

# Scrutiny Committee

Date: **Wednesday 24 April 2024**

Time: **10 am**

Venue: **Council Chamber, County Hall, Martineau Lane, Norwich NR1 2DH**

## Supplementary Agenda

**8. Performance Review Panels – Quarterly Update**

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# Scrutiny Committee

**Item No: 8**

**Report Title:** Quarterly update on Children's and Adult Social Care Performance Review Panels.

**Date of Meeting:** 24 April 24

**Responsible Cabinet Member:** **Cllr Karen Vincent** (Deputy Cabinet Member for Children's Services) & **Cllr Shelagh Gurney** (Deputy Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care).

**Responsible Director:** **Debbie Bartlett**, (Interim Executive Director for Adult Social Services) & **Sara Tough**, (Executive Director for Children's Services).

## Executive Summary

This report outlines progress to date with regards to the ongoing activity of the two Performance Review Panels (PRPs), one for Adult Social Care and one for Children's Services. Members will receive updates on recent work undertaken, key actions, updates on actions from scrutiny, and an overview of the forward programmes of work for the panels.

## Recommendations

The committee is asked to:

1. Note progress and activity from the two performance review panels, providing feedback and recommendations where appropriate.
2. Note the panel forward work programmes, providing feedback to the panel leadership around potential items for further investigation.

## 1. Background and Purpose

- 1.1 At the Scrutiny Committee meeting held on the 21 July 2021 members considered the item 'Establishment of Children's and Adult Social Services Performance Review Panels'. The full report and associated minutes can be found [here](#).
- 1.2 Following discussion, the committee resolved to note the proposed Terms of Reference and the operating principles/membership of the two panels, as

well as agreeing to disband the previous Children's Services Scrutiny Sub-Panel.

- 1.3 It was also agreed that there should be an ongoing reporting schedule between the panels and the Scrutiny Committee
- 1.4 This report serves as the seventh update to the Scrutiny Committee, allowing members the opportunity to discuss progress and feed into panel development and work programming.

## **2. Performance Review Panels – Membership and Approach**

- 2.1 The Performance Review Panels are responsible for monitoring and providing challenge to Norfolk County Council's Children's/Adult Social Services functions, reviewing performance to improve service delivery.
- 2.2 The panels meet in private, though are tasked with updating regularly and publicly with the Scrutiny Committee. They have the authority to commission reports and request data from the relevant service areas, and may make recommendations to the Cabinet Member and senior officers.
- 2.3 The panels are chaired by the relevant Deputy Cabinet Member, with wider membership nominated by group leaders according to the following political composition:  
3 Conservative (inc. Chair), 1 Labour, 1 Liberal Democrat.
- 2.4 Membership of the panels is as below:

### **Adult Social Care PRP**

- Cllr Shelagh Gurney (Chair)
- Cllr Mark Kiddle-Morris
- Cllr Sharon Blundell
- Cllr Brenda Jones
- *Vacancy*

### **Children's Services PRP**

- Cllr Karen Vincent (Chair)
- Cllr Brian Long
- Cllr Vic Thomson
- Cllr Mike Smith-Clare
- Cllr Lucy Shires

## **3. Update on Actions from the Scrutiny Committee**

- 3.1 There are no outstanding actions from the Scrutiny Committee.

## **4. Children's Services Performance Review Panel**

- 4.1 At each meeting, the Children's Services PRP receives a broad update on vital signs performance indicators, as well as a deep dive into a specific performance indicator.
- 4.2 Since the last update to the Scrutiny Committee on the 12 December 2023 the Children's Services Performance Review Panel has met on two occasions:
  - 23 January 2024
  - 19 March 2024
- 4.3 Minutes from PRP meetings occasionally contain sensitive information so haven't been appended. These are however, available upon request.
- 4.4 An outline of discussions and actions from each of the meetings can be found below.

