



Committee and Date

People Overview and Scrutiny
Committee

1st July 2026

PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 22 April 2026

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

6.00 - 8.00 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,
Duncan Kerr, Mark Morris, Alan Mosley and Teri Trickett.

Other Members in Attendance:

Councillor Ruth Houghton – Portfolio Holder for Social Care

Officers in Attendance:

David Shaw – Director Children's Services

Sonya Miller – Service Director Children's & Young People

Natalie McFall - Service Director Care & Wellbeing (remotely)

Michelle Williams – Service Manager Long Term Support

Lisa Gardner - Development Officer SSCP

Sophie Foster – Overview and Scrutiny Officer

Tom Dodds - Strategy and Scrutiny Manager and Statutory Scrutiny Officer

32 Apologies for Absence

None received.

33 Disclosable Interests

Councillor Mark Morris declared that he run a private hire business which sometimes provided school transport and declared this as a potential interest related to safeguarding.

34 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 14th January 2026 be confirmed as an accurate record.

35 Public Questions

There were no public questions.

36 Member Questions

There were no member questions.

37 Performance Monitoring Report – Quarter 4 2025/26 - Care and Wellbeing

Michelle Williams, Service Manager Long Term Support presented the Quarter 4 Performance Monitoring Report for Care and Wellbeing, providing a focused overview of adult social care activity, demand and financial pressures. She highlighted improved performance in completing care package reviews, with over 4,400 reviews completed out of approximately 5,300 people receiving funded support. It was noted that while some reviews remain overdue, these were prioritised and risk-managed, with safeguards in place to ensure individuals continue to receive appropriate care.

Ongoing work to support people to make informed care decisions, manage unpredictable demand pressures, including NHS-related demand transfers, and strengthen financial controls around capital reductions was also outlined to members and officers concluded that risks were actively managed, demand pressures were well understood, and the new operating model focused on earlier intervention and prevention.

Members queried how the Council ensured that individuals with overdue reviews, particularly those assessed as lower risk, were not experiencing harm. Officers confirmed that all individuals continue to receive care and were supported through additional oversight, including primary care and multi-disciplinary working where appropriate.

Members acknowledged the progress made in reducing the backlog of reviews and asked whether specific targets had been set for completing the outstanding reviews. Officers advised that review activity was managed flexibly in response to demand, with clear improvement plans in place across service areas and performance monitored quarterly. If progress does not meet expectations, actions were adjusted and additional support deployed.

Members questioned trends in the data showing a slowing rate of increase in completed reviews and sought clarification on whether this indicated a plateau in demand. Officers explained that the figures reflect fluctuating cohorts, with people entering and leaving services, and increasing front-door activity resulting in more people entering the review cycle.

Concerns were raised about the proportion of overdue reviews and whether resource limitations were a contributing factor. Officers confirmed that staffing capacity was a constraint and that resources must be balanced between new demand and review activity. It was explained that addressing all reviews immediately would require significant additional staffing, which could reduce the service's ability to respond to urgent new cases.

Members asked whether additional funding could be used to recruit more staff. Officers confirmed that workforce capacity was being considered as part of the new Care and Wellbeing operating model, with targeted investment and transformation activity planned to manage demand more effectively at the earliest point rather than relying solely on reactive responses.

Members sought clarity on how reviews were conducted in practice, including who was involved and who carried them out. Officers explained that reviews were undertaken by qualified practitioners or social workers, involve the individual at the centre, and may include family members, carers and relevant professionals to ensure a holistic assessment.

Further questions were raised about the lack of benchmarking information. Officers confirmed that a shift to client-level data was underway and that regional and national comparisons will be introduced as this data becomes available, enabling stronger performance benchmarking in future reports.

Members emphasised the need for clearer presentation of performance, including comparative data and indicators, to support effective scrutiny. Officers acknowledged this and confirmed work was underway to develop a more consistent set of indicators aligned with national frameworks.

