

## **Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

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**Date of Meeting:** 5 August 2020

**Report Title:** Elected Member Frontline Visits

**Portfolio Holder:** Cllr Kathryn Flavell – Portfolio Holder for Children and Families

**Senior Officer:** Mark Palethorpe – Executive Director (People)

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### **1. Report Summary**

- 1.1. This report sets out the proposal to reinstate elected member frontline visits on a virtual basis following COVID-19.

### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1. Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to:
  - 2.1.1. Note the contents of the report.
  - 2.1.2. Endorse the proposal to reinstate member frontline visits virtually.

### **3. Reasons for Recommendations**

- 3.1. It is important for members to have an overview of the issues affecting frontline Social Work Teams. COVID-19 will have a significant impact on our children and young people, practitioners, and demand to frontline services, so it is particularly important that members are sighted on this as we move forward.
- 3.2. Members received training to undertake frontline visits in February 2020. Establishing visits was delayed due to COVID-19 and lockdown in March.
- 3.3. The Council has invested in equipping services and members to work remotely, so it is proposed that these visits should be reinstated remotely using Microsoft Teams.

#### **4. Other Options Considered**

- 4.1. There is the option for members not to visit the frontline, and instead to receive reports from officers and independent reports, e.g. peer reviews. However, this would not provide members with direct contact with frontline practitioners and managers to allow them to have an overview of the effectiveness of these services.
- 4.2. There is the option to continue to delay frontline visits until these can be carried out in person. However, this could lead to visits being suspended for a considerable period of time. Services and members are working effectively remotely, so we feel these visits could be conducted effectively through an online meeting. This is an unprecedented time for our families and services, and we feel it is critical that members are sighted on the issues for families and teams during this period.

