

Strategic Leadership (Political and Officer)

In terms of strategic leadership the Inspection report acknowledges the 'clear political focus on children's services in Leicestershire'. Paragraph 80 of the report states:-

'80. *There is clear political focus on children's services in Leicestershire. The committed and experienced lead member has a clear focus on improving outcomes for children and there is regular member oversight and challenge through the overview and scrutiny panel. Children's services have received additional funding to support progress and improvement in the context of the council needing to make overall savings. This has ensured improvements in early help services, through the SLF work stream, in the sufficiency and quality of placements and in the timeliness of health assessments for children looked after. The recently appointed interim DCS and assistant director for social care have strengthened the local authority's improvement plan. Though this identifies clear areas for focus it is not yet sufficiently comprehensive.'*

This endorsement of the current arrangements in place for involving members (the Lead Member and the Children and Families Scrutiny Committee Chairman and Spokesmen) is particularly welcomed. For the benefit of the wider Council membership set out below is a brief summary of the arrangements.

The County Council established new governance arrangements for Children's Social Care in 2014. This was in response to a need to ensure that the full scope of children's social care services could be considered by elected members and that there was clarity of accountability. The new arrangements also responded to the requirement in the new Ofsted Inspection Framework that leaders, including elected members, should have a comprehensive and current knowledge of what is happening at the 'front line' and how well children and young people are helped, cared for and protected.

There are three Member Panels covering this area of work; the overarching Children's Social Care Panel and two subpanels, the Children in Care Panel and the Child Protection Panel. These Panels do not meet in public and thus allow issues to be considered in much greater depth than at a public meeting, including through the sharing of information that is not in the public domain.

For this reason, the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee often requests that the Children in Need Panel or Child Protection Panel considers a particular issue which has usually been identified through the quarterly performance report. The Panels also consider detailed performance reports, for the Child Protection Panel these focus on Child Protection Plans and for the Children in Care Panel these cover children admitted to care, children leaving care and children currently in care.

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