

SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN'S SERVICES)

THURSDAY, 10TH APRIL, 2008

PRESENT: Councillor W Hyde in the Chair

Councillors C Campbell, R D Feldman, R Harington,
A Lamb, B Lancaster, J Langdale, T Murray and
K Renshaw

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (VOTING):

Mr E A Britten	- Church Representative (Catholic)
Mr I Falkingham	- Parent Governor Representative (Special)
Prof P H J H Gosden	- Church Representative (Church of England)
Mrs S Knights	- Parent Governor Representative (Primary)

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (NON-VOTING):

Mr T Hales	- Teacher Representative
Ms T Kayani	- Leeds Youth Work Partnership
Ms J Morris-Boam	- Leeds Voice Children and Young People Services Forum Representative

115 Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed all in attendance to the April meeting of the Scrutiny Board (Children's Services).

116 Late Items

In accordance with his powers under Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chair admitted to the agenda, the following information:

- Agenda item 11, Young Peoples Scrutiny Forum – Draft Terms of Reference; and
- Agenda item 13, Annual Report 2007/08 – draft text.

(The information was unavailable at the time of agenda despatch.)

117 Declaration of Interests

Councillor T Murray declared a personal interest in agenda item 8, Implementation of the Family Support and Parenting Strategy in Leeds, due to being a Director of Learning Partnerships, and agenda item 9, Education

Standards Inquiry, due to being a LEA Governor of Thomas Danby College (Minute Nos. 121 and 122 refer.)

Councillor B Lancaster declared a personal interest in agenda item 8, Implementation of the Family Support and Parenting Strategy in Leeds, due to being a member of the Pre School Learning Alliance (Minute No. 121 refers.)

Further declarations of interest were made at later points in the meeting (Minute Nos. 122 and 125 refer.)

118 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted by Councillors J Elliott and S Hamilton, and by Ms C Foote and Mrs S Hutchinson.

119 Minutes of Last Meeting

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 13th March, 2008 be approved as a correct record.

120 Minutes of Overview and Scrutiny Committee

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 11 March, 2008 be noted.

121 Implementation of the Family Support and Parenting Strategy in Leeds

Further to Minute No. 72 of the meeting held on 6th December, 2007, The Director of Children's Services submitted a report which provided the Board with an update on progress in implementing the Family Support and Parenting Strategy.

Appended to the report was the Leeds Family Support and Parenting Board – Draft Terms of Reference.

Sally Threlfall, Head of Early Years Services and Barbara Newton, Strategic Leader Partnership and Participation, attended the meeting and provided the Board with information in relation to some of the opportunities and challenges that the Strategy presented.

The Strategic Leader Partnership and Participation reported that a one-year secondment to the post of manager of the Parenting Unit had been advertised, although no appointment had been made on this occasion. The Board was informed that the post would be re-advertised, probably as a two-year post.

It was reported that a number of key work-streams had been identified, including increasing awareness of the range of services available for parents across the city, identifying future training needs and evaluating services to

determine which ones were the most effective. It was noted that a meeting had been arranged to consider the progress made.

In addition, the following points were discussed:

- The Board considered the successful bid by Leeds Primary Care Trust (PCT) to become part of the Family Nurse Partnership Programme. The Board was informed that it was a two-year programme, which would assist vulnerable young parents. It was reported that the programme would report to the Family Support and Parenting Board, so that the work undertaken could be linked to other initiatives, eg, the Child Health Programme.
- Members discussed the role of the Family Support and Parenting Board and how the Board met the needs of families. It was reported that the Board provided a co-ordinated approach to family strategies and reference was made to the range of representatives involved. It was pointed out that work was underway to secure representation from adult services.
- The Board emphasised the importance of ensuring that the children's services directory, the Family Hub, was kept up to date. It was noted that work was being undertaken to improve the Family Hub and that organisations could now update their own details on the website.
- Members discussed the contribution of the voluntary sector. It was acknowledged that the voluntary sector was an important partner and work had been undertaken with a number of different providers, including small community groups and large national organisations.
- Members queried the work being done to alleviate the effects of poverty. The Head of Early Years Services advised that the main problem related to worklessness. To assist families and parents, the Family Support and Parenting Strategy provided support to develop their skills and confidence, so that they were better able to access opportunities in training and employment. She referred to the role of Jobcentre Plus in the partnership.

The Chair then thanked Sally Threlfall, Head of Early Years Services, and Barbara Newton, Strategic Leader Partnership and Participation, for their attendance at the meeting.

(Councillor R Harrington joined the meeting at 9.48 am during the consideration of this item.)

(Councillor C Campbell joined the meeting at 10.04 am during the consideration of this item.)

RESOLVED – That the report and information appended to the report be noted.

122 Education Standards Inquiry

Further to Minute No. 111 of the meeting held on 13th March, 2008, consideration was given to a report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development, which requested the Board to consider whether it had sufficient

information to complete its Inquiry and consider the conclusions and recommendations to be incorporated into the draft Inquiry report.

Appended to the report was the Terms of Reference for the Inquiry into Education Standards in Leeds.

The following officers attended the meeting to respond to Members' questions and comments:

- Gary Milner, 14-19 Strategy Co-ordinator; and
- Alun Rees, Head of the Extended School for Looked After Children.

The Head of the Extended School for Looked After Children provided the Board with an update of the work undertaken since taking up the post 6 months ago. He reported that he had held discussions with a number of professionals and with young people, which had enabled him to identify the nature of the challenge faced, establish priorities and develop an improvement plan.

In brief summary, the main highlighted points were:

- The Board considered the excellent work undertaken by dedicated teachers.
- One Member queried the input there had been from Governors. The Head of the Extended School for Looked After Children reported that no input had been received to date, although an invitation had been issued to them in the governor newsletter.
- The Board considered targets for improving performance. The Head of the Extended School for Looked After Children advised that schools should have targets for attendance, inclusion, attainment and value added progress. It was suggested that the Board could review the targets next year.
- The Board was briefed on the support currently available to foster carers in relation to education and the changes to 14-19 provision.
- One Member queried the work undertaken with other services outside of school hours. The Board was informed that work was being undertaken with the Integrated Youth Support Service and Connexions.

The 14-19 Strategy Co-ordinator was then invited to report on work that was being undertaken with young people who were particularly vulnerable to becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training). The Co-ordinator reported that Leeds had been successful in attracting £2.5m of European funding over the next three years for work with the NEET grouping. It was also reported that an independent review of information and guidance that was provided by schools was being undertaken. Reference was also made to the September Guarantee, which guaranteed the offer of learning to school leavers (and 17 year olds from September, 2008). It was noted that further work was being undertaken to review the level of take-up, and the appropriateness of the offers made to young people.

The following points were also discussed:

- The Board expressed concern that there did not appear to be any financial support available for colleges teaching students who were unable to start at level two because they still needed to undertake work at level one. It was agreed that clarification of the funding arrangements would be reported back to the Board prior to the final meeting of the municipal year on Thursday 24th April, 2008.
- One Member expressed concern in relation to the level of provision and work placements for those post 16 year olds from specialist settings. It was advised that the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) was aware that more work was needed in this area as part of the new college development.

The Chair then thanked Gary Milner, 14-19 Strategy Co-ordinator and Alun Rees, Head of the Extended School for Looked After Children for attending the meeting.

(Councillor R Feldman left the meeting at 10.50 am during the consideration of this item.)

(Councillor B Lancaster declared a personal interest due to being Chair of the Foster Carers' Liaison Group.)

(Councillor K Renshaw declared a personal interest due to being a Governor of East Ardsley Primary, Seven Hills Primary and Rodillian High School.)

(Mrs S Knights declared a personal interest due to being a Foster Carer.)

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the report and information appended to the report be noted;
- (b) The Board notes the issues raised by the evidence provided and the visits undertaken as part of the Inquiry, and the emerging conclusions and recommendations to be reflected in the draft report of the Board's Inquiry.

123 Leeds Strategic Plan and Council Business Plan

Further to Minute No. 109 of the meeting held on 13th March, 2008, the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which asked the Board to comment on the Leeds Strategic Plan 2008-11 and Council Business Plan 2008-11.

The following officers attended the meeting:

- Jane Stageman – Senior Project Manager (Performance);
- John Maynard – Strategic Leader (Children's Services); and
- Heather Pinches – Performance Manager.

Appended to the report was the Leeds Strategic Plan 2008-11: Draft Targets and Indicators, and the Draft Corporate Balanced Scorecard.

In relation to the Leeds Strategic Plan 2008-11, the main highlighted points were:

- The Board discussed the latest position in relation to finalising the Leeds Strategic Plan, and in particular the draft measures and targets, which had been presented to the Board for consultation.
- It was reported that the targets reflected the local priorities of children and key partners, for example reducing bullying.
- The Strategic Leader reported that some of the targets were still being negotiated with Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber as they formed a core part of the requirements of the Leeds Local Area Agreement.
- The Board noted that some of the targets appended to the report were subject to further amendments. It was agreed that an update on these targets would be reported back to the Board at the next meeting on Thursday 24th April, 2008.
- Members emphasised the importance of reducing health inequality and narrowing the gap.
- Members also queried the absence of specific targets in relation to mental health. It was reported that the Government had introduced new targets and methodology, and at present this information was not available.
- In relation to the Council Business Plan 2008-11, the Performance Manager reported that the key changes included: reducing the number of outcomes from four to three: re-structuring the outcome in relation to organisational development: and adding additional improvement priorities in relation to the work still to be done in risk management and project management.

The Chair then thanked Jane Stageman – Senior Project Manager (Performance), John Maynard, Strategic Leader (Children’s Services) and Heather Pinches, Performance Manager, for their attendance.

RESOLVED – That the report and information appended to the report be noted.

124 Young People’s Scrutiny Forum - Draft Terms of Reference

Further to Minute No. 112 of the meeting held on 13th March, 2008, the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which updated Members on progress with the Young People’s Scrutiny Forum.

Appended as late information was the Young People’s Scrutiny Forum – Draft terms of reference.

The Board was informed that the Forum met on Thursday 3rd April to finalise the terms of reference. The Principal Scrutiny Advisor advised that the Forum’s priorities were waste management, education and sustainable building. It was noted that it was hoped that some of the Inquiry would be filmed.

RESOLVED – That the Board endorses the terms of reference for the Young People’s Scrutiny Forum Environment Inquiry.

125 Draft Statement on Inclusion

(Sue Knights declared a personal interest in this item as a Member of North West SILC.)

RESOLVED – That this item be deferred to the next meeting on 24th April, 2008.

126 Annual Report 2007/2008

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which detailed the Board’s contribution to the Annual Scrutiny Report 2007/08.

Appended as late information was the Annual Report 2007/08 – draft text.

The Principal Scrutiny Advisor reported that the text would be completed following approval of the Board’s final inquiry reports.

RESOLVED – That the Board agrees the contribution to the Annual Scrutiny Report 2007/08.

127 Executive Board - Minutes

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Executive Board held on 12th March, 2008 be noted.

128 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Thursday 24th April, 2008 at 9.45 am in the Civic Hall, Leeds (No pre-meeting).

(The meeting concluded at 11.58 am).