

Scrutiny Review – Scoping Document

Review Title:	Impact of the lockdown on children and families
Scrutiny Board:	Children’s Services and Education
Date of Review:	November 2021 – March 2022

Reasons for undertaking the review:

On 23 August, 2021, the Board considered a presentation on the pandemic response and impact of the national lockdown on children and families.

The report and presentation highlighted that essential services had continued to operate throughout the pandemic including social care services and virtual online school learning. The Council had been proactive with all educational establishments across the Borough and continued to support stakeholders under difficult circumstances. In particular, the Council had provided support to Sandwell Children’s Trust to access various Covid-rated grants to mitigate against increased costs and fast track additional equipment for social workers.

The Council had developed a Return to School strategy to specifically focus on the welfare of children and young people. However, the Board noted that the lockdown had resulted in some negative developments such as increases in free school meal provision, increases in domestic abuse , safeguarding incidents and an increase in demand across services.

There was a consensus that the Board needed to establish a review to investigate and review recovery activity across multiple areas in education and social care with specific focus on uplifting standards and attainment.

Membership of the Working Group will be agreed by the Board and a subsequent project plan will be completed for this review.

Key Lines of Enquiry – Impact of the lockdown on children and families

- a) Recovery plan for education attainment and child development
- b) Recovery plan for Social Care
- c) Response to increased service demand and mitigation planning
- d) Delivery of emotional health and wellbeing support
- e) Rates and management of those requesting Education Health and Care Assessments

f) Impact on child poverty rates and pupil premium children

Intended Outcomes:

to make further recommendations regarding areas in it considered would benefit from further scrutiny or policy development.

- To understand and capture how the Council and Schools have progressed with recovery plans to improve standards and educational attainment.
- Identify methods and strategies employed by schools/academies to shrink the educational attainment gap and uplift standards.
- To understand the impact of the lockdown on exam results
- To get a crosscutting picture on the impact of the lockdown on education attainment from a wide range of stakeholders.
- To investigate child poverty rates and mitigating measures.
- To understand the increasing pressure on Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) and those children and young people requiring EHCPs.

**Officer Group
(including partners):**

**Links to Corporate Plan
and Vision 2030:**

Best start in life for children and young people:

Successful recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic will have positive impact on all ambitions contained in the Council's Vision 2030 benefiting communities, stakeholders and children within the Borough.

**Scoping undertaken
by:**

Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board

**Council Chief Officer
(or partner equivalent):**

Michael Jarrett –Director of Children's Services and Education
Melanie Barnett

Existing data available for consideration:

Reset and Recovery Updates to Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board on 21 September, 16 November 2020, 11 January 2021 and 15 March 2021.

Report and presentation to Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board on 23 August 2021.

Education Endowment Foundation – Paper on Covid-19 on attainment gap

<p>Potential witnesses</p>	<p>Parents Young people Head Teachers representative Corporate Parenting Board representatives Citizens Advice Sandwell Children's Trust School Admission and Appeals Service Social Care Parent/Carer organisations such as Sandwell Parents Voices United</p>
<p>Activities</p>	<p>Desk top research Survey Focus group(s) Meetings</p>