

Effective Scrutiny of Children's Services

LGA Training and Development Offer

Aims of our offer

As part of the LGA's continuing work to support political and corporate leadership for children's services, we are piloting a training and development offer to support councils to improve the effectiveness of their scrutiny of children's services. Our offer aims to:

- Support scrutiny boards to identify strengths and areas for development using our self-assessment tool.
- Use a mixture of workshop sessions, individual coaching and resources to improve the confidence and ability of scrutiny chairs and members to use their roles to have a positive impact on the lives of children and families.
- Ensure that the wider system of support around children's services supports and enables scrutiny to operate effectively.

Offer overview – 6 steps to effective scrutiny of children's services

Our offer is made up of 6 modules linked to the '6 steps for effective scrutiny' described in our self-assessment tool. This means support can be tailored and scaled to the specific needs of councils.

| Module | Areas of focus | Delivery |
|--|---|---|
| 1. Knowledge of children's services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of services provided to children and families and the impact they have on their lives • The legislative context and statutory role of children's services and corporate parents • Children's services policy context and key challenges • Understanding children's services data trends | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information sharing - overview presentation (include video clip to give young person perspective?) • Personal exercise: put yourself in the place of a young person, parent, social worker • Interpreting data and information exercise <p><u>Action planning and next steps:</u> what can be put in place to ensure that members have the information and training they need to provide effective challenge?</p> |
| 2. The role of children's scrutiny | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What children's scrutiny is, isn't and could be • Membership - roles and member engagement • Building an engaging vision and ambition for scrutiny of children's services • Developing effective working relationships across the whole council and with partners | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information sharing – overview presentation exploring different models/good practice case studies • Exercise: Exploring the good, the bad, and the non-existent – how well is scrutiny supported and enabled to operate effectively? <p><u>Action planning and next steps:</u> What needs to happen to ensure there is a clear view on the role and purpose of children's scrutiny across the council and partners?</p> |

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|--|---|--|
| 3. Work programming and planning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considerations when sourcing and prioritising topics • Structuring the scrutiny year • Methods for conducting scrutiny and context for best use • Support and resources for evidence gathering | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work programming exercise: brainstorm all work programme ideas, agree filter criteria, prioritise • Use of a case study to explore work programming and evidence gathering (Bristol: Safeguarding within the context of Covid-19 response and recovery planning) <p><u>Action planning and next steps:</u> Developing an outline year on a page</p> |
| 4. Engagement and working with others | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that the voices, views and experiences of children and young people are embedded within scrutiny work • Capturing the voice, experiences and perspectives of the children's services workforce • Questioning skills – how to plan, prepare, unpack issues and select the right questioning techniques for maximum impact | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information sharing – overview presentation on evidence gathering and effective questioning • Use an example report and get members to come up with some key questions • Good practice examples of involving children and young people in scrutiny work <p><u>Action planning and next steps:</u> What can you put in place to ensure the voices of children and young people are heard?</p> |
| 5. Demonstrating value and influence | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating SMART recommendations and tracking their impact • Using evidence to demonstrate the impact of scrutiny on outcomes for children and families | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case study examples of the impact of scrutiny done well • Creating SMART recommendations – exercise <p><u>Action planning and next steps:</u> How will you build in follow-up to your programme of work?</p> |
| 6. Creating a strong organisational culture | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicators of a strong organisational culture • Scrutiny within the council's wider governance structures • Using scrutiny to model excellent corporate parenting, and actively engage other councillors as corporate parents • Organisational vision for effective children's scrutiny | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise: why is culture important for effective scrutiny? <p><u>Action planning and next steps:</u> Agree a shared understanding of the role and value of children's scrutiny within the council and how this will be supported</p> |

Facilitators

All modules will be facilitated by an LGA associate with significant experience of supporting councils with effective scrutiny, working with a Member with recent or current experience of children's services leadership.

Structure of support

Support will be structured based on the needs of different councils, and the modules that are most relevant to their needs. A typical programme for a council may be structured as followed with group sessions scaled up or down as necessary.



LGA wider support for effective scrutiny

| Courses | Resources | Peer Mentoring |
|---|---|--|
| <p>The LGA offers Leadership Essentials courses for councillors providing learning and networking opportunities on specific themes.</p> <p>Leadership Essentials: Effective Scrutiny 2-day programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leading and managing a scrutiny review • Ensuring impact of scrutiny recommendations • Increasing participation by members and public • Chairing scrutiny meetings <p>Leadership Essentials: Children’s Services 2-day programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting Lead Members and children’s Scrutiny Chairs with the key challenges they face in the changing policy landscape • An opportunity to network and share learning. | <p>The following resources can be found on the LGA website:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillor workbook on scrutiny • ‘Must Know’ guides for Lead Members of Children’s Services | <p>Peer mentoring for Scrutiny Chairs from an experienced children’s services lead member or scrutiny chair.</p> |