

Report to Cabinet

15 February

Subject:	Scrutiny Review on the Impact of Lockdown on Children and Families
Cabinet Member:	Cabinet Member for Children & Education Councillor Simon Hackett
Director:	Director of Children and Education, Michael Jarrett
Key Decision:	No
Contact Officer:	Democratic Services Officer, Connor Robinson Connor1_Robinson@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Cabinet consider and either approve all, approve in part or do not approve any of the recommendations of Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board in respect of the scrutiny review on the impact of lockdown on children and families as follows:-
- a) that the Director of Children and Education works co-operatively with the Department for Education to improve the education standards of children and young people, utilising Education Investment Area funding;
 - b) that the Director of Children and Education is proactive in working with schools in the area to consider the creation or adoption of multi-academy trusts;
 - c) 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;
 - d) that the Council joins the Department for Education's 1-2-1 attendance mentoring pilot to monitor issues in schools across the Borough.



e) 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;

f) that the Cabinet Member for Children and Education writes to the Secretary of State for Education, to request that the 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.

g) 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;

h) that the Cabinet Member for Children and Education writes to the Secretary of State for Education, to request that specific monetary assistance is made available to children eligible for free school meals to take part in extracurricular activities;

i) 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.

j) that the Cabinet Member for Children and Education investigates ways to connect with young people and offer extra support, mentoring and encouragement including, but not limited to:-

- i) establishing a peer mentoring programme;
- ii) encouraging social youth work, sports, drama, and outdoor activities;
- iii) engaging with local businesses to improve the number of available apprenticeships;
- iv) supporting a holistic youth services experience which accompanies physical and digital offer;



v) supporting and championing the new Eco Bus with young people's involvement.

k) 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 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;


l) that, the Director of Children and Education works with multi-agency partners to support, engage and monitor the stability within the early years settings.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 The Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board agreed during their work programming session in 2021 to undertake a scrutiny review into the Impact of Lockdown on Children and Families.
- 2.2 The Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board subsequently conducted a scrutiny review into the Impact of Lockdown on Children and Families in 2022. The Scrutiny Board felt that recovery across multiple areas in education and social care needed to be investigated, through the lens of uplifting standards and attainment, the Board, therefore established a Working Group to carry out the review and ascertain an understanding of the current pressures across Children's Services and Education and provide, where necessary, recommendations to support Children and Families in Sandwell.
- 2.3 At the Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board on Monday 9 January 2023 the Board agreed to a range of recommendations based on the research and findings of the Working Group. Those recommendations are now presented to Cabinet for consideration.



3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	<p>The Best Start in Life for Children and Young People</p> <p>The Covid-19 pandemic had and continues to have an impact upon children and families across Sandwell. The Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board sought to examine the impact of the pandemic and understand the key pressures and challenges now facing children and young people and provide recommendations as necessary.</p>
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4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic the Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board received 'rest and recovery' updates on the work of Children's Services in response to the pandemic.
- 4.2 The Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board decided to carry out this scrutiny review at its work programming event in June 2021 in response to the concerns raised during the height of the pandemic.
- 4.3 A Working Group was established in early 2022 to carry out the review. The Working Group met several times to gather and discuss evidence from stakeholders such as service and educational leads, and to receive updates from youth and learning advisory support and updates from the Sandwell Children's Trust and the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).
- 4.4 A parent survey was undertaken to understand views from parents and how they believed the pandemic had impacted their children.
- 4.5 The attached report sets out the findings and recommendations of the Working Group.

5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 There are no alternative options. The Cabinet may approve all, some, or none of the recommendations.



6 Implications

Resources:	There are no specific financial implications arising from this report. Any financial implications as a result of the recommendations will be considered by the Executive, should they be approved.
Legal and Governance:	Scrutiny Procedure Rules require the Board to prepare a report following a review and submit it to the Executive.
Risk:	There are no specific risk implications arising from this report. Any risk implications as a result of the recommendations will be considered by the Executive, should they be approved.
Equality:	There are no specific equality implications arising from this report. Any implications as a result of the recommendations will be considered by the Executive, should they be approved.
Health and Wellbeing:	There are no specific health and wellbeing implications arising from this report. Any implications as a result of the recommendations will be considered by the Executive, should they be approved.
Social Value	There are no specific social value implications arising from this report. Any implications as a result of the recommendations will be considered by the Executive, should they be approved.
Resources:	There are no specific financial implications arising from this report. Any financial implications as a result of the recommendations will be considered by the Executive, should they be approved.

7. Appendices

Impact of the Lockdown on Children and Families Working Group – Final Report

