



Committee and Date

People Overview and Scrutiny
Committee

22nd April 2026

PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2026

In The Council Chamber, The Guildhall, Frankwell Quay, Shrewsbury, SY3 8HQ

6.00 - 8.05 pm

Responsible Officer: Shelley Davies

Email: shelley.davies@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01743 257718

Present

Councillor Andy Davis (Chairman)

Councillors Mandy Duncan (Vice Chairman), Thomas Clayton, Susan Coleman,
Jamie Daniels, Mark Morris and Julian Dean (substitute for Duncan Kerr).

Other Members in Attendance:

Councillor Ruth Houghton – Portfolio Holder for Social Care

Councillor Andy Hall – Portfolio Holder for Children and Education

Councillor Roger Evans – Portfolio Holder for Finance (remotely)

Councillor Dawn Husemann – Group Leader (remotely)

Officers in Attendance:

Sophie Foster – Overview and Scrutiny Officer

Tanya Miles – Interim Chief Executive & Executive Director DASS

David Shaw – Director Children's Services

Sonya Miller – Service Director Children's & Young People

Natasha Moody - Families First Partnership (FFP) Strategic Lead

John Rowe – Head of Education Quality and Safeguarding

Jo Kelly – Virtual Head Teacher

Michelle Williams – Service Manager Long Term Support

23 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Duncan Kerr (Substitute: Julian Dean),
Councillor Alan Mosley, Councillor Terri Trickett and Gemma Martin, Diocesan Board
of Education.

24 Disclosable Interests

None received.

25 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 22nd October 2025 be confirmed as an
accurate record.

26 Public Questions

A public question was received from Mr John Palmer, in relation to the Children's services reforms.

The full question and response provided can be found on: [Public Question - POSC 14.01.26.pdf](#)

As a supplementary question, Mr Palmer asked the Chairman if he would have liked to have seen even more professionals attending the meeting, excited by the positive actions being introduced in children's services reforms.

The Chairman, Councillor Andy Davis, noted his appreciation to the Officers and Portfolio Holders for their presence and acknowledged the considerable work undertaken in preparing the report.

27 Member Questions

There were no member questions.

The Chairman announced that item 7, Children's Services Reforms, would be taken first, followed by item 6, Quarterly Performance Monitoring Report. The remaining items would proceed as originally scheduled.

28 Children's Services Reforms

David Shaw, Director Children's Services presented the report which gave an overview of the recent national reforms to children's services. He referred to the wide-ranging and fundamental nature of the reforms, describing them as the most significant changes in many years and highlighted the principle of "One Council" working together to achieve the best outcomes for children, young people, and families in Shropshire.

Natasha Moody, Families First Partnership Strategic Lead gave a presentation detailing the following five key reform programmes:

- Families First Partnership
- Family Hubs/Best Start in Life
- Youth Strategy
- Private Law Proceedings Pathfinder
- SEND and Alternative Provision Reform

It was explained the reforms, which focused on early intervention and prevention in response to poorer outcomes and a rise in the number of children in care since 2010, were being integrated into a single transformation programme and delivery plan, with key personnel appointed from the local authority, police, and health.

Natasha Moody provided an overview of the progress made to date and encouraged the Committee to ensure that the partnership remains accountable for achieving its objectives and asked members to share feedback from their communities with the Impact Board.

In response to questions members were advised that:

- Existing performance data and documents such as the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment were being used to identify family needs.
- A "needs and harms analysis" was required by the Department of Education to review various indicators across local areas. It was mentioned that the results of this analysis would be presented at a future meeting.
- Schools were actively involved in the programme with a School Leader and Academy Chief Executive leading the "family help" task and finish group.
- The fire service should be included as a partner and the importance of involving other partners such as the voluntary sector to make the programme successful was also highlighted.
- Transport was a significant barrier for young people, especially in rural areas which affected access to work and services. It was emphasised that transport challenges cannot be solved by Children's Services alone and required a corporate, Council-wide approach.
- Shropshire and the West Midlands regularly share of good practice across the region although there was a recognition that needs differ across communities.
- Suitable places need to be identified to ensure that services are delivered where people actually go and feel comfortable such as community centres and family hubs.
- The strategy was to select sites based on data showing areas of deprivation and need, but it was acknowledged that there might be challenges to locate available buildings in those priority areas.
- The Council expects anyone engaging with children, including school clubs and similar roles, to have safeguarding training but a response would be provided in relation to the query about whether minibuss drivers were required to have safeguarding training.

Officers were thanked for their report.

RECOMMENDED:

That the report be noted and the Committee receive an update on progress in 12 months.

