

Children's Services Scrutiny Panel

8 November 2023

Commenced: 6.00pm

Terminated: 7.40pm

Present: Councillors Roderick (Chair), Tilbrook (Deputy), Fitzpatrick, Howarth, Karim, Martin, McLaren, Owen, Robinson

Apologies: Councillor T Smith

27. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest submitted by members of the Scrutiny Panel.

28. MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings of the Children's Services Scrutiny Panel held on 13 September 2023 and 4 October 2023 were approved as a correct record.

29. CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE PERFORMANCE AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

The Panel welcomed Councillor Bill Fairfoull, Deputy Executive Leader (Children & Families); Allison Parkinson, Director of Children's Services; Melanie Field, Interim Head of Quality Assurance; and James Smith, Performance, Intelligence and Scrutiny Manager, to receive the Performance Management Framework for Children's Social Care and the Children's Services Performance and Quality Assurance Scorecard.

Panel members reviewed the new Performance Management Framework, which sets out the structure and parameters in order to achieve greater direction and oversight. It is important to measure and provide evidence of the quantity, timeliness and the quality of social work practice. This requires a strong performance and quality assurance system to be in place in order to evidence the effective delivery of services.

The framework outlines the practice and management activity to ensure children and young people receive the quality of outcomes they deserve. An effective Performance Management Framework consists of:

- Regular reporting and analysis of accurate performance data
- Clear monitoring and quality assurance arrangements
- Effective evidence-based set of performance management and improvement processes
- Ownership and understanding by at all levels within the organisation
- A clear child-centred focus on impact, aimed at improving services and outcomes
- Oversight and scrutiny by senior management and members

It was reported that senior managers have additional responsibilities to monitor and address performance issues. The performance management activities are in addition to routine and regular performance monitoring processes such as statutory reviews, supervision, complaints and service user feedback.

Detail was also provided on the performance inputs and practice improvement activity. A monthly performance cycle of meetings and actions creates a shared focus and accountability to ensure best outcomes for children.

The cycle operates across 4 weeks and includes:

Week 1 – Brilliant at the Basics (BAB)

Week 2 – Children’s Scorecard

Week 3 – Performance Accountability Board

Week 4 – Quality assurance and performance report

The framework aims to provide a suitable system to support service improvement within Children’s Social Care. This will also be used to inform the self-evaluation and to provide an evidence base for the improvement and delivery plan.

Panel members reviewed the Children’s Services Performance and Quality Assurance Scorecard. The Director of Children’s Services provided some additional clarity to members as to how the scorecard is structured and also the detail specific to the contact and referral process for children and families requiring more formal social care intervention,

The Deputy Executive Leader and officers responded to a number of questions from the panel on:

- Performance reporting and oversight.
- The range of measures included within the scorecard and understanding trajectory over time.
- The scale and complexity of demand.
- The statutory measures that services have to monitor and record.
- Areas of focus for services and priority actions.
- Translating and considering the impacts on children and families regarding the quality of practice and outcomes.
- The role and importance of audits, the reporting of data on this and learning available.
- A number of identified indicators relating to the Front Door, Safeguarding, Quality Assurance and Workforce.

Actions: The points for action include:

- The Children’s Services Performance and Quality Assurance Scorecard to be tabled at all future meetings.
- The Scrutiny Panel to identify and agree key lines of enquiry relating to specific performance indicators. The request to be made outside of the meeting direct to the Deputy Executive Leader and Director of Children’s Services, with responses to be tabled at the next available meeting.

30. CHILDREN’S SOCIAL CARE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Panel welcomed Councillor Bill Fairfoull, Deputy Executive Leader (Children & Families); and Allison Parkinson, Director of Children’s Services, to review the updated Children’s Social Care Improvement Plan.

31. CHAIR’S UPDATE

The Chair advised members of upcoming Scrutiny reports to be tabled at the meeting of Overview Panel on 21 November 2023.

All members of the Scrutiny Panel have received an invitation for 28 October 2023, to attend a training session delivered by the LGA on the Effective Scrutiny of Children’s Services.

32. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To note that the next meeting of the Children's Services Scrutiny Panel will take place on Wednesday 10 January 2024.

33. URGENT ITEMS

The Chair reported that there were no urgent items for consideration at this meeting.

CHAIR