Meeting	SBC Contract Monitoring
Date	November 2025
Report	Performance against contractual KPIs – up to 30 September 2025
Author	Ben Short – SCF Director of Operations Alexandra Pilgerstorfer – SCF Director of Finance Sarah Wilson – Assistant Director Legal and Government (SBC Senior Responsible Officer for SCF)
Action Required	For information and discussion

Overview

This report provides an overview of progress in meeting contractual KPIs up to the end of September 2025.

#	Indicator / DfE test	Measure	August 2024
1	Effectiveness of Corporate Parenting Panel **Political Ownership**	Satisfactory progress made against LGA review recommendations and Ofsted feedback • Care leavers' participation in CPP, with evidence of action in response to suggestions. • Effective participation by children and young people to ensure provision of views and engagement •	Whilst CPP is a Council panel, SCF has a key role in ensuring its effectiveness, including via the work programme, sharing of best practice and quality of officer reports. The Corporate Parenting Panel has met once so far in the municipal year 2025/26, with planned meetings cancelled in October and one meeting scheduled in December 2025. The ToR include the following: • To advise the LMCS, Cabinet and other relevant member bodies on issues relating to corporate parenting; • To advise the SCF board and other partners on issues relating to corporate parenting; • To report annually to the Council on the work of the panel. Key positives: • The CPP has a performance scorecard and there is evidence of effective challenge on the data in the minutes. • There is evidence of engagement of young people Key issues/next steps: • The panel has only met once so far this municipal year. • The panel has not produced an annual report for Council on the impact it has made. • The panel has not published any documents as part of its agenda, except its minutes, demonstrating a lack of transparency. Reports should be capable of being written in a way that means they can be published, with confidential information in an exempt appendix.

			• There is limited evidence of the panel advising the lead member or wider cabinet or the SCF board on improvements to corporate parenting.
			• There are a large number of officers from SCF and SBC attending, but less evidence of wider partnership engagement, although there are some representatives from partners.
			• There is no forward plan for the panel and a lack of evidence of engagement with key strategic documents, such as the Local Offer for Care Leavers or key areas of risk such as children in care being subject to criminal justice system or failure to secure good quality education, training or employment. An option could be having a thematic focus on key priorities for children in care and care experienced young people. The panel could also have a role in assessing itself against the LGA review.
2	Effectiveness of Council's scrutiny function **Political Ownership**	Contribute to at least one scrutiny topic per year leading to evidence-based recommendations or improvements	The CISC agreed a work programme for 2025/26 in June 2025. This includes receiving an update on the youth justice inspection outcome in July, receiving a report from the task and finish group on NEETS in September. There is also work planned that will impact children and families, including around community safety and tobacco and vapes use. Key issues / next steps: • Evidencing the value that scrutiny activity is having. Whilst there was questions and discussion on youth justice, the only recommendations were around receiving more information, as opposed to using the information to identify an area of focus or making recommendations to other member bodies or the SCF board.

			• The task and finish group has not yet reported back on its work on NEETs.
3	Effective Governance **Governance & Accountability**	Compliance with contractual requirements, including timely submission of annual report, business plan, performance reports and contributing to contract monitoring processes.	SCF has complied with key contractual deadlines, including submission of an annual report and draft business plan. SCF officers and board members supported with the review by Mutual Ventures on effectiveness and value for money. Issues / Next Steps: • Changes to board composition and structure in 2026/27. • Amendment of articles to support a slimmed down board. • New arrangement for performance appraisal of Chair and wider board from 1 April 2026 to evidence requirements. • Amended Board and Committee Meeting schedule for 2026/27 to reduce duplication and Officer time whilst retaining Board oversight
4	Effective statutory partnerships **Effectiveness of Partnership Working**	Implementation of recommendations from LGA peer review for youth justice service. Review of outcomes in annual safeguarding report. Attendance at key partnership boards. Feedback from partners.	The Youth Justice Service was inspected in September 2024 and had a rating of inadequate overall and requires improvement for organisational delivery. The service responded promptly by developing an action plan and the inspectors noted that the service and partnership were going through a planned period of change. Progress to date: • Action plan to respond to inspection • Submission of approval of youth justice plan to Cabinet and Full Council for final approval. Issues / Next Steps:

