

## Scrutiny Review – Scoping Document

<b>Review Title:</b>	The Cost of Living and its Impact on Attainment and Attendance
<b>Scrutiny Board:</b>	Children’s Services and Education
<b>Date of Review:</b>	September 2023 – March 2024

**Reasons for undertaking the review:**

On 21 April 2022 the Council declared a Cost of Living Crisis, this was followed by the declaration of a Cost of Living Emergency on 13 December 2022.

The move to declare a Cost of Living Emergency highlighted the difficult situations facing many Sandwell residents, a cost-of-living summit was subsequently held to bring partners together and work to address the ongoing challenges.

The Sutton Trust has stated “in state schools, 38% of teachers said a third or more of their class were living in families facing considerable financial pressures which they felt are impacting on the children’s ability to succeed in school. In addition, in state schools, 67% of teachers thought the cost of living crisis and associated impact on pupils would increase the attainment gap at their school, with 18% saying there would be a substantial increase. This figure was 72% in the most deprived state schools, compared to 60% in those with better-off intakes”.

The Children’s Services and Education Scrutiny Board had previously undertaken a review into the impact of lockdown on children and families which evidenced how the lockdown had negatively impacted children’s education. Since the review, the cost of living crisis has added additional pressure on children which has increased the barriers to their attendance and educational attainment. The Children’s Scrutiny Board wished to investigate this impact, understand its implications, and what is being done within Sandwell to alleviate and counteract its effects.

Sandwell Council is part of an effort to increase attainment through the Education Investment Area and Priority Education Investment Area developments. The Board welcomed these developments and would like to review and understand what other initiatives are being developed and rolled out to combat the challenges faced by children in their attendance and attainment.

There was a consensus that the Board needed to establish a review to investigate and review the attendance and attainment in education with specific focus on understanding what was being done to increase outcomes for children and young people in education.

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 – The Cost of Living and its Impact on Attainment and Attendance**

- a) How the cost of living impacts engagement with education and attainment.
- b) Government and local investment going into education at a primary and secondary level.
- c) Council initiatives to engage with schools and parents around support with learning and school engagement.
- d) Development plans and catch up sessions developed by schools to increase attendance and attainment.
- e) The correlation between Free School Meals and attainment and attendance.
- f) Post-16 destination data – the impact of the cost of living on future educational and career pathways.
- g) Educational attainment and engagement with school for those children in care.
- h) The impact on those with SEND and their engagement with education.

### **Intended Outcomes:**

to make further recommendations regarding areas considered and which would benefit from further scrutiny or policy development.

- To understand the level and nature of support being given and offered to schools and parents to increase school attendance and attainment.
- To understand the work of the Council in engaging with schools and parents.
- To understand what schools are doing to support children and young people in achieving their potential.
- Assess the impact of free school meals on increasing school engagement.
- The impact of the cost of living and post-16 destinations for young people.
- How the cost of living has impacted children and young people in care and how it has affected their school engagement and education outcomes.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The impact of the cost of living on those children and young people with SEND, how it has affected their relationship with education and how it has impacted their attainment.</li> </ul>	
<b>Officer Group (including partners):</b>	
<b>Links to Corporate Plan and Vision 2030:</b>	<p>Best start in life for children and young people:</p> <p>Sandwell Council want children to be ready for school and for schools to be ready for children. Families and communities being able to support that readiness are vital, the Council want to ensure the right measures are in place for children and young people and to prepare them for adult life with the necessary skills and development.</p>
<b>Scoping undertaken by:</b>	Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board
<b>Council Chief Officer (or partner equivalent):</b>	Michael Jarrett –Director of Children's Services and Education
<b>Existing data available for consideration:</b>	
<p>The Sutton Trust – Cost of Living and Education 2022 (<a href="#">Web Link</a>)</p> <p>Sandwell Council – Education Investment Area and Priority Investment Area Developments – 20/03/2023</p> <p>Sandwell Council – Education Investment Area and Priority Investment Area Developments – 11/09/2023</p>	
<b>Potential witnesses</b>	<p>Sandwell Council Officers</p> <p>Sandwell Children's Trust</p> <p>Social Care</p> <p>Corporate Parenting Board representatives</p> <p>Head Teachers representative</p> <p>Parents</p> <p>Young people</p> <p>Parent/Carer organisations</p>
<b>Activities</b>	<p>Desk top research</p> <p>Survey</p> <p>Focus group(s)</p> <p>Meetings</p>