29 Quarterly Performance Monitoring Report

Tanya Miles, Interim Chief Executive and Executive Director DASS introduced the Performance Monitoring Report Quarter 1 which gave an update on key areas of performance across Care & Wellbeing and Children and Young People services.

John Rowe, Head of Education Quality and Safeguarding outlined key areas of the report in relation to the Designated Schools Grant (DSG). It was explained that the DSG was made up of several blocks: schools, early years, high needs, and central school services and that Shropshire faced significant pressure in the high needs block, currently running a £41 million deficit.

John Rowe noted that the deficit was not on the Council's core budget sheet due to a statutory override and was driven by a 70% increase in Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) since 2019, more children in independent and special schools, and increased top-up funding for mainstream schools. Strategies to manage the deficit were outlined and it was noted that the Council was working with the Department for Education and the Schools Forum on a management plan, but the future of the statutory override and any government bailout was still uncertain.

In response to questions in relation to the DSG members were advised that:

- The team was not spending significant time modelling various hypothetical scenarios for the DSG deficit as these were uncertain and efforts were instead focused on managing the current situation and bringing the deficit back to balance using available strategies.
- The Schools Forum was advisory but also a formal committee which made recommendations on funding formulas and resource allocations. It has a specific subgroup overseeing the DSG management plan and their involvement ensured schools understand the challenges faced by the Council.
- The increase in children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) was not only in the UK but also seen across Western Europe.
- The Chairman recommended that a briefing for all Members on the DSG be arranged, as it was a complex topic involving the allocation of funds to local authorities and schools, with various categories and significant financial implications.

Jo Kelly, Virtual School Headteacher, outlined key areas of the report in relation to Elective Home Education (EHE). She explained that safeguarding was a concern since these children were less visible to authorities and that Shropshire's EHE rate, currently at 791 was slightly above the national average. It was noted that priority visits target those on child protection plans, and Shropshire was proactively preparing for new laws that will generally require children under protection plans to return to school, barring exceptional cases.

In response to questions members were advised that:

- There was a rise in EHE numbers after COVID, with figures increasing from 539 in 2022-23 to 791 at present.
- The Council tracks children eligible for free school meals who were electively home educated but does not provide meals as responsibility shifts to parents once a child is home educated. It was added that the team monitored this group in their data and encouraged a return to school if needed, but there was no direct provision or guarantee of nutrition for these children.
- EHE requests have been previously refused based on safeguarding concerns identified during multi-agency checks.
- The Council has worked with waste collection services and the postal service to encourage them to use their observations to help identify safeguarding concerns in the community.
- When mental health was cited as a reason for EHE, education welfare officers work with families and schools to explore if a return to school was appropriate and provide signposting to mental health resources. If parents proceed with EHE, they receive a welcome pack with health information.

Sonya Miller, Service Director Children's & Young People outlined key areas of the report in relation to fostering. She highlighted the national challenge of declining foster carers but noted that Shropshire was bucking the trend with increased recruitment, especially of kinship and connected carers.

In response to questions members were advised that:

- After age 18, fostering allowances end unless the young person stays under "staying put" arrangements, which provide financial support at a different rate.
- Care leavers, were supported with accommodation and other services up to age 25, including options like supported lodgings or help with independent tenancies.
- There was an aging cohort of foster carers in Shropshire, with some fostering well into their 70s. The Council was addressing this by running targeted campaigns to recruit younger families, single carers, and those interested in short breaks, as well as dispelling perceived barriers to fostering.

Michelle Williams, Service Manager Long Term Support outlined key areas of the report in relation to Adult Social Care. It was reported that Shropshire faced high demand from self-funding clients whose assets have dropped below the threshold, often due to expensive care packages. In response to this the Council was working with partners to provide better information and advice to prevent rapid depletion of assets and ensure appropriate care at reasonable rates. Members were also advised that a new policy on deferred payments (supporting people with property assets

entering care homes) was being developed and would be reported to scrutiny in due course.

All officers were thanked for their reports.

RECOMMENDED:

The Committee noted the report and agreed the following proposals:

- That a task and finish group on SEND transport, open to all members be set up and the Audit and Governance Committee be asked to review the cost and procurement processes for SEND transport, especially regarding taxi and minibuss contracts.
- That authority to establish future task and finish groups without needing full committee approval be delegated to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman.

30 Work Programme

Sophie Foster, Overview & Scrutiny Officer noted that she had noted a number of topics that had been suggested during the meeting and she suggested that an additional meeting be arranged to discuss the priorities for the Committee.

RECOMMENDED:

That an additional meeting be arranged to discuss the Work Programme.

31 Date of next meeting

Members noted that the next meeting of the People Overview and Scrutiny Meeting will be taking place on at 6.00 p.m. on Wednesday 22nd April 2026.

Signed (Chairman)

Date: