

Agenda item no. 5 - Questions from members of the public

| Question Number | Questioner | Question | Question to |
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| PQ 1 | Ms Reid, Hereford | <p>The below are from the PowerPoint presentation:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "Reduction in <u>numbers of children coming into our care</u>; increased recruitment of foster carers; review of sufficiency; tight management control of high-cost placements" 2. "referral level will be in line with statistical neighbours" <p>I note no mention of reducing the <u>number of Looked-After Children</u> (LAC) which would reduce costs and mitigate Placement Sufficiency.</p> <p>Would the SMB recommend that a strategy to reduce the high rate of LAC (eg by reunification and increased investment in support for families) is implemented asap?</p> | Chairperson, Scrutiny Management Board |
| <p>Response:</p> <p>Thank you for your question. Tuesday's meeting will be focussing principally on scrutinising the budget. The committee will be following lines of enquiry and any subsequent actions or recommendations that seek assurances from the Cabinet that the budget is both balanced and legally compliant. The committee will be considering the budget implications for children's services as part of the deliberations. I have also made the director of children's services aware of your recommendation and will ask that he responds directly to you with a written response.</p> | | | |

Supplementary Question

Hopefully, the DCS's letter will be on the meeting's webpage. However, I reiterate: "Would the SMB recommend that a strategy to reduce the high rate of [Looked-After Children] ... is implemented asap?" The rate of children coming in care is about that of Statistical Neighbours but the LAC rate is considerably higher (24/11/22 Cabinet meeting).

Therefore, the focus should be on latter. Sufficiency is a Corporate Risk: support and advocacy inexpensive. Costly/over-budget LAC are reduced by statutorily-recommended Family Group Conferences. The Cabinet agreed the CYP Scrutiny Committee's recommendation: "... Family Group Conference model be targeted for implementation by April 2023 ..." However, Improvement Plan (final version) states: "Determine FGC model and approach by April 2023" FGCs would reduce expensive care proceedings (twice the rate of "Statistical Neighbours"). Would the SMB recommend/ensure that FGCs are implemented by April 2023?

Response: The Cabinet members was invited to provide a written response.