

Scrutiny Review - Planning & Scoping Document

<p>What is the Purpose of the Review?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specify exactly which Outcome(s) the review is examining? • Also being clear what the review is <u>not</u> looking at? • What is the Scrutiny Review seeking to achieve? • Where possible refer to VFM issues of service cost, service performance and/or customer satisfaction. 	<p><i>The council acts as corporate parents to those children who are looked after (LAC) through a variety of arrangements. Specifically this review is looking at those children and young people who are in residential placements and in-house and independent foster placements. This statutory responsibility covers Children’s protection from harm, their wellbeing and achievement</i></p> <p><i>The corporate plan states children and vulnerable adults are safe wherever they are and those who are the care of the county council are there for protection from harm from others and themselves, neglect or because of their disability. These are our most vulnerable children.</i></p> <p><i>The review will focus on outcomes for looked after children who have a foster or residential placement. It will also focus on the costs of care in order to scrutinise where budget pressures are that are affecting the councils financial position.</i></p>
<p>What are the Criteria for Selection?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why has this particular topic been considered to be a priority issue for scrutiny? • Which of the principle criteria promoted by the Centre for Public Scrutiny does it satisfy? 	<p><i>This topic has been selected as it involves our most vulnerable children and young people which account for a considerable cost pressure in the children services budget. The review needs to understand the reasons why budget issues remain, even when overall the numbers of looked after children are falling. The review will also need to consider the impact of unaccompanied asylum seeking children on the overall resources available. Included in the review will be the cost over and above that of the placement such as social work time and additional services such as the virtual school.</i></p> <p><i>This topic is of strategic importance to the council both in financial and reputational terms. The work that we do with and for children and young people has a significant impact on their outcomes. As such it is a suitable topic for review. The other scrutiny committees will have an interest in this review and should be seen as participants in the review process. The review, when focused as acting as a critical friend on the work and processes around the issues that impact on the council’s role as corporate parents will add value.</i></p>

What are the Indicators of Success?

- *What factors / outcomes will demonstrate that this Scrutiny Review has been a success?*

The process of the review will provide the committee with information about current pressures and practice in relation to LAC. As a council and like many in the country the issue of demand for statutory children services is rising as is the complexity of those children who come to our attention.

We will look to bring an evidence summary of what good looks like in relation to LAC. This will allow elected members to measure how well we are performing against the new corporate parenting principles as laid out in recent legislation. These are:

- *To act in the best interests, promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people*
- *To encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings*
- *To take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people*
- *To help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners*
- *To promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people*
- *For those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work*
- *To prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent*

Success factors will include the confidence that the review will have that the above principles are being met through our work with and for LAC. This process will also enable the committee to examine the reasons for and profile of our LAC population. The Association of Children services have undertaken research into the national picture of looked after children and the following is an expert from that report.

'Neglect remains the biggest category of abuse (52.9%) of all children starting to be looked after. The recent large increase in the proportion of children starting to be looked after in the category Absent Parenting, to 12.6%, largely relates to the increase in numbers of unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC). This is also reflected in the changing age profile of children starting to be looked after, and whilst 28.8% of all children becoming looked after are 10-15 years old, the proportion is diminishing and there is an increase in the older age groups'.

The support of the committee in providing feedback to the service areas involved- as to their present work to reduce the need for care and bring children and young people where appropriate out of care



<p>What Methodology / Approach is to be followed?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What types of enquiry will be used to gather evidence?</i> • <i>Following a structured and proportionate review process, which is likely to involve the active consideration of evidence, direct representation(s), a review of financial, performance and risk data to arrive at an objective opinion against some Key Lines of Enquiry.</i> 	<p><i>The proposed methodology would through an enquiry day.</i></p> <p><i>The day would include the current numbers, profile and cost of Dorset's LAC population. This will be compared to national and statistical neighbour reported numbers to enable some benchmarking to take place. This will include trends and baselines to identify the causes and forces that are at play.</i></p> <p><i>A presentation of what good looks like in terms of the evidence base will be undertaken and insight can be provided into how well Dorset meets these evidential criteria.</i></p> <p><i>In order to gather additional insight a journey of a life through the care system will be provided. This will include presentation by social workers with additional input into the services that wrap around LAC such as the virtual school and Child and Adolescent Mental Health.</i></p> <p><i>We would also like to provide real world experience by inviting a care leaver to describe their experience of care from their perspective.</i></p> <p><i>By triangulating a range of evidence, such as the above, the committee will be able to shape a range of challenge questions for the team supporting the enquiry day. This can test our arrangements both from comparison with other areas, what good looks like, the interventions that lead to care proceedings and the experience of a care leavers.</i></p> <p><i>Finally the day will provide an assessment of the way in which the elected members and staff are complying with the corporate parenting principles detailed above.</i></p>
<p>What specific resources & budget requirements are there?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What support is required for the review exercise?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>specialist staff</i> – <i>any external support</i> – <i>site visits</i> – <i>consultation</i> – <i>research</i> 	<p><i>Specialist internal and external staff will be required for this review, particularly for the insight aspect of a journey through care.</i></p> <p><i>We will require support to plan and implement the day some coming from Children Services and some from Democratic Services.</i></p> <p><i>We may have to offer expenses for care leavers to attend.</i></p>
<p>Are any Corporate Risks associated with this Review?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Identify any weaknesses and barriers to success</i> 	<p><i>There are corporate risk associated with finance and reputation around our looked after children population. This work can only reinforce the importance that members place on our corporate parenting duties</i></p>

Who will receive the review conclusions and any resultant recommendations?	<i>All committees and cabinet. The information will be shared with staff and partners</i>
What is the Review Timescale? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Identify key meeting dates and any deadlines for reports or decisions.</i> 	<i>It is proposed that enquiry day is held in the autumn to allow for sufficient planning with a target of November.</i>
Who will lead the Review Exercise? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Identify a nominated:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Elected Member</i> - <i>Lead Officer</i> 	<i>Elected member to be identified. Lead Officers will be Vanessa Glenn and Patrick Myers</i>
Media Interest / Publicity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Communications Plan</i> • <i>Do we need to publicise the review to encourage community involvement?</i> • <i>What sort of media coverage do we want? (e.g. Fliers, leaflets, radio broadcast, press release, etc.)</i> 	<i>The review will of course be of interest to a wide audience particularly since recent reporting has highlighted some issues and risks associated with LAC.</i> <i>Elected Member to be identified and lead officer will be Vanessa Glenn.</i> <i>Michael Carhart-Harris communications contact.</i>
Completed by: Date:	<i>Patrick Myers- Assistant Director Children's Services. 15th August 2017</i>
Approved by Scrutiny Committee Date:	