Recommended

That the Committee:

1. Note the contents of this report and take assurance on how Care and Wellbeing was managing care package reviews, including the use of a risk-based approach to prioritisation, performance oversight and statutory compliance.
2. Endorse the Council's current approach to managing financial pressures arising from capital reduction, self-funding transitions and unpredictable demand and spend, including the use of forecasting, scenario planning and strengthened financial and operational oversight.
3. Support the continued implementation of the revised Deferred Payment Agreement arrangements, noting the progress made in strengthening governance, consistency, customer experience and financial sustainability.
4. Support the Council's approach to meeting its duties under the Care Act 2014 in relation to information, advice, informed choice and planning for later life, in line with the new Care and Wellbeing operating model.
5. Note the completion of the Day Services public consultation and agree that officers proceed to analyse consultation feedback and bring a further report to Cabinet setting out options and recommendations in due course.

38 Year End 25/26 Performance Report - Children's Services

Sonya Miller, Service Director Children's & Young People presented the Year End 25/26 Performance Report for Children's Services, providing an overview of end-of-year performance, demand trends and outcomes. She advised that the report was intended to give members a comprehensive picture of performance to support scrutiny and statutory responsibilities. It was highlighted that Children's Services benchmark well against most key indicators and that performance was monitored weekly, allowing issues to be identified and addressed promptly. She reported a continued downward trajectory in the number of children looked after, with rates reducing over the last three years, alongside a lower-than-average rate of children entering care and a higher-than-average rate of children ceasing care.

Members attention was drawn to pressures relating to children aged 0–5, the increasing complexity of need, the growing use and cost of residential provision, and capacity challenges in foster care. It was emphasised that care planning was complex, must be driven by the child's needs and timescales, and required coordination across education, health and social care.

Members welcomed the report and acknowledged the range of positive performance indicators, including improved early help, foster carer recruitment and strengthened decision-making. Members asked how confident officers were that the reduction in children looked after would continue. Officers confirmed confidence in the ongoing downward trend, supported by strengthened early help, Family First Partnership reforms, and improved care proceedings while noting that future numbers must still reflect the level of harm and need within the county.

Members were advised that the Stepping Stones programme played an important role in early intervention and prevention, contributed to improved outcomes for children, and supported demand management and longer-term financial sustainability by reducing reliance on high-cost care placements. It was added that a report would be presented to Cabinet in June, setting out Children's Services transformation plans with a strong emphasis on early help and Stepping Stones, including how prevention and early intervention will be further strengthened through service reform and investment.

Questions were raised regarding the high use of residential placements, out-of-county placements and financial pressures. Officers explained national and local market challenges, the limited availability of foster placements for younger children with complex needs and that work was underway with commissioning colleagues to secure more local provision and increase capacity.

Members raised concerns about the level of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding held by the Council and suggested it could potentially be used to support children's residential provision. Officers advised that the use of CIL for new children's homes had been considered but noted that expansion of in-house provision was

constrained by workforce capacity and stability, rather than the availability of buildings. It was explained that while the Council delivers high-quality children's homes, expanding provision too quickly could destabilise existing services due to staffing pressures.

Members asked about the impact of COVID-19 and wider system issues on historically high numbers of children looked after. Officers outlined factors including court delays, reduced availability of community services, increased non-accidental injuries, large sibling groups and the impact of national transfer arrangements, and advised that detailed analysis had previously been undertaken and this information would be shared with members.

Further questions related to modelling future demand, benchmarking, and comparative performance. Officers confirmed that modelling work was underway to project future children looked after numbers and associated workforce and financial implications, and that this would inform forthcoming transformation and Cabinet reports.

Members agreed that housing had emerged as a significant issue contributing to children's social care pressures and that it should be looked at further through the scrutiny process. Officers confirmed that housing-related factors were being analysed through needs and harms work, and Members emphasised the importance of ensuring the issue was picked up through the Council's scrutiny arrangements rather than being overlooked.

