

Agenda item no. 4 - Questions from members of the Council

Question Number	Questioner	Question	Question to
MQ 1	Cllr Carole Gandy, Mortimer	<p>Ofsted reports that most plans and planning are weak and do not ensure that children are sufficiently protected and that their lives improve. Most plans are too generic and do not relate to the identified risks for the individual child. Some centre around adult and tasks to be completed without defining the outcomes to be achieved for children or timescales to work towards.</p> <p>Were directorate managers too remote to be aware of this culture of behaviour and therefore complicit in the failure to adequately support children and families within our care, or was this a deficiency in the training of some of our staff?</p>	Cabinet member children and families
<p>Response:</p> <p>The reasons for the poor quality of practice in the service, including that of plans and planning are deep-rooted and varied. The Ofsted report clearly indicates a decline in the quality of social work practice over a number of years, specifically over the past four years and over a longer a period when one also considers the reports in 2012 and 2014. Directorate managers were not too remote to be aware of this, and it is through the efforts and presence of current directorate managers that more is known about the quality of practice, and performance in the service than was hitherto the case.</p> <p>Reasons include those reported by Ofsted inspectors such as staff turnover, weak guidance and a lack of management grip over a period of time. The report also points to a lack of scrutiny and focus by the council. Other contributory reasons include a poorly introduced model of practice, an electronic recording system that has not aided practice improvement and a lack of clarity about practice standards.</p> <p>Inspectors recognised small areas of progress from a significantly low base including the development of more accessible and more accurate data, developing the functionality of electronic case management recording systems and reducing caseloads. Inspectors also recognised that through the activity of the new senior leadership team there are plans in place, but that it is too soon to assess their impact.</p> <p>A decline that came about over a number of years is not turned around overnight. Significantly revised practice standards were published in the spring and we are confident that we shall see the quality of plans, and planning, improve.</p>			