

Walsall Council Scrutiny and Performance Panel Work Group
Initiation Document

Work Group Name:	Looked After Children Working Group
Panel:	Children's and Young Peoples
Municipal Year:	2013/14
Lead Member:	Councillor Eddie Hughes
Lead Officer:	Sue Butcher
Scrutiny Officer:	Neil Picken
Membership:	Councillor Eddie Hughes Councillor Gary Perry Councillor Tina Jukes Councillor Rose Martin

1. Context	
	<p>Walsall Council's Children's Services is on a continuing improvement journey. Members of the Working Group are keen to develop their understanding of services for Looked After Children (LAC) and Care Leavers and assure themselves that they are effective and efficient whilst delivering the best outcomes for these vulnerable children and young people. .</p>
2. Objectives	
	<p>For Members to:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an understanding of Looked After Children's and Care Leaving service and statutory obligations; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The legal context; ○ Staffing – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ agency levels; ▪ Staff turnover; ▪ Workloads. ○ Budget – short/medium/long term; ○ Structure in place to address need; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Safeguarding procedures; ▪ Thresholds; ▪ Application of Care Planning Regulations; ▪ The role of the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO). ○ Permanency; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Adoption; ▪ Family and Friends Fostering; ▪ Long term fostering; ▪ Special Guardianship; ▪ Residence Orders; ▪ Return home; ○ Profile of Looked After Children – reasons for becoming looked after, ages, cultural and ethnic profiles; ○ Risks – availability and stability of placements; ○ Transition and leaving care.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand and experience the journey of looked after children; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Does our current structure support the child's journey?; ○ Listen to looked after children and young people – spend time in their shoes; how do their views and opinions shape the services they receive?; ○ What happens when processes fail and what impact does this have? How does the authority mitigate risks including financial risks? • Seek assurance that the overall service is effective and efficient delivering the best outcome for young people, including; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Core Assessments; ○ Pathway plans; ○ Education including Personal Education Plans; ○ Personal Health Plans and information sharing, frequency and access to CAMHS if children placed outside borough; ○ Are children and young people seen and seen alone at the appropriate frequencies and are their views and opinions gained and evidenced on PARIS; ○ Quality assurance processes; ○ Partnership working particularly for looked after children and young people with disabilities. • Identify potential areas for improvement;
3.	Scope
	<p>Members to spend time with the social work teams working with Looked After Children Residential Services, the Family Placements service together with children and young people, foster carers and partners agencies to develop their awareness of the service to looked after children.</p> <p>To consider frontline practices meeting with senior officers to gain a strategic overview and a detailed operational understanding of how a child enters and works through the system.</p> <p>To request information as necessary to better understand the legal framework, key processes, governance arrangements and policies and procedures in place.</p> <p>To take into account all information both quantitative and qualitative to make recommendations for improvement where necessary.</p>

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4.	Equalities Implications													
	<p>When considering each area Members will consider whether each area adequately delivers towards the six strands of equalities, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age • Disability • Gender • Race • Religion or belief • Sexual orientation 													
5.	Who else will you want to take part?													
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and Young Peoples Staff; • Children & Young People; • Foster carers; • Families; • Partners; • Education Services – virtual school; • Council for kids (Children in Care Council). 													
6.	Timescales & Reporting Schedule													
	<p>To report to the Children's & Young People Scrutiny and Performance Panel on:</p> <p>Terms of reference – 26th November, 2013</p> <p>Final report – 8th April, 2014</p> <p>To report to – Cabinet – 14th May, 2014</p>													
7.	Risk factors													
	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: left;">Risk</th> <th style="text-align: left;">Likelihood</th> <th style="text-align: left;">Measure to Resolve</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Difficulties engaging with vulnerable groups</td> <td>Medium</td> <td>Engage with teams early to make necessary arrangements</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Completing all work in a timely manner</td> <td>High</td> <td>Advance schedule of meetings arranged. Consider interim report if necessary.</td> </tr> <tr> <td> </td> <td> </td> <td> </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Risk	Likelihood	Measure to Resolve	Difficulties engaging with vulnerable groups	Medium	Engage with teams early to make necessary arrangements	Completing all work in a timely manner	High	Advance schedule of meetings arranged. Consider interim report if necessary.			
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	Possible transition of senior management during review	Medium	Open discussion with senior managers to ensure consistency of review.
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Date Agreed:		Date Updated:	
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Timetable:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Purpose</u>
w/c 4 November, 2013	<p>Key focus to follow the journey of four virtual children:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under 1; (Cllr Martin) • Primary age; (Cllr Hughes) • Secondary age; (Cllr Jukes) • Care Leaver. (Cllr Perry) <p>The presentation should:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • highlight key areas of the legal framework; • Show 'risk points' which could have a detrimental impact on the individuals outcome; • LAC profile (as posters).
11 November – 20 December, 2013 (6 weeks)	<p>Organised visits to services: –</p> <p>To follow the child's journey, receive information that the child (or parents/guardian of child) would receive and visit locations that they would visit....'walk in their shoes' to understand the experience of children and young people.</p>
w/c 6 January, 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation on the overall service to ensure that it's efficient and effective. Given members visits, this should be much clearer and real enabling them to knit together various strands more easily; • Discuss initial findings from visits; • Identify any other areas which may require further attention. • Discussion with Housing providers regarding strategies and challenges for providing supporting housing for young people.
13 January, 2014 - 24 January, 2014 (2 weeks)	<p>Pick up any additional visits requested at the meeting on w/c 9th December, 2013.</p>

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w/c 3 February, 2014	Pull together conclusions and identify areas for improvement.
w/c 3 rd March, 2014	Consider draft report
w/c 17 March, 2014	Consider final report (if necessary)
8 th April, 2014 or special meeting in March, 2014	Present to Panel
14 May, 2014	Submit final report to Cabinet