

Cabinet

Report Title	Children and Families Strategic Partnership - Approval of Children and Families Strategy 2025-28
Date of Meeting	Wednesday, 30 July 2025
Report Author	Samantha Harman, Connor Robinson
Lead Officer	Executive Director Children and Education Services
Lead Cabinet Member(s)	Cabinet Member for Children & Families
Why is this a key decision?	To be significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards of the Borough.
Wards Affected	(All Wards);
Identify exempt information and exemption category	Open
Is the report urgent?	No
Reasons for urgency (only where applicable)	Not applicable.
Appendices (if any)	1. Children and Families Strategic Partnership – Children and Families Strategy 2025-28

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 To consider and approve the Children and Families Strategic Partnership - Children and Families Strategy for 2025-28.

2. Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to: -

- 2.1 Approve the Children and Families Strategic Partnership Board's – Children and Families Strategy 2025-28.

3. Proposals – Reasons for the recommendations

- 3.1 Sandwell's Children and Families Strategy is an overarching strategy and the mechanism for delivering the Council's commitment to improving outcomes for children and young people. It is informed by current legislation and statutory guidance and reflects the forthcoming national reform agendas across education, children's social care and health.
- 3.2 The strategy responds to the current challenges that children and young people face in the borough and sets out our key ambitions and priorities to address these challenges in a collaborative way.
- 3.3 The strategy outlines our commitment to ensuring all children and young people in Sandwell have the opportunity to thrive. Developed in collaboration with key partners and informed by children, young people, families and communities it sets out our shared vision for a future where every child is safe, as healthy as possible, happy, and achieves their full potential.
- 3.4 The strategy recognises our commitment as a UNICEF UK Child Friendly Candidate Community, aiming to respect and promote children's rights according to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- 3.5 The four priority areas highlighted in our strategy include:
 - Family Help
 - Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
 - Early Years
 - Children's Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing

And these are underpinned by four distinct yet aligned delivery plans that will deliver on our intentions.

- 3.5 The strategy includes a shared outcomes framework working with the Children and Families Strategic Partnership and Sandwell Children's Safeguarding Partnership, designed to align agencies and stakeholders towards an agreed set of common goals.

4 Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 There are no alternative options, the strategy has been carefully considered with no other feasible alternative options.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 Consultation has been carried out with stakeholders and partners including Sandwell Children's Trust, Sandwell Council for Voluntary Organisations, Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council, Black Country Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust, Black Country Integrated Care Board, and West Midlands Police who all have a shared commitment to improving outcomes for children and young people through a whole system approach.

- 5.2 Officers from across the Council and the wider Partnership have been engaged in the shaping of the strategy, assuring alignment to the council plan and related plans and strategies.
- 5.3 The strategy is developed in collaboration with key partners and informed by children, young people, families and communities
- 5.4 The strategy is underpinned by a shared approach to working with families within a trauma-informed way through our ST*R practice model.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 Delivery on the strategy is through a shared partnership approach.
- 6.2 Facilitation, co-ordination and monitoring of the strategy and associated action plans will be managed by the council.

7. Legal and Governance Implications

- 7.1 The strategy, commitments and working arrangements within contribute towards ensuring compliance with the Council's obligations under the 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023' statutory guidance issued by the Department for Education (DfE) in 2023.
- 7.2 This statutory guidance regarding Family Help strengthens the role of education and childcare settings in supporting children, keeping them safe. With the stronger emphasis on working with families and the role of family network meetings to improve family network engagement in decision making and supporting family, this too has been embedded in the Strategy set out above, along with how multi agency professionals can work with families.
- 7.3 As the strategy includes delivery on statutory responsibilities as a core function of the council, given its scope it requires Cabinet approval for political oversight and ownership.
- 7.4 The rationale being
 - a) those responsibilities reserved to SMBC and
 - b) identification of those responsibilities being discharged by partners.Clarity on that split is important to be visible and accountable – a cabinet decision will achieve that.
- 7.5 The Children and Families Strategic Partnership chaired by the Executive Director of Children and Education Services and the Chief Superintendent and Local Policing Commander for Sandwell with representation from key stakeholders and partners will oversee governance and reporting responsibilities for this strategy.

8. Risks

- 8.1 A risk assessment is being carried out to assess the risks associated to delivery. Any risks identified will be addressed with a series of actions to mitigate the risk.
- 8.2 Risk assessments are also included in the individual delivery plans and monitored at a local board level.

- 8.3 At present two risks have been identified as significant and are in respect of:
- Delivery partners having the resources to deliver on the priorities and outcomes of the strategy.
 - The strategy not improving outcomes for children, young people and families

Measures will be put in place to manage these risks to an acceptable level.

9. Equality and Diversity Implications (including the public sector equality duty)

- 9.1 An equality impact assessment (EIA) screening is underway.

10. Other Relevant Implications

- 10.1 **Corporate parenting** – The strategy is aligned to our Corporate Parenting Strategy and supports the objectives and priorities for improving outcomes for children and young people we care for, and our care experienced young people.
- 10.2 **Health and Wellbeing** – The strategy incorporates the Healthy Child Programme which includes health promotion, early childhood development, and addressing health disparities among children and young people living in the borough.
- 10.3 **Crime and Disorder Act 1998** - Our strategy recognises that children and young people are central to many strategies, not those focused solely on them; they're a key part of both Council and partnership initiatives. The Children and Families Strategic Partnership will need to take account of the emerging strategies that contribute to improving outcomes including the Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy, the Community Safety Strategy and the Knife Crime and Serious Violence strategies.

11. Background Documents

- 11.1 None

12. How does this deliver the objectives of the Strategic Themes?

This report will support the delivery of the following Strategic Themes: -

- Growing up in Sandwell
- Living in Sandwell
- Healthy in Sandwell
- Thriving Economy in Sandwell
- One Council One Team Approach.

- 12.1 Growing up in Sandwell - The strategy supports a partnership approach seeking to improve outcomes for all children and young people.

- 12.2 Living in Sandwell - The strategy supports our commitment to addressing barriers to access and striving to create an accessible community offer for all families.
- 12.3 Healthy in Sandwell - The strategy supports our commitment to improving health outcomes for our most vulnerable groups.
- 12.4 One Council one Team Approach - The strategy supports our commitment as an outstanding corporate parent and our aspirations to become a UNICEF UK Child Friendly Community

Relevance Check

Budget Reduction/Service Area:

Service Lead

Date:

In what ways does this Budget reduction have an impact on an outward facing service? How will the service feel different to your customers or potential customers?

N/A

If not, how does it impact on staff e.g. redundancies, pay grades, working conditions? Why are you confident that these staff changes will not affect the service that you provide?

N/A

Is a Customer Impact Assessment needed? No