

Report to: **Scrutiny Committee for Children's Services**  
Date: **7 June 2010**  
By: **Director of Governance and Community Services**  
Title of report: **Future scrutiny reviews**  
Purpose of report: **For the committee to decide the topics for future scrutiny reviews**

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## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**The Committee is recommended to:**

- 1. decide which reviews it wishes to carry out during the year; and**
  - 2. agree the membership of the review boards.**
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### **1. Financial Appraisal**

1.1 Any costs associated with carrying out scrutiny reviews are met from within the scrutiny budget.

### **2. Background and supporting information**

2.1 Scrutiny reviews are invaluable in enabling members to gain in-depth knowledge on a particular service/matter, draw out key issues and then put forward recommendations on ways in which improvements can be made.

2.2 Scrutiny reviews can be carried out in two different ways:

a) In-depth reviews

The committee normally carries out one or two in-depth reviews during the course of a year. The review usually involves three to five scrutiny members and lasts approximately six to nine months. The review board usually looks at a particular County Council service or a complex issue affecting service users. The review carries out in-depth research and gathers evidence from witnesses, usually through questionnaires or focus groups.

The final review report outlining the board's findings and recommendations is presented to the committee for agreement and then to the Cabinet and Full Council for comment and endorsement. Update reports on the implementation of these recommendations are brought back to the committee at a six and twelve month point so that members can scrutinise progress.

b) Table top reviews

These are much shorter reviews carried out over the course of just one or two meetings. There are several advantages to working in this way; such as being able to focus on a specific issue that would not warrant an in-depth review, using the process to enable scrutiny members to carry out a 'critical friend' role in relation to policy development at an early stage in the process or carrying out a preliminary review of a topic before a decision is made to carry out an in-depth review.

The final report outlining the findings and recommendations of the review is usually only presented to its scrutiny committee or, in the case of reviewing policy development, the recommendations are forwarded directly to the department to help them in their work.

### **3. Topics for a future scrutiny review**

3.1 Appendix 1 lists those areas that the Committee has highlighted as suitable for a scrutiny review. These suggestions were put forward either at the Away Day in September 2009, at recent scrutiny committee meetings and feedback from the initial work of the Key Stage 2 review. Members may also wish to put forward further ideas for a review at the meeting.

3.2 Members are asked to consider which topics they wish to focus on over the forthcoming year. Ideally one review should take place from May to September/November (depending on whether it is an in-depth review or a tabletop review), with a further review commencing in the autumn. Membership of the review board(s) should also be decided at this time.

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Local Members: All

Background Documents: None

Appendix 1 – suggestions for scrutiny reviews

**Suggestions for scrutiny reviews**Topics previously suggested by the committee

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Access to services	<p>At the 2009 Away Day members highlighted access to services as an area that it wished to focus on. Of particular interest was the accessibility of health services and the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).</p> <p>The review could consider how the policies and processes that help direct families to relevant services actually work in practice and then highlight any areas where they feel improvements are needed.</p>
Children's Centres	<p>At the 2009 Away Day members stated that they wanted to analyse who is actually making use of the Children's Centres and assess the impact that they are having on the families that they are primarily aimed at.</p> <p>A report is scheduled for the September committee meeting on the take up at Children's Centres and the impact centres are having on improving outcomes for children. This report may answer members' questions on the issues highlighted and negate the need for a review. Or the Committee may decide to carry out a review instead of receiving the September report.</p>
Looked After Children	<p>At the 2009 Away Day members highlighted two areas that they felt might warrant further scrutiny: matching foster carers' capacity to the number of children who need fostering and processes in place to support a child to move on from a foster placement to adoption.</p> <p>An initial table top review might be useful as members could explore these issues further with officers prior to deciding if an in-depth review is necessary</p>
Not in education, employment or training (NEET)	<p>Performance against National Indicator 117 (number of 16 to 18 year olds who are Not in Education, Employment or Training) has been an area of concern for the committee for some time.</p> <p>The Committee received a report on this issue in November 2009 and a subsequent briefing for all members has been requested (date for briefing still to be confirmed). The Committee may wish to wait until after the briefing before deciding on the scope of the review.</p>
Supporting young carers	<p>At the 2009 Away Day members highlighted that they found it hard to get a handle on the number of young people who were caring for their parents, how this impacted on their lives and what support the County Council was able to provide.</p> <p>An initial table top review might be useful as members could explore these issues further with officers prior to deciding if an in-depth review is necessary</p>
Youth Services	<p>At the March 2010 committee meeting members received an update report on the implementation of changes to the Youth Development Service following a departmental review. The Committee recommended that a table top review be carried out in the autumn and that suggestions for areas to cover in this review be presented to the June committee meeting.</p>

	<p>Following discussions with officers the following areas have been suggested for a scrutiny review:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. ways in which contact with young people and their subsequent participation in activities could be increased;</li> <li>2. how services are resourced across the county; or</li> <li>3. whether youth support should be targeted to particular areas/groups and, if so, what these areas/groups should be.</li> </ol>
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Topics arising from the work of the scrutiny review of attainment in mathematics at Key Stage 2

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Early Years Education	<p>The Key Stage 2 Review Board has recognised the impact that good early years education can have on beginning the learning process for children, which in turn can help lead to better outcomes at all stages in education. The Review Board does not have sufficient time within the remit of their review to explore this issue and has suggested that this area be looked at as a separate review.</p> <p>Due to departmental changes to the structure of the Early Years team being carried out over the summer, it would be advisable if this review was left until autumn 2010/spring 2011 to allow time for these changes to bed in.</p>
Attainment by vulnerable pupils	<p>Attainment of vulnerable pupils at Key Stage 2 was initially an area within the remit of the Key Stage 2 review. However, the Review Board has found that it does not have sufficient time to explore this issue and has suggested that this area be looked at as a separate review.</p>