

# Report to Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board

**10 October 2022**

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| <b>Subject:</b>         | Covid Funding Update   |
| <b>Director:</b>        | Director of Children and Education,<br>Michael Jarrett   |
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## 1 Recommendations

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

## 2 Reasons for Recommendations

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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



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



- 4.14 SCVO holds regular provider meetings, where challenges, experiences and project delivery are discussed. There has been improved collaboration between providers which has led to cross project support. One significant example is where one provider had too many children and young people waiting for counselling provision. They were able to assess people on their waiting list and refer to other providers to minimize waiting times for the children and young people who required the service.
- 4.15 At 22nd June 2022 Cabinet Meeting, there was a further £550k of funding agreed to continue the programme in 2022/2023. SCVO in conjunction with partners will pause to reflect on the data and feedback currently available from providers, participants and partners to assess where the priorities are for future activity. There is ongoing work being undertaken to continuously improve data collection, evaluation partners are continuing to work with providers and partners to provide feedback and the Provider Group and Steering Group will continue to meet to maximise delivery and ensure all CYP can access the support they need.

## 5 Alternative Options

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

## 6 Implications

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



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

## 7. Appendices

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