			• Production of annual report of Safeguarding Partnership for presentation to Cabinet/ Full Council to produce public assurance on work of partnership.
5	Effective commissioning strategies **Effectiveness of business and improvement arrangements**	Published commissioning strategies with detailed action plans and systems for monitoring progress.	There have been good developments in commissioning since introduction of this KPI. However SCF's commissioning lead left the organisation. Progress to date: • Mutual Ventures review noted the strong approach to commissioning via an external placement panel, with evidence that this is driving down cost whilst ensuring good quality. Next steps/issues: • Increase in joint commissioning with partners • Considering commissioning alternative options for short-breaks • Considering invest to save options for development of in-house provision for semi-independent accommodation and support. • Partnering opportunity with RBWM as improvement partners within the commissioning arena • Options appraisal of use of CareCubed for best value following discussion with Adults services and attendance at national briefing
6	Effective inter-agency working **Effectiveness of Partnership Working**	Evidence of embedding local priorities across wider partnership. Deliver clear improvements in working with VCS and faith leaders/groups. Strengthen MASH.	Progress to date: Issues / Next Steps • Consider actions following CISC report.

			• Ofsted noted that there is inconsistent attendance by partner agencies at child in need meetings, core groups and review child protection conferences. This limits the ability of the social workers to update the plans, and this has been raised with partners through the Safeguarding Partnership arrangements. • More work is needed on wider partnership arrangements overseen by the Children and Young People's Board to achieve cultural shift and system change. • Pick up issues raised in YJS inspection.
7	Business Improvement **Effectiveness of business and improvement arrangements**	Evidence of: supporting children to stay at home, family led decision-making, strengthening of oversight of children missing from home and vulnerable to exploitation.	Progress to date: • More robust gateway processes to inform decision making on commencing proceedings, leading to lower numbers of looked after children • Business plan evidences direction of travel around Families First model, including reunification. Issues / Next Steps: • Improve the analytical tools and skills to interpret data. • Ensure effective reporting process to executive leadership and board level meetings and for this to link into risk management processes.
8	Effective risk management system **Effectiveness of business and**	Embed audit programme to drive improvements in quality of service. Improved management oversight. Evidence of LADO providing scrutiny and oversight where professional issues raised.	Progress to date: • SCF has a quality assurance and audit process in place for assessing quality of practice. The practice quality board committee is receiving regular updates on performance. • The annual report set out the auditing system and improvements made to gain assurance and increased management oversight.

	improvement arrangements		- Experienced NED leads on reviewing practice at board level. - Chief executive and NED working closely with new DfE Improvement Advisor on assurance data. The LADO provides an ongoing role in the oversight of situations of safeguarding concern involving professionals. The annual report of the LADO will be submitted for approval by the Safeguarding Partnership Board in December 2024. There is no public reporting on this to Council members. Issues / Next Steps - Review of performance reporting arrangements at board committee level by new NED. - Ensuring risk management procedures feed into SBC risk management procedures and reporting.
9	Culture leading to outcomes focused improvements **Cultural shift, change management and communication**	Positive feedback from staff surveys. Feedback from children, young people and families. Complaints data reporting system embedding listening and learning culture.	Progress - Staff survey completed as part of SBC survey. - Increased reporting to corporate parenting panel on participation Next steps/Issues - More formal reporting on how feedback is being used as key improvement tool eg. Formal reporting on complaints data and whether this can be merged with Council complaints reporting. - Consider pulse surveys to capture views from staff. - Consider reporting arrangements for staff data from exit interviews and sickness absence.

10	Improved participation of children and young people at strategic level **Participation, voice and influence**	Evidence that the aspirations and priorities in the children and young people's participation strategy are delivering improved outcomes and positive feedback from children and young people. Feedback from surveys and capturing ad hoc feedback. Evidence of involvement from harder to reach groups. Effective consultation on new and amended strategies.	Progress - Care experienced children and young people met SBC CLT. - Participation events now more embedded with wider engagement. - There have been a number of events involving children and young people to celebrate success. Issues / Next Steps: - Increasing number of children and young people actively responding to engagement activities; - Consider formal reporting on feedback from surveys and other feedback mechanisms. - Consider how to ensure that views of under-represented groups are heard and taken into account.
11	Financial sustainability - annually **Sufficiency, sustainability and management of resources**	Production of regular financial forecasting reports to SCF board and in contract monitoring meetings. Evidence of actions being taken to mitigate pressures where identified. Appropriate use of in-year change mechanism where required.	Progress to date: - SCF delivered its services in 2024/25 under budget, however it has some cost pressures in 2025/26. - Financial forecasting is in general accurate and transparent. - External assurance from Mutual Ventures provided evidence for value for money and that financial strategy was aligned to operational performance. - The SCF board is showing a stronger grip on monitoring and management of finances. Issues / Next Steps - Address opportunities raised by Mutual Ventures review. - Identify medium-term opportunities from national social care reforms - Develop business cases for invest to save use of capital

12	Evidence of value for money **Sufficiency, sustainability and management of resources**	Effectively manage all external placements. Reduce overall spend on legal costs Reduce cost of independent assessments in PLO cases. Robust arrangements for determining unit costings, value for money comparisons across comparators	Progress to date: • Mutual Ventures report highlighted effectiveness of external placement panel in driving down spend whilst ensuring quality provision. • Reduction in legal costs as direct result of reducing caseload. • The draft annual business plan has good evidence base for forecasts. Next steps: • Consider further benchmarking to evidence value for money, for example from comparable neighbours identified by BCG review. • Consider joint commissioning strategies. • Joined a Berkshire wide benchmarking group to look at how we can use S251 data and other returns to inform best value •
13	Financial sustainability – medium term **Sufficiency, sustainability and management of resources**	To deliver a MTFS which aligns with Council's MTFS and to ensure plans to repay loan at end of contract.	Progress to date: • Working with Council's transformation team on savings proposals • Introduced Magic Notes as pilot to deliver savings from better use of technology. • Loan repaid. Next steps: • Evidence any potential savings via detailed business cases. • Consider invest to save business cases to deliver medium-term savings.
14	Quality of Practice	QA reports demonstrating robust RAG rating linked to need to drive	Progress:

		Quality of Practice	improvements and showing improvement over time. % of re-referrals at 22% or below.	**Issues / Next Steps** • Evidence of review of thresholds and assessments based on analysis by Mutual Ventures that level of referrals leading to assessment is high, but level of assessments leading to action is relatively low.
15	Participation in CLA reviews **Participation, voice and influence**	92.0% or above participating	87.8% of children in care participated in their review
16	CLA placed over 20 miles away **Quality of Practice**	20% or below	As at the end of October 30.2% of children in care lived 20+ miles away from Slough. This is around average for the year but higher than as at the end of March 24 which was 28.5%.
17	Care experienced young people in EET **Participation, voice and influence**	52% in EET. 85% with pathway plan (18+). QA process demonstrating quality of plan and evidence of effective participation.	As at the end of October 56.2% of care leavers aged 18-21 were in EET. 72.2% of care leavers (18+) had a pathway plan
18	Workforce Supervision **Workforce planning and staff engagement**	• Evidence of appraisals being undertaken and learning and development captured. • Staff survey feedback. • Turnover data and exit interview data.	Progress: • Workforce data supplied at contract monitoring meetings. Issues/Next Steps • Appraisal data to be supplied, including evidence of quality assurance • Evidence of analysis of data feeding into action plan where required.

19	Workforce Diversity **Participation, voice and influence**	Workforce strategy with priorities and targets for workforce diversity. Evidence of effective staff networks representing staff with protected characteristics. Mentoring and support programme to increase diversity at management and leadership levels.	Progress to date: • Draft business plan shows positive effect of workforce strategy on permanent staffing. • Established programme of training routes is leading to forecasting lower levels of agency staff over medium-term. Issues / Next Steps
20	Children with disabilities **Quality of Practice**	Ensure disability assessments are undertaken and care needs met to enable children with disabilities to engage in social activities on an equal footing to their peers	Issues / Next Steps: