

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

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**Date of Meeting:** 23 September 2019

**Report Title:** Elected Member Frontline Visits to Child in Need and Child Protection Teams

**Portfolio Holder:** Cllr Dorothy Flude, Portfolio Holder for Children and Families

**Senior Officer:** Mark Palethorpe, Acting Executive Director, People

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### **1. Report Summary**

- 1.1. This report sets out proposals on the future arrangements around frontline visits to the Child in Need and Child Protection Teams.

### **2. Recommendation/s**

- 2.1. Members are asked to:
  - 2.1.1 Note the contents of the report; and
  - 2.1.2 Endorse the proposals set out in Section 7 below.

### **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**

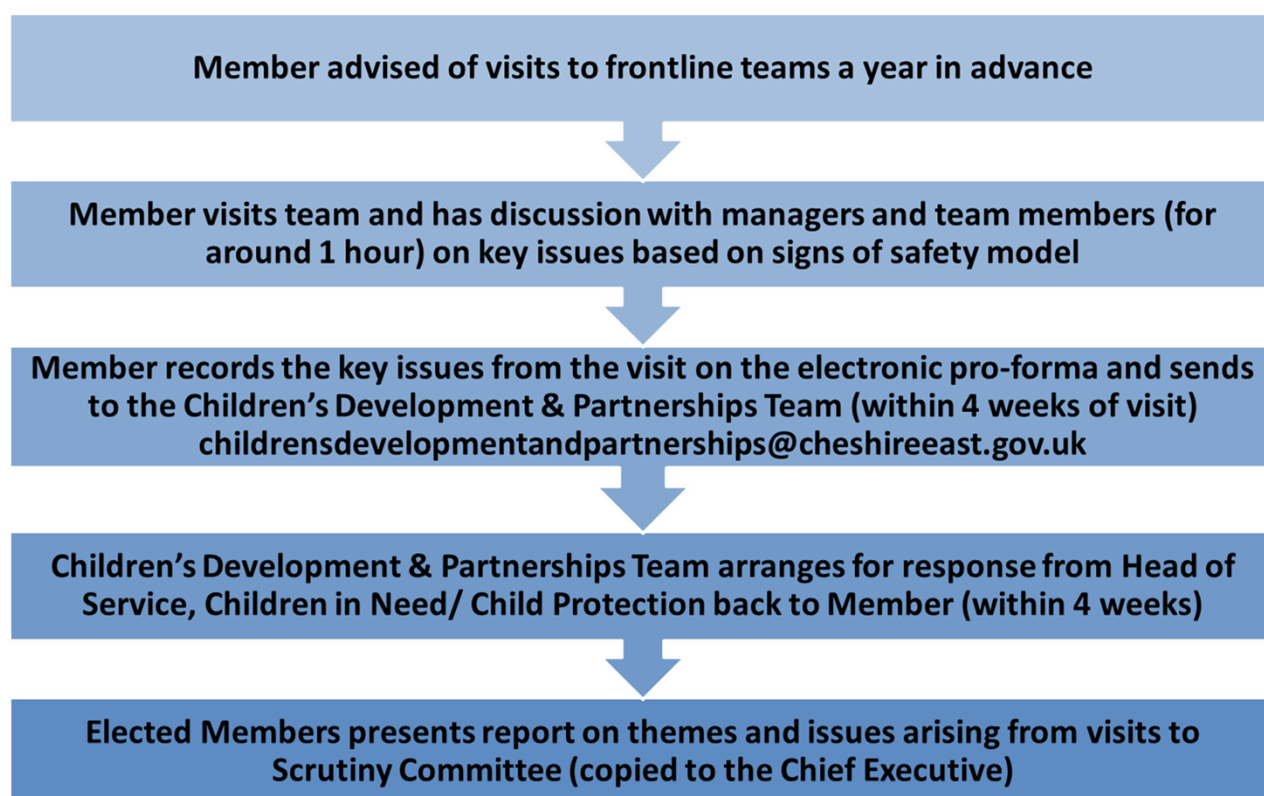
- 4.1. There is the option for members not to visit the frontline and instead to receive reports from officers and independent reports, eg peer reviews. However, this would not provide members with the direct contact with frontline practitioners and managers to allow them to have an overview of the effectiveness 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:

*"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 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.
- 5.3. To date, a number of elected members have been trained to carry out visits to frontline teams and a rota of these members is drawn up each year in advance and scheduled in with the teams.
- 5.4. A summary of the procedure is set out below:



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

## **6. Issues**

6.1. The existing members on the frontline visit rota have been in place for some time. Of the 8 members on the list for 2018-19, 3 are no longer councillors and only 2 are current serving members of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

6.2. Whilst it is positive that we have a number of very experienced members on the rota, it would be good to enable some new members to be involved and to get input from their perspective. It also helps to get new members familiar with issues within children's services.

## **7. Proposals for Future Visits**

7.1. The proposals for future visits is set out below:

- Current members of the rota have been approached to see if they wish to continue carrying out frontline visits.
- An invitation to carry out frontline visits will be sent to all existing members.
- 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.
- Any Members who wish to join the rota will be expected to attend a training session in November where they will learn more about the process and expectations of carrying out frontline visits.
- The new rota is expected to be in operation from January 2020.
- 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.

## **8. Implications of the Recommendations**

### **8.1. Legal Implications**

8.1.1. None identified.

## **8.2. Finance Implications**

8.2.1. None.

## **8.3. Policy Implications**

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

## **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/Cared for Children**

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

## **8.9. Public Health Implications**

8.9.1. There are no direct implications for public health.

## **8.10. Climate Change Implications**

8.10.1. There are no direct implications for climate change.

## **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: Director of Children's Social Care