

Report to:	SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Relevant Officer:	Steve Sienkiewicz, Scrutiny Manager
Date of Meeting	26th February 2015

CHILDREN'S SERVICES (SAFEGUARDING) SCRUTINY REVIEW PANEL

1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 The Committee to consider the report of the Children's Services (Safeguarding) Scrutiny Review Panel.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

2.1 That the Scrutiny Committee notes the ongoing work of the Children's Services (Safeguarding) Scrutiny Review Panel and makes comments or recommendations as appropriate.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

3.1 To ensure the scrutiny process continues to be fully accountable and an important part of the democratic process.

3.2a Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No

3.2b Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? N/A

3.3 Other alternative options to be considered:

None

4.0 Council Priority:

4.1 Safeguarding and protecting the most vulnerable.

5.0 Background Information

5.1 At its meeting on 12 December 2013, the Scrutiny Committee appointed a Panel to undertake the responsibility of scrutinising children's services information, with particular reference to safeguarding matters. The Panel currently meets four times

per annum and most recently met on 26 January 2015. This report covers the outcomes of its recent meetings.

- 5.2 The Panel has received the current Children's Services budget monitoring information and provided challenge to officers on the reasons for variances from the budget.
- 5.3 The Panel has scrutinised Children's Services performance information detailed in the Purple and Blue Books. Members have raised a number of key questions regarding the recent increase in numbers of looked after children and expressed concerns regarding the high number of cases being presented to the 'front door' of Children's Services, which upon investigation were not appropriate for a Children's Social Care referral. Members challenged officers on what action was being taken to remedy this situation and were assured work would be undertaken to ensure partner agencies better understood thresholds.
- 5.4 The Panel has also considered the Improvement Plan for Children's Social Care, which had been drafted following the most recent Ofsted inspection of Children's Services. It was explained to the Panel that the Ofsted inspection report set out a number of priority actions and areas for improvement and that those had been embedded into the Improvement Plan, which had been developed according to six themes. Those themes were:
 1. Performance Management
 2. Quality Assurance
 3. Improving Front Line
 4. Partnership Working
 5. Scrutiny
 6. Communications
- 5.5 The Panel challenged the progress that was being made in putting those recommendations contained within the Improvement Plan into practice and received detailed proposals for work that had still to be undertaken.
- 5.6 The Panel has also received an update report on recent changes to the Children and Young People's Partnership, which had been established following a review of the Children's Trust. Members agreed that they would consider the Partnerships' Annual report in due course at a future Panel meeting.
- 5.7 The next meeting of the Children's Services (Safeguarding) Scrutiny Review Panel will be held after the May elections. A draft schedule of meetings will be circulated to Panel Members in due course.

5.8 Witnesses/representatives

5.8.1 Councillor Stansfield, Scrutiny Lead/Shadow Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Culture and Heritage.

Does the information submitted include any exempt information?

No

List of Appendices:

None

6.0 Legal considerations:

6.1 None

7.0 Human Resources considerations:

7.1 None

8.0 Equalities considerations:

8.1 None

9.0 Financial considerations:

9.1 None

10.0 Risk management considerations:

10.1 None

11.0 Ethical considerations:

11.1 None

12.0 Internal/ External Consultation undertaken:

12.1 None

13.0 Background papers:

13.1 Notes of the Children's Services (Safeguarding) Scrutiny Review Panel meetings held on 26 November 2014 and 26 January 2015.