

### **Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2)**

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**Time and Date**

10.30 am on Thursday, 21st October, 2021

**Place**

Diamond Rooms 1 and 2 - Council House

Please note that in line with current Government and City Council guidelines in relation to Covid, there will be reduced public access to the meeting to manage numbers attending safely. If you wish to attend in person, please contact the Governance Services Officers indicated at the end of the agenda.

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**Public Business**

1. **Apologies and Substitutions**
2. **Declarations of Interests**
3. **Minutes** (Pages 3 - 8)
  - a) To agree the minutes of the meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> September, 2021
  - b) Matters Arising
4. **Children's Services Horizon Team (Child Exploitation Team)** (Pages 9 - 24)

Briefing Note of the Director of Children's Services
5. **Children withdrawn from the school system to be educated at home (Elective Home Education)** (Pages 25 - 28)

Briefing Note of the Director of Education and Skills
6. **Work Programme** (Pages 29 - 32)

Briefing Note of the Scrutiny Co-ordinator
7. **Any Other Business**

Any other items of business which the Chair decides to take as matters of urgency because of the special circumstances involved.

**Private Business**

Nil

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Julie Newman, Director of Law and Governance, Council House Coventry

Wednesday, 13 October 2021

Notes: 1) The person to contact about the agenda and documents for this meeting is Michelle Rose, Governance Services, Council House, Coventry, telephone 024 7697 2645, alternatively information about this meeting can be obtained from the following web link: <http://moderngov.coventry.gov.uk>

2) Council Members who are not able to attend the meeting should notify Michelle Rose as soon as possible and no later than 9.00 a.m. on 21<sup>st</sup> October, 2021 giving their reasons for absence and the name of the Council Member (if any) who will be attending the meeting as their substitute.

3) Scrutiny Board Members who have an interest in any report to this meeting, but who are not Members of this Scrutiny Board, have been invited to notify the Chair by 12 noon on the day before the meeting that they wish to speak on a particular item. The Member must indicate to the Chair their reason for wishing to speak and the issue(s) they wish to raise.

Membership: Councillors F Abbott, P Akhtar, J Blundell, B Gittins (By Invitation), S Hanson, J Innes (Chair), Jones (Co-opted Member), S Keough, K Sandhu (By Invitation), P Seaman (By Invitation), R Simpson, R Thay, C Thomas and A Tucker

### **Public Access**

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Any member of the public who would like to attend the meeting in person is required to contact the following officers in advance of the meeting regarding arrangements for public attendance. A guide to attending public meeting can be found here:

<https://www.coventry.gov.uk/publicAttendanceMeetings>

Please note: a hearing loop is available in the committee rooms

If you require a British Sign Language interpreter for this meeting  
OR if you would like this information in another format or  
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**Michelle Rose**

**Telephone: (024) 7697 2645**

**e-mail: [michelle.rose@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:michelle.rose@coventry.gov.uk)**

**Coventry City Council**  
**Minutes of the Meeting of Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2)**  
**held at 10.30 am on Thursday, 16 September 2021**

Present:

Members: Councillor J Innes (Chair)  
Councillor F Abbott  
Councillor P Akhtar  
Councillor J Blundell  
Councillor S Keough  
Councillor R Simpson

Co-Opted Members: Mrs S Hanson  
Mrs K Jones

Other Members: Councillor P Seaman (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People)

Employees (by Directorate):

S Bhambra, Children's Services  
J Gregg, Director of Children's Services  
G Holmes, Law and Governance  
M Rose, Law and Governance  
R Sugars, Education and Skills

Apologies: Councillor B Gittins, R Thay, C Thomas and A Tucker

## **Public Business**

### **6. Declarations of Interests**

There were no disclosable interests.

### **7. Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 24th June 2021 were agreed as a true record.

Further to Minute 4/21, the most effective way to scrutinise apprenticeships where three scrutiny boards were involved was to be investigated.

**RESOLVED that further detail regarding the scrutiny of Apprenticeships be communicated to the Board.**

### **8. Children's Services Ofsted Visit Outcome and Action Plan Progress**

The Scrutiny Board considered a report of the Director of Children's Services which detailed the outcome of the Children's Services Ofsted focused assurance visit, held on 12th and 13th May 2021 and progress against the Action plan.

Ofsted re-inspected Children's Services in March 2017, the outcome of the inspection was published on 13th June 2017, Children's Services were judged as "requires improvement to be good". The Ofsted framework (ILACS) included focused visits to local authorities who were judged to be 'requires improvement'. Children's Services had received two visits. The first visit was held on 30th and 31st January 2018. The visit focused on the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). The letter confirming the outcome of the visit was published on 22nd February 2018. A further focused visit was held on 26th and 27th February 2019. The visit focused on permanency planning and achieving permanency. The letter confirming the outcome of the visit was published on 21st March 2019.

In March 2020, Ofsted paused ILACS inspections due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Children's Services was anticipating a standard Inspection by September 2020. Ofsted published their interim plans to reflect the COVID-19 context for a phased return to routine inspections which commenced from September 2020. The Interim visits were paused again during the November 2020 lockdown. On 5 January 2021 a further national lockdown was announced. Ofsted confirmed that interim assurance focused visits would be undertaken during the national lockdown period commencing from February 2021.

The interim focused visit, (COVID-19 assurance) was undertaken on 12th and 13th May 2021. Interim focused visits differ from the usual focused visits in that they had a broader scope with a particular focus on the quality of decision making for children. The methodology for the visit was in line with the inspection of local authority children's services (ILACS) and was adapted to reflect the COVID-19 context. The visit was carried out largely on site, although remotely for the School HMI.

The scope of the visit included:

#### Help and protection scope

- The effectiveness of the front door, with specific reference to any rise in and response to referrals, section 47 enquires and strategy discussions
- The progress of children subject to child protection and child in need plans (those who have experienced abuse, neglect or exploitation)
- The progress of those recently stepped up or stepped down to early help and the exercise of thresholds
- Edge of care/pre-proceedings, particularly those subject to letter before proceedings

#### Children in care and care leavers scope

- The focus on physical/mental health of children in care and care leavers, including how the local authority has maintained contact with the child/care leaver and how they're facilitated contact with families
- Placement decisions, including the quality of matching, particularly when sufficiency is a challenge

#### Impact of Leaders scope

- The quality assurance of practice and 'line of sight' to the quality and impact of practice with children and families
- Management and workforce capacity, including responses to staff well-being

- The effectiveness of leaders in leading and contributing to multi-agency working that leads to effective social work practice

The letter confirming the outcome of the visit was published on 25th June 2021. The link to the report was provided to the Board. The findings stated that there was strong, timely and effective political and corporate support for children's services which had enabled leaders to respond promptly to mitigate the significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Leaders had ensured the most vulnerable children had been seen in person, and staff were provided with personal protective equipment. Children in care, both living in Coventry and those living outside of the city were provided with the technology and access to tuition and education where possible. Inspectors stated that partnership working had strengthened during the pandemic with positive changes identified. Partners had maintained oversight of child safety and well-being. Decision making in the multi-agency safeguarding hub was timely and Strategy discussion held promptly. Face to face visits had continued during the pandemic, subject to risk assessment. Staff were positive about working in Coventry. They stated that their workload was manageable and that they valued the support and communication provided by leaders and managers at all levels during the pandemic.

Three areas were identified as areas for improvement:

- The timeliness of decision making for children to enter the Public Law Outline (PLO), and their circumstances being purposefully progressed once within it.
- The quality of supervision, management oversight and case notes so that the rationale for decisions, made was clearly recorded.
- Decision making and the recording of rationale with respect of children's placements

An Action Plan which was appended to the briefing note was developed in response to the visit, the plan detailed the areas for improvement and the actions that were being progressed.

Officers noted that since the 'Inadequate' rating in 2014 Coventry had showed many signs of improvement and pre-pandemic this had been significant enough to see elements of practice that could be considered at a 'good' level. However, the pandemic had had a significant impact on progress. The Assurance Visit was in response to the pandemic and the service was reviewed in 2 days. There was positive feedback to be proud of and some areas highlighted to focus on for improvement. Inspections were viewed as providing support for achieving the best outcomes for children.

The Board questioned officers, received responses, and discussed the following:

- The four different Ofsted ratings and what they meant
- Areas of improvement
- Issues around timeliness of court work and capacity for judges in family courts
- Quality of case notes
- The difference between Management oversight and supervision
- The increasingly complex problems faced by families
- One Coventry approach and partnership working
- Which aspects of Leadership are included in the inspection process.

- Action plan progress
- How timeliness is measured
- 'Voice of the Child' work not included in the Ofsted report

Officers noted that the increase in the volume of work and the national shortage of staff had affected Coventry's improvement work. Social workers had been out protecting children during lockdown in Coventry and were facing an increase from 2000 contacts on average per month pre-pandemic, to 2600 calls raising concerns per month during the pandemic. Pre-pandemic on average 400 contacts per month would become referrals however, this had increased now to 600 on average. The Director of Children's Services evidenced the issues in Coventry with the approximate figures of 80,000 children in the city, of which 5,000 were open to Children's Services, with a budget of approximately £80million and 1,000 members of staff. Staff shortages contributed to delays and despite the Social Worker Academy being regarded highly, time was needed for new staff to gain experience. The complexity of problems faced by families was significant and there were recognised links with poverty. Partnership working was crucial, and the One Coventry approach aligned support.

Officers explained that significant improvements had been made with the quality of case notes in Coventry, for example summaries were now evident on case files. Improvements to the quality of case notes would continue to be important. Overview supervision was a time allocated for reflective supervision and developing practice wisdom and management oversight was required when a more immediate decision was presented. Measuring timeliness combined qualitative and quantitative assessment. Purposeful assessment was important for the best outcomes for children and therefore a balance must be considered as this may take longer to establish key information. Quantitative measures included the number of assessments completed within the target number of days and Coventry were currently at 91.2%, ahead of statistical neighbours and the national average. Qualitative measures included audits of cases. The 'Voice of the Child' work in Coventry was recognised as a good story and Coventry would work to improve promoting positive work. The Action Plan was a required response to the areas for improvement highlighted by the inspection and actions had been progressed which could be shared with the Board.

The Board requested that:

- Progress on the action plan be circulated to Members
- Consideration be given to numeric metrics being included to measure progress against actions where possible
- Consideration be given to arranging briefings for the Board on the voice of the child, as well as quality assurance audits

**RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Board note the Action Plan and thank officers for a comprehensive response to questions.**

## 9. **Work Programme**

The Scrutiny Board considered and noted their Work Programme for the 2020/21

## 10. **Any Other Business**

## **Support to families self-isolating due to Covid**

Officers responded to Members concerns about the communication of support available to families who were required to self-isolate due to Covid. Officers discussed the link to the Council website that was sent to parents requested to isolate and the information regarding support available on the webpage was displayed for Members and discussed. If the family were in receipt of Free School Meals they would receive a voucher or food parcel from the school. It was recognised that schools were aware of potentially vulnerable families and often offered support for those in need even if they did not meet guidelines required for funding.

The Board asked questions regarding:

- The value of vouchers
- The impact of the revised government regulations regarding isolation
- The speed of support
- Support for children with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP)
- Contact by the Council following Test and Test requests to isolate

Councillor Abbott highlighted the Council offered support to families via the network of food hubs in the city.

Officers to provide the following information:

- Whether parents have still applied for support they are now not eligible for following the changes to the government isolation requirements
- What are the timescales for test and trace payments?
- Whether children with an EHCP are still eligible for test and trace support if they are required to isolate due to shielding
- How and when Public Health contact people as part of the Track and Trace process.

On behalf of the Board Councillor Innes thanked Councillor Abbott and all those involved with supporting families in need at food hubs in the City.

(Meeting closed at 11.50 am)

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**To: Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2)**

**21<sup>st</sup> October 2021**

**Subject: Children's Services Horizon Team (Child Exploitation Team)**

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### **1 Purpose of the Note**

- 1.1 To inform the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) of the safeguarding measures and engagement approaches adopted by the Horizon Team when working with children and young people deemed at risk of Child Exploitation and the progress to date.

### **2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) are recommended to:

- 1) Consider the content of the briefing note and appendix
- 2) Identify any recommendations for the Cabinet Member

### **3 Information/Background**

- 3.1 The Horizon Team sits within Responsive Services and work closely alongside the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and Emergency Duty Team (EDT).
- 3.2 The Horizon Team, is a multi-disciplinary team, comprising of social workers, youth workers, child and family workers, a harm reduction and victim support officer, Missing Coordinator, West Midlands Police Officers from the Child Sexual Exploitation Team, Child Criminal Exploitation, Youth Violence Reduction Unit and LOCATE Missing Police Team.
- 3.3 The Horizon Team work with children and young people resident in Coventry aged between 10-18 years who are deemed at risk of child exploitation.
- 3.4 The Horizon team accept referrals directly from MASH and via the internal transfer protocol from Social Work Teams.
- 3.5 The Horizon Team hold smaller caseloads to deliver intensive and bespoke intervention plans for children and young people, allocated with the Horizon Team, Area Social Work Teams and Through Care service.

### **4 Safeguarding Measures**

- 4.1 The Horizon Team work collaboratively to ensure children and young people who are deemed at risk of child exploitation are safeguarded.
- 4.2 The Horizon Team:
- Provide timely and effective interventions with children, young people and families to safeguard those vulnerable to exploitation. **Appendix 1 (Safety Planning, Key Ring Presentation and young people case studies presentation).**

- Practice in a Restorative and Relationship Based approach that is underpinned by the Signs of Safety Framework. The practice framework ensures that the intervention with children, young people and their families, will make a difference to their lives and improve their outcomes.
- Apply pro-active problem solving to address the risks associated with victims, perpetrators and locations and ensure children and young people who are or may be at risk from child exploitation are safeguarded.
- Work closely with parents and carers to keep children and young people within their family. The Horizon Team identify and implement bespoke intervention packages and safety plans to stabilise and strengthen relationships that reduce the opportunities for exploitation.
- Are creative in identifying services for young people post 18 to ensure that their needs continue to be met. The Horizon Team work closely with partner agencies to explore the safeguarding offer for all young people post 18.
- Take action against those intent on abusing and exploiting children and young people by working in conjunction with the police to prosecute and disrupt perpetrators. This also includes support for young people that will provide evidence in criminal trials through a bespoke victim and harm package.
- To raise awareness and provide preventative education for the welfare of children and young people who are, or may be, exploited.

## **5 Collaborative Working**

- 5.1 The Horizon Team work collaboratively with stakeholders in response to the increased risks of child exploitation, to improve positive outcomes for children and young people within Coventry.
- 5.2 The Horizon Team work closely with the MASH to ensure a timely and robust response to new referrals involving children and young people deemed at risk of Child Exploitation is provided.
- 5.3 The Horizon Team provide Social Work teams case consultations when there are emerging child exploitation concerns identified for young people.
- 5.4 The Horizon Team have developed positive Cross Boarder working relationships with both Local Authorities and Police Departments across the region. This activity continues to strengthen and now includes both a Horizon and Youth Offending Representative attending bi-monthly meetings with Warwickshire Local Authority and Police Department. The purpose of this meeting is to share information and set actions to safeguard young people who are believed to be involved in County Lines, Groups or Gangs.
- 5.5 For the Regional Police Action Week scheduled for 11<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> October 2021, the Horizon Team and West Midlands Violence Reduction Unit have developed a Child Exploitation awareness event for Education Designated Safeguarding Leads. The purpose of the event is to identify gaps in knowledge for the Educational Safeguarding Lead within Coventry City Council to assist in the development of bespoke training packages for Education Provisions.
- 5.6 To compliment the raising awareness event, the Horizon Team have assisted in the co-ordination of Police School Link Officers offering continued support, raising awareness, assisting school staff in completing child exploitation screening tools and offering to speak with young people alongside staff members to build upon community engagement.

- 5.7 The Horizon Service Manager works closely with the Education leads to strengthen collaborative working at both a strategic and operational level. The Horizon Social Workers attend Education Provisions, that provides both the young people and teaching staff opportunities of joint interventions.

## **6 Safeguarding Arrangements**

- 6.1 The Horizon Team are accountable for leading, responding and managing the following work streams:
- Daily Missing Triage Meeting - The Missing Co-Ordinator or Team Manager within Responsive Services chair the daily missing triage meeting. In attendance are a West Midlands Police Missing Person Officer, West Midlands Police Youth Violence Reduction Officer and Education Representative. With this consistent attendance and information sharing from all representatives, a timely response to a child or young person's missing episode is achieved, evidencing risk management, defensible decision making, actions and solutions to reduce future missing episodes that are recorded on the child or young person's case file.
  - Weekly Child Exploitation Screening Review Meeting. The Horizon Team review all Child Exploitation Screening Tools to ensure a timely response to the risks identified can be implemented. This may involve, scheduling a Multi-Agency Child Exploitation Meeting that will review, agree risk levels, identify and implement intervention and disruption plans with stakeholders, parents/carers and young people.
  - Weekly Extended Multi-Agency Child Exploitation and Missing Meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to review children and young people who have come to the attention of agencies in relation to child exploitation, serious youth violence, county lines and gangs inclusive of missing children. Panel members work collaboratively to achieve joint planning and decision making to develop a multi-agency risk management plan that compliments pre-existing plans. Panel members will monitor the progress and impact in order to achieve positive outcomes for children and young people who are vulnerable to exploitation.
- 6.2 The Horizon Team are Core Panel Members for the following panels:
- Monthly Serious Youth Violence Forum
  - Monthly Vulnerable and Missing Person (VAMP)
  - Monthly Child Operation Group (COG)
  - Monthly Youth One Day One Conversation (YODOC)

## **7 Action Plan: Safeguarding and tackling Child Exploitation and Serious Youth Violence**

- Recruitment of an additional five full time Social Workers and three full time Adolescent Workers to be achieved by January 2021.
- Appointment of a Health Navigator by November 2021.
- An additional two West Midlands Police Officers joining the Horizon Team by the end of November 2021. A further four West Midlands Police Officers will join within the New Year (2022).
- A three tier Multi-Agency Child Exploitation Training Package to be developed and implemented for Children Services and the Safeguarding Partnership Board by December 2021.

- Six weekly Champion Group Sessions will continue to be facilitated by the Operational Lead of the Youth Offending Service and Service Manager of the Horizon Team. This group offers participants access to updates on current trends and themes in respect of Child Exploitation within Coventry. Participants have access to resources, services and training opportunities that can be embedded into daily practice when working with children deemed at risk of Child Exploitation.
- The development of an intelligence product that shared across the partnership. This document will be designed to increase awareness of the trends, themes, services, resources and actions being taken to identify, safeguard, reduce and tackle Child Exploitation and Serious Youth Violence.

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## **Appendix**

Appendix 1: Safety Planning and Key Ring Presentation

# Safety Plan Presentation

Andie Burgwin – CSE C&F Worker  
HORIZON

# Presentation objective

- My role & background.
- An innovative way of setting out a safety plan using signs of safety.
- To showcase different ways of setting out the safety plan.
- Sharing best practice and the difference it make to young people & families.
- Please be aware that these are 'live' cases and following GDPR & Confidentiality this needs to be respected, adhered to and not shared – Thank you for your co-operation.

# Devising a plan

Discussing with the young person what they want.

Go through signs of safety to see how the plan can be adapted to them.

Ensure their voice is heard.

Adjust and change the format so it is catered to the young person.

Make it unique – so it belongs to them.

Work together to see how they want their plan to look.

Multi-professional collaboration

Come up with joint solutions with your young person & support network.

No matter how minor a problem may seem this could be a major issue to a young person.

Think outside the box – people are not generic but individuals.

The plan needs to be fluid and interchangeable to meet the current needs and future goals.

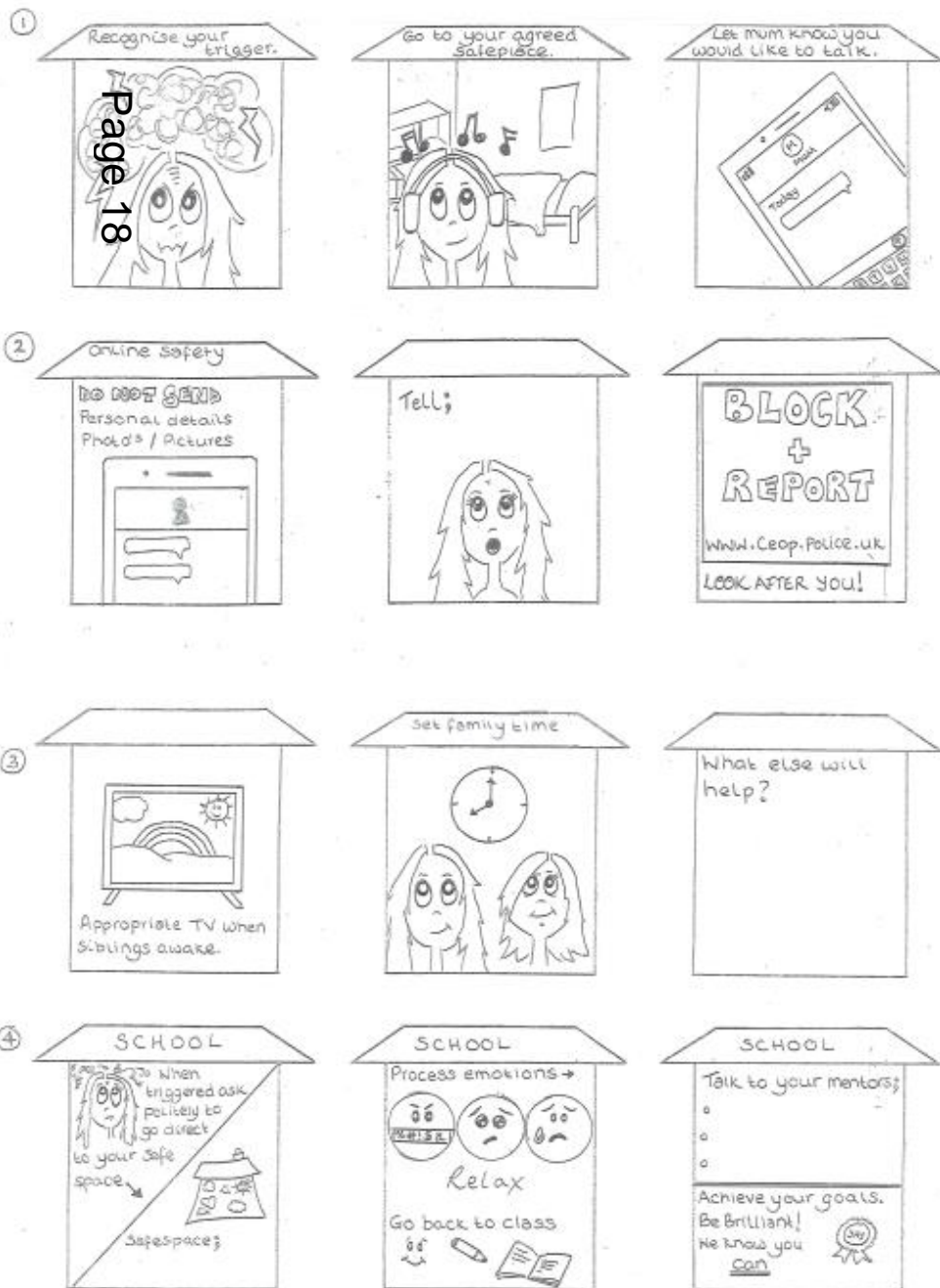
- Adapt – Change – Plan.

