

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

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

Setting the Scrutiny Panel's Work Programme 2020/2021

20 JULY 2020

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 2020/21 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 and suggestions 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.

Topical Issues and Suggestions

5. Following the Ofsted judgement, and subsequent findings of the Children's Commissioner, the Panel may need to take on more of an 'oversight' role to monitor progress in relation to the Children's Services improvement journey, particularly in key areas of concern and to seek assurances in relation to those areas.

Topic/Suggestion	Details
South Tees Multi Agency Children's Hub (ST MACH)	Seek assurances/oversight of: the robustness of the disaggregation of the service; resources and impact; progress on thresholds, timeliness of service; working relationship with Redcar & Cleveland (Middlesbrough's partner). (Suggestion from Councillor/Children's Services)

Corporate Parenting Strategy	<p>To involve the Panel and gain its views in relation to the development of the Corporate Parenting Strategy.</p> <p>(Suggestion from Children’s Services).</p>
Youth Services	<p>To examine Youth Service provision in Middlesbrough, including how services are commissioned and what support is provided by the Council. (Potentially look at the work of the Ballinger Charitable Trust).</p> <p>(Suggestion from a Councillor).</p>
Commissioned services across Children’s Services	<p>Examine the wider issue of all commissioned services across Children’s Services. What services do we currently commission? (Potentially look at the work of Children North East charity).</p> <p>(Suggestion from a Councillor).</p>
Services for Children with Disabilities	<p>What services and support does the Council provide/commission for children with disabilities? (including Short-break provision).</p> <p>(Suggestion from a Councillor).</p>
Custody/PACE Beds	<p>How can we improve response to, and outcomes for, children held overnight in Police custody? Particularly in the context of local authority Children’s Services and local police force being judged inadequate - What are the challenges?</p> <p>(Suggestion from a Councillor).</p>
Ensuring safety and appropriate support for children	<p>In the ‘new normal’, recovering from Covid, with less children attending school/education settings, there are reduced avenues for children to self-report issues. How do we ensure that children are safe and receiving the support they need?</p> <p>(Suggestion from a Councillor).</p>
Sufficiency and Permanency	<p>How do we ensure the right children are in care and that they remain in local placements? What are the issues in securing permanency and how is this being addressed? Does the Council have developed strategies for Sufficiency and Permanency?</p> <p>(Suggestion from a Councillor)</p>
Children’s Residential Home Provision and Edge of Care	<p>To look at current and future residential provision for children and young people in Middlesbrough, including Edge of Care Provision.</p> <p>(Suggestion by a Councillor).</p>

Provision.	
No Wrong Door Programme/ Future for Families	To consider the early impact of the programme in supporting reductions in the care population and local placement stability.
DfE Longitudinal Study of Local Authority Children & Families Social Workers	To examine the differing roles and responsibilities of Social Workers across Children's Services, including Social Work culture, pressures and caseloads. (Suggestion from a Councillor).
Locality Working	Locality working is due to commence in Newport and North Ormesby. What impact will this have on Children's Services Social Workers? Will it lessen workloads and/or provide better focus? (Suggestion from a Councillor).

Updates

Early Help & Prevention Services	To receive an update in relation to the recommendations made by the Scrutiny Panel's previous review of Early Help and Prevention Services (2019).
South Tees Safeguarding Children's Partnership	To receive an update on the South Tees Safeguarding Children's Partnership, established 1 July 2019, following the introduction of legislation through the Children and Social Work Act 2017 to reshape the way in which local agencies work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

6. 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.
7. 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.
8. 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.

9. 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

10. 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

11. The Scrutiny Panel is asked to consider and agree its work programme for the 2020/21 Municipal Year. The Director of Children's Services will be in attendance to assist the Panel by highlighting priority areas/issues and challenges and also to provide an overview of the structure within Children's Services.
12. 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.
13. 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.
14. 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

15. That the Scrutiny Panel identifies the areas of focus/topics it would like to include in its work programme for 2020/21, for consideration/approval by the Overview and Scrutiny Board.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 16.** Throughout the report, reference is made to documents published by the Dfe, Ofsted, Report of the Commissioner for Children's Services, Gov.uk, Middlesbrough Council.

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APPENDIX 1

