

SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN'S SERVICES)

THURSDAY, 13TH OCTOBER, 2016

PRESENT: Councillor S Bentley in the Chair

Councillors J Akhtar, N Dawson, J Elliott,
S Field, C Gruen, M Iqbal, P Latty, J Pryor
and K Renshaw

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (VOTING)

Mr E A Britten – Church Representative (Catholic)
Mr A Graham – Church Representative (Church of England)
Ms L Nichols – Parent Governor Representative (Primary)
Mrs J Ward – Parent Governor Representative (Secondary)

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (NON-VOTING)

Ms C Foote – Teacher Representative
Mrs S Hutchinson – Early Years Representative
Ms C Hopkins – Young Lives Leeds
Ms C Bewsher – Looked After Children and Care Leavers

32 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests declared to the meeting, however the following matter was brought to the attention of the Scrutiny Board for information:

- Councillor S Bentley advised that she was a member of the Ireland Wood Children's Centre Advisory Board.

Councillor S Bentley remained present for the duration of the meeting.

33 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence were submitted by Councillors C Dobson and A Lamb and Co-opted Members, Ms J Hazelgrave and Ms K Jan.

Notification had been received that Councillor J Pryor was to substitute for Councillor C Dobson.

34 Minutes - 15 September 2016

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 September 2016 be approved as a correct record.

35 Scrutiny Inquiry into Children's Centres - Session 1

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report which presented information as part of Session 1 of the Board's inquiry into Children's Centres.

Minutes approved as a correct record
at the meeting held on Thursday, 10th November, 2016

The following information was appended to the report:

- Early Start Service – One Minute Guide (February 2016) Improvement Cycle
- Details of Children’s Centres by cluster, ward, phase and governance lead
- City Wide Early Start Dashboard
- Inspection example – outstanding, good, requires improvement
- Leeds Best Start Plan 2015-2019: A Preventative Programme from Conception to Age 2
- A Life Ready for Learning 2015-2069: A Preventative Programme from 2 to Age 5
- All Parliamentary Group on Children’s Centres: Family Hubs – The Future of Children’s Centres (July 2016)
- Economic Modelling in support of Children's Centre Business Case for Leeds.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor Lisa Mulherin, Executive Board Member (Children and Families)
- Councillor Jane Dowson, Deputy Executive Board Member (Children and Families)
- Sue Rumbold, Chief Officer (Partnership Development and Business Support)
- Andrea Richardson, Head of Services (Learning for Life)
- Amanda Ashe, Children’s Centres and Early Help Lead
- Sharon Yellin, Consultant in Public Health
- Janice Burberry, Health Improvement Manager, Public Health
- Debra Gill, Service Manager for Health Visiting, Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust.

The Board received a presentation ‘Best Start in Life for all Children: Leeds Children Centres’.

The key areas of discussion were:

- An update on commissioning arrangements, particularly the importance of an integrated approach, the role of the CCG and work with GP partners.
- Clarification sought about co-ordination of services, particularly in ensuring that there were no gaps in provision or overlap. The Board was advised that co-ordination of services was one of the key principles of the ‘Best Start’ Strategy.
- Confirmation that core services were being delivered across all children centres in Leeds (56 in total, 25 provided by schools), although there had been some changes to management and governance arrangements. The Board was advised about investment in children centres through the Schools’ Forum for 2017.

- An acknowledgement of gaps in provision regarding speech and language therapy. The Board supported the potential development of a new pathway in relation to this area of work.
- Development of the Family Learning Programme with Leeds City College.
- The importance of sharing good practice across children centres. The Board was advised about performance management and monitoring processes in place.
- The powers of intervention regarding children centres that underperformed.
- An update on maternal mental health. The Board was advised that maternal mental health was one of the key priorities of the NHS maternity strategy.
- Concern about the increase of foetal alcoholism and an increased awareness of this issue in training of practitioners.
- Clarification regarding recruitment, development and support programmes to minimise staff sickness and long term absenteeism.
- The role of school clusters and the school nursing team in relation to family support and transition from early years.
- The needs of schools and the perceived differences in quality regarding services accessed by schools across Leeds.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the issues raised as part of the Board's inquiry into Children's Centres, be noted.
- (b) That the Board writes a letter to frontline staff across Leeds' children centres acknowledging their hard work and valuable contribution.

(Mrs S Hutchinson left the meeting at 11.30am at the conclusion of this item.)

36 Home Education

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report which outlined the current law in relation to home education and the processes undertaken by Children's Services to support the local authority's duties.

The following information was appended to the report:

- Policy on Elective Home Education 2016 (Children being educated at home by parental choice)
- Elective Home Education: One Minute Guide (October 2016)
- Elective Home Education: Guidelines for Local Authorities.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor Lisa Mulherin, Executive Board Member (Children and Families)
- Councillor Jane Dowson, Deputy Executive Board Member (Children and Families)

- Sue Rumbold, Chief Officer (Partnership Development and Business Support)
- Andrea Richardson, Head of Services (Learning for Life)
- Barbara Temple, Lead Officer for Home Education, Children's Services
- Elaine McShane, Head of Children's Social Work, Children's Services.

The key areas of discussion were:

- Clarification sought regarding the destinations of young people that had been home educated. The Board was advised that legislation prevented the local authority maintaining a record of this information.
- Clarification sought whether there was any data about particular cohorts of children that benefitted from home education. The Board was advised that this was difficult to determine.
- Following a case described by Councillor Mulherin, the Board sought clarification about ensuring the voice of the child was heard and that they were given a choice. The Board was advised that children became home educated at different times for different reasons and that each case was unique. It was the parent's choice to home educate.
- The importance of ensuring a good standard of education for all young people. The Board was advised that it was the local authority's responsibility to ensure that children received the education that they were entitled to. It was the parent's choice about what they considered to be a suitable education. The local authority had no right of access to monitor the quality of education.
- The trend in the increase in home education. Clarification was sought about the reasons for the increase and why parents chose to home educate. The Board was advised that parents were not obliged to disclose reasons for home education, however information was sought to try and provide the necessary support.
- The aim to develop relationships with parents rather than a regime of inspection.
- Social learning, isolation, the refusal of visits / access and safeguarding. The Board was advised that there were a number of agencies, particularly GP's that engaged with children not in the school system. The nature of the law did not provide a right of access, a refusal of a visit was passed onto Social Care. However, without consent and evidence of risk of significant harm there were no grounds for going out to the family.
- The work of the Virtual Youth Council and the Voice and Influence Team in providing information and support to families.
- Access to extended and targeted services and access to CAMHS.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the contents of the report and appendices, be noted
- (b) That the concerns raised by the Board be forwarded to Leeds Safeguarding Children Board

- (c) That the Board writes a letter to the Secretary of State for Education, outlining the Board's concerns in relation to the legislation and the quality of education and intervention relating to home education.

(Mr A Graham left the meeting at 11.50am, Councillor K Renshaw at 12 noon, Ms C Foote at 12.25pm, Councillor C Gruen at 12.30pm, Ms L Nichols at 12.35pm and Councillor J Akhtar 12.40pm, during the consideration of this item.)

37 Work Schedule

The Head of Scrutiny submitted a report which invited Members to consider the Board's work schedule for the 2016/17 municipal year.

The Board was advised that an update on the issue of youth activity funding was to be considered at a future Board meeting.

RESOLVED – That subject to any on-going discussions and scheduling decisions, the Board's outline work schedule be approved.

38 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Thursday, 10 November 2016 at 9.45am (pre-meeting for all Board Members at 9.15am)

(The meeting concluded at 12.45pm)