# Pen Picture – Safety Plan 1

- X is female, 15 years old and white British. They are the oldest of 3 siblings, her two younger siblings are 3 & 7 years old.
- X lives with her mother & her mother's partner who has adopted her.
- X's biological father has passed away – he was convicted of sexual assaults historically.
- X has a long history of being open to children's services both CIN (Child in Need) and CP (Child Protection).
- X has a diagnosis of Socio-communication disorder and attends a specialist provision. X is also under CAMHS (Child and adolescent mental health services).
- X has a history of self-harming and previous suicide attempts.
- X is a victim of CSE (Child Sexual Exploitation), this has happened online.
- X cannot always regulate their emotions, this results in them shouting and becoming abusive to others in the family home and at school.
- X finds it difficult to communicate at times and due to living in a busy household finds it hard to have any quality time with her Mum.
- X likes to sing, is in a choir and enjoys music.

# Planning

- What are we worried about? What's working? What needs to change?
  - Different forms of communication.
  - How to keep safe, Where to go? Who is the support network?
  - How can arguments / sensory overload be reduced?
  - What do they want for their future.
- 
- Completing a learning style questionnaire establishes X is a visual learner.
  - X does not like wordy documents finds these overwhelming and confusing.
  - X would prefer plan to be simple and easy to understand.
  - X likes colouring in.
- 
- Agree a style of plan.



1. **(i)** Learning to recognise when you may be triggered. **(ii)** Go to agreed safe place (bedroom), put on some music, do your breathing exercises and focus on your body and mind to get to a calmer state. Agreed with family that they are to respect that X needs time. **(iii)** When X is ready to talk they send a blank message to Mum. Mum can then go and discuss with X the situation. The blank text also is there for when X has something on their mind and does not know how to start a conversation with Mum. This is an indicator to Mum that their child has something important to share.

2. **(i)** Work was ongoing re: online safety, but the main focus for X was not to send any person details, pictures or images and only to communicate with people online that were age appropriate and that X knew in person. Mum was to monitor these conversations. **(ii)** If X had any concerns it was discussed who she would tell. In this instance it was her Mum and/or a close family friend. **(iii)** A strategy of how they would report inappropriate online activity. They understood that this would not only help them but also help to protect others.

3. **(i)** Due to having younger siblings appropriate television was not followed. This resulted in the younger siblings being affected and X having arguments with family members. At times this became volatile. Agreed safety measure that only age appropriate programme's to be put until the younger siblings bedtime. **(ii)** X felt left out in the family dynamics and did not have quality time with Mum. This caused friction in the home. It was agreed that at 8pm every evening allocated time was given to X to spend with Mum. **(iii)** Discussions with what else could help. This was doing cooking with Mum & Dad, allowing X to possibly go for a walk in the local area (had to be monitored due to ASD and vulnerabilities & recognizing risk. Allowing X to have some independence.

4. Agreed with school. **(i)** A designated safe place for X to go to when experiencing a sensory overload or when triggered. This was student support. **(ii)** To talk through and process emotions (writing, fiddle toy, calming sensory interventions, doodling). Manage to regulate emotions to enable them to go back to class to learn. **(iii)** Agree 3 members of staff who they can talk to or share any concerns that they have ongoing or something that had happened in the day. To be able to de-brief before going home so they don't carry any concerns or burdens that may impact on them as an individual or in the home.

# Pen Picture – Safety Plan

- Y is a 14 year old female of Polish white heritage
- Y is the youngest sibling in the household, she lives with older sister & Mum.
- Y has witnessed domestic abuse between her parents and has previously been on CP.
- Has had multiple missing episodes within 12 months meeting unknown males who they have met on the internet. Travelled outside of outside of City.
- Awaiting CAMHS/relate.
- Has been admitted to hospital previously after taking an overdose of paracetamol.
- History of Self-harm.
- Is presently completing intervention work via Positive choices.
- Previous drug misuse – MDMA , cocaine & cannabis.
- Y is very artistic, loves music and singing. Enjoys cosplay.

# Planning

- What are we worried about? What's working? What needs to change?
  - Different forms of communication.
  - How to keep safe, How to make contact with support network.
  - What do they want for their future.
- 
- Completing a learning style questionnaire establishes Y is a visual & kinaesthetic learner.
  - Y would prefer plan that they can have on them at all times.
  - Discuss Y's interests and how we can incorporate that into the plan.
  - Y's favourite colour is red.
- 
- Agree a style of plan.

# Adapted Key ring card – Safety Plan 2

- **Card 1 – 999 Danger**



If you or anyone else is in immediate danger/ threat call for emergency services.

- **Card 2 – Reverse**



If there is no credit on your mobile phone or you do not have a phone and have no money you need to use the telephone box, reverse call to contact home or your support network.

- **Card 3 – Telephone number**



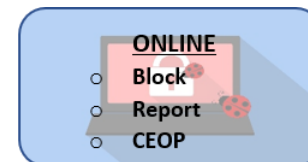
Coded telephone number (Mum's), so you always have access to it.

- **Card 4 – contacts**



Contacts agreed that you have access to, for you to access help & support.

