

Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: 16 July 2018

Report Title: 2017-18 Annual Report of Member Frontline Visits

Portfolio Holder: **Jos Saunders, Portfolio Holder for Children and Families**

Senior Officer: Nigel Moorhouse, Director of Children's Social Care

1. Report Summary

- 1.1. This report provides an update to Committee on the themes and issues raised through member frontline visits to the Child in Need and Child Protection Teams.
- 1.2. Members continue to be committed to frontline visits and their direct contact and discussions with social workers and managers within CiN/CP is highly appreciated. The findings from frontline visits continue to inform planning and quality assurance within the service.

2. Recommendation/s

- 2.1. Members are asked to note the contents of the report.
- 2.2. Members to endorse the proposed revised process and documentation for future visits set out at para 7.

3. Reasons for Recommendation/s

- 3.1. It is important for Members to have an overview of issues affecting frontline Social Work 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, eg peer reviews. However, this would not provide members with the direct contact with frontline practitioners and managers to allow them to have an overview of the effectiveness of these services.

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:
- 5.2. "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).
- 5.3. This recommendation remains 'best practice' and still considered as part of any Ofsted Inspection. In Cheshire East it has been agreed that the Cheshire East Consultation Team (ChECS) and the two Child in Need / Child Protection Teams Crewe and Macclesfield will be deemed 'intake teams' for these purposes as they are the teams dealing with new referrals.
- 5.4. A number of elected members have been trained to carry out visits to frontline teams. A rota of these members is drawn up a year in advance and scheduled in with the teams. The current process is as follows:
- 5.5. During their visits Members meet with Managers and team members (as available) 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
- 5.6. Following on from the introduction of Signs of safety, a recognised strength based social work practice model it is recommended that the template used for frontline member visits is changed to compliment the signs of safety approach. The proposed template is attached.
- 5.7. The following visits took place in 2017-18. Meetings did not take place in May 2017 due to no replacement being available at short notice and July 2017 when a Special Cabinet meeting was convened.

2017			
April	10 th	Crewe	Rhoda Bailey & Gill Merry / Steven Edgar
May		Macc	
June	14 th	ChECS	Jill Rhodes & Steven Edgar
July		Crewe	
August	1 st	Macc	Lesley Smetham & Gill Merry Rhoda Bailey
September	13 th	ChECS	Rhoda Bailey & Laura Jeuda
October	16 th	Crewe	Steven Edgar & George Hayes
November	28 th	Macc	Jill Rhodes & Paul Bates

2018			
December		ChECS	Jos Saunders & George Hayes
January	3rd	Crewe	Jill Rhodes & George Hayes
February	7th	Macc	Jos Saunders & Steven Edgar
March	9th	ChECS	Lesley Smetham & Paul Bates

5.8. The rota for future meetings is attached at Appendix 1.

6. Issues and Head of Service Response

6.1. A summary of the issues raised by frontline teams are set out at Appendix 2, along with a response from the Head of Service.

7. Proposals for Future Visits

7.1. The proposal is to make the following amendments to the process and documentation for future frontline:

- The form and content of discussion with frontline staff has been amended to align with the signs of safety model, including the 3 key questions of signs of safety and a scaling assessment of the service.
- Categories of discussion have been combined to cover three main areas – staffing, performance and other.
- It is proposed that future presentations to Scrutiny Committee are made by Elected Members who carried out the visits, with support from the Head of Service.
- More Members of scrutiny committee will be encouraged to carry out frontline visits to provide a wider view of service areas and to enhance the knowledge and understanding of Committee members.

7.2. Members are asked to endorse the new approach and documentation set out at Appendix 3 and Appendix 4, respectively.

8. Implications of the Recommendations

8.1. Legal Implications

8.1.1. None identified.

8.2. Finance Implications

8.2.1. There continues to be a pressure on frontline social work teams as a result of the increase in the complexity of cases, particularly court cases with an international element. The financial implications of this have been reported separately.

8.3. Policy Implications

8.3.1. None.

8.4. Equality Implications

8.4.1. There are no equality implications.

8.5. Human Resources Implications

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

8.6. Risk Management Implications

8.6.1. 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.

8.7. Rural Communities Implications

8.7.1. There are no direct implications for rural communities.

8.8. Implications for Children & Young People

8.8.1. There are no direct implications for children and young people.

8.9. Public Health Implications

8.9.1. There are no direct implications for public health.

9. Ward Members Affected

9.1. There are no direct implications for individual wards.

10. Consultation & Engagement

10.1. Not applicable.

11. Access to Information

11.1. There is no additional information.

12. Contact Information

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

Name: Jacquie Sims

Job Title: Head of Service, Children in Need and Child Protection

Email: Jacquie.sims@cheshireeast.gov.uk

Rota for Future Visits

2018			
April	20th	Crewe	Rhoda Bailey & Gill Merry
May	2nd	Macc	Laura Jeuda & George Hayes
June	1st	ChECS	Jill Rhodes & Steven Edgar
July	20th	Crewe	Jos Saunders & Paul Bates
August	8th	Macc	Lesley Smetham & Gill Merry
September	3rd	ChECS	Rhoda Bailey & Laura Jeuda
October	3rd	Crewe	Steven Edgar & George Hayes
November	23rd	Macc	Jill Rhodes & Paul Bates
December	3rd	ChECS	Jos Saunders & George Hayes

SUMMARY OF ISSUES AND HEAD OF SERVICE RESPONSE

Team	What staff said	Head of Service Response
CHECS	<p>Workload issues/Performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The work load is diverse and interesting. The management is good and the atmosphere is positive. • The structure of the team was clearly visible on the meeting room wall. • The team are meeting expectations in terms of the assessment of calls. • ChECS is efficient in assessing cases and deciding an appropriate response. A member was able to support this as had personal experience of reporting a concern. The service has played an important part in improving the quality of response to reported concerns. 	<p>The review of ChECS was completed and implemented in 2017. As part of the redesign of the front door, multi-agency representation has been improved, including health, police, the Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) team and the Domestic Abuse hub. There has also been some input from Adult Social Care. The Health representative has now been permanently recruited. The service has an additional resource to support partner agencies in leading CAFs and there is an increased number of CAFs being led by other agencies.</p> <p>The levels of need document has been reviewed and was the focus of a session with the LSCB in September. The number of referrals has reduced by 13% between April 2017/March 2018. This is positive progress and means that Cheshire East compares favourably with statistical neighbours.</p>
	<p>Referral monitoring & Management Systems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The service is currently operating a call monitoring survey. • There had been a reduction in managers from 3 to 2 following the redesign but the change was bedding-in. • Some of the managerial responsibility, around signing off cases, has been handed over to an experienced Grade 10 Social 	<p>Call monitoring has taken place to support the reduction in the number of misdirected calls. There have been changes made to where calls are diverted and this has led to a reduction in the number of inappropriate calls received.</p> <p>During this period the number of team managers</p>

