

# Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee



## Annual Report 2017-18

***Everyone should feel safe, wherever they are.***

***But... sadly, we have seen a significant increase in the number of children and vulnerable adults needing protection. There are areas of Dorset with higher levels of crime, substance misuse and domestic abuse. We know that by working with vulnerable families early on we can often help them be stronger and more stable, and to stay together.***

***There are also far too many accidents on our roads. While many of the factors that influence road accidents are outside of our control, we know that by doing things like road safety education, fixing road defects and gritting roads during icy conditions quickly, efficiently and well, we can help make Dorset's roads safer.***

***The safety of all of our residents, and particularly the most isolated and vulnerable, is sometimes seriously affected by extreme weather events such as flooding. As well as providing an emergency response to such events, we will continue to work alongside our communities to plan ahead and minimise the disruption to people's lives when such things inevitably do happen.***

**Dorset County Council Corporate Plan 2017-19**

**Working Together  
for a Strong and Successful Dorset**



**Dorset County Council**

## Foreword

**During the second year of its life** the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee has scrutinised topics in all its diverse areas of responsibility. To mention just a few of the topics examined in this Annual Report:

The Committee has looked at the work being done to prevent children going into care, to keep those who are in care within Dorset if at all possible, and to ensure they engage with education, either at school or at home.

The Annual Youth Justice Plan, which aims to reduce offending by young people, comes before us twice a year, once to accept the initial plan and once to review its operation.

The Committee also responded to the concerns of parents of children with Special Educational Needs that their children had not received timely Education Health and Care Plans when these were introduced, and steps have been taken to rectify this with a regular group of professionals meeting to monitor the process, and especially to improve communication with parents and carers.

Through its Scrutiny Day on Domestic Abuse, the Committee recognised the need for the “Whole Family” approach when working with victims and abusers and this applied equally with elderly people and men being abused as with the classic image of victims being young women.

The Committee supported the Dorset Citizen’s Advice Bureau in raising with central government their concerns at the poor administration of Personal Independence Payments, an issue which we continue to monitor and will respond again to.

A piece of work is continuing to try to understand, and ameliorate, the numbers of deaths on our Dorset roads. In addition a report on Emergency Planning has led to closer links between Councillors and the Emergency Planning Team in the hope of improving the local response to crises when they occur.

In summary the Committee has a wide-ranging brief which it has attempted to address fairly over the year. It has been a privilege to Chair the Committee and my thanks go to the Officers and to fellow Committee Members who have striven to ensure that the safety of the people of Dorset is at the forefront of the County Council’s work.



**Pauline Batstone**

Chairman, Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee

## Committee Membership 2017-18

**Pauline Batstone (Chairman)**

Katharine Garcia

Derek Beer

Kevin Brookes

Toni Coombs

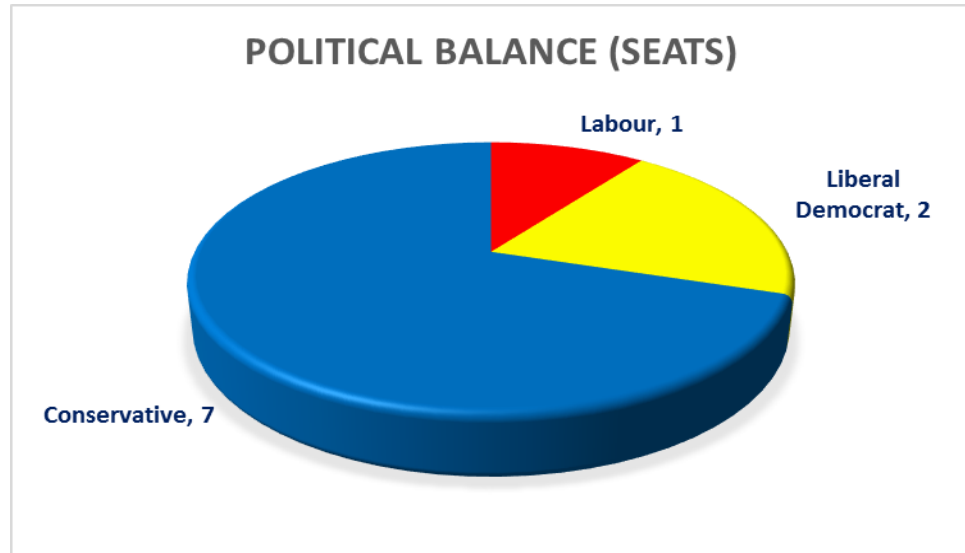
Lesley Dedman

Beryl Ezzard

Steven Lugg

Bill Pipe

Kate Wheller



## Background: Outcomes Focused Scrutiny

Dorset County Council's Corporate Plan is based on the outcomes that we are seeking for Dorset's people – that they are **safe, healthy and independent**, and that they benefit from a **prosperous** economy. Underpinning this is the firm commitment to work as One Council, alongside our partners and communities, to ensure the best possible outcomes for Dorset's people, even as the available resources diminish.

Historically, scrutiny at the County Council reflected directorate structures and was based around children's services, adult services and environment services. While this worked to an extent, its focus on services rather than outcomes meant no committee had oversight of thematic, cross-cutting issues, like independence. Senior leaders – both councillors and officers – were keen to break out of this model and focus on strategic outcomes, with greater involvement from local residents and partners.

To take this forward, in February 2016 the council agreed that the future committee structure should be based on the new outcome focused Corporate Plan. Instead of focusing on a single directorate, as the old Overview Committees had done, three new Overview and Scrutiny Committees would each champion one or two corporate outcomes.

Three new committees were formed:

- **Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee:** *To oversee what the council does to keep people in Dorset **safe***
- **People and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee:** *To oversee what the council does to help people in Dorset be as **healthy and independent** as possible*
- **Economic Growth Overview and Scrutiny Committee:** *To oversee what the council does to make Dorset's economy more **prosperous**.*

Our councillors also separated the 'audit' and 'scrutiny' functions, so the former Audit and Scrutiny Committee became the Audit and Governance Committee. This committee's primary purpose is to assess the governance, financial, performance, internal control and risk information from right across the authority. An Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, comprising the Chairmen of the four new committees, was created to bring oversight and coordination to the whole process.

The rationale for our overview and scrutiny arrangements is that councillors want to ensure that our committee system reinforces the corporate plan and uses the outcomes framework to ensure we work as one organisation to improve the lives of residents and communities (and also that they have a say in assessing how well this is done). Changing the focus of each committee has meant meetings, debates, recommendations and decisions are aligned with the corporate plan, helping councillors and officers alike focus on what makes a real difference.

The changes also place councillors in the position of proactively leading investigations on the issues they want to consider, instead of our more traditional approach of officers taking the lead and deciding which reports are required.

This Annual Report summarises the work of the Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee during its second year – the committee's purpose, the work in which it has been directly involved, and the contributions it has made towards improving outcomes.

## Purpose of committee

Delivering good outcomes for the residents and communities we serve through a constructive, proactive and objective approach to the consideration, scrutiny and review of policies, strategies, financial and performance issues.

### Overview

- To review and develop policy at the Committee's own initiative or at the request of the Cabinet or the Public Health Joint Board and make recommendations to the Cabinet, Joint Committee or the Full Council.
- To oversee major consultations and make recommendations to the Cabinet, Joint Committee or the Full Council.
- To give advice on any matters as requested by the Cabinet or the Joint Committee.

### Scrutiny

- To hold the Executive to account through a process that seeks and considers necessary explanations, information and evidence to ensure good outcomes for our residents and communities.
- Through proactive scrutiny inquiry work, to contribute to improving the lives of our residents and communities, through an active contribution to the Council's improvement agenda.
- To scrutinise key areas of strategic and operational activity and, where necessary, make recommendations to the Full Council, Cabinet or Joint Committee in respect of:
  - i) Matters which affect the Council's area or its residents;
  - ii) Performance of services in accordance with the targets in the Corporate Plan or other approved service plans;

- iii) To provide a clear focus on finding efficiency savings in accordance with requirements in the Council's financial strategy;
- iv) To monitor expenditure against available budgets and, where necessary, make recommendations to the Cabinet or the Joint Committee;
- v) To consider proposed budget plans, service plans and any other major planning or strategic statements and to make recommendations to the Cabinet or the Joint Committee.

### **Key Lines of Enquiry**

In selecting, refining and focusing areas for possible scrutiny, members frequently work with lead officers on a scoping exercise, looking at progress towards key outcomes within their committee's remit and asking:

- i) If we do nothing, where is the trend heading? is this OK?
- ii) What's helping and hindering the trend?
- iii) Are services making a difference?
- iv) Are they providing Value for Money?
- v) What additional information / research do we need?
- vi) Who are the key partners we need to be working with (including local residents)?
- vii) What could work to turn the trend in the right direction?
- viii) What is the Council's and Members role and specific contribution?

