

Health and Care Scrutiny Committee

18 October 2019

Children's Services Working Group
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Purpose of Report: Summary

The Group met on 3 September 2019 to undertake Member Development and scrutiny of the Improvement Plan. A presentation on Children Looked After – the Role of the Court was given and Section 3 of the Improvement Plan, Safeguarding and Good Social Work Practice was undertaken.

A number of requests for further information arising from this and the previous meeting were made:

- Feedback was requested following the CIW monitoring visit re Care Leavers
- Leisure Centre membership – the Group had previously suggested that subsidized or free membership be offered to our care leavers. A progress report has been requested, including the costs.
- Details of legal costs for the service with regards court attendance for care orders etc were also requested together with a comparison with surrounding authorities
- The Group have asked for a breakdown regarding the number of care orders etc, applied for and granted during the preceding 12 months, broken down by the age of the child
- The restructure was in place but the Group asked whether any grievances or resignations have been lodged which cite the restructure as a cause
- The Group were aware that apprenticeships etc were being pursued to enable the service 'to grow their own' staff. Further information has been requested to enable the Group to see evidence of links with universities and progress being made.

The Group have asked that their next member development session be around the budget to improve their understanding of how the budget is constructed and allocated to the various elements within the service. This would equip them to undertake more detailed scrutiny of specific areas at future meetings. The first of these would be placements and their costs at the November meeting.

One formal request for information was made to the Portfolio Holders with responsibility for Children's Services and Education. There was concern that Personal Education Plans for children with more complex needs were not adequately in place. The Group consider this to be a corporate responsibility but there seems to be a lack of clarity as to whether the responsibility lies with Education or Children's Services. The matter needs to be addressed although it is acknowledged that not enough information is available for the Group to ascertain whether this is a major issue. The Group have requested that a written response be provided for consideration at their meeting on 13 November 2019.

A series of Laming Visits have been arranged to take the Group to the end of 2019. Further dates will be included in the programme for 2020 in due course.

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Background papers: Notes of meeting held on 3 September 2019

Group Membership: County Councillors A Jenner (Lead Member), S McNicholas, D Rowlands, E Vaughan, G Williams, J M Williams and R Williams