- **Card 5 – Online**



Always make sure you block, report and who to report to (CEOP) if you receive any inappropriate contact/images/requests online. Also speak to your support network.

- **Card 6 – Curfew**



Agreed time between Mum and yourself on what time you need to be home. If you are going to be late, then call home and communicate with Mum – let her know. If no contact is made, Mum is advised to report you as missing.

- **Card 7 – Support Network**



Use your support network. These include home, school including your pastoral leader, your close friends, your online services and recommended telephone numbers, just to name a few. Always reach out for help and support, there is always somebody there, don't struggle on your own.

- **Card 8 – Mind of My own**



You have the information to download the Mind of My own app. This is a tool a tool to help make sure opinions from you are listened to. You can send messages to your worker for them to see when they are at work. You can tell them whatever you like, for example how you are feeling or something you want to talk about. Give it a go, it could help.

# What it looks like:





Other examples of  
keyrings completed



Thank you for taking  
the time to listen and  
hope you found this  
useful.

Stay Safe

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**To: The Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2)**

**Date: 21<sup>st</sup> October 2021**

**Subject: Children withdrawn from the school system to be educated at home (Elective Home Education)**

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### **1 Purpose of the Note**

- 1.1 To set out the legal and national position in relation to the education of children who are home schooled, known in law as elective home education (EHE); and to report on:
- the effectiveness of the Council's approach to delivering its statutory duty, to ensure children who are EHE are receiving a 'suitable' education and;
  - any fluctuation in the number of EHE children known to the LA, in the context of the current pandemic and the significant increase reported nationally.

### **2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Education and Children's Scrutiny Board (2) are recommended to:
- 1) Note the content of the report
  - 2) Support the approach to elective home education in Coventry, which embraces parents informed choice, without compromising the Council's statutory duty to safeguard all children
  - 3) Identify any recommendations for the Cabinet Member

### **3 Information/Background**

- 3.1 The decision to home school a child is supported in law through Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 which states:

"The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable:

- a) to his age, ability and aptitude, and
- b) to any special educational needs he may have, either by regular attendance at school **or otherwise.**"

- 3.2 This means that as an alternative to school attendance, parents can arrange 'suitable' education otherwise, which includes EHE. If the LA is aware that a child is being EHE it has a duty to determine if the provision is suitable. However, there is no legal or nationally agreed definition of what 'suitable' education means. The definition is therefore determined locally and may vary across LAs.
- 3.3 The true number of children who are EHE in England is not known. This is because there is: no national database of EHE children; no requirement for LAs to maintain a register and no requirement for parents to register their children on a voluntary register where these exist. The Association of Directors of Children's Services projected that as of October 2020 more than 75,000 children were being educated at home, an increase of 38 per cent from

the previous year. LAs contributing to the survey identified the increase as being partially attributable to the pandemic. Reasons included the need to protect vulnerable family members who were shielding, fear of transmission and a philosophical choice based on a positive experience of remote learning.

- 3.4 Whilst there is no requirement for a parent to inform the LA of their decision to EHE their child, under Section 436A of the Education Act 1996 LAs do have a duty to identify children who are of compulsory school age but are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education outside of school. This therefore creates a tension, between Section 7 and Section 436A in terms of balancing a family's right to EHE their child unfettered and the safeguarding duty Councils have for all children in their local area
- 3.5 The Government estimate that approximately 10 to 20% of EHE children have never been to school. It is therefore particularly difficult to identify this group through available monitoring systems, because children have never accessed services and are not on any accessible databases. Consequently, an unknown proportion of EHE children currently remain legally 'out of sight' which means it is not possible to ensure that they are safeguarded.
- 3.6 In terms of provision, there is no legal requirement for parents who chose to EHE their children, to follow the national curriculum, enter their child for public examinations, follow the dates of the school year or length of school day. Education provision can be autonomous and self-led, although there is an expectation from the Government, that the programme will have positive outcomes. Parents that elect to home educate must take full responsibility for their child's needs at their own expense. LAs do not receive any funding for children who are EHE.
- 3.7 The LAs general responsibilities for EHE is set out in national guidance: [Elective Home Education: Government Guidance for Local Authorities April 2019](#)

#### **4 The National Landscape**

- 4.1 The tension created by the competing legislation set out in this report, is subject to continuous and often contentious debate. The national landscape in context, is best understood with reference to the [House of Commons Education Committee: Strengthening Home Education July 2021](#) and its preceding report, produced in 2016. The inquiry sought to understand "the extent to which current arrangements provide sufficient support for home educated children to access efficient, full-time and suitable education, and establish what further measures may be necessary in order to facilitate this." The call for evidence included both written and oral contributions and is now closed. The interim key recommendations of the report include:
  - The establishment of a statutory register for children out of school, arguing that without data, it is not possible to ensure that all children are receiving a suitable education.
  - Completion of the National SEND review, to ensure that the needs of children with SEND are met within their school, so families do not feel that they have to EHE to meet their child's needs
  - The creation of an independent, neutral advocate to "guard against coercive off-rolling and provide families considering EHE with neutral guidance"
  - The power for LA's to assess the educational progress of children who are home educated at least once a year, in order to take reasonable steps to reassure themselves that EHE is judged 'suitable'.
  - National criteria against which the suitability of education can be assessed
  - The commission and publication of a longitudinal research on the life chances and social outcomes of EHE children

