

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2)
held at 10.00 am on Thursday, 16 July 2026

Present:

Members: Councillor S Jobbar (Chair)
Councillor A Bullock
Councillor A Cole
Councillor J Fearn
Councillor G Hayre
Councillor A Hopkins (substitute for Councillor J Innes)

Co-opted Members: Sybil Hanson
Ghulam Vohra

Other Members: Councillor M Mutton – Cabinet Member for Children and
Young People

Employees (by Directorate):

Children's and Education
Services S Sen (Director)

Law, Governance and
Safer Communities M Rose, A West

Apologies: Councillor J Innes
David Jackson (Co-opted Member)

Public Business

1. Declarations of Interests

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 26th March 2026 were agreed and signed as a true record. There were no matters arising.

3. OFSTED Inspection of Coventry Local Authority Children's Services

The Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) received a report of the Director of Children's and Education Services that provided information on the recent inspection of Coventry Local Authority Children's Services including services for children in need of help and protection, children in care and care leavers.

All Local Authority Children's Services are inspected by Ofsted, every three/four years. The focus of inspections includes:

- The effectiveness of local authority services and arrangements to help and protect children, and enable families to stay together and get the help they need
- The experience and progress of children in care wherever they live, including children who return home
- The effectiveness of the arrangements for permanence for children who are looked after, in stable, loving homes, including adoption
- The experience and progress of care leavers

Inspectors also evaluate:

- The effectiveness of leaders and managers
- The impact leaders and managers have on the lives of children and young people
- The quality of professional practice delivered by multi-disciplinary local authority teams that are equipped and effective

Children's Services were last inspected in June 2022. A change to the inspection framework in January 2023, introduced a separate judgement and evaluation criteria added for 'the experience and progress of care leavers. The outcome of Coventry's inspection in 2026, therefore included a separate judgement for care leavers for the first time. Local Authority Children's Services Inspections were based on a strength-based approach focusing on social workers and social work practice.

Children's Services were inspected between 9-13 March 2026. The Ofsted report was published on 18th May 2026, judging Coventry Children's Services as 'Outstanding' in four of the five judgement areas. Ofsted judgements for all Local Authorities in England, highlighted that Coventry were 28th of 153 local authorities representing the top 18% nationally. Coventry were one of four local authorities in the West Midlands region rated 'Outstanding' overall. This achievement was significant and one to be proud of. The inspection report identified two recommendations to strengthen and improve further:

- The consistency of the quality and impact of planning for children in need of help and protection.
- The consistency of the quality and impact of supervision.

The national children's social care reforms provided an important opportunity to strengthen and accelerate local ambitions for children and families. The direction of travel, including a stronger focus on Family Help, multi-agency working, kinship and family networks, and evidence-informed practice, align closely with the commitment to strengthen practice further and ensure children receive the right help at the right time, aligned to the One Coventry ambition. The aim was to shift the balance of support towards earlier help, prevention and whole-family approaches, so that families would be supported before needs escalate and children would be helped to remain safely within their families and communities wherever possible.

The test and learn pilot of the end-to end pathway from Family Help to multi-agency child protection commenced at the beginning of June 2026 in the East locality team and would be an opportunity to evaluate at the end of the six months and provide a basis for the phased roll out implementation planned for March 2027. While recognising the progress already made, Coventry would continue to learn, internally challenge and work with partners to deliver consistently outstanding practice, improve outcomes and strive for the very best for all children, young people and families.

A Children's Services Action Plan had been developed to focus on strengthening and developing what was already very strong and would include quality and impact of plans and supervision in line with the Quality Assurance Framework. Progress against the areas for development would be monitored by the senior leadership team and presented to a future Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2).

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young People attended the meeting and outlined her commitment to providing the best service and indicated that any recommendations from the Scrutiny Board would be welcomed. The Cabinet Member and the Scrutiny Board offered congratulations to all those involved for what they had achieved.

The Briefing Note and presentation at the meeting highlighted:

- The journey over time
- The inspection areas of focus
- Strengths
- Areas to develop
- The impact of lifelong relationship links
- The right help at the right time
- Partnership working

In considering the Briefing Note and the presentation, the Scrutiny Board asked questions and received responses from officers and the Cabinet Member on matters including:

- Continuing to improve
- Working on the areas for development
- Recruitment and retention and promoting the challenging but rewarding profession
- Training programmes

The Cabinet Member and the Director of Children's and Education Services were positive that the self-evaluation identified areas to develop further, including the following:

- Consistency and auditing quality impacts
- Evidencing detail including discussions and curiosity, actions and decisions
- Work planning
- Supervision
- Recruitment and retention, training and development

The Scrutiny Board thanked officers for their presentation and their continued commitment.

RESOLVED that the Children's Services and Education Scrutiny Board (2):

- 1) Notes and welcomes the recommendations highlighted in the Inspection report.**
- 2) Requests that 'Recruitment, Retention and Workforce Planning in Children's Services' be added to their Work Programme 2026/27.**

4. Work Programme 2026/27

The Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) received a Briefing Note of the Scrutiny Co-ordinator that detailed issues that were proposed for the Board's Work Programme for meetings of the Board in 2026/27.

Further to Resolution 2) in Minute 3/26 above, it was noted that an item headed 'Recruitment and Retention and Workforce Planning in Children's Services' would be added to the Work Programme.

The Scrutiny Board also requested an item about Behaviour, Attendance, Exclusions and Alternative Provision in Schools.

RESOLVED that the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) Work Programme 2026/27 be updated to include:

- Recruitment and Retention and Workforce Planning in Children's Services**
- Behaviour, Attendance, Exclusions and Alternative Provision in schools**

5. Any Other Business

There were no other items of public business.

(Meeting closed at 10.46 am)