	<p>Worker who has management experience. Grade 9 Social Workers are also being encouraged to take on more responsibility to ensure the performance of the department is maintained.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timeliness of referrals had improved. 3 days were allowed for referral of cases requiring social care assessments, and 5 days to Early Help. • A presentation was to be made to the LSCB to encourage partnership agencies to take more responsibility for making their own decisions of whether they needed to make a referral. • Monthly review of cases that had become issues, were held. Naomi audited cases monthly where there had been two referrals within a certain period, to see if the cases were being progressed in the right direction. • The re-referral rate was still too high, the step up/step down process being the issue. Some of the assessments were not dealing with all the issues they needed to. • A high percentage of re-referrals were DV related. Monthly meetings with police taking place to quality assure the notification by the police following a DV incident 	<p>reduced from 3 to 2. This was well managed by the service and has provided an opportunity for Grade 10 Social Workers, our Advanced Practitioners to develop their role and authorise decisions on referrals.</p> <p>The re-referral rate during this period reduced from 25% the previous year to 22%, this is now in line with the national average although the ambition is for this to reduce further as a low re-referral rate is indicative of getting it right first time for children and achieving sustainable change.</p> <p>Regular auditing takes place of referrals and contacts received into the front door to quality assure decision making. Themes and learning from the audits are then shared with the wider team and partner agencies.</p> <p>There has been close working with the police to improve the quality of their information. This has led to a reduction in the number of referrals from the police. The Service Manager has contributed to the training of police officers to support improvement</p>
	<p>Staffing Issues (Experience/Skills/Attendance levels)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a good mix of staff in the team. There is a number of experienced staff who is able to offer advice to less experienced staff and students. Naomi has only recently joined the team but has 22 years' experience in Staffordshire. Extra staff are 	<p>Over the last six months Signs of Safety has been introduced within Children's Social Care and Early Help with ChECS leading the way with early changes to questions that were asked when referrals called in. This has been positively received by agencies, particularly some of the Primary Schools in Cheshire East.</p>

	<p>planned to ensure of the efficiency of the service. A part-time personal support officer and a part-time Grade 9 Social Worker are due to be employed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As well as experienced staff the unit has students who are in training and less experienced social workers. 	<p>ChECS is fully staffed and has an experienced team of social workers and practitioner support officers.</p>
	<p>Staff Support issues (e.g. IT, office environment, communication)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All staff received monthly supervision sessions recorded on a spreadsheet. The team managers supervised the social workers, and grade 10s had just taken on responsibility for supervising the PSOs. Two social workers were receiving advanced practitioner training. Naomi currently managed the FIS team co-ordinator. • Liquid Logic could be problematic by its going down nearly every day; although the issues were generally resolved, it was causing down time. • The move from Sandbach House had been a success, giving better accommodation and facilitating easier communication between staff as they were all located on one floor. 	<p>Earlier this year there was a period of time when Liquid Logic was problematic. This was resolved and the system has subsequently been more stable.</p> <p>Regular communication is now in place between the Adult Service's front door and ChECS.</p> <p>Access to the office space has been restricted to staff who work there due to the sensitive nature of the calls being discussed and information shared between the teams that are co-located.</p>

	<p>Other Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving links with adult services • Access to the front door 	
<p>CIN/CP CREWE</p>	<p>Workload Issues/ Performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caseloads are attempted to be kept at under 25 but allocation depends on the experience of the Social Worker and complexity of the case. Currently the total caseload is about 600. • Project Crewe(FACT 22) has now collocated with Cin/CP • The conversation with 2 team managers elicited that caseloads had increased (in line with the national picture). • The lack of sufficient foster carers was still a difficult issue, for placing children in an emergency, for instance. • The plan is to reduce the casework load for Grade 10 to allow them to mentor and train other staff. There has been an increase in the number of complex cases which are being referred. Performance is clearly being monitored and evaluated on a regular basis and improvements made. 	<p>Caseloads are closely managed by team managers and regularly reviewed by Service Manager / Head of Service Cin/CP. The overall caseload of the service has continued to reduce over the last 12 months but the complexity of families has increased. A specific pressure is complexity in care proceedings with increasing numbers of cases with an international element.</p> <p>There have been some staffing pressures in Crewe Cin/CP over the last 12 months and at times this has placed additional pressures on caseloads. Additional support was offered to workers through the provision of 2 closure Saturdays earlier this year. The service was able to meet together on a Saturday and focus on case</p>