- The creation of a 'level playing field' to enable EHE children to the same access to public examinations, further educational and work opportunities as their schooled peers.
  - The Select Committee also identified from evidence, that children who are EHE are not considered in any national safeguarding guidance, specifically Keeping Children Safe in education (KCSIE), which it wants rectifying as an urgent priority.
- 4.2 The National Child Safeguarding Panel in its annual report for 2020, included a focus on safeguarding children who are not visible to school. It reported that during the course of the year, there were 15 incidents involving children who were reported to be electively home educated. Three of those children died, two through suicide and one through risk-taking behaviour. The non-fatal serious harm incidents included neglect, emotional abuse, and intra-familial child sexual abuse. The panel noted that often these children were 'invisible' to services, because they were not in school and not visited at home. Therefore, they did not have the additional protection that school provides. The Panel has determined to analyse these cases to examine the extent to which elective home education has been a factor in the serious harm or death of a child.
- 5 The Coventry offer:**
- 5.1 Coventry City Council discharges its duty to ensure suitability of provision through the post of an EHE Coordinator. This dedicated post is held by an experienced teacher who ensures that the Council fulfils the minimum standards for monitoring EHE, whilst building a strong partnership with the City's community of home educators.
- 5.2 The minimum standards recommended by the Department for Education are set out in the national guidance as follows:
- the provision and regular review of a written policy statement on elective home education which is consistent with the current legal framework, clear, transparent and easily accessible,
  - the necessary resources to implement its policy effectively and consistently.
  - consider organisational structures to ensure an holistic approach to issues of suitability, attendance, welfare and safeguarding.
  - consider the offer of guidance to all known home-educating families in their area about their rights and obligations, and provide advice on good practice and available resources for parents who request it;
  - make it clear in all documentation that the local authority sees its role in relation to home education as part of its wider responsibilities, including safeguarding, for all children living in its area;
- 5.3 Coventry's response to EHE is based on a model of partnership. The Council respects a family's decision to EHE and offers a range of support as required. This includes a help hotline, the provision of guidance and advice and the sharing of information via a dedicated Facebook page e.g. arrangements for Covid vaccinations, examinations and community activities. Every known EHE family is offered an annual conversation to discharge the LA's duty to determine if a programme is suitable. This can be in the form of a meeting within the home, at a neutral venue, or virtually; a telephone conversation or an email/letter exchange. Given that there is no requirement for a family to engage with the LA relationships are informal.
- 5.4 The coordinator deploys professional curiosity towards new referrals, to ensure that families have an opportunity to reflect on their decision and are able to make an informed choice. Consequently, a significant proportion of expressions of interest do not transfer to EHE programmes or the programme ends relatively quickly. Common reasons given for a decision to EHE include Covid concerns, dissatisfaction with a school offer at the point of phase transition (primary to secondary), perceived encouragement by their current school,

'off-rolling', avoidance of an exclusion, newly arrived in the City, perceived bullying or relationship breakdown with school.

- 5.5 In July 2020, 228 children were recorded on the voluntary register as EHE, this rose to 358 by July 2021 and currently stands in October 2021 at 369. The national range of EHE is 0.5% to 1.5% of the school age population. Coventry maintains a voluntary register, which is subject to daily fluctuations. During the last academic year 164 children were removed from the register, 129 of whom are now attending school; 149 children are identified as established long-term EHE, benefitting from high quality provision that evidences progression.
- 5.6 Coventry maintained its service for EHE throughout the pandemic, although during periods of lockdown face to face visits were switched to virtual meetings. The offer of a remote service has proved successful and the level of uptake has been maintained. The virtual offer now includes an improved virtual presence offering increased opportunities to share information via the Council's website and Facebook which has been welcomed by families.
- 5.7 Coventry has robust systems in place to respond to individual circumstances. The service works closely with admissions, attendance and social care systems, enabling an integrated response to any concern. Parents are able to access comprehensive information and advice as required and if a situation needs to be improved, the service works with the family to secure a positive outcome. If on a rare occasion it proves necessary to instigate enforcement action, this is followed through to a conclusion.
- 5.8 Coventry has worked with local businesses and exam centres to ensure that parents who want to register their child to sit public examinations can do so, although there is no compulsion for EHE students to sit exams. In order to encourage formal validation of a child's learning, subsidies are available to support family finances through business sponsorships.
- 5.9 EHE programmes are not always delivered from the home. For example many EHE students in Coventry attend North Warwickshire and Hinckley College (Nuneaton campus) to access English and Maths. However, it is evident nationally that some providers within the EHE community are operating as unregistered schools. Coventry is vigilant to this practice and is currently unaware of this activity within the City.
- 5.10 EHE students follow a range of post 16 destinations. For those that continue their formal studies at home, Coventry continues to offer support. Others attend a range of colleges or enter employment. When consent is secured, the Council refers students to a careers advisor to support any young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET).

## **6 References**

[Elective Home Education: Government Guidance for Local Authorities April 2019](#)

[House of Commons Education Committee: Strengthening Home Education July 2021](#)

[The Child Safeguarding Annual report 2020](#)

<https://www.coventry.gov.uk/electivehomeeducation>

<https://www.facebook.com/coventrycchomeeducation/>

[https://adcs.org.uk/assets/documentation/ADCS EHE Survey 2020 FINALweb.pdf](https://adcs.org.uk/assets/documentation/ADCS_EHE_Survey_2020_FINALweb.pdf)

[Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021](#)

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# Agenda Item 6

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) Work Programme 2021-22

Last updated 12/10/21

Please see page 2 onwards for background to items

|  |
|--|
| <b>24<sup>th</sup> June 2021</b>   |
| Children and Young People's Plan<br>i) Overview of services<br>ii) Covid-19 context<br>iii) Holiday Activity Fund including provision of Free School Meals   |
| <b>16<sup>th</sup> September 2021</b>  |
| Ofsted Outcomes and Action Plan<br>Briefing on support for self-isolating families   |
| <b>21<sup>st</sup> October 2021</b>  |
| Children's Services Horizon Team (Child Exploitation Team)<br>Children withdrawn from school to be home educated   |
| <b>9<sup>th</sup> December 2021</b>  |
| Education & Skills and Children's Services Covid-19 recovery update<br>School Readiness  |
| <b>27<sup>th</sup> January 2022</b>  |
| Covid-19 recovery update   |
| <b>17<sup>th</sup> March 2022</b>  |
| -  |
| <b>Items for 2021-22</b>   |
| Library provision<br>Children Missing Education<br>One Strategic Plan<br>Adoption Service Annual Report<br>Family Health and Lifestyles Service update<br>Children's Services Strategic Plan and Journey to Excellence<br>Family Valued Programme<br>Youth Provision in Coventry<br>Safeguarding Children's Partnership Annual Report<br>SEND, employment and post-16 opportunities<br>Apprenticeships (with Scrutiny Board 1&3) |
| <b>2022-23</b>   |
| School Performance Information – validated data  |
|  |

