

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2)

Time and Date

10.30 am on Thursday, 9th December, 2021

Place

Council Chamber - 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.

Public Business**1. Apologies and Substitutions****2. Declarations of Interests****3. Minutes** (Pages 3 - 10)

- a) To agree the minutes of the meeting held on 21st October, 2021
- b) Matters Arising

4. Voice of the Child (Pages 11 - 22)

Briefing Note of the Director of Children's Services

5. Free School Meals Holiday Activities Fund Update (Pages 23 - 26)

Briefing Note of the Director of Education and Skills

6. School Readiness - Impact of Covid-19 (Pages 27 - 32)

Briefing Note of the Director of Education and Skills

7. Work Programme (Pages 33 - 36)

Briefing Note of the Scrutiny Co-ordinator

8. 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

Wednesday, 1 December 2021

Notes: 1) The person to contact about the agenda and documents for this meeting is Michelle Rose, Governance Services, Council House, Coventry, telephone 7683 3111, 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 9th December, 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), K 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

Please note that in line with current Government and City Council Covid guidelines, there will be reduced public access to the meeting to manage numbers attending safely.

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

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If you require a British Sign Language interpreter for this meeting
OR if you would like this information in another format or language please contact us.

Michelle Rose

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Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2)
held at 10.30 am on Thursday, 21 October 2021

Present:

Members: Councillor N Akhtar (Chair) (Substitute for Councillor J Innes)
Councillor P Akhtar
Councillor J Blundell
Councillor S Keough
Councillor R Thay
Councillor C Thomas
Councillor A Tucker

Co-Opted Members: Mrs S Hanson
Mrs K Jones

Other Members: Councillor K Sandhu (Cabinet Member for Education and Skills)

Employees (by Directorate):

Children's Services	J Gregg (Director) C Batchelor, A Burgwin, N Davies, S Graves, C Healy
Education and Skills	K Nelson (Director), J Essex
Law and Governance	V Castree M Rose

Apologies: Councillor F Abbott, B Gittins, J Innes, P Seaman and R Simpson

Public Business

11. Chair

In the absence of the Chair, Councillor J Innes, the Board appointed the Chair of Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee, Councillor N Akhtar to Chair the meeting.

12. Declarations of Interests

There were no disclosable interests.

13. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 16th September 2021 were agreed and signed as a true record.

14. Children's Services Horizon Team (Child Exploitation Team)

The Scrutiny Board considered a briefing note of the Director of Children's Services which informed the Board 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. Appended to the report were some case study examples of safety planning which were presented to the Board.

The Horizon Team was part of Responsive Services and worked closely alongside the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and Emergency Duty Team (EDT). The Team were multi-disciplinary and comprised 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. They worked with children and young people resident in Coventry aged between 10-18 years who were deemed at risk of child exploitation.

The Horizon Team accepted referrals directly from MASH and via the internal transfer protocol from Social Work Teams. They hold smaller caseloads to deliver intensive and bespoke intervention plans for children and young people, allocated within the Horizon Team, Area Social Work Teams and Through Care service.

The briefing note detailed Collaborative Working, Safeguarding Arrangements and tackling Child Exploitation and Serious Youth Violence. The Director of Children's Services explained that, there had been a rise in demand for the services provided and there were significant numbers in need that the teams were responding to. The strong collaborative work in the City enabled the safeguarding needs to be met in a timely way. It was difficult to do justice in a briefing note to the complexities of the work that surrounds the traumatic circumstances of some young people in the City. Safety plans were individual and gave supportive information about positive choices, they were aimed to empower the young people to voice their feelings and choices.

The Board praised the collaborative work in the City supporting young people and the individual approach involving listening to the young people which was evident in the keyring case study developed by Coventry officers.

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

- Raising awareness of safeguarding at an early age
- Links to violence in the City
- Data about the service, including trends over time, and views of the children
- Gender and age trends of affected young people
- Stigmas associated with receiving support
- Time spent with young people
- Preventative and reactive work
- Transition into adulthood
- Children Missing interviews and support
- Exploitation experienced in schools
- Live cases in the City
- Listening to Young People

Officers noted that the work was reactive in that thresholds were met prior to interventions in the specialist tier 4 service but also preventative in that when vulnerabilities were identified in connection with a case support would be offered. There were a significant number of investigations currently in the city.

Officers recognised the challenges regarding support through the transition into adulthood in particular the complex legal frameworks and thresholds. Also the challenges around supporting children who had been missing.

The Coventry Safeguarding Partnership Board had recently considered exploitation with schools and did not believe there was any evidence of concern.

Officers agreed to circulate a confidential briefing note to members with metrics about the service, including trends over time, and views of the children supported by the service. This level information was not part of the agenda today due to the potential to identify individuals.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Board:

- 1) note the content of the briefing note and thanked officers for supporting Young People**
- 2) recommend that further consideration be given to how to meet the needs of those children supported by the Horizon Team post 18 as they transition from Children's Services.**

15. Children Withdrawn from the School System to be Educated at Home (Elective Home Education)

The Board noted the briefing note of the Director of Education & Skills regarding children withdrawn from the school system to be educated at home (Elective Home Education). The information included the legal and national position in relation to the education of children who were home schooled, known in law as EHE. Also, the effectiveness of the Council's approach to delivering its statutory duty, to ensure children who were EHE were receiving a 'suitable' education. The report also covered the numbers of EHE children known to the Local Authority (LA) in the context of the current pandemic and the significant increase reported nationally.

The decision to home school a child was supported in law through Section 7 of the Education Act 1996. As an alternative to school attendance, parents could arrange 'suitable' education, which included EHE. If the LA was aware that a child was being EHE it had a duty to determine if the provision was suitable. However, there was no legal or nationally agreed definition of what 'suitable' education means. The definition was therefore determined locally and may vary across LAs.

The true number of children who were EHE in England was not known. This was 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.

Whilst there was 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 did have a duty to identify children who were of compulsory school age but were not registered pupils at a school and were not receiving suitable education outside of school. This therefore created 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.

The Government estimate that approximately 10 to 20% of EHE children have never been to school. It was therefore particularly difficult to identify this group through available monitoring systems, because children had never accessed services and were not on any accessible databases. Consequently, an unknown proportion of EHE children currently remained legally 'out of sight' which meant it was not possible to ensure that they were safeguarded.

In terms of provision, there was 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 could be autonomous and self-led, although there was an expectation from the Government, that the programme would have positive outcomes. Parents that elect to home educate must take full responsibility for their child's needs at their own expense. LAs did not receive any funding for children who were EHE.