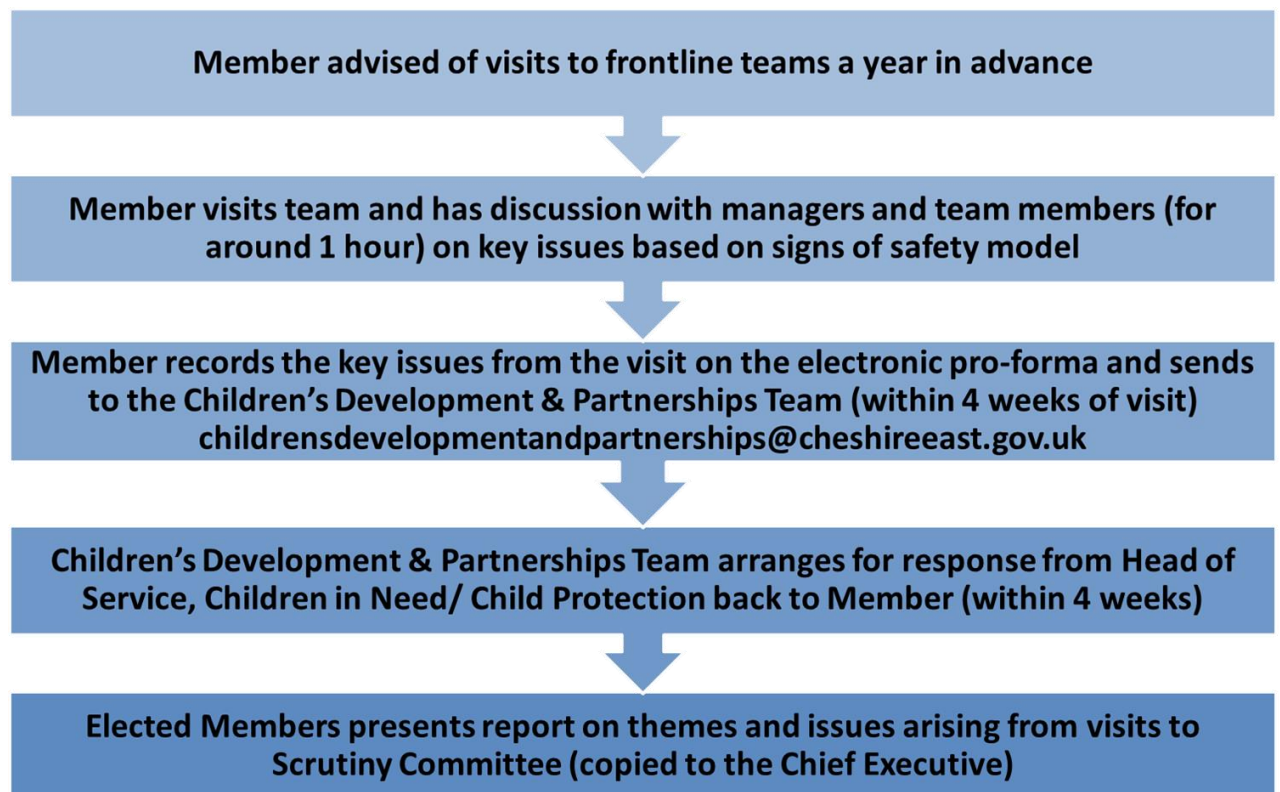
#### **5. Background**

- 5.1. Lord Laming's Inquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié resulted in a range of recommendations. One of these (Social Care Recommendation 41) states that:

*"Arrangements must be made for senior managers and councillors to regularly visit intake teams in the Children's services department and to report their findings to the Chief Executive and Social Services Committee" (para 5. 193).*

- 5.2. This recommendation remains 'best practice' and is still considered as part of any Ofsted Inspection. In Cheshire East, our 'intake teams' (the teams that deal with new referrals) are the:
  - Cheshire East Consultation Service (ChECS)
  - Child in Need and Child Protection Service in Crewe
  - Child in Need and Child Protection Service in Macclesfield
  - Children with Disabilities Team.
- 5.3. Frontline visits to the cared for and care leaver services are being considered by the Corporate Parenting Committee.
- 5.4. A number of elected members were trained to carry out visits to frontline teams in February 2020.

5.5. A summary of the procedure is set out below:



5.6. During their visits, members meet with managers and team members to discuss the following:

- Staffing situation (vacancies/experience/skills/attendance levels)
- Workloads and performance monitoring (outcomes for children)
- Referral, monitoring and management systems
- Staff support systems, eg IT, office accommodation, communication.

5.7. The proposal for future virtual visits is set out below:

- All elected members who received training in February will be approached to see if they wish to be part of the rota for frontline visits.
- All members who wish to be part of the rota will be offered training on Microsoft Teams which members can take up if needed.
- The Children's Development and Partnerships Team will set up a rota for visits for the year, liaising with members and the service.
- Members will be sent the form to complete during the visit (Appendix 1), and the guidance (Appendix 2) one week before the meeting.

- Visits will be carried out through a Microsoft Teams meeting. As before, members will meet with the Service Manager initially, then with three or four practitioners. The Service Manager will invite the practitioners to join the meeting once their section of the meeting is finished using the chat function.
- As outlined in the procedure, members will complete and return the form, and will receive a response from the Head of Service.

## **6. Implications of the Recommendations**

### **6.1. Legal Implications**

- 6.1.1. We advise that all members who are undertaking the frontline visits also complete the member GDPR training.

### **6.2. Finance Implications**

- 6.2.1. None.

### **6.3. Policy Implications**

- 6.3.1. Elected members may raise issues from frontline visits that have policy implications. These would follow due process.

### **6.4. Equality Implications**

- 6.4.1. There are no equality implications.

### **6.5. Human Resources Implications**

- 6.5.1. This proposal involves elected members visiting frontline teams. Previous feedback from staff is that this process makes them feel valued.

### **6.6. Risk Management Implications**

- 6.6.1. If frontline social work teams are not staffed and equipped to deal with the demand on their services, there is a risk of death or serious harm to children and young people that are not effectively safeguarded.
- 6.6.2. Carrying out visits virtually will help us to manage the risk of infection from COVID-19.

### **6.7. Rural Communities Implications**

- 6.7.1. There are no direct implications for rural communities.

## **6.8. Implications for Children & Young People/Cared for Children**

6.8.1. Frontline visits are part of our quality assurance framework, ensuring that services are equipped to meet the needs of children and young people.

## **6.9. Public Health Implications**

6.9.1. Carrying out visits virtually will help us to manage the risk of infection from COVID-19.

## **6.10. Climate Change Implications**

6.10.1. Carrying out visits virtually will also enable us to reduce our carbon footprint.

## **7. Ward Members Affected**

7.1. There are no direct implications for individual wards.

## **8. Consultation & Engagement**

8.1. Not applicable.

## **9. Access to Information**

9.1. There is no additional information.

## **10. Contact Information**

10.1. Any questions relating to this report should be directed to the following officer:

Name: Jacquie Sims

Job Title: Director of Children's Social Care

Email: [Jacquie.Sims@cheshireeast.gov.uk](mailto:Jacquie.Sims@cheshireeast.gov.uk)

Appendix 1:

## ELECTED MEMBER FRONTLINE SAFEGUARDING TEAM VISITS FORM



Please read the document 'Elected member frontline safeguarding team visits guidance document' before completing this form.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Names of Elected Members</b>         |  |
| <b>Date of visit</b>                    |  |
| <b>Service visited</b>                  |  |
| <b>Names of staff involved in visit</b> |  |

NB Only insert commentary where you have gathered information.

|                       | What are we worried about/ barriers? | What is working well? | What needs to happen? |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Outcomes for children |                                      |                       |                       |
| Support for teams     |                                      |                       |                       |
| Any other areas       |                                      |                       |                       |

|   |
|---|
| How has COVID-19 impacted on your work (e.g. needs of families/ impact on relationships/ working as a virtual team) |
|   |

OFFICIAL

| Comments |
|----------|
|          |

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| Completed By: |  |
| Date:         |  |

| Head of Service Feedback |
|--------------------------|
|                          |

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| Completed By: |  |
| Date:         |  |

Please forward this completed form to the Children's Development and Partnerships Team Inbox within 4 weeks of the visit:  
[childrensdevelopmentandpartnerships@cheshireeast.gov.uk](mailto:childrensdevelopmentandpartnerships@cheshireeast.gov.uk)



Appendix 2:



# **Guidance to Member Frontline Safeguarding Team Visits 2020**



## Elected Members Frontline Safeguarding Team Visits

Lord Laming's Inquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié resulted in a range of recommendations. One of these (Social Care Recommendation 41) states that:

"Arrangements must be made for senior managers and councillors to regularly visit intake teams in the children's services department and to report their findings to the Chief Executive and Social Services Committee" (para 5. 193)

### Local Procedure

1. Within Cheshire East it has been agreed that the 'intake teams' for these purposes are the teams dealing with new referrals, ie:
  - **Cheshire East Consultation Team (ChECS)**
  - **Child in Need/Child Protection Team in Crewe**
  - **Child in Need/Child Protection Team in Macclesfield**
  - **Children with Disabilities Team**
2. Visits will be undertaken to each team **every four months**, with the Service Manager of the appropriate team. These visits will be arranged a year in advance.
3. Visits will last approximately **1 hour** and consist of:
  - Discussion with **Service Managers(s)/ Team Manager(s)**
  - Discussion with **team members** (as available)

4. The visits will be based on the **Signs of Safety model**, which poses the following three questions:

- What are we **worried about**?
- What is **working well**?
- What **needs to happen**?

5. Members are asked to consider these questions against the following areas (**always starting with what is working well**):

### Outcomes for children

- ✓ How are you making a real difference for children?
- ✓ How do you know?
- ✓ How are you building and developing good relationships with families?
- ✓ How do you keep children at the centre of your work?
- ✓ How is multi-agency working supporting good outcomes?
- ✓ What are the barriers to achieving good outcomes for children (e.g. workloads, processes, etc.)
- ✓ What changes would help you to achieve better outcomes?

### Support

- ✓ How are you supported to achieve good outcomes for children (e.g. management support, training opportunities, ICT equipment/ environment, communications).
- ✓ What's good about how we support you?
- ✓ How can we support you more effectively?
- ✓ What's it like to work in your team at the moment – what is morale like?

### Other areas

- ✓ Are there any other areas the team wanted to raise, or that came up during the discussion that impact on providing effective services to safeguard children and young people?
- 7. Elected members will record the **key issues** from the visit on the electronic form and send to the [childrensdevelopmentandpartnerships@cheshireeast.gov.uk](mailto:childrensdevelopmentandpartnerships@cheshireeast.gov.uk) who will arrange for the relevant **Head of Service** to provide a response to issues raised.
- 8. The **themes and issues** arising from visits and the service response to these will be **presented** to the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee **six monthly** by the Head of Service (copied to the Chief Executive).

### Summary of Procedure

