

Education and Local Economy Scrutiny Commission

Preliminary draft recommendations – Children’s Experience and Education through Covid

Mental health

- The Commission supports the Council’s efforts to better support the mental health of children and young people as outlined in submissions to the Commission and the announcements in February’s Council Assembly. The Commission recommends that the Council looks at additional steps to address the expected mental health crisis amongst children and young people, in particular whether the Council can support:
 - the rollout of outreach support from the Nest to primary schools as well as secondary schools
 - Additional support for peer-led mental health approaches (e.g. peer counselling and mental health first aid training) in schools
 - Teachers who seek mental health support, and aid efforts to ensure that teachers do not have any mental health support sought via the school or otherwise flagged on their records

Wellbeing

- The Commission recommends that the Council supports efforts to:
 - Ensure young people get early and sufficient access to public spaces as they reopen, particularly libraries
 - Agree access to green space in public schools for Soutwark’s children
 - Provide additional opportunities for extra-curricular activities for children who have missed out on these over the various lockdowns.

Catch-up

- The Commission recommends that the Council advocates for schools to take an evidence-informed approach to any catch-up activity and ensures young people’s voices are heard in approaches taken. In particular the Commission recommends the Council seeks to understand children’s concerns that intense catch-up activity over the summer could put further strain on students and should not be done at the expense of extracurricular activity and broader attention to children’s mental health and wellbeing.

- The Commission recommends that the Council provide more transparent structures and outputs from its task and finish group focused on narrowing the attainment gap and sharing what works in this area

Technology and devices

The Commission supports the Council's continued efforts to source devices and to support families in securing internet access. The Commission requests an update on the provision of online learning across the borough's primary schools during the lockdowns of 2020 and 2021 with attention paid to the variation of provision. The Commission recommends that the Council looks at how it could support schools, especially smaller ones, to ensure that all pupils are able to access a high quality online learning provision in the event that further lockdowns are required.