

SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN AND FAMILIES)

THURSDAY, 13TH FEBRUARY, 2014

PRESENT: Councillor J Chapman in the Chair

Councillors J Akhtar, J Elliott, C Gruen,
J Hardy, M Harland, A Lamb, P Latty,
M Rafique, K Renshaw and A Sobel

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (VOTING)

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

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (NON-VOTING)

Ms S Hutchinson – Early Years Representative

67 Late Items

In accordance with her powers under Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chair agreed to accept the following late information:

- Agenda item 10, supplementary information in relation to appendix 2 of the report into improving school attendance. (Minute No. 75 refers)

The above information was not available at the time of agenda despatch, but was subsequently made available on the Council's website.

68 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests.

69 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence were submitted by Councillors B Urry and K Mitchell and Co-opted Members T Kayani – Young Lives Leeds (13-19 age group), J Morris-Boam – Young Lives Leeds (0 -13 age group) and C Foote – Teacher Representative. Councillor B Urry was substituted by Councillor J Hardy. Councillor K Mitchell was substituted by Councillor M Harland.

70 Appointment of Co-opted Member

The Scrutiny Board (Children and Families) agreed the appointment of the JCC nomination Kauser Jan (Bankside Primary School Teacher) as a Teacher Representative Co-opted Member (non-voting).

71 Minutes - 12 December 2013

In relation to minute no. 61, it was suggested that the linkages between clusters and Area Committees form a strand of investigation at the next cluster visits on 13 March 2014.

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 December 2013 be approved as a correct record.

72 Update on Children's Services Improvement Action Plan

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report providing an update on the 'Nine Point' plan which was developed after consultation with children and young people, staff and other stakeholders.

The following representatives were in attendance and responded to Members' queries and comments:

- Councillor Judith Blake, Executive Board Member (Children's Services)
- Nigel Richardson, Director of Children's Services
- Steve Walker, Deputy Director of Children's Services, Safeguarding, Specialist and Targeted Services

The key areas of discussion were:

- The involvement of children and young people in influencing front line working.
- The numbers of children becoming looked after and leaving care and the number of children in external residential placements.
- The behaviour of parents and how this is influencing the number of children under the age of 1 coming into care.
- Keeping families together and respecting cultural differences, kinship care and better engagement with the wider family.
- Attracting and retaining experienced social workers.
- Leaving care and the creation of a specific team to work with children age 13+ to prepare them for leaving care and adulthood.
- Pioneering work done in New Zealand and the work being done with Leeds to work with communities and understand cultural differences and the meaning of 'family' in different communities.
- Ofsted, raising of the bar with regard to assessment for children's homes and what it is like for a young person living in that setting.
- Family group conferencing and restorative practice. Training staff to work restoratively and then spreading that through schools and children's centres.

RESOLVED –

The Scrutiny Board (Children and Families):

- a) Considered and noted the report

Draft minutes to be approved at the meeting
to be held on Thursday, 24 April, 2014

- b) Ofsted framework briefing to be sent to the Scrutiny Board.

73 Frameworki Implementation

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report which provided an update on the implementation of the Children's Services Social Work system Frameworki

The following representatives were in attendance and responded to Members' queries and comments:

- Councillor Judith Blake, Executive Board Member (Children's Services)
- Nigel Richardson, Director of Children's Services
- Steve Walker, Deputy Director of Children's Services, Safeguarding, Specialist and Targeted Services.

The key areas of discussion were:

- Data transfer and cleansing.
- The concentration of resources to ensure the full implementation of reporting in Frameworki, which means utilising IT support from across the council including Adult Social Care.
- The need to ensure that social workers are in a better position than they were when utilising ESCR.

RESOLVED – That the update on the current position and future developments be noted.

74 Recommendation Tracking - External Placements

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which set out the progress made with regard to recommendations arising from the External Placements Scrutiny Inquiry.

The following information was appended to the report:

- Recommendation tracking flowchart and classification
- Review of External Placements Inquiry (February 2014)

The following representatives were in attendance and responded to Members' queries and comments:

- Councillor Judith Blake, Executive Board Member (Children's Services)
- Nigel Richardson, Director of Children's Services
- Steve Walker, Deputy Director of Children's Services, Safeguarding, Specialist and Targeted Services.

The key areas of discussion were:

- Foster carer payment structure. From April 2014 will be matching Fostering network rates.
- The increase in foster carers in 2013.
- The initiatives in place to focus on targeting areas where the number of looked after children are not in decline.
- Support for special guardians that is available and how this has improved over the past 2 years.
- The cultural change of ensuring that doors and phone lines are always open for professionals who have concern about the care of a child.

RESOLVED –

The Scrutiny Board (Children and Families):

- a) Agreed that recommendation 7 and 9 are achieved and no longer require monitoring. Tracking of this inquiry is now complete.

75 Recommendation Tracking - Improving School Attendance

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which set out the progress made with regard to recommendations arising from the Improving School Attendance Scrutiny Inquiry.

The following information was appended to the report:

- Recommendation tracking flowchart and classification
- Review of Improving School Attendance (February 2014)

The following representatives were in attendance and responded to Members' queries and comments:

- Nigel Richardson, Director of Children's Services
- Jancis Andrew, Area Head of Targeted Services (West North West)

The key areas of discussion were:

- Recommendation 6, and the requirement for a culture change in the way medical appointments are made for children of school age. Nigel Richardson to ensure this is on the agenda with the Integrated Commissioning Executive and will undertake more investigative work to understand the extent of the problem. It was highlighted that there is a clear need to engage with health practitioners and progress this further.
- Recommendation 2, that further School Governors should have a designated responsibility for attendance. Also Elected Member Area Leads for Children can also ensure that attendance is always on the agenda.

- Medical needs teaching service – concern was expressed that there is no intervention until a child misses 15 days education a year which is a significant amount of education missed.

RESOLVED –

The Scrutiny Board (Children and Families):

- (a) Agreed that recommendations 7 and 8 are complete and therefore no longer require monitoring;
- (b) Noted that satisfactory progress for recommendations 2, 6 11 and 12 is being made and that significant further action is required for recommendations 2 and 6.
- (c) Requested that children's services investigate the threshold for intervention by the medical needs teaching service and if there is scope to reduce the time period of missed education.

76 Work Schedule

A report was submitted by the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development which detailed the Scrutiny Board's work programme for the current municipal year.

The draft Scrutiny Board (Children and Families) work schedule for 2013/2014 and Executive Board minutes 18 December 2013 and 22 January 2014 was appended to the report.

Sandra Pentelow, Principal Scrutiny Adviser, presented the report and responded to Members' queries and comments.

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report and appendices be noted.

77 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Thursday, 13th March 2014 at 9.30am in the cluster areas. (No pre meeting)

The next public meeting of the Scrutiny Board will be Thursday, 24 April 2014 at 9.45am in the Civic Hall. (Pre meeting for Board Members at 9.15am)

(The meeting concluded at 11:55am)