Recommended:

That the Committee:

1. Note the contents of the report and the year-end performance position for Children's Social Care for April 2025 to March 2026.
2. Consider the key demand, activity, and placement trends, including the principal factors contributing to cost pressures.
3. Acknowledge the progress made in reducing CLA numbers.
4. Support the actions being taken to mitigate financial pressures and manage future demand.
5. Request continued regular performance and financial updates.

39 Shropshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2024/25

David Shaw, Director of Children's Service presented the Shropshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report for 2024/25, noting that the report was being presented later than intended due to staffing and capacity challenges. He confirmed that the subsequent 2025/26 annual report would be completed and published by September 2026 in line with statutory guidance and introduced Lisa Gardner, Development Officer - Shropshire Safeguarding Community Partnership

Lisa Garner outlined the key themes of the report including the rural nature of the county and associated access challenges, strengthening of partnership governance arrangements, improved accountability and independent scrutiny, and progress in implementing national safeguarding reforms. She highlighted the transformation of early help and family hub arrangements, delivered without additional national funding, which had led to earlier intervention, improved parental satisfaction and reduced escalation to statutory services and reported on learning from serious safeguarding cases, strengthened quality assurance, multi-agency training activity, and ongoing priorities including child neglect, exploitation and early intervention.

Members asked what the most significant measurable improvements for children and families had been. Lisa Gardner advised that the development of early help and family hubs had made the most notable difference, supporting families earlier and improving community outcomes.

Members sought clarification regarding comments in the report about capacity being stretched in delivering statutory safeguarding functions. Officers explained that during 2024/25 there had been staffing gaps and changes within the safeguarding partnership team, which had created pressures. These gaps had since been addressed through interim arrangements, recruitment activity and review of team structure, with steps taken to ensure statutory functions continued to be delivered safely.

Questions were raised about monitoring and responding to missing children. Officers explained that children missing within Shropshire largely relate to children placed in the county by other local authorities, particularly in residential provision. Assurance was provided that Shropshire-responsible children were closely monitored, return-home interviews were completed promptly, and work was underway with police colleagues to strengthen data and oversight arrangements.

Members asked about the notification and management of sex offenders placed in communities. Officers confirmed that monitoring and disclosure arrangements were managed on a case-by-case basis by police and probation services, depending on licence conditions, and that disclosure to the Council or community was not automatic. It was explained that safeguarding mechanisms, including Sarah's Law, were available where there is a specific risk to a child.

Concern was raised about protecting individuals who report safeguarding concerns. Officers confirmed that referrals can be made anonymously and reiterated the duty to

share safeguarding information appropriately, advising that concerns about breaches of confidentiality should be followed up and investigated.

Recommendations:

That the committee:

1. Considers and notes the content of the report.
2. Considers and notes the priorities for 2025/26 and how these will positively impact the lives of children and families in Shropshire.

40 Update from the SEND Transport Task and Finish Group

The Chairman provided a verbal update on the SEND Transport Task and Finish Group, advising that the Group had reviewed the legal requirements relating to SEND transport. Members were informed that the next stage would be to hold a meeting with officers and relevant Portfolio Holders to explore the issues in more detail and discuss them in person, with a view to progressing the work and determining next steps.

41 Work Programme

Tom Dodds, Strategy and Scrutiny Manager and Statutory Scrutiny Officer provided a verbal update on the work programme, advising that Members would be invited to attend a strategic work-programming session in June. He explained that the session would bring together non-executive Members and senior officers to consider key issues and priorities over the next 12–24 months, helping to inform and shape future Scrutiny work programmes. It was noted that this approach would support better coordination across Scrutiny Committees, ensure that emerging cross-cutting issues (including housing) were picked up by the most appropriate committee, and align work programmes more closely with the Council's Corporate Plan.

42 Date of next meeting

Members noted that the next meeting of the People Overview and Scrutiny Meeting will be taking place on Wednesday 1st July 2026 at 6.00 p.m.

Signed (Chairman)

Date: