



Shropshire Council
Legal and Democratic Services
Shirehall
Abbey Foregate
Shrewsbury
SY2 6ND

Date: Tuesday, 6 March 2018
:

**Committee:
People Overview Committee**

Date: Wednesday, 14 March 2018

Time: 10.00 am

Venue: Shrewsbury Room, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY2 6ND

You are requested to attend the above meeting.
The Agenda is attached

Claire Porter
Head of Legal and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer)

Members of the Committee

Peggy Mullock (Chair)
Ed Potter (Vice-Chair)
Nigel Hartin
Christian Lea
Matt Lee

Elliott Lynch
Cecilia Motley
Kevin Pardy
John Price
Kevin Turley

Co-opted Members (Voting):

Carol Morgan
Sian Lines
Vacancy
Vacancy

Diocese of Shrewsbury (RC)
Diocese of Hereford (CE)
Parent Governor – Secondary Schools
Parent Governor – Primary & Special Schools

Co-opted Members (Non-Voting):

Mark Hignett

Voluntary and Community Sector
Assembly

Substitute Members:

Roy Aldcroft
Dean Carroll
Julian Dean
Hannah Fraser
Rob Gittins

Roger Hughes
Jane MacKenzie
Claire Wild
Paul Wynn

Your Committee Officer is:

Tim Ward Committee Officer

Tel: 01743 257713

Email: tim.ward@shropshire.gov.uk

AGENDA

1 Apologies and Substitutions

To receive apologies for absence from Members of the Committee

2 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

Members are reminded they must not participate in the discussion or vote on any matter in which they have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest and should leave the room prior to the commencement of the debate.

3 Minutes (Pages 1 - 4)

The minutes of the last meeting, held on 1 March 2018, are attached for confirmation.

4 Public Question Time

To receive any public questions or petitions from the public, notice of which has been given in accordance with Procedure Rule 14. The deadline for this meeting is 10.00am on 13 March 2018

5 Members' Question Time

To receive any questions of which Members of the Council have given notice.

Deadline for notification: 10.00am on 13 March 2018

6 Proposals for the Future of Education Support for Schools

Report to Follow

7 The increasing numbers of pupil exclusions from maintained schools and academies and the LAs response to this issue

Report to follow

8 Terms of Reference for the inquiry into placements for looked about children (Pages 5 - 8)

The terms of reference for the inquiry into placements for looked about children are attached for confirmation.

9 Date of Next Meeting

Members are reminded that the next meeting of the People Overview Committee will be held on 9 May 2018 at 10.00am



PEOPLE OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 1 March 2018

10.00 am - 12.00 pm in the Shrewsbury Room, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY2 6ND

Responsible Officer: Tim Ward

Email: tim.ward@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01743 257713

Present

Shropshire Councillors

Councillor Peggy Mullock (Chairman)

Councillors Ed Potter (Vice-Chair), Christian Lea, Kevin Pardy, John Price and Kevin Turley

22 Apologies and Substitutions

22.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Nigel Hartin, Elliot Lynch and Cecilia Motley and from Sian Lines (Diocese of Hereford)

23 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

23.1 There were no declarations of pecuniary interest.

24 Minutes

24.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 29 November 2017 had been circulated

24.2 With regard to minute 16.1 the Director of Children's Services clarified that although the report went out in her name it was the report of the Task and Finish Group.

25 Public Question Time

25.1 There were no questions from members of the public

26 Members' Question Time

26.1 There were no questions from Members

27 Ofsted Action Plan

27.1 The meeting received the report of the Director of Children's Services which set out the action plan required by Ofsted following the recent inspection of Services for Children in Need of Help and Protection, Looked After Children and Care Leavers.

27.2 The Director of Children's Services reminded Members that following the inspection carried out by Ofsted in September 2017 the Council was rated good overall, placing Shropshire amongst the highest performing local authorities nationally. She

advised the meeting that the report provided by Ofsted contained a number of recommendations for improvement, and that the Council was required to provide Ofsted with an Action Plan which set out the Council's responses to the recommendations.

- 27.3 The Chair congratulated Officers on the clear and concise way that the Action Plan was laid out.
- 27.4 A Member asked what input staff had had in developing the Action Plan. The Head of Children's Social Work and Safeguarding informed the meeting that following the inspection a Staff Development Day had been held which had focussed on the inspection and that there had been continuous consultation with staff throughout the development of the Action Plan.
- 27.5 In response to a query, the Head of Children's Social Work and Safeguarding advised that progress with all areas of the Action Plan was on track.
- 27.6 A Member asked how progress with the actions would be monitored. The Head of Children's Social Work and Safeguarding informed the meeting that a variety of audits were already carried out to ensure good practice and that a number of themed audits were planned to ensure that the changes were embedded in normal work practices.
- 27.7 The Director of Children's Services commented that the 5 priorities underpinned all the work that was carried out.
- 27.8 The Portfolio Holder for Children's Services commented that whilst the Ofsted result was excellent the Council could not sit on its laurels. He added that there was a role for Councillors in achieving some of the recommendations.
- 27.9 A Member asked how performance would be measured for those recommendations that had already been actioned. The Head of Children's Social Work and Safeguarding advised that performance measurement was built into the processes. The Director of Children's Services said that she and the Head of Children's Social Work and Safeguarding held quarterly performance reviews with Service Managers.
- 27.10 In response to a query, the Director of Children's Services commented that it was important to have a Care Leavers Pledge which was robust and ensured that it laid out levels of support and help available to care leavers. She added that it was important that commitment was gained from wider partners in order to take this forward. She agreed that a report would be brought to a future meeting setting out progress with the development of the pledge.
- 27.11 With regard to recommendation 12 the Director of Children's Services commented that the only accommodation available for homeless young people was often "hard to let" properties that were unsuitable. She added that there was a role for Councillors as Corporate Parent in ensuring that the Council was able to provide suitable accommodation for homeless young people.

27.12 Members confirmed that the Action Plan adequately addressed the required improvements.

27.14 The Director of Children's Services advised the meeting that following minor amendments the Action Plan would be submitted to Ofsted by the required date of 7 March.

28 Ensuring sufficient placements for looked after children

28.1 The meeting received a presentation from the Head of Children's Social Work and Safeguarding (copy attached to the signed minutes) which provided the context for Shropshire's increasing looked after children numbers, for increases in placement costs and set out the increasing complexity of the needs of looked after children.

28.2 The Head of Children's Social Work and Safeguarding informed the meeting that in the period between April 2017 and December 2017 the number of Looked After Children (LAC) had risen by 41, mainly due to the fact that less children had left the care of the Authority than previously, and that the profile of the children coming into care had changed in that the biggest cohort was aged 0 – 5 years where previously it had been 14 – 17 years.

28.3 The Director of Children's Services commented that whilst the number of LAC was rising the numbers were still similar or lower than those of the Councils statistical neighbours, and national figures.

28.4 The Head of Children's Social Work and Safeguarding informed Members that there had been an increase in the complexity of our looked after children through 2017 due to

- An increase in younger children being at risk of significant harm requiring an increased number of applications to court
- An increase in complex court proceedings relating to older children
- Increased focus within court proceedings on placing children with family members resulting in high number of connected carers assessments per case
- An increase in complex emotional health and well-being and mental health issues
- An increase in drug misuse and involvement with drug dealers/drug running
- Increasing complexity with our older young people including trafficking, self-destructive behaviours and Child Sexual Exploitation

The Head of Children's Social Work and Safeguarding highlighted the fact that the increasing complexity of cases caused pressure within a number of teams within the Council and also on external partners.

28.5 The Head of Children's Social Work and Safeguarding highlighted the costs of various different placements and that it was important to ensure that there was a sufficiency of internal placements.

28.6 It was agreed that a Task and Finish Group be set up to look at Sufficiency of Placements and that terms of reference should be brought to the next meeting for approval.

29 Date of Next meeting

29.1 Members were reminded that the next meeting of the People Overview Committee would be held on Wednesday 14 March 2018 at 10.00am.

Signed (Chairman)

Date:

Terms of Reference for the inquiry into placements for looked about children

Context

The Children Act 1989 requires local authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children within their area. This includes a requirement to provide accommodation where the child's parent or guardian is unable to do so. Shropshire Council thus becomes the corporate parent of these 'looked after' children.

In September 2017 there were 319 children and young people looked after by Shropshire Council. This figure has increased steadily in recent years, mirroring an increase nationally since 2008. Of these, 178 of these were in placed with foster carers registered with the council, half of which were placed with friends and family (known as connected carers). There were also 39 children and young people in external foster placements. 65 children and young people were placed in residential children's homes, of which five lived in homes run by Shropshire Council. The remaining children and young people were placed with their parents, in pre-adoption placements or living semi-independently in the community.

	Number	Typical cost per week*
Fostering	217	
Independent Foster Agency	39	£850
Fostered by Shropshire Council	178	
Connected Care (friends and family)	92	£450
Council registered foster carers	86	£450
Residential Care	65	
External	60	£3,000
Shropshire Council	5	£3,000

**costs are illustrative and subject to fluctuation*

Although every child should receive the type of care that is best for them, it remains an inescapable fact that there are very large differences in cost for different types of care. It typically costs Shropshire Council £450 a week to place a child with foster parents, compared to a typical cost of £850 a week for a placement arranged by an independent fostering agency. However either option is considerably cheaper than residential care, which is on average £3,880 a week.

Although it is important to look at ways to reduce the cost of care, it is absolutely crucial that the council is able to find suitable accommodation for its looked-after children. This is becoming increasingly difficult for all local authorities, as demand for both foster and residential care is growing faster than the supply of placements. This means that the council, particularly when seeking emergency placements, has to reply on 'spot' purchases of care, which are especially costly.

Objectives

In order to improve outcomes for looked after children, as well as reducing the cost of care to the local authority, this inquiry aims to provide recommendations to the council that may:

- examine ways to reduce the council's reliance on spot purchasing residential care, thus reducing costs;
- learn from best practice in other local authorities; and
- explore alternatives to placing looked after children in private residential care homes outside the county.

Information required

The committee will need a thorough understanding of arrangements in Shropshire, and how they compare to arrangements in other local authorities.

- profile of looked after children and young people in Shropshire
 - age, gender
 - geographic and
 - outcomes (health, education, offending)
- profile of care in Shropshire
 - types of care used
 - placement length
 - placement durability
 - cost of care
 - comparisons with other local authorities
- foster recruitment good practice from other local authorities
- schemes to reduce reliance on spot-purchasing residential care
- alternatives to residential care

Methods to be used

- hearing from:
 - Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People
 - Director of Children's Services
 - Service Manager for fostering and adoption
 - other local authorities
- desktop research into:
 - rates of children becoming looked-after children
 - edge of care and early help in other local authorities
 - achieving permanence
 - alternative ways to pay for residential care
 - alternatives to residential care

Timescales

Following the success of recent work scrutinising Environment Maintenance Grants, we propose to carry out the scrutiny in a one-day workshop with a discrete task and finish group. This will require considerable planning by members and officers in advance of the workshop.

The committee has asked to receive a final report and proposed recommendations following the one-day workshop.

Inquiry work programme

Topic	Method	Officer	Date
Background information; including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • profile of looked after children and young people in Shropshire; and • profile of care in Shropshire 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briefing note in advance of meeting • Presentation and questions 	Danial Webb/Lisa Preston	
The cost of care in Shropshire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briefing note in advance of meeting • Presentation and questions 	Danial Webb/Lisa Preston	
Residential care in Shropshire	Presentation and questions	Lisa Preston/Jo Rocke	
Case study: highly-skilled foster carers Herefordshire and Dudley	Presentation and questions	Herefordshire Council	
Case study: bridging the gap between foster and residential care North Yorkshire?	Presentation and questions	TBA	
Recommendations	Chair-led discussion	Group chair	