium and long-term career goals and appropriate routes and provision. Each young person seen will receive a careers action plan (Aspiration Career Pathway Plan if they have an EHCP). The information contained within this plan can inform the young person's EHCP, where one is in place.

6.6 If a NEET young person aged 18-25 with an EHCP keeps in touch with Connexions, they will continue to provide careers information, advice and guidance. This number is very small because young people engage with age appropriate agencies e.g. DWP, Social Services and SMBC SEN department. If Connexions are advised that the young person has started in employment that would be recorded on their client record.

6.7 **Supported Internships**

6.8 Supported internships are widely available as a pathway for young people with SEND at Westminster Special school and all local colleges. Supported Internships are structured study programmes for young people with an EHC plan, based primarily at an employer. Internships normally last an academic year and wherever possible, will support the young person to move into paid employment at the end of the programme.

6.9 In Sandwell, there is a unique offer for NEET SEND young people to apply for a DFN Project Search supported internship sites and if they are accepted their EHCP is re-instated.



7.0 Youth Unemployment

Youth unemployment is defined as people aged 18 – 24 who are claiming out of work benefits (Universal Credit). The data is collated nationally utilising claimant data held by DWP.

7.1 Youth Unemployment has for a long time been an area of concern for Sandwell, with the percentage of young people claiming benefits being higher than the regional and national average.

The below table shows the performance over the past four years

	Sandwell %	West Midlands %	Great Britain %
Jan 2020 (pre pandemic)	7.3	5.0	4.0
Aug 2020	14.5	10.3	9.4
Aug 2021	11.1	8.3	6.4
Aug 2022	9.0	5.9	4.6
Aug 2023	9.1	6.7	4.9

7.2 The number of young people claiming benefits had begun to decrease following the pandemic but has increased in recent months. There are high numbers of young people claiming benefits, with 2600 in August 2023 compared to 1930 before the pandemic. An increase has also been seen in the regional and national data.

The table below shows the comparison with the Black Country Boroughs

	Sandwell %	Dudley %	Walsall %	Wolverhampton %
Jan 2020 (pre pandemic)	7.3	6.9	7.6	8.7
Aug 2020	14.5	13.2	14.5	16.0
Aug 2021	11.1	9.9	11.6	12.9
Aug 2022	9.0	6.9	8.2	9.4
Aug 2023	9.1	7.5	9.2	10.5

7.3 When looking at Sandwell in relation to the other Black Country boroughs, the proportion of unemployed young people is comparable.



This indicates that the rise in youth unemployment is due to external factors but has had a greater effect on the Black Country area than other neighbouring authorities in the West Midlands and wider Great Britain.

7.4 It is possible to drill down to the Sandwell wards to see where the greatest levels of unemployment exist.

Sandwell Wards	Total Claimants 16+		Youth Claimants 18-24	
	number	% of population	number	RAG compared to Sandwell
SANDWELL	13,495	6.4	2600	
Abbey	435	5.1	65	
Blackheath	405	5.4	50	
Bristnall	410	5.4	55	
Charlemont and Grove Vale	410	5.5	80	
Cradley Heath and Old Hill	550	6.5	95	
Friar Park	495	6.4	105	
Great Barr and Yew Tree	360	4.5	100	
Great Bridge	540	6.1	110	
Greets Green and Lyng	695	8.1	125	
Hateley Heath	660	6.9	125	
Langley	540	6.1	100	
Newton	365	4.8	75	
Old Warley	370	4.9	80	
Oldbury	530	5.4	80	
Princes End	690	8.3	150	
Rowley	400	5.5	80	
Smethwick	725	7.7	125	
Soho and Victoria	1095	9.8	190	
St. Pauls	905	9.0	150	
Tipton Green	610	6.6	130	
Tividale	445	5.6	100	
Wednesbury North	540	6.6	115	
Wednesbury South	490	5.9	110	
West Bromwich Central	830	9.1	145	



The data provides an overview of the total number of claimants within each ward and the proportion of the ward population that this equates to. It also shows the number of claimants aged 18-24 although data does not exist to see what proportion of this age group is claiming benefits.

The wards have been RAG rated against the Sandwell data to show those wards where unemployment is higher than the authority's average.

7.5 Causes of Youth Unemployment

Youth unemployment has been a longstanding issue in the borough, which has been exacerbated by the pandemic. Current reasons include:

- Withdrawal of national programmes such as Kickstart, ESF, etc
- A lack of skills and experience for the vacancies that are available
- Low academic achievement specifically in topics such as Maths and English

It is likely that there are a number of other factors that contribute to this although it is difficult to evidence. These include

- Increased mental health and anxiety of young people following the pandemic
- A lack of work experience opportunities including those young people who did not complete work experience placements during the pandemic
- Reluctance to move away from the stability of benefits (covering income, housing, etc.)
- Reluctance to take up opportunities such as apprenticeships due to financial constraints
- Increase in caring responsibilities (siblings, parents, grandparents)
- Generational worklessness resulting in lower aspirations
- Lack of willingness to travel outside of the borough for opportunities

7.6 Measures to reduce Youth Unemployment

In order to address the issue and help to decrease the number of unemployed young people, a number of activities are taking place:

- Covid funding is being used to provide a range of activities to improve confidence and encourage engagement. The activities are being run from September 23 – March 24 in partnership with SRES and the Youth



Service and include canoeing, archery, orienteering, hill walking, music, magic, crafts, etc. Confidence-building is often an important precursor to engaging in skills-based training for some young people.

- A Youth Hub is currently being developed in partnership with DWP and the YMCA to provide a 'one stop shop' for young people needing support to progress
- UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) funding for April 2024 – March 2025 will be commissioned to specifically target young people who are claiming benefits and support progression into education or employment
- Mapping of provision for specialist groups including Care Leavers, SEND and Youth Justice has taken place to identify the gaps. Targeted commissioning for these groups will also take place via UKSPF
- The Employment and Skills Partnership held a workshop on youth employment to identify barriers, gaps in provision and potential solutions to feed into UKSPF commissioning and key priorities for the Skills and Employment Strategy in development. As a result, a series of areas were identified for further exploration including mental health and resilience, gaps in youth justice provision and piloting models currently used for Children in Care/Care Leavers for SEND and Youth Justice. This work will be fed into the action plan for the Skills and Employment Strategy.
- The Anchor Network has an employment group who are working on a series of projects to make vacancies more accessible and inclusive including the 'I can project' with the NHS
- The Council has a supported employment service who are supporting young people with an EHCP to access supported internship programmes with local employers.
- Commonwealth Games legacy funding is being used to target youth unemployment, including NEET prevention activities in schools, targeted jobs and skills support and paid work placements for disadvantaged groups.
- A Children in Care/Care Leavers NEET strategy action plan has been put in place to progress actions targeted at reducing NEETs.
- Outreach of Employment and Skills staff across a range of voluntary sector organisations, libraries and Jobcentres to engage residents needing support



7.7 SEND Employment Activity

- 7.8 A range of interventions are available to reduce unemployment amongst young people with SEND.
- 7.9 Supported internships are widely available in Sandwell, with a variety of employers, and whilst these are leading to paid employment for some interns, the quality of the programmes is inconsistent and more needs to be done to both increase the number of young people with an EHCP accessing supported internships and the number of supported interns securing paid employment when the programme ends. These issues are being addressed by the Internships Work project being funded in the region by Department for Education.
- 7.10 Sandwell Council is not currently offering a Supported Internship programme as an employer but there are discussions taking place regarding the implementation of a scheme for academic year 2025.
- 7.11 In addition to supported internships, Sandwell Council has a Specialist Employment Team, which is a pan-disability, all-age supported employment service. Young people who are NEET with SEND are referred to the team through different routes as a pathway into employment.
- 7.12 Until March 2025, the team has funding from the Department for Work and Pensions for a Local Supported Employment Initiative (LSEI), to support up to 60 people with a learning disability and/or autism into employment. Referrals into this provision have been steady and have resulted in employment outcomes.



8.0 Apprenticeships

- 8.1 There were 2070 apprenticeship starts in Sandwell in 2021/22, a 46.6% reduction since 2016/17. Nationally the figure declined by 28.1%. Of those starts, 650 were aged 19-24, 990 25 plus and 430 under the age of 19, with 54% being female.
- 8.2 The majority of apprenticeships started were at an advanced level, with 910 starts (44%) which is equivalent to Level 3. Higher apprenticeships represented 29% of all starts with 27% starting Intermediate apprenticeships equivalent to Level 2.
- 8.3 The most popular sectors to complete an apprenticeship in were Business, Administration and Law (630 starts) and Health, Public Services and Care (660 starts).
- 8.4 Sandwell Council Apprenticeship Programme
- 8.5 Since the start of the Apprenticeship Levy in 2017 there have been 954 **apprenticeship** starts across the Council and schools.
- 8.6 The current age range of apprentices is from 16 to 62 years, including existing staff. Of the 954 starts, 355 are substantive staff and 599 new apprenticeship posts, including progressions of L2 to L7 apprenticeships.
- 8.7 The range of apprenticeships delivered across L2-L7 qualifications, across many sectors of customer service, business administration, marketing, ICT, Leadership, early years, teaching assistants and teachers, horticulture, agriculture, farming, surveying and town planning, electrical, gas, carpentry, painting and decorating, plastering, libraries, and motor vehicle.



5 Implications

Resources:	The services involved in delivering these services include Connexions and Employment and Skills, using a mixture of target budget and external funding.
Legal and Governance:	There are statutory duties to deliver Careers Advice and education for post 16 young people.
Risk:	Risk assessments are completed for all project provision delivered within post 16.
Equality:	There are no adverse impacts to protected characteristics from the delivery of post 16 pathways
Health and Wellbeing:	Health and wellbeing has been linked with employment outcomes with positive impacts found on health and wellbeing.
Social Value:	Social value opportunities are maximised for Sandwell young people with Regeneration developments and the Regeneration pipeline in the borough.
Climate Change:	Green skills are a key emerging area for the FE sector and growing demand for employers.
Corporate Parenting:	This work supports our corporate parenting priorities including ring fenced apprenticeships and supporting Children in Care and Care Leavers to achieve their aspirations.

6 Appendices

N/A

7. Background Papers

N/A



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Post 16 Pathways

Kelly Harris – Skills and Employability Service Manager



Education, Employment and Training Monitoring

Statutory Duties

- Targeted careers support for vulnerable young people
- Raising of the participation age (RPA)
- Connexions Service delivery
- Monitoring arrangements in place



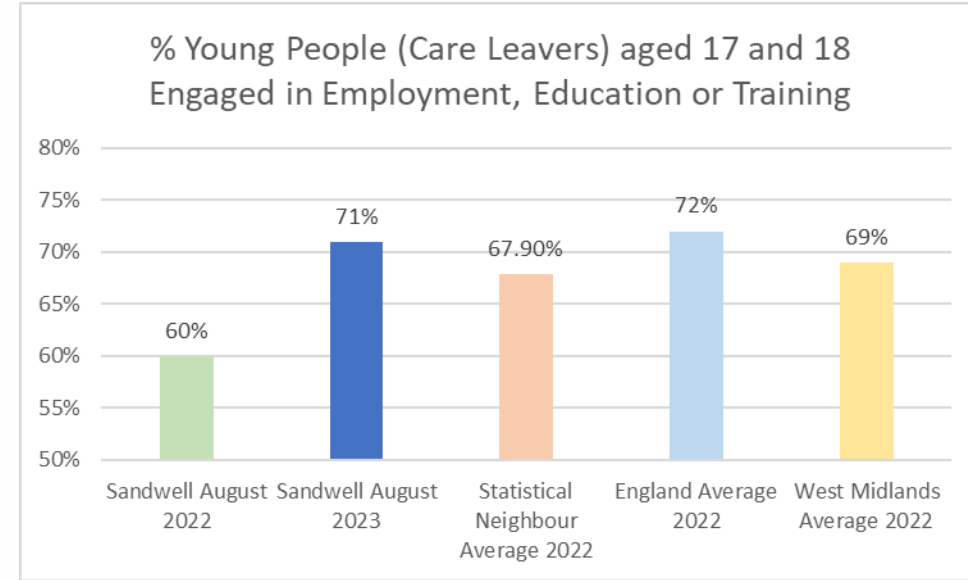
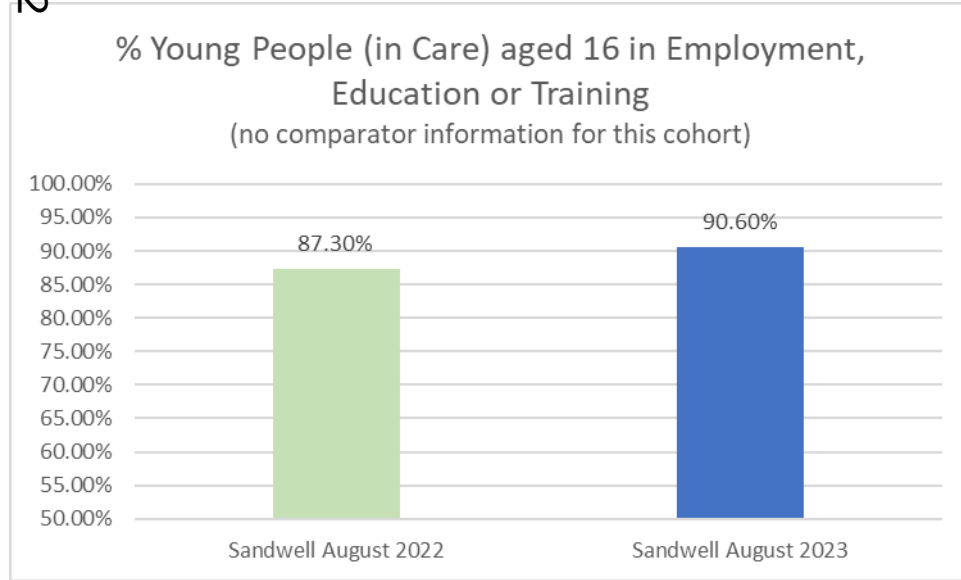
NEET/EET Statistics

- Current NEET/Not known figure for 16-17 year olds – 1.7%
- Improvement on 2021/2 – 2.6%
- Sandwell ranked in Quintile 1, 7th in the Country
- September offer:

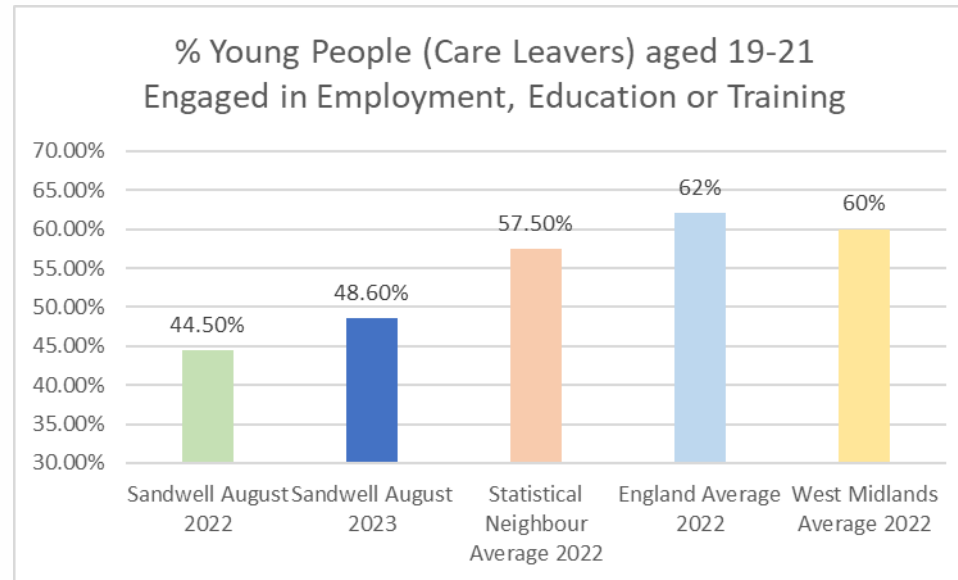
	Total Y11 Guarantee	Offer made	% Offer made	Total Y12 Guarantee	Offer made	% Offer made	Combined %
ENGLAND	609273	590123	96.4%	608035	563617	92.6%	94.5%
WEST MIDLANDS	68515	67029	97.8%	68751	64935	94.4%	96.1%
Sandwell	4371	4357	99.7%	4561	4530	99.3%	99.5%



Children in Care/Care Leaver NEET/EET



Children in Care/Care Leaver NEET/EET



SEND NEET/EET

- Sandwell has a high percentage of SEND young people in learning aged 16-17
- Sandwell's NEET and Not known figures compare favourably against the West Midlands and England averages

	In-learning	NEET	Not Known	NEET/NK combined
Sandwell (SEND)	85.5%	5.6%	2.6%	8.3%
West Mids. (SEND)	87.3%	7.8%	1.6%	9.4%
England (SEND)	87.2%	8.2%	1.5%	9.7%
Sandwell (SEN Support)	88.4%	5.3%	1.0%	6.3%
West Mids. (SEN Support)	84.8%	6.6%	4.3%	11.0%
England (SEN Support)	85.9%	6.3%	2.9%	9.1%



Specialist EET Support

CIC/Care Leavers

- Connexions bespoke careers careers advice and guidance programme yr 8-11
- Aspire to HE
- NEET panel
- Ringfenced apprenticeship opportunities
- Employment and Skills team offer

SEND

- Connexions targeted service
- Support available up to 25 with EHCP
- Supported internships offer
- Supported apprenticeships
- Specialist employment team offer



Apprenticeships

2070 apprenticeship start 2021/2

Declining apprenticeship figure – 46.6% reduction since 2016/17

- 430 under 19
- 650 19-24
- 990 25 plus

Levels of apprenticeship

- 44% Advanced apprenticeships
- 29% Higher apprenticeships
- 27% Intermediate apprenticeships

Sectors – Business administration and law/Health and Social Care



Council Apprenticeship Programme

Apprenticeship Levy

- **954** starts in Councils and schools since 2017
- Age range 16-62
- 355 substantive staff, 599 new entrant apprentices
- **Inclusive** recruitment practices eg for Children in Care/Care Leavers

Employment and Skills Team

- Apprenticeship recruitment for local employers
- Engagement activities



Youth Unemployment

	Sandwell %	Dudley %	Walsall %	Wolverhampton %
Jan 2020 (pre pandemic)	7.3	6.9	7.6	8.7
Aug 2020	14.5	13.2	14.5	16.0
Aug 2021	11.1	9.9	11.6	12.9
Aug 2022	9.0	6.9	8.2	9.4
Aug 2023	9.1	7.5	9.2	10.5

- Sandwell's out of work benefits claimants 2600 in August 2023
- Higher than pre-pandemic levels (1930)
- Sandwell rate higher than West Midlands (6.7%) and national average (4.9)



Causes of Youth Unemployment

- End of funding streams/support available reduced
- Lack of skills and experience for vacancies available
- Mental health and anxiety
- Lack of work experience
- Financial barriers – benefit reliance/apprenticeship wage
- Generational worklessness
- Lack of willingness to travel outside of borough for opportunities



Measures to Reduce Youth Unemployment

- Accelerate programme
- New Sandwell youth hub – partnership with DWP
- UKSPF – People and Skills pillar
- Commonwealth games legacy funding – jobs and skills support, incentivised work placements, NEET prevention
- CIC/Care Leavers NEET strategy
- YJS deep dive NEET
- SEND employment activities – LSE, growing supported internship model
- Skills and employment strategy refresh



Any questions?