The tension created by the competing legislation set out in this report, was subject to continuous and often contentious debate. The national landscape could be 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 provided 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 was now closed. The interim key recommendations of the report included:

- The establishment of a statutory register for children out of school, arguing that without data, it was not possible to ensure that all children were receiving a suitable education.
- Completion of the National SEND review, to ensure that the needs of children with SEND were 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 were home educated at least once a year, in order to take reasonable steps to reassure themselves that EHE was judged 'suitable'.
- National criteria against which the suitability of education could 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 were EHE were not considered in any national safeguarding guidance, specifically Keeping Children Safe in education (KCSIE), which it wanted rectifying as an urgent priority.

The National Child Safeguarding Panel in its annual report for 2020, included a focus on safeguarding children who were 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 provided. The Panel had determined to analyse these cases to examine the extent to which elective home education had been a factor in the serious harm or death of a child.

Coventry City Council discharged its duty to ensure suitability of provision through the post of an EHE Coordinator. This dedicated post was held by an experienced teacher who ensured that the Council fulfilled the minimum standards for monitoring EHE, whilst building a strong partnership with the City's community of home educators.

Coventry's response to EHE was based on a model of partnership. The Council respected a family's decision to EHE and offered a range of support as required. This included 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 was offered an annual conversation to discharge the LA's duty to determine if a programme was suitable. This could 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 was no requirement for a family to engage with the LA relationships were informal. The minimum standards recommended by the Department for Education were set out in the national guidance and detailed in the briefing note.

The coordinator deployed professional curiosity towards new referrals, to ensure that families had an opportunity to reflect on their decision and were able to make an informed choice. Consequently, a significant proportion of expressions of interest did not transfer to EHE programmes or the programme ended relatively quickly. Common reasons given for a decision to EHE included 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. If on a rare occasion it proved necessary to instigate enforcement action, this would be followed through to a conclusion.

The national range of EHE was 0.5% to 1.5% of the school age population. Coventry maintained a voluntary register, which was subject to daily fluctuations. In July 2020, 228 children were recorded on the voluntary register as EHE, this rose to 358 by July 2021 and in October 2021 was 369.

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 had proved successful and the level of uptake had been maintained. The virtual offer now included an improved virtual presence offering increased opportunities to share information via the Council's website and Facebook which had been welcomed by families.

Coventry had 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 was no compulsion for EHE students to sit exams. In order to encourage formal validation of a child's learning, subsidies were available to support family finances through business sponsorships.

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 was evident nationally that some providers within the EHE community were operating as unregistered schools. Coventry was vigilant to this practice and was currently unaware of this activity within the City.

EHE students follow a range of post 16 destinations. For those that continue their formal studies at home, Coventry continued to offer support. Others attend a range of colleges or enter employment. When consent was secured, the Council referred students to a careers advisor to support any young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET).

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

- There being no legal definition of a 'suitable education'
- Concerns about a mandatory register and the aims of a mandatory register
- Visits to home and Enforcement
- Assessments
- Coventry's EHE community

Officers highlighted that Coventry responded to requests to share the positive EHE approach with other Authorities due to praise reported by Coventry's EHE Community.

The Board supported the approach to elective home education in Coventry, which embraced parents informed choice, without compromising the Council's statutory duty to safeguard all children. Following a vote, the Board supported the national proposal to implement a mandatory register for home educators.

Officers agreed to investigate with Ofsted the question raised about online unregistered schools.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Board

- 1) note the content of the briefing note and support the approach to elective home education in Coventry, which embraced parents informed choice, without compromising the Council's statutory duty to safeguard all children.**
- 2) Following a vote, the Board support the national proposal to implement a mandatory register for home educators.**

16. **Work Programme**

The Scrutiny Board deferred consideration of the Work Programme until the next meeting.

17. **Any Other Business**

Support for the new Fostering recruitment video

The Board were made aware of a new fostering recruitment video and a link to the new video would be circulated.

(Meeting closed at 12.35 pm)

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Briefing note

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

Date: 24 November 2021

Subject: Voice of the Child

1 Purpose of the Note

- 1.1 To inform the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) of the methods used to identify the voice of the child, through the use of technology when engaging with specific groups of children and young people.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) are recommended to:
1. Note the current methods used to capture the voice of children and young people.
 2. Identify any further recommendations for the appropriate Cabinet Member.

3 Background and Information

- 3.1 Coventry Children's Services employs various methods to support children and young people in sharing their wishes, feelings and aspirations. This includes during direct work, group activities, surveys, focus groups and technology, details of which can be found in appendix 1. The focus of this briefing note is on the use of technology.

4 Methods

4.1 Mind of My Own

Mind of My Own is an app designed and co-produced with Children and young people, to support them in sharing their views, concerns and thoughts about their lives. It has been successfully used in Coventry since 2019. To date **458** young people, have their own account, (although many more children and young people access the app via their worker), **699** staff have been trained and have a worker account, **2459** individual statements have been received from children and young people. Part of the app has been specifically designed to support children and young people living with special educational needs and disabilities to share their voice and have a say in decision making. The app has various themes children and young people can access, the most popular in Coventry are:

Theme	Total sent
My Wellbeing	391
My Life	287
My Worker is visiting	209
I want to share good news	127
I have a problem	107

The lesser used areas of the app by children, young people and workers are based around meetings:

Theme	Total sent
Preparing for a conference	43
Preparing for a foster care review	33
Feedback following a meeting	19

(This is an area for awareness raising amongst staff and further development.)

Some of the benefits of using Mind of My Own have been:

- a) Children and young people on the autistic spectrum have shared more via the app than previously with their worker.
- b) During Covid-19 lockdowns, it was an effective tool for young people to keep in touch with their worker.
- c) Young people have used the app to tell their worker something that is difficult to say in person.
- d) Staff have benefitted from being able to upload to case files young people's views in their own words.
- e) Children, young people and staff have all benefitted from sharing good news rather than focusing on issues all the time.

4.2 Leaving Well

Coventry has been partnering with Social Finance for the past three years as a pilot authority in the development of Leaving Well. Leaving Well is a pioneering, new digital approach to leaving care services, centred around the Leaving Well Digital Tool. The new style pathway plan has been successful in ensuring all pathway plans are completed and reviewed via Leaving Well. This has several advantages:

- a) Plans are living documents which are always being reviewed and therefore in date.
- b) Both workers and young people have feedback, resulting in pathway planning being more meaningful and impactful.
- c) The information provided about our care leavers comes directly from them.
- d) The dashboard of information allows us for the first time to really understand what is going on for care leavers and provides more richness than the limited information captured via statutory returns to central government.
- e) Interventions are targeted, e.g., being able to identify all young people who needed more support around education, training and employment.

Currently all pathway planning is completed through the app, enabling young people to share their feedback 'in real time'. This means the service is responsive to their needs and able to identify trends and/or areas of focus.

4.3 Supporting CYP living with special educational needs and disabilities to have a voice.

Various methods are employed to ensure CYP have a voice including;

- a) A project involving 34 children and young people aged between 8-14 years, set up to understand children and young people's experiences of the pandemic. Widgets and Makaton, (the use of symbols, signs, and speech to replace written words), were used to support children and young people with communication issues.
- b) CYP with visual impairment make use of Screen sharing Apps for sharing white board screen in classroom with young person on laptop or tablet—e.g. Team Viewer and Join Me app <https://www.teamviewer.com/en/>. Screen reading technology including touch typing programmes. Students use phones and tablets to take images and zoom in. There are also specific apps, such as, 'Seeing AI' which is a talking camera for the blind

to identify images or read writing <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/seeing-ai/id999062298>. Hardware used includes, electronic Brailers, and CCTV's electronic Brailers <https://www.enhancedvision.com/low-vision/cctv-magnifiers.html>.

- c) The use of MS Teams has also had a positive impact on the number of young people attending annual reviews and expressing their opinions. It is thought that online is a less intimidating environment than being in a room with a range of professionals.

4.4 Kooth

Kooth is a safe, free and confidential way for young people to access emotional wellbeing and early intervention mental health support, it is actively promoted by Coventry Children's Services. The service is available to all young people across Coventry aged 11-25 years from April 2021 and is jointly funded by the City Council and Coventry and Rugby Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG).

Kooth.com is an award winning and innovative online mental health and wellbeing support service, accredited by the [British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy \(BACP\)](#), which supports and complements the existing offer operated by Rise - a family of NHS-led services providing emotional wellbeing & mental health services for young people across the county. Rise already provide a well-established 24/7 telephone service providing crisis support to young people across Coventry. Kooth deliver digital self-help resources and online counselling to further extend the local offer.

Fully trained and qualified counsellors and emotional wellbeing practitioners are available from midday to 10pm, and from 6pm to 10pm at weekends, 365 days a year to provide a much needed out-of-hours service for emotional support in an accessible way. Sessions can be booked in advance or they can drop in for one-to-one instant text-based chats.

The service also encourages peer to peer support via moderated discussion forums, and self-help through reading or submitting content. Children and young people have 24/7 access to magazines with wellbeing articles, personal experiences and tips from young people and the Kooth team, as well as giving members the opportunity to write in a daily journal to track feelings or emotions and promote a positive mental health and wellbeing.

5 Other methods of participation used within Coventry Children's services

5.1 Participation Team

The key aim of the Participation Team is to support the delivery of the first element of Coventry Children's Services Vision, namely:

"Children are at the heart of everything we do; they are involved as key partners in planning and decision making". (2016).

The Participation Team currently works with children, young people, Coventry City Council colleagues and its partners both locally and nationally to ensure:

- Children and young people have a voice about the decisions that impact upon them.
- Children and young people take part in the commissioning, design, development and monitoring of the services they access; and as such provide the Council with a critical friend, whilst influencing commissioning, service design and improvement.
- Children and young people are celebrated for the added value they bring to the city of Coventry.
- Colleagues and partners are advised, supported and challenged around participation good practice; and the views of CYP are used to develop increasing levels of participation.

The Participation Team is a focal point for engagement across children's services. With the support of children and young people and colleagues, the team has added value by:

- a) Developing, raising awareness and monitoring of the Participation Strategy. The strategy currently incorporates activity across looked after children and care leavers, children in need, child protection and children living with special educational needs and disabilities. The development of the strategy helped to identify gaps around engagement and enabled work, that had previously not been identified as good practice, to be shared with colleagues. Similarly, areas for development are also being highlighted.
- b) Children and young people feedback, regarding the services they access, is influencing practice development.
- c) Production of 3 videos, created with the support of children and young people has been an effective way of reaching large numbers of staff and highlighted the importance of the lived experiences and voice of the child.
- d) Throughout the pandemic, the Participation Team have supported colleagues to continue to involve children and young people in recruitment and selection panels. This has included some innovative methods of involvement when it was not possible for them to physically attend panels. Examples include candidates taking part in role play with young people over Zoom and young people marking leaflets/posters pre-prepared by candidates in advance of their interview with professionals.
- e) Producing effective, interactive, age appropriate children's guides, known locally as 'Welcome Packs.' These have been well received by children, young people, carers and staff alike.
- f) Developing the programme, training staff and managing the Mind of My Own app locally has been so successful that we have won a couple of national awards. These were for best usage of the app and best resources created by an area.
- g) Supported teams from across children's services to review their child friendly literature and direct work tools.
- h) The Young Inspectors project has been developed and is currently being delivered in all the Family Hubs in Coventry. This is proving to be an excellent way to hear the views of our children receiving help from Early Help and Protection colleagues.

5.2 Participation Database

The database allows us to monitor participation across looked after children aged 5-18 years and identify where there are gaps. Currently there are **744** on children's services dashboard, of which **551** are between 5-18 years. All but 33 of these have had some sort of contact via the Participation Team over the last year. Of those 33, **19** have been in care since 1st July 2021 and will shortly receive a Welcome Pack. The other 14 require follow-up. The table below breaks down the figures:

Activity	Contacted	Comment
Welcome Packs issued	501	Sent out by the Participation Team with an accompanying letter explaining its purpose and to show their worker. All relevant teams have been visited to explain content.
Virtual LAC Awards	419	The LAC awards are aimed at 16 years and under.
Recruitment Panels	23	This includes a mixture of face to face and virtual activity.
Consultations	432	Various consultations on the Pledge survey, Tier 2 mental health and CAMHs.
General mailouts	419	including information about how to access Mind of My Own

Wellbeing checks	90	Our most vulnerable young people living in secure units or residential homes, have been contacted to check on their wellbeing and identify any needs.
Social Activity	96	This includes activities held on-line during lockdown periods and some face to face activity.
Young People led groups	27	Little Voices, Voices of Care and Care leavers.

5.3 Young Inspectors

Young Inspectors is a youth led programme which provides children and young people a platform for their views and opinions of the services they access. Recommendations made, will support services in the development of their offer and help to ensure services are meeting the needs of the children and young people they work with.

How it works

- Children and young people, (from 8 years upwards), voluntarily take part in the programme.
- The children and young people involved, will either be accessing the service directly, be based within the area that the service functions or be from the services target group.
- Young Inspectors receive training, then work together to design the inspection criteria and materials, so each inspection is be-spoke to that service. Once the prep work is complete, they carry out the inspection and provide recommendations on their findings. The Young Inspectors are supported by the Participation Team throughout.
- The Young Inspectors programme is offered to all services, within Coventry City Council, that work directly with young people, the Family Hubs are the first to be inspected.
- Family Hub inspections will vary between:
 - Assessment based, (focused on grading or scoring against fixed criteria or set of standards) or
 - Development based (Focused on identifying areas for improvement and suggesting recommendations for moving forward.)
- Family Hub inspections started in August 2021, following the training of the relevant Young Inspectors.
- Findings will be presented in a child friendly report. This will be shared with both the inspected service and Children's Senior Leadership Team in the autumn term. Agreed recommendations to be taken forward in action plan and monitored over an agreed period.
- Following inspections and feedback from both the inspected service and Children's Senior Leadership Team there will be a celebration event for all involved. This will help highlight the value placed on children and young people views.

Aims of the programme:

- To provide all children and young people involved the chance to speak up and share their views about the services they access and/or are available to them.
- To increase children and young people's awareness of the services available to them.
- To raise awareness amongst staff of the value of children and young people's voices.
- To promote the importance of children's rights.
- To increase children and young people and service provider engagement.
- To improve outcomes for children and young people and the development of skills, e.g. analytical, active listening, teamwork, communication, observation and presentation skills.

From inspections services may be able to...

- Identify changes and improvements that need to be implemented as a result of the inspection.

- Have a better understanding of service user experiences from the children and young people they work with and communities they serve.
- Deliver effective outcomes for young people. Have the potential to increase the number of young people accessing the service and promote the voice of the child by listening to children and young people's views and wishes.
- Surveys have been sent out to all Family Hubs. By completing these surveys, staff are self-evaluating their strengths and areas for development. The surveys will be reviewed by the Young Inspectors to see if they agree.

5.4 Young people led groups

'Little Voices' and 'Voices of Care' make up our local Children in Care Council. A separate Care leavers group contributes to the Corporate Parenting Board and Coventry Youth Council provide a more generic voice.

Over the last year many of the sessions have had to be held virtual via MS Teams. This has proven challenging as young people have not been keen to spend all day completing schoolwork on-line and then being expected to join additional activities on-line in the evening. Colleagues from across the West Midlands have reported a similar finding. However, children and young people have still contributed to some consultations, informed the development of child friendly literature for Family Group Conferencing, Independent Reviewing Officers and the Youth Offending Service. They have also been involved in the commissioning of Tier 2 mental health, supported accommodation and CAMHs. Plus had extensive involvement in the recruitment of staff for the new Coventry Family Valued project, produced 3 videos to aid staff development and spoken to Ofsted during their focused visit in May 2021.

Below is a digital photograph of piece of work recently carried out which shares some care leavers view of their care journey. The original is 3 metres long and we hope to be able to display it for staff to access.



5.5 Moderation of case note files, focusing on the voice of the child

Over the last 12 months 61 files have been moderated with a focus on the voice of the child, following a general audit which looked at all domains including the voice of the child.

Findings	Auditor View	Voice of the child moderation
Meets good	20	6
Does not meet good	40	47
Cannot comment	0	8
Exceeds good	1	0
Total	61	61

The moderator looking at files from the perspective of the voice of the child is looking for evidence to demonstrate:

- The voice of the child/young person has been heard, recorded and appropriately acted upon.
- Children and young people's lived experiences are recorded.
- There is an understanding of CYP's wishes and feelings.
- Children and young people have been seen regularly and spoken to alone.
- Advocacy has been offered.
- Direct work is recorded and purposeful.
- There are observations where a child is too young to communicate their wishes and feelings and/or children and young people have communication difficulties/issues.
- Actions are SMART and delivered in a child friendly format.
- Positive experiences/outcomes are recorded as well as the issues.

What worked well

- There is evidence of good practice where children and young people's views are listened to and appropriately acted upon.
- Where the child is too young to communicate their wishes and feeling, some practitioners have included useful observations of the child interacting with their care givers, others and environment, which they have then reflected upon and included in their forward planning.
- Actions are clear, SMART and written in a child friendly format.
- The Signs of Safety format is being used more regularly across services. Alongside this there is evidence of child friendly safety plan on file along with evidence which suggests the child/young person understands and agrees to follow it.
- There are records of children and young people being seen alone and being offered access to advocacy.

What we are worried about

- Auditor and participation moderator, on occasion, disagree about findings. However, it is important to recognise that the auditor was grading on the case file overall and the moderator (participation view), focused solely on the voice of the child.
- There are occasions in files, where there is no clear pen picture of the child leaving the reader with a lack of understanding of the child's needs, wishes, feelings or aspirations. This finding was often compounded by sparse notes which do not explain why social care is involved.
- Examples of the specific child not being visible where the information provided combines data on all siblings and/or the focus being on another child/children. Alternatively, the child is invisible because the focus of the notes is on parents.
- Instances of the voice of the child being cut and pasted across several visits/reviews
- A lack of recorded observations of children where they are too young to voice their views.
- Case notes that refer to direct work, but not evidenced in documents.
- Signs of Safety strengths and worries documents only listing the strengths of the parents/carers.
- Where a child has shared a specific worry/issue, this is not always followed up by direct work or referenced in the plan.
- Child's lived experiences not identified, or the impact of our involvement explored.
- Child not seen and/or not seen alone for substantial periods of time.

5.6 Service user feedback forms

a. Parent/Carer quarterly Feedback:

Q1: Do you understand why Children's Services is or, was involved with you and your family?

Q2: How involved were you in decisions which affect your child?

Q3: Have/did Children's Services listen to what you have/had to say?

Q4: Have/did Children's Services do what they say/said they are/were going to do?

Q5: How much has / did working with Children's Services help you as a family?

Year	Quarter	Feedback not provided	Feedback Provided	Total
2020/21	1	n/a	99 (100%)	99
	2	56 (37%)	97 (63%)	153
	3	91 (42%)	127 (58%)	218
	4	111 (47%)	125 (53%)	236

There has been a sustained improvement in the volume of parent/carers feedback returns attempted and collected.

Commentary on city wide findings for the last Quarter:

Parent/carers satisfaction was generally positive, although a little lower than previous quarter, across the board. The table below, provides the average mark out of 10 that parent/carers gave their workers. Question 5, remains the lowest scoring question across all quarters, highlighting concerns around families' perception of the impact of interventions. Question 2 & 3 showed drops of over half a point compared to the previous quarter, highlighting a decrease in how involved and listened to parents felt they were through support.

	Average of Question 1	Average of Question 2	Average of Question 3	Average of Question 4	Average of Question 5
Qtr. 2	9.32	8.85	8.85	8.29	8.12
Qtr. 3	9.36	8.71	9.00	8.66	7.92
Qtr. 4	9.37	9.05	9.05	8.43	7.95
Qtr. 1	9.10	8.49	8.46	8.30	7.80
12-month Average	9.28	8.76	8.83	8.43	7.94

Generally high levels of satisfaction were reported over the past year, although the last quarter showed the lowest satisfaction levels over the 12 months. Question 5 (*How much has / did working with Children's Services help you as a family?*) remains the lowest scoring question throughout the year, highlighting concerns around families' perception of the impact of interventions, although there is a caveat here as some parents who have had children removed or made subject to CP plans are unlikely to feel they were 'helped'.

b. Children and young people's feedback

Children and young people's feedback has only been reported on via the quarterly report for quarters 3 and 4. Figures remain low whilst more work is done to embed this activity.

		DO YOU KNOW WHY THE WORKER IS VISITING YOU?		HAVE THE VISITS MADE A POSITIVE CHANGE?		HAS THERE BEEN ANY CHANGE SINCE YOUR WORKER STARTED VISITING YOU?		
TEAM	Number Completed	NO	YES	NO	YES	Things have got better	Things have got worse	Things have stayed the same
Early Help Central	97	18 (19%)	79 (81%)	11 (11%)	86 (89%)	68 (70%)	7 (7%)	22 (23%)
Early Help East	1	0	1 (100%)	0	1 (100%)	0	0	1 (100%)
Early Help South	21	2 (10%)	19 (90%)	2 (10%)	19 (90%)	16 (76%)	0	5 (24%)
Early Help West	6	0	6 (100%)	0	6 (100%)	5 (83%)	0	1 (17%)
Protection East	1	0	1 (100%)	1 (100%)	0	0	1 (100%)	0
Grand Total	126	20	106	14	112	89	8	29

Combined feedback from quarters 3 and 4

What worked well

- Children and young people's feedback is now monitored quarterly.
- The number of returns from Early Help Central and South is positive. Generally young people know why the worker is visiting, visits have made a positive change and 70% of respondents feel things have got better.

What we are worried about

- Not enough feedback forms are being collected from our children and young people
- Several teams did not record any responses and others very few, from children and young people. Low response rates make it difficult to determine satisfaction levels.
- The response from Area teams in the East, reports that the young person knows why the worker is visiting but feels there has not been a positive change and their situation has got worse. The Team Manager has been requested follow-up with this young person to understand their lived experience and reasons for this response.

5.7 New Belongings

Coventry is part of wave 2, of Coram Voice, New Belongings project. Care leavers were surveyed to identify where they were flourishing and where things could be improved. This helped to produce an evidence base of care leavers experience and well-being to inform service improvements.

247 Coventry care leavers completed the survey, producing a response rate of 65%. Following receipt of the findings, Children's Services staff, young people and Coram Voice, collaborated to produce an action plan. Key areas for development included housing and accommodation, emotional well-being and finance.

As a result of the survey and its findings, Coventry Children's Services have initiated the Housing Project, where care leavers are supported to develop the practical and emotional skills they need to live independently. Work is also being done with a new budgeting tool application to support care leavers. In September 2021, a review of New Belongings is planned with the aim of repeating the survey in January 2022.

5.7 Life Story work

In 2018, the Social Work Academy, supported by young people from Voices of Care, developed a good practice guide for life story work. This has been widely disseminated and used by staff.

During Covid-19 restrictions, the delivery of direct work changed. Families in transition or deemed high risk/vulnerable continued to be seen face to face. All other visits took place virtually, following completion of individual risk assessments to agree this. During virtual visits, where possible, staff incorporated interactive games, stories and pictures to ensure life story work continued. However, some of this work was put on hold, with the aim of resuming in person meetings as soon as possible. It has been acknowledged that maintaining attention with children virtually has had its challenges.

Currently, a project group has been formed to:

- a) Further develop the role of Life Story Champions
- b) Compile toolkits for staff to access-ensuring there are materials included which also support older children

The aim is to ensure that life story work is not viewed as a tick box exercise and is purposeful and undertaken throughout the child/young person's care journey.

5.8 Lifelong Links and Family Group Conferencing

Children and young people inform practice via direct liaison with coordinators and formal service user feedback. During Covid-19 restrictions, the service offered three options which were influenced and guided by young people:

- a) to hold meetings via MS Teams
- b) to pause progression until restrictions were lifted
- c) to progress, where possible via telephone and written communication

Some young people were keen to progress via virtual platforms. Others felt apprehensive, especially where a working relationship with the coordinator had not yet been established. All three options were made use of and children and young people shared they valued having the choice. Some conferences have been written up as case studies, which maintain anonymity, but reflect children and young people's experience of conferences. These are excellent learning and awareness raising tools for staff. Currently coordinators are looking to develop their child friendly information about the service and want to ensure children and young people are actively involved in that process. They are also considering the development of service user panels. One possible format is to have a panel, quarterly, made up of young people and family members, who have had a conference during that quarter, to discuss:

- a) What worked well?
- b) Areas for development/improvement?
- c) Anything missing that would have helped?
- d) Could service have been offered earlier?

5.9 Family Hubs

There are 8 Family Hubs across Coventry, they are multi-agency centres, based within neighbourhoods which offer help and support. The key aim of hubs is to provide early

interventions to prevent children, young people and families moving towards higher levels of need.

Each hub focuses on a specific geographical area, identifying need and providing a multi-agency response. Families are kept in touch via community notice boards, newsletters, local schools and Facebook. Partnership coordinators ensure information from all the hubs is shared, promoted appropriately and there is learning from good practice. In excess of 15,000 residents are regularly reached.

With regards to children and young people, the hubs are at the forefront of using the Mind of My Own app, they have provided youth sessions during holiday periods and deliver child friendly interventions. Young people's feedback informs how sessions can be further developed. To ensure hubs are offering what their local community needs, they measure customer experience, twice a year, via the Let's Talk Coventry platform. In addition, feedback forms are offered to all families following periods of intervention.

Currently all the hubs are taking part in the Young Inspector's programme. This activity will inform hubs about how they are viewed from a young person's perspective.

6. Conclusion

All this activity is monitored quarterly as part of the Participation Strategy. Monitoring enables Coventry Children's Services to articulate the status of participation activity across our services, celebrate successes and identify areas for development. Participation is recognised as 'everyone's' business with services developing mechanisms for children, young people, parents and carers to have a voice about the services they access and inform practice.

Moving forward, the expectation is that participation work will be further enhanced through the Voice and Influence strand of the Coventry Family Valued project.

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

Date: 9th December 2021

Subject: Free School Meals Holiday Activities Fund Update

1 Purpose of the Note

- 1.1 The purpose of this note is to give an update on the previous report re: free school meals (FSM) and the Holiday and Activities Fund (HAF) considering dependency and funding and the future position.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board are recommended to:
 - 1) Note the information in this report in relation to FSM support for pupils over holiday periods and the progress of the Coventry HAF programme
 - 2) Identify any areas the Board may want to consider in more detail at a future meeting
 - 3) Identify any future recommendations for the Cabinet Member (Education and Skills).

3 Background and Information

- 3.1 FSM numbers in the city have increased 11,683 (21.6% of pupil population) at the start of the pandemic to 12,683 (23.4% of pupil population) in January 21 and 13,272 (24.3% of pupil population) currently. This compares with 20.8% of pupils nationally.
- 3.2 By the end of April 2020 100% of eligible children were recorded as accessing free school meals (FSMs), and with the help of schools during the first lockdown, food vouchers/parcels for benefits eligible FSM children were delivered (including holiday periods).

4 FSM Holiday Schemes

- 4.1 The DfE scheme funding FSMs in the holidays ended in August 20 with the start of the Autumn term and expectation that all pupils were back in school. Schools still provided vouchers or food parcels for eligible pupils that could not attend (e.g. self-isolation) during term-time.
- 4.2 Pressure mounted on the government throughout Autumn 20 to continue to fund FSMs during holiday periods. The Covid winter grant scheme was announced in

November, with some clear expectation that it could be used to fund FSM in holiday periods. This meant that there was not funding available to fund FSMs during the October half term holidays. A number of Local Authorities across the country agreed to fund food parcels/vouchers for eligible families, and Coventry City Council worked with the food network to provide an offer for eligible pupils. This amounted to 300 referrals on top of the normal level of demand.

- 4.3 The Covid winter grant (WGS) and Covid local grant schemes (LGS) were in place between December 20 and September 21, and amongst a wider package of support these funded FSM vouchers / parcels for holiday periods. The grants were also used to fund FSM vouchers for eligible children in Early Years provision. The total funding received for these schemes was £3.2M of which £2.5M was used for FSM schemes.
- 4.4 On the 6th October 2021 the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) announced a new grant, the Household Support Fund (HSF) to provide support to those most in need this winter. Whilst DWP are clear this is not intended to be an extension of the previous grants it is clear from the grant guidance that it is, in effect, a continuation (and slight expansion) of what we have already been delivering.
- 4.5 Coventry has been indicatively allocated £3.2M for the HSF which runs from the 6th October to 31st March 2022 (6 months). This is the same level of funding as was provided to cover the 10 month period of the WGS and LSG. It is likely that the increase in funding is due to consideration of the recent reduction to Universal Credit and the significant price inflation currently affecting the energy market.
- 4.6 It is intended that alongside the wider offer of support this grant will continue to fund FSM voucher/parcels in holiday periods and support for eligible children in the early years over the holiday periods up until 31st March 22.
- 4.7 Currently no further funding has been announced for beyond 31st March 22. By this point eligible pupils will have received food parcels / vouchers in holiday periods for almost 2 years.

5 Holiday Activities and Food Pilot Programme

- 5.1 Alongside this the Government's Holiday Activities and Food Pilot Programme was extended nationwide. The national programme launched for Easter, Summer and Christmas 2021 for children and young people (5-16 year olds, reception to year 11 & accessing benefits-related Free School Meals)
- 5.2 Holiday clubs/experiences needed to include enriching activities, hot or cold meal, food nutrition awareness, and signposting families to support & services. This is not a like-for-like replacement of the FSM vouchers approach as the meal was linked to attendance at the activity. In addition, the allocation of £1.5m would allow us to reach approximately a quarter of eligible children (at full attendance). As the other grant schemes remained in place eligible pupils will have had access to this as well as parcels / vouchers.
- 5.3 During the school Easter Holidays, Coventry provided a remote offer since planning was in the context of uncertainty around lockdown restrictions offering up to 25% of eligible children Home Activity and Healthy Breakfast packs. The pack included ambient, healthy breakfast items providing approximately 16 meals alongside a chocolate egg and a 40 page bespoke activity pack exploring Coventry as a City, it's community and legacy.

- 5.4 Over the summer, Coventry grant funded 36 organisations to provide 58 Holiday Clubs, ensuring provision across the City proportionally reflected the spread of eligible children in different wards of the City. The clubs engaged 2009 children and young people, who booked to attend on average 50 hours each. Of these, 29% of children had an EHCP or received SEN support at school. The numbers who booked to attend represent 16% of our eligible cohort of 12,683, as indicated in the Jan 2021 school census figures used to map demand and provision and reflects the proportion of children who engaged in provision in the 2019 pilot programme.
- 5.5 As of 1st Dec, 1,255 children have booked to attend 3,406 sessions across 54 clubs and activity providers for the Christmas programme, Festive Fun 2021. Building on the success of the Easter programme, which engaged exactly 25% of the eligible cohort, we are also offering Cook at Home Packs for all families of eligible children, which include substantial food provision (each is worth approximately £40) and a recipe book with winter recipes and links to videos to demonstrate the recipes.
- 5.6 In the spending review further funding was announced for the Holiday activities and food programme over the next 3 years at £200M per annum. The national level is at roughly the same amount as the current year.
- 5.7 Promotional information for the Christmas programme Festive Fun 21 has been shared with SB2 members for further information and promotion.

6 Coventry Food Network

- 6.1 Over the last few months, the Coventry Food Network has been working to develop a city-wide Sustainable Food Strategy which focuses on the links between the long-term sustainable prevention of food poverty, the promotion of public health and the reduction of growing health inequalities. They are also currently going through the process of applying for charitable status.
- 6.2 Following a successful 2-years funding bid to Feeding Britain, Coventry Independent Advice Service is offering a wrap-around advice service, to 3 social supermarkets in the city; Foleshill Social Supermarket, Henley Green Food Hub and Canley Food Hub. An advisor will be based for 1 day per week at each social supermarket, to offer residents a range of advice and support. The aim is to help residents address and resolve underlying issues that made them vulnerable to hunger or food insecurity; to increase household income or reduce expenditure, thereby contributing to greater financial resilience; reduce their reliance on community food provision; receive support to improve their wellbeing and independence.
- 6.3 Coventry Food Network is supporting the procurement of food and delivery of the HAF 'Festive Fun 2021' Programme. A number of social supermarkets are providers for the HAF programme and are delivering activity programmes and meals to children and young people eligible for FSM. An additional number are supporting the co-ordination and distribution of the 'Cook at Home Packs'.
- 6.4 Coventry Food Network supports the delivery of the HSF by issuing food parcels to residents who have made requests for food via the CCC Community Support Team.
- 6.5 Feeding Coventry secured £10,000 to bulk order and distribute food to the social supermarkets during October 2021. This ensured that the social supermarket were able to stock-up on essential food items for their members.

- 6.6 Between 1 September 21 and 30 November 21 nearly 7,000 food parcels were distributed to members, and a further 1,500 distributed to non-members.
- 6.7 A Christmas campaign has been launched by the Community Resilience Team to raise money and secure food donations for the social supermarkets and vulnerable families in the city to address the shortage of lorry drivers and increased demand for help from the social supermarkets during the holiday period and into January 2022.

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

Date: 9th December 2021

Subject: School Readiness – impact of Covid-19

1 Purpose of the Note

- 1.1 The purpose of the note is to consider the impact Covid has had on school readiness and what services are doing to support and improve school readiness.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) are recommended to:
 - 1) Note the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic on school readiness and the continued work to support children and young people in the city
 - 2) Identify any areas the Board may want to consider in more detail

3 Background and Information

- 3.1 In England a child's progress is reviewed between the age of 2 and 3 by an early years practitioner or health visitor and again by their class teacher at the end of the school year in which they turn 5 (reception). The teacher uses their judgement to assess a child's attainment against the national checklist of 'Good Level of Development (GLD)' [Framework for the early years foundation stage](#). This is the key national indicator of whether a child is 'ready for school'. The levels attained by children at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) are categorised as: Emerging = 1, Expected = 2 and Exceeding = 3. It is important to note that this is a measure of attainment, not progress.
- 3.2 It is not possible to claim a full understanding of the impact Covid has had on school readiness. This is partly because the government temporarily disapplied and modified certain elements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework. Consequently, no profile data is available for July 2020 or 2021. In addition, children born immediately before or during the academic have not yet started school, so any impact on their expected level of development is not known.

- 3.3 It is recognised that high quality early years education combined with a supportive home learning environment are known precursors to later educational success. It is accepted that children will have had varying pre-school experience. For those attending early years settings, access may have been disrupted and it is probable that the level of uptake of early years provision has been detrimentally impacted by a Covid concerns and parental demand because more parents have been at home.

4 Local Position

- 4.1 Prior to the Covid 19 pandemic, school readiness was an area of focus in Coventry. The data taken from 2019 indicated that overall, 69% of Coventry children were 'school ready' compared to a national average of 71%. However, the breakdown for children identified as disadvantaged fell to 55% compared to a national average of 56.6%.
- 4.2 A study by five universities, including Oxford University, investigating the impact of Covid-19 on family life and early childhood development during the first lock down in 2020 found:
- Whilst 90% of families reported an increase in enriching activities during lockdown, these increases were not spread equally across families
 - During lockdown disadvantaged parents were less likely to engage in enriching activities e.g. reading, playing, singing, one-to-one conversations, cooking, arts and crafts, exercise, and gardening.
 - Disadvantaged families spent less time doing activities that require outdoor space and access to books
 - 75% of parents reported that during lockdown their children spent more time than usual watching TV or playing with a tablet, but children from disadvantaged backgrounds were more likely to have high daily screen use.
- 4.3 In addition, a recent Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) funded study, survey worked with teachers in schools where children started reception in September 2020.
- 76% said that children starting school needed more support with communication than in previous years.
 - Teachers pinpointed the three areas of development that children were struggling with:
 - 96% of schools said they were concerned about pupils' speech and language development
 - 91% of schools said they were concerned about pupils' personal, social and emotional development
 - 89% of schools said they were concerned about pupils' literacy skills
- 4.4 Nationally, we know that the key factors that have influenced these findings are:
- Temporary and permanent closures, including significantly reduced demand for early years places during lockdown 1 and beyond

- Attributed impact on social, emotional and behavioural development and mental health, physical development and school readiness
- Potential worsened negative impact for disadvantaged and SEN children

5 Local Provider Feedback

5.1 Feedback from Coventry Schools and Early Years Providers in Coventry supports these findings. This is included below:

Concerns - children entering the EYFS exhibit poorer social skills:

- They are often more comfortable in learning on their own or with a very small number of other children.
- Unable to share
- Some children are overwhelmed by a busy classroom, preferring quieter, more solitary activities
- More children seeking adult attention and some evidence of building unhealthy attachments with adults
- Language delay and confidence in communication
- Children enjoying sharing books with adults
- Gross and fine motor skills are less well developed, and balance and co-ordination are below levels expected
- Overall tiredness within the day and across the week – whilst this has always been a factor it is now more pronounced
- Unable to sustain concentration
- Significantly higher number of children presenting with special educational needs (SEND)
- (Nursery) – more children not yet toileting independently and reliant on ‘pull-ups’ than ordinarily expected

5.2 On a more positive note some schools have also reported that children have settled well into daily routines and are starting to make gains in their learning through good progress.

5.3 There are not funded place uptake figures for Summer 20, but in Autumn 20 our uptake of 2 year old funded places was 61% compared to 76% in Autumn 19. Our uptake of 3 and 4 year old funded places was 90% in Autumn 20 compared to 92% in Autumn 19. Throughout the pandemic we have ensured that there are a sufficient number of high quality childcare places for keyworker and vulnerable children, including using reserves to support holiday periods and provide better funding certainty for providers.

5.4 The quality profile of our early years providers across the city remains high. The percentage of childcare providers on non-domestic premises achieving good or better Ofsted outcomes remains at 99% even though the overall number of providers in this has category decreased. Childcare on domestic premises remains

at 97% of providers achieving good or better. Also, 91 % of schools with a Nursery class achieved good or better outcomes at inspection, 7% requires improvement and 2% were found to be inadequate.

- 5.5 Early years health and education services, continued to be vigilant in identifying children who required high levels of support, to successfully transition to school in September 2021. Consequently, a higher number of children than ever before began school with an Education Health and Care Plan in place. However, referrals to the SEND early years services continued to place unprecedented demands on service capacity both within the portage service (this service works with children and families within their home) and specialist teachers, who work with children in a setting. To a level, this growth in demand was pre-empted by an extension of the service offer. Additional capacity was created to enable practitioners to work directly in schools, supporting children who had not been previously identified because they had not attended an early years setting or been referred by a health practitioner. Anticipated demand growth for specialist school places was also pre-empted by the commissioning and reservation of an additional 10 reception places in special schools. These placements have subsequently been filled.
- 5.6 It is evident that transition because of the necessity to limit access to mainstream school environments, children have not been able to experience the breadth of transition support. Therefore, some children with SEN have started school without the pre-understanding of school routines and expectations. Consequently, early play skills are under-developed, and some children are exhibiting challenging behaviours because of the challenges formal education presents in terms of new routines and rules, socialisation skills and separation anxiety. The ongoing number of children identified as requiring support for presenting SEN. is continuing to increase month by month across both early years and schools' settings, saturating the capacity of support services.

6 The Coventry Offer - Support Available to improve school readiness

- 6.1 It is clear that nationally there has been a negative impact on early learning. Although there are emerging studies, the full extent of this is not understood. We remain committed to ensuring that practitioners are well equipped to support children's' learning. The early years team have continued to provide advice, information and training throughout the pandemic via a variety of media, including the production of a COVID Operational toolkit to ensure providers have continued to meet legislation and EYFS requirements. Face to face visits have now resumed to further support the providers where appropriate.
- 6.2 Over the last year we have implemented the Early Years Team restructure, which was to increase the emphasis and level of focus on quality in the sector. We now have a full time permanent post leading on quality and we are working with EYFS leads across networks and providing support to embed work the EYFS reforms. There was a training offer in the summer term for Headteachers, Early Years Leads and Governors on the reforms and take up was high.
- 6.3 We have recently launched an Integrated Early Years Strategy, which also includes collaborative work related to closing attainment gaps, increasing uptake of early years provision, providing resources to support families and offering wider opportunities for training and development. This is focused on the wider role of partners and practitioners in the Early Years sector including health and early help.

- 6.4 In February 2021, the Government announced £10 million for a pre-reception programme to provide high quality training to early years staff in order to support children who were at risk of falling behind at a critical stage of their development due to the COVID-19 pandemic 'Building on Success programme'. Coventry have been invited to join this programme and have nominated early years providers who meet the criteria below:
- Highest numbers of funded two-year olds
 - Highest numbers of children with SEND (EHCP/Inclusion Grant)
 - Highest numbers of children in receipt of Early Years Pupil Premium
- 6.5 We are also offering a targeted training program for leaders, managers and practitioners, with several courses offered free of charge, to encourage engagement by practitioners and ultimately improve outcomes for children
- 6.6 Our Autumn 21 data shows that 2 year old take up of funded places is back in line with Autumn 18 and 19, and for 3 and 4 year olds take up of funded places is back up to Autumn 2019 levels. This shows strong recovery for Coventry, which we suspect outstrips the national average although we do not yet have the figures to confirm the position. We continue to use local criteria for 2 year old places to ensure access to a wider cohort of disadvantaged children.
- 6.7 Schools have received recovery funding to support pupils through a recovery premium, national tutoring programme and school-led tutoring grant. The Education Partnership has jointly identified key priorities for Coventry for the current academic year, which are:
- Ensure that early years practitioners working with children and professionals supporting families are resilient well trained, knowledgeable and confident to deliver high quality services
 - Be ambitious for children and young people with SEND and effective in the provision that we make for them so that their educational outcomes improve across all key stages, including in the early years
- 6.8 All networks will be considering how they use joint funding to pursue priorities within their network.

Reference

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/974907/EYFS_framework_-_March_2021.pdf

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Agenda Item 7

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

24th June 2021
Children and Young People's Plan i) Overview of services ii) Covid-19 context iii) Holiday Activity Fund including provision of Free School Meals
16th September 2021
Ofsted Outcomes and Action Plan Briefing on support for self-isolating families
21st October 2021
Children's Services Horizon Team (Child Exploitation Team) Children withdrawn from school to be home educated
9th December 2021
Voice of the Child - use of technology to engage specific groups of children and young people School holiday FSM and activity provision update School Readiness
27th January 2022
Covid-19 recovery update
17th March 2022
-
Items for 2021-22
Library provision Children Missing Education One Strategic Plan Adoption Service Annual Report Family Health and Lifestyles Service update Children's Services Strategic Plan and Journey to Excellence Family Valued Programme Youth Provision in Coventry Safeguarding Children's Partnership Annual Report SEND, employment and post-16 opportunities
2022-23
School Performance Information – validated data

Date	Title	Detail	Cabinet Member/ Lead Officer
24th June 2021	Children and Young People's Plan i) Overview of services ii) Covid-19 context 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 Cllr Sandhu/ Cllr Seaman
16th September 2021	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 Cllr Seaman
	Briefing on support for self-isolating families	Information for Members on support to families.	
21st October 2021	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 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 Cllr Sandhu
9th December 2021	Voice of the Child - use of technology to engage specific groups of children and young people	A report to focus on using apps for young people - item on voice of the child - a positive story. Voices of children with additional needs SEND aspect as well.	John Gregg/ Jeannette Essex Cllr Seaman
	School holiday FSM and activity provision update	Education & Skills to cover feedback from summer holiday activity fund as well as plans for Christmas holiday FSM provision.	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 Kirston Nelson/Cllr Sandhu

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

Date	Title	Detail	Cabinet Member/ Lead Officer
27th January 2022	Covid-19 recovery update		
17th 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 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 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 Amanda King Charlotte Finlayson - SWFT
	Children's Services Strategic Plan and Journey to Excellence	At their meeting on 28 th 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 th March 2021 the Board agreed that this report would replace the regular progress reports from the Improvement Board	John Gregg Cllr Seaman

Date	Title	Detail	Cabinet Member/ Lead Officer
	Family Valued Programme	To consider progress and impact on families of the programme	John Gregg Cllr Seaman
	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	
2022-23	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