



***SOCIAL SERVICES, HOUSING AND COMMUNITY  
SAFETY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE***

***2.00 PM THURSDAY, 20 APRIL 2023***

***MICROSOFT TEAMS / HYBRID COUNCIL CHAMBER***

**All mobile telephones to be switched to silent for the duration of the meeting**

This meeting will be recorded for broadcast via the Council's Internet Site. By participating you are consenting to being filmed and the possible use of those images and sound recordings for training purposes.

1. Chair's Announcements
2. Declarations of Interest
3. Minutes of Previous Meeting (*Pages 5 - 12*)
4. Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (*Pages 13 - 20*)
5. Pre-Decision Scrutiny  
To select appropriate items from the Cabinet Board agenda for Pre-Decision Scrutiny (Cabinet Board reports included for Scrutiny Members)
6. Forward Work Programme 2022/23 (*Pages 21 - 22*)
7. Urgent Items  
Any urgent items at the discretion of the Chairperson pursuant to Section 100BA(6)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

8. Access to meetings  
Access to Meetings to resolve to exclude the public for the following item(s) pursuant to Section 100A(4) and (5) of the Local Government Act 1972 and the relevant exempt paragraphs of Part 4 of Schedule 12A to the above Act.

## **PART 2**

9. Pre-Decision Scrutiny of Private Item/s  
To select appropriate private items from the Cabinet Board agenda for Pre-Decision Scrutiny (Cabinet Board reports enclosed for Scrutiny Members)

**K.Jones**  
**Chief Executive**

**Civic Centre**  
**Port Talbot**

**Friday, 14 April 2023**

### **Committee Membership:**

**Chairperson:**      **Councillor C.Galsworthy**

**Vice**  
**Chairperson:**      **Councillor H.C.Clarke**

**Councillors:**      O.S.Davies, J.Jones, A.R.Lockyer, A.Lodwig,  
K.Morris, P.D.Richards, M.Spooner, D.Thomas,  
S.Rahaman and A.R.Aubrey

### **Notes:**

- (1) *If Committee Members or non-Committee Members wish to have relevant items put on the agenda for future meetings, then please notify the Chief Executive/Chair eight days before the meeting.*
- (2) *If non-Committee Members wish to attend for an item of interest, then prior notification needs to be given (by 12.00 noon on the day before*

*the meeting). Non-Committee Members may speak but not vote, or move or second any motion.*

- (3) For pre scrutiny arrangements, the Chair will normally recommend forthcoming executive items for discussion/challenge. It is also open to Committee Members to request items to be raised - though Members are asked to be selective here in regard to important issues.*
- (4) The relevant Cabinet Board Members will also be invited to be present at the meeting for Scrutiny/ Consultation purposes.*
- (5) Would the Scrutiny Committee Members please bring the Cabinet Board papers with them to the meeting.*

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## Social Services, Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny Committee

(Microsoft Teams / Hybrid Council Chamber)

**Members Present:**

**9 March 2023**

**Chairperson:** Councillor C.Galsworthy

**Vice Chairperson:** Councillor H.C.Clarke

**Councillors:** O.S.Davies, J.Jones, A.R.Lockyer,  
P.D.Richards, M.Spooner, D.Thomas,  
S.Rahaman and A.R.Aubrey

**Officers In Attendance** R.Davies, J.Hodges, C.Howard, A.Jarrett,  
A.Thomas, K.Warren, T.Rees, C.Jones,  
R.Griffiths, T.Davies, N.Aleksanyan, C.Frey-  
Davies, A.Jarrett, E.O'Brien, D.Watts, L.Smith,  
S.Williams, S.McCarthy, H.Short, D.Harding,  
C.Owens, S.Wells-Jones, R.Hopkins and  
A.Thomas

**Cabinet Invitees:** Councillors S.Harris, A.Llewelyn, J.Hales

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1. **Chair's Announcements**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

The Chair advised that the committee would be scrutinising items 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 15, 16 and 17 from the Cabinet Board papers.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

Declarations were received from:

Cllr H.C.Clarke – Items 8 and 15 (Cabinet Board) – Personal, Non-Prejudicial.

### 3. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

15<sup>th</sup> December 2022

Page 1

Members noted that Cllr A.Llewelyn was present not Cllr A. Lockyer.

