

<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>Children and young people scrutiny committee</b>
<b>Meeting date:</b>	<b>Monday 2 October 2017</b>
<b>Title of report:</b>	<b>Outcome of peer review June 2017</b>
<b>Report by:</b>	<b>Director for children's wellbeing</b>

## **Classification**

Open

## **Decision type**

This is not an executive decision

## **Wards affected**

(All Wards);

## **Purpose and summary**

To consider and provide views on the outcomes and recommendations from the casework peer review, which took place between 13 and 15 June 2017, and to consider if the outcomes provide assurance to the committee that we are providing a robust environment in which good quality social work can take place.

## **Recommendation(s)**

**That:**

- (a) the outcome and recommendations from the Local Government Association (LGA) casework review are considered;**
- (b) the committee determines any recommendations it wishes to make to secure further improvement and provide a robust environment in which good quality social work can take place; and**
- (c) the committee determines whether, in light of the review, to make any additions to the future committee work plan.**

## Alternative options

1. The committee could choose not to review the outcomes of this peer review and seek other alternative methods of obtaining the assurance that robust evidence based recording is happening across the council's children's wellbeing directorate. This is not recommended as this review has already been completed by the Local Government Association and has provided useful evidence upon which the scrutiny committee can assess the performance of the service.

## Key considerations

2. The casework peer review took place from 13 to 15 June 2017 and was carried out as part of a programme of improvement, which will also include a bespoke peer review which is scheduled to take place in the near future. It was viewed, in part, as piloting a different approach to mirror the changing inspection framework and emphasis on outcomes and the lived experience of the child. This would then enable other local councils to benefit from a revised LGA approach. Herefordshire Council asked the case file auditing team to take a broad cross-section of cases and to give particular attention to the experience of the child and whether the work had improved outcomes for them.
3. A random selection of 18 cases was made from case lists provided by Herefordshire Council. As agreed, they included child protection, child in need, looked after children, care leavers, early help and children with disabilities. Some children fell into more than one category or had done so over their involvement with the service.
4. It is important to note that none of those cases referred, presented immediate concerns to the auditors.
5. Auditors used the existing LGA case audit tool and have reflected that the tool could be revised to reflect changing national expectations and enable the full benefit of a case audit review to be realised.
6. The full detail of the work undertaken, our strengths and areas for consideration can be found in appendix a. These will form the basis for the bespoke peer review to take place in the future. Following on from this future peer review, actions to further improve and ensure good practice is recognised and shared, will be put in place and proposed, where appropriate, to Cabinet and partners. The children and young people scrutiny committee will have an opportunity to comment on the findings of the future peer review.
7. In relation to an immediate response to the casework peer review, the safeguarding improvement plan 2017/18 has been updated and is now being acted upon. This is included in a separate report for children's scrutiny at the meeting on 2 October 2017.

## Community impact

8. The committee has a statutory duty to scrutinise and support the continuous improvement work of the children's wellbeing directorate. The committee is key to ensure challenge, support and promotion of the improvement of these services within Herefordshire. The outcome of the casework report and the areas for improvement, identify areas that require sustained focus and improvement and work is underway to ensure that this continues.
9. As the areas of improvement are delivered this will have a positive impact on the delivery of services to children who are the subject to casework. There are further benefits to all children in the county and the wider community in strengthening processes to keep

children safe and give them the best start in life. Improvements to processes around children's casework, resulting from this review, will also contribute positively and tangibly to the responsibilities of the council as a corporate parent.

## **Equality duty**

10. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
  - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
  - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
11. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. The peer review looked at a range of work undertaken to support some vulnerable children, including those with protected characteristics such as disabilities. Some good practice was identified, as well as actions for improvement which, when followed through, will enhance the support to children with protected characteristics that are open to social care.

## **Resource implications**

12. There are no resource implications arising from this report to the committee. Agreed actions to the recommendations will need to be costed and the impact of benefits assessed.

## **Legal implications**

To enable the scrutiny committee to fulfil its function, the report should be shared and any recommendations from the committee put forward to the council for consideration.

## **Risk management**

13. There are no risks associated with agreeing the contents of this report and the associated appendix, as the detail in the report from the LGA provides information and indicates what improvements can be made to take this work forward. Risks associated with the actual activity are managed through the children's wellbeing directorate risk register and where necessary would be escalated to the council's corporate risk register.

## **Consultees**

14. None

## **Appendices**

Appendix A – Outcome of children’s wellbeing casework peer review presentation

## **Background papers**

None identified