

# MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

## CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY PANEL

### Setting the Scrutiny Panel's Work Programme 2023/2024

**18 SEPTEMBER 2023**

#### **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1. To invite the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel to consider its work programme for the 2023/2024 municipal year.

#### **REVIEW OF 2022/2023**

2. At a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Board held on 18 April 2023, a new structure for scrutiny arrangements in Middlesbrough was agreed. As a consequence, the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel is a new panel for this year (in effect, an amalgamation of the two former children's scrutiny panels, i.e., the Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel, and the Children and Young People's Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel).

For Members' information, relevant topics considered by the two former panels in 2022/2023 were as follows:

#### Children and Young People's Learning Scrutiny Panel

- Behaviour, Discipline and Bullying in Schools - An Update
- Education and Covid-19 Recovery (updates)
- Free School Meals for Nursery Aged Pupils in Middlesbrough
- Learning and Education Strategy Update
- Outwood Academy Ormesby - Response to Ofsted's Findings
- School Exclusion Data (update)
- School Meals and Physical Education (update)
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) (consideration of final report carried over from 2021/2022)
- Youth Offending and Partnership Working with Schools (main review topic).

#### Children and Young People's Social Care and Services Scrutiny Panel

- Children's Services Improvement Journey (update)
- Ofsted Monitoring Visit (update)
- South Tees Safeguarding Children Partnership - Annual Report 2021/2022
- Supporting Young People to Prepare for Adulthood and Independence (main review topic).

## BACKGROUND

3. At the start of every municipal year, scrutiny panels discuss the topics that they would like to review during the coming year.
4. 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.
5. As part of the process for establishing the work programme, Democratic Services 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. Priorities from the Strategic Work Plan 2021-2024 are also listed below for information.

### Suggestions

***Please note that the topics marked \*\* fall outside of the Local Authority's remit, however, may still be of interest to the panel.***

Suggestion	Details
<b>Children in Care – Finance and Performance</b>	Suggestion from a Councillor:  “What is in place for children in care, i.e. care costs per week per child, schooling, transport, outside bodies looking after children in care in Middlesbrough, etc. How much does it cost for maintaining care homes?”
<b>**Children's Learning and SATS Tests</b>	Suggestion from a Councillor:  “Children's Learning – Sat's tests results: how important are they and their usefulness, how are they used for our children. What is in place for those who don't do so good?”
<b>Children's Services and OFSTED</b>	Suggestion from a Councillor:  “Discussion of the Children's services OFSTED report and how the officers plan to work on the improvements as outlined in the report in order to get the best service for young people across the town.”
<b>**Children who Struggle Making Friends at School</b>	Suggestion from a member of the public:  “There are many children out there that struggle to make friends and some even don't have any friends at all , the children in question can be bullied or find life hard.  What can Middlesbrough Council do to help this group of children to make friends, feel like they are part of this world and relevant and to

	keep friends?”
<b>Ensuring Best Value in Children’s Services</b>	Suggestion from an Officer:  “Could the panel consider a topic around Ensuring Best Value in Children’s Services?”
<b>Improving Poor School Attendance</b>	Suggestion from a Councillor:  “Improving poor school attendance. This is an issue across schools in Middlesbrough and the poor attendance of many Middlesbrough’s young people will have a detrimental effect on their future success.”
<b>Management and Performance of Middlesbrough’s Virtual School</b>	Suggestion from a Councillor:  “Middlesbrough’s virtual school. Look at the work of the virtual schools as it works to support Middlesbrough’s looked after children.”
<b>**Provision and Development of Post-16 Education Places</b>	Suggestion from a Councillor:  “Provision of post-16 education places. For the committee to look at the post-16 offer for Middlesbrough’s young people. To see if more places are required and what those places should offer. Impact of this on teachers in Middlesbrough? (Eton)”
<b>Quality of Middlesbrough’s Alternative Provision</b>	Suggestion from a Councillor:  “Middlesbrough alternative provision. Looking at the quality of AP in Middlesbrough and looking at potential gaps that need to be addressed in order for all students to be in the best place for their needs.”
<b>Safeguarding in Schools</b>	Suggestion from an Officer:  “Safeguarding in Schools – what measures are currently in place, how well are they performing and how can these be further developed?”
<b>The Education of Looked after Children</b>	Suggestion from an Officer:  “The Education of Looked after Children – what is provision and performance like and how could this be further improved?”
<b>The Impact of Poverty on Children’s Services</b>	Suggestion from a Councillor:  “As we are forming a strategy to tackle poverty across the town, I’d like scrutiny to have a direct involvement in shaping the policy. Would it be at all possible for scrutiny panels to investigate their issues with the aim to see how they impact levels of poverty across the town?”

<b>Working with Permanently Excluded Children</b>	<p>Suggestion from a Councillor:</p> <p>“Working with Middlesbrough permanently excluded. Looking at solutions to ensure Middlesbrough permanently excluded are given the opportunity to archive success despite the barriers they face (provide increased support prior to exclusion?)”</p>
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## Topical Issues

<b>Children’s Social Worker Shortage</b>	<p>In February 2023, The Guardian reported that children’s social workers were quitting in record numbers as they struggled to cope with more challenging caseloads stemming from austerity, the pandemic and the cost of living crisis. Quoting figures released by the Department for Education (DfE) in 2022 (also released by the LGA in March 2022), it was indicated that the number of professionals had fallen for the first time since data collection began in 2017, despite rising need. 5,400 social workers left the profession in 2022, a 9% rise on the previous year (4,995) and the highest number since 2017. Vacancies were also at a record high of 7,900, a 21% rise on 2021 (6,522). This is reflective of a myriad of challenges including the impact of the pandemic, rising demand for services, falling investment, and the cost of living crisis.</p> <p>The LGA has called for children’s services to be adequately funded so that councils have the resources to ensure social workers receive the support and reward they deserve, and to fund the family help services social workers need to refer families to.</p> <p>It is estimated that, due to mounting pressures on children’s social care, future costs are set to increase by £600 million each year until 2024/25, with more than 8 in 10 councils already in the unsustainable position of having to overspend their budgets. Rising demand means that despite increasing their children’s social care budgets, councils are having to divert funding away from family help services to protect those children at most immediate risk of harm.</p> <p><i>Sources: Community Care, DfE, LGA, LGiU, The Guardian.</i></p>
<b>Pupil Premium</b>	<p>The pupil premium grant is funding to improve educational outcomes for disadvantaged pupils in state-funded schools in England.</p> <p>In April 2022, the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) released a new evidence brief, which identified robust research that schools could use to guide their decision-making around how to use their pupil premium funding.</p> <p>The tool focuses on three central areas of school development recommended by the EEF’s tiered model - high-quality teaching, targeted academic support and wider strategies - to signpost specific evidence-informed resources on important areas of teaching and learning, such as professional development and strategies to</p>

	<p>support pupils with SEND.</p> <p>In the financial year 2023-24, pupil premium spending will increase to almost £2.9 billion. The aim was to support all schools to use the wealth of evidence of ‘what works’, evaluated by the EEF to use this funding effectively.</p> <p>Sources:</p> <p><a href="https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/guidance-for-teachers/using-pupil-premium">https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/guidance-for-teachers/using-pupil-premium</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium/pupil-premium">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium/pupil-premium</a></p>
<p><b>The Impact of COVID on Learning</b></p>	<p>In May 2022, the Education Endowment Fund (EEF) published new research on the impact of COVID on learning.</p> <p>Four- and five-year-olds were less likely to meet the expected levels of development in 2021 than before the pandemic, with parents and schools reporting that children’s personal-social and emotional development, language, literacy, and numeracy skills had been affected.</p> <p>The research found that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• While all pupils’ learning had been affected, the attainment gap between socially disadvantaged students and their classmates had grown across all age groups.</li> <li>• There was some evidence that in primary schools, younger year groups had been the most significantly affected.</li> <li>• Aside from the impact on attainment, teachers had frequently reported concerns around the impact on pupil wellbeing.</li> </ul> <p>Source:</p> <p><a href="https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/news/new-pandemic-adversely-affected-young-childrens-development-with-fewer-reaching-expected-levels-by-the-end-of-reception-class">https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/news/new-pandemic-adversely-affected-young-childrens-development-with-fewer-reaching-expected-levels-by-the-end-of-reception-class</a></p> <p>Now one-to-two years on, the panel could look at the types of issues being experienced, and work being undertaken to address those – with a view to further developing activities in order to reduce the level of impact longer term.</p>

## Updates

<b>School Exclusion Statistics</b>	For the panel to receive regular updates in relation to school exclusions.
<b>Ofsted Updates</b>	To continue to receive regular updates in relation to visits and findings of Ofsted on the progress of the Children's Services improvement journey.
<b>Performance information</b>	For the panel to receive regular updates in relation to key performance information.
<b>South Tees Safeguarding Children's Partnership (STSCP)</b>	For the panel to receive an overview of the remit of the STSCP including its Annual Report.

## Strategic Plan Workplan 2021-24

<p><b>Priority:</b> Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour  <b>Supports the following aim(s):</b> People, Place &amp; Business  <b>Description:</b> We will tackle crime and anti-social behaviour head on, working with our partners to ensure local people feel safer.</p>
<p><b>Priority:</b> Climate Change  <b>Supports the following aim(s):</b> People, Place &amp; Business  <b>Description:</b> We will ensure our town acts to tackle climate change, promoting sustainable lifestyles.</p>
<p><b>Priority:</b> Physical Environment  <b>Supports the following aim(s):</b> People &amp; Place  <b>Description:</b> We will work closely with local communities to protect our green spaces and make sure that our roads, streets and open spaces are well-designed, clean and safe.</p>
<p><b>Priority:</b> Town Centre  <b>Supports the following aim(s):</b> People, Place &amp; Business  <b>Description:</b> We will transform our town centre, improving accessibility, revitalising unused assets, developing iconic new spaces and building more town centre homes.</p>
<p><b>Priority:</b> Quality of Service  <b>Supports the following aim(s):</b> People, Place &amp; Business  <b>Description:</b> We will ensure that we place communities at the heart of what we do, continue to deliver value for money and enhance the reputation of Middlesbrough.</p>

6. It should be noted that the suggested topics outlined above are exactly that, suggestions. The content of the scrutiny panel's work programme is entirely a decision for the panel to make. When considering the work programme, the panel is advised to select topics that will 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. 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 wellbeing. 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 flood defence schemes, policing matters, post office closures and rural bus services.

#### Scrutiny Work Plan Prioritisation Aid

9. Members are asked to use the aid attached at **Appendix 1** to prioritise issues where scrutiny can make an impact, add value or contribute to policy development in order to determine which topics are suitable for inclusion in its final work programme.

#### **PURPOSE OF THE MEETING**

10. The scrutiny panel is asked to consider and determine suitable scrutiny topics for inclusion in its work programme for the 2023/2024 municipal year.
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, by utilising the Scrutiny Work Plan Prioritisation Aid (see Appendix 1), the scrutiny panel identifies two topics it would like to include in its work programme for 2023/24, for submission to Overview and Scrutiny Board for approval.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

15. Throughout the report, reference is made to documents published by Community Care, DfE, EEF, LGA, LGiU, Middlesbrough Council, The Guardian and .Gov.uk website.

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APPENDIX 1