Page 5 – Leasing Scheme Wales, Para. 3

To insert remove 'lawn' and insert 'loan'.

Resolved: To approve the minutes of the meetings held on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2022 and 26<sup>th</sup> January 2023 as a true and accurate record with above amendments.

### 4. **Adults and Children's Single Point of Contact**

Officers provided a presentation to the committee on the single point of contact (SPOC), which is also the first point of contact for many referrals that are received by Social Services.

Officers noted that the presentation would focus on the single point of contact in relation to adult services. Prior to outlining the detail of the services, officers outlined how the referral system currently works. There is one single phone number and email address which is used for both children and adult services. Following on from initial contact, there is an integrated referral form which is used regionally by partners when referring a case to social services. SPOC will undertake assessments in order to provide information, advice and assistance to those who make contact.

SPOC operate on a multi-disciplinary team structure. Officers went through the make-up of the adult SPOC team. Staff numbers have been increased due to the concerns that were raised last summer around response rates.

The new structure was introduced in summer 2022. It was recognised that the wider pressures in the adults social care team could be supported if the rate of referrals could be slowed down by responding to the needs of persons at the earliest opportunities with the outcomes focused model of practice.

Members were advised that the referred rates into adults SPOC has steadily increased over the last few years, with certain months being

busier than others. Members were provided with a breakdown of the referrals over a recent six month period, and information pertaining to how they were actioned.

Officers discussed the journey of the referrals at the point that they are received by SPOC and the impact of proportionate assessments on the wider service. Proportionate assessments deal with advice and assistance as per the Social Services and Well-Being Act. Assessments can also assist in uncovering some more complex needs that may lead to further assessment within the system.

Members were provided with information relating to call times, and it was recognised that the number of unanswered calls has decreased. Contact Officers receive an array of phone calls, relating to various aspects of adult and children's social care. Officers are constantly assessing how contact officers can be best supported.

Members raised concerns with regards to staff sickness and how they could be better understood. In addition, how can assistance be provided with regards to recruiting new staff. Officers confirmed that staff sickness was not in relation to stress or anxiety at work, but that it was mainly due to unpreventable illness that normally occurs.

Officers confirmed that they would be reporting on staff welfare and how this is supported in a report to be presented at a later date.

Members queried how customer satisfaction with the service was assessed. Officers confirmed that as a first point resolution only compliments seem to be received. However it was recognised that this does not mean that services users are not disgruntled. Officers noted the work that had previously been done with external consultants being engaged and capturing the views of service users and the feedback that they provided.

The Director advised that the expectation was that there should be no abandoned calls, especially when vulnerable people are telephoning a service that they require assistance from. There is an expectation that teams will have a look at the systems that are in place to make sure that they can be possible in the future.

Members noted the high demand on the service. Officers distinguished between the short term OT services and the long term OT services, where the waiting lists for assessments would be longer.

It was confirmed business support staff can assist with answering telephone calls, however it is recognised that they are not trained to deal with the complexities of the phone calls that are received. They would be able to provide an immediate answer to a call if required. The business support workers can deal with email referrals received in terms of putting them on the required system.

Following scrutiny, members noted the item for information.

5. **Early Intervention and Prevention Support within Children Services**

Officers presented the information as outlined with the report circulated with the agenda.

Officers noted that they currently offer a hybrid service in terms of the groups that are run. Support that is offered includes parenting classes, assistance with accessing grants, applying for benefits families are entitled to and support around housing issues. Support can be provided where there is parental mental health issues in the home or domestic violence.

Two new programmes have been developed – the Friendship support and the Aspire Group. Officers outlined the support offered by these groups.

Officers advised that they currently work with schools and do drop-ins. It is about making the engagement with social services to be seen as a positive, not a negative engagement.

Members were informed of the outreach work that was currently being undertaken in the community, including working with the Welsh Rugby Union. Christmas hampers were delivered locally. There are also going to be Easter hampers delivered.

Members thanked officers for the report and noted it for information.

6. **Pre-Decision Scrutiny**

West Glamorgan Safeguarding Annual Report



Officers provided a brief outline to the report. The West Glamorgan Safeguarding Board is a regional board. It brings organisations together to look at safeguard and also brings organisations to account. They do both children and adult practice reviews. The report outlines the first part of the safeguarding plan. The prime objective of the Board is to protect children and adults, and the second objective is to prevent harm in relation to children and adults.

