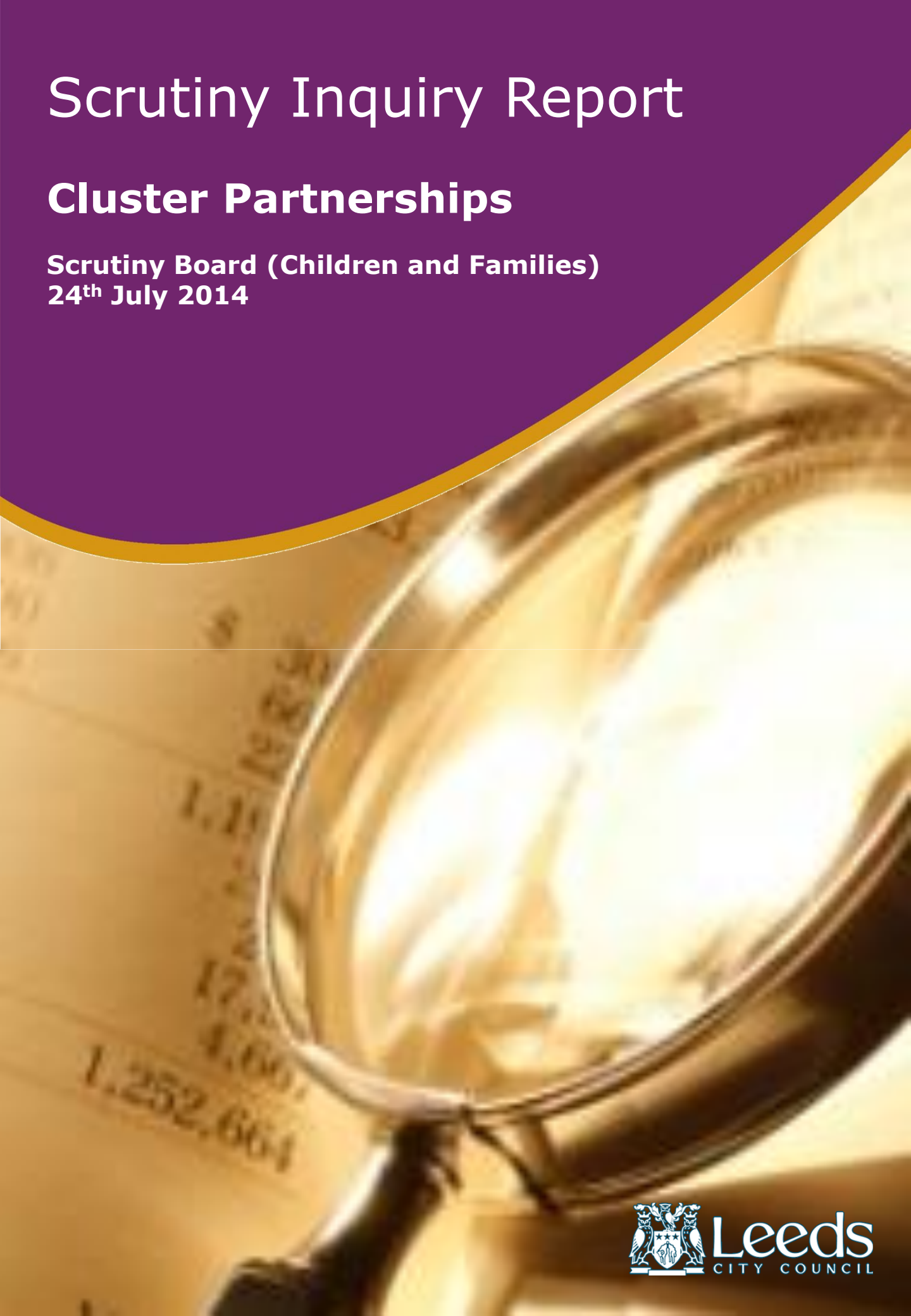


# Scrutiny Inquiry Report

## Cluster Partnerships

Scrutiny Board (Children and Families)  
24<sup>th</sup> July 2014



**Draft Scrutiny Inquiry Final report  
Cluster Partnerships  
24<sup>th</sup> July 2014**



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**DRAFT**



# Desired Outcomes and Recommendations

**Desired Outcome** – To ensure a system of funding which secures the future sustainability of services provided by Cluster Partnerships across the City

**Recommendation 1** – That the Director of Children’s Services work in collaboration with Schools Forum obtain feedback from individual clusters regarding the success of the funding formula implemented and the capacity to provide services. Following this undertake a review of the funding formula for implementation from 2016/17 onwards.

**Desired Outcome** – To ensure best use of resources which secures the future sustainability of services provided by Cluster Partnerships across the City.

**Recommendation 2** – That the Director of Children’s Services works in collaboration with the Children’s Trust Board and Cluster Chairs to consider the current structure of Cluster Partnership areas to identify if resources could be better utilised if structured differently.

**Desired Outcome** – To secure services for the benefit of Children, Young People and Families in the longer term

**Recommendation 3** – That the Chief Executive, Leader of Council and Director of Children’s Services consider if a package of Cluster investment to secure sustainable localised services in the longer term could be facilitated. This should align with future contributions for combined services via the Schools Forum. (see also recommendation 17)

**Desired Outcome** – a) To ensure the best and most effective use of publicly funded resources which has a significant positive impact and provides best value for money.  
b) The implement support where this is not being achieved

**Recommendation 4** – That the Children’s Trust Board and Director of Children’s Services clarifies within the Governance Framework how the effective use of significant local authority and partnership resources is monitored. In addition also clarify the provision, mechanism and trigger point for supportive intervention in any Cluster Partnership with identified weaknesses in partnership arrangements, structures and performance.

**Desired Outcome** – To strengthen relationships between Community Committees and Cluster Partnerships in Leeds.

**Recommendation 5** – Recommendation 5 – That the Director of Children’s Services  
a) works in collaboration with the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) to provide information, advice and guidance to all Elected Member Cluster Representatives about their role  
b) provides information to Elected Member Cluster Representatives on the different Cluster Partnership governance structures and voting rights.



# Desired Outcomes and Recommendations

**Desired Outcome** – To strengthen relationships between Community Committees and Cluster Partnerships in Leeds.

**Recommendation 6** – That the Director of Children’s Services and Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) investigates and implements methods of raising awareness about the mutually beneficial relationship that could and should exist between Cluster Partnerships and Community Committees.

**Desired Outcome** – To raise awareness of the value of Cluster Partnerships and the positive impact in the Schools they support. In addition to facilitate dialogue and feedback between School Governors and Cluster Partnerships

**Recommendation 7** – That the Director of Children’s Services identifies barriers in communications with School Governors and ensures that School Governors have access to Cluster Partnership information.

**Desired Outcome** – To clarify the role and purpose of ‘Family of Schools’ and Cluster Partnerships to promote understanding and where possible minimise duplication.

**Recommendation 8** – That the Director of Children’s Services and Children’s Trust Board works collaboratively with School Headteachers and Cluster Chairs to review the roles of Families of Schools and Cluster Partnerships to clearly identify and define their purpose and value in terms of outcomes for Children and Young People. Duplication in remit or responsibility should be identified and where possible minimised.

**Desired Outcome** – To promote engagement and support of the Cluster Partnership by all the organisations involved.

**Recommendation 9** – That the Director of Children’s Services works with Cluster Managers to inform the scheduling of future meetings to maximise the attendance of Elected Members and non-education based partners.

**Desired Outcome** – To ensure strong leadership and support structures are in place to ensure fully coordinated management of partnership functions.

**Recommendation 10** – That the Children’s Trust Board as part of their governance review consider the core support structures of each Cluster Partnership to assess the strength of leadership and support and ensure that adequate resources are in place to coordinate and galvanise the work of the partnership.

**Desired Outcome** – To strengthen the link between Cluster Partnerships and the Local Authority and provide strategic advice and support.

**Recommendation 11** – That the Chief Executive and Director of Children’s services reviews the provision of Local Authority Partners on Cluster Partnerships with a view to appointing officers from across various directorates who hold positions which support operation at a strategic level and have a detailed understanding of the council wide contribution to the cities priorities for children and young people. (e.g. Chief Officer level or above.)



# Desired Outcomes and Recommendations

**Desired Outcome** – To identify gaps in partner engagement and involvement and ensure that this is minimised .

**Recommendation 12** – That the Director of Children’s Services collates and maintains partner engagement information to inform the governance review process and identify where participation can be strengthened.

**Desired Outcome** – To strengthen links between the Health Sector and Cluster Partnerships on a strategic and operational level to secure family focused support for both children and adults.

**Recommendation 13** – That the Health and Well Being Board, Director of Children’s Services, Cluster Chairs and Director of Public Health work in collaboration to:

- a) consider how partnership arrangements between Health Services and Cluster Partnerships can be strengthened
- b) provide a localised more integrated system of health support with Cluster Partnerships to provide family focused support.

**Desired Outcome** – To support budget planning and spending in Clusters Partnerships and ensure that no partnerships is disproportionately financially disadvantaged by cross partnership working.

**Recommendation 14** – That the Director of Children’s Services works in collaboration with Cluster Chairs to agree and document a clear concordat for cases where cross cluster support is required. This should clarify the mechanism for expected financial and/or resource contribution in such cases.

**Desired Outcome** – To enhance the knowledge of practitioners who work in multiple clusters on the core offer and support available in each cluster area.

**Recommendation 15** – That the Director of Children’s Services works in collaboration with Cluster Chairs to identify and record the core offer in each Cluster Partnership and ensure that this information is accessible to all practitioners supporting Cluster Partnerships.

**Desired Outcome** – To proactively improve practices and service delivery in Cluster Partnerships and reduce the levels of inconsistency in performance and outcomes across the city.

**Recommendation 16** – That the Director of Children’s Services works collaboratively with Cluster Chairs to implement a process which maximises the sharing of strategic and operational good practice across all Cluster Partnerships.



# Desired Outcomes and Recommendations

**Desired Outcome** – To consider the merit and provision of focused support within communities with multiple disadvantage to improve the outcomes for children living in those communities.

**Recommendation 17** – That the Chief Executive and Director of Children’s Services considers the research in the reports ‘Developing Children’s Zones for England’ and ‘Developing Children’s Zones for England, What’s the evidence?’ and reports back to the Scrutiny Board (Children and Families) on the potential for establishing and maintaining a Children’s Zone in Leeds which brings a holistic focus and effort in improving a community or place that is experiencing multiple challenges.

**Desired Outcome** – To provide a forum for a high level collaborative focus on the purpose, value and performance of Cluster Partnerships and establish a clear vision for the future of Cluster Partnerships.

**Recommendation 18** – That the Director of Children’s Services organises and provides a high level event which will promote and define Cluster Partnerships. This should clarify their value and purpose and consider future aims and development for governance and accountability, funding and resources, improving performance and future potential.



# Introduction and Scope

## Introduction

1. A Cluster is a local partnership that include a wide range of organisations who work together to deliver services and provide support to Children, Young People and their families. There are currently 25 Cluster Partnerships. Each covers a geographical area, mainly defined by a 'family' or grouping of school in the locality. Clusters provide the architecture to focus on and target the needs of the city on a local geographical basis. A support and service delivery structure such as this is unique in a city the size of Leeds.
2. Leeds has an ambition to be a child friendly city by 2030. The methodology for delivering this vision is outlined in The Children and Young People's Plan. The main purpose of all Cluster Partnerships as defined in that plan is to:
  - Enable local settings and services to work together effectively to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families
  - Build capacity to improve the delivery of preventative and targeted services to meet local needs
  - Create conditions for integrated partnership at locality level
  - Promote the ambition of a child friendly city across the locality.
  - Leeds has an ambition to be a child friendly city by 2030. The methodology for delivering this vision is outlined in The Children and Young People's Plan which details five headline outcomes.
3. Cluster Partnerships have a key role in co-ordinating effort on a local level to deliver the priorities of the Children and

Young People's Plan. This includes the 3 obsessions

- Help Children to live in safe and supportive families
- Improve behaviour, attendance and achievement
- Increase numbers in employment, education and training

Also included are nine other priorities which relate to improved safeguarding, education, health and crime reduction.

4. At its meeting on 28 June 2013, the Scrutiny Board (Children and Families) considered its work programme for the 2013/14 municipal year. It was acknowledged that the Board had expressed during two meetings, 14 March 2013 and 25 April 2013, a wish to conduct an inquiry which would consider the role and function of Cluster Partnerships. The purpose was to consider the function of the partnerships and evaluate their impact, effectiveness and value.

## Scope of the Inquiry

5. Terms of reference for this inquiry were agreed at our board meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2013 when we concluded that the purpose of the inquiry would be to make an assessment of and, where appropriate, make recommendations on the following areas:
  - Clarification of the lines of Cluster accountability to organisations, within and external to the Local Authority.
  - Cluster governance arrangements and framework
  - Partnership engagement, representation and participation in





# Introduction and Scope

order to identify if this complements arrangements at a city level.

- The performance of Clusters and the management of performance and financial information.
  - Ensure measures are in place which secure total accountability for resources.
  - The improvement measures in place to progress the performance of Clusters where it is required.
  - The extent of collaborative and supportive working relationships between Clusters.
  - The value of Clusters and the difference partnership activities are making across the City to improve outcomes and to ensure that local investment is providing good value for money and having a positive impact.
6. When considering the terms of reference we acknowledged that the Children and Young People's Plan specifies a number of cluster activity related improvement measures. This demonstrates a clear commitment by Leeds Children's Trust Board to develop and strengthen services through Cluster Partnerships.
  7. The inquiry was conducted over three evidence gathering sessions which took place between November 2013 and February 2014 when we received a range of evidence both written and verbal.
  8. We also visited four Cluster Partnerships, Temple Newsam, Beeston Cottingley and Middleton, Alwoodley and OPEN XS. We are grateful for the contribution of practitioners active in each of those partnerships and for the open and informative information provided which highlighted the many

complexities of their work. This was very enlightening and we would like to thank them for their input to this inquiry. A full list of those who participated is detailed at the end of this report.

## City Wide Benefits of This Inquiry

9. The scope of the inquiry fulfils a number of best council objectives and proprieties as defined in the Best Council plan for 2013 to 2017
  - Strengthening local accountability and being more responsive to the needs of local communities.
  - Providing accessible and integrated services
  - Building a Child Friendly City
  - Joining up health and social care services.
  - Improving how we are organised and making the best use of our assets.

## Desired Outcomes, Added Value and Anticipated Service Impact

10. Our recommendations require a number of improvement measures. Such measures could require additional resources, the cost of which may be required from existing budgets, unless grant funding or investment from partner organisations can be sourced.
11. We hope that our findings will contribute to raising the levels of performance and positive outcomes through cross partnership collaboration and the



# Introduction and Scope

sharing of good practice. In addition we hope that our findings improve the circumstances of children who face multiple disadvantage in the communities in which they live.

12. In conducting the Inquiry we wished to identify and highlight the value of Cluster partnerships. We also recognise the potential for Clusters Partnerships to meet consistently high standards of performance city wide and provide the structure to focus on communities with multiple challenges.
13. Overall our recommendations seek to secure the future of Cluster Partnerships and ensure robust governance and support mechanisms are in place to achieve this.

## Equality and Diversity

14. The Equality Improvement Priorities 2011 to 2015 have been developed to ensure that the council meets its legal duties under the Equality Act 2010. The priorities will help the council to identify work and activities that help to reduce disadvantage, discrimination and inequalities of opportunity to achieve its ambition to be the best city in the UK.
15. Equality and diversity issues have been considered throughout this Scrutiny Inquiry. The evidence submitted and the topics debated in this inquiry have highlighted that:
  - There are high levels of challenge in some Cluster Partnerships due to socio-economic circumstances, for example the provision of services in an area, transport connections, leisure facilities, employment opportunities and housing

conditions. The Board has made recommendations to focus on communities that face multiple disadvantage and which require high levels of support to reduce negative influences on children and young people growing up in those communities.

- The Scrutiny Board has highlighted opportunities to strengthen health support in all Cluster Partnerships which will support children, young people and families with identified health and wellbeing needs.

Further specific information is detailed later in the report.

16. Where a Scrutiny Board has made recommendations and these are agreed, the individual, organisation or group responsible for implementation or delivery should give due regard to equality and diversity and where appropriate an equality impact assessment will be carried out



# Conclusions and Recommendations

## Introduction

17. A Cluster Partnership is a local model of support for children and families which link a number of key services such as education and early year's provision with personal social and health support to improve outcomes wherever they live in the city.
18. The remit of Cluster Partnerships is much wider than the provision of Education. At the first inquiry session it was stated that children spend 15% of their time in school and 85% outside. What happens in the 85% of time massively impacts on the 15%. There are multiple factors that can shape a child's life, these include services in the area, transport connections, leisure facilities, employment opportunities and quality of housing stock. Locality working enables specific focus on the child or a family and promotes the understanding of issues so that whole family support can be implemented using a range of services. These should, either directly or by default, remove barriers to learning for children.
19. Cluster areas are defined by networks and relationships built over a number of years by schools. The areas do not exactly align with Electoral Wards or Community Committee areas. We acknowledge that this lack of alignment has raised the question of clear cut democratic accountability in Cluster Partnerships, however, we were reassured that partners are happy to work to the existing model and that long standing relationships between schools have ensured a collective responsibility and a strong network of support. The lack of exact alignment with electoral wards has not had an impact on the capacity for Cluster Partnerships to operate.
20. The structures of Cluster Partnerships facilitate a focus on areas where there are a common set of issues facing children and young people. The socio-economic make up of each cluster area is varied and each Cluster Partnership can structure and commission services to meet those challenges for their own geographical area.
21. Although each Cluster Partnership will predominantly focus on its own local area, it is linked to a wider network of service provision bringing together partners from different services, whilst maintaining a connection to the Children's Trust Board and Leeds Children's Services in order to focus on city wide strategies. We were advised that each of the 25 partnerships comprise of practitioners from a wealth of organisations which include, but not exclusively, Children's Social Work Service, Schools, Police, Leeds City Council Youth Service, Youth Offending Service, Children's Centres, Housing Services, Third Sector, Health Services, Elected Members and Children's Services. There is no statutory or formal set formula for who is involved in each partnership although there is a recommended standing membership. (appendix 1).
22. Whilst maintaining a focus on the city's obsessions as defined in the Children and Young People's Plan, Cluster Partnerships have freedom to develop their own responses to local issues. We were pleased to hear during our visits to four Cluster Partnerships that practitioners did not necessarily consider the local authority to be the



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main driver in determining priorities and ambitions but saw it as a partnership with equal contribution.

23. We were advised that each Cluster Partnership should demonstrate three behaviours which drive how services are provided and delivered:

- restorative practice, with high support and high challenge, build on the premise that ‘people are happier, more cooperative and productive, and more likely to make positive changes when those in positions of authority do things with them rather than to them or for them.
- outcome based accountability, looking at desired outcomes and formulating action plans to achieve those goals and objectives.
- listening and responding to children and ensuring they have an influence on the services provided for them.

24. We appreciate that the success of each Cluster Partnership is strengthened by the consensus and collaboration of the whole school network in the locality. We therefore acknowledge that there could be risk where schools opt to remain outside the Cluster Partnership. This is a concern in most of the cluster areas visited particularly due to the increase of different school types within an area such as Free Schools and Academies. It is our understanding that this issue has not yet manifested in any particular cluster area. We speculate that this is because Free Schools and Academies recognise the value that cluster arrangements can bring and due to the concerted efforts of a number of Local Authority and School representatives to maintain positive relationships as

reported to the Scrutiny Board in November 2013.<sup>1</sup>

25. We would like to state early in this report that the Children and Families Scrutiny Board believe that the City is very fortunate to have Cluster Partnerships and we consider that the lives of children and young people are better as a result of these arrangements. Our overarching desire is that Cluster Partnerships are nurtured, supported and sustained for the future benefit of all children, young people and families in Leeds and the associated social and economic benefits that will bring.

## Resource, Finance and Sustainability

26. At the ‘Call in’ meeting of the Scrutiny Board on the 25<sup>th</sup> April 2013 we heard that Leeds Schools Forum had approved that the Local Authority could hold £5.2m of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)<sup>2</sup> per year centrally from 2013/14 to 2015/16, under the budget heading ‘Contribution to Combined Services’. The funding is to be fully utilised to support Clusters Partnerships. This represents 1% of the total schools budget. Schools Forum voted that the model for funding to each partnership fit the Department of Education simplified formula for DSG, therefore clusters areas with significant deprivation get greater support.

27. We were advised that a commitment was made to implement a funding

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<sup>1</sup> Report of the Director of Children’s Services- The implications of Academies for Leeds Children’s Services and Education in General.

<sup>2</sup> With the Exception of David Young Academy



# Conclusions and Recommendations

arrangement over 3 years to provide opportunity to plan, implement and review support over the longer term. Direct funding to Cluster Partnerships provides financial independence, to invest and commission services in order to address issues in their locality. During the inquiry we sought to clarify how the investment of funding provided by the Schools Forum would be monitored to ensure investment is being made wisely. We were advised that the Schools Forum Review and Support Sub- Group<sup>3</sup> will ensure that value for money is being achieved. Cluster Partnerships are required to submit an annual business plan and also articulate spending.

28. In addition we understand that Cluster Partnerships can seek additional financial support directly from Schools<sup>4</sup>, external sources such as voluntary organisations or from other local authority budgets such as the youth funding held by Community Committees. We consider that an improvement in the collaboration and links between Clusters Partnerships and Community Committees could be beneficial (see recommendation 5&6) in terms of securing additional future funding from this source.

29. Cluster Partnerships are highly autonomous, however Leeds City Council is closely involved in the provision of considerable resources in terms of staff and access to practitioner support. The provision of resources in this manner means that there is no single body responsible for the success of Cluster Partnerships. Much depends on the Schools Forum, Children's Trust

Board, Local Authority and Partnerships to work collaboratively. This arrangement relies on all the aforementioned to ensure that this works in all areas of the city and presents exposure to risk if there are any gaps or weaknesses in the collaboration.

30. The Scrutiny Board considers that Clusters Partnerships are accountable to those bodies who provide resource in whatever form this may be. We were advised that Local Authority services have been aligned to Cluster Partnerships. This has enabled relationships to mature and integrated working to develop within the partnerships with responsibility for resources ultimately being retained by Leeds City Council rather than delegated directly to Cluster Partnerships. Public resources include Children's Social Work Service, Targeted Service Leaders, Leeds City Deal Youth Contract Locality Innovation Funding, Targeted Information Advice and Guidance and Early Start Teams with a monetary value in excess of £14.5m.<sup>5</sup>

31. The Scrutiny Board believes that the Children's Trust Board and the Council have a significant role in ensuring the utilisation of substantial public resources is effective and presents value for money. Throughout the inquiry we have received a number of comments regarding the resourcing of Cluster Partnerships and it is evident that there is an incorrect belief by some that Cluster Partnerships are only resourced from redistributed DSG and therefore are not accountable to the Local

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<sup>3</sup> Constituted 26<sup>th</sup> November 2013

<sup>4</sup> Temple Newsam for example receives additional funding direct from schools

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<sup>5</sup> Figures provided 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2013



# Conclusions and Recommendations

Authority. Although Cluster Partnerships are autonomous we consider that the Children's Trust Board and Local Authority have a responsibility to provide supportive intervention in any Cluster Partnership with identified weaknesses in arrangements, structures and performance. In addition mechanisms to drive improvement should be put into place where support is required.

32. The ability to hold an amount of DSG to support the provision of combined services by Cluster Partnerships has clearly been beneficial. We do however, acknowledge that there is an uncertainty for future retention if the Government changes the rules regarding the allocation of DSG, which may result in all schools being requested individually to contribute financially. Funding was a common theme throughout all our visits and a concern in the majority.
33. The financial pressures on services have begun to erode some of the provision that has developed in clusters areas. We were advised that some Cluster Partnerships now have to concentrate on targeted support and the capacity to provide any type of universal support is diminishing. One of the Cluster Partnerships visited suggested that a way forward would be to integrate with another partnership and highlighted that work with their neighbouring partnership is already in development with regard to Children's Centres.
34. We were also advised that the size of a Cluster also brought funding issues particularly if it is a small cluster with high demand for services, for example translation services. This has frustrated the scope for partnership to undertake more proactive initiatives and has

resulted in some difficult choices around the work undertaken by Targeted Services.

35. It was highlighted that Cluster Partnerships are increasingly being heralded by numerous organisations as the solution to a number of city wide issues, which they endeavour to resolve within their budget. It was stated that there is a feeling of disconnection between the 'centre' and the Cluster Partnerships and therefore a lack of understanding of what is truly happening 'on the ground'. We feel that such developments should be clearly apparent to every Local Authority Partner within the Cluster Partnership as they are the conduit that link partnerships to the 'centre'. (See recommendation 11)

**Recommendation 1 – That the Director of Children's Services work in collaboration with Schools Forum obtain feedback from individual clusters regarding the success of the funding formula implemented and the capacity to provide services. Following this undertake a review of the funding formula for implementation from 2016/17 onwards.**

**Recommendation 2 – That the Director of Children's Services works in collaboration with the Children's Trust Board and Cluster Chairs to consider the current structure of Cluster Partnership areas to identify if resources could be better utilised if structured differently.**



# Conclusions and Recommendations

36. The three year funding commitment by the Schools Forum has enabled Cluster Partnerships to plan the use of allocated finances over a term which will enable the identification of local issues, continuity of service provision and identify the benefits of investment and intervention. We were advised by two Cluster Chairs of the importance of planning in the longer term and the frustration of what is perceived as a 'one year future'. We found that resources provided from the Leeds City Council did not have the same three-year commitment and therefore hinder the capacity of Cluster Partnerships to plan with confidence a three year future as the Schools Forum intended.

37. We acknowledge the current economic climate has created massive challenges in terms of workforce and resource management and planning. The effects of resource reductions in the Local Authority are being felt in the Cluster Partnerships as valued colleagues are leaving and not being replaced. This is causing gaps in the support services that can be provided. It is appreciated that these circumstances are not unique to Cluster Partnerships in a time when most council services are similarly affected.

38. We consider that it is essential to support Cluster Partnerships to develop strategies and successfully plan for the longer term by affirming the commitment of resources, in whatever form that may be for a period of time longer than twelve months, ideally in accordance with the DSG contribution delegated by Schools Forum.

**Recommendation 3 – That the Chief Executive, Leader of Council and Director of Children’s Services consider if a package of Cluster investment to secure sustainable localised services in the longer term could be facilitated. This should align with future contributions for combined services via the Schools Forum. (see also recommendation 17)**

39. We sought to identify if there is a formal framework which specifies the governance arrangements for Cluster Partnership structures. We were advised that a new governance framework has been in place since September 2013 which stipulates the three models of governance in place in Leeds:

- *Joint Collaborative Committee (JCC)* - Schools within an identified cluster may wish to form an extended services committee in line with the School Governance (Collaboration) (England) Regulations 2003. The schools remain as separate schools but form a joint committee, whose powers are determined through the delegation of the collaborating schools' governing bodies. The Joint committee can appoint associate members to represent other relevant services. Voting rights of members are decided by school governing bodies.
- *Trust Model* - In some instances, extended services may be governed through the federation of schools or through the formation of Trust schools. Brigshaw and Temple Newsam Cluster Partnerships are based upon the regulations around



# Conclusions and Recommendations

the formulation of trusts. This structure can include a wide array of partners and various trustees including voluntary sector, charities and businesses. Trusts are legal entities but do not replace the autonomy of individual school governing bodies.

- *Informal Partnership* -Partners working together to deliver the extended services provision may wish to form a partnership. However, unincorporated associations in law are not corporate bodies; they cannot employ staff, hold financial resources or enter into contracts. The partnership would need to do these things through an accountable body, which would be one of the partners, which may be a public, charitable or private body. The Seacroft Manston Cluster Partnership is an informal set up which includes three secondary school academies. We were advised that there is a wide range of partners and each school has a representative role.

40. We were interested to identify if any correlation existed between a Cluster Partnership model and success in terms of outcomes and performance. Following further analysis we were advised that there is in fact no identifiable link therefore we are unable to identify one particular model as favourable.

41. A report detailing the Cluster Partnership governance and performance arrangements was presented to us during our first inquiry session. This detailed the Children's Trust Board expectations with regard to these arrangements which recognised

that accountability to Schools Forum is integral. Contained in the report was a suggested framework for Cluster Partnerships to follow in terms of their governance and their annual governance cycle. This aims to formalise light touch minimum reporting requirements on Cluster Partnerships with a focus on outcomes and value for money.

42. The roles of partners to support these aims are defined as follows:

- *Children's Trust Board* – to provide support for cluster working and through regular performance reports provide both challenge on the effectiveness of clusters and strategic support for improvement.
- *Schools Forum* – to hold the children's trust board and clusters to account for effective use of the funding allocated through the Forum. To be supported in this by the Review and Support sub-group.
- *Cluster management and leadership* – commitment to being open and honest about the progress the cluster is making and any challenges it is trying to address
- *Targeted services leader* – focusing on targeted work with children and families to look at the numbers being supported as well as the quality and impact of the support
- *Elected Members* – to link cluster working with Area Committee<sup>6</sup> arrangements ensuring both local democratic accountability and that cluster priorities are understood and supported.
- *Local Authority Partners* –support clusters in considering performance and quality, including self-evaluation

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<sup>6</sup> Now referred to as Community Committees





# Conclusions and Recommendations

work and preparation of the local cluster plan.

- *Children's Trust Partners* – will actively seek involvement in cluster arrangements. This relates to organisations committed to the outcomes outlined in the Children and Young People's Plan and to working within their local communities to improve the lives of children and families.
- *Leeds Children's Safeguarding Board* – within overall role will seek reassurance and provide support to ensure that local cluster practice is keeping children safe. Asking clusters to participate in multi-agency case audits would be an example.

43. Some Cluster Partnerships have subgroups each of which focus on and reflect the three obsessions. These subgroups will include the relevant partners to provide the expertise required.

44. Cluster partnerships are also required to commit to an annual timetable which includes:

- the preparation and submission of business and action plans to the Local Authority for moderation and quality assurance and to Schools Forum for approval.
- Sharing of good practice with school governing bodies in the cluster area. To support this, the Local Authority will provide performance data and prepare six monthly performance reports.

45. We were further advised that the Children's Trust Board on a quarterly basis monitors the overall progress of Cluster Partnerships and progress against the obsessions. In addition the Trust Board also considers the impact of

targeted work and local demand for social care services. On a six monthly basis the Children's Trust Board receives:

- Targeted Services Report
- Quality of engagement, leadership and governance self-assessments
- Progress against business plan priorities
- Value for money statement
- Highlights of lessons learnt, good practice and help needed.

46. Schools Forum is made up of representatives from schools and academies, with some representation from other non- school organisations, such as nursery and post 16 representatives. The forum acts as a consultative body on some issues and a decision making body on others.

47. Clusters have a direct accountability to Schools Forum who have committed to delegating funding for three years. Schools Forum requires assurance that cluster funding is achieving value for money. The Vice Chair of the Schools Forum advised us that a sub group of the Schools Forum, the Review and Support Sub Committee, will have a specific role to ensure that the funding Schools Forum provided to Cluster Partnerships represents value for money. The sub group will ensure that all annual business plans have been received from each cluster and will ensure that each business plan is robust and review any concerns about cluster spending. The sub group will also receive progress reports every six month to consider progress made by Cluster Partnerships against the obsessions and priorities of the Children and Young People's Plan. Schools Forum releases funding on completion



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of Cluster Partnership business plans and following the six month review of the business plans.

48. It is clear that the Children's Trust Board hold Cluster Partnerships to account for outcomes as defined in the governance framework and that the Schools Forum will hold partnerships to account for the funding delegated. The provision of funding is highly dependent on meeting basic governance requirements and accountability to the Schools Forum is clear. However, the framework is unclear about which body will be holding the partnerships to account for how effectively Local Authority and other partnership aligned resources are utilised and what supportive measures the Children's Trust Board would put into place where desirable outcomes are not achieved.

**Recommendation 4 – That the Children's Trust Board and Director of Children's Services clarifies within the Governance Framework how the effective use of significant local authority and partnership resources is monitored. In addition also clarify the provision, mechanism and trigger point for supportive intervention in any Cluster Partnership with identified weaknesses in partnership arrangements, structures and performance.**

49. We sought to clarify how accessible Cluster Partnership information is to the public. We were advised that service information should be widely available, ideally on a website. The partnerships should seek public engagement within their communities and where possible hold meetings in public.

50. In terms of democratic accountability, we felt that it would be beneficial for an overview and scrutiny committee in Leeds to consider the views of the Children's Trust Board, Schools Forum and other relevant stakeholders with regard to performance, outcomes, resources and governance arrangements. We will therefore invite the Schools Forum and Children's Trust Board to attend the Scrutiny Board (Children and Families) on an annual basis. This will be scheduled into the annual work program of the Scrutiny Board.

## Links with Community Committees and School Governors

51. The governance framework states that there is a need to more clearly understand the relative roles and responsibilities of Area Committees (now referred to as Community Committees). The Elected Member relationship between Community Committees and Cluster Partnerships is central to this. Member Management Committee recommended in June 2013 that local working arrangements be strengthened by the appointment of Elected Member representatives to Clusters Partnerships by their Community Committees. This establishes a formal link between Community Committees and Cluster Partnerships and enables and supports the building of closer working arrangements to better support the needs of children and families across the city. Prior to formal appointment by Community Committee some Elected Members have engaged with their area Cluster Partnerships.



# Conclusions and Recommendations

52. We invited a number of Elected Member Cluster Representatives (EMCRs) to participate in the inquiry, helpfully a large number are also School Governors so were able to reflect on their experiences from varying perspectives. We wanted to clarify the following:

- If the role of EMCR has ever been made clear to those appointed
- The interaction between EMCRs and Cluster Partnerships
- The level of Elected Member engagement and inclusion in Cluster Partnership business
- Lines of communication
- Involvement or influence in Cluster Partnership Decisions
- If the Elected Member link between Cluster Partnerships and Community Committees is effectively utilised
- Examples of positive practice
- Concerns that participants have as an Elected Member or School Governor

53. We received views from Elected Members who are involved in a significant number of Cluster Partnerships. It was apparent that there is wide support for the work of the partnerships and many had firsthand experience and knowledge of the positive outcomes achieved by the partnerships in their wards and schools. Elected Members whose experiences were not wholly positive appreciated the clear value of Cluster Partnerships when hearing the feedback from their colleagues.

54. We received contrasting views, which was not unexpected, but does demonstrate inconsistencies across Cluster Partnerships in engagement, communication and inclusion. It also highlighted that the Elected Member

representatives have varying levels of understanding about Cluster Partnerships and prioritise their own inclusion in cluster activities differently.

55. Whilst undertaking our research we were unable to source any guidance for EMCRs which provided information about their role or remit as a Community Committee Representative. Members stated that they were still not sure about their responsibilities with regard to Cluster Partnerships and how they 'fit'. They questioned if they were attending as a ward representative, a council representative or community committee representative. One Member stated that he 'was not as involved as he could be but said that was due to not really understanding what his role is. If that was known then he would throw himself into it.'

56. It was also suggested that the reasoning behind Elected Member involvement is also unclear within some partnerships. We were advised that one Cluster Chair thought an Elected Member was representing a school as they did not understand the role of Councillors. We were also advised that in one area all Ward Members are being invited to Cluster partnership meetings and this created uncertainty about roles.

57. We do acknowledge that advisory sessions had previously been made available to Elected Members to advise about Cluster Partnerships and enhance their understanding. We consider that alternative methods of providing information may also benefit Elected Members, particularly those who have not been able to attend.



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58. We were pleased to hear during our visit to the Cluster Partnerships that some have actively approached Community Committees to apply for funding. A view was expressed however that this is particularly challenging where there are weaknesses in the formal link due to lack of EMCR support.

59. Practitioners in Cluster Partnerships and Elected Members giving evidence to us agreed that relationships between Cluster Partnerships and Community Committee should be strengthened. We consider that this could be achieved by:

- raising awareness of the mutually beneficial relationship that could and should exist between Cluster Partnerships and Community Committees.
- Elected Members fully understanding the responsibility and time commitment of the Cluster Representative role.
- Elected Members regularly attending Cluster Partnership meetings and communicating progress, achievements and challenges to Community Committees

60. We consider that Cluster Partnerships have a degree of accountability to Community Committees where funding has been secured from this source and that this should be recognised in the governance framework.

61. A number of Elected Members expressed their frustration as it is not clear why in some Cluster Partnerships they are not allowed to vote. Voting arrangements are briefly referred to in the governance framework however they are still not fully understood by some of the Elected Members involved. We were reassured that Cluster

Partnerships have been asked to review voting arrangements and to ensure that there is Elected Member representation.

**Recommendation 5 – That the Director of Children’s Services a) works in collaboration with the Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) to provide information, advice and guidance to all Elected Member Cluster Representatives about their role and b) provides information to Elected Member Cluster Representatives on the different Cluster Partnership governance structures and voting rights.**

**Recommendation 6 – That the Director of Children’s Services and Assistant Chief Executive (Citizens and Communities) investigates and implements methods of raising awareness about the mutually beneficial relationship that could and should exist between Cluster Partnerships and Community Committees.**

62. During the inquiry we were advised that School Governors are consistently provided with Cluster updates at each meeting. In clarifying whether this was correct we received mixed responses. A number of School Governors stated that Cluster information is very rarely discussed at meetings.

**Recommendation 7 – That the Director of Children’s Services identifies barriers in communications with School Governors and ensures that School Governors have access to Cluster Partnership information.**



# Conclusions and Recommendations

63. A certain amount of confusion was highlighted with regard to the different groupings of Schools that are working in partnership and the potential for duplication. We were advised that clarity has been sought on the difference between Family of Schools and Cluster Partnerships and how much effort is duplicated, however this still remains unclear. We consider this a relevant question to raise in an era where time is precious and feel there is a need to re-evaluate the different bodies, their purpose and what they are achieving.

**Recommendation 8 – That the Director of Children’s Services and Children’s Trust Board works collaboratively with School Headteachers and Cluster Chairs to review the roles of Families of Schools and Cluster Partnerships to clearly identify and define their purpose and value in terms of outcomes for Children and Young People. Duplication in remit or responsibility should be identified and where possible minimised.**

64. We heard from an Elected Member representative who sits on two Cluster Partnerships and has experienced very contrasting practices. Only one has very good lines of communication and ensures partners are well informed.

65. The Morley Cluster Partnership was highlighted to us as a model of good practice. We were advised of the very positive relationship that exists with Elected Member representatives, who feel very included in the decision making processes. It was evident that there is considerable confidence that families are well supported by the partnership

and there are strong links with the Community Committee. We were advised that people from all agencies attend cluster meetings and there is much open discussion.

66. We were advised that the ability for Elected Members and partners from external organisations to attend partnership meetings has been hindered by the arrangement of meetings at short notice. Meetings are often set during the school day and some have clashed with other important Council meetings. We believe that attendance and participation could be increased with effective scheduling and the communication of municipal arrangements.

**Recommendation 9 – That the Director of Children’s Services works with Cluster Managers to inform the scheduling of future meetings to maximise the attendance of Elected Members and non-education based partners.**

## Cluster Support Structures

67. The core structure supporting cluster activities includes the Cluster Chair, Cluster Manager and Targeted Service Leader. The Cluster Managers and Targeted Service Leaders in each cluster co-ordinate the overview of local early intervention services. They ensure that processes are in place within the Cluster Partnership to bring partners and organisations together and provide appropriate early intervention and support. They broker arrangements to ensure that resources are appropriately targeted.



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68. We consider that the targeted service model is key to the delivery of successful interventions, therefore the coordination work of the Targeted Service Leader and Cluster Manager is absolutely fundamental. We believe that the skill and dedication of this post holder cannot be overestimated. This was a strong theme emerging from all the cluster visits and we were particularly impressed with the commitment and enthusiasm of the cluster support teams during each visit.

69. We were advised that the core structure as we have described is not always implemented across all partnerships. We were advised that in some cases this was because of vacancies, however we were also advised of another example where it had been decided that this type of role was not required. We were advised that the effect of this deficit hinders the progress of partnerships in meeting key objectives and weakens partnership working which has a direct impact on children, young people and their families. We consider that a long term vacancy or lack of a strong co-ordinating leader or manager in each partnership is a significant risk.

**Recommendation 10 – That the Children’s Trust Board as part of their governance review consider the core support structures of each Cluster Partnership to assess the strength of leadership and support and ensure that adequate resources are in place to coordinate and galvanise the work of the partnership.**

70. At an operational level the practitioners we spoke to demonstrated a clear commitment to improving outcomes for children, young people and their

families. It was evident that individuals from differing organisations had formed strong working relationships and networks built up over long periods of time. It was clear that practitioners saw themselves as ‘relationship managers’ who worked hard in collaborating well with colleagues across a vast number of agencies. Many cited the fact that having good relationships with other colleagues meant that they could do their job better, express ideas and test out theories.

71. Practitioners stated that much better ‘pathways’ and routes of referrals now existed. Practitioners that work together provide support and training to colleagues from other sectors in order to promote understanding, facilitate signposting to support and provide a more integrated service to those that need it. Unfortunately it was apparent that these strong networks can be destabilised when practitioners leave or are moved to work in other areas. We consider consistency a key factor for success, with practitioners working effectively together and getting results. It also reinforces the importance of committing resources over a period of time which extends beyond a single financial year (see recommendation 3).

72. A further key role is that of Local Authority Partner (LAP) who is a senior local authority employee, predominantly from Children’s Services. We were advised that the LAP provides a support and challenge function and enables things to happen within the local authority where action is required. They have a pro-active role which has enabled the development of relationships between the Cluster Partnership and the Local Authority,



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liaising with other directors and services within the council. The LAP, as a communication and support link between the Local Authority and the Cluster Partnership, enables a corporate view to be presented.

73. As a representative actively engaged with Clusters Partnership the LAP has an insight into the challenges and successes for partnerships which cannot be interpreted from any statistical information. We were therefore greatly concerned when we were advised that engagement was particularly weak in some Clusters due to lack of resources. We believe that a strong commitment by the local authority in this role is hugely important. Cluster Partnerships are operationally supported by local authority practitioners from various services across the Council, we therefore consider that partners from the local authority of a strategic level of seniority should also be established reflecting directorates from across the council. The LAP should also provide a key role in building strong links between the partnerships and Community Committees and where required report to the CTB and Schools Forum about their experiences of governance, accountability and financial matters in the partnership. We also consider that establishing LAP's from across the Council will reinforce a whole council approach to the safeguarding and welfare of Children and Young people and will promote cross council support and action around the family.

**Recommendation 11 – That the Chief Executive and Director of Children's services reviews the provision of Local Authority Partners on Cluster Partnerships with a view to appointing officers from across various directorates who hold positions which support operation at a strategic level and have a detailed understanding of the council wide contribution to the cities priorities for children and young people. (e.g. Chief Officer level or above.)**

## Partnership engagement, representation and participation

74. As stated earlier in this report, a Cluster Partnership links a network of service provision by bringing together partners from different services. There is no statutory set formula for who is involved in each partnership, however, a recommended standing Cluster Partnership membership list has been agreed by Children's Trust Board and Schools Forum.
75. The importance of having the right partners involved at strategic level in the Cluster Partnerships was stressed to us, including membership of subgroups. We sought clarification about the implementation of the recommended membership structures and were advised that recommended membership is in place in many of the clusters across the city and Schools Forum would undertake further inquiry where it is identified that this is not the case to



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ensure that partner involvement is sufficient.

76. We sought to clearly identify the level of engagement and participation of partners at a strategic level to clarify if the collaboration demonstrated on the Children's Trust Board was replicated on a local level. We were advised that the partnership structure of some Cluster Partnerships is heavily weighted to educational representatives and discussion is be school centric. It was explained that some structures are organised in this way, however we were also advised that there are meetings where partners do not attend and schools, teachers and governors are well represented. We requested data which clarified membership and attendance at Cluster Partnership meetings however this information was not collated and throughout the duration of this inquiry the information could not be obtained. We therefore do not have the level of data required to make an assessment on whether partners are fully engaged with Cluster Partnerships across the city or if participation within each Cluster is acceptable. We consider it essential that all bodies involved in monitoring the success of each Cluster Partnership should have an understanding of the level of partner engagement to identify if improvement is required.

**Recommendation 12 – That the Director of Children's Services collates and maintains partner engagement information to inform the governance review process and identify where participation can be strengthened.**

## Health Service Engagement

77. The Board has received a significant amount of information which highlighted that a large proportion of the problems experienced by children are directly attributable to the behaviour of adults. During our visits a clear theme emerged about the capacity to provide family focused support to parents with mental health, drug or alcohol problems. It was stated that Cluster working would benefit greatly from sustained access to resources from Health Services and/or Adult Social Services to focus on supporting adults, particularly those with mental health problems. Practitioners identified the clear need for greater active involvement by the health sector to support the health and wellbeing of both adults and children. There was a real desire to strengthen relationships and work in closer collaboration with Clinical Commissioning Groups and General Practitioners at a strategic and operational level. Elected Members also echoed concerns around mental health support and a need to improve interaction with GP services.

78. We were advised that work is being undertaken with public health to recommission drug and alcohol services. Worryingly this could take up to 2 years which highlights the need to build effective relationships to support families in the interim.

79. We were advised by the Assistant Director of Adult Social Care that the department provides assistance to those who have a presenting social care need which may compromise their independence, therefore 80% of people that Adult Social Care work with are elderly. The remaining 20% usually





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have forensic mental ill health (diagnosed) or have a physical or sensory impairment that compromises their independence. The expertise that has built up in the Adult Social Care Service focuses on these groups and not adults with what was termed as personality disorders or drug and alcohol dependency.

80. We were further advised that Adult Social Care expertise can be brought to bear by commissioning specialist support services to work with the parents discussed. Work is currently being undertaken to explore changing the way some services are provided to adults to bring together the web of services to support adults to appropriately care for children. We also ascertained that most adults with chronic problems will be known in the health system by GP's and that there is a pivotal role of GP's around the early identification of these issues as they have direct contact with a large amount of the community.

**Recommendation 13 – That the Health and Well Being Board, Director of Children's Services, Cluster Chairs and Director of Public Health work in collaboration to:**

- a) **consider how partnership arrangements between Health Services and Cluster Partnerships can be strengthened**
- b) **provide a localised more integrated system of health support with Cluster Partnerships to provide family focused support.**

81. We were pleased to note in the partnerships visited the close collaboration with School Nurses who provide a number of services such as health education, child protection, family planning, sex education and administer immunisation programmes within schools in addition to providing targeted family support with colleagues in their cluster area.

82. At our visit to the Temple Newsam Cluster Partnership we were advised that they are funding a targeted mental health initiative. This initiative bridges the gap between specialist support and early intervention. It has improved access to specialist Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and has the potential to be replicated across other Cluster partnerships where funding is available. It was evident that there was a strong link in all Cluster Partnerships visited to CAMHS.

## The Value of Cluster Partnerships

83. The Centre for Social Justice produced a report which states that family breakdown has a staggeringly high human and financial cost. Family breakdown is currently estimated to cost the country £46 billion a year<sup>7</sup>. In addition to removing the barriers to family stability in legislation and the welfare and housing systems, the report supports what is known nationally as the troubled families programme and

<sup>7</sup> Relationship Foundation Counting the Cost of Family Failure 2013 Update Cambridge Relationships Foundation 2013



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recommends that the most vulnerable families are reached and supported.<sup>8</sup>

84. We were advised that Cluster Partnerships are supporting a number of key services including early intervention and prevention support to local children and families, working with them to improve their outcomes. Targeted Service Leaders within the partnerships are coordinating the Families First program<sup>9</sup> with support from the Families First Project Team. The Targeted Service Leaders are also using a 'top 100' methodology to identify children and families who need additional support, co-ordinating help with practitioners operating in the partnership to provide a package of support from across education, health, community, housing adult and children's settings.

85. Similar focused support is offered to promote the best start in life for children aged 0 – 5 years, helping the most vulnerable and targeting those children at risk of becoming looked after by the local authority.

86. Multi agency teams work together to identify the best package of support utilising a comprehensive assessment framework and aim to deliver services in a way that enables children to remain safely with their family and community.

87. It was clear that practitioners believe in the Cluster model, arguing that the success accomplished with families could not have been achieved without the Cluster structure. A good example

provided was the development of a shared attendance policy which provided a consistent message and common approach in all schools in the locality. The shared attendance policy has been a very powerful tool and all schools involved have seen an increase in pupil attendance as a result.

88. A Families First representative stated that without the cluster structure and particularly targeted services, contact would need to be made with individual core providers, which would be labour intensive and time consuming. It was said that the partnerships are a lynchpin and a conduit for identifying families who need support and would have otherwise slipped through the cracks if all organisations had been working separately.

89. We were advised that Cluster Partnerships provide significant support for Head Teachers as they now have a clear referral path. It is reassuring that the school can draw on expertise. It was explained that partnership support is absolutely vital for smaller schools that do not have the resources to meet some of the complex and emotional needs that present themselves.

90. From the outset practitioners advised us that operating as a wider team enabled focus on family and full family intervention. Capturing what is going on in the family, focusing less on individual incidents and more on people's lives. We were advised that events are a trigger and an indicator that help may be required, they provide an opportunity to speak to young person about family life and look at situations holistically in order to unravel problems. It was highlighted that it can take some considerable time

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<sup>8</sup> Known nationally as Fractured Families, Why stability Matters – Centre for Social Justice, July 2013.

<sup>9</sup> Troubled Families programme launched by the Prime Minister in 2011



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to resolve complex problems. Sometimes it can take up to 18 months to support a family and improve their situations and therefore it is important to have consistency in the support over the long term. (see recommendation 3)

91. We were advised that within the Youth Offending Services there was historically a focus on statutory court work. Cluster working has enabled a focus on early intervention and created capacity to consider the work that could also be done with parents and siblings. Expanding on this, representatives from West Yorkshire Police highlighted that they now have essential links with practitioners in the Cluster Partnerships. They are included in discussions when considering what support a family requires and are involved in providing resolutions to stop children from entering the criminal justice system or prevent the escalation of activity which may put a child at risk.
92. Working in community based teams, Leeds Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) offers assessment and help to children and young people with significant emotional and behavioural difficulties, and their families. We were advised that CAMHS workers are actively involved in Cluster Partnerships. This facilitates working proactively with other practitioners through the comprehensive assessment framework system and guidance and support meetings, which has forged strong links with occupational therapists, colleagues in Children's Social Care and colleagues in Children's Centres.
93. Throughout the inquiry we have been provided with a wealth of examples where complex lives have been

improved through Cluster Partnership support. These have included improved school attendance, strengthening relationships in families, avoiding children becoming looked after by the local authority and support to improve behaviour and avoid involvement in the criminal justice systems. All the cases described had a team of professionals structured to provide the necessary support. Cases are assessed and the most appropriate practitioners are assigned. Support can be extensive dependant on the nature of the support. To demonstrate this we were advised that in one case support included the School, a Family Support Outreach Worker, Barnardo's Family Intensive Support Targeted Services, TaMHS<sup>10</sup>, the School Nurse and the child's parents. In another case support included the School, an Attendance Improvement Officer, the Health Visitor and School Nurse, the Family Intervention Service, Children's Social Work Services, parent and extended family members.

94. Many practitioners stated that Cluster Partnerships have broken down the previous 'silo mentality' of working and this is clearly demonstrated. Others mentioned the wealth of information now available which aides their work considerably, conversely however we were also advised that the use of different data systems and information sharing agreements still "got in the way". The benefit of being able to 'pick up a phone' and the sharing of intelligence and expertise was highly valued. Practitioners arrange joint visits and they learn about each other's roles and professional responsibilities.

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<sup>10</sup> Targeted Mental Health in Schools.



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95. Another benefit of Cluster working is the reduction of duplication across organisations. Previously numerous professionals would be entering the same family home, without the others being informed. Cluster activities have generated significant goodwill between agencies which help deliver those services which might not have been delivered if left to a single agency.
96. On a personal level it was stated that some practitioners now feel less isolated in their work, confidence has been built to tackle issues and the development of a sense of permission has evolved to address issues knowing professional help from other colleagues and agencies was available.

## Improving Performance

### Evidencing Impact

97. Cluster Partnerships in terms of their maturity and effectiveness vary across the city. We acknowledge that a strong Cluster Partnership can have a major impact in their locality and understand that there is scope for those partnerships in development to achieve their potential. It is already recognised that there is a need to raise activity in the strong Cluster Partnerships and eliminate the issue of inconsistency in performance across all partnerships.
98. The Children's Performance Service produce a variety of standard reports at cluster level. This monthly information is supported by a broader set of intelligence provided through the cluster

profiles. We wanted to identify if there are sufficient intelligence and data structures in place to assess the impact of Cluster Partnerships in their locality and to enable the monitoring of performance and value for money in terms of finance and resources.

99. As stipulated earlier in this report the governance framework defines how the impact of Cluster Partnerships will be evidenced, it also sets out the performance information required. In terms of support to Cluster Partnerships, Children's Services provide a monthly 'dashboard' information aligned with the priorities in the children and young people's plan. This enables the partnerships to measure improvement in outcomes. Quarterly information including targeted services reports are also provided and an annual cluster profile is also produced which provides a broader perspective of local need.
100. Cluster Partnerships are expected to use this information to assess if they are making a difference, comparing their own performance to that of other Cluster Partnerships. The cluster profile should be used to support understanding of the local area and identify the common set of issues facing children and young people which then inform priorities and focus.
101. In addition, Cluster Partnerships utilise outcome based accountability principles when reviewing their performance against children and young people's plan priorities. This involves looking at the current baseline performance trend and agreeing an action plan for improving performance, or 'turning the curve' towards the desired outcome.



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102. We received examples of the monthly information provided and during our visits we had the opportunity to discuss how this data was used. The statistical information received was as follows:
- Children and Young People's Plan Key Indicator Dashboard –this provides city level information which identifies key measures as defined in the Children and Young People's Plan and provides comparative national and statistical neighbour information.
  - Children and Young People's Plan Key Indicator Dashboard, Cluster level–this details key indicator information for all Cluster Partnerships in the city and enables comparisons to be made.
  - Monthly obsession trackers by Cluster – this tracks the progress of each cluster on the three main obsessions defined in the Children and Young People's Plan.
  - Number and rate of young people who are NEET by Cluster – provides an annual overview of the number and rate of young people who are NEET for all Cluster Partnerships which enables improvement to be measured and the comparison of partnerships.
  - Children and Young People are safe from harm – this provides an overview by cluster of children who are subject to a Child Protection Plan or are Looked After.
103. We acknowledge that this is a significant amount of information and considered on their individual merit assumptions could be made about performance. Cluster Partnerships face their own unique set of circumstances and challenges and therefore data should be considered with local socio-economic information. This information is also produced for each cluster area which details demographic information, provides an overview of children and young people in the city from BME communities and the number who speak English as an additional language. We also accessed information which identified the cluster areas with significant challenges due to deprivation or financial hardship.
104. The Cluster Partnerships visited acknowledged that they receive a comprehensive set of data. Previously it was difficult to ascertain the impact their work was having in the locality. The information produced has changed that position. A further positive aspect is that some individual schools are benchmarking their own data against that provided by Children's Services.
105. External assessment by Ofsted has provided valuable information to evidence how Cluster Partnerships are contributing to improving outcomes for Children and Young People city wide. We were presented with pleasingly positive Ofsted feedback which recognised in one case that good partnerships with the local cluster of schools ensure smooth transition at all stages of the pupils' education. The school's involvement in the Cluster Partnership provides excellent opportunities for partnership working.
106. Reference has already been made earlier in this report to performance and the effective use and monitoring of non-financial resources. (See recommendation 4). In addition, we have expressed our desire to strengthen the role of Local Authority Partner to facilitate a clear understanding of the



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performance challenges faced at an operational level that cannot be interpreted from data sets and statistics. (See recommendation 11)

## **Collaboration and Sharing Best Practice**

107. The desire to eliminate the issue of inconsistency in performance across all the 25 partnerships has already been identified in this report. A theme discussed during each of our visits to the Cluster Partnerships was the consistency of 'offer' across Clusters and how this was delivered. A large proportion of practitioners worked in two or more cluster areas. It was acknowledged that there would inevitably be a variance in practices and standards between partnerships. This was attributed to different leadership