

# **Title of report: Children and Young People Mental Health – impact of the pandemic on the mental health and well-being of pupils in schools**

**Meeting: Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee**

**Meeting date: Tuesday 22 March 2022**

**Report by: Service Director - Education, Skills and Learning**

## **Classification**

Open

## **Decision type**

This is not an executive decision

## **Wards affected**

(All Wards);

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this paper is to report to members the impact of the pandemic on the mental health and well-being of children in our education system – including both the statutory aspects (i.e., schools and colleges) and non-statutory (i.e. pre-school) settings.).

## **Recommendation(s)**

**That:**

- a) The committee considers the report at Appendix 1 and determines any recommendations it wishes to make.**

## **Alternative options**

1. The committee could choose not to review the information provided in this report however the functions of the committee includes: statutory education scrutiny powers; and statutory health scrutiny powers including the review and scrutiny of any matter relating to the planning provision and operation of health services for children and young people, including transitional health care services, affecting the area and to make reports and recommendations on these matters. In considering the information in this report the committee is considering an item in accordance with the agreed work programme of the committee.

## **Key considerations**

2. The mental health of our children has been affected as a result of the pandemic's impact on education. The report attached in appendix 1 provides the context, background and data concerning the issue locally.

## **Community impact**

3. In accordance with the adopted code of corporate governance, Herefordshire Council achieves its intended outcomes by providing a mixture of legal, regulatory and practical interventions. Determining the right mix of these is an important strategic choice to make sure outcomes are achieved. The council needs robust decision-making mechanisms to ensure its outcomes can be achieved in a way that provides the best use of resources whilst still enabling efficient and effective operations and recognises that a culture and structure for scrutiny are key elements for accountable decision making, policy development and review.

## **Environmental Impact**

4. There are no general implications for the environment arising from this report.

## **Equality duty**

5. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to –

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
  - b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
  - c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
6. The ability to access a secure educational provision is an equalities issue. Pupils with additional needs have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic in the ways outlined in summary above. Similarly, despite the fulsome efforts of the council in providing additional support for disadvantaged pupils, we know that disadvantage is a key indicator of disengagement with education.
  7. We did not see the same spike in moving to Elective Home Education (EHE) that was seen in other Local Authority areas – but we did see an increase. There are national moves to monitor this, and we have seen evidence of some pupils enjoying NOT attending schools and engaging well on line – and as a consequence some EHE pupils returned to schools as the pandemic impact receded. We will produce a report showing the exact figures in due course (the half term from January to late February 2022 was too disrupted for COVID related reasons to make reliable conclusions hard to find) – attendance (or a reluctance to attend) is an issue that was of some concern in Herefordshire prior to the pandemic (we had high authorised absence

rates) - but initial data both locally and nationally suggests that since the pandemic this has become a bigger issue. One consequence of this has been some of these pupils moving into EHE: In 2020-21 56 children who became EHE cited Covid as the reason for this. It must be noted that some of these children have now returned to school.

### Resource implications

8. There are no resource implications associated with the recommendation. The resource implications of any recommendations made by the committee will need to be considered by the responsible health partner or the executive in response to those recommendations or subsequent decisions. The report attached at appendix 1 contains detail of the resource implications of current projects.

### Legal implications

9. The functions of the Children and Young People Scrutiny committee are set out in paragraph 3.4.5 of the constitution. The functions of the committee includes; statutory education scrutiny powers; and statutory health scrutiny powers including the review and scrutiny of any matter relating to the planning provision and operation of health services for children and young people, including transitional health care services, affecting the area and to make reports and recommendations on these matters.

### Risk management

9. There are no risks identified in relation to the recommendation in this report.

### Consultees

None

### Appendices

Appendix 1 – impact of the pandemic on the mental health and well-being of pupils in schools

### Background papers

None identified.

Report Reviewers Used for appraising this report:

Please note this section must be completed before the report can be published		
Governance	Matthew Evans	Date 10/03/2022
Finance	Louise Devlin	Date 11/03/2022
Legal	Click or tap here to enter text.	Date Click or tap to enter a date.
Communications	Luenne featherstone	Date 14/03/2022
Equality Duty	Carol Trachonitis	Date 10/03/2022

Procurement	Mark Cage	Date 11/03/2022
Risk	Chris Jones	Date 14/03/2022

Approved by	Click or tap here to enter text.	Date Click or tap to enter a date.
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[Note: Please remember to overwrite or delete the guidance highlighted in grey]

**Please include a glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.**