The report sets out the structure of the group and each organisation involved with take on elements of the work. The board ensures a consistent approach and response across the region.

Members noted that the report outlines a high number of male overdoses and suspected suicides. Members queried if a reason for this could be identified. Officers advised that it reflects the trends identified in the 2008 financial crisis. All suicides and significant attempts at suicides are referred to the service. Data is being gathered, working the Public Health Wales, to identify the services that the individuals and their families access and see if anything can be done differently to prevent those suicides.

Following scrutiny, Members noted the report for information.

### Housing Support Grant Annual Report 2022

Officers provided a brief overview to the report circulated. The grant is the main source of funding for homelessness services, including the Council's own Housing Options Team and Community Independence Service. It also funds a full range of commissioned services, for example domestic violence refuges. Officers noted that the amount of funding awarded has been the same for the financial year 21-22, 22-23 and 23-24. Members were asked to note the pressures on the services with increased demand and costs over those years.

The grant is key to delivering the Rapid Rehousing Plan and preventing homelessness by offering a range of targeted support to people in their homes and also building based support services. Officers advised that a key piece of work will be carried out over the next couple of years to optimise the grant to ensure that it supports the Rapid Rehousing Plan.

Members noted the report.

### Quarter 3 Performance Indicators

Officers suggested that the scrutiny committee may wish to focus their attention on indicators that they consider key. Officers could carry out a piece of work to focus the indicators on what the scrutiny committee requires.

Member queried, in terms of the average delay to delivering disabled grants, what is the average waiting time for the service user? Officers confirmed that there has been some substantial delays during the pandemic due to the demands in the private market with construction works. Generally shower works have been carried out quite quickly, but the extension work was taking between 6-9 months. However, it is starting to improve as the private market slows down.

Members queried the partially upheld complaint against a social worker that is outlined in the report and the lessons learned from this. Members queried if the lessons learned were forwarded to the social worker's new employer so that the same mistakes were not repeated. Officers advised that they would take advice from HR as appropriate. Generally system wide errors would be considered and the wider lessons learned from the complaint and how this can be improved upon.

Members noted that the number of looked after children and those on the child protection register has fallen over the last 10 years. However, since the first quarter of 2021, the numbers are quite significantly declining. Member queried if there was a specific reason for this rapid decline. In terms of looked after children, members advised that children and families have been worked with to allow children to return home safely. During the pandemic, this process slowed down and youngsters stayed within foster care longer. However, these numbers will now continue to go in a downward trajectory. Officers advised that there are no target numbers for looked after children and children on the child protection register. It was also noted that from time to time large sibling groups come off the child protection register which can sometimes explain the rapid decline in figures.

It was noted that sometimes targets appear to be in the red, however this does not always correctly reflect the position. At this current time there is a central corporate system which asks that targets and objectives are set. However sometimes this is counter-productive as

the figures need a much more nuanced explanation around the outcome.

Members queried the rise in care home admissions and the concerns about the availability of beds. Officers outlined that although there are vacant beds, the care homes can't get the care staff to look after those beds. More often than not people are admitted into a care home on discharge from hospital when awaiting care in the community or when there is no care available in the community to look after people so they are admitted to the care home.

Following scrutiny, members noted the report.

### Substance Misuse Action Fund: Grant Agreements

Officers provided an overview of the report circulated with the agenda. The increase in funding will support the objectives to prevent drug related deaths, reduce drug related harm and ensure that those that require support can get timely access to the services they require when they need it.

It was acknowledged that whilst drug related deaths across the region are increasing, the number of death in Neath Port Talbot has decreased during the last year.

Following scrutiny, members were supportive of the recommendation to go to Cabinet Board.

### Participation in Welsh Governments Empty Homes Scheme

Officers provided an overview of the report circulated with the agenda.

Members queried the reasoning for signing a service agreement with RCT and the benefits that this would bring. Officers confirmed that the scheme outlined copies the Valleys Task Force scheme that was administered by RCT Council. RCT are the Welsh Government's appointed lead authority for the scheme going forward. RCT will deal with the legal and financial side of the scheme. The local authorities will deal with the surveys.

Following scrutiny, members were supportive of the recommendation to be considered Cabinet Board.

7. **Forward Work Programme 2022/23**

Members noted the Forward Work Programme.

8. **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

9. **Access to meetings**

Resolved: to exclude the public for the following item(s) pursuant to Section 100A(4) and (5) of the Local Government Act 1972 and the relevant exempt paragraphs of Part 4 of Schedule 12A to the above Act.

10. **Pre-Decision Scrutiny of Private Item/s**

**Contractual Arrangements for a Range of Services Funded Through the Housing Support Grant 2023/24**

Members considered the report as set out within the documents circulated.

Following scrutiny, the committee noted the report.

**Extension to the provision of a Welcome Centre in respect of Ukrainians fleeing the conflict**

Members considered the report as set out within the documents circulated.

Following scrutiny, the committee were supportive of the recommendations to be considered by Cabinet.

**CHAIRPERSON**



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot  
Neath Port Talbot Council

## **NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNCIL SOCIAL SERVICES, HOUSING & COMMUNITY SAFETY SCRUTINY BOARD**

**20<sup>th</sup> April 2023**

**Report of the Director Social Services, Health & Housing –  
Andrew Jarrett**

### **Matter for Information**

**Wards Affected All Wards**

### **UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM SEEKING CHILDREN (UASC)**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

The purpose of the report is to advise members of the current situation in respect of the mandated National Transfer Scheme for UASC and how this impacts on Neath Port Talbot Council (NPT).

#### **Executive Summary**

The report sets out the current situation and details the expectations on the Council. This report also highlights the consequential challenges, as well as the services and support provided by the Council, and its partners.

#### **Background**

In December 2021, Neath Port Talbot Council was given formal notice directing it to comply with the National Transfer Scheme (NTS) for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) under section 72(5) of the Immigration Act 2016. A UASC is defined as an individual, who is under 18 when the asylum application is submitted, is not being cared for by an adult who by law has responsibility to do so, is

separated from both parents and has applied for asylum in the UK in their own right.

The aim of the NTS approach is to achieve a fair and equitable distribution of UASC across the UK.

Therefore, from the 14<sup>th</sup> December 2021, officials from the Ministry for Safe and Legal Migration began referring young people for placements across Wales. The transfer of children to their new local authorities is directed within an operational framework and rota system referred to as Tranche's and Cycles which is managed by the UASC Coordinator at the Wales Strategic Migration Partnership on behalf of the Home Office. When a referral is received by the Local Authority the Local Authority is directed under the NTS protocol to accept the young person within 10 working days of the referral. The Home Office have an escalation process, and will issue a 'non-compliance letter' to the council for any referral not placed within 20 days of receipt.

### **Current Pressures**

Initially, NPT were asked to support 2 young people under this scheme, however this has increased over the last year and we have to date supported 16 young people, 2 of whom are now care leavers. All are male and have ranged in age from 14 through to 17 on arrival. 5 young people are currently placed in foster care (4 of whom are in commissioned placements out of area) and 11 in supported accommodation. All the young people that we are supporting have different nationalities, different cultures, different languages and different life experiences.

It has been very challenging to find appropriate placements in very short timeframes. There are significant pressures currently in respect of available foster placements and supported accommodation, therefore this does put additional pressure on an already difficult situation.

There has been an impact on Education and Health also. All young

people that have been placed in NPT all wish to have access to education, there are limited resources available within college and some are not able to access full time hours. There has also been impact in respect of the Children Looked After Nurses who undertake health assessments.

The asylum process is significantly delayed at this time, there will be a delay in young people being able to move on and access housing / benefits; therefore, they are likely to be reliant on the Local Authority for a much longer period than initially anticipated.

Directors across Wales have made representation to the Home Office highlighting concerns raised by Councils in Wales on the mandated National Transfer Scheme, including that as a direct result of placement sufficiency issues, a high proportion of UASC referred to Wales are currently in out of county/country placements.

The Home Office have advised that they will be making further referrals in the coming months, which is likely to result in a further 15 placements. Commissioning have undertaken a piece of work based on the current data (Appendix 1 attached).

There are current significant pressures on placements for children and young people; therefore, it is important that we continue to develop a specific provision to meet the needs of these young people whom we are and will continue to support.

### **How are their needs met?**

The young people who are aged under 18 are allocated a Social Worker (SW), and those who are care leavers have an allocated Young Persons Advisor (YPA). This is met from existing resources. We have recently appointed 2 support workers to work alongside the social workers and the YPA's. Our Engagement and Participation Officer has a number of events planned to show them the culture of Wales and also to focus on what matters to them and what support they feel they need when they arrive within NPT. The support to UASC is regularly

on the agenda for Corporate Parenting Panel, where the pressures and the support provided is discussed.

There continues to be a fortnightly multi-agency group in place chaired by the Principal Officer to develop Neath Port Talbot's response to accommodating UASC's under the mandated National Transfer Scheme (NTS). This is to ensure that there is a multi-agency response to supporting UASC. The group closely monitors the cases and care plans of the individual young people and to collate relevant information. Plans are developed in respect of transition and identified needs. We are also developing a guide and a suite of resources for the wider services in how to provide support to young people in these circumstances.

Opportunities for training, development, support and how best to address matters arising are considered.

We have continued to work closely as a Region with Swansea to develop suitable provisions to meet the identified needs.

### **Next Steps**

The Local Authority have commenced a multi-departmental exercise to review, remodel and explore how we effectively meet the needs of both our current UASC young people and also our future need. We will be exploring different models of working which will be informed by what we have learnt in the last 12 months since we became part of the National Transfer Scheme. The outcome will be to have an outcome plan to map out and develop services to meet the future demand.

### **Financial Impacts**

There is funding from the Home Office on an individual basis for each UASC supported by the Local Authority. This is received by way of claiming through the Home Office. The funding significantly reduces when that young person becomes a care leaver. Therefore, there is likely to be a risk of a financial impact in the coming years when more of our young people turn 18.



Some of the young people have been able to access the Basic Income Pilot Scheme (BIP) set up and implemented last year by Welsh Government for Care leavers meeting certain criteria. This scheme ends in July but those who have been accepted will be able to receive BIP for two years after their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

### **Integrated Impact Assessment**

There is no requirement to undertake an Integrated Impact Assessment as this report is for information purposes.

### **Valleys Communities Impacts**

No implications.

### **Workforce Impacts**

We have recently appointed 2 support staff on temporary contracts, these posts will be kept under review in respect of need and funding. Each young person will be allocated a Social Worker (if under 18) or a Young Persons Advisor (YPA) (if over the age of 18) this resource comes from with the existing teams.

### **Legal Impacts**

The mandated National Transfer Scheme (NTS) for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) under section 72(5) of the Immigration Act 2016.

### **Risk Management Impacts**

We are managing risk by assessing the potential numbers of UASC young people arriving and endeavouring to project their needs. All safeguarding risks are considered including risk of exploitation, any missing episodes and the young person's level of vulnerability thus each young person is assessed on an individual basis.

The risk to the local authority is the impact of increased numbers of young people arriving, and the limited resources available. We are mitigating those risks by holding regular planning meetings, identifying

and acting on potential risks and evaluating these against the criteria that we have set out in the report, i.e. the need for community inclusion, accommodation, education and financial support. This list is neither mutually exhaustive nor exclusive and new risks can be identified commensurate with the needs of new young people entering the area.

### **Consultation**

There is no requirement for external consultation on this item.

### **Appendices**

Appendix 1 UASC 'What the data is telling us'.

### **List of Background Papers**

None.

### **Officer Contact**

Keri Warren: Head of Children And Young People Services

Email: [k.warren@npt.gov.uk](mailto:k.warren@npt.gov.uk) Tel: 01639 683328

Victoria Smith: Principal Officer - Fostering And Care Experienced Children and Young People. Email: [v.smith@npt.gov.uk](mailto:v.smith@npt.gov.uk)

Tel:01639 685888

## NPT UASC: WHAT THE DATA IS TELLING US

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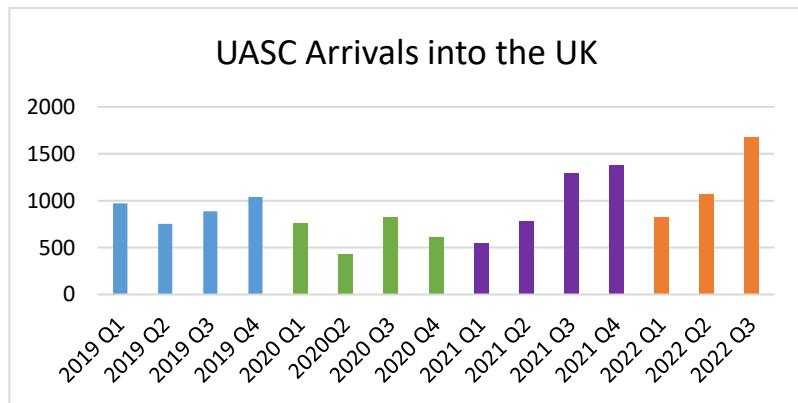
**Maximum number of UASC who could be allocated to NPT via the current NTS scheme**

Based on current guidance on how LA populations are calculated to determine the max UASC allocation.

We received 13 transfers in 2022. Unless they up the 0.1% rule, the maximum we will receive in 2023 is a further 15.

### UASC Arrivals into the UK are Rising

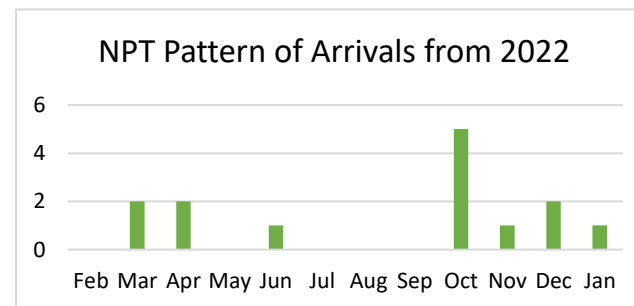
**September to March** appear to be the peak months when UASC apply for Asylum at the UK border. Depending on how many UASC are awaiting a placement, we can expect more transfers to us during these months.



### The Pattern of NPT Arrivals is Unpredictable

There is so many factors at play, it is not possible to predict patterns of when NPT can anticipate placements through the NTS.

In the absence of projections from NTS, by accepting advance placements when we know we have placement availability, this is the only thing we can do to create some predictability.



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	2023												2024											
	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	
UASC in Duncan & Dewis																								
Abdu		1												2										
Huss			1											2										
Ham		1												2										
Ram									1												2			
Zho									1												2			
Kha									1												2			
Mur										1												2	2	
Ahm											1													
Kam											1												2	
Har												1											2	

**Key:** Under 18 (Green), Over 18 (Blue), 1 or 2 = 1 and 2 year anniversary of when they submitted asylum claim at UK border.

### In January 2024, the majority of UASC's in Supported Accommodation turn 18

This needs to be a factor when designing any models of splitting under 18/ over 18 UASC accommodation (we need more under 18 provision during 2023).

**Depending on asylum application processing times, if an estimated time is 2 years, we will not have any move-on until April 2024.**

Based on this estimation, we will need to increase provision during 2023 to accommodate new transfers until

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## Social Services, Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny Committee

**(All starting 2pm unless otherwise stated)**

Meeting Date	Agenda Item	Contact Officer
<b>2022</b>		
27 <sup>th</sup> June		
28 <sup>th</sup> July	Training Meeting	
11 <sup>th</sup> Oct (re-scheduled from 22 <sup>nd</sup> Sept)		
10 <sup>th</sup> Nov		
15 <sup>th</sup> Dec	'What is a statutory nuisance' in Environmental Health	Celvin Davies
<b>2023</b>		
26 <sup>th</sup> Jan	Asylum Seekers and Refugees Policy	Chele Howard
	Anti-Social Behaviour and Homelessness	Chele Howard
	Budget Scrutiny	
9 <sup>th</sup> March	Single Point of Contact – Front Door (Adults and Children's) (SPOC)	Keri Warren / Nune Aleksanyan
	Team Around the Family / Early Intervention	Ruth Griffiths / Keri Warren
20 <sup>th</sup> April	Joint Working with Home Office (UASC)	Andrew Jarrett

- **To be programmed into the next cycle**

Update on accommodation (Asylum and Refugees) – Claire Jones

Report on personal assistants – Angela Thomas/Maggie Hayes