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Report to Children’s Services and Education Scrutiny Board

13 November 2022

Subject:	Sandwell Virtual School for Children with a Social Worker
Director:	Director of Children and Education Michael Jarrett
Contact Officer:	Executive Head Teacher of STEPS and LACE Virtual School, Balwant Bains balwant_bains@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Board considers and comments upon Sandwell Councils Corporate Parenting responsibilities and the impact of the Sandwell Virtual School for Children in Care (PLAC), Previously Looked After Children (PLAC) and those Children with a Social Worker (CWSW).
- 1.2 That the Board considers the feedback from Ofsted and the education and extra curricula support for all Sandwell’s Children in Care.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 The role of Headteacher for the Virtual School for CiC is a statutory role within all UK council governed by legislation set out in:
 - **Promoting the education of children with a social worker - Virtual School Head role extension. June 2022.**
 - **Promoting the education of looked-after children and previously looked-after children. Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities. February 2018**



All children need love and stability in order to thrive. A strong corporate parenting ethos means that everyone from the Chief Executive down to front line staff, as well as elected council members, are concerned about those children and care leavers as if they were their own. This is evidenced by an embedded culture where council officers do all that is reasonably possible to ensure the council is the best 'parent' it can be to the child or young person.

Applying corporate parenting principles to looked-after children and care leavers

Statutory guidance for local authorities. February 2018.

The 7 Guiding Principles:



1. to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people
2. to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings
3. to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people
4. to help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners
5. to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people
6. for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and
7. to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

- 2.2 Sandwell Virtual School for CiC's Strategic Intention is to have high expectations for children so that they are given every opportunity to access the very best education possible and achieve their potential.



2.3 The Scrutiny Board requested an overview of the service to better understand how it operates and impacts the outcomes for children and young people in Sandwell.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	<p><i>Best start in life for children and young people. Building our Plan together.</i></p> <p><i>We want children to be ready for school and for schools to be ready for children. prepare young people for adult life and skills, with a particular focus on vulnerable children.</i></p> <p>Sandwell Virtual School has the responsibility to empower professionals to prioritise the education of its children in care and use Pupil Premium+ funding to close the gaps in learning to peers.</p> <p>As corporate parent we aspire for our Children in Care to have access to the same opportunities as their peers. This includes a good education and well-being support based upon their individual needs.</p> <p>As they mature, we want all Young People to shape the future of Sandwell and be able to contribute to that future.</p> <p>We want Young People to have access to service that will support their mental wellbeing and meet their SEND needs. So that as local people they can thrive and be prepared for the Sandwell’s future jobs market.</p>
	<p>Strong resilient communities</p> <p>Our communities are built on mutual respect and taking care of each other, supported by all the agencies that ensure we all feel safe and protected in our homes and local neighbourhoods. As Corporate parents we want those children in our care to feel a sense of belonging and have the skills and resilience to forge their communities and relationships for a stronger and prosperous future.</p>



4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 Sandwell Virtual School is co-located with Sandwell Transition Education Partnership Service (STEPS) at Cooper's Lane, Smethwick B67 7DW. Its aim is to promote achievement, raise attainment and ensure equality of opportunity to enhance the life chances of all CiC.
- 4.2 The Virtual School Head should be the lead responsible officer for ensuring that schools have arrangements in place to improve the educational experiences and outcomes of the authority's Children Looked After, including those placed out-of-authority.

VSHs should ensure the educational attainment and progress of Children Looked After are monitored and evaluated as if those children attended a single school.

For Children Looked After, the VSH should ensure that there are effective systems in place to:

- Ensure the status of the child and their entitlement to support is made clear to all the professionals supporting that child.
- Maintain an up-to-date roll of its Children Looked After who are in school or college settings and gather information about their education placement, attendance and educational progress.
- Inform head teachers and Designated Teachers in schools if they have a child on roll who is Looked After and ensure they understand their need to know the children on their roll classed as Previously Looked After Children.
- Ensure that social workers, Designated Teachers and schools, carers and IROs understand their role and responsibilities in initiating, developing, reviewing and updating the child's Personal Education Plan (PEP) and how they help meet the needs identified in that PEP.
- Ensure up-to-date, effective and high-quality PEPs that focus on educational outcomes and that all Looked After children, wherever they are placed, have such a PEP.
- Avoid drift or delay in providing suitable educational provision, including special educational provision, and unplanned termination of educational arrangements through proactive multi-agency co-operation. Where this requires negotiation with other authorities this should be completed in a timely manner and with the best interest of the child as paramount.



- Ensure the educational achievement of Children Looked After by the authority is seen as a priority by everyone who has responsibilities for promoting their welfare.
- Report regularly on the attainment of Children Looked After through the authority's corporate parenting structures.

5 Implications

Resources:	The Virtual School is co-located at the Hollies Centre with STEPS. The majority of the posts are financed through the High Needs Block. 2 Education Development Officers (EDO) are funded through PP+, the Children with a Social Worker posts are 2 year contracts (expiring 2025) and 2 EDO posts (including Post 16) and funded until 2026) through a government grant. It was vital to expand staffing to meet the continued expansion of responsibilities and the rise in number of Children in Care since I joined in 2014.
Legal and Governance:	The Headteacher of the Virtual School for CiC is a statutory post in the Local Authority.
Risk:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is an aging workforce which has provided stability for CiC; succession planning is very important. • That grants funding EDO posts are cut; reducing capacity to deliver the current model.
Equality:	The ethos of all in the Virtual School is to stabilise CiC so that they have equality with their peers. Pupil Premium+ is there to provide some equity so it is vital that the Personal Education Plan is a vehicle to close the education gap.
Health and Wellbeing:	Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires are imbedded in the Personal Education Plans; these indicate the mental wellbeing of each CiC; these shape SMART targets. We have the approach that if the child's mental well is addressed there will be in better state for learning. Staff wellbeing is addressed through 5 Clinical Supervision sessions per year.
Social Value:	In partnership with STEPS Children in Care have the opportunities for Work Placement (2 in "2/23), we are engaging Lovell for the Post 16 Work Experience Programme. Year 11, 12 and 13 NEETS have reduced due



	to the award-winning Sandwell Virtual School Careers Guarantee Programme.
Climate Change:	N/A
Corporate Parenting:	Long-term there is a potential that Sandwell Virtual School responsibilities will change to 0 – 25 'Vulnerable Young People@ this will have implications for possible realignment with wider services such as the local offer, staffing, networking ...

6 Appendices

N/A

7. Background Papers

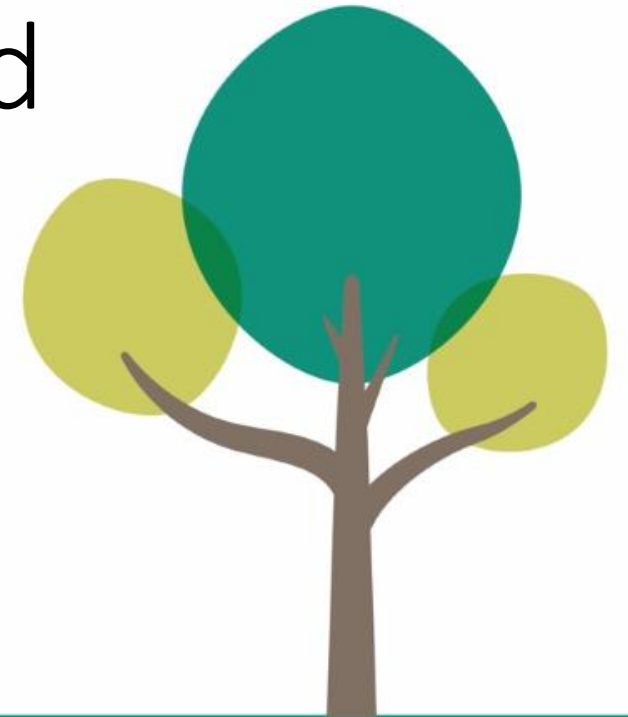
- [Promoting the education of looked-after and previously looked-after children](#)
- [The designated teacher for looked after and previously looked-after children](#)
- [Promoting the education of children with a social worker: virtual school head role extension](#)
- [Virtual school head role extension: grant determination letter 2023 to 2024](#)
- **Sandwell Virtual School:** <https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/schools-education/virtual-school-looked-children-1#:~:text=What%20is%20the%20Virtual%20School,education%20of%20children%20in%20care.>





Sandwell Virtual School for Children in Care, Previously Looked After Children, Children with A Social Worker and Post 16 YP.

Balwant Bains – Executive Headteacher



Sandwell Virtual School

- Headteacher
- Operations Manager
- Lead Advisory Teacher (part-time)
- 8 X Advisory Teacher (1 X Post 16)
- 2 X Admin Support
- CWSW – 2 X Leads



Strategic Intent

- Sandwell Virtual School for CiC Strategic Intention is to have high expectations for children so that they are given every opportunity to access the very best education possible and achieve their potential.
- Our values: LEARN : ACHIEVE : TOGETHER



Inspection of Sandwell local authority children's services: May 2022.

- Leaders and the head of the virtual school have high expectations for children in care. They have worked diligently since the previous inspection to bring about improvements in the virtual school service and have had notable successes in improving the quality of how children in care are monitored and supported through education. Most children in care attend schools which are good or better and for those who do not, the reasons are clearly defined and in the best interests of the child. Children in care have a high attendance rate at school.
- Most children in care live in stable placements which meet their needs, often with brothers and sisters if this is in their best interests. They are well supported and make progress in their education and learning.

Sandwell Children's Trust Adoption Inspection Dec 2022.

- Children have access to a range of social and educational opportunities. The agency, through its links with the virtual school, keeps track of children's attainment, achievements and progress. When needed, additional support is provided to children without delay. This ensures that children's educational progress does not drift, and the support promotes children's learning.



Cohort Profile: Sandwell-503 of school age

- Nationally - There were 82,187 80,850 CiC in England (+2% from 2021).
 - The most common reason for a child to come into cares is - at risk of abuse or neglect - 54,270 children (66%).
 - Males account for 56% of the cohort this is slightly over-represented in the CLA population, compared to 51% in the overall child population.
 - CiC are predominantly older - 10 to 15-year-olds account for 39% of children, 18% aged 5 to 9 years, 14% aged 1 to 4 years and 5% aged less than 1 year.
- Approximately 48% of Sandwell children attend school outside the area of Sandwell, with 93% attending schools in and within 20 miles of Sandwell.



1. Schools attended: Sandwell-503 of school age

- 16% (-1% National) of the **overall** CiC cohort (of school age) attend an 'outstanding' education setting.
- 88% (+8% from 2020) attend an education setting that is 'good/outstanding';
-1 below all children national.
- Only 1% of the cohort attend a setting judged to be Inadequate. For all children nationally this is 3%.



2. Creative Curriculum – Partnership with West Midlands Foundation.

Page 64

a) Arts and Crafts Day - 10th December 2022

Children watched a pantomime, decorated biscuits made decorations and experienced a 'Dohl' lesson.

- *"They both loved the independence and being able to express themselves and make friends."*

b) Film Making Workshop February 2023 Birmingham and Black Country Cluster 3 children from each cluster

- Develop reels and edit their own epic videos.

c) Easter Arts Festival April 2023 – A Partnership between HAF, Sandwell Virtual School and The STEPS Centre

- 46 adults and 84 young people attended.

d) WMVS Foundation in partnership with Women & Theatre: Easter Performance April 2023

- 17 Sandwell children – 3 days of creativity over Easter dance and a drama programme culminated in a performance



Page 65

e) An Introduction into TV Acting 12th April 2023 at The Grand Theatre Wolverhampton

By the end of the workshop, students understood the difference between theatre and TV acting and performed one of the scripts (EastEnders or Casualty) to peers and staff.

f) Year 7 Prosthetics Workshop 30.05.23

6 Sandwell CiC - fantastic hands-on opportunity to learn how to create prosthetics and television/ film make up from an industry professional!



3. Raising Aspirations – Aspire 2 University

- 129 young people (years 8-13) on the programme from (Sandwell, Walsall, Wolverhampton, Dudley & Staffordshire. (45 from Sandwell).
- 2023 – 10 graduates all in positive destinations

KA	B - English B - Law C - Chemistry	Bath University studying Law
JB		Sandwell College studying a Diploma in Esports (Business & Gaming Course)
TB		Sandwell College studying a Diploma in Esports (Business & Gaming Course)
KD		Juniper Training studying English and Maths
VH	B - Physics B - Geography C - Maths	University of Swansea studying Aerospace Engineering
MJ		Sandwell College studying Level 2 in Electronics
RK		Second year at Cardiff University studying Architecture
ZM		Looking for apprenticeship
LO		Dudley College studying Art (second year)
TS	C – Media Distinction - Business	Kingston University London studying Software Engineer.

4. Attendance - The attendance of Sandwell CiC continues to pass that of all students nationally. There has been a 1.14% increase in attendance from the previous year .

	2018 CIC matched	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Attendance						
No. of pupils	298	543	474	456	574	503
Sandwell CiC	95.30%	94.30%	92.80%	90.35	92.82	93.96%
National CiC	95.50%	95.3%				
National (all)	95.20%	95.3%	95.3% (Aut 2020)	94.2*	92.4	92.5% Autumn 2022/23

- 2022-23 – of a 503 cohort, there were 106 occasions of suspension (21.1%); representing 45 children (8.9%).
- 3 PX in 8 years.



5) Sandwell Virtual School engaged 554 service partners & carers in training over the academic year.

- Page 68
- **ePEP - 65 attendees** The impact of early experience on sensory development and processing.
 - **Trauma Informed Practice – 480** (Anxiety based difficulties and school, Developing emotional Regulation in children and YP who experience Trauma, A world of distractions, successful inclusion of children and Young people with ADHD, Attachment and Trauma demystified and Developing trauma Sensitive Classrooms and Children’s mental health in Covid-19 era – Jenny Nock : Steven Russell from Elements Support - Inspiring young people).

6) **Sandwell Virtual School Music Provision Programme/SIPS Music Services:** Sandwell Virtual School recognises the value of music in **strengthens a child’s perseverance and self-esteem. 81** Years 4 to 7 **weekly 30 minute 1:1 lessons** (keyboard, drums, tabla, guitar, ukulele, flute, clarinet, saxophone, vocal, trumpet, baritone and violin). **12 of the students passed their gradings:** elementary grade keyboards, ukuleles and brass, grade one clarinet and grade clarinet, elementary, grade 1 and grade two flute.

- 30 children attended The Symphony Hall in Birmingham where they experienced The Music of Harry Potter performed by a professional orchestra.

‘IGNITE’ – 25 Children performed on 4 separate occasions.

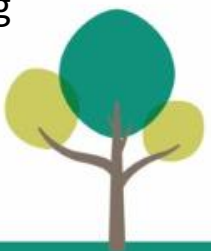


7) The VSH holds schools and education settings to account for the impact of the Pupil Premium Plus.

- PEP completion for the 2022-23 academic year indicates that 94% (2022 - 91%) PEP completed (5 to 16 years old).
- Quality assurance process showed that 69% (2022 - 76%) of those completed were judged as Good/Outstanding with 10% (2021 – 6.6%) being inadequate.

8) **Extended Role for Children with a Social Worker:** Virtual School Heads take a strategic leadership role in promoting the educational outcomes of CWSW and those who have previously had a social worker (Child in Need plan or a Child Protection plan, CiC).

- There are approximately 1000 Sandwell Children WSW. A programme of engagement and Professional Development is in place to build professional capacity.
 - Professional drop-in meeting - 8 school consultations, 13 Social work consultations.
 - Tuition - 6 children received tuition for 6 weeks
 - Poverty proofing – 19 Schools
 - Training (2022-2023) - Improving Attendance (65 participants), Pupils under Stress (20 participants), Learning Behaviours (11 participants), Engaging with Parents (17 participants)



9) Albion Foundation

The Albion Foundation

6 young people and 7 Carers attended WBA home fixtures

Inspire Coaching
70 young people in 7 Secondary Schools engaged

120 Club
KS 2 Club - 8 YP

Supporting the KS3 Transition residential

10) Reducing NEET

- 2017 – 24%
- 2023 1.8%

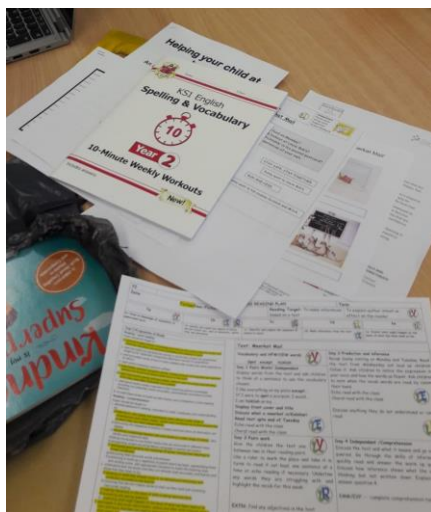
	Cohort (12 Months +)	NEET Sept (End of Y11)	NEET Year 12	NEET Year 13
2017	42	24%	21%	36%
2018	49	12%	37%	31%
2019	50	14%	8%	18.0% (9 Children)
2020	63	6% (4 children)	13.0% (7 children)	9.5% (6 Children)
2021	38	8% (2 children)	13.2% (5 children)	23.6 % (9 children) 18.4% (7 YP)
2022	53	11.3 % (6 Children)	11.3% (6 children)	
2023	59	1.8% (1 Child)		



Key Stage 1 Outcomes 2023

	Reading				Writing				Mathematics			
	Expected +				Expected +				Expected +			
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2020	2021	2022	2023	2020	2021	2022	2023
LAC Sandwell	75	31	41	60	50	23	38	45	67	31	38	55
LAC National	49	46	44	45	44	36	33	33	48	45	43	45
ALL Sandwell	70	59	61	64	66	49	51	55	72	59	63	67
ALL National	72	67	67	68	67	58	58	60	73	67	68	70

Intervention Packs - . Each PEP was analysed, and personalised packs were provided to support gaps in learning and help support those children working just below the expected levels.



- There is a rise in attainment in all areas: Reading +19%, Writing +7% and Maths +17% closing the gap to All Sandwell children.
- 31% of the KS 2 cohort has SEN EHCP/Statement or SEN support, there remains a gap in this cohort attainment compared to peers.
- Of the 29 children with no SEND, this cohort's outcomes surpassed those of All Sandwell Children in Reading Writing and Maths.

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Report to Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board

13 November 2023

Subject:	ASEND Inspection Outcome and Next Steps
Director:	Director of Children and Education Michael Jarrett
Contact Officer:	Strategic Adviser for Inclusion Jo Mawby joanne1_mawby@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations


- 1.1 That the Board considers and comments upon the ASEND Inspection outcome and next steps.
- 1.2 That the Children and Education Scrutiny Board note the information provided in this report.
- 1.3 That the Children and Education Scrutiny Board provide support and governance for the improvements made by the Local Area Partnership in driving the necessary improvements leading up to the next successful inspection in Summer 2026.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 To provide an update on the ASEND Inspection conducted by Ofsted/CQC between 19th June and 7th July 2023.



3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	<p>Best start in life for children and young people</p> <p>The local area partnership's response to the ASEND inspection links with the Directorate Business plan commitment to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• ensure that children and young people with SEND can access high quality local services when they need them, by working with partners to ensure there is a comprehensive local offer available to children and families• work with partners to make sure that vulnerable children in our community receive the right support to enable them to thrive and have successful adult lives• work with schools and other learning providers to improve educational outcomes for children and young people <p>Through the delivery of the local area plan, local area partners will work collaboratively together to develop provision across the borough. This will help children and young people to be well-prepared for adulthood and employment and enhance their life chances and choices.</p>
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4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 Following the last inspection of the Sandwell local area partnership for SEND in 2019, the Sandwell local area partnership for SEND was inspected over a period of 3 weeks by Ofsted / CQC between 19th June and 7th July 2023, evaluated against a new Ofsted / CQC inspection framework which was launched in January 2023
- 4.2 The revised framework 'evaluated' the effectiveness and impact of local area partners and the extent to which children and young people with SEND, including those who attend Alternative Provision (AP) settings, were receiving consistently good experiences leading to consistently good outcomes.



- 4.3 The inspection team found that children and young people with SEND, including those who attend AP settings, received inconsistent experiences leading to them achieving inconsistent outcomes in Sandwell. This is commonly referred to as a 'category 2' outcome for the local area partnership. A 'category 1' outcome is available to local area partnerships which can demonstrate consistent experiences leading to consistent outcomes for children and young people with SEND, including those attending AP settings. A 'category 3' outcome is given to a local area partnership where there are endemic weaknesses found in the partnership which leads to poor experiences and poor outcomes for children and young people with SEND.
- 4.4 A category 2 outcomes means that the local area partnership will be submit to routine monitoring by Ofsted / CQC and supported by the DfE in making the necessary improvements and within agreed timeframes as published in the **local area inclusion plan** (action plan). Following inspection, all local areas are required to publish a local area inclusion plan by 2024. Sandwell will be publishing theirs ahead of the deadline set by the DfE.
- 4.5 The inspectors were highly complementary about the renewed energy and vision shared across the partnership for children and young people with SEND, and the new SEND eco-system transformation programme launched by the local area partnership in June 2023. This gave the inspectors a very clear understanding that the local area partners, through the self-evaluation, are accurate in their judgements and the actions they are taking to improve the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND.
- 4.6 The inspection report is due to be published in early September 2023, after which the local area partnership is required to submit a **local area inclusion plan** (action plan) for improvement within 30 days of publication, and to make this publicly available to all partners, parents and carers of children and young people with SEND in Sandwell.
- Area leaders should **strengthen multi-agency working across the partnership between education, health and social care**, so that children and young people's needs are identified and assessed in a more efficient and timely manner.
 - Area leaders should **develop co-production with children and young people with SEND at a strategic level**, so that children and



young people play a key role in developing improvement strategies and plans.

- Area leaders **should increase the number and range of short-break opportunities** to support the needs of all children and young people with SEND, including those with complex needs and post-16 young people.

4.7 The senior leaders of the Sandwell local area partnership for SEND were pleased the inspection was both developmental and helpful and confirmed the accurate self-evaluation of the partnership.

4.8 Since the last inspection in 2019, when the previously issued written statement of action (2017) was lifted, using a different inspection framework, the local area partnership has been working through the SEND Strategic Board and the SEND Operations Board to oversee the necessary improvements required of the local area partnership. These improvements continue to be driven and will be included in the revised action plan to be submitted to Ofsted / CQC and for publishing to partners, parents and carers.

4.9 This is because we are not complacent in our determination to ensure all children and young people with SEND, including those who attend AP settings, in Sandwell, only receive the very best experiences leading to them securing the very best outcomes and successful transition into adulthood.

4.10 Sandwell local area partnership for inclusion (SEND and AP) will monitor the impact and effectiveness of the local area inclusion plan, via the 8 inclusion workstream groups of the Sandwell Inclusion Eco-System Transformation Programme. Each group reports monthly to the Sandwell Inclusion Board (Operations) and provides a half termly 'highlights report' to the Sandwell Inclusion Board (Strategic).

4.11 Both boards are attended by senior officers from across the local area partnership, including representatives from Sandwell Parents Voices United (SPVU), our parent carer forum, and children and young people. All reports are available to the Sandwell Health and Wellbeing Board which has governance oversight of SEND at a system level across Sandwell.



5 Implications

Resources:	Assets implication for expansion of SEND provision to meet increasing needs of our 0-25 population Implications for workforce development costings to improve SEMH and SEND provision.
Legal and Governance:	Requirement for local area partners to take joint ownership and responsibility for co-producing and delivering the local area plan in order to achieve the expected improvements.
Risk:	Close monitoring of progress on key priorities will need to take place to ensure that the expected impact is achieved and can be evidenced, and that any necessary adjustments are made to the local area inclusion plan to support this.
Equality:	Meeting needs and ensuring reasonable adjustments of the 0-25 population with SEND needs and adhering to the Equality Act (2010)
Health and Wellbeing:	Improved educational outcomes, gained through the best quality provision, contribute to the improved emotional wellbeing, attendance and resilience of CYP.
Social Value:	Improving outcomes for vulnerable CYP at transition points between 0-25 will enhance community connection, and increase potential of successful education, training and employment experiences.
Climate Change:	N/A
Corporate Parenting:	Improving provision and outcomes for LAC to reduce vulnerability.

6. Appendices

Area SEND inspection Ofsted Report

7. Background Papers

N/A



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Area SEND inspection of Sandwell Local Area Partnership

Inspection dates: 3 to 7 July 2023

Dates of previous inspection: 18 to 21 March 2019

Inspection outcome

The local area partnership's arrangements lead to inconsistent experiences and outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The local area partnership must work jointly to make improvements.

The next full area SEND inspection will be within approximately 3 years.

Ofsted and CQC ask that the local area partnership updates and publishes its strategic plan based on the recommendations set out in this report.

Information about the local area partnership

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council, NHS Black Country Integrated Care Board (ICB) and Sandwell Children's Trust are jointly responsible for the planning and commissioning of services for children and young people with SEND in Sandwell. Children's social care services transferred to Sandwell Children's Trust on 1 April 2018.

There have been changes to the senior leadership of Sandwell's SEND services since the previous inspection. These include the appointment of a new chief executive officer for Sandwell Council, a new director of children's services and education, a new cabinet member for children, young people and education, an interim director of public health and a new chief executive officer for Sandwell Children's Trust. The commissioning of health services changed across England in 2022. On 1 July 2022, NHS Black Country ICB became responsible for the commissioning of health services in Sandwell. In addition, Black Country Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust became the lead provider for mental health services, having already had this responsibility for learning disabilities and autism services.

Sandwell Council commissions a range of alternative provision inside and outside of the borough. This is to provide education for children and young people, including those who cannot attend school due to social, emotional and mental health (SEMH), and medical needs, or for those who are at risk of, or have been, permanently excluded.

What is it like to be a child or young person with SEND in this area?

Children and young people with SEND are valued in Sandwell. However, their experiences are variable due to the inconsistencies that exist across the local area partnership. Area leaders are aware of the inconsistencies and are taking appropriate action to address them. For example, they acknowledge the current reliance on out-of-area specialist provision and are pursuing a 'Sandwell first' approach. This approach aims to make better use of available space in existing education settings within the area. Some of the local area's improvement plans are in the early stages of development.

Many children and young people with SEND in Sandwell thrive when their needs are identified accurately, without unnecessary delay, so that the best possible provision can be put into place. However, for some children and young people with SEND, this does not happen. A lack of multi-agency working means that too often the identification of need is delayed, which hinders putting the right help into place. Parents and carers comment that the SEND system works better if an individual professional, such as a teacher, a therapist, or a social worker, champions their child's cause.

Children and young people with SEND appreciate the help they get in their education and training settings. There are examples where tailored support is put into place, which helps them to flourish and achieve well. This includes children and young people with SEND following speech and language therapy programmes in their education setting. However, setting leaders at times become frustrated when multi-agency partners do not work well together, which hinders children and young people with SEND receiving the support they need.

Children and young people with SEND value the extra-curricular activities that their education settings offer. For example, pupils with SEND in a secondary school attend an after-school cadets club, where they learn life skills. Plus, they are proud of what they achieve in their role as careers ambassadors supporting other pupils. However, children and young people with SEND and their families would value a wider range of out-of-school activities being made available through the short breaks offer, especially during school holidays. Currently, the offer is limited.

Young people with SEND access a range of post-16 provision, including specialist colleges, supported internships and support for employment. However, there is a lack of post-16 provision in Sandwell, which leads to a reliance on out-of-area providers. This means that some young people with SEND travel out of their local community to attend an appropriate setting. Area leaders have a vision that their reliance on out-of-area providers will reduce over time. To support this, they have increased the number of supported internships at The Westminster School. In addition, area leaders have made a commitment that no child or young person will travel more than 50 minutes to their education or training setting.

Children and young people say that teachers, therapists, social workers and other practitioners listen to their views. They give examples of how their targets and provision have been changed in response to their comments. However, these views are not always captured in education, health and care (EHC) plans. Overall, there remains variability in the quality of EHC plans. Area leaders recognise this and have established a quality assurance system. As a result, more recent EHC plans are of a higher quality.

What is the area partnership doing that is effective?

- There is a renewed dynamism in Sandwell. Leaders across the local area partnership, which includes the children's trust and the ICB, are making sustained improvements for children and young people with SEND. Area leaders know the region well. They have created eight workstreams to address inconsistencies in the SEND system, which reflect areas for improvement identified in their self-evaluation. The workstreams are intrinsically linked so that there is a clear direction of travel, rather than plans pulling in opposite directions. Practitioners across the workforce recognise the appetite and commitment for change demonstrated by area leaders. As a result, practitioners are invested in the drive for improvement. For example, school leaders are supportive of the fair access protocol, which aims to secure a school place for children and young people who are not currently in an education setting.
- In many instances, mainstream education settings go 'above and beyond' what is expected of them in supporting children and young people with SEND. In some settings, focused provisions have been established to help children and young people with particular needs, such as autism. An 'early years intervention grant' is used well to fund early help for the youngest children, without the need for an EHC plan. Early years practitioners value this support but find the paperwork burdensome. Despite these initiatives, some mainstream education settings struggle to cater for children and young people with SEND whose needs would be better supported in a specialist setting.
- Parents and carers value the bespoke provision that is put into place for their children in special schools. However, they report that securing a place can be a struggle. Area leaders are aware of the shortage of special school places and the increasing demand for them. They have responded to this by producing a specialist place planning strategy in order to increase the number of places and extending the age range in some special schools. However, there are still children and young people remaining in mainstream settings on reduced timetables, or who are attending alternative provision on a long-term basis while they wait for a special school place.
- Alternative provision has different functions within Sandwell. This includes providing placements for children and young people who cannot attend school due to medical needs or short-term intervention places to support children and young people with SEMH needs. The latter is reducing the number of exclusions for children and young people with SEND. However, area leaders recognise that there remains some variability in the quality of alternative provision. Leaders have evaluated the quality and range of alternative providers across the region to pave the way for a new alternative provision strategy. A key aim of the strategy will be to iron out inconsistencies and continue to improve the quality of alternative provision across the local area.
- There are strong examples of joint commissioning at an individual level and in response to specific needs. For example, the 'STEPS centre' was jointly commissioned. This centre provides bespoke support for families who are new to the country and speak English as an additional language. The centre helps children and young people, including those with SEND, to secure a school place. However, at a strategic level, joint commissioning is underdeveloped and is often reactive, rather than proactive.
- The dynamic support register (DSR) has been mapped against the minimum standards outlined in the statutory guidance. The team's responsiveness in arranging care, education and treatment reviews is a strength. Leaders have ensured that the DSR is

underpinned by an effective risk management process. Risk ratings give clear indications of need and suggested actions for practitioners working with children and young people.

- Health leaders have responded creatively to delays caused by long waiting lists. For example, they have prioritised the development of a needs-led neurodevelopment pathway. The pathway makes better use of clinicians' time and means that parents and carers can access support from clinicians during the waiting period. In addition, children and young people who are in mental health crisis can access a 24-hour support service. Plus, therapists run weekly drop-in clinics at community locations across Sandwell, where they assess needs and signpost parents and carers to other professionals who can offer support with mental health.

What does the area partnership need to do better?

- There is variability in relation to how well children and young people's needs are identified and assessed. When this works well, their needs are identified accurately in a timely manner, and appropriate provision is put into place at the earliest opportunity. In contrast, there are examples when this is not the case. This is mainly due to a lack of multi-agency working across education, health and social care. Also, a lack of responsiveness from relevant agencies and long waiting times to see paediatricians impacts negatively on the identification and assessment of need. Parents and carers find these delays upsetting and frustrating because it means that the best support for their children is not put into place quickly enough. This impacts on how well their children achieve and puts pressure on family life. However, health providers oversee waiting lists so that increasing need can be identified and support can be offered while children and young people with SEND are waiting.
- Area leaders seek the views of children and young people through various means. This includes the 'SHAPE programme', a child and young persons' forum, and 'Voices of Sandwell', a group of 11- to 18-year-olds who are in the care system. Also, there are strong examples of child-centred and culturally sensitive work in the children with disabilities team. However, leaders do not engage in co-production with children and young people with SEND at a strategic level. Area leaders have prioritised this because they want children and young people with SEND to have a say in current and future improvement plans.
- The parent carer forum (PCF) sits on a range of strategic boards within the local area partnership. As a result, they are actively involved in co-production. The members of the PCF are strong advocates for parents and carers and champion their views at a strategic level. For example, they worked with the occupational therapy team on a sensory project. However, area leaders should support the PCF to gather views from a broader range of parents and carers so that the PCF's representation is wider and more far reaching.
- Short breaks provision is available within the local area. The Sandwell Parents of Disabled Children group has been tasked by area leaders to commission part of the offer. However, there is not enough capacity within the local area. For example, the summer holiday schemes are accessible, but places fill up quickly on a 'first come, first served' basis, leaving some children and young people with no provision at all. The range of short breaks is also limited, especially for children and young people with complex needs and for post-16 young people. This leaves some families feeling isolated. In addition,

parents and carers say that the local offer is not helpful. They say the local offer 'looks good', but it does not give them the up-to-date information they need in respect of the available services in Sandwell.

- Young children have their level of emotional and physical development screened. Where concerns or developmental delays are apparent, children benefit from a formal, comprehensive health visitor assessment. This supports good practice to identify need at the earliest opportunity. However, there is no integrated health and education review for two-year-olds in the area due to the lack of a coordinated approach.

Areas for improvement

Areas for improvement
Area leaders should strengthen multi-agency working across the partnership, between education, health and social care, so that children and young people's needs are identified and assessed in a more efficient and timely manner.
Area leaders should develop co-production with children and young people with SEND at a strategic level so that children and young people play a key role in developing improvement strategies and plans.
Area leaders should increase the number and range of short break opportunities to support the needs of all children and young people with SEND, including those with complex needs and post-16 young people.

Local area partnership details

Local Authority	Integrated Care Board
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council	Black Country Integrated Care Board
Michael Jarrett, Director of Children's Services and Education	Mark Axcell, Chief Executive Officer
www.sandwell.gov.uk	www.blackcountry.icb.nhs.uk
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council Council House Freeth Street Oldbury West Midlands B69 3DE	Black Country Integrated Care Board Civic Centre St. Peter's Square Wolverhampton West Midlands WV1 1SH

Information about this inspection

This inspection was carried out at the request of the Secretary of State for Education under section 20(1)(a) of the Children Act 2004.

The inspection was led by one of His Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) from Ofsted, with a team of inspectors, including: two of His Majesty's Inspectors from education and social care, a lead Children's Services Inspector from Care Quality Commission (CQC), and another Children's Services Inspector from the CQC.

Inspection team

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Report to Children’s Services and Education Scrutiny Board

13 November 2023

Subject:	Tracking and Monitoring of Scrutiny Recommendations
Director:	Law and Governance Surjit Tour Surjit_tour@sandwell.gov.uk
Contact Officer:	Connor Robinson Democratic Services Officer Connor1_robinson@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations







- 1.1 That the Board notes the responses to the recommendations since the Board’s last meeting.
- 1.2 That the Board notes the progress on implementation of those recommendations.
- 1.3 That the Board determines what action it wishes to take where progress is unsatisfactory.
- 1.4 That the Board determines which actions/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 actions identified and/or recommendations made by the scrutiny function and progress on the implementation of those previously approved.



5 Implications

<p>Resources:</p>	<p>Any resources implications arising from scrutiny activity are considered as required by the appropriate director or cabinet member/cabinet.</p> <p>Any specific resource implications for the Board's attention are detailed in the Appendix.</p>
<p>Legal and Governance:</p>	<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> <p>NHS service commissioners and providers have a duty to respond in writing to a report or recommendation where health scrutiny requests this, within 28 days of the request. This applies to requests from individual health scrutiny committees or sub-committees, from local authorities and from joint health scrutiny committees or sub-committees.</p>
<p>Risk:</p>	<p>Any risk implications arising from scrutiny activity are considered as required by the appropriate director or cabinet member/cabinet.</p> <p>Any specific risk implications for the Board's attention are detailed in the Appendix.</p>
<p>Equality:</p>	<p>Any equality implications arising from scrutiny activity are considered as required by the appropriate director or cabinet member/cabinet.</p> <p>Any specific equality implications for the Board's attention are detailed in the Appendix.</p>



Health and Wellbeing:	<p>Any health and wellbeing implications arising from scrutiny activity are considered as required by the appropriate director or cabinet member/cabinet.</p> <p>Any specific health and wellbeing implications for the Board's attention are detailed in the Appendix.</p>
Social Value:	<p>Any social value implications arising from scrutiny activity are considered as required by the appropriate director or cabinet member/cabinet.</p> <p>Any specific social value implications for the Board's attention are detailed in the Appendix.</p>
Climate Change:	<p>Any climate change implications arising from scrutiny activity are considered as required by the appropriate director or cabinet member/cabinet.</p> <p>Any specific climate change implications for the Board's attention are detailed in the Appendix.</p>
Corporate Parenting:	<p>Any corporate parenting implications arising from scrutiny activity are considered as required by the appropriate director or cabinet member/cabinet.</p> <p>Any specific corporate parenting implications for the Board's attention are detailed in the Appendix.</p>

6 Appendices

Appendix – Tracking and Monitoring Table

7. Background Papers

None.



Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board				
22 Feb 2023	Scrutiny Engagement with Youth Services SHAPE Board	Following feedback from the SHAPE Survey and Youth Summit. Further consideration would be given to future engagement with children and young people. All scrutiny chairs and vice-chairs to consider possible future workshops with young people.	Democratic Services	All scrutiny chairs and vice-chairs have been asked to consider a workshop.
20 March 2023	SEND Post-16 Provision	“that the Cabinet Member for Children and Education give a response to the Children’s Scrutiny Board on his plans to increase the number of inclusive apprenticeships offered by the Council and its contractors”	Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education	The number of apprenticeships and their availability will be discussed and considered at the November meeting.
	Impact of Lockdown on Children and Families	That the Chair of the Thrive Board presents a report to the scrutiny Board outlining its work and the impact of, in relation to the impact of the pandemic on students’ mental health and well-being.	Democratic Services	Report coming to the January 2024 meeting.
	Impact of Lockdown on Children and Families	That representatives of the SEND Strategic Board/SEND Operational Board report to the Board on the services and support provided to SEND	Democratic Services	Report to be coming to the January 2024 meeting.
	Impact of Lockdown on	That the Chair of the Children’s Services and Education Board writes to the Chair of the	Democratic Services	Report to be coming to the March 2024 meeting.

	Children and Families	Corporate Parenting Board to request details of their plans to address the challenges faced by children in care and care leavers and to understand how the pandemic has impacted them and what has been done to address this.		A workshop had been arranged with young people to hear challenges and successes.
	Impact of Lockdown on Children and Families	that the Director of Children and Education is proactive in considering suitable locations in the Borough for specialist sixth-form free schools which are funded by central government;	Director of Children and Education	Response to be provided.
	Impact of Lockdown on Children and Families	that the Council joins the Department for Education's 1-2-1 attendance mentoring pilot to monitor issues in schools across the Borough.	Director of Children and Education	Regular meetings in place with the DfE Attendance Advisor Training for staff to be showcased with other Councils as exemplar practice
	Impact of Lockdown on Children and Families	that, the Cabinet Member for Children and Education pledges to improve and increase the Borough's educational assessment data in line with the national average by 2027, in line with the aims and objectives of Vision 2030;	Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education	Response to be provided.
	Impact of Lockdown on Children and Families	that the Cabinet Member for Children and Education writes to the Secretary of State for Education, to request that the	Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education	Response to be provided.

		Government actively engages with education practitioners to understand the long-term problems caused by the national pandemic and prepare appropriate resources to help children and young people recover academically, socially and psychologically.		
	Impact of Lockdown on Children and Families	That the Director of Children and Education encourages and supports schools in the Borough to provide sports programmes and extracurricular activities to help children catch up in all areas of lost learning and experiences and to improve mental and physical health;	Director of Children and Education	Response to be provided.
	Impact of Lockdown on Children and Families	that the Director of Children and Education reviews the Council's partnership working with education providers and the Sandwell Children's Trust to ensure that actions, outcomes and best practice work are shared to ensure we are working cohesively together.	Director of Children and Education	Response to be provided.
	Impact of Lockdown on Children and Families	That the Cabinet Member for Children and Education investigates ways to connect with young people and offer extra	Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education	A) Created a role within Youth Service to develop leadership and mentoring opportunities for young people for next 12 months.

		<p>support, mentoring and encouragement including, but not limited to:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) establishing a peer mentoring programme; b) encouraging social youth work, sports, drama, and outdoor activities; c) engaging with local businesses to improve the number of available apprenticeships; d) supporting a holistic youth services experience which accompanies physical and digital offer; e) supporting and championing the new Eco Bus with young people's involvement. 		<p>B) Reviewed and refreshed the youth offer to provide young people with opportunities to engage in a wide range of activities through both our core offer and external funding opportunities including Holiday Activities & Food, Violence Reduction Partnership, Adventures Away from Home, West Midlands PCC funding and Safer Streets Fund.</p> <p>C) The Employment and Skills team continue to work with local employers to increase the numbers of apprenticeships available in the borough and are delivering a range of engagement activities such as Accelerate to encourage young people to apply</p> <p>D) Continue to work in partnership with a range of partners, including the voluntary, community sector, Youth Organisations in Uniform West Midlands and Council departments to promote and deliver a holistic youth offer.</p> <p>E) Young people have been engaged in developing the specification for 2 x new youth buses, including developing a brief for the exterior design and fit out for the interior, including equipment and activities. A wider group of young people will be given the opportunity to vote for the final exterior design.</p>
	<p>Impact of Lockdown on Children and Families</p>	<p>that the Cabinet Member for Children and Education writes to the Secretary of State for Education, to lobby for recurrent yearly funding which will allow for</p>	<p>Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education</p>	<p>Letter has been drafted and will be being sent.</p>

		consistent support to address young people's emotional wellbeing and (low level) mental health as we recovery from COVID and the impact that it caused, whilst supporting the Council's ambition to improve academic performance, socialisation, conversation, mental health and wellbeing;		
	Impact of Lockdown on Children and Families	That, the Director of Children and Education works with multi-agency partners to support, engage and monitor the stability within the early years settings;	Director of Children and Education	Response to be provided.

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Report to Children’s Services and Education Scrutiny Board

13 November 2023

Subject:	Cabinet Forward Plan and Board Work Programme
Director:	Law and Governance Surjit Tour Surjir_tour@sandwell.gov.uk
Contact Officer:	Connor Robinson Democratic Services Officer Connor1_robinson@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations







- 1.1 That the Board notes the Cabinet Forward Plan (Appendix 1), which sets out the matters programmed to be considered by the Cabinet;
- 1.2 that the Board notes its work programme (Appendix 2), which sets out matters to be considered by the Board in 2023/24;
- 1.3 that, the Board considers whether any changes or additions are required to its work programme and in doing so, has regard to the Prioritisation Tool (Appendix 3).



2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 A strong and effective work programme underpins the work and approach of Scrutiny.
- 2.2 It is good practice for work programmes to remain fluid, to allow for scrutiny of new and emerging issues in a timely manner.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	Best start in life for children and young people	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.
	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 Scrutiny is a member led and driven function, driven by members' commitment to improve services and thereby people's lives.
- 4.2 An annual work programming event, involving chief officers, executive members and key partners, was held in June 2023 and all boards approved their work programmes for 2023/24 at their first meeting of the municipal year.



- 4.3 Boards have responsibility for their own work programmes, and it is good practice to keep them under review, to allow for new and emerging issues to be scrutinised in a timely manner.
- 4.4 Scrutiny Procedure Rules allow any member of the Council to request that an item is added to a scrutiny board’s work programme, subject to certain provisions.
- 4.5 Before including an item on its work programme the Board must have regard to the Prioritisation Tool attached at Appendix 3, to ensure that the scrutiny activity will add value and work programmes are manageable.

5 Implications

Resources:	Any resources implications arising from scrutiny activity are considered as required by the appropriate director or cabinet member/cabinet. Any specific resource implications for the Board’s attention are detailed in the Appendix.
Legal and Governance:	The duty to undertake overview and scrutiny is set out in Part 1A Section 9 of the Local Government Act 2000. 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. NHS service commissioners and providers have a duty to respond in writing to a report or recommendation where health scrutiny requests this, within 28 days of the request. This applies to requests from individual health scrutiny committees or sub-committees, from local authorities and from joint health scrutiny committees or sub-committees.
Risk:	Any risk implications arising from scrutiny activity are considered as required by the appropriate director or cabinet member/cabinet. Any specific risk implications for the Board’s attention are detailed in the Appendix.



Equality:	Any equality implications arising from scrutiny activity are considered as required by the appropriate director or cabinet member/cabinet. Any specific equality implications for the Board's attention are detailed in the Appendix.
Health and Wellbeing:	Any health and wellbeing implications arising from scrutiny activity are considered as required by the appropriate director or cabinet member/cabinet. Any specific health and wellbeing implications for the Board's attention are detailed in the Appendix.
Social Value:	Any social value implications arising from scrutiny activity are considered as required by the appropriate director or cabinet member/cabinet. Any specific social value implications for the Board's attention are detailed in the Appendix.
Climate Change:	Any climate change implications arising from scrutiny activity are considered as required by the appropriate director or cabinet member/cabinet. Any specific climate change implications for the Board's attention are detailed in the Appendix.
Corporate Parenting:	Any corporate parenting implications arising from scrutiny activity are considered as required by the appropriate director or cabinet member/cabinet. Any specific corporate parenting implications for the Board's attention are detailed in the Appendix.

6 Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Cabinet Forward Plan
- Appendix 2 – Board Work Programme
- Appendix 3 – Prioritisation Tool

7. Background Papers

None.



The following items set out key decisions to be taken by the Executive:-

	Title/Subject	Decision Maker	Public or exempt report? If exempt – state reason for exemption	Decision Date	Pre or post decision Scrutiny to be carried out? (Board and date)	List of documents to be considered
1	<p>Proposed Relocation of Causeway Green Primary School to Brandhall Village Development, Oldbury</p> <p>To approve the procurement of a new school development to replace existing facility.</p> <p>Contact Officer: Martyn Roberts</p> <p>Director: Michael Jarrett - Director of Children and Education</p>	<p>Cabinet – Children, Young People and Education (Cllr Hackett)</p>	<p>Public</p>	<p>6 December 2023</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>Report by Director of Children and Education</p>



	Title/Subject	Decision Maker	Public or exempt report? If exempt – state reason for exemption	Decision Date	Pre or post decision Scrutiny to be carried out? (Board and date)	List of documents to be considered
2	<p>Sandwell Residential Education Service fees and charges</p> <p>Contact Officer: Chris Davies, Residential Education and Educational Visits Services</p> <p>Director: Michael Jarrett – Director of Children and Education</p>	<p>Cabinet – Children, Young People and Education (Cllr Hackett)</p>	<p>Public</p>	<p>6 December 2023</p>		<p>Report</p>













	Title/Subject	Decision Maker	Public or exempt report? If exempt – state reason for exemption	Decision Date	Pre or post decision Scrutiny to be carried out? (Board and date)	List of documents to be considered
3	<p>Child Friendly Sandwell</p> <p>Contact Office: Sally Giles, Samantha Harman, Sarah Sprung</p> <p>Director: Michael Jarrett</p>	<p>Cabinet – Children, Young People and Education (Cllr Hackett)</p>	Public	17 January 2024	N/A	Report and associated appendices
















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Work Programme 2023/24





Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board

Meeting Date	Item	Links with Strategic Aims	Notes
3 July 2023	Corporate Parenting Board		
11 September 2023	Sandwell Children's Trust 6-month Performance Review Headline on: • Fostering • Children in our care and our care leavers	  	
	Annual Regional Adoption Report	  	
	Education Investment Area and Priority Education Investment Area developments – update and progress.	 	
	SEND Inspection Headlines		



<p>13 November 2023</p>	<p>Post-16 Pathways – provision and outcomes for young people.</p> <p>The take up of training, apprenticeships and further education. Mainstem and Special Provision</p> <p>Reducing unemployment amongst young people.</p> <p>Provision for those who are NEET and NEET SEND.</p>	 	
	<p>Virtual School Outcomes</p>	 	
	<p>SEND strategy and inspection outcomes</p>		
<p>8 January 2024</p>	<p>Safeguarding - Serious Case Reviews</p>	 	
	<p>Childhood Obesity – Invite Health Scrutiny</p>	 	
	<p>Attainment of SEND students - SEND Strategic Board/SEND Operational Board – update</p>		
	<p>Health and Wellbeing of Students - Thrive Board Update</p>	  	

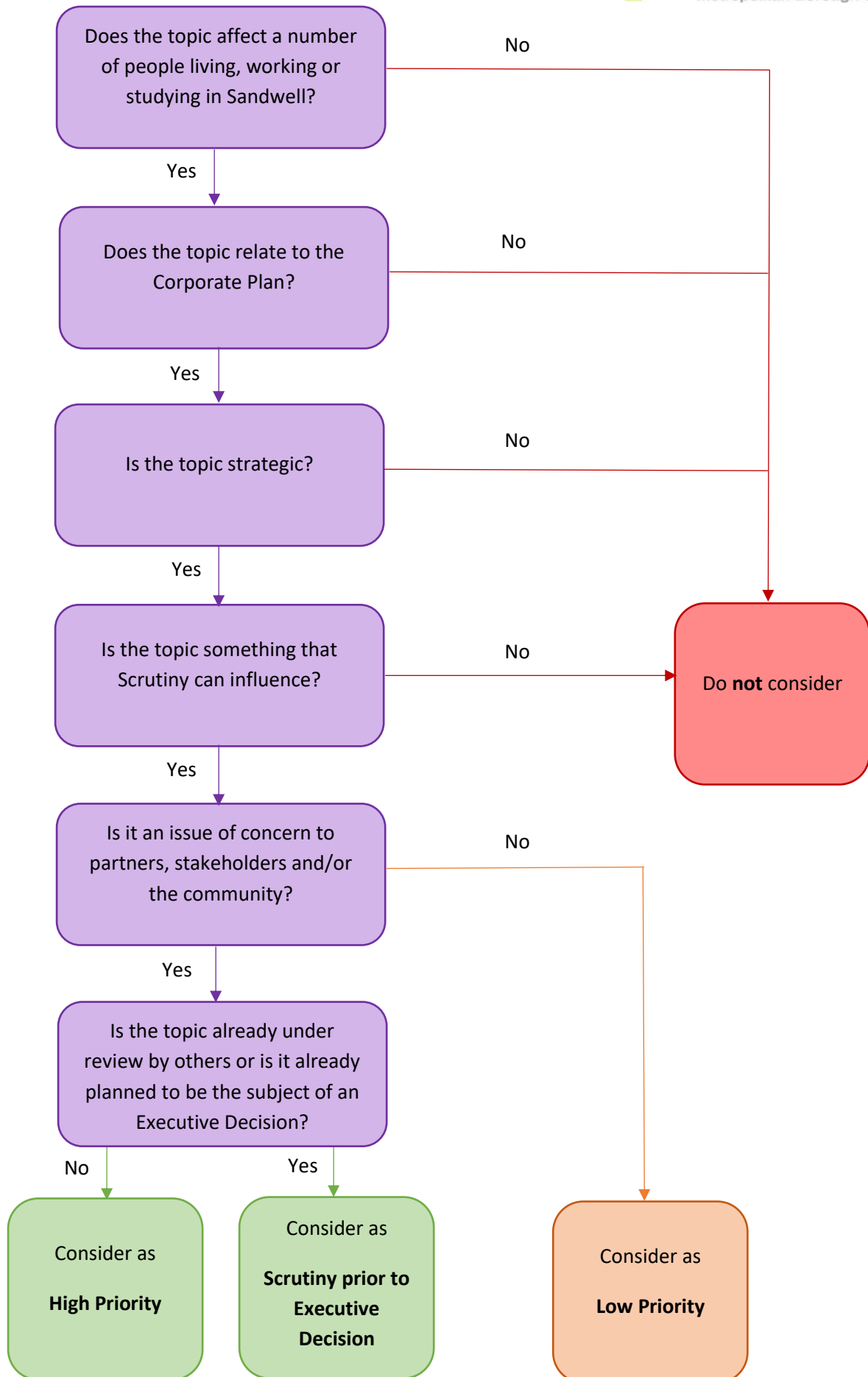


<p>25 March 2024</p>	<p>Sandwell Children's Trust 6-month Performance review Spotlight on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locality working • Accommodation strategy • Early Help 		
	<p>Residential Children's Homes – sufficiency strategy</p>		
	<p>Transition to Adulthood</p>		
	<p>Corporate Parenting Update</p>		

<p>Items to be scheduled</p>
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