

## **Wiltshire Council**

### **Children's Select Committee**

**15 March 2022**

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## **Task Group and Rapid Scrutiny Update**

### **Purpose**

To provide an update on any recent work from task groups and rapid scrutiny exercises linked to the Children's Select Committee (CSC), as well as information on any upcoming overview and scrutiny (OS) activities for the committee.

### **Proposed activities**

There have been no requests or proposals received for the Committee to establish a new OS exercise.

There are currently three active task groups, and the following are listed in the Forward Work Programme.

Conversations are ongoing with relevant Cabinet Members and Directors to establish appropriate start dates for these activities:

- Children and Young People's Mental Health Task Group
- Access to Post-16 education Task Group (*spring 2022*)
- Youth provision and youth service funding Task Group
- High needs block funding Rapid Scrutiny
- Health Outcomes and meeting health needs Rapid Scrutiny

### **Updates from active Task Groups**

#### **1. Children's Select Committee – Standing Task Group**

*Supporting officer: Marie Gondlach*

#### Membership

Cllr Helen Belcher  
John Hawkins  
Cllr Jon Hubbard (Chair)  
Cllr Jacqui Lay  
Cllr Caroline Thomas  
Cllr Jo Trigg

#### Terms of Reference

At its 6 July 2021 meeting, the Children's Select Committee resolved to

establish this Standing Task Group:

1. To undertake detailed reviews of the regular reports that come within the Children's Select Committee's remit and to bring updates to the Committee on its work;
2. To present any key issues, findings and recommendations to the Children's Select Committee, and / or other relevant committees, for discussion, endorsement or further scrutiny where appropriate;
3. To invite all members and substitutes of Children's Select Committee to its meetings, should they wish to attend and participate.

#### Recent activity

There has been no meeting of the Standing Task Group since the last Children's Select Committee meeting.

#### **4. Disadvantaged Learners Task Group**

*Supporting officer: Ceri Williams*

#### Membership

Cllr Jo Trigg (Chair)  
Cllr Trevor Carbin  
Cllr Gordon King  
Cllr Kathryn Macdermid  
Cllr Caroline Thomas  
John Hawkins

#### Terms of Reference

Whilst Wiltshire has a relatively low number of disadvantaged learners, they are largely underperforming compared to regional and national levels. This task group will aim to:

- assess the council's current work and aspirations
- identify the reason(s) for the high rates of 'underperformance' relative to regional and national rates
- explore solutions to raise performance levels, based on best practice across the country.

#### Recent activity

The task group has met on three occasions. The focus to date has been towards understanding the Wiltshire context; the number of disadvantaged learners (DLs), the performance levels and the efforts being undertaken to deliver improvement. Witnesses to speak with the task group have included the lead from our Early Years team and the Intensive Support and Vulnerable Learners Lead. To understand the national picture, the task group is scheduled to meet with the Education Endowment

Foundation on 10 March. Members are also hoping to shortly speak with some headteachers to gain an improved understanding from the schools' perspective.

The task group is scheduled to bring its final report to the CSC on 8 June 2022.

## **5. Fostering Excellence Task Group**

*Supporting officer: Marie Gondlach*

### Membership

Cllr Liz Alstrom  
Cllr Chuck Berry (Chair)  
Cllr Ruth Hopkinson  
Cllr Sam Pearce-Kearney  
Cllr Mark Verbinnen

It should be noted that Cllr Jack Oatley was appointed to the task group but had to resign at the second meeting as he was no longer able to attend the scheduled meetings of the task group.

### Terms of Reference

For the Fostering Excellence task group to:

1. review how the Fostering Excellence project has been / is / will be addressing the issues identified in the report presented to CSC on 10 March 2020:
  - a. Increase initial enquiries and therefore assessments and approvals of Wiltshire Council foster carers;
  - b. Improve the retention of Wiltshire approved foster carers;
  - c. Increase the percentage of Wiltshire children in foster care cared for by Wiltshire Council foster carers (at the time 46%);
  - d. Maintain high occupancy rates of Wiltshire approved foster carers (at the time 80%+).
2. identify how the effectiveness of the Fostering Excellence project will be measured and reported, and be satisfied that this is robust and delivering improvements whilst achieving the savings identified in the budget 2022-23;
3. identify how the benefits of being placed with Wiltshire Council foster carers (who are receiving enhanced training / support as part of Fostering Excellence) for children in care will be measured and reported, and be satisfied that this is robust;
4. identify best practice across the country for recruitment and retention of in-house foster carers.

### Recent activity

The task group held its scoping meeting on 18 January 2022, when it also elected its Chair (Cllr Chuck Berry) and agreed its terms of reference (as shown above).

The task group held its second meeting on 3 February 2022 where it considered the following:

- What Fostering Excellence is,
- Why Wiltshire Council has chosen this fostering model,
- Whether other councils use a Fostering Excellence model (if so who they are and sharing of good practice / learning),
- Key milestones for the project (past and upcoming) – including key successes and key issues / risks,
- Officers / structure involved in “delivering” the project
- Budget - What is driving the savings to be achieved?  
Where is the council investing to deliver Fostering Excellence?

The task group held its third meeting on 3 March 2022 and focused on understanding the data collected and how it is analysed to monitor progress for the project. In doing so the task group also considered:

- Occupancy rate,
- Placement stability,
- How effectiveness is reported and currently monitored by the council.

The task group has two more meetings scheduled and is looking to present its final report to CSC on 8 June 2022.

## **Proposals**

- 1. To note the update on task group and rapid scrutiny activities provided.**
- 2. To endorse the terms of reference for the Fostering Excellence Task Group.**

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