

S31. SCRUTINY PANEL UPDATE – OUTCOMES FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

The committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services providing an update on the work of the panel to date. Appended to the report were the panel's scoping document and four notes of meeting. Kathy McCarroll provided an overview of the report and highlighted that the next meeting of the panel would hear evidence from young people and their representatives.

Members agreed that it was important to hear the views of young people and asked why that meeting was to be held in early 2016 when it had initially been scheduled for late 2015. Kathy McCarroll advised that a meeting to specifically consider corporate parenting had been added to the schedule and therefore the original schedule had been revised.

The committee asked if, in its evidence gathering, the panel had identified addiction issues in families as a significant issue. Councillor Meiklejohn, the convener of the scrutiny panel, stated that addiction was emerging as a key issue and she noted that the Community Planning Partnership were working on the area as a priority. Members discussed the role of the Falkirk Alcohol and Drug Partnership and Fiona Campbell advised that the partnership was reviewing the balance of care to consider more community support. Further, the Community Planning Partnership's strategic plan was under review and would have more focus on substance misuse.

Members asked for further information on a Champions Board, which had been discussed at the corporate parenting meeting of the scrutiny panel. Fiona Campbell stated that the panel had considered what the best approach to corporate parenting for looked after children would be. They had been provided with examples of practice from across the United Kingdom, a number of authorities had already created Champions Boards. The examples showed that a variety of roles and remits were in place in different authorities for their Champions Boards. In some cases the Board was there only to promote a child's interests, while in other cases there would be direct contact with looked after children. The Council had submitted a funding bid in order to engage young people for their views on what they wanted from a Champions Board, it was felt to be important that the aspirations of the Council matched those of young people. Kathy McCarroll advised that the Service had received notification that the Council's funding bid had been successful.

The committee asked how other Champions Boards had measured success. Fiona Campbell stated that as Champions Boards were a relatively new approach most evidence was anecdotal on the different models and what their impact had been. Where authorities felt their model was not working well they had revised the approach taken.

Decision

The committee noted the progress made by the scrutiny panel – outcomes for looked after children to date and its programme of meetings for 2016.