

Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding)	Date of Meeting:	Tuesday 25 September 2018
Subject:	Enhancing Elected Member Involvement		
Report of:	Director of Social Care and Health	Wards Affected:	(All Wards);
Portfolio:	Children, Schools and Safeguarding		
Is this a Key Decision:	No	Included in Forward Plan:	No
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

1.1 During April 2018, the Local Government Association undertook a Care Practice Diagnostic into Children's social Care. The team made the following recommendation,

Provide opportunities for a wider range of members to engage with children's social care, to enhance understanding of front-line delivery, and take advantage of the intake of new councilors following the elections to further raise the profile of the corporate parenting role.

Recommendation(s):

(1) That the Over view and scrutiny committee support the suggested approach to introduce a rota of front – line visits by elected members to Children's Social Care teams.

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

To enhance the elected members understanding of front – line delivery and further enhance the profile of the corporate parenting role.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: (including any Risk Implications)

N /A

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

There are no additional revenue costs to the Council within this report

(B) Capital Costs

Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets):
Legal Implications:
Equality Implications: There are no equality implications

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable: Children's Social Care have a statutory duty to protect the most vulnerable.
Facilitate confident and resilient communities: Children's social care work with children and their families to improve outcomes for children
Commission, broker and provide core services: Children's social care work in partnership with a range of organisations to ensure vulnerable children are safeguarded.
Place – leadership and influencer: The scrutiny of Children's social care performance supports the aspiration for all services to children to be good or better.
Drivers of change and reform: There has been significant focus on driving up standards of practice and linking and aligning resources with the framework for change
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: Improving outcomes for our most vulnerable children will support them to have aspirations and obtain economic independence.
Greater income for social investment: N/A
Cleaner Greener

N/A

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Head of Corporate Resources (FD 5300/18) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD4525/18) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

N/A

Immediately following the Committee meeting.

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Appendices:

There are no appendices to this report

Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

1. Introduction/Background

1.1 During April 2018, the Local Government Association undertook a Care Practice Diagnostic into Children's social Care. The Team made the following recommendation,

Provide opportunities for a wider range of members to engage with children's social care, to enhance understanding of front-line delivery, and take advantage of the intake of new councilors following the elections to further raise the profile of the corporate parenting

1.2 Lord Laming's Inquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié found a number of failings across all agencies. He found that elected councilors and senior officers didn't know there was a crisis in the frontline teams. He therefore recommended:

Arrangements must be made for senior managers and councillors to regularly visit intake teams in the children's services department and to report their findings to the Chief Executive and Social Services Committee"

1.3 In addition in the current Ofsted Framework evaluates the effectiveness of leadership as follows;

Strategic leadership

- The leadership of the council, including the chief executive, lead member (and other members) and the Director of Children's Services (DCS) recognise and prioritise the needs of children and this is reflected in corporate decision-making, action and active attendance at key committees and boards.
- The chief executive and lead member are well informed and hold the DCS and their leadership team to account for the quality of practice and the challenges in the local area. This is exemplified through accurate assessments of practice that drive improvement.
- Strategic leaders ensure that relationships with key partners including the health community, the police, schools, Cafcass and the family courts provide a helpful and effective context for social workers and practitioners to work effectively with children and families.
- The local authority is an active, strong and committed corporate parent – in line with the corporate parenting principles.³⁷ There is a corporate sense of responsibility for children in care and care leavers and the chief executive leads a local authority that recognises and prioritises the needs of children in all aspects e.g. housing, career opportunities, education and learning.

1.4 A briefing was given to pre – council on 19th July in relation to elected members role in corporate parenting and a briefing to pre- council on 20th September in relation to elected members role in safeguarding children .

2 Proposal for frontline visits

2.1 For the purpose of frontline visits It is proposed that the MASH team, and Social Work Locality Teams will be deemed 'intake teams' for these purposes as they are the teams dealing with new referrals.

2.2 At least one Visit will be undertaken annually to each locality, with the Service Manager of the appropriate team.

2.3 Visits will last approximately 1 hour and consist of: -

- i) Discussion with Service Manager(s) / Team Managers
- ii) Discussion with team members (as available)

Within the above discussions the following issues will be considered:-

- iii) Staffing situation (vacancies/experience/skills/attendance levels)
- iv) Workloads and performance monitoring (Outcomes for children)
- v) Referral monitoring and management systems
- vi) Staff support systems, eg IT, office accommodation, communication

2.4 In addition there will be bi – annual visits to the corporate parenting service which will focus on the services offered to looked after children and care leavers as well as the fostering service.

Visits will last approximately 1 hour and include

- i) Discussion with Service Manager(s) / Team Managers
- ii) Discussion with team members (as available)

Within the above discussions the following issues will be considered:-

- iii) Staffing situation (vacancies/experience/skills/attendance levels)
- iii) Workloads and performance monitoring (Outcomes for children)
- iv) Staff support systems, eg IT, office accommodation, communication
- v) Recruitment, retention and support to foster carers.

2.5 Elected members will record the key issues from the visit on an agreed electronic proforma and send to the Head of Service who will provide a response to issues raised.

2.6 The Head of Service will collate the information from these reports and present them to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding) Committee on an annual basis (copy to Chief Executive).