


Children's Scrutiny Committee

Children's Social Care Visits

June 2022

Summary



Members visited 6 locations across 7 visits across the County: the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH, County Hall), Exeter Locality (County Hall), Barnstaple (Taw View), Newton Abbot (Estuary House), Tiverton (Oaklands Court) and the Atkinson Children's Home (Exeter).

Members spoke to at least 57 staff including locality directors, team managers, area managers, social workers and officers in a range of teams.

Staff told us they feel supported by a great team of managers and colleagues.

Devon County Council's Children's Services is an attractive place to come and work and has an open culture.

Staff welcome the shared vision of the new Senior Leadership team and the stability they bring to the service.

Staff feel the service is going in the right direction and praised the "shift in focus" to prioritising children and young people.

There is more to do on recruitment and retention and recruit more to join the Council as permanent employees. Full compliments of staff are needed to deal with demand and rising complexity of cases.

1. Background

- 1.1 As part of Members ongoing work monitoring the performance of local services and ensuring that they hear from our front-line staff, the Committee undertook visits to Children's Social Care locations across the County. Members visited each of the four localities teams, the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) in Exeter and the Atkinson Children's Home, Exeter. At times, Members of the Committee were accompanied by local Members and the Cabinet Member on their visits.
- 1.2 These were the first formal visits by the Committee since the summer of 2019 and the first post-pandemic visits undertaken by the Committee in person, and Members felt it was important to show their support to staff, feedback to the service and Cabinet Member and learn about what was happening in some of our frontline teams.
- 1.3 The Committee would like to place on record its gratitude to all the staff who gave up their time during these visits to speak to Members. Staff were always enthusiastic to speak with Members and Members welcomed their honesty and candour.
- 1.4 Overall, Members found their time with staff "informative", "enlightening" and "enjoyable". Members immediately recognised the dedication and professionalism of every member of staff they spoke to, all of whom were passionate about children and families and wanted to be part of an outstanding service. In particular, the Committee's newer Members were able to contextualise what they had heard in Committee meetings, learn about what happens on the ground from practitioners and understand the demands on the service.
- 1.5 Members hope that staff found they were engaging and found their conversations interesting. In addition, Members hoped that staff found their visits useful and showed the Committee's commitment to helping to improve services as part of our improvement journey.
- 1.6 Members made the following visits:
 - MASH, County Hall, Exeter (29th November 2021 and 6th April 2022).
 - Taw View, Barnstaple (11th April 2022).
 - Estuary House, Newton Abbot (12th April 2022).
 - Atkinson Secure Children's Home, Exeter (27th April 2022).
 - Oaklands Court, Tiverton (13th May 2022).
 - County Hall, Exeter (16th May 2022).
- 1.7 During the visits a range of issues and themes were discussed with Members. The following findings are by no means an exhaustive list of the points raised; rather some of the key common themes raised in conversations with Members.
- 1.8 Individual reports for each visit have been shared with the Members who were on those visits, the relevant senior leaders and managers. These individual reports summarise the visits and the issues raised on each visit in more detail.

2. Overall Themes

- 2.1 Members saw and recognised the brilliant work and outstanding individual members of staff across our social care locations, all of whom were doing their utmost to support children and families, despite challenging times and the demands on their time.
- 2.2 Members saw the professionalism of our staff on display and their genuine desire to improve our services and work to improve outcomes for children and families.
- 2.3 Members were appreciative of the relaxed atmosphere and felt that Staff were relaxed and open to talk to them to share their candid thoughts.

Staff, Workloads, Culture and Support

2.4 Staff are well supported with good managers and colleagues around them who understood the personal toll that the role can have on their wellbeing. Staff praised the open culture of the service and stated they enjoyed working in the service and across the county felt Members saw that teams saw themselves as a family.

- 2.5 Managers across children and families teams and in the Atkinson Children's Home commented that they welcome the stability and shared vision of the senior leadership team and felt supported by senior leaders. Staff supported these comments by stating senior leaders were visible and staff have responded positively to their appointments. However, some staff did comment that they would like to physically see senior leaders more often in person in the office to boost morale and support wellbeing.
- 2.6 Across all the social work offices, staff reported that their workloads and caseloads are very high, and in some cases, staff reported that that their caseloads and demand were the highest they have ever experienced. Levels of activity are below what they were during the pandemic, but generally above the pre-pandemic levels. Staff were very concerned about the level of demand on them and the number of hours they have to work to keep on top of cases. Staff were also concerned about their ability to ensure that their work was of high quality rather than just completing tasks. Members were told that while workload is high, in some areas of activity it is comparable to our neighbours, although that does not mean our staff are not overstretched and exhausted.
- 2.7 In terms of the effects this was having on staff, staff commented on the large numbers of extra hours they are having to work in the evenings and weekends and difficulties in finding time to take time out for leave, knowing the impact it will have on their colleagues and their own future demands. Some staff also told us it was difficult at times to find the time and space at work to relax and reflect.
- 2.8 Staff commented that in general, more staff capacity is urgently needed to deal with demand and ensure a full complement of staff as some of our teams were not at a full complement. This is not across every team Members spoke to, some teams had the right level of capacity to meet demand at the time of the visit. In addition, there was an overwhelming desire across several teams for more members of staff with administration or business support roles to support the teams and take some of the workload off professional teams or social workers.

2.9 Staff commented that as a whole, because of the pandemic, the organisation was more flexible and utilising flexible working arrangements. This meant less time in the office and more time at home, where staff can add in notes at home rather than having to come into the office which Members had previously heard about. In addition, less travelling allowed staff to save time in their busy workdays. But it did mean that offices were having to be creative in finding time to check in with staff and bring them together to reflect and share experiences.

Recruitment and retention

2.10 Members and staff spoke frequently about recruitment and retention issues of key workers across the County, including the recent measures that have been agreed to and what more could be done.

2.11 In terms of the Council as an attractive place to work, staff commented that Devon looks and feels like an attractive place to work and praised the open culture as a reason for coming to work and stay in Devon. Compared to other Local Authorities, Devon is seen as having an open culture and being on an improvement journey is a strength because potential staff know Devon is improving and changes are happening.

2.12 While pay plays one part in recruiting staff, conditions, demands and the overall reputation of social work in general are barriers to recruitment. There is a wider need to improve the perception of social work, and the negative connotations of a "social worker" who is someone who takes children away from their families, which is a very rare event. There is a need to promote the positive work of our social care staff and praising our staff for the good work they do.

2.13 There was varied reaction to the recruitment and retention measures brought in over recent months. Some staff commented that the recent work on pay and conditions had been helpful to improve the situation and some in the locality teams commented that positively that Devon's pay rates are now competitive to our neighbouring authorities. Likewise, staff at the Atkinson Children's Home told Members that improved grading had resulted in the recruitment and retention of well qualified staff. In addition, managers commented that Devon is now more "creative" when thinking about recruitment and retention.

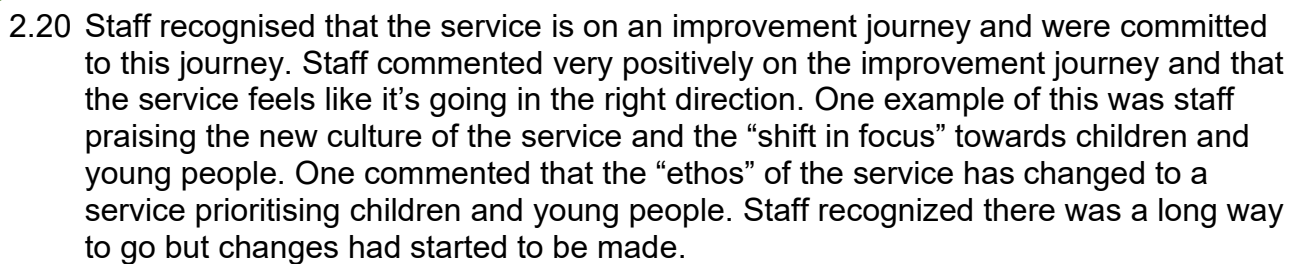
2.14 However, there is more to do to be more creative and to continue to retain staff and create a stable, permanent workforce. Some told Members that new measures to keep staff came too late to make an impact and others told Members that permanent rates need to be significantly improved to be more "fair" in comparison to agency staff. The Council needs to continue to be creative in its offer to potential staff.

2.15 The lack of affordable housing continues to be a barrier to getting staff to come and work in Devon. Staff in Exeter staff shared an experience of one new starter who had been waiting since December 2021 to find somewhere to live to move to Devon and start working for us.

2.16 However, Members were pleased to hear about recent successes in recruiting newly qualified social workers, 20 overseas social workers, 7 Frontline students and the Mid/East locality reported their concerns were stabilising.

- 2.17 Members spoke to a range of agency and permanent staff and discussed with them the benefits and drawbacks of both types of employment and Devon as an attractive place to work. Agency rates amongst our staff are high and Members were surprised to speak to more agency staff than they were expecting. Members heard about the differences in pay between the agency and rates and permanent staff, and while there is there are benefits to being an employee of the Council, at this time in the national context of cost-of-living pressures, many would be unwilling to take a significant pay cut (reported by staff to be from 25-50%) to become permanent staff.
- 2.18 While Members recognised the important work of all staff but were concerned about the long-term impact on cases, and avoiding children having to change social worker and re-tell their story. In addition, the impact on training, and having to train new staff and building a knowledge base amongst staff of Devon.
- 2.19 Members and staff discussed the 'grow our own strategy' and the need to attract people to the profession, it was suggested that more could be done to show young people the profession in schools and through work experience to attract them into working with children and families and ensuring there are routes into the profession in all parts of the County.

Devon's Improvement Journey



2.20 Staff recognised that the service is on an improvement journey and were committed to this journey. Staff commented very positively on the improvement journey and that the service feels like it's going in the right direction. One example of this was staff praising the new culture of the service and the "shift in focus" towards children and young people. One commented that the "ethos" of the service has changed to a service prioritising children and young people. Staff recognized there was a long way to go but changes had started to be made.

2.21 Staff and Members discussed the improvement journey and the rate of change. Staff commented that there is a lot of change happening, and the priorities of the leadership team felt the right ones now: recruitment and retention and ensuring that children were seen at the right time.

2.22 Across multiple localities, staff were enthusiastic about Devon's restorative approach as our practice approach and to help change the perception of social work.

2.23 However, a common concern staff raised was that with so many changes happening all at once, it would be beneficial from some regular communication from senior leaders and managers about final decisions that have been made and the overall "end goal" for staff to aim towards. Staff commented that they were not clear on what changes were happening and when and this led to confusion. Staff recognised that senior leaders have been communicating with staff on this, but their emails get lost amongst the many emails staff receive and some clarity is needed.

2.24 When changes had been made, staff felt there was an open discussion with managers about the impact of those changes and upon reflection some had been reversed if it was felt they had not worked.

2.25 Staff wanted to be reassured they would be a part of the ongoing conversations.

IT Systems

- 2.26 Children's Services use a range of different systems across their teams, including Eclipse across the Children and Families Teams, MASH Guardian within the MASH and Right for Children across a range of other teams and agencies.
- 2.27 In a visit to the MASH in November 2021, Members were given an understanding about the MASH Guardian system used - it is an information sharing system for partners to access.
- 2.28 MASH Guardian was spoken about as a good resource with the ability for partners to be able to submit updates. However, Members were made aware of staff's concerns with the MASH Guardian System, with staff calling the system "dangerous" and "not fit for purpose". Members were alarmed to hear the issues around work and information being lost or deleted on the system. These issues resulted from users being able to overwrite other users, multiple users being logged into one case, issues around migrating information across systems and the auto log-out time window being very short. These issues were immediately reported to the Head of Children's Social Care, who has continually updated Members on progress made since then.
- 2.29 Members heard in both November 2021 and April 2022 about the service's long term aim to move to one system, with Eclipse being the preferred choice. The service has begun the initial conversations with the provider (OLM) about functionality and moving to one system. In the meantime, the service is working with MASH Guardian and Eclipse and carrying out small improvements where it can while the long-term solutions are developed. In both visits, staff were clear with Members how important it is to move to one system as soon as possible and would like to continue to have input on the final product.
- 2.30 When asked about Eclipse, some staff re-iterated the previously documented complaints about it not being user friendly or "clunky". Staff stated it is complicated and overly process led with too many forms to complete. This means that it takes a long time and detracts from what social workers need to do. However, some staff Members spoke to were happy with the system and recognised there is no perfect system.
- 2.31 Staff told Members that the migration from Care First to Eclipse had not been 100% successful and this leads to delays when trying to find information about previous or historic cases.
- 2.32 Staff in multiple offices stated that tablets would be beneficial and would work well in the field when visiting children and families.

Nature and complexity of cases

- 2.33 When discussing particular cases and the types of work that our front-line staff do, it was noted that there are changes to the nature and an increasingly complexity to the cases that we have. This was reported across multiple locality offices (Newton Abbot and Tiverton) and the Atkinson Children's Home.

- 2.34 Staff commented on the number of referrals coming into the service which have doubled since before the pandemic and the nature of the referrals had changed. Referrals related to mental health and autism were more common now than cases of neglect and staff estimated around 50% of referrals into the service were due to either mental health or autism (ASD). Furthermore, staff raised their concerns that what were considered standard cases for social workers e.g. cases of neglect were still happening but were not in the system as they were previously.
- 2.35 In Newton Abbot, staff told Members about the escalation of mental health cases and increasing Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAHMS) waiting lists were an issue for social work teams. Staff felt mental health issues were referred into the service as a default position because of the lack of CAMHS services for young people. Staff stated that CAMHS' criteria and thresholds were too strict and sometimes confusing and led to more social work referrals for issues that social workers felt were mental health issues and they did not have the expertise or specialisms to deal with effectively. Staff were aware of the lack of CAMHS services and the waiting lists and emphasised with the situation but discussed the impact it was having on their own workloads. There was some optimism that CAMHS will be coming to sit with social workers on the floor at some point in the future and social workers will be able to call on them for expertise and support.
- 2.36 This theme was also raised at the Atkinson Children's Home, with Members being told that there is an increasing number of young people diagnosed within the ASD spectrum, as well as other conditions because of past significant neglect and abuse. While there was better recognition and understanding of these conditions, it was impacting on diagnostic and other resources.

3. Locality/Team/Service Area Specific Comments

3.1 Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

- 3.1.1 The MASH deals with enquiries and referrals regarding children who may be vulnerable or in need of a particular service. The MASH is a partnership and is made up from representatives from both internal DCC services and external services including Children's Social Care, Education, Health, Police, Early Help, REACH and Adult's services.
- 3.1.2 As part of their visit, Members were given an introductory presentation from officers before conducting floor walks and focus groups to meet with a variety of officers from across different services and teams.
- 3.1.3 Members heard that the main advantage of the MASH was having partners in one room to share information with each other. The COVID-19 pandemic had brought partners closer together and re-defined what is meant by a vulnerable child or young person. However, COVID-19 had undoubtedly affected the information sharing in the room with many working from home.
- 3.1.4 In their November visit, Members and staff raised concerns about the lack of any health partners being physically present in the office since before the COVID-19 Pandemic and felt that had a detrimental effect on exchanging information between

partners. In their April visit, Members were pleased to see health partners back in the room and were able to speak to them about their work.

- 3.1.5 Staff raised that some of their delays were down to other partners and agencies not being aware of their roles, the role of the MASH or some of the processes within Children's Services. For example, a school referring a case in without speaking to the child or parent or giving a reason as to why this hadn't happened resulted in staff having to go back to do this which resulted in unnecessary work.
- 3.1.6 Members were pleased to hear that since January 2022, our Early Help teams have benefited from additional resources which have improved timeliness. Staff stated that resources and capacity in the MASH were no longer causing delay but more resources in the locality teams and schools are needed to support professionals and to communicate with families.



3.2 North Locality – Barnstaple

- 3.2.1 Members met with staff from the Initial Response Team (IRT), Children and Families teams, Family Group Conference service and Family Practitioners, along with the Locality Director and Area Manager. These meetings were generally on the floor with Members pulling up a chair to sit with staff at their desks and have conversations with them and their colleagues during their working day. Councillors met with the Locality Director and Area Manager in a separate room at the end of the visit to de-brief and discuss their findings.
- 3.2.2 The Initial Response Team (IRT) told Members that while they cannot control what comes out of the MASH, once the Children and Families teams are full with cases, they stop taking more cases on and families end up stuck in the IRT teams for weeks and their overall caseload continues to increase. This creates more pressure for them as a team and the family not receiving the help and support they need.
- 3.2.3 Staff in the Children and Families teams suggested to Members that the contact service could be improved and asked that the £75 sign off figure is reviewed and expanded to empower them to make decisions and save time having to get amounts signed off from managers.
- 3.2.4 Staff in the Children and Families teams responded positively about the social workers in schools pilot and how much of a difference it was making to keeping children and young people out of statutory services. The pilot meant not all schools or areas were feeling the benefit of this service yet. At the time of the visit, the 11 team members across Devon hadn't had a chance to meet up in person yet to share experiences.
- 3.2.5 Staff in the Family Group Conference team reflected the overall comments about workload and the need for a full complement of staff. 30 families were waiting in the local area for the service. Staff understood that the senior leaders want to have more family decision making as part of the process, but this is not reflected in any

additional resources. Staff commented that in comparison, Leeds have 32 Family Group Conference staff while Devon has 11 (with 2 posts unfilled, so 9 currently). However, staff were hopeful that things will get better and praised the resilience of the team throughout the pandemic.

- 3.2.6 Staff reflected comments heard in the MASH that teams in the localities need extra resources for Early Help. Staff commented that when Early Help was not in place at the right time, it just resulted in more referrals and children and families back in the system again.

3.3 South Locality – Newton Abbot

- 3.3.1 Members met with staff from the Initial Response Team (IRT), Children and Families Teams and Bridges, as well as the Area Manager. These were all generally focus group type meetings with staff leaving their desks to meet Members. The IRT team took Members through a particular case they were working on that morning and the issues related to that case. The Bridges team spoke to Members about their team's aims and development since being established in November 2020.
- 3.3.2 Staff spoke about the different agencies and authorities appearing to not communicate well with each other and in some respects working against each other such as housing issues in a two-tier local authority structure. Staff told Members that housing and accommodation is a big issue, both affordable housing and having suitable housing for families in terms of the number of bedrooms. While there are good relations with housing providers such as Teign Housing, the lack of housing available was detrimental to families.

- 3.3.3 Members heard from staff in the Bridges team about the work they do to support children and families and avoid children coming into care. The team works with children and young people aged 11 to 18 when there has been a breakdown of family relations, normally between the young people and their parents/carers, at the point of a breakdown of relations. The service works with a smaller caseload than social workers and generally spend 3 to 6 months with each case. The multi-disciplinary team looks to use a restorative approach to build sustainable solutions for families, building on the strengths of the family. When children and families leave the service, they will have a strategy or plan of support going forward.
- 3.3.4 The Bridges team has a success rate of over 85% and the service have saved around £1.5m to date as an invest to save strategy and the success of the service had wider knock-on effects to the other teams. Members stated that because of the good news they had heard, they would take it on themselves to act as advocates for the team and share their work with other Members.

3.4 Mid and East Locality – Tiverton

- 3.4.1 Members met with Area Managers, Team Managers, Social Workers as well as the Locality Director. These were all focus group type discussions with staff leaving their desks to meet Members.

- 3.4.2 One of the Member's main takeaways was the genuine feel of a well-supported "family" in the Mid/East locality. Staff told Members they are treated well and are valued by their managers in the locality so that in essence, the team practice what they tell families to do – a restorative approach, respecting others, treating people with kindness. A couple of staff had left the Mid/East locality to work in other places but had returned and stated returning was like "coming home".
- 3.4.3 Members and staff had a wide-ranging discussion about relationships with the local people and judiciary services. Managers were impressed with the local police and partnership working with them, although information sharing can be difficult. There was a concern about delays in the police and courts as while social workers are waiting for the police and judiciary system to complete their processes, a child is left waiting for support and the social workers have to hold that space.
- 3.4.4 Members and Staff spoke about Early Help and the challenges in a rural county like Devon. Members were pleased to hear that targeted Early Help work means teams go to families and there are no barriers to children and families accessing this support. However, universal Early Help support does rely on the community and partners to work together and there is a need to make sure all partners see themselves as part of the wraparound support for children. Unfortunately, previous tools such as surestart centres and youth clubs have fallen away and there is a gap to ensure some early concerns can be picked up.
- 3.4.5 Staff told reiterated the concerns raised in the North locality that Family Group Conference service is oversubscribed and requested that it sits with Early Help as a better fit for their services. Staff stated it would be useful for MASH or the teams around the family (TAF) to refer directly to the service as an Early Help tool to avoid escalations later.

3.5 Exeter Locality – Exeter

- 3.5.1 Members met with the Area Manager, a Team Manager, and a Social Worker in small focus group type meetings. Members saw the impressive newly decorated office space including desks, informal seating areas, booths and touch down areas.
- 3.5.2 In the office, a full complement of staff would be 35 social workers, but there are currently 15 vacant posts. Exeter normally had a very stable work force, but this had changed and managers were concerned about this. Staff stated that a full complement of staff is needed.
- 3.5.3 Members and staff discussed the Corporate Parenting Service and our care leavers. Staff stated that other agencies need to have more recognition for the experiences of our care leavers and their struggles with independence, loneliness and budgeting at times. Housing is key for our care leavers to get them settled into an area and access services. However, it was not easy to get housing for our care leavers and staff welcome the work of the homeless prevention team. Staff stated that partners sometimes do not give care leavers enough chance and aren't patient with them if for example, they are having difficulties managing their budgets. Staff asked Members to look into a surcharge that care leavers have to pay in housing.

3.6 Atkinson Children's Home

- 3.6.1 The visit to the Atkinson Children's Home, Exeter came just a few weeks after their 'Good' Ofsted rating and Members congratulated the managers and staff on the report's positive findings. The rating was the 6th consecutive year of positive findings, indicating the sustained good practice both before and during the pandemic. There were currently 6 children placed at the home, with no children placed by Devon County Council. The placements are filled by other local authorities, emphasising the home's value as a national resource, and this was contributing to the home's improving financial position.
- 3.6.2 Whilst the home is registered for 12, in practical terms, it could only accommodate a maximum of 8 residents given the current staffing and support levels and physical room required for young people with complex needs.
- 3.6.3 Staff discussed with Members the current improvement works happening this financial year (refurbishments in 6 bedrooms and drain covers) and referred to future improvements and raised infrastructure projects including refurbishing 4 additional bedrooms, repairing the extension roof, improved lighting/eco measures, upgrading storage facilities for young people, upgrading the football pitch, electric vehicle charging points and feasibility of a new 'step down' facility. In addition, the DfE are due to visit in June 2022 to look at the building and discuss longer term plans.

4. Other issues raised by staff

- 4.1 Members and staff in Barnstaple spoke about specific issues that are in the North of the county and make it different to the rest of the county and how these issues are not fully understood at the leadership level. The rurality of North Devon compared to Exeter and the differences in connectivity, transport, travel times and support services make the area more difficult to work with children and families. The Council and its outlook is Exeter-centric and this does not reflect the reality in rural areas. Discussions about the physical geography of Devon were repeated in Tiverton in terms of the distances travelled by social workers.
- 4.2 The opportunities for people to become social workers in Devon and the desire for a degree type course in North Devon to attract people to stay in North Devon and practice social work as their career.

4.3 Members and officers spoke about the language around social work, with "working with children and families" the preferred language to cover the wide range of roles and types of work rather than "social care" or "social services" to improve the reputation and perception of the work.

- 4.4 Members and staff in Newton Abbot and Exeter. discussed the future expected demand on the service due to poverty and the cost of living. Members in Exeter were made aware of increases in foodbank and voucher referrals, some of which come from the S17 budget. Staff stated it is a limited budget but families who need support will be given support if needed.

4.5 Staff were looking forward to working with CAHMS in the locality offices and hoped it would be useful for social workers to understand more about CAHMS services and their thresholds.

4.6 Members and staff in Tiverton spoke about the lack of foster carers nationally, meaning that children need to be placed further away to meet their needs.

4.7 Members and staff across most of the offices discussed the child friendly Devon vision and the ask for Members to be in their communities and building relationships.

5. Key takeaways

5.1 Where specific actions have come up, they have been reported back to the service in the individual visit reports for action.

5.2 In terms of general recommendations resulting from the visits and this report, Members agreed the following main areas:

- Children's Services should work at pace to implement one system across the service.
- The Council needs to continue to promote Devon as an attractive place to work to attract permanent staff and continue to be creative in pay, conditions and our offer.
- Staff should continue to feel included in the improvement journey and changes and decisions need to be communicated clearly to staff.
- Positive stories about our staff and the service need to be promoted to praise our staff, recognise their achievements, and change the perception of social work.
- Members themselves need to promote the Child Friendly Devon vision and share our successes such as the Bridges service, the Atkinson Children's Home and advocate for our staff.

6. Attendance

MASH, County Hall, Exeter (29th November 2021)

Councillors Hannaford, Sanders and Leadbetter.

MASH, County Hall, Exeter (6th April 2022)

Councillors Aves, Bradford, Hawkins, Letch and Squires.

Taw View, Barnstaple (11th April 2022)

Councillors Wilton Love and Roome.

Estuary House, Newton Abbot (12th April 2022)

Councillors Bradford, Bullivant, Gribble and Sanders.

Atkinson Secure Children's Home, Exeter (27th April 2022)

Councillors Hannaford, Sanders and Leadbetter.

Oaklands Court, Tiverton (13th May 2022)

Councillors Letch, Samuel and Sanders.

County Hall, Exeter (16th May 2022)

Councillors Hannaford, Letch and Squires.

7. Conclusion

7.1 Members of the Children's Scrutiny Committee again want to thank the staff who spoke to us and took time out of their busy days to do so

- 7.2 Members enjoyed visiting teams across the county, hearing their experiences, gathering feedback, and asking them what we could do to improve.
- 7.3 As part of their continuing work, Members want to continue to visit staff to hear from them and ensure that more teams are visited throughout the term of the Council. Members want to revisit some of these offices and visit other teams to monitor progress and ensure it is across the service. Suggested teams to visit in the future include the Permanence and Transition team, Children's Centres, Education teams, the Youth Offending Service and spending more time with our frontline social workers to understand the day-to-day pressures of the job. Members will continue to feed back to the Cabinet Member to ensure positive news stories and both successes and concerns of staff are raised.
- 7.4 It was clear that teams across the County felt valued and supported each other and that the impact of senior leaders has been felt.
- 7.5 The Committee hopes that the Cabinet Member and senior officers embed the learning from front-line staff as part of their ongoing work to improve services.
- 7.6 The Committee would like to thank the officers who worked to arrange the visits and support Members on their visits. In particular, Victoria Bendle and Gerry Ruffolo for their support in conducting visits and the creation of this report.

8. Contact

Councillor Rob Hannaford
Chair, Children's Scrutiny Committee

Electoral Divisions: All

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Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers

Background Paper	Date	File Reference
Children's Social Care – Office Site Visits	10 th June 2019	