

Children's Services Scrutiny Panel

7 June 2023

1. Training

Training

- Centre for Governance & Scrutiny – skills briefings and practice guides.
- Local Government Association – workbooks, e-learning portal and events.
- Bespoke

2. Role of Scrutiny

Role of Scrutiny (1)

- Local Government Act 2000.
 - ‘Executive’ – leader and cabinet.
 - ‘Overview & Scrutiny’ – look at decisions & policies / issue reports & recommendations.
- Improve decisions and thus services.
 - no formal power to change.
 - influence policies and decisions.
 - gather evidence & make recommendations

Role of Scrutiny (2)

- Legal power to require:
 - information made available
 - recommendations responded to within a set time frame.
- ‘Critical friend’ – soft influencing power.
 - focus on forward thinking improvement and positive recommendations.
 - avoid apportioning blame and focusing on negatives.

Role of Scrutiny (3)

- Council – direct (and commissioned).
- Partners – formal
 - Health (Health & Social Care Act 2001)
 - Community Safety (Police & Justice Act 2006)
- Partners – informal
 - Housing
 - Transport
 - Education

Role of Scrutiny (4)

- Pre decision (inform and influence).
 - Challenge assumptions
 - Bring insight
 - Suggest new ideas and thinking
- Post decision (challenge and evaluate).
 - Inform evaluation and assess impact
 - Call In (pause a decision)

Role of Scrutiny (5)

- Full in-depth reviews.
- Light touch and/or research reviews.
- Follow up (from previous reviews).
- Check & challenge / assurance.
- Engagement / consultation.
- Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO).

Role of Scrutiny (6)

NOTE: Scrutiny is not / does not ...

- Planning or Licensing.
- Party political.
- Ward specific issues.
- Management of services.
- Operational monitoring of performance, finance, risk and/or projects.
- Inspectorate.

3. Panel Remit

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The Children's Services Scrutiny Panel has responsibility to consider all matters related to Children's Social Care and Education. The Panel will be the main mechanism by which Scrutiny members will scrutinise and monitor the planning and performance of the Council's services to children and young people and the Corporate Parenting role. This includes regular oversight of improvement related to Social Care, Early Help, Youth Services, the safeguarding partnership, Education and SEND. To promote 'critical friend' challenge to the Council's Executive specific to Ofsted improvement and to deliver statutory functions when educational matters are considered.

Part of the Panel's work will be to seek the lived experience of children and young people about the services they receive. The Panel will look to ensure there are sufficient and adequate mechanisms in place to encourage participation, with the aim to inform service delivery, wider improvement set by Ofsted framework and practice standards.