

Tackling the long-term impacts of Covid-19 on children and families – Draft Inquiry Report

Date: 8th September 2021

Report of: Head of Democratic Services

Report to: Scrutiny Board (Children and Families)

Will the decision be open for call in? ☐ Yes ☒ No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? ☐ Yes ☒ No

What is this report about?

Including how it contributes to the city's and council's ambitions

- The former Children and Families Scrutiny Board had used its final meeting in March 2021 to begin exploring what the potential long-term impacts of Covid-19 are likely to be on children and their families and what further actions the council can actively take, along with key partners, to begin mitigating these impacts.
- It was proposed that a report summarising the Board's views and proposed recommendations arising from its March discussion, but also reflecting any developments and issues raised since March, be considered and formally approved by the Board in July 2021. However, as the Board's meeting in July was held as a remote consultative meeting, Members were unable to formally approve its draft report, but were still invited to share any initial views on draft inquiry report prior to it coming back to the next formal public meeting for approval.
- The Board's draft inquiry report is attached as Appendix 1 for Members' consideration and formal approval during today's meeting.

Recommendations

Members are asked to consider and agree the Board's report following its recent inquiry into tackling the long-term impacts of Covid-19 on children and families.

Why is the proposal being put forward?

1. During the Scrutiny Board's consultative meeting on 9th June 2021, it was noted that as well as monitoring and helping to inform some of the immediate responses needed during the Covid-19 pandemic, the former Children and Families Scrutiny Board had used its final meeting in March 2021 to begin exploring what the potential long-term impacts of Covid-19 are likely to be on children and their families and what further actions the council can actively take, along with key partners, to begin mitigating these impacts.
2. In anticipation of the Scrutiny Board conducting its July meeting as a formal public meeting in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972, it was proposed that a report summarising the Board's views and potential recommendations arising from its March discussion, but also reflecting any developments and issues raised since March, be considered and formally approved by the Board in July.
3. However, following confirmation by Government of the extension of national Covid-19 restrictions until at least 19th July 2021, a joint agreement was reached by all Scrutiny Board Chairs to conduct the planned Scrutiny Board meetings in July as remote consultative meetings.
4. While this meant that the Board's draft inquiry report could not be formally approved during its July meeting, Board Members were given the opportunity at that stage to discuss and share any initial views on the draft report prior to it coming back to the next formal public meeting of the Board for approval.
5. The Scrutiny Board's draft inquiry report is now attached as Appendix 1 for Members' consideration and formal approval.
6. Once approved, the appropriate Director(s) will be asked to formally respond to the Scrutiny Board's recommendations.

What impact will this proposal have?

Wards affected: All

Have ward members been consulted?

☐ Yes

☐ No

7. The Board's draft inquiry report summarises the key findings of the Scrutiny Board around specific issues that had been raised primarily during its discussion in March, such as the psychological impacts on children and young people; the impact and recovery needs surrounding lost learning, including the need to deliver a quality remote learning offer in the future; and the impact on early years.
8. During the Board's July meeting, the Chair reminded Members that the work undertaken by the Board was primarily aimed at identifying key priority areas for the Board to maintain a watching brief or to potentially undertake further detailed work in the future. Linked to this, it was noted that the Scrutiny Board had identified a number of areas where scrutiny has already played a key role and can continue to add value as part of its future work programme. This includes maintaining a key focus on recovery actions linked to education settings; tracking the implementation of the new Future In Mind Strategy; maintaining a focus on delivering the Leeds Child Poverty Strategy; and maintaining its commitment to

resume its ongoing inquiry work in tackling school exclusions, elective home education and off-rolling.

9. However, the Scrutiny Board also made a number of recommendations for the Director of Children and Families to take a lead in implementing, which are set out within the draft inquiry report.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

10. The Board's draft inquiry report details those individuals that had contributed to the Board's inquiry work.
11. The Scrutiny Board Procedure Rules state that "where a Scrutiny Board is considering making specific recommendations it shall invite advice from the appropriate Director(s) prior to finalising its recommendations. The Director shall consult with the appropriate Executive Member before providing any such advice. The detail of that advice shall be reported to the Scrutiny Board and considered before the report is finalised".
12. During the Board's July meeting, the relevant Director and Executive Board Members were also invited to share any initial views on the draft inquiry report prior to it being formally approved by the Board.

What are the resource implications?

13. There are no resource implications relevant to this report.

What are the legal implications?

14. This report has no specific legal implications.

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

15. There are no risk management implications relevant to this report.

Does this proposal support the council's three Key Pillars?

☐ Inclusive Growth ☒ Health and Wellbeing ☐ Climate Emergency

16. The Scrutiny Board's inquiry supports the Best Council Priorities in terms of supporting families to give children the best start in life and improving social, emotional and mental health and wellbeing.

Appendices

17. Appendix 1 – Tackling the long-term impacts of Covid-19 on children and families – Draft Inquiry Report.

Background papers

18. None.