

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

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

Setting the Scrutiny Panel's Work Programme 2021/2022

27 JULY 2021

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 2021/22 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 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.

Topic carried over from 2020/21

- Sufficiency and Permanency (Perceptions of Children in Care) - (Draft Final Report to be considered in September 2021).

Topical Issues and Suggestions

Topic/Suggestion	Details
Domestic Abuse – new statutory duties on Councils	The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 places a duty on local authorities to provide support to victims of domestic abuse and their children in refuges and other safe accommodation. Additionally, all eligible homeless victims of domestic abuse automatically have 'priority need' for homelessness assistance from their local authority. Recently, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) published the funding allocations for council homelessness priority for the 2021/22 financial year. This is to assist councils with the new financial burden that all councils now have across England. The Act places a legal duty on local authorities to

	<p>provide support such as therapy, advocacy and counselling in safe accommodation, including refuges. The New Burdens funding allocated to all local authorities amounts to £125 million.</p> <p>Local authorities are also now expected to create a domestic abuse local partnership board to provide advice to the local authority on its new responsibilities.</p> <p>Other important measures include support for children, as the new law explicitly recognises children as victims - particularly if they see, hear or experience the effects of abuse. It also places the guidance supporting the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (“Clare’s law”) on a statutory footing.</p>
<p>Support for Care Leavers/ Unregulated accommodation</p>	<p>In a press release in May 2021, the Education Secretary announced a £51 million funding boost to help thousands of vulnerable young people in the care system, and proposals to improve the quality of their accommodation.</p> <p>The support package will fund a range of schemes to support those that are either in or leaving care, as well as proposals to introduce national standards for accommodation settings for 16 and 17-year-olds. A consultation has been running in respect of this.</p> <p>These programmes include:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £33 million continued investment in ‘Staying Put’, which helps looked after children stay with their foster carers after their 18th birthday if they wish to. • £3.6 million to extend the ‘Staying Close’ pilot which gives extra support for young people leaving residential care, and £12 million for councils to continue to provide personal advisors to support care leavers up to the age of 25. • £2.7 million to provide intensive support to care leavers at high risk of homelessness, as part of the government’s Rough Sleeping strategy. <p>The Care Leaver Covenant Board has been working to improve the opportunities care leavers have access to as they proceed to independence and adulthood since its launch last year.</p> <p>This links to the announcement below regarding unregulated accommodation.</p>
<p>Unregulated accommodation</p>	<p>The number of children in care placed in unregulated settings has increased from 2,900 in 2009 to 6,490 in 2020. In February 2021 the Government announced that placing vulnerable children, aged under 16, in unregulated accommodation will be illegal from September 2021.</p> <p>The Government is seeking views on proposed standards for unregulated provision for looked after children and care leavers aged</p>

	<p>16 and 17.</p> <p>The Department for Education opened a consultation inviting views on:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the key indicators of whether a provider is delivering ‘care’ or ‘support’ • how best to define this provision in future and whether ‘supported accommodation for older children’ is the best descriptor • what the best provision in this sector looks like and therefore what needs to be accounted for in new national standards • a proposed suite of national standards • how settings should be regulated by Ofsted
PACE Bed Provision	<p>Response to, and outcomes for, children held overnight in Police custody? What are the challenges? How does the local authority work with partners?</p> <p><i>Suggestion from a Councillor - carried over from 2020/21.</i></p>
Locality Working	<p>Locality working has commenced in Newport and North Ormesby. What impact will, or has, this had on Children’s Services Care? Can locality working provide better focus of resources in these and other areas of the town?</p> <p><i>Suggestion from a Councillor – carried over from 2020/21.</i></p>
Task and Finish - Panel Member visits to service areas	<p>Small task and finish groups to undertake visits to various areas within Children’s Services, on a regular basis and to feed back to the Scrutiny Panel for information.</p> <p><i>Suggestion from the Chair</i></p>

Updates

Ofsted / Children’s Commissioner Updates	To continue to receive regular updates in relation to visits and findings of Ofsted and the Children’s Commissioner and on the progress of the Children’s Services improvement journey.
Covid Recovery	To continue to receive updates as and when appropriate in relation to Covid recovery in Children’s Services.

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 2021/22 Municipal Year. The Executive 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.
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 the areas of focus/topics it would like to include in its work programme for 2021/22, for consideration/approval by the Overview and Scrutiny Board.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

15. Throughout the report, reference is made to documents published by Middlesbrough Council, Dfe, Ofsted, LGA, Gov.uk.

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