

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SOCIAL CARE AND SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL

Setting the Scrutiny Panel's Work Programme 2018/2019

2 JULY 2018

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. To invite the Children and Young People's Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel to consider its work programme for the 2018/19 Municipal Year.

BACKGROUND

2. At the start of each Municipal Year, Scrutiny Panels discuss the topics that they would like to review during the coming year.
3. Work programmes are useful as they provide some structure to a Scrutiny Panel's activity and allow for the effective planning and preparation of work.
4. As part of the process for establishing the work programme, support officers gather information/views from a number of sources. Below is a list of topics which are anticipated to be of particular interest to the Scrutiny Panel. Members are advised that the list of possible topics is not exhaustive and that additional topics can be added and considered at the Scrutiny Panel meeting.

Topics agreed in 2017/18, which were not investigated

- Promoting good emotional wellbeing and mental health for children and young people.

Topical issues

Topic	Details
Children's Social Care funding and demand	<p>In August 2017, the Local Government Association (LGA) produced a press release warning that Children's social care was being pushed to breaking point with growing demand for support leading to 75% of Councils in England overspending on their children's services budgets by more than half a billion pounds.</p> <p>The National Audit Office found that local government funding has been cut by 50% in real terms since 2010 and that overall, by 2020, Councils will face a funding gap of around £2 billion for children's services.</p>

	<p>Although local authority spending on children’s social care has increased, it is not keeping pace with the increase in demand. Government figures show that in 2016/17 the total number of children in care reached a new high of 72,670 (on average this equates to 90 children being taken into care every day - the biggest annual rise of children in care in seven years).</p>
<p>Early Help/ Revolving Door Report</p>	<p>Action for Children produced a report entitled ‘Revolving Door Part 1’ which expresses concern that some of the most vulnerable children in society are not getting the help they need and raises questions about the availability of Early Help provision for an estimated 140,000 children.</p> <p>The report recognises the increased pressures facing local authorities protecting vulnerable children and the increased demand on local authority children’s services. The number of referrals to local authorities’ children’s services has increased by almost 9% over the past decade and the number of children on child protection plans as a result of those referrals has increased by more than 90%.</p>
<p>Emotional wellbeing and mental health of Children and Young People</p>	<p>In 2016, the LGA published a document entitled ‘Best Start in Life – Promoting good emotional wellbeing and mental health for children and young people.’ The document focuses on how local authorities can promote good emotional wellbeing and prevent mental illness. It includes case study examples of Councils that are exploring innovative ways to provide support with more focus on children and families rather than static services, as well as information about the scale of the problem and what steps can be taken.</p> <p>In December 2017 the Department for Education and Department for Health published a Green Paper – Transforming Children and Young People’s Mental Health Provision.</p>
<p>New support to help children living with alcohol-dependent parents</p>	<p>In April 2018, the Government announced new measures to provide children living with alcohol-dependent parents, fast access to support and advice.</p> <p>£6 million in joint funding from the Department of Health and Social Care and the Department for Work and Pensions is designed to help an estimated 200,000 children in England living with alcohol-dependent parents.</p>
<p>Tackling Childhood Obesity</p>	<p>The LGA briefing on Childhood Obesity sets out the analysis of a survey conducted by the LGA amongst local leaders on public health delivered by their local authority showing that the top priority for public health is to give children and young people the best start in life (88%). 27% of respondents’ councils were most concerned at the present time with mental health and childhood obesity.</p>

Review of the role and functions of the safeguarding children board (Wood Review)	<p>The fundamental Wood Review of the role and functions of local safeguarding children’s boards within the context of local strategic multi-agency working was requested in 2016 by the Secretary of State. The report sets out a new framework for improving the reorganisation and delivery of multi-agency arrangements to protect and safeguard children. In late 2015 Ofsted reviewed the effectiveness of Middlesbrough Safeguarding Children’s Board and concluded that it required improvement.</p>
Young Carers	<p>Councils are under a legal duty to identify young carers and carry out assessments that consider the impact on the child and whole family. This is challenging as those young carers are often isolated and hidden from view. The last census puts the official figure for young carers at almost 170,000, however, research by the BBC and Nottingham University suggests the true figure may be four times higher than official estimates claim.</p> <p>The LGA has published a report “Meeting the health and wellbeing needs of young carers” setting out the importance of meeting the health and wellbeing needs of young carers. The report also provides a range of case studies outlining examples of good practice.</p>
Child Poverty	<p>Low income families deserve to be able to afford the day-to-day essentials they need. But often poorer families end up paying more for basic essentials than everyone else. Stretched incomes mean that they are forced to make impossible choices for their children – between healthy meals, warm clothes and heating the home.</p> <p>Action for Children is campaigning for Government to apply as much focus to tackling the day-to-day reality of poverty, as tackling the wider causes and investing in early help to give all children the best start in life.</p> <p>The Campaign to End Child Poverty produced a Child Poverty Map of the UK in November 2016. This identifies 37% of children in the Middlesbrough local authority area as living in poverty (after housing costs).</p>

