

SCRUTINY PANEL

28 April 2016

OUTCOME OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES PEER REVIEW

Report of the Director of Children's Services

Strategic Aim:	Creating a safer community for all	
Exempt Information	No	
Cabinet Member(s) Responsible:	Councillor Richard Foster, Portfolio Holder for Safeguarding Children and Young People	
Contact Officer(s):	Steve Tanner, Head of Service (Safeguarding and Improvement)	Telephone 01572 758493 email: stanner@rutland.gov.uk
Ward Councillors		

DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Panel:

1. Notes the peer review letter and action plan and makes any comments or recommendations accordingly.

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To inform the Scrutiny Panel about the outcome of the recent peer review conducted in relation to children's services, and the actions being taken in response.

2 BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

- 2.1 Peer reviews are part of an approach called "sector led improvement", which the coalition government established in 2011 following the abolition of the DFE field force advisers who monitored local authorities. The government wanted to remove top-down monitoring and invested in a sector led model designed to generate improvements from within the sector, sharing good practice and expertise between authorities.
- 2.2 As part of the peer review programme, there is an expectation that all Councils who run children's services will donate time to provide external challenge to another Council and, in turn, will be open to challenge from their peers. In the East Midlands, several local authorities work collaboratively through the School Development Support Agency (SDSA), who organise and manage the peer review programme for both adult services and children's services.

- 2.3 Rutland's Children's Services peer review took place on January 27th and 28th 2016 and was led by Debbie Barnes, Director of Children's Services in Lincolnshire. She was supported by a team comprised of senior staff from Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire County Councils and from the SDSA.
- 2.4 The peer review team was specifically asked to review our preparation for the forthcoming Ofsted inspection, comment on the authority's improvement journey to date; specifically examining services in relation to looked after children, care leavers, and adoption.
- 2.5 The outcome of the peer review is attached in the form of a letter from the lead reviewer. Key findings to note are:
- a discernible journey of improvement was evident
 - sustainable leadership and a focus on workforce development was commended
 - an embedded quality assurance framework is clearly in place
 - there is active member involvement, resulting in improved collaboration and better joint working with partners
 - the authority is ambitious for looked after children and has a well-integrated care planning process
 - They found a wide range of early help services with excellent staff, and political commitment to these services in the face of financial challenges.
 - Rutland's involvement in the child sexual exploitation hub, praised by OFSTED
 - staff, some of whom were highly motivated and child focused
 - outstanding relationships with housing, leading to outstanding outcomes for care leavers
- 2.6 The team made a number of recommendations to support our readiness for inspection and to support further improvements. The latter included the need to:
- have sufficient corporate support for transformation alongside the resilience and infrastructure needed to continue the journey of improvement
 - strengthen corporate parenting through wider political and corporate engagement
 - embed signs of safety
 - ensure consistent management oversight and reflective practice
 - improve our pre-proceedings court work and concurrent planning

- attend to the emotional health and well-being of children looked after through a focus on CAMH's and the use of strengths and difficulties questionnaires.

2.7 A 12 week action plan was developed in response to the reviews findings and this is attached as appendix 2. It includes details of progress as of the end of March 2016. The plan runs to the beginning of May 2016. On the whole, most actions are being progressed as expected or have been completed. Those actions that are traffic lighted red are escalated as necessary. The whole plan is being overseen and monitored by the Service Improvement Board (SIB) chaired by the Director.

3 BACKGROUND PAPERS

3.1 There are no background papers attached

4 APPENDICES (SIMPLY STATE IF THERE ARE NO APPENDICES)

Peer review letter and the 12 week action plan in response are appended.

A Large Print or Braille Version of this Report is available upon request – Contact 01572 722577