#### **Tuesday 23 January 2024**

- 4.5 On Tuesday 23 January the panel received a broad paper on Children's Services Vital Signs, which provided an overview of performance indicators with a commentary where performance was above or below the expected level.
- 4.6 Members and officers discussed the following areas with relation to the report:
  - The percentage of children achieving a positive Early Years outcome in Norfolk had increased by 0.1% over November 2023's figures to 67.4%, keeping the country broadly in line with the national figure of 67.2%.
  - GCSE exam data, with the first cohort now comparable with pre-covid data-sets. Members noted that GCSE results in Norfolk were 1% below the national average, and that the percentage of SEND support students achieving a standard pass in English and Maths had declined since 2019. Members discussed the data in detail and provided challenge around individual cohorts.
  - The percentage of Care Leavers between the ages of 19 and 21 who were in Employment, Education and Training (EET) had increased to 63.4%, as opposed to the target of 52%. Members discussed current targets, the manner in which these were set, and whether a more ambitious target might be appropriate.
  - The rate of Looked-After Children per 10,000 of the overall 0-17 population remained on red, with performance at 69.9% against the

target of 62.3%. Members challenged performance, and discussed local and national trends. As part of discussions members noted that an update on Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children was expected at a meeting of the panel scheduled for March 2024.

- Anomalies in data regarding recurrent referrals into social within 12 months of a previous referral. Members discussed performance and the reporting cycle for data.
- Increases in the average time between NCC receiving court authority to place a child and deciding on a match to an adoptive family. This had increased to 147 days, though was still significantly below the target of 221 days. Members discussed shortages in the number of potential adoptive families.
- Members were presented with a full calendar year of EHCP data and analysed ongoing challenges and performance.
- Members discussed the remit of the panel, particularly with regards to financial scrutiny. While statistics and performance data was reported to the Performance Review Panel, information relating to ongoing budget assessments against targets in Children's Services was not available. Clarification was requested as to whether financial information was reported to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services or the Cabinet Member for Finance as portfolio holder. There had been a budget overspend in the department and it was unknown whether this data should be relayed to the Panel for scrutiny against performance targets. It was agreed that the Chair would take away an action to discuss appropriate financial challenge with the Cabinet Member for Children's Services.

4.7 Members further received an update on areas for development from the inspection of Norfolk Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS). Officers introduced the report, which provided analysis of three key areas which were identified in the November 2022 Ofsted inspection of Children's Services as "requiring development", and how the department had responded to develop necessary improvements. Data was now available to show the progress and impact of the measures taken by officers. The three priority areas identified were as follows:

- The practice response to children aged 16 and 17 who presented as homeless.
- The recognition of, and response to children who were experiencing neglect over a prolonged period of time.
- Decision-making, practice, and support to children placed within their family and friends networks, which also ensured that carers were well supported and regulatory requirements were consistently met.

4.8 Members and officers discussed the following areas with relation to the report.

- Challenges related to effective data collection with regards to the number of 16-17 yr olds presenting as homeless. While data was not available to inspectors at the time of inspection, a list had now been collated through various other sources and a dashboard had been pulled together.
- Members discussed the NCC approach to supporting 16-17 yr olds presenting as homeless, including identification of those requiring support, services delivered to those at risk of harm or neglect, and work with partners such as district authorities and charities such as YMCA and the MAP network. Members specifically discussed the practice guide and protocol put together to help staff work with partners to recognise and rectify issues.
- Officers discussed future training on the topic of support to homeless young people to be delivered to NCC staff which was planned for April 2024.
- Work to reduce cases of persistent neglect. This was identified as a key area requiring greater focus. Inspectors were satisfied that cases of acute neglect were handled effectively, but raised concerns around re-referrals. Members discussed plans to reduce persistent neglect, alongside the work of the Neglect Practice Group and Neglect Champions across the organisation. Members were particularly pleased to hear that the number of neglect champions had increased from 11 to 302.
- Members discussed the introduction of a family help multi-disciplinary pilot, designed to enable family practitioners and social workers liaise effectively, supporting targeted early intervention in neglect cases. Members queried how neglect cases might come to the attention of the local authority, particularly with regards to third parties such as schools. Members heard how efforts were made to create a systemwide, multi-agency approach to ensure consistency, and discussed the potential benefits of using technology to enable a swifter and more joined-up response.
- Members discussed the development of new training materials and briefings on the topic of neglect to support development of staff, and were briefed on the developing work of the newly established operational oversight forum.
- Family arrangements was identified as an area requiring further oversight. The Ofsted inspection highlighted that Norfolk County Council exhaustively worked towards keeping children with their families, which was considered the best practice for children given evidence. However, there was a lack of confidence that families were being correctly informed about their circumstances and responsibilities. Members discussed efforts to improve

communication with families within current regulations and national expectations. Members also received an update on activity to strengthen guidance related to temporarily approved foster carers.

## **Tuesday 19 March 2024**

4.9 Members received an overview of Children's Services vital signs performance indicators with a commentary where performance was above or below the expected level. Areas discussed by officers and members included:

- The percentage of schools judged good or outstanding by Ofsted had reached the 86% target during January 2024, for the first time on record. The percentage of special and secondary schools judged good or outstanding remained above the national average. Members discussed performance trends, and focused on primary school education where a significant number of schools were still rated as requires improvement.
- Improvements in the percentage of care leavers who were in Employment, Education or Training (EET).
- The percentage of family support referrals who previously had a referral in the previous 12 months had increased to 14.6% in January 2024. This was higher than previous months but remained below the 15% target for this indicator. Members discussed activity to reduce this number, including early outcomes from a Family Help pilot scheme in West Norfolk.
- The percentage of children beginning a child protection plan who previously been subject to a child protection plan continued to improve, with the January 2024 data showing this had decreased to 7.6% as opposed to the 11% target for this indicator.
- Children's Services continued to see strong demand for Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), with the data for January showing a marked increase in requests compared to the same period in 2023. Members discussed ongoing efforts to improve NCC performance around EHCPs.
- Officers provided members with a presentation regarding the proposed refresh of Children's Services Vital Signs performance measures.

4.10 Members further received a deep-dive briefing on activity to decrease the rate of Looked-After Children per 10,000 of 0-17 population. Members and officers discussed the following areas with relation to the report:

- Officers acknowledged that Children's Services was consistently missing its performance target of 62.3% for this indicator. There had

been a significant increase in the number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) coming into Norfolk, with the data illustrating a significant increase in the rate of looked-after children from mid-2022 onwards, up to 70-71%. This level had been maintained for the majority of 2023; however there were now signs this rate was about to decrease, as the overall number of looked-after children in Norfolk was now declining.

- As of the 26 February 2024, there were 1,170 looked-after children overall, with 169 being UASC.
- Members discussed positive trends with regards to non-UASC looked-after children had been identified, with the numbers per 10,000 reducing to 58.8 in 2023. This was within the target of 62.3. Norfolk was performing well compared to statistical neighbours and the national average. Members discussed performance, and activity taking place that had led to the fall in numbers.
- 93.3% of statutory visits for UASC were completed within timescale in January 2024, which was similar to the overall looked-after population. Officers commented this was area of performance that the service was focusing on improving. There was evidence suggesting that this cohort reacted very positively to engagement from the team.
- Members heard an update from officers around planned health assessments, given it was likely those in the UASC cohort had never received health support previously and certainly not in their journey to the UK. It was imperative that their needs be understood and met. 90.1% of health assessments were completed in the target timescale in January 2024, the figure regularly fluctuating around this percentage. The service had also seen strong performance in ensuring the UASC cohort had dental checks within timescale.
- Officers acknowledged that mental health was a major challenge for looked-after children. Evidence suggested the UASC cohort appeared to have fewer mental health issues than locally looked-after children. Research into this suggested that many in this cohort came from loving family units before they travelled to the UK. Because of this background, UASC appeared to have a different resilience to trauma if their needs were met back at home before they reached the UK. The service was vigilant towards signs of mental health problems, along with other health issues which could cause a deterioration in mental health. Dedicated UASC providers had a large wealth of experience in this area. The Chair asked if support services were offered to colleagues in Children's Services, given they would experience trauma from listening to the experiences of looked-after children. An officer confirmed there was a dedicated psychotherapist who also worked with staff, offering a reflective space to them. The team also hosted reflection events to ensure team members could come together and share experiences.



