

Report to: **Scrutiny Committee for Children's Services**
Date: **7 March 2011**
By: **Interim Director of Governance and Community Services**
Title of report: **Future scrutiny review**
Purpose of report: **For the committee to decide the topic for a future scrutiny review**

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is recommended to:

- 1) decide the topic for the next scrutiny review and agree the membership of the review board; and**
 - 2) decide whether to set up a tabletop review in the autumn to scrutinise how outcomes from the Serious Case Review actions plans have impacted on service delivery and safeguarding of children**
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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

2.1 At the June 2010 committee meeting a list of possible review topics was discussed by members and a short list of four suitable reviews was agreed:

- Transition to Adult Social Care services
- Young carers
- Early Years Education
- Looked After Children

2.2 Following a discussion with officers regarding current changes to services and the capacity within each team to be able to support a review at that time, it was decided to carry out a review on Looked After Children. A review board was set up, consisting of councillors Kathryn Field (Chairman), Rosalyn St Pierre and Francis Whetstone and Carole Shaves, Police Authority Representative. The aim of the review was to assess if there were any ways in which the East Sussex County Council's Fostering Service could increase the numbers and capacity of their team of in-house foster carers so that it could support more Looked After Children.

2.3 The review had just got underway when the Children's Services Department was given notice of an impending Ofsted inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children (which took place in December 2010). The review paused at that stage to enable officers in the department to concentrate on the inspection. The Department was then given notice that an Ofsted inspection of the Fostering Service was also to take place, scheduled for spring 2011.

2.4 The Review Board met again on 27 January 2011 to consider the outcomes from the Safeguarding inspection and to decide the future of the review. With an impending inspection of the Fostering Service and no particular issues resulting from the Safeguarding inspection that the board wished to scrutinise, members concluded that it was not worthwhile continuing with the review.

3. Topics for a future scrutiny review

3.1 The Committee now needs to consider which topic or issue it would wish to cover as part of a future scrutiny review. As well as the remaining topics that the committee decided to review back in June 2010, which are listed at appendix 1, there are several other areas highlighted below that members might like to consider:

- The Education Bill will lead to fundamental changes in the accountability of schools and the role of the local authority in education. The committee may wish to scrutinise an aspect of these changes and the impact it will have on outcomes for pupils.
- Significant changes to the funding of Children's Services will impact on certain areas of service delivery (eg Children's Centres, Youth Services and early years provision). Whilst many of these changes are at an early stage of development or implementation, it might be worthwhile setting up a review board now ready to scrutinise elements of these changes once the work is underway.
- Members have also had a briefing on NEETs (Young people who are not in education, employment or training) on 28 February. Any issues arising from this briefing will be highlighted at the meeting so that members can consider if these warrant a scrutiny review.

3.2 Members may wish to scrutinise any one of the areas highlighted above or in appendix 1, or even put forward a suggestion at the meeting for another area which they feel would benefit from a scrutiny review at this stage.

4. Tabletop reviews

4.1 Tabletop reviews 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.

4.2 During the Ofsted inspection of our safeguarding and Looked After Children Services in December 2010, an inspector highlighted to Councillor Ensor where he felt scrutiny could add particular value to the work of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB). Whilst the LSCB is responsible for initiating Serious Case Reviews (SCR) and then monitoring the recommendations that arise from the action plan, there could be a role for scrutiny to carry out short reviews looking at how the outcomes from the SCR actions plans have impacted on service delivery and safeguarding of children.

4.3 Cathie Pattison, Independent Chairman of the LSCB, is supportive of the role scrutiny could play in this work. A sub group of the LSCB is holding a development session in the summer to consider how it can best monitor outcomes from SCR recommendations. Following on from this, scrutiny may wish to set up a tabletop review in the autumn to scrutinise the impact that these outcomes have had.

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Local Members: All
Background Documents: None

Appendix 1 – topics previously agreed by the committee for a scrutiny review

Topics previously agreed by the committee for a scrutiny review

Topic	Comments
Transition to Adult Social Care services	<p>Opportunity to scrutinise the support young people receive when transferring from a service provided by Children's Services to one provided by Adult Social Care.</p> <p>Possible joint review with members from Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee</p> <p>Initial interest: Cllr Field</p>
Supporting young carers	<p>Members had highlighted young people who care for a parent or adult family member as an area that they wished to explore further.</p> <p>An information sheet was provided to members in November 2010 outlining the number of young carers in East Sussex and the service provided to them.</p> <p>Initial interest: Cllr Field, Cllr Shing and Cllr Waite</p>
Early Years Education	<p>The Key Stage 2 Review Board 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 did not have sufficient time within the remit of their review to explore this issue and suggested that this area be looked at as a separate review.</p> <p>Initial interest: Cllr Ensor and Cllr Shing</p>