Suggestions

Suggestion	Details
Early Help and Prevention Services	<p>Suggestion from a Member of the Public.</p> <p>“To examine the use of the term ‘early help and prevention’ and how it is used by statutory sector children’s services in contradiction to how support is experienced by children and families.</p> <p>The reality of how early help is delivered by statutory partners is focussed on complex cases, predominantly those already beyond</p>

	<p>preventative work (a shift towards early help partners taking more complex cases and the move away from preventative towards more intensive interventions, known in the VCS as mission drift fuelled by the current funding landscape).</p> <p>Conversely, when children and families try to access support at an early opportunity (preventative support for low level problems) they are generally unable to access this support until problems escalate and the reality experienced is that there are longer waiting lists for lower level support or exclusions because of the lack of complexity of issues at this stage. This is a systemic problem and one that perpetuates the escalation of problems, complexity and more costly, intensive interventions. I understand the dilemma of resources needing to be focused around those in crisis but unless we start intervening at a preventative level we will never achieve support at the earliest opportunity and the term early help will remain as it is now, an oxymoron”.</p>
Corporate Parenting	<p>Suggestion from Children’s Services</p> <p>To examine Corporate Parenting in Middlesbrough.</p>
Emotional wellbeing and mental health of children and young people	<p>Suggestion from the Children’s Services</p> <p>To examine current provision, how services are commissioned and innovative ways of providing support.</p>

5. It should be noted that the topics outlined above are suggestions and the content of the Scrutiny Panel’s work programme is a decision for the Panel. When considering its work programme, the Panel is advised to select topics that are of interest to it, as well as topics that the panel feels by considering, it could add value to the Local Authority’s work.
6. In addition to undertaking the agreed work programme, Scrutiny Panels have also previously responded on an ad-hoc basis to emerging issues - such as considering relevant new legislation, guidance or Government consultation documents. This approach occasionally results in further topics being identified for investigation or review throughout the year.
7. On occasion ad-hoc scrutiny panels may also be established throughout the year to undertake additional investigations, for example to examine areas of work which overlap more than one Scrutiny Panel.
8. The Scrutiny Panel is also advised that, under the terms of the Local Government Act 2000, local authorities have a responsibility of community leadership and a power to secure the effective promotion of community well-being. Therefore, in addition to the Scrutiny Panel’s generally recognised powers (of holding the Executive to account, reviewing service provision, developing policy, considering budget plans and performance and financial monitoring), Panels also have the power

to consider **any** matters which are not the responsibility of the Council but which affect the local authority **or** the inhabitants of its area. For example, nationally, local authorities have undertaken scrutiny work on issues such as post office closures, rural bus services, policing matters and flood defence schemes.

Scrutiny work plan prioritisation aid

9. Members may wish to use the aid attached at **Appendix 1** to prioritise issues where scrutiny can make an impact, add value or contribute to policy development.

PURPOSE OF THE MEETING

10. The Scrutiny Panel is asked to consider and agree its work programme for the 2018/19 municipal year. Accordingly, Helen Watson, Executive Director of Children's Services and Alison Brown, Director of Children's Care, have been invited to attend the meeting to provide an overview of the main services within the Scrutiny Panel's remit and outline priorities, key issues and challenges for the year ahead.
11. When considering its work programme, the Scrutiny Panel is asked to ensure that topics agreed for inclusion:-
 - Affect a group of people living within the Middlesbrough area.
 - Relate to a service, event or issue in which the Council has a significant stake or over which the Council has an influence.
 - Are not issues which the Overview and Scrutiny Board or the Scrutiny Panels have considered during the last 12 months.
 - Do not relate to an individual service complaint; and
 - Do not relate to matters dealt with by another Council Committee, unless the issue deals with procedure.
12. It is suggested that the Scrutiny Panel has a mixture of working styles in its programme. This can include detailed and in-depth reviews, shorter topics, or one-off investigations.
13. Once the Scrutiny Panel has identified the areas of priority, support staff will draw those topics into a programme for approval by the Overview and Scrutiny Board.

RECOMMENDATION

14. That the Scrutiny Panel identifies two topics it would like to include in its work programme for 2018/19, for consideration/approval by the Overview and Scrutiny Board.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

15. Throughout the report, reference is made to documents published by the Local Government Association (LGA), Gov.uk, National Audit Office, Middlesbrough Council, Action for Children, End Child Poverty, Westminster Insight.

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APPENDIX 1