- There were issues with availability of education for the UASC cohort in Norfolk, with recruitment and capacity being the main reasons. The service was working closely with providers to support those in the looked-after cohort into further education elsewhere in Norfolk.
- Members discussed the employment of a number of specialists within Children’s services – including a housing and immigration lead.
- Members and officers discussed what effective support to this cohort from central government might look like. Officers noted that a renewed focus on educational provision would be welcome, particularly swifter access to English as a second or additional language.
- Members thanked officers for facilitating the discussion and agreed to take away an action to explore opportunities to present the stories and data they’d received to a wider audience of councillors.

## **5. Adult Social Care Performance Review Panel**

- 5.1 The Deputy Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Prevention has agreed, alongside the panel, a forward programme of work and schedule of meetings for the Adult Social Care Performance Review Panel through until April 2024.
- 5.2 Since the last update to the Scrutiny Committee the Adult Social Care Performance Review Panel has met on two occasions.
- 19 January 2024
  - 16 April 2024
- 5.3 This report updates members on activity discussed at the January meeting of the panel. Members will receive an update on the April meeting in the next update expected in July. There were no actions received for the Scrutiny Committee at this meeting.
- 5.4 Minutes from PRP meetings occasionally contain sensitive information so haven’t been appended. These are however, available upon request.

### **Friday 19 January 2024**

- 5.5 Members received an update on HR & Workforce issues for Adult Social Care. The following areas were raised in discussion of the report.
- Members noted and discussed workforce highlights, the workforce strategy and plan. In addition, members were provided with an

overview of recruitment data, and activity to meet challenges in the market. This included a discussion around international recruitment.

- Members discussed partnership work with the DWP to support those who are currently unemployed into careers with NCC.
- The issue of keyworker staff housing in North Norfolk was raised. Members broadly discussed keyworker housing schemes, and their rules surrounding governance, access and operation.
- Members discussed work taking place to encourage younger people in Norfolk to consider a career in care with NCC. Officers updated the panel on efforts to develop an effective relationship with the Health and Social Care Panel, and the low uptake of recent taster days. The committee suggested that greater communication with post-16 education providers should be prioritised to increase attendance at future open days.
- Officers provided members with an update on mandatory training at NCC, and the priorities outlined in the learning and development plan.
- The issue of MyOracle was raised, and members questioned officers on the impact on the service, and the corporate response to issues surrounding missing or incorrect payments to staff.
- Members advised that some constituents had highlighted that they found it challenging to communicate effectively with some international workers due to language barriers, specifically a person's accent if English was not their first language. It was confirmed that all social workers are required to have an English qualification and must be able to talk and write English confidently and sufficiently. It was noted by officers that international recruitment was led by the Government to help lessen the social care recruitment crisis. A language barrier may occur when there was a genuine barrier such as hearing loss, or if someone found a particular accent difficult to understand. Other incidents of language barriers may be due to attitudes and beliefs towards international workers and ethnic minority employees. International workers had shared through feedback that they experience significant racism at work. How NCC manages these types of situations was important, to ensure that all workers felt safe, valued and protected at work. For people experiencing genuine language barriers, these would need to be addressed appropriately. Officers agreed to take an action away to develop guidance that members could draw on when asked what to do when a service user was experiencing language barriers.

5.6 Members further received an update on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion within Adult Social Care. The following points were raised by members and officers as part of the discussion.

- The Panel received a broad update on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) within Adult Social Care, and a specific update on work being carried out within Adult Social Services to respond to a peer review that took place in 2022. The findings of the peer review highlighted key areas for improvement.
- A clear priority set out in the review was awareness across the service of EDI priorities. Members received an update from officers around activity to strengthen knowledge and build confidence amongst staff.
- Members further heard around efforts in place to reduce incidents of racism – and the early stages of an action to address concerns as a priority.
- Panel members agreed to maintain oversight of activity taking place to address priorities set out in the peer review.

## 6. Work Programming

6.1 The Performance Review Panel terms of Reference set out a clear work programming relationship with Scrutiny. While the panels are responsible for setting their own work programmes, the Scrutiny committee may suggest additional topics for the Panels to consider.

6.2 Please note, that as with the Scrutiny Committee forward work programme, all of the below are subject to change, adapting to pressures as needed.

### Children’s Performance Review Panel

The following plan has been agreed:

May 24	An overview of CS vital signs performance indicators
July 24	An overview of CS vital signs performance indicators
September 24	An overview of CS vital signs performance indicators

### Adult’s Performance Review Panel

The following plan has been agreed:

May 24	Forensic mental health support
July 24	Nothing currently scheduled
September 24	Nothing currently scheduled

The above is subject to change, depending on the timeframe/outcome of a likely CQC inspection of Norfolk County Council ASC services.

## 7. Action plan

7.1 The below is a summary of current and outstanding actions arising as a result of the panels. It includes significant actions from the last three meetings of each panel, with an indication of both the action owner and progress to date. The tracker will be updated over time, with the Scrutiny Committee kept up to date on key recommendations and actions from the panel.

Date	Action/Recommendation	Owner	Update
Children's Services PRP (CS PRP)			
27/03/2023	The Panel Reviewed, Commented on, supported and challenged the performance of Children's Services as it related to the provision of appropriate care placements for looked after children.	CS PRP	Completed
	A follow up report requested on Ofsted thematic audits and outcomes.	CS PRP	Completed
	A future deep dive review was requested on post 16 exploitation.	Children's Services	Completed
	Future reports to provide data on looked after children with clearer distinction of support provided to Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children.	Children's Services	Completed.
	A future deep dive scheduled to look at Ks2 data.	Children's Services	Completed – deep dive considered by committee in September 23.
13/07/2023	The Panel Reviewed, Commented on, supported and challenged the performance of Children's Services broadly, with a specific discussion around elective home education in Norfolk.	CS PRP	Completed, with feedback provided to officers.
	Requested that a member briefing around the work of the elective Home Education team should be arranged for members.	Elective Home Education Team/Committee Support Team	Completed, member briefing session delivered in October.
18/09/2023	Panel members requested that future updates on care leavers who are in EET/NEET include broader narrative to support effective challenge.	Children's Services	Completed
	The panel requested that the following previous deep dive	Committee team	Completed

	<p>papers be circulated to members for questions and comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- percentage of cases with a current exploitation risk level which is below the original level of risk recorded at initial screening,</li> <li>- percentage of Care Leavers who are in Education, Employment or Training (EET).</li> </ul>		
	The Panel Reviewed, Commented on, supported and challenged the performance of Children's Services broadly, with a specific discussion around Ks2 outcomes.	CS PRP	Completed
	Members requested that an update on learning ambitions Ks2 be scheduled for a future meeting of the panel.	Children's Services	Completed – Update received in March 24
16/11/2023	The Panel Reviewed, Commented on, supported and challenged the performance of Children's Services with regards to vital signs.	CS PRP	Completed
	<p>The Panel identified the following areas to be investigated further in future deep dives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The number of looked-after children and unaccompanied asylum seekers in Norfolk.</li> <li>-Referrals into social care and trends in reporting over time.</li> <li>-Peaks in EHCP requests to better understand underlying drivers and narrative.</li> </ul>	Children's Services	<p>Partially complete</p> <p>UASC item considered in March 24.</p> <p>Discussions ongoing to appropriately place additional items over the course of the next two meetings.</p>
	The Panel commented and reviewed analysis of permanent exclusions and alternative provision in Norfolk.	CS PRP	Completed
	The Panel considered the effectiveness and appropriateness of support, challenge, and the development of new provision under Local First inclusion.	CS PRP	Completed
	The Panel requested that an all-member briefing be delivered on the topic of permanent exclusions and alternative provision.	Children's Services	To be scheduled

23/01/2024	The Panel resolved to review and comment on Children's Services performance against the Vital Signs Measures. Panel Members agreed that no additional items required a deep dive at present.	CS PRP	Completed
	The Panel resolved to review the actions taken by Norfolk County Council's Children's Services in relation to the areas identified by Ofsted for development, and their effectiveness on impacting positively on the lives of children and young people.	CS PRP	Completed
19/03/2024	The Panel resolved to review and comment on Children's Services performance against the Vital Signs Measures.	CS PRP	Completed
	Members commented on, questioned and challenged officers around performance with relation to the number of looked after children per 10,000 of the 0-17 population, with particular focus on the UASC cohort. Members discussed how best to share the work of Children's Services in this area with a broader audience of members. This could include taking the item to a future meeting of the People and Communities Select Committee.	CS PRP	Completed
<b>Adult Social Care PRP (ASC PRP)</b>			
18/04/2023	Panel members discussed the report and challenged the service around assurance preparation, with a clear focus on readiness for inspection	ASC PRP	Completed, with feedback provided to officers.
	Members requested that an update be provided at a future meeting on the work that is being undertaken to address the issues identified in the regional self-assessment tool.	ASC PRP/Adult Social Services	Completed
20/06/2023	Members thanked officers for the organisation and delivery of a visit to Swallowtail Place – an assisted living scheme in Acle.	ASC PRP	Completed
	Members worked with officers to outline expectations for a future workshop session with service users.	ASC PRP	Completed – 1:1 engagement activity is currently being scoped

			and delivered by social care colleagues.
03/10/23	Members requested that feedback provided around the frontline experience of councillors supported vulnerable residents in their community be shared with colleagues working on wider system transformation.	Adult Social Services	Completed
	Information around 'Right Care, Right Person' to come back to a future meeting, with wider communications around progress shared with the broader membership of the council.	Adult Social Services	Ongoing
19/01/2024	Officers agreed to develop guidance that members could draw on when asked what to do when a service user was experiencing language barriers.	Adult Social Services	Ongoing
	A further update on Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion within Adult Social Care to be received by the panel later in the year	AS PRP	Not yet scheduled

## 8. Resource Implications

8.1 **Staff:** None identified

8.2 **Property:** None identified

8.3 **IT:** None identified

## 9. Other Implications

9.1 **Legal Implications:** None identified

9.2 **Human Rights Implications:** None identified

9.3 **Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) (this must be included):** N/A

9.4 **Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA):** N/A

**9.5 Health and Safety implications (where appropriate):** N/A

**9.6 Sustainability implications (where appropriate):** N/A

**9.7 Any Other Implications:** None identified

## **10. Risk Implications / Assessment**

10.1 N/A

## **11. Select Committee Comments**

11.1 No specific comments, though the panel are able to refer matters to the Select Committee where appropriate, as set out in the PRP Terms of Reference.

## **12. Recommendations**

To:

1. Note progress and activity from the two performance review panels, providing feedback and recommendations where appropriate.
2. Note the panel forward work programmes, providing feedback to the panel leadership around potential items for further investigation.

## **13. Background Papers**

13.1 None

### **Officer Contact**

If you have any questions about matters contained within this paper, please get in touch with:

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