## Key Outcomes

### What have we achieved and influenced?

To give a flavour of the types of issues and the work that comes before the Committee for its consideration, the following provides examples of focussed and targeted assurance and scrutiny work which has been undertaken by the Committee during the year.

### Monitoring Corporate Plan outcomes

At each of its four meetings in 2017-18, the committee received a report on progress with the "People in Dorset are Safe" outcome in the corporate plan. The reports focused on the five big "Safe" issues identified in the corporate plan, as follows:

- The number of children in care, or in need of our protection in other ways
- The percentage of children who are persistently absent from school
- The number of adult safeguarding concerns
- Rates of crime, antisocial behaviour and domestic abuse in Dorset
- Number of people killed or seriously injured on Dorset's roads

The monitoring reports also include performance measures by which the County Council can measure the contribution and impact of its own services and activities on the Corporate Plan's outcomes. As can be seen below, the evidence from these reports helped shape, but did not dictate, the agendas for the committee throughout the year.

### Personal Independence Payments

Following concerns raised by the committee during 2016-17, Daniel Cadisch, Chief Officer of the Citizens' Advice Bureau, came to the first meeting of 2017-18 in July. He said there were still substantial delays in processing applications for PIP and many clients continued to be disadvantaged as a result. This had been the single greatest issue that the Citizens Advice Bureau had faced which affected the most vulnerable clients in our communities.

The Chairman proposed that a motion be presented to the County Council meeting on July 20 2017 as follows:

*"That the County Council express its extreme concern to the Secretary of State for the Department of Work and Pensions in respect of the significant distress being caused to Dorset residents as a direct consequence of poor administration of the Personal Independence Payments process; as evidenced by the Dorset Citizens Advice Bureau. We call on the Secretary of State to urgently review the process to ensure improved outcomes for all residents."*

#### Scrutiny in Action!

*On 30 January 2018, the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) announced that 1.6 million of the main PIP disability benefit claims will be reviewed, with around 220,000 people expected to receive more money as a result. This came after the DWP decided not to challenge a court ruling that said changes to PIP were unfair to people with mental health conditions. It was reported that the review could cost £3.7bn by 2023.*

*The minister for disabled people, Sarah Newton, said the DWP was embarking on a "complex exercise and of considerable scale". She added: "Whilst we will be working at pace to complete this exercise it is important that we get it right."*

*The Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee may not have been solely responsible for the Government's change of heart – but we like to think we played a part!*

## Emergency Planning

Following the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower on June 14 2017, members discussed how the County Council would respond to such an incident. They were concerned that in such circumstances councillors, and cabinet members in particular, should be equipped to play an effective role as community leaders.

Simon Parker, The County Emergency Planning Officer, attended the July meeting and explained that there is a Strategic Co-ordination Group, which includes Leaders and Chief Executives from across Dorset, whose role it is to take the significant lead in any event of this kind. In response to a question about what would happen if there was a need to rehouse up to 500 people in an emergency, he advised that the local Resilience Forum works closely with all councils, including the District and Borough Councils who have responsibility for housing. The committee decided that councillors should have a dedicated emergency planning session as part of member development, to better understand how these arrangements work, as well as some drop-in sessions for members to visit the team's offices and get a better feel for their work.

The committee returned to this subject at its October meeting. Cllr Kevin Brookes had been looking at the emergency planning service from the elected member angle and had found that there are well thought out processes in place for the Leader and Chief Executive, but less so for non-executive members. He suggested a skills audit of members to see what they could offer in a range of situations. The committee emphasised the importance of ensuring that all three levels of members (Town, District and County) were involved so that everyone knew what to do in an emergency. At the January meeting it was confirmed that emergency response briefings were to be arranged for all members of all tiers.

## Road Traffic Collisions

In July, members agreed the scope and responsibilities for a small Task and Finish Group on the number of road traffic accidents in Dorset. Two councillors worked with the council officers responsible for monitoring road accidents in the county and seeking to reduce them.

By the October meeting, the Task and Finish Group had met and agreed to review and update the existing Road Casualty Reduction Plan. The aim was to identify opportunities for new interventions, and in particular to review all the rural routes across Dorset and provide an objective assessment of where the need for improvement is greatest. The Task and Finish Group emphasised that they had to be realistic about what would make a difference to reducing casualties and deaths.

In January, and again in March, the members of the Task and Finish Group gave updates on the work. The Road Casualty Reduction Plan was being refreshed in order to better understand the Council's role in reducing the number of accidents. This would set a baseline from which performance could be judged. It would not include unrealistic targets over which the Council had little control, but ones towards which the Council could realistically make progress. The Group had discussed the need for a driver education campaign, and the establishment of hard standings on rural routes so that mobile speed cameras could be used, which might impact on dangerous driving in those areas. The committee also suggested that 20mph zones could be introduced around schools at specific times of the day, which the Group agreed to raise with officers.

Finally, members noted that the Police and Crime Commissioner planned to digitise speed cameras, and to introduce an average speed check, which the Committee welcomed. The Group's work is continuing, and it will continue to report on progress to the Committee.



## Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse is an area of focus in the corporate plan, and Tuesday 17 October 2017 was chosen for an Inquiry Day. A number of agencies were invited to attend, which including: the Police, the CCG, Volunteer agencies, Public Health, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, the Community Safety Partnership and front line staff. A domestic abuse survivor also attended and agreed to describe her experiences and answer questions. The purpose of the day was to identify and explore key lines of enquiry. Although the County Council has no strategic responsibility for domestic abuse, this was an opportunity for members to hear first-hand from a range of people, partners and providers and to gain an understanding of the issues. There were also opportunities for members to ask questions and decide on next steps.

### Domestic Abuse Inquiry Day

*On 17 October, the committee held an inquiry day into Domestic Abuse in Dorset. The day was organised into four sessions. The scene was set by a moving account from a domestic abuse survivor, and the two voluntary sector agencies that had supported her, **You First** and **Waves**. The following three sessions gave members the opportunity to hear from, and ask questions of: front line practitioners from the health service, the Police, the probation service, and children's and adult services; senior managers from those organisations; and commissioners and providers. The aim of the day was to gain insight into the issue, understand how much, and how well, the different agencies were working together to tackle it, and to discuss ways in which the response of public agencies could be more effective.*

*Members heard many encouraging accounts of support provided to abuse victims, particularly by You First and Waves. However, some key themes emerged from the day of where improvements could be made. The importance of timely, proportionate data sharing was emphasised, as was improved sign-posting of services, the empowerment and improved funding of voluntary agencies, the need for whole family approaches, and a relentless focus on early intervention and prevention to prevent problems from escalating and worsening.*

*Following the inquiry day, the committee asked the Cabinet to commit to further targeted activity with key partners to tackle domestic abuse and improve outcomes for vulnerable adults and children. This was agreed by the Cabinet on 7 March 2018.*

## Modern Slavery

The County Council has a legal duty to notify the government of any potential victims of human trafficking or slavery. Andy Frost, the Community Safety and Drug Action Manager, came to the January committee to discuss with members the newly agreed Modern Slavery Protocol and Guidance. This had been jointly developed with partners and consulted upon widely, involving, for example, the Police, the CCG, and the Voluntary and Community Sector. The document sets out how partners would organise themselves and work collaboratively in the event of a modern slavery operation. The committee welcomed the protocol and recommended that the Cabinet formally adopt it.

## Children's social care

In 2017-18, the committee considered several different aspects of children's social care, beginning in October with a discussion about the issues with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities provision that had been identified by the Ofsted/ CQC Local Area Inspection in January 2017. In particular, the Children and Families Act 2014, which requires the conversion of SEN statements into the new Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), was having a significant impact on workloads. Figures for September 2017 indicated that only 6% of new EHCPs were being completed within the 20 week target period, and as new requests showed no sign of abating, there was a continued risk of further EHCPs not being finalised within statutory timescales. A Written Statement of Action had been produced to address this and other related issues. A Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND) Strategy was being developed and the first meeting of the SEND Delivery Group had recently taken place. There

were 12 other authorities nationally that had written statements of action in place for the same reason.

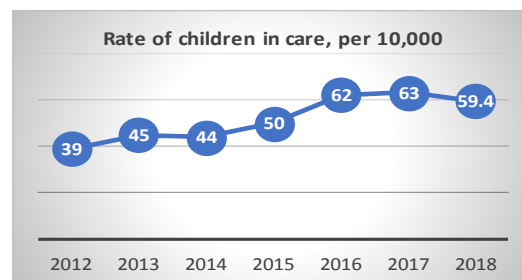
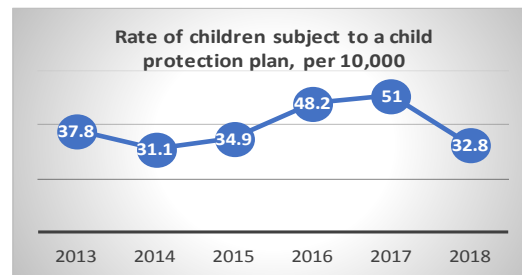
Also in October, the committee received its regular report monitoring progress against corporate plan outcomes. This drew attention to the rate of **Children in Care**, or subject to a **Child Protection Plan (CPP)**, in Dorset, which although plateauing and beginning to fall, remained too high and (at that time) higher than the national rates.

There was a focus on the importance of manageable social worker caseloads and attracting good quality children's social workers. A consequence of having too few experienced social workers is too many children being taken into care, which has resulted in a major overspend. It is also well known that children in care tend to have significantly poorer outcomes in life than their peers. The committee discussed opportunities to find funding to reduce caseloads by improving commissioning arrangements and reducing third party payments.

Members returned to this subject at the January meeting, when they considered a report by the Director for Children's Services, Nick Jarman, which provided an overview of the Council's approach to **social worker recruitment and retention**. The Cabinet had recently agreed to an additional £1m of funding to recruit additional social workers in order to help manage risk safely and avoid too many children being taken into care. He also referred to a marketing campaign that was already attracting good quality social workers. However, the cost of living, and especially housing, in Dorset is a real obstacle to the County Council becoming an 'employer of choice', and possible mitigations to this were discussed, including making a supply of 'pop up' modular housing available for key workers. Following a question from a member regarding work previously initiated with Bournemouth University to "grow our own" supply of social workers, the Director reassured the committee that this is still happening and there is an ongoing strong relationship, but inevitably it takes time to develop the experienced social workers that are needed.

In March, Nick Jarman presented a report explaining the County Council's approach to **early intervention and prevention (EiP)**. The report explained that the purpose of EiP is to work alongside other agencies (e.g. schools; the health service) to provide families with early help and support. The aim is to improve outcomes and avoid children ending up in care, which

### Turning the Curve on Child Protection



*After rising significantly over the last few years, the rate of children subject to a CPP, and the rate of children in care, have now fallen back. Some of this is due to improved multi-agency working, the hard work of social workers, improvements to decision making on initiating child protection investigations and conferences, embedding child protection conference chairs in area teams so that there is better joint working, and ensuring that plans don't drift.*

*There has also been a focus on preventing children coming into care in the first place. One of the ways of doing this is through our Family Focus Team, which undertakes intensive family work to try to prevent children coming into care or in supporting children to return home. The Family Focus Team was one of the first teams to adopt the 'whole family' approach to working, which is what Dorset Families Matter (DFM) and Family Partnership Zones are all about. Because we have been mainstreaming the DFM approach, we wouldn't say that any single team is part or not part of the DFM programme any more. We expect the entire workforce to work in this way.*

often leads to worse outcomes for children in terms of mental health, educational attainment, vulnerability and many other factors, as well as placing considerable strain on the public purse. A national body of evidence now shows the effectiveness of this approach in terms of greater social cohesion, reduced crime and anti-social behaviour, and lower spend in the long term. It has been suggested that ultimately, the return on every pound invested on EiP could be as high as £7.

Dorset's EiP approach is centred on **Family Partnership Zones (FPZs)**, based around seven school 'pyramids'. They have only been established recently, and it is too early to see measurable results. The four main tests that will ultimately be used to demonstrate success will be: a reduction in the number of children coming into care; fewer children with child protection plans; fewer re-referrals; and fewer school exclusions.

The committee had a wide-ranging discussion about the issues covered by the report. They raised the pressure the lack of school transport places on many families, and Portland schools were particularly mentioned as suffering from this issue. It was argued that this might lead to increased exclusions and the need for more help and support. One member talked about a Young Researchers survey that was part of the review on isolation and loneliness being undertaken by the People and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The findings showed that 22% of respondents did not feel supported by their parents, or feel safe at home. Members wanted to know more about how they could get involved in Family Partnership Zone work, and called for there to be stronger connections between the FPZs and youth services, particularly in Purbeck.

It was acknowledged that the committee has an important role in scrutinising the impact of EiP. The Director agreed to provide this information to the members of the Committee as soon as it was available. It was also confirmed that data on all of the EiP success measures would be incorporated into future Outcomes Focused Monitoring Reports.

### Helping Families Help Themselves



*"Mum – you have helped yourself." That's what 11-year-old Charlie said when his mum, Vicky Bush, was talking to us about our **Family Partnership Zone** approach.*

*Vicky, from Portland, was introduced to our targeted youth worker Julie Walsh by her children's school when discussing her son's behaviour.*

*Vicky said: "I was struggling to keep Charlie at school and he had run away. We didn't understand why and didn't know what to do."*

*Julie spent time with Vicky, her partner and children over several months to help them learn to communicate better and work through their problems together.*

*Julie said: "Vicky wanted support keeping Charlie at school and dealing with any issues that may come up when he's a teenager. As well as one-to-one sessions, I introduced challenges around team work, mediation and communicating.*

*"They were brilliant and up for trying everything. They're now using techniques I taught them, which means I don't have to intervene – as they're making changes themselves."*

*The support has also helped Vicky manage her own anxiety issues. She added:*

*"My kids are now so much better at home and at school. We have a lot more family time now and I have been going out more. There are still times when it's hard, but I feel more confident now and use the tips and tricks that Julie has given us. We're doing great."*

## **Elective home education**

During one of their informal briefing sessions, the Chair and Vice Chair of the committee expressed an interest in exploring the issue of elective home education in Dorset, in order to understand whether it carries any implications for the safety of the children concerned. Nick Jarman presented a report to the committee in January, summarising the issues. He advised that the County Council has very limited access to children being educated at home unless there is a safeguarding concern. However, there is little evidence of children coming to harm through home education. There are some safeguarding concerns when some parents withdraw children from school because of bullying, and these are addressed.

Members' discussed particular issues within their divisions and said that if they had clearer evidence of the numbers of children being home educated in their areas it would be helpful. They also mentioned that they were aware of issues with bullying on school transport, which is sometimes given as the reason why children are educated at home. The Director said that bullying is a safeguarding and standards issue in schools, and with appropriate evidence County Council would bring this to the attention of the Governors of a particular school.

Member's agreed it was important to establish the scale of the potential issue and requested a summary report for their meeting on 5 July 2018, to give them an overview of what is going on.

## **Recruitment and Retention in Adult Social Care**

At its March meeting, the Committee received a report by the Assistant Director for Adult Care on recruitment and retention work in Adult Social Care. Last year, a workforce plan was developed, to identify priorities, meet challenges, and improve resilience and capacity. A year on, recruitment is now more successful and the overall situation has improved. More staff have been employed to meet the increased demand generated by the Mental Health Capacity Act and Deprivation of Liberty cases. The workforce is currently undergoing a two year transformation programme and additional funding from the Better Care Fund has been accessed for hospital teams in order to deliver improved performance for transfers of care. This funding will be at risk if performance does not meet set targets. It is essential that there is sufficient capacity in order for the Council to meet its responsibilities.

Members were assured that any use of agency staff to cover vacancies/sickness has always been within budget, and only happens as a last resort. Vacancy rates have fallen from 15.5% in May 2017 to 8% more recently. The unqualified workforce had reduced from 5% to 3% and work by managers and HR colleagues has led to a reduction in sickness absence from 10.9 days to 7.8 days.

Looking to the future, the introduction of the MOSAIC ICT system for both children and adults will address new demands and improve workflow. The Council is looking to develop its own staff, develop a peripatetic scheme and carry out a recruitment and retention review to ensure salaries are competitive.

Members fully supported having a well-qualified workforce and asked about incentives. They were assured that there are regular reviews to ensure that jobs are competitive, training is offered, and everything is done to sell the benefits of working in Dorset for the County Council.

The Cabinet Member for Safeguarding asked whether the Council is doing anything to help providers with their recruitment difficulties. It was explained that commissioners are looking at the sector wide workforce and an update will be provided to the People and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Cabinet Member for Health and Care added that workforce is a key work stream within the Sustainability and Transformation Plan and that hospitals and health trusts are also

experiencing recruitment and retention difficulties. She acknowledged the difficulty in some rural areas of finding domiciliary care workers to enable patients to be discharged from hospital and said that she was going to meet with Somerset colleagues to find out about their use of micro businesses to grow the workforce.

## **Conclusion - Looking to the Future**

The thematic approach to scrutiny adopted by the Overview and Scrutiny Committees has identified and sought to better understand a range of key issues facing Dorset and its communities, and constructively challenged public sector approaches to making a positive difference with the resources that are available.

Through 2018-19 the committees will work to refine the conclusions that arise from this work, so that they can contribute to the base of evidence available to the various committees of the new Dorset Council. Armed with the best information available, the new unitary council can enable better, more joined-up approaches to the issues with which this committee and others have wrestled, such as domestic abuse, child protection and road accidents.