

Report To: ECYP Scrutiny Panel
Report From: Julian Wooster, DCAS
Report Date: 24 November 2014
Report Title: Scrutiny of Children's Services

Background

1. Members at the meeting of the ECYP Scrutiny Panel at previous meetings have requested information which would enable the Panel to enhance its' scrutiny role of children's services.
2. Key City Council member (Leader and Lead Member for Children's Services) and officer roles (Chief Executive, Director of Children's Service and Head of Children's Social Care) in relation to children's services are prescribed by statutory guidance to ensure clarity of accountability.

Ofsted

3. The Ofsted inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children in June/July 2014 highlighted that improvements could be made to the challenge and scrutiny. Recommendation 11 from Ofsted was to;

Ensure that elected members are properly trained and are given high quality and relevant information by officers. This will allow them to appropriately scrutinise and challenge the work of children's social care and act as effective champions for children who are looked after.

4. Inspectors observed that the scrutiny topics for this Panel were focussed on education, and concluded through a trawl of public reports on the Council's website there was insufficient appropriate scrutiny of children's services.
5. Inspectors were made aware of a number mechanisms for Elected Member scrutiny including;
 - Weekly briefings to the Cabinet Member for Children and Education (Lead Member for Children as set out in the statutory guidance).
 - Membership of Elected Members from all political parties on the Children's Trust Board
 - Participant observation on the Portsmouth Safeguarding Children Board by the Cabinet Member
 - Chairmanship of the Corporate Parenting Board by the Cabinet Member
 - Reports to Governance and Audit and Standards Committee

Proposed Way Forward

6. Below is the relevant excerpt from the post-inspection Improvement Plan that is due for submission to Ofsted in early-December 2014, and is subject to approval by the Children's Trust Board on the 18th November.

7. After consultation with the Cabinet Member it is proposed that the ECYP Scrutiny Committee receives the following;
 - a) Children's Trust Quarterly Performance Reports
 - b) Minutes of the Children's Trust Board
 - c) Youth Offending Team Two-monthly Performance Report
 - d) Minutes of Corporate Parenting Board (Looked After Children)

11. Ensure that elected members are properly trained and are given high quality and relevant information by officers. This will allow them to appropriately scrutinise and challenge the work of children's social care and act as effective champions for children who are looked after.

Lead: Julian Wooster - Director of Children's and Adults' Services

Linked Plan: None

a) Expected outcome (what will be different?)

- Elected members effectively scrutinise and challenge Children's Social Care to provide effective safeguarding and care

b) Measures of success (how will we know we have achieved it?)

- All Elected Members are aware of the numbers, profile and outcomes of our Looked After Children
- The annual Scrutiny Programme includes scrutiny of safeguarding and care reflecting its importance to LA
- Performance information drives the Scrutiny Programme

c) Actions

	By when	By whom	Status
Annual report on Looked After Children is placed on Members Information Service	Jan 2015	Stephen Kitchman	RAG
Strengthen the Quarterly CSC Performance Report to Governance and Audit and Standards	Jan 2015	Stephen Kitchman	RAG
Ensure this Improvement Plan is considered by Governance and Audit and Standards	Feb 2015	Hayden Ginns	RAG
Review 2014/15 Scrutiny Programme to ensure full consideration given to balance of Children's issues	Mar 2015	Vicky Plytas	RAG
Include scrutiny of Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting in the development of Members training programme	Apr 2015	Michael Lawther	RAG

MONITORING AND IMPACT

d) Action Plan Progress

RAG

e) Impact: Data and Commentary

RAG

f) Recommendations for Further Action