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) Work Programme 2021-22

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| <b>Date</b>                           | <b>Title</b>   | <b>Detail</b>  | <b>Cabinet Member/ Lead Officer</b>                    |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| <b>24<sup>th</sup> June 2021</b>      | Children and Young People's Plan<br>i) Overview of services<br>ii) Covid-19 context<br>iii) Holiday Activity Fund including provision of Free School Meals | An introduction to the Board on the priorities of the service for the coming year, including the impact of Covid-19 on children and young people in school, as well as a focus on the planned activities over the summer, including the provision of Free School Meals over the summer holiday | John Gregg/ Kirston Nelson<br>Cllr Sandhu/ Cllr Seaman |
| <b>16<sup>th</sup> September 2021</b> | Ofsted Outcomes and Action Plan  | To look in detail at the recommendations from the Ofsted visit in May 2021 and progress on actions   | John Gregg<br>Cllr Seaman                              |
|                                       | Briefing on support for self-isolating families  | Information for Members on support to families.  |  |
| <b>21<sup>st</sup> October 2021</b>   | Children's Services Horizon Team (Child Exploitation Team)   | Progress on the work of the Horizons Team to protect children from criminal and sexual exploitation.   | John Gregg/Cllr Seaman<br>Kirston Nelson/Cllr Sandhu   |
|                                       | Children withdrawn from school to be home educated   | Following concerns that the numbers of electively home education children has risen as a result of concerns around Covid, Members requested an item on how these children are being supported and safeguarded.   | Kirston Nelson<br>Cllr Sandhu                          |
| <b>9<sup>th</sup> December 2021</b>   | Education & Skills and Children's Services Covid-19 recovery update  | Education & Skills to cover feedback from summer holiday activity fund as well as plans for Christmas holiday FSM provision.<br>Children's Services to cover demand on services and progress on new ways of working with use of new technology, also the voice of the child.                   | John Gregg/Cllr Seaman<br>Kirston Nelson/Cllr Sandhu   |
|                                       | School Readiness   | To consider the impact Covid has had on school readiness and what services are doing to support and improve school readiness   | John Gregg/Cllr Seaman<br>Kirston Nelson/Cllr Sandhu   |
| <b>27<sup>th</sup> January 2022</b>   | Covid-19 recovery update   |  |  |

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) Work Programme 2021-22

| Date                        | Title  | Detail  | Cabinet Member/ Lead Officer                              |
|-----------------------------|--|---|---|
| 17 <sup>th</sup> March 2022 | -  |   |   |
| Items for 2021-22           | Library provision  | With particular reference to those now being delivered with/by volunteers e.g. Earlsdon and the 'new' library in Holbrooks  |   |
|                             | Children Missing Education                                   | To include children excluded, at risk of exclusion Children home schooled will be considered as part of a separate item   | Kirston Nelson<br>Sara Mills, Jeanette Essex              |
|                             | One Strategic Plan   | The One Strategic Plan was approved by Cabinet in Feb 2020. The Board will monitor progress on implementation of the plan.  | Kirston Nelson  |
|                             | Adoption Service Annual Report                               | Annual report – including information about the diversity of the adoption panel and adopters as well as support to birth mothers after their children have been adopted   | Cllr Seaman<br>Paul Smith                                 |
|                             | Family Health and Lifestyles Service update                  | The service includes the following: Family Nurse Partnership (supporting first time teenage parents), Health Visiting, Infant feeding, Stop Smoking in Pregnancy, Family Weight management – Be Active Be Healthy, School Nursing and support for BAME families. The paper will provide an overview on how the service is being redesigned to ensure that there is an even greater focus on increasing levels of service to those with greater health inequalities in Coventry. | Harbir Nagra<br>Amanda King<br>Charlotte Finlayson - SWFT |
|                             | Children's Services Strategic Plan and Journey to Excellence | At their meeting on 28 <sup>th</sup> November 2020 the Board requested progress on data from performance highlights, with demographics where possible, provided in the strategic plan. Also, to include RAG ratings from the action plan. At their meeting on 11 <sup>th</sup> March 2021 the Board agreed that this report would replace the regular progress reports from the Improvement Board   | John Gregg<br>Cllr Seaman                                 |
|                             | Family Valued Programme                                      | To consider progress and impact on families of the programme  | John Gregg<br>Cllr Seaman                                 |

| Date           | Title   | Detail   | Cabinet Member/ Lead Officer |
|----------------|---|--|------------------------------|
|                | Youth Provision in Coventry                       | How and where we work with outside partners (and specifically the third sector) to deliver it  |                              |
|                | Safeguarding Children's Partnership Annual Report | To include recommendations and progress on any serious case reviews  |                              |
|                | SEND, employment and post-16 opportunities        | To consider how children with SEND are supported to access employment and training opportunities post 16   |                              |
|                | Apprenticeships (with Scrutiny Board 1&3)         | Tie in with the careers. National Careers Service. Item to be considered at Scrucro due to the item cross-cutting 3 boards                                 |                              |
| <b>2022-23</b> | School Performance Information – validated data   | A report on school performance data using validated data, including LAC and vulnerable groups, as well as gender analysis. Possibly overlaying with Marmot | Kirston Nelson               |
|                |   |  |                              |