1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To assist the Committee in considering and agreeing its work programme.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The proposed work programme, for consideration up until April 2015 is attached at Appendix 2.

3. RECOMMENDATION

Members consider the Work Programme attached at Appendix 2.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION

To enable the Committee to develop an outcome-focused work programme for the next 12 months and beyond

4. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

4.1 At its March 2014 Meeting (Minute 60 refers) the Council reviewed the structure and terms of reference of all Scrutiny Committees.

4.2 The Council resolved that the terms of reference of the Education, Safeguarding & Well-being Scrutiny Committee be divided between two new Scrutiny Committees,
Lifelong Learning and Safeguarding, Communities and Well-being. The terms of reference for the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee are as follows:

“To ensure that the people of Wrexham have positive aspirations, education and potential”

4.3 On this basis, the proposed work programme is attached at Appendix 2 and has been updated to incorporate the changes which were recommended by the Education, Safeguarding & Well-being Scrutiny Committee at the meeting held on 15 May:

- Improving Outcomes for Young People in the town centre – to consider a further report and to hold the meetings in the schools concerned (Ysgol Rhosnesni and Ysgol Clywedog) and to involve the Headteachers of the cluster primary schools.

Draft Scoping Document - Improving Outcomes for Young People - Reviewing Town Centre Schools – Appendix 3

4.4 Subject to the agreement of the work programme, the Committee needs to consider how and when they would like to proceed with the above-mentioned review. At the meeting held on 15 May 2014, the former Education, Safeguarding & Well-being Scrutiny Committee recommended that a further report be submitted to include the following information:

- Succession planning for teachers
- Other ways of assessing teacher performance
- Destination of year 6 pupils for all secondary schools
- Possibility of more targeted support from GwE (e.g. transition, pupil tracking methods)
- Funding issues (understanding the differences between school funding in England and Wales and how this impacts on parental preference)

4.5 It was also recommended that meetings be held at Ysgol Rhosnesni and Ysgol Clywedog and that Head teachers from the cluster area primary schools also be invited to attend.

4.6 In terms of the areas identified above, the Chair and Vice-Chair have suggested that the Committee could receive information on the following issues as Information Reports to help inform future debate on improving outcomes for young people.

- Destination of year 6 pupils for all secondary schools in Wrexham and analysis of the reasons for parents not choosing the two schools as their first choice
- Funding issues (understanding the differences between school funding in England and Wales)

4.7 In terms of the other areas which have been identified, the previous scrutiny review of secondary school education involved the former Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee inviting the head teachers and/or a representative of the Governing Body of each of the secondary schools to give a presentation on what they felt were the key challenges/barriers to achieving good performance. The Scrutiny Officer then extracted the common themes identified from each of the meetings and Education Officers were then asked to produce an action plan to address the key areas identified. This process was subsequently commended following the Estyn inspection.
of the Wrexham Education Authority in October 2007 and is cited as one of the Case Studies in the WLGA Guidance referred to in the paragraphs below.

4.8 To assist the Committee in planning this review, a draft scoping document has been prepared in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair and is attached at Appendix 3. It must be emphasised that this is very much a draft plan as it is up to the Committee to consider and agree how they wish to proceed with this review.

**Guidance on Scrutiny of Education Issues**

4.9 The new Scrutiny structure referred to above has created capacity for this Scrutiny Committee to increase the focus on education issues (September, November, January, February and March meetings currently have capacity). The former Education, Safeguarding & Well-being Scrutiny Committee has already highlighted two topics for more in-depth scrutiny for the July meeting (Special Educational Needs and Welsh as a Second Language).

4.10 To assist the Committee in identifying future topics, the Chair has suggested that the Committee have regard to the most recent reports on educational standards (links provided in the background section of the report) and the following guidance in respect of scrutiny of education issues:-

- **‘Back to School’ (Appendix 4)** - the most recent guidance from CfPS and LGA on ways for scrutiny to influence local education and support school leaders to improve results. Suggested topics for scrutiny are listed throughout the guidance.

- **Scrutiny of Schools and Education Issues (Appendix 5)** - 2009 guidance from the WLGA and CfPS which outlines the different roles for scrutiny committees in examining schools and education issues (Wrexham County Borough Council’s review of secondary school performance is cited as one of the case studies).

4.11 The Scrutiny Facilitator can then develop Scrutiny Topic Selection Forms with the Chair and relevant Officers to submit to a future meeting. It would also be useful if the Committee could prioritise any issues which they would like to include on the future work programme.

4.12 **Policy Framework** - The terms of reference of this Committee are partly aligned to the Council’s Strategic Theme ‘People’ as set out in the Council Plan, hence any scrutiny topics identified will contribute to the Council’s priority outcomes outlined in Appendix 1.

4.13 **Budget** - There are no budget implications arising from this report.

4.14 **Legal** - There are no legal implications arising from this report.

4.15 **Staffing** - There are no staffing issues arising out of the report, but Officer resource will be required to support the preparation of information for Scrutiny Committee consideration.

4.16 **Equality/Human Rights** - This report provides information to inform a work programme and the Equality Manager has confirmed that the programme does not require an equality impact assessment as it merely sets out a timetable.
4.17 **Risks** - Not applicable for a work programme planning report.

5. **CONSULTATION**  
5.1 Not applicable

6. **EVALUATION OF OPTIONS**  
6.1 Not applicable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Background Papers</th>
<th>LOCATION / WEBSITE INFO.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
**Committee Terms of Reference and relevant Council Priority Outcomes**

The Committee is aligned with the Corporate Priority – People. The terms of reference of this Committee as set out in the Council’s constitution are as follows:-

“To ensure that the people of Wrexham have positive aspirations, education and potential”

The following are the key priority outcomes from the Council Plan:-

**Priority 1** of Council Theme of ‘People’ - All children and young people have positive aspirations, learn and achieve their potential

**Priority 6** of Council Theme of ‘People’ - Welsh Language and culture is promoted and supported

**Probable service areas:**
- Education
- Adult Education
- Welsh Language
- Libraries
Appendix 2

LIFELONG LEARNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Work Programme from July 2014

Please note that the forward work programme is a ‘live’ document and subject to change at short notice. The information in this work programme is subject to agreement at the meeting on 19 June 2014

The order in which items are listed at this stage may not reflect the order they subsequently appear on the agenda / are dealt with at the scrutiny meeting. Please note that for items marked as ‘part 2’ it is recommended that the press and public be excluded from the meeting during its consideration in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

Please note: Workshops are not open to the general public.

For general enquiries relating to the Council’s scrutiny function, including this committee’s work programme, please contact Tracy Davies, Scrutiny Facilitator, Scrutiny Team on 292258.

For administrative arrangements such as enquiries relating to report dispatch dates, venue layouts, setting up of presentations, etc., please contact Sarah Royce, Committee Officer, Committee and Member Services on 292240.

All Meetings start at 2.00pm in the Guildhall, Wrexham, unless otherwise stated.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of meeting</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Purpose of Report</th>
<th>Reason for Consideration</th>
<th>Lead Member / Contact Officer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17 July 2014</td>
<td>Welsh as a Second Language</td>
<td>To consider the measures being undertaken to increase the number of candidates taking Welsh as a second language at Key stages 3 and 4 in order to improve the employment prospects of young people.</td>
<td>Pre-decision Scrutiny</td>
<td>Lead Member Children’s Services &amp; Education – Councillor Michael Williams / Head of Lifelong Learning – John Davies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 September 2014</td>
<td>Special Educational Needs (SEN)</td>
<td>To consider the arrangements for supporting children with special educational needs with a view to improving standards of achievement and transition arrangements in schools.</td>
<td>Pre-decision Scrutiny</td>
<td>Lead Member Children’s Services &amp; Education – Councillor Michael Williams/ Head of Lifelong Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 October 2014</td>
<td>School Performance and School Performance Action Plan</td>
<td>To consider the provisional results for KS4 and 5, Standards at Foundation Phase, Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 in 2014 and the Progress made against the School Improvement Action Plan.</td>
<td>Performance Monitoring</td>
<td>Lead Member Children’s Services &amp; Education – Councillor Michael Williams/ Head of Lifelong Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 November 2014</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of meeting</td>
<td>Subject</td>
<td>Purpose of Report</td>
<td>Reason for Consideration</td>
<td>Lead Member / Contact Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>11 December 2014</td>
<td>GwE (NW Regional School Improvement Service) Annual Report</td>
<td>To consider the annual report on the performance of GwE,</td>
<td>Performance Monitoring</td>
<td>Lead Member Children’s Services &amp; Education – Councillor Michael Williams/ Head of Lifelong Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 January 2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 February 2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>19 March 2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>16 April 2015</td>
<td>Education, Training and Employment Indicator for the Wrexham Youth Justice Service</td>
<td>To receive an update in respect of performance in this area, together with additional data as requested at the meeting of the Education, Safeguarding and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee on 17 April 2014.</td>
<td>Performance Monitoring</td>
<td>Lead Member Children’s Services &amp; Education – Councillor Michael Williams/ Head of Lifelong Learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**POSSIBLE FUTURE ITEMS / ITEMS TO BE SCHEDULED**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>AS AGREED at meeting of:</th>
<th>PURPOSE OF REPORT</th>
<th>REASON FOR CONSIDERATION</th>
<th>RESPONSIBLE OFFICER/ CONTACT OFFICER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improving Outcomes for Young People in the Town Centre</td>
<td>15 May 2014</td>
<td>To consider a further report to include the following information:- Succession planning for teachers</td>
<td>Post-decision Scrutiny</td>
<td>Lead Member Children’s Services &amp; Education – Councillor Michael</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITEM</td>
<td>AS AGREED at meeting of:</td>
<td>PURPOSE OF REPORT</td>
<td>REASON FOR CONSIDERATION</td>
<td>RESPONSIBLE OFFICER/ CONTACT OFFICER</td>
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</table>
| | | • Other ways of assessing teacher performance  
• Destination of year 6 pupils for all secondary schools  
• Possibility of more targeted support from GwE (eg transition, pupil tracking methods)  
• Funding issues (understanding the differences between school funding in England and Wales and how this impacts on parental preference) | | Williams/ Head of Lifelong Learning |

### REGULAR ITEMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>AS AGREED at meeting of Education, Safeguarding &amp; Well-being:</th>
<th>PURPOSE OF REPORT</th>
<th>REASON FOR CONSIDERATION</th>
<th>RESPONSIBLE OFFICER/ CONTACT OFFICER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GwE (NW Regional School Improvement Service) Annual Report</td>
<td>September 2013</td>
<td>To consider the annual report on the performance of GwE. December or January, depending on date of Regional Joint Committee.</td>
<td>Performance Monitoring</td>
<td>Lead Member Children's Services &amp; Education – Councillor Michael Williams/ Head of Lifelong Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITEM</td>
<td>AS AGREED at meeting of Education, Safeguarding &amp; Well-being:</td>
<td>PURPOSE OF REPORT</td>
<td>RESPONSIBLE OFFICER/CONTACT OFFICER</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public Library Standards &amp; CyMAL response</td>
<td>19 July 2012</td>
<td>To receive the Annual Report submitted to CyMAL together with CyMAL’s response. (The Annual Report is available via Executive Board papers September 2013). The response from CyMal will be published when available. <strong>December 2013 /January 2014</strong></td>
<td>Head of Communities and Well-being Lawrence Isted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil Referral Unit (PRU)</td>
<td>19 September 2013</td>
<td>To receive information on the role and function of the PRU, the cost and scope of the service and details of pupils’ performance. To be circulated <strong>March 2014</strong>.</td>
<td>Head of Lifelong Learning – John Davies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengthening the Role of the Local Authority Governor</td>
<td>21 November 2013</td>
<td>To receive a progress report on the implementation of protocols to strengthen the role of the Local Authority governor, including training and support and changes to the appointment process. <strong>November 2014</strong></td>
<td>Head of Lifelong Learning – John Davies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Draft Scoping Document – Improving outcomes for young people – reviewing town centre schools

### Objectives / desired outcomes
- To improve educational achievement of young people in the two schools which have been placed in the category of in need of significant improvement by Estyn (Ysgol Clywedog and Ysgol Rhosnesni)
- To improve transition arrangements for the cluster feeder schools to those secondary schools
- To improve the reputation of the two town centre schools

### Timescales / Time restraints
Review to commence in September 2014 and to take place over a period of no longer than 6 months, to enable recommendations to be considered by the LA in April 2015 and communicated to schools prior to the end of the school year 2015

### Define Scope - What is included?
The review will focus on the two secondary schools in the town centre who have been placed in special measures. It will also involve other schools who have been commended by recent Estyn inspections in order to share areas of good practice. The cluster primary schools to the two town centre secondary schools will also be involved in order to consider the transition arrangements.

### Information required
Schools to be invited to attend a meeting to give a presentation. The following key questions are based on the previous review of secondary schools which was undertaken by the former Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee:-
- What are the challenges facing the school?
- What strategies are being put in place to tackle these challenges?
- What barriers have been overcome to raise standards at the school?
- How is the Local Authority supporting the school to improve?
Other supporting information:
- Recent Esytn Inspections and recommendations in respect of the secondary schools involved in the review
- Behaviour policies and exclusions data
- Additional Support and Challenge arrangements (in respect of the two town centre schools)
- Transition arrangements
- Succession planning for teachers
- Methods of assessment of teacher performance

Scrutiny Facilitator to extract the key themes from the meetings in terms of the barriers and good practice and present this to a meeting to enable the Committee to consider and make any recommendations for improvement in terms of support from the Local Authority and GwE, raising standards, and sharing good practice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who needs to be involved?</th>
<th>Local Authority:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lead Member for Children’s Services and Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Head of Lifelong Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Link Officers for the two town centre schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>GwE support officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Schools:</td>
<td>Headteacher, Chair of Governors, Parent Governor(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leadership consultants who have been working with the two town centre schools as part of the additional challenge and support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Schools:</td>
<td>Headteachers, Chair of Governors and Parent Governor(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Parents of pupils from the feeder primary schools who have not stated the two schools as their first choice?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Senedd Yr Ifanc representatives</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| Where should the meeting(s) be held? | At the secondary schools involved in the review. Tour of the school to take place immediately prior to the meeting. Chair and Vice-Chair to meet with the Headteacher informally prior to the meeting to explain the role of scrutiny and emphasise that this is not just about constructive challenge but is also about supporting the schools to drive forward improvement. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meeting Date and Focus of meeting</th>
<th>Information Required</th>
<th>Supporting Officers /Attendees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18 September 2014 - to consider the arrangements for improving outcomes for young people at Rhosnesni High School. Meeting to be held at the school.</td>
<td>As outlined in scoping document. Meeting to be preceded by a tour of the school.</td>
<td>As outlined in scoping document. Parents from secondary schools also be invited to attend?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 November 2014 - to consider the arrangements for improving outcomes for young people at Ysgol Clywedog. Time of meeting to be agreed with the school.</td>
<td>As above</td>
<td>As above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 January 2015 - to consider areas of good practice at the secondary schools who have been commended by recent Estyn Inspections (St Josephs, Ysgol Morgan Llwyd, The Maelor School, Penley) and to hold the meeting at one of the schools.</td>
<td>As above</td>
<td>Headteacher, Chair of Governors, Parent Governor(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 March 2015 – to consider the key themes from the meetings with schools referred to above and to make recommendations for improvement.</td>
<td>Report prepared by the Scrutiny Facilitator on the key themes extracted from the meetings with schools, both in terms of the barriers to improvement and areas of good practice.</td>
<td>Lead Member for Children’s Services and Education Head of Lifelong Learning Senedd Yr Ifanc representatives Headteachers, Chairs of Governing Bodies and Parent Governors of the secondary Schools involved in the review also be invited to attend.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Back to school

Ways for scrutiny to influence local education and support school leaders to improve results
The Centre for Public Scrutiny
The Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS), an independent charity, is the leading national organisation for ideas, thinking and the application and development of policy and practice to promote transparent, inclusive and accountable public services.

We support individuals, organisations and communities to put our principles into practice in the design, delivery and monitoring of public services in ways that build knowledge, skills and trust so that effective solutions are identified together by decision-makers, practitioners and service users.

www.cfps.org.uk

Local Government Association
The Local Government Association (LGA) is the national voice of local government. We work with councils to support, promote and improve local government.

We are a politically-led, cross party organisation which works on behalf of councils to ensure local government has a strong, credible voice with national government. We aim to influence and set the political agenda on the issues that matter to councils so they are able to deliver local solutions to national problems.

www.local.gov.uk

Acknowledgements
This publication has been written by Su Turner, from the Centre for Public Scrutiny, and Ann Reeder of Frontline Consulting and Expert Adviser for the Centre for Public Scrutiny.

We are very grateful to the following people for their contributions to this publication.

• Ian Keating, Local Government Association
• Mark Rogers, Solihull Council and SOLACE
• Mike Cooper, Independent Consultant
• Councillor Bennett and Paul Dean, East Sussex County Council

We are also grateful to the following councils for sharing their experiences, challenges and learning to date that has been used to inform this publication.

• Birmingham City Council
• Blackpool Borough Council
• Buckinghamshire County Council
• East Riding of Yorkshire Council
• London Borough of Hackney
• London Borough of Richmond upon Thames
• Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
I am delighted to introduce this publication arising from the latest collaboration between the Local Government Association (LGA) and Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS). As all involved in education grapple with new school structures and models, it is timely to focus on how councillors can best contribute, using their scrutiny responsibilities.

I firmly believe that the scrutiny role of councillors becomes more – not less – important as schools become more autonomous. To achieve the council’s ambitions for its local area and community, councillors increasingly need to use the power of influence, coalition building and credible, informed persuasion to get all partners to cooperate together.

These are exactly the skills and attributes demonstrated by the best overview and scrutiny reviews, as CfPS knows from our Good Scrutiny Awards each year. I believe that this power of influence can potentially be more persuasive and effective than when the Local Education Authority sought to rely on their statutory powers to direct schools – because it brings schools into the wider debate about outcomes for children and young people. Regardless of changes in the management of local schools and any moves to Academy status or the setting up of Free Schools, councils continue to have a role to play in the local schools system and retain a range of statutory responsibilities for children in their area and for school improvement.

As you will read, the lessons from our seven case studies are clear and compelling. They have identified the need for closer links with school leaders, for better communication between councillors and local schools and for greater support and training for both councillors and school governors. They have also shown that council scrutiny can challenge all providers on their contribution to wider issues as well as school results.

Our conclusion is that scrutiny of the changing world of education needs to develop a clear focus, work out where its reviews can add value and be clear about the changing lines of accountability, whilst building relationships to gain support for its work in this area.

I hope that our case studies and the shared learning captured in this guide demonstrate to other councils that scrutiny is an important tool for helping councils to meet their continuing statutory responsibilities towards children and young people, regardless of the status of their local schools.

I would like to thank the LGA for funding and collaborating on this project and the councils involved for sharing their experience and ideas.

Jessica Crowe
Executive Director, CfPS
Introduction

“Overview and scrutiny goes back to school”

This quote, from one of the participants of the programme, captures what this publication is trying to achieve – helping councils to understand the different ways to keep in touch with schools and to identify opportunities for scrutiny to influence local education, support school leaders and help improve school results.

About this publication

All schools have become more independent of councils in recent years, but the Academies Act of 2010, the rapid increase in Academies in many areas and the emergence of Free Schools, has fundamentally changed established relationships. The council is still accountable for promoting academic excellence, protecting vulnerable children, school place planning and a whole raft of other responsibilities1. To discharge these through what is effectively becoming in some areas an independent sector, councils need to develop a strong strategic role based on completely new ‘rules of engagement’.

Many councillors thought the Academies Act gave absolute autonomy to schools and released councils from all responsibility, not realising they still had fundamental duties to discharge, for some of which Ofsted at the very least would be holding them to account.

The dilution of council powers and the increasing numbers of schools becoming directly accountable to the Secretary of State makes the job of fulfilling these statutory duties more challenging. The case for a continued but changing role for councils and their scrutiny function is compelling in relation to all schools, whatever their governance.

In June 2013, the LGA and SOLACE published a report that illustrates how a number of councils have responded to the challenge of the changing accountability landscape - showcasing the work being done by councils up and down the country to support school improvement. Coinciding with the new Ofsted inspection regime for school improvement support by councils, it showed how councils are adapting to the changing educational context of increasing school autonomy by strengthening and deepening their relationships with local schools.

CfPS recognised that the new pressures on councils with respect to the results achieved by pupils in their schools, regardless of management structures, required councils to increase their knowledge of pupil attainment and school improvement and the role of the council in school improvement – and that there is a role for scrutiny. Working with councils that have identified a role for scrutiny within the evolving educational

1 http://www.local.gov.uk/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=129dab82-7e7b-4466-9e17-8661848ffe4&groupId=10171}
picture, this programme and publication focuses on the role of council scrutiny to influence and improve education.

At a workshop in September 2013, programme participants were asked to detail as many ways as possible that scrutiny could review education, including pupil attainment, governance, school improvement and the role of councillors. Over 30 ideas were captured.

These have been themed under the following headings and are explored in more detail within this publication:

• Developing relationships with schools
• Reviewing and monitoring performance
• Reviewing approaches to school improvement and support services
• Reviewing governance
• Reviewing and understanding resource allocation.

Whilst there is a separate section on developing relationships with schools and the importance of good strong supportive partnerships, these run as a thread through the other sections encouraging schools and scrutiny to work together to benefit children and young people.
Developing relationships with schools

Overview
This section puts the foundations in place to ensure that the role of scrutiny in improving school performance can develop to its full capacity. Effective relationships are the cornerstone of ensuring that education delivery and school support services and people engaged in schools and activity relating to children and young people work together to mutual benefit and around common goals.

Sometimes regarded as a cliché, developing effective relationships is vitally important and not hard to do if you understand respective roles, responsibilities, purpose and the added value of a good working partnership.

A lot can be learnt from the role and function of health scrutiny over recent years. Health scrutiny is based on specific powers that education scrutiny does not have – but health scrutiny has rarely relied just on these powers to get results – the powers are used only as a last resort. Instead it has developed an understanding of health services, developed effective working partnerships and ensured that the health service understands what scrutiny is. Hospitals, ambulance trusts, community health services and other health commissioners and providers have learnt that health scrutiny can assist when making changes in health provision, or when tackling underperformance or seeking to involve patients and the public. Also health scrutiny is not ‘inspection’ or ‘performance management’. Similar roles are possible in education and parallels may be drawn with schools, school improvement services, governing bodies, parents and pupils.

It requires an understanding of different roles and expectations in education and the added value that might result from external constructive challenge by the critical friend of scrutiny.

Many head teachers, chairs of governing bodies and other school leaders may not be familiar with the role of scrutiny. However, there is the statutory requirement for scrutiny committees that cover education to have co-optees from governing bodies, which may include parent governors and diocesan representatives in respect of voluntary aided faith schools. It therefore is important to champion scrutiny, to tell the story of why it is important and how it might add value, to explain that it is the voice of the public (parent and pupil, the local business community and others) and to demonstrate how it helps the council to deliver the best services to its wider community, including its schools.

Ways to improve links with schools

Raise the profile of scrutiny
Given the perceived limited knowledge about scrutiny and the changing education system and council support, it would be important to showcase what scrutiny does and how it can help a school and the council in respect of its responsibilities in connection with education. This would include drawing on examples from other councils or making comparisons with health scrutiny.
Back to school

Strengthening links between local councillors and schools in their ward or division

Local councillors have a unique role in their community and are best placed to ensure that the school is aware of the community that it is within. These individual relationships help to break down perceived barriers. Challenge is easier to exert if the council and councillors are alongside their schools and are supportive and interested in their activity.

Tips!

- Create opportunities to explore and understand respective roles, perhaps by attending a schools forum.
- Consider ways of improving communication through publishing a scrutiny newsletter or setting up an email group or agreeing the information that should be shared with scrutiny by schools.
- Ask if the scrutiny chair might visit the school and meet with the head teacher and chair of governors to explain the role and explore how they might work together, highlighting the potential value.

Site visits to schools

Visiting schools gives councillors a ‘real life’ picture, helping them to get to know their schools and its leaders. This type of informal approach helps councillors “feel where the school is coming from”, and brings its activities to life. It also helps schools to gain a different view of the council and its councillors and how they might work together.

Tips!

- Contact the head teacher to request a visit or tour of the school – stating your reasons and indicating that you would like to support them.
- Plan where visits can be used most effectively and where information gleaned may be helpful evidence.
- Once you have developed good working partnerships, ask to hold a scrutiny committee at the school and engage the school leaders and pupils as co-optees, partners or witnesses in a review or inquiry.
- Consider the role of schools within their community, rather than focus only on performance and results.

Tips!

- Show support by attending school and community events.
- Show an interest all of the time – not just when performance is patchy!
Strengthening links with local school and education leaders

Councillors and governors, whether appointed to community schools from the council or elected by parents, selected from a council or staff, or co-opted in Academies have very similar roles not dissimilar from scrutiny. Working together to share experiences and skills will allow for better governance overall. Understanding where scrutiny can help school governors and where school governors can help scrutiny will help build support for partnership working.

Tips!

✔ Be clear about the information you need, from whom it is available, how it will be sourced and why you need it.

✔ Be clear about the different types of governing body and governors how they are elected, selected or appointed, and their roles.

✔ Create opportunities for direct conversations with parents, pupils, head teachers, chairs of governors and leaders of federations or Academy chains – and for scrutiny to meet with schools on a regular basis.

✔ Involve the Youth Parliament, youth representatives on scrutiny and other students in field research with their peers e.g. young carers and schools.

✔ Try holding in-depth reviews to look at topics related to schools and invite school leaders to suggest possible topics that might help them.

✔ Consider joint training and sharing of scrutiny skills between councillors and governors. Sharing council best practice on governance and transparency might be helped by comparing schools’ approaches and openness to scrutiny and information sharing.

✔ Explore opportunities to maximise the role of council governors in particular and share scrutiny skills between governors, councillors and others along the lines of the CfPS local accountability framework – Accountability Works for You.

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2 http://www.education.gov.uk/a00226253/academy
3 http://www.cfps.org.uk/accountability-works-for-you
Reviewing and monitoring performance

Overview
Although not new, the Academies agenda has strengthened and gained momentum recently, with more and more schools opting to become independent of the council. This has caused anxiety in some areas with councils fearing that they are losing oversight of performance, admissions and curricular within Academies across their area – and that they are becoming more distant from schools. Monitoring, challenge and support remain clear roles for a council as it seeks to raise pupil achievement across the whole area – getting the best possible schools for local children. The work by scrutiny that is outlined in this publication shows how council scrutiny committees can help councils to fill this emerging accountability gap and to continue to fulfil their ‘champions for children’ role. This could include taking an overarching look at the quality of education in a local area and asking questions about any poor attainment levels, regardless of school type.

Case examples

Blackpool and East Riding of Yorkshire Councils have taken the direct route of reviewing a number of schools at each of their meetings. They felt that this gave opportunities for scrutiny councillors to review the effectiveness of all schools – challenging improvement services where things needed to improve and praising those that were raising the bar.

Richmond is moving to a commissioning council model and using scrutiny for strategic oversight of school performance at a council-wide level, not school by school. They systematically review topical issues such as place-planning and future education provision.

Hackney found it helpful to understand the lines of accountability and considered this for the role of scrutiny and holding schools to account. As the diagram below demonstrates, they concluded that the role of scrutiny was not to hold schools directly to account but to hold improvement services and senior officers within the education department to account for the support and challenge that they provide to schools.

• Semi-dotted line to connect Scrutiny with Schools denotes informal information sharing
• Solid line denotes the line of accountability
Identifying roles for overview and scrutiny in reviewing and monitoring performance

A number of topics and opportunities for scrutiny to add value to improving the performance of schools emerged from our case studies.

Much debate took place on the role of scrutiny in tackling under-performance of schools and it was clear from the conversations that the councils within this programme had tackled this in different ways.

**Tips!**

- Scrutiny could take an overview of school attainment in the council area and compare results with similar councils at all stages.
- Scrutiny could look at school Ofsted reports by exception, review improvement support and help prepare for Ofsted inspections of council support.
- Scrutiny is not performance management.
- Beware the time pressures of trying to scrutinise all your schools. Instead, set criteria to help you to select the best approach and focus on the places where you can make most impact; this could be of council procedures for monitoring performance and supporting school improvement.
- Make an annual challenge to the Executive councillor and officer on progress in closing the attainment gap within the council area and in comparison with similar authorities.
- Look at learning from the experience of federations of schools in terms of performance and improvement.

**Suggested topics for scrutiny of performance**

- Comparative results across the local authority area and with similar councils at key stages, GCSE and A level.
- The role of the council and local schools in bridging the gap in educational attainment.
- The effectiveness of education in making pupils ready for work.
- Thematic reviews e.g. Key Stage 2 literacy results, sixth forms, 14 – 19 provision, early years provision
- The local authority’s support for looked after children and their educational attainment.
- School exclusions.
- Reviews with the head teacher and chair of governors of a school facing special measures or with underperformance to gain a clearer appreciation of the support and challenge that the school requires.
- Work with school leaders, the council’s Executive member and the director of children’s services and other appropriate officers to help carry out an informal ‘dry-run Ofsted inspection’ of the local authority’s school improvement arrangements.
Reviewing approaches to school improvement and support services

Overview
In September 2013, Ofsted announced that annual inspection figures show that 39 per cent of schools had improved since their last inspection. In real terms this now means that 78 per cent of schools are graded “outstanding” or “good”, compared with fewer than 70 per cent last year. Sir Michael Wilshaw concluded that the inspection figures showed that “England’s school system is making some genuine and radical advances”.

Schools have been becoming autonomous for many years and are increasingly responsible for their own improvement – but the move to establishing Academies has given them additional freedoms away from central government such as the ability to adapt the national curriculum and national teacher’s pay and conditions thus moving them further away from councils. Despite this, from May 2013 Ofsted introduced a new inspection framework which will consider how well a council is fulfilling its general duty to promote high standards of education and to enable every child to fulfil their educational potential. Alongside this, councils still retain a role to act as champion for their children and to fulfil duties such as those to ensure there are sufficient school places.

So in this mixed world where there are continued expectations of councils in some aspects of educational provision, but increasing autonomy of schools, what can scrutiny do to help and support effective and appropriate school improvement services?

Identifying roles for scrutiny

School improvement services
Where provided by the council, there is more opportunity for scrutiny to monitor and challenge the support the council provides. Scrutiny can be the bridge between the school and the school improvement service to ensure that what is being provided makes an impact, is of high quality and addresses the need of schools.

The situation is more complex where Academies and Free Schools buy in support services from elsewhere. Here scrutiny could have a role in checking the effectiveness of the improvement support provided by Academy Chains.

Tips!

✓ Scrutiny committees need to understand the totality of school improvement locally – is it provided by the council and/or others?
✓ Listen to stories of success as well as of concern.
✓ Build effective working relationships (as detailed in the previous chapter) to allow for a better understanding of how improvement services are deployed within a school.
✓ Scrutiny may help to ensure that schools have access to advice, support and professional development that supports improvement from the council or elsewhere.
✓ Use scrutiny to help stakeholders to prepare for Ofsted inspections.
Recruitment and retention of leaders
Maintaining continuity and strength of leadership is vital for schools to improve. Whilst this seems less of an obvious task for scrutiny committees, they can assess whether there is a framework to recruit and retain leaders through monitoring turnover, identifying whether there is a training and development programme in place and listening to school leaders in terms of their success at retaining effective teachers, heads and deputies.

School-to-school support
Outstanding schools make it their business to provide school-to-school support as part of their on-going journey to excellence and to help those in need of support. Academy chains have been established and some maintained schools have been federated in order to support each other’s improvement journey and ensure the transfer of excellence across schools, this is a potentially significant area for scrutiny to explore. This could include assessing what a school excels in or needs to improve, gaining an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of schools on an individual basis (using scrutiny’s improved links, as detailed in the previous section) and asking questions of chains or federations in terms of the outcomes of their school-to-school support in order to share those insights more widely.

Scrutiny could also have a role in ensuring that all local schools are working collaboratively to drive school improvement or check that all schools are buying in improvement support from somewhere, even if it is not from the council.

Scrutiny’s evidence gathering would provide a picture of the key inputs and structures to promote excellence and improvement that can be shared across an area.

Tips!

✓ Use a council’s influence to build the reputation of schools and the area including through ward councillors taking a more active and supportive role within a school.

✓ Monitor recruitment and retention of head teachers, senior leaders, governors and chairs of governors – reviewing the advice given to schools by council human resources staff.

✓ Seek to develop joint training and leadership development for champions of their patch (scrutiny councillors and all governors, not only council appointed governors).
Engagement with stakeholders and the public

It is possible to develop a role for scrutiny to assess how effective a school is at listening and responding to pupils, parents, the community and stakeholders. Scrutiny might also explore how it can involve pupils, parents, the community and stakeholders in reviews of schools and school improvement. Parental insights are invaluable in any review of admissions procedures, eg the clarity of information provided, the ease with which applications may be made, the information that they receive about place allocations and their experience, if any, of appeals.

As ever, effective scrutiny will depend upon getting to know individual schools better, understanding how these stakeholders are engaged with their School Development Plan, looking at how open schools are in terms of meetings with parents and considering whether schools offer community focused activities. The best schools build on the views of all stakeholders and, whilst they may not be able to deliver everything that people want, scrutiny can assess whether they have a systematic approach and culture of involvement.

As is the case with most scrutiny reviews, you will need to encourage all stakeholders to be involved and be open to new ways of reaching out to local people – parents, young people and children.

There are many good examples of councils that have involved young people within scrutiny reviews and some of these are highlighted within CfPS’s publication ‘Tomorrow’s People’.

Tips!

- Carry out a review of school-to-school support – involve school leaders, school improvement services, education partnerships, Academies and their chains, Free Schools and maintained schools and their federations.
- Encourage buddying and sharing across schools.
- Where it is difficult for scrutiny to review the performance of all schools, seek to hold ‘collaboratives’ or ‘clusters’ to account for the results and the effectiveness of their ‘school-to-school’ improvement systems across those schools.

Tips!

- Use Public Question Time at council meetings.
- Use web-casting.
- Show the public the work of scrutiny in relation to schools.
- Draw on the experience of scrutiny across the country in engaging with children and young people, sourcing ideas from the CfPS website and library of reviews.

Suggested topics for scrutiny of school improvement and support

- The whole education approach of the council from early years to post-16
- School improvement services, whether within the local authority or outsourced
- Local authority provision of a schools liaison team, or similar
- Local authority provision of support for special educational needs
- Support of the local authority for co-optees on education scrutiny committees
- The local councillor as school governor and local authority support for them
- The effect of traded services
- The Home to School Transport Service
Reviewing governance

Overview
Given the refreshed school accountability system with the growth in number of Academies and the emergence of Free Schools, as well as the new ways that school improvement is delivered, scrutiny committees and their officers need to understand better the new lines of accountability and with whom they need to work. Then, having determined with whom the relationships need to be developed or sustained, contact needs to be made and shared understanding developed.

Scrutiny can play a role by exploring if there is effective governance. Although schools have more autonomy, many continue to have local authority governors. Even if they do not, council scrutiny might explore new accountabilities and the openness of schools, the nature and effectiveness of school leadership and the role and performance of governing bodies. Many councillors are also local authority governors and have an appreciation of education and the effectiveness of local schools. They could be involved in helping to develop relationships with schools and scrutiny and could be witnesses or co-optees on task and finish groups on matters relating to education. In general, as outlined earlier, local councillors should be more involved with their schools, including but not only as school governors.

Whilst there are fundamental differences between members of a governing body (whatever the school management structure) and scrutiny councillors, there are also some parallels. These include:

- providing constructive challenge and helping to develop proposals on strategy and policy
- monitoring school performance and providing challenge where appropriate
- being satisfied about the integrity of financial information and the robustness of controls and risk management
- refreshing their knowledge and skills and participating fully in an induction programme
- showing integrity and probity, instilling an appropriate culture, applying appropriate values and exhibiting appropriate behaviour
- insisting on high quality information in sufficient time for meetings
- taking account of parents’, children’s and other stakeholders’ views
- disclosure of relevant interests.

Yet there are very few opportunities for scrutiny and governors to work together and learn from each other and support services for governors and scrutiny often sit within different departments of a council. With authorities increasingly recognising the vital and complex role played by governors in ensuring school effectiveness, it would be useful to understand the complementary roles of governors and scrutiny councillors and how they can work together locally to improve education for children and young people.
Identifying roles for scrutiny

Role and efficacy of school governors
It is usual for a council to provide varying degrees of support for governance of schools, e.g., training, information, and clerking services, so there are opportunities for scrutiny to ensure that these services are fit for purpose and used to benefit all governing bodies. However, an untapped resource and conduit of information is the council governor. Maximising use of this role and the support provided to council governors could improve the challenge provided by the whole governing body and can certainly be used to improve communication between schools and scrutiny councillors. More effective council governor roles and support will help councils to keep an eye on education from a distance.

Involving statutory co-optees
There was some debate between the programme participants surrounding the role of statutory co-optees. There are regulations requiring the co-option of church (Church of England and Roman Catholic), and parent governor representatives onto council committees dealing with education. These include voting rights on education matters only. Some education or children’s services scrutiny committees also co-opt youth representatives and it is at the discretion of the council whether they are given voting rights on matters relating to education and youth provision.

It was felt that there was value in having co-optees to provide a link to the wider community and give broader representation and that they could fill the gap in the skills of the committee sharing resources, insights and ideas. However, their understanding and contributions appear to vary widely within and across committees, which is possibly a reflection of the nature of their induction and support, time availability and competing personal commitments.

Tips!

- Explore the support that the council provides to all governors.
- Understand the different types of governor and their roles – in particular the role of the council governor.
- Review whether good governors are being recruited.
- Review whether governors have the right skills and support.
- Remember that Academies are allowed up to one council governor, so might be interested in a scrutiny role regarding support for and the selection of councillors on governing bodies.
Political decision making
Participants recognised that the council continues to have powers and duties in relation to education, so scrutiny needs to retain an internal council focus on its own decisions around education support and resource allocation.

The council leader, executive member covering education and children’s services, and the director of education and/or children’s services all have a significant role in decision making about education. This may include:

- school place planning
- support for vulnerable pupils including those with Special Educational Needs
- admissions policies including the provision of information and the handling of appeals
- the resources made available for school improvement
- the level of in-council staffing for school improvement and support
- provision or not of clerking services and training for governing bodies
- provision or not of human resources advice
- funding of Home to School transport and Pupil Referral Units
- non-school support for learning such as the provision of libraries and their opening hours, leisure facilities, playing fields, public health and even housing, given their role in the wider determinants of educational attainment
- council policies and budget allocations for looked after children, children’s social care, safeguarding, and the activity of the council as a corporate parent.

Potential outcomes from scrutiny of council decisions relating to education were identified as:

- better relationships for the council with all schools in its area
- an improved and extended offer of council support to schools
- clarification of the role of the council
- better understanding of how scrutiny might help all stakeholders in education
- acceptance of the council’s responsibility for the whole area and all the children who live there.

Tips!

- Ensure that education co-optees are inducted and kept fully briefed on matters relating to education.
- Consider co-opting youth representatives eg from a local youth council or Youth Parliament and ensure they are inducted, briefed and involved.
- Ensure that co-optees have an understanding of their role and the nature of scrutiny.
- Encourage and support co-optees to be involved in task and finish groups and other forms of scrutiny review.
- Review the views and engagement of co-optees and their relationship with the bodies they represent, their recruitment, training and engagement and identify action required to improve their understanding of scrutiny, their involvement and the support they need.
Tips!

✓ Hold a briefing for scrutiny councillors on the Government's agenda for education and schools, including the Secretary of State’s proposal for ‘developing moral purpose’.

✓ Hold a briefing for scrutiny councillors on the new accountabilities in education and the emerging local school systems, including Federations, Academies, Academy chains and Free Schools.

✓ Hold regular (though not necessarily frequent) meetings with the director of children’s services and other relevant officers, the executive member, teaching unions, a head teachers forum, schools forums, parent groups, teaching alliances and similar.

✓ Hold the leader, executive member and director of children’s services or education to account for their monitoring of Ofsted inspections and school results and their preparation for Ofsted inspection of school improvement support by the council.

✓ Scrutinise school place planning and council school building projects and the use of planning gain that is earmarked for education.

✓ Look at the council’s policy in relation to relationships with Academies and Free Schools and their attitude and relation to Academy improvement chains.

Suggested topics for scrutiny of governance

• Local authority as the ‘champion of pupils and parents’.

• Local school leadership against the four Ofsted criteria: namely the achievement of pupils at the school, the quality of teaching in the school, the behaviour and safety of pupils at the school and the quality of leadership in, and management of, the school.

• Local authority intelligence gathering about the range of curricula across all schools – and what they do with the intelligence.

• Engagement with any governors networks, including consideration of the support provided by the local authority for all school governors.

• Admissions procedures and appeals.

• School to school improvement arrangements in-house or outsourced.

• Succession planning by schools.

• Performance monitoring of relevant KPIs by the school leadership.

• School leadership’s pupil plans, differentiation and alignment.

• Collaboration with schools forum or similar.

• Inclusion across the local authority.

• Pupil behaviour and attendance across the local authority.
Overview
As councils’ children’s services budgets come under pressure, the question of maximising the impact of resources becomes more important. It’s also important to ensure that schools allocate funding according to need and that targeted funding provided to the council or to schools is utilised effectively. These are roles that scrutiny can play, both externally, through the influence of council governors where appointed and through building better relationships with schools and also internally, through the budget and policy scrutiny mechanism.

Scrutiny roles could include:

- understanding the authority’s strategy for targeting expenditure and working with children and young people at a time when schools have increased autonomy and providers of schools are becoming increasingly diverse, thus making it harder to gain intelligence about them
- looking at the range of services being provided, whether ‘traded’ or otherwise and how the pattern of services are likely to change in the future
- reviewing and helping to choose the right performance indicators that will provide assurance as to the quality and effectiveness of any relevant strategy and delivery
- monitoring spend and outturn figures.

Identifying roles for scrutiny

Place planning
Councils have a statutory duty for school place planning and shaping future education provision. Scrutiny can play a valuable role in providing insight and challenge to plans made by a council. This can include a check on the quality and source of data and future projections, compared with census and other demographic information, for example.

Scrutiny can:

- bring together and listen to the views of a wide set of stakeholders
- work across councils
- represent the community and act on behalf of parents
- review and interpret data.

Tips!

- Continue to ensure scrutiny of council budgets that relate to education in the annual budget cycle.
- Monitor funding allocations by central government to the council and schools within the council area and decide whether it is possible to scrutinise their use and outcomes.
- Look at data that is used in place planning and projections alongside the location of all types of school in the area.
Use of the Pupil Premium
The majority of participants identified this as a possible scrutiny topic. It was recognised that schools use pupil premium funding differently. Some use it to benefit those pupils that receive it, despite some of these pupils not needing additional support to achieve well. Others who have an in-depth understanding of the performance of all of their children target spending on the pupil premium where it is needed more – and so pupils who are not eligible for free school meals benefit as well as those that are.

Scrutiny can challenge the use of pupil funding – gaining an understanding of local practices and what works best and comparing local schools’ application of the funding with schools in other councils. Scrutiny can help assess whether the funding is achieving the required outcomes in different schools and hold the school leadership to account for making best use of an additional resource.

Scrutiny is able to access relevant information as schools must publish details of their pupil premium, how it is spent and what the outcomes are for children receiving it. This is relatively new data that schools now publish and will give a great deal of insight into school planning and improvement that scrutiny can use to build up a picture of the school.

Tips!

✓ Scrutiny can offer a holistic view in terms of the use of the pupil premium, the selection of children who might benefit and the sharing of good practice from other authorities.

✓ Scrutiny may identify aspects of deprivation that influence educational attainment and make suggestions to other relevant council services or partners that could help them also to address this inequality, drawing on evidence in assessing the use of the pupil premium.

✓ Scrutiny might look at what works and celebrate the success of schools in making an impact through the pupil premium.

✓ Scrutiny could be used to facilitate transparency of the use of the pupil premium, evaluate the teaching system and make recommendations and have a better understanding of the needs of pupils and their schools.

✓ Scrutiny could help to ensure compliance with a school’s statutory duty for publishing information on the use of and outcomes from the pupil premium.
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Suggested topics for scrutiny of resource allocation

- Local authority budgetary support for schools and school improvement and related services.
- Research data on the Capital Programme.
- Local authority input into the school improvement strategy and services.
- Recruitment and retention of school leaders and staff.
- Home to School Transport budget.
- Cost of value added in School Improvement Services.
- Services provided to schools by the local authority that are bought by Academies as well as used by maintained schools.
Summary and conclusions

Our interest is in how scrutiny can help to improve educational attainment and the prospects for all the children in our councils. The case studies and other material in this publication indicate the many ways in which scrutiny can develop in regard to the continuing responsibilities of councils for education, as well as by providing a means to ensure accountability of all schools. From our work and the case studies, it is clear that council scrutiny has a significant role to play in relation to education.

Furthermore, we are convinced that scrutiny has a role in education regardless of the form of governance of schools. This applies both in exercising its powers to scrutinise the services directly provided by the council and in engaging with all schools whilst recognising their autonomy. Scrutiny may use its influence and credibility to act on behalf of its community, engage stakeholders, work with decision-makers and providers to seek to improve education and where appropriate to hold decision-makers and providers to account.

Reflecting on the comparisons with health scrutiny as a ‘lever to improve the health of local people’, we feel that scrutiny can be a ‘lever to improve the educational achievement of children’. This is an opportunity to build relationships not just between scrutiny and schools but across all stakeholders in education.

Scrutiny can bring:

• independent support and challenge to schools, regardless of their governance model
• relevant experience of and skills from working with health and social care (where, as in education, partners and council commission and provide services, and where scrutiny can provide internal and external challenge and support in relation to policies, services, public experience and outcomes)
• a track record in building strong effective working relationships and practices
• skills in consensus-building through stakeholder engagement as a core way of working.

We hope that this resource will help other scrutineers to draw on this good practice and to consider some of the suggested ways to scrutinise education and school leaders in order to improve school support and educational attainment of children and young people in your council.

CfPS would like to hear from you and how you are scrutinising education; and also how you have drawn on this resource in developing new accountabilities in education. Please use the blank pages at the back of this publication to jot down your thoughts and next steps. The remainder of this publication includes:

• Appendix 1 outlines questions to help you start to think about scrutiny and education. The questions have been adapted from those produced by the West Midlands Scrutiny Network (CfPS wishes to thank the network for sharing these questions). They include additional questions highlighted by this programme and should provide a tool to help you consider your own arrangements and to plan for the future.
• Appendix 2 provides the case studies of councils who already have undertaken scrutiny of local education provision and support and of their schools.
Appendix 1

Questions

• What reviews have you undertaken regarding education?
• What topics would you now wish to review after reading this publication?
• Which education services are the council continuing to provide to schools?
  • How are these services being funded?
  • How do these services relate to the priorities for children and young people in the area?
  • How might you scrutinise performance across your council?
• How is the council ensuring that it will still be able to deliver its statutory duties?
  • What are its statutory duties?
  • How is the council ensuring that safeguarding remains the top priority?
• The council will continue to have a statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient school places in the area. What information does the council have about:
  • Proposals for Free Schools?
  • Plans of schools to increase their admissions numbers?
• Is the council considering trading education services with schools?
  • How will the council ensure the sustainability of those services when in competition with other service providers?
• Which education services has the council stopped providing to schools?
  • How will outcomes for young people be affected if external service providers cannot fill the gap?
• Will the council be seeking an agreement with Academies regarding access to information – for example, to enable scrutiny of educational attainment and compliance with the admissions code?
• Will the council continue to operate a School Admissions Forum, following removal of the statutory duty?
  • If so, what changes would be beneficial to its terms of reference?

• How is the council continuing to foster collaborative relationships with schools in the area?
  • Does the council have a role in school-based partnerships?
  • What about the relationship with local councillors?
  • What about the relationship with the scrutiny function?
  • How do you currently work with the full range of schools in your area?
  • What actions could you take to improve links with all types of school in your area?
  • What are the implications for a scrutiny committee’s statutory education co-optees?
  • How could you raise the profile of scrutiny with school leaders?

• How will the council work with all schools to take forward initiatives in the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Green Paper and support for children and young people with SEN?5
  • How will you achieve an appropriate balance between scrutiny of the council’s role in education and direct scrutiny of the range of local schools?

• How will the council influence better educational outcomes for the most vulnerable children and young people in the council area?
  • How will you achieve an appropriate balance between scrutiny of the council’s role in education and direct scrutiny of the range of local schools?

5 (The Green Paper ‘Support and aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability’ was published on 11 March 2011; see http://www.education.gov.uk/schoolspupilupport/SEN/b0075291/green-paper)
Appendix 2 Case studies

Over the following pages you will find out more about the work and reviews of seven of the councils that worked on this project.

Each one gives more details on:

• their context and the reasons for the review
• what they did
• learning and tips
• what they are planning to do next.
Strengthening the family of schools – the role of Birmingham City Council

Background
Like others, Birmingham wanted to respond positively to the changing educational landscape. The changes risked a growing misconception that the council no longer has a role to play in our children’s education; in fact nothing could be further from the truth. The Secretary of State for Education has made clear that he sees councils taking a strategic role in the educational system, while retaining three core responsibilities:

1. Ensuring a sufficient supply of school places.
2. Tackling underperformance in schools and ensuring high standards.

What Birmingham did
The Scrutiny Inquiry was conducted via a short series of formal committee meetings during September and October 2012 along with a visit to a city Academy. We heard evidence in the meetings from a range of schools and stakeholders. The key questions for the Inquiry were:

• In the light of more schools in Birmingham becoming Academies what role should the City Council play to support all schools and children?
• What is the new strategic role for councils in local education provision?

The timeframe for the Inquiry meant that there were several areas we were unable to probe, and the findings from the review are very much seen as a baseline to build upon. The ten recommendations are focused on improving processes and relationships.

They covered: developing a vision for education; school improvement; school places; and the role of councillors in understanding and challenging performance at a local level and championing their local schools.

Learning and tips
• The review identified several challenges, but the one overwhelming message heard was the need for a new debate on education locally to develop a shared vision for education. This will be central to ensuring that the needs of all our children are met, whichever type of school they attend.
• Don’t be afraid to question; you are a ‘critical friend’.
• Be clear about your objectives; identify what you can influence.
• Make achievable recommendations that add value and track progress.
• Hold officers and the executive to account on the council’s role in education.
• Visit schools to hear at first-hand about issues that are affecting them.

What’s next?
Committee members see this report as an important step in establishing how the City Council can work with all schools within the increasingly diverse and autonomous school landscape and how councillors can develop a role as effective ‘Education Champions’ for children, parents and communities.

Members will continue to explore issues relating to the future role of the council in this new educational landscape and this will form the basis of the committee’s on going work.

For more information, please use this link: http://tinyurl.com/nqvcq9p
Scrutiny of schools in Blackpool

Background
In October 2012, the Scrutiny Committee appointed a Review Panel to undertake scrutiny of education matters, including the consideration of school performance information and Ofsted Inspection Reports.

The Panel’s role is to consider and make recommendations on school performance information including attendance at schools, attainment of children and Ofsted Inspection Reports; and to review and make recommendations on key strategic documents and issues affecting schools such as exclusions.

What Blackpool did
The Review Panel meets approximately six times per year and considers up to four schools at each meeting (comprising a mix of schools e.g. primary, Academy, secondary and special). Schools are considered on a rolling programme and meetings are held at a school in Blackpool and at a time to allow attendance by head teachers and governors, if requested by Members. Time prior to the meeting is used for councillors to undertake a tour of the school.

The Panel has made a number of enquiries and observations in relation to the schools that have been reviewed to date, including the impact of pupil stability on absence levels, the high levels of special educational needs at schools and the steps made by schools to improve attainment. The Panel has also considered data demonstrating that Blackpool schools have significant levels of children in receipt of free school meals and higher than average pupil transience.

The Panel review Ofsted Inspection reports as and when they are published and receives regular updates regarding improvements at schools, monitoring the implementation of any action plans that may have been put in place.

Learning and tips
- Hold meetings in schools (with the permission of the school) and take a tour to enable councillors to get to know the school.
- Build relationships with schools to ensure they are approachable and to allow for better cooperation, if and when required.
- Don’t take attainment in isolation – use the links between Ofsted reports and school performance data (including absence, transience, free school meals, special educational needs) to get a holistic view.
- Get an understanding of who is accountable to the Panel – is it the Executive Member, the Director of Children’s Services, the School Improvement Team, the governing body or the head teacher?

What’s next?
In November 2013 the Panel is going to review its work over the first year of operation to identify how to take work forward to next year – building on what has worked well in meetings and also what they have learnt from being a part of this national project for CfPS. Amongst other questions, the Panel will be considering the following:

- Is the Panel receiving the right level of information?
- Is the Panel challenging the right people in the right way? Where does accountability lie? Council officers, school governors, head teachers?
- Is the Panel being challenging enough?

For more information, please use this link: www.blackpool.gov.uk
Scrutiny of schools in Buckinghamshire

Background
In 2012 there were already over 30 Academies in Buckinghamshire, almost all secondary schools. Some councillors thought this meant absolute autonomy for those schools and were unaware of the key strategic role played by the council. Others were concerned how the statutory responsibilities of the council for the education and wellbeing of its children were being discharged without the traditional top down relationship; and others expressed concern for the accountability of Academies in general.

An emerging independent learning trust had reported regularly to the Overview and Scrutiny Commissioning Committee (OSCC) – but had not been the subject of review. It was in this context that the OSCC commissioned a review to explore relationships between Buckinghamshire Academies and the county council.

What Buckinghamshire did
A review group was tasked with providing an overview of how working arrangements between Academies and the local authority have developed since the 2010 Academies Act, in particular around supporting vulnerable children, standards and provision of places; and potential roles around local involvement and accountability, including new roles for local councillors in working with and building relationships with schools. They did this through a variety of meetings with cabinet members and education professionals, head teachers, literature review and research.

Learning and tips
• It is key for the local authority to define its new strategic role in relation to education – built around collaboration and projects such as the creation of the Buckinghamshire Learning Trust.
• There is strong commitment in Buckinghamshire to exploring collaborative working between schools and the local authority.
• Councillors have a strong role as a link between schools, the council and other organisations, and as ‘critical friends’ of schools.
• There are opportunities for sharing good practice including school-to-school development.
• The Cabinet Member is held accountable overall.
• It is important to engage with as wide a group as possible and especially with head teachers, chairs of governing bodies and parents.

What’s next?
• The council embarked along a path of continuous adjustment and culture change. It demonstrated commitment to a new style of collaborative working to fulfil their responsibilities. This will be reviewed again by scrutiny.
• As the future is in part dependent on the success of the proposed Buckinghamshire Learning Trust, scrutiny will be updated formally on the early operation of the Trust in Spring/Summer 2014, including information on commercial operation and the mitigation of identified risks and support for collaborative working.
• Member induction will include guidance on why it is important for councillors to get to know their local schools. Options for a ‘protocol’ around school and councillor working relationships are to be explored.
• The new Education Skills and Children’s Services Select Committee is continuing to tackle education issues with a review into the causes of the widening achievement gap.

For more information, please use this link:
Scrutiny of schools by East Riding of Yorkshire Council

Background
Scrutiny of education falls to the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee and Review Panels at East Riding. The work of the Sub-Committee is divided up between ordinary meetings and Ofsted meetings. The Sub-Committee has co-opted members including parent governors, young people, Teachers’ Union and Church representatives.

What East Riding did
The Sub-Committee meets seven times per year to review subjects such as school funding, 14-19 education provision, term time holiday, special educational needs, school admissions and road safety training within schools; and four times a year to view all the Ofsted reports for East Riding schools. Head teachers and chairs of governors from a cross section of schools (including Academies) are invited to meet with the Sub-Committee, alongside the School Improvement Service. Councillors ask questions about the Ofsted report; what the school is doing to address areas for improvement; and how the School Improvement Service is supporting them; and since the introduction of the new Ofsted framework, also ask those schools requiring improvement, how long it will be before they are a good school.

Review Panels are set up to undertake in-depth reviews of specific issues. A Review Panel was set up following the release of the ‘Achievement and Attainment Tables’ in 2011, which showed that some East Riding secondary schools had not performed as well as had been expected. The Panel looked into the reasons why, visited and met with a number of secondary schools and sought the views of all secondary schools on the 2011 examination results.

The review recommended that an ‘Excellence for All Fund’ of £200,000 be established and invited all LA schools to bid for funding to undertake initiatives to raise attainment. This was well received and has led to increased attainment.

Currently the Panel is examining the performance of East Riding Schools following the 2011/12 annual report of Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector, which highlighted that schools in the East Riding were falling below the national average in terms of the proportion that have been judged to be good or outstanding. The review is examining and evaluating the effectiveness of schools in the East Riding and the measures implemented by schools to monitor, review and improve their outcomes. This is due to report later in 2013.

Learning and tips
- Ofsted meetings provide an excellent opportunity to build good relationships with schools, enabling the Sub-Committee to monitor performance, identify good practice and follow up issues raised by schools.
- A focused approach via a Review Panel has been effective in making recommendations which have made a positive impact on children and young people in the East Riding.
- Visits to schools, children’s centres and businesses are invaluable and help to build relationships and involvement in the scrutiny process; councillors hear first-hand about their experiences and issues.
- The Portfolio Holder for Education is invited to participate in meetings and to be held to account as necessary.

What’s next?
The Sub-Committee is keen to ensure it is taking a holistic approach to the performance of schools, comparing performance of schools across the East Riding and nationally. It is also considering ways in which it can involve young people more effectively in the topics it considers.

For more information, please use this link: http://www2.eastriding.gov.uk/council/committees/overview-and-scrutiny-committees/children-and-young-people-sub-committee/
Hackney’s Scrutiny Review: The Council’s Role in the New Education Environment

**Background**

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission focuses on all services provided by Hackney Learning Trust, children’s social services, and other issues relating to young people in the borough.

The Commission chose to review this topic to try to understand and shape the local authority’s future role in education, and the relationship between schools and local councillors. This was influenced by changes to policy nationally as well as locally as education services were transferred back to Hackney Council having been run by the Learning Trust since 2002.

**What Hackney did**

They sought clarity about what the council expects from schools in the borough; and explored the role of ward councillors in relation to schools and how that relationship could be improved. They:

- gathered evidence over four months
- heard from the Learning Trust; Sir Michael Barber, a former Chief Adviser to the Secretary of State for Education on School Standards and an educationist; Rick Muir, Associate Director for Public Services at the Institute for Public Policy Research and London Councils
- surveyed councillors and head teachers
- councillors listened to governors and met head teachers in their wards and reported back.

**Learning and tips**

- Councillors can be a key link between schools and a council by promoting wider engagement with the local community, and educating children and young people about local democracy.

- Being a school governor is one of the best ways to link with a school, but challenges are the time commitment and getting a balanced coverage across wards.

- There is a good track record of councillor involvement with schools when involved in a scrutiny review, as evidenced in the report.

- You need to understand the lines of accountability. There is a role for scrutiny in holding schools to account and asking school leaders questions about performance. But scrutiny should not hold head teachers directly to account for the performance of their school. Instead the Committee should hold the Head of Education Services and the Cabinet Member to account for how effectively they were challenging and supporting the school to improve.

**What’s next?**

The Cabinet response to the Commission’s findings and recommendations was positive and it has agreed with everything the Commission said. The recommendations were largely about the council providing information, advice and support for councillors to develop their relationships with schools effectively.

For more information, please use this link: [www.hackney.gov.uk/Councils-Role-New-Education-Environment-Scrutiny-Review](http://www.hackney.gov.uk/Councils-Role-New-Education-Environment-Scrutiny-Review)
Scrutiny of schools in the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames

Background
Richmond’s vision is to become a fully ‘Commissioning Council.’ Work is underway across all areas to commission and procure the services the council needs to meet the existing and future needs of its residents. This includes a programme within Education and Children’s Services to create ‘Achieving for Children’; a joint company, with the Royal Borough of Kingston. The challenge of growing numbers of Academies and Free Schools also raises wider issues of accountability and transparency for scrutiny councillors.

What Richmond did
Richmond is not doing a specific piece of time limited work. Instead they are focusing on ensuring that scrutiny is fit for purpose for the council model and wider changing education landscape. They have:

• A strong partnership of schools developed through Education Richmond. The challenge for scrutiny is to build good relationships with this body through its officer links to enable whole scrutiny of cross borough school and education issues. Officers attending as witnesses need to provide reassurance that schools are continuing to work together and are open to scrutiny and involvement.

• Looked at what the councillor role will be in the future through the council’s Strategy Panel.

• Managed the agenda for committee meetings to ensure that the range of bodies and individuals are invited and the full breadth of issues are scrutinised.

• Scrutinised key issues such as school place planning and future education provision. A range of detailed meetings have taken place on these issues to involve scrutiny prior to decision making.

• Separated out council statutory duties from the delivery by Academy Trusts and Free Schools to ensure they are effectively scrutinised. They are asking: What happens where there is underperformance? How can scrutiny maintain relationships and helpfully challenge?

• Developed an agreed way to engage councillors as fully as possible in the commissioning and procurement process. Councillors are engaged in looking at: what is needed to meet the needs of people accessing services; how can the specification be developed to meet these needs; what are the strengths of existing arrangements which need to be carried forward; and how can value for money and quality be ensured? In respect of post contract award monitoring, they are asking: how has the contract bedded in; are the outcomes being delivered; and are there any areas where expectations haven’t been met?

Learning and tips
• Restrict agendas to only three items per meeting to ensure focus and more detailed scrutiny.

• Get out and about – scrutiny councillors engage best when they can see things happening on the ground.

• Involve young people through use of a volunteer youth scrutiny panel to gather the views of their peers.

• Make sure that scrutiny looks in two directions – with ‘schools as customers’ and the ‘council as provider’, and ask if expectations are being met.

• Focus on outcomes.

What’s next?
• Continue to be flexible – ensuring scrutiny adapts to meet the requirements of the emerging ‘Commissioning Council Model’; including working closely with partners and schools to ensure good relationships can be maintained and further developed.

• Refresh the councillor role to keep pace with the changing council and ensure that scrutiny continues to play a valuable role.

• Focus on ensuring continued engagement with schools across the borough which is meaningful and challenging so as to ensure the highest quality of education for the children and families in the borough.

For more information, please use this link: http://www.richmond.gov.uk/council_committees_list?mgl=mgCommitteeDetails.aspx&ID=536
Scrutiny of schools in Solihull

Background
Solihull was keen to explore and understand the extent of the education changes locally and whether scrutiny could be used as a lever for holding schools to account for their performance.

What Solihull did
Tasked by the Chief Executive, Solihull scrutiny officers began to examine legislation to explore what powers scrutiny had to call in head teachers and governors and hold them to account for the performance of their school. Despite a wealth of legislation governing most other public bodies, they found that legislation and powers in respect of education were limited, even non-existent.

So Solihull concluded that in the absence of powers it needed to build on its current working practices and relationships with schools and develop these further to ensure that the council is able to fulfil its statutory role for children. Building relationships with schools and their governing bodies in support of voluntary cooperation was found to be undoubtedly the most appropriate means of getting either a chair of governors or head teacher to the table. From research they identified the following practices as ways to get schools to work with scrutiny:

- Scrutiny needs to show the added value that could result for schools if they are engaged in any particular activity.
- Schools are more likely to engage if the scrutiny is focused on a specific problem rather than a particular school.
- It is better to gather evidence from schools in a more informal way ie 1:1 meetings between a scrutiny councillor and a head teacher or chair of governors.
- It is useful to engage with school governing bodies through council representatives on those bodies and/or by co-opting governors onto scrutiny committees or a task and finish group.

The Committee recommended that scrutiny should seek to work with school governing bodies in sharing scrutiny skills and possibly to undertake joint activity on areas of mutual interest.

Learning and tips
- There is little in legislation to require a school to report to or attend scrutiny meetings. However using any such power should be a last resort anyway. The answer is to build better relationships and links with schools instead.
- It is useful to hold scrutiny in educational settings and to build links and relationships with schools and related stakeholders.
- It is important to undertake deep scrutiny through task and finish groups and to hold subject specific meetings and reviews on specific and focussed topics, such as ‘narrowing the gap’ and ‘developing skills for the future’.
- It is important to make sure that scrutiny is effective in holding to account the lead councillor, the director of children’s services and a school where there are performance issues.

Next steps
Solihull is looking at ways to strengthen its links with schools and in particular the role of the ward councillor.

For more information, please use this link: http://www.solihull.gov.uk/decisions/overviewandscrutiny.htm
Contact

Welsh Local Government Association

The WLGA’s primary purposes are to promote a better local government, its reputation and to support authorities in the development of policies and priorities which will improve public service and democracy. It represents the 22 local authorities in Wales, with the 4 police authorities, 3 fire and rescue authorities and 3 national park authorities as associate members.

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The Guide

This Guide has been produced by the Welsh Local Government Association and a group of scrutiny officers from the North Wales Scrutiny Officers Group in association with the Centre for Public Scrutiny. The Guide, the latest in a series to be produced to assist practitioners in Wales, outlines the different roles for scrutiny committees in examining schools and education issues, the relationship between scrutiny, the local authority’s education function, individual schools and regulatory bodies and case studies of education scrutiny from across Wales.

The Interface between Scrutiny, the Local Authority and Individual Schools

The Welsh Assembly Government has devolved powers over education policy in Wales which is led by the Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS). However, local authorities deliver education in their local area and provide support and strategic direction for schools. Local authorities delegate, on average, 76% of their budgets to schools.

Local Authority Duties:

The duties of the local authority towards schools can be divided into five areas:

1. Strategic management: includes making grants and internal audits and provision of school advisory services
2. Specific grants: e.g. workload agreement
3. Special Educational Needs and Additional Learning Needs: including funding for pupils and Pupil Referral Units
4. School Improvement: particularly supporting underperforming schools
5. Access to Education: admissions policy and process, home to school transport and assessing eligibility for free school meals

School Governing Bodies:

All publicly funded schools have a governing body. These are made up of parent representatives, the head teacher, serving teachers, governors appointed by the local education authority and members of the local community. They are responsible for the main policy decisions within schools including:

- academic matters;
- school discipline;
- the appointment and dismissal of staff;
- repair and maintenance of school buildings.

As referred to above, Executive Members and council officials can be called to account in respect of any
areas of responsibility, including education. Representatives of schools can also be involved in the scrutiny process, for example, when reviewing a local authority's School Admissions Policy, it may be useful to involve head teachers and governors at an early stage either as co-opted members or expert witnesses. This can help to ensure that a 'schools' perspective is given when education issues are considered by scrutiny.

The Statutory Power of Scrutiny in Education Issues

Section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000 requires overview and scrutiny committees to have power:

- “to review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge of any functions which are the responsibility of the executive;
- to make reports or recommendations to the authority or the executive with respect to the discharge of any functions which are the responsibility of the executive,
- to review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge of any functions which are not the responsibility of the executive;
- to make reports or recommendations to the authority or the executive with respect to the discharge of any functions which are not the responsibility of the executive; and
- to make reports or recommendations to the authority or the executive on matters which affect the authority's area of the inhabitants of that area.”

Co-opted Members

There is also a requirement to include representatives from the following groups on overview and scrutiny committees which deal with education matters. They are entitled to speak and vote on such matters.

(a) Church in Wales representatives;
(b) Roman Catholic Church representatives; and
(c) Parent governor representatives.

There is also a potential to co-opt young people onto scrutiny committees with a remit for schools and education matters as non-voting members. An example of this is Newport City Council who have appointed a member of the Newport Youth Council as a permanent co-opted Member of the Young Persons Services Overview & Scrutiny Forum.

The Relationship between Scrutiny and Regulatory Bodies (E.g. Estyn and Wales Audit Office)

The local authority and schools are subject to a range of regulatory activity including external regulation, inspection and audit, as well as internal auditing. Schools are also accountable to their governing bodies. For scrutiny to add value it must complement rather than duplicate the work of these
bodies, for example, if a scrutiny committee seeks to investigate a service area that is due to be inspected or has recently been inspected it may be duplicating effort. However, scrutiny has a valid role in testing the robustness of post-inspection action plans and monitoring their implementation. This is not to say that if a scrutiny committee identifies a poorly performing service it should not undertake a more detailed review or investigation of the service area, but should, as part of this review, draw on any existing inspection reports and also establish if any forthcoming external inspections of the service area are planned.

Lifelong learning or other relevant scrutiny committees with a remit for schools and education matters have a role in monitoring the ongoing performance of the local authority’s education function and the overall performance of schools, and they should have a clear awareness and understanding of how well they are performing. If this is the case, and poor performance is identified by scrutiny committees and corrective action is successfully implemented, external inspections should not reveal significant failings or areas of underperformance that the authority was not already aware of. Where poor performance is identified, scrutiny committees may decide to undertake a more detailed investigation into the underlying causes of the poor performance and the action the authority intends to take to improve performance.

**CASE STUDY**

**Wrexham County Borough Council**

**Improving Educational Attainment**

Due to the relatively low educational standards, particularly at Key Stage 4, in 2005 the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee decided to reserved a slot on each Scrutiny Committee Agenda over a period of nine months where the head teachers and/or a representative of the Governing Body of each of the 9 secondary schools could attend to give a presentation on what they felt were the key challenges/barriers to achieving good performance. The Scrutiny Officer extracted the common themes identified from each of the meetings and Education Officers were then asked to produce an action plan to address the key areas identified. This process was subsequently commended following the Estyn inspection of the Wrexham Education Authority in October 2007.
Different Roles for Scrutiny Committees with a Remit for Schools and Education Matters

Scrutiny committees have a number of different roles and when developing scrutiny work programmes for education it is important to ensure that the committee allows sufficient time to fulfil its different roles. Examples of different roles for scrutiny include:

- performance monitoring in relation to the local authority’s education function, including comparative school performance within the authority and compared with other authorities;

- investigating areas of poor performance within the local authority education function, including the support provided to individual underperforming schools;

- assisting with the reviewing and/or development of education policies;

- budget scrutiny – this could include a consideration of the allocation of budgets in accordance with service or corporate priorities, or an examination of the efficiency of the local authority.

- reviewing the contribution of other organisations/service areas to schools and education issues, including a consideration of the links between the local authority and partner organisations.

CASE STUDY
Flintshire County Council
School Size Policy

As part of the development of the School Size Policy, which included a criteria for assessing the future viability of small primary schools, the Lifelong Learning Overview & Scrutiny Committee held three separate meetings at three different primary schools and invited the head teachers and representatives of governing bodies of all primary schools to attend and participate in at least one of them. Informal theatre style and café style seating was used to create a more informal atmosphere and encourage more open debate. Education Officers and lead Executive Members attended, but only as observers. A number of amendments were subsequently made to the proposed policy.
Developing Forward Work Programmes for Scrutiny Committees with a Remit for Schools and Education Matters

As with the development of any scrutiny work programme there are a range of sources from which work programme topics can be identified. These include:

- policy and budget framework;
- programme in key plans and strategies;
- performance indicators;
- corporate / community objectives;
- directorate / service plans;
- views of overview and scrutiny committee Members and other non-executive Councillors;
- views of executive member / portfolio holder;
- views of parents / pupils;
- views of officers / professional groups (e.g. teachers);
- views of governors;
- views of partner organisations;
- budgetary information;
- regulatory reports (e.g. Estyn, Wales Audit Office, Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales);
- the public (taxpayer perspective).

When consulting with stakeholders on potential topics for scrutiny, or as part of a specific scrutiny exercise, it is important to obtain views from as many different perspectives as possible. An important role for scrutiny can be to gather a range of perspectives and balance the differing priorities of stakeholders before arriving at recommendations/conclusions.

Performance Information for Education Scrutineers

Wales does not publish school league tables, but comparisons of the levels of achievement between local authorities can be found on the Welsh Assembly Government’s statistics website (www.wales.gov.uk/statistics) as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistical Release</th>
<th>Date Published</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provisional GCSE/GNVQ GCE A, AS and AVCE results in Wales</td>
<td>September each year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final GCSE/GNVQ GCE A, AS and AVCE results in Wales</td>
<td>November each year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Assembly Government’s 6 National Strategic and 8 Core PIs enable comparisons to be made between the 22 Welsh authorities and could be the focus of performance monitoring reports to scrutiny committees. There are also a number of other performance indicators relating to schools (e.g. exclusions and attendance) which can also be found on the website. Rather than monitor all of these,
scrutiny committees with a remit for schools and education matters could develop a smaller basket of key indicators which could be monitored on a regular basis. In addition, local indicators may be devised by authorities to monitor and manage performance in areas not covered by the Assembly Government’s National Performance Measurement Framework in a sufficiently detailed or timely basis.

Performance monitoring is a tool which can be used to assist scrutiny committees in carrying out their range of functions. Suggested ways to improve performance monitoring arrangements:

- ensure the provision of regular, relevant and timely statistical information to enable challenges to be made to specific areas of education service delivery as well as the overall performance of the education service;
- provide training for members on the authority’s education performance management framework to enable members to understand how performance information and performance indicators (including how they are set and measured) in respect of schools and education services can be used to assist effective scrutiny;
- scrutiny committees with a remit for schools and education matters could consider setting priority performance indicators within the business planning process against which it would seek regular information and explanation of performance;
- seek corporate acceptance of the prominent role to be played by scrutiny in challenging executive members and senior managers in the delivery of services against targets.

To assist committees in undertaking their role, performance monitoring reports to scrutiny committees with a remit for schools and education matters could include the following:

- performance against a set of priority PIs that have been agreed by the Committee as the indicators that will be reported routinely;
- the use of ‘exception’ reporting for informing members of areas where performance is below target;
- performance against current targets;
- comparisons with performance in previous years;
- performance compared with the similar local authorities;
- performance at each key stage and for GCSE results for the current and previous years and the authority’s ranking for these on an all Wales basis;
- performance by pupil cohort for successive years;
- more detailed information on areas of specific concern / interest / under performance identified by the committee;
- details of identified key risks to service delivery and progress made by the authority in attempting to mitigate their impact.
Approaching Scrutiny of Cross-Cutting Issues and Engaging Stakeholders

Education cuts across many service and policy areas, when examining issues relating to education consider if it would be appropriate to involve officers, representatives or lead members from other departments or organisations in the scrutiny exercise as well as education officers and lead members for children and young people and lead members for education. For example:

- Other council departments e.g. Children’s Social Services, Leisure Services, Libraries and Schools Meals / Catering Service;
- Children and Young People’s Partnership;
- Job Centre Plus;
- Local Further / Higher Education establishments;
- Community Safety Partnership;
- Youth Offending Team;
- Voluntary Organisations (e.g. Save the Children);
- Probation Service;
- Local Employers.

CASE STUDY
Wrexham County Borough Council
Young Carers

Two Young Carers from two of Wrexham’s Secondary Schools were invited to address a meeting of the Children & Young People Committee about the daily problems they faced and how the Council could help. During discussions, it was noted that they had problems in completing homework on time and that teachers weren’t as understanding as they would have liked. It was also noted that the response from schools to the NCH (National Children’s Homes) training packs for young carers had been poor. As a result, a working group was established and a presentation has since been given to head teachers of primary and secondary schools to raise awareness and ensure early identification of young carers.

This case study not only demonstrates the importance of involving stakeholders in the process, but also the need to take account of other cross-cutting issues which impact on a child’s education.

When undertaking any aspect of scrutiny work it is important that the committee allows sufficient time and opportunity to scope the scrutiny exercise and ensure that all relevant stakeholders are given the opportunity to participate. Below are some suggested ways to engage stakeholders in the scrutiny process.

Professionals - officers/teachers

- Establish a group of teacher representatives which could be used for consultation with schools, as opposed to consulting with every school
- Hold meetings in schools themselves to encourage attendance
- Circulate minutes of meetings with teachers/governor, keep them engaged
Parents
- Find a way to canvass parents on an annual basis for ideas for scrutiny
- Establish a representative group of parents whose views could be sought on authority-wide education matters
- Use informal meeting environments / task & finish groups
- Publicise forthcoming education issues to encourage attendance e.g. through newsletters, press releases

Pupils
- Invite representatives of the Youth Council to attend meetings
- Issue surveys to pupils / school councils

CASE STUDY
Cardiff Council School Bullying

The Children & Young People Committee in 2007/08 identified a review of Cardiff’s approach to Anti-Bullying as a key priority for the year, and agreed to set up a Task and Finish Group to undertake an inquiry into the effectiveness of Cardiff Council’s Anti-Bullying Strategy.

This inquiry focused on the effectiveness of schools’ anti-bullying policies, including training and awareness raising for staff, pupils, and parents on the issue of bullying. The inquiry received evidence from the Welsh Assembly Government and ESTYN, from a number of Charities who are providing support, advice, and information for parents and children experiencing bullying. They also received evidence from a team of young consultants who had discussed with pupils in a number of schools their concerns, relating to bullying and their schools’ actions to address the bullying incidences.

The inquiry report focused on areas highlighted by national research and the primary research with parents from Cardiff Council’s Schools which was undertaken by our Scrutiny Research Team. Questionnaires were sent to the parents of all the children in years four and nine in Cardiff schools (a total of 7,000), and focus groups were arranged with certain hard to reach groups. The report made recommendations designed to further improve the support, training, advice, information, and monitoring provided by the Council and individual schools. It also addressed specific concerns, such as parent’s perception of the ineffectiveness of their children’s schools’ anti-bullying policies, and processes in dealing with incidents of bullying. The inquiry found that bullying is serious, as it can destroy a child’s enjoyment of school, family and social life, as well as their capacity to learn. The report recommended a number of key improvements to the present support and guidance provided by the Council and Schools to help further reduce the incidents of bullying, as part of their efforts to create safe, positive and stimulating environments for children and young people.
The Involvement of Co-opted Representatives

Co-opted members of scrutiny committees with a remit for schools and education matters may need additional support in accessing information and understanding their role. The role of a co-opted member is in some ways similar but in other ways different to that of an elected councillor. In view of this, co-opted members may benefit from specific training and advice on the role of co-opted members, as well as training on meeting procedures and the constitution. It is also important to ensure that co-opted members are invited to generic overview & scrutiny training sessions for elected members. An induction pack for parent governor representatives has been produced by the Centre for Public Scrutiny and can be downloaded free of charge from the link below:


Have you found the Guide useful? We would welcome your views on this Guide and where you found it helpful. Also if you would like any help or advice in implementing some of the approaches to scrutiny outlined in this guide please contact:

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Information Sources for Education Scrutineers

Welsh Assembly Government - Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning And Skills (DCELLS)
http://new.wales.gov.uk/about/departments/dcells/?lang=en

Welsh Assembly Government - Education And Skills Topic Webpage
http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/?lang=en

Welsh Assembly Government - Children And Young People Topic Webpage
http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/childrenyoungpeople/?lang=en

National Assembly Of Wales - Current Committees
http://www.assemblywales.org/bus-home/bus-committees/bus-committees-third-assem.htm

ESTYN (Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales)
http://www.estyn.gov.uk/about_estyn/about_estynduties.asp

Wales Audit Office
http://www.wao.gov.uk/home.asp

Local Government Data Unit Wales
(who support the National Pupil Database for Wales)
http://www.dataunitwales.gov.uk/eng/WorkAreas.asp?cat=15
http://www.npd-wales.gov.uk/

Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) - Education And Lifelong Learning Topic Page
http://www.wlga.gov.uk/content.php?nID=30;lID=1

The Centre For Public Scrutiny – Education Topic Webpage

Department for Children, Schools And Families - UK Government (As education is a devolved function, much of the information on this site does not necessarily apply to Wales, however, may be of value for comparative purposes).
http://www.dfes.gov.uk/localauthorities/index.cfm
Useful Websites for Performance Information

Education statistics can be viewed on the Welsh Assembly Government website at www.wales.gov.uk/statistics

A range of assessment and examination results can also be accessed from the Assembly at www.learning.wales.gov.uk

Estyn inspection reports and other information from www.estyn.gov.uk

The National Pupil Database website www.npd-wales.gov.uk contains information on individual local authorities and schools, including analyses using free school meal data (also used by Estyn).

The Fischer Family Trust provides a range of analyses to make more effective use of education performance data at www.fischertrust.org

The Local Government Data Unit – Wales is involved in the processes of gathering education data at www.lgdu-wales.gov.uk