		<p>closures. Workers received overtime and were well supported by senior managers, including the Head of Service and Director of Children’s Services. Nigel’s support was particularly appreciated as he bought lunch!</p> <p>The co-location of Fact 22 in the Crewe Cin/CP office has been a success, leading to improved relationships and more effective partnership working.</p>
	<p>Referral monitoring & Management Systems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A conversation with the social worker revealed that the change in duty rotas from whole weeks to one day per week, was working well. • Cases that had been to court were taking a long time to be transferred on – • There are regular staff meetings (One had just finished when I arrived). Staff have regular mentoring sessions and can seek the advice of more experienced staff when necessary. • Staff are given advice about how best to deal with complex cases, like adoption breakdowns and relinquished children. Support is given to ensure that the best outcomes are achieved. At these meetings tasks are assigned to the individual and the team. • The new ICT systems are all working allowing greater flexibility of working. 	<p>The duty rota was changed from a weekly rota to a daily rota for teams. This was in consultation with Social Workers and had been piloted successfully in Macc Cin/CP.</p> <p>Closer working with Cared for and Care Leavers Service has been a priority this year, with a particular focus on planned transfers to their service from Cin/CP. This means that the new social worker is involved at an earlier point and has a good understanding of the child’s permanency plan so there is no delay in this being progressed. There have also been benefits in ensuring that specialist advice from the service when working with</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signs of Safety training will be complete in February. This system has helped focus staff as well as ensuring a more consistent approach to cases and has given staff better guidelines to work within. This system emphasises the family as the main resource for solving issues and looks to give the family strategies to help them in times of crisis. • Staff are now fully trained in the use of Liquid Logic. • The Department is continually assessing and evaluating the systems so that lessons can be learnt and experience shared. The aim is to reduce repeat referrals. • There is a new initiative to visit the Safeguarding staff in schools and to build a relationship with them. This is in its infancy but has proved popular with schools. 	<p>Relinquished Babies and children at risk of adoption disruptions.</p> <p>Signs of Safety training commenced as planned in February 2018 and we are in the process of training all of our staff. We have received positive feedback from trainers about the quality, motivation and enthusiasm of our staff. This was great to hear!</p> <p>As part of the implementation of Signs of Safety we will be introducing Appreciative Inquires, this looks in detail at what has worked well when working with a family so the good practice can be shared.</p>
	<p>Staffing Issues (Experience/Skills/Attendance levels)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proportion of permanent social workers to agency staff – this is an improving area, with only 4 agency staff at present; although there is still a reliance of NQSWs. • We are becoming slightly better at recruiting experienced Social Workers, and our ‘grow your own’ model is coming to an end. • There is now a clear career path for staff and so staff retention is better. The programme to train Social workers has been successful. Staff levels of absence in general are not a cause for concern. There are some staff on maternity leave and 5 staff who plan to leave, one of them is a manager. They are leaving for a variety of reasons. There is a confidence that these positions can be filled with staff with the right level of experience. The decision has been made to reduce the number 	<p>Regular meetings are now in place with Safeguarding Leads from local schools. Reports from a recent Primary School meeting were positive with improving relationships. A number of compliments have recently been received from Primary Schools about ChECS workers.</p> <p>The recruitment and retention of Social Workers within Crewe Cin/CP continues to be a challenge this reflects the national picture. On the positive the level of experience of workers has increased. There are now a number of Advanced Practitioners within the teams. There are still higher numbers than we would like of social workers leaving the service. We now complete exit interviews to assist us in understanding the reasons</p>

	<p>of teams from 5 to 4 rather than replace this manager.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are less agency and 2 of these are seeking permanent positions with the authority. Agency staff in general feel that they are well supported and the systems in place are better than those in some other authorities. • 	<p>for this. Recent themes have been workers moving to other service areas such as fostering/ adoption or moving to an area that is closer to where they live. We continue to have a strong offer for student social workers and the majority of students remain with us following the completion of their placement.</p>
	<p>Staff Support issues (e.g. IT, office environment, communication)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All staff spoken to were generally pleased with the way that the service was progressing, with improvements being seen constantly. In spite of the stressful nature of their work, they seemed happy to be part of a thriving team that was in good heart. • There have been two serious incidents towards social workers. This has made the team re-consider procedures and re-evaluate risk assessments. This has highlighted some procedures as possibly dangerous. It has raised awareness of previous abuse which was tolerated by staff. It has been decided that a no tolerance of abuse policy will be implemented. This review has highlighted the need for a personal alarm system for staff and this is being considered. • The problem of desk space has been resolved by the removal of some cupboards • As stated earlier the IT systems seem to be aiding the team in dealing promptly with cases and achieving better outcomes. 	<p>Agency Staff numbers continue to reduce. We currently have three agency social workers; two have been with us for over two years. One agency worker was recently employed on a permanent basis.</p> <p>The health and safety of social workers has been a key priority for the service following two serious incidents. Lots of work has been completed to ensure social workers are as safe as possible when undertaking their important work to safeguard children.</p> <p>There continues to be challenge in respect of the lack of working facilities for social workers in Court, particularly in the Liverpool Court. There have been some limited improvements with the upgrading of video conferencing and introduction of Wi-Fi. Liverpool Court is due to make a room available where social workers can work. A letter has recently been sent to the Judge highlighting our concerns regarding the number of hearings that continue to be held in Liverpool. For families and Social Workers in Cheshire East this means significant time is spent travelling.</p>
	<p>Any Other Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilities for social workers to work at court are still an issue, but Nigel Moorhouse is in discussion with Judge de Haas about it. WI-FI access is now available at Chester and Liverpool Courts but not at Crewe. A solution maybe to have a 	

	<p>communication system which allows staff to work in the office until their case is due to be heard.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Securing appointments with CAMHS is still a big problem – Scrutiny Committee has this on its work programme. • Interpretation costs are an issue for the department. There is some use of Polish family workers to help out but there are so many languages spoken in the area that this costly service is still needed. 	<p>Crewe Cin/CP has recently employed a Polish Family Support Worker and this will reduce the monies spent on interpretation.</p>
<p>CIN/CP MACC</p>	<p>Workload issues/Performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are usually increases in referrals in May and June as holidays approach with a decrease in July. Highest referrals from the police, then schools. GCSEs can impact in June with teenage referrals. Meetings are held with schools at half-term to discuss issues. Often referrals are made late on Fridays and saved-up at the end of the GCEs. 30% of referrals end up in social care. 70% are managed earlier. It's important to ensure the right cases are opened at the right time. It is very busy just before the summer break. • Performance is good, there are higher numbers going through the courts. 	<p>Macclesfield Cin/CP has a more experienced and stable team. It is easier to recruit social workers in the north of the County and the service has been fully staffed for a number of months. There are currently no agency Social Workers and all Team Managers are permanent.</p> <p>A decision to make an application to Court is overseen by Service Manager or Head of Service. The number of care proceedings has stabilised</p> <p>Performance meetings are currently being reviewed and will have an increased focus on tracking of individual children to ensure that they achieve permanency in a timely way.</p>
	<p>Referral monitoring & Management Systems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management systems with good access to data helps manage performance with regular challenge sessions and work performance plans. There is joint challenge with Jackie Sims, jointly with other departments. Performance challenge has been 	<p>Similarly to Crewe Cin/CP there are regular meetings in place with school and this ensures that there is a good</p>

	<p>done for a while and found to work. Rewarding and complimenting staff is successful too.</p>	<p>level of communication between education and Children's Social Care.</p>
	<p>Staffing Issues (Experience/Skills/Attendance levels)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There were three agency staff until recently, now two: one newly recruited member of staff and one agency team manager. Interviews being held in the week following this visit. Students who have completed their training also interviewed in the following week. C22 is fully staffed. The experience of improving ASYEs is progressing well, there is one per unit. 2nd year progression on Sept 6th are on the panel to go into the middle grade, so will be able to take on more complex cases. Experienced workers take on work around allegations of sexual abuse, pressure reduces with maturity. There are no staff off sick at present. The highest caseloads are 25. 	
	<p>Staff Support issues (e.g. IT, office environment, communication)</p> <p>Liquid Logic is great. Signs of safety developing, rebranding social workers more focus on families, sharing risks, how we engage with families and looking at different ways of engaging, changing forms, training all staff.</p>	
	<p>Any other issues</p>	



Guidance to Member Frontline Safeguarding Team Visits

Version 2, June 2018

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**

2. Visits will be undertaken to each team **quarterly**, 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:

Staffing

- ✓ Are there vacancies in the team? If so, are these covered by agency staff?
- ✓ Do staff have the relevant experience and skills?
- ✓ Are attendance levels good?
- ✓ Is staff morale positive?
- ✓ Do staff have the support systems they need?, eg IT, office accommodation, communication needs.

Performance

- ✓ Is the service children and young person focused?
- ✓ Are referral, monitoring and management systems working well?
- ✓ Any issues impacting on performance, eg, workloads?
- ✓ Is multi-agency engagement good?

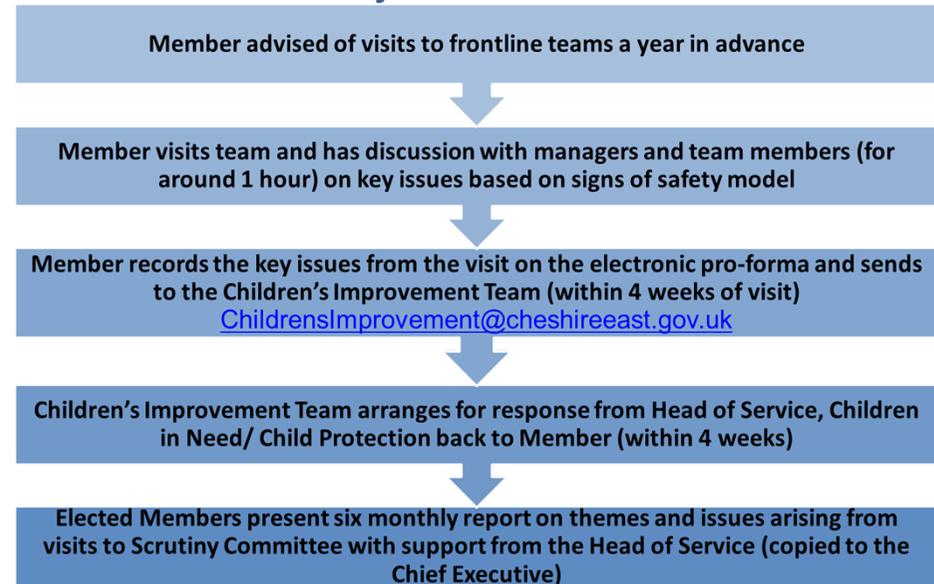
Other

✓ Were there any other issues raised that impact on providing effective services to safeguard children and young people?

6. At the end of the visit, Members are also asked to use **scaling**, to form an assessment of how effective the service is at keeping children and young people safe, ie, rate on a scale of 0-10, where 10 is very effective at keeping them safe and 0 is the service is ineffective at keeping them safe.
7. Elected members will record the **key issues** from the visit on the electronic form and send to the ChildrensImprovement@cheshireeast.gov.uk who will arrange for the **Head of Service, Children in Need and Child Protection** 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



ELECTED MEMBER FRONTLINE SAFEGUARDING TEAM VISITS FORM



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

Names of Elected Members	
Date of visit	
Service visited	
Names of staff involved in visit	

NB Only insert commentary where you have gathered information.

	What are we worried about?	What is working well?	What needs to happen?
Staffing			
Performance			
Other			

Please scale the effectiveness of this service in keeping children and young people safe (0 is not effective and 10 is highly effective). Please put a cross in the relevant box.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

<i>Completed By:</i>	
<i>Date:</i>	

Head of Service Feedback	

Completed By:	
Date:	

Please forward this completed form to the Children's Improvement Team Inbox within 4 weeks of the visit:
ChildrensImprovement@cheshireeast.gov.uk

Any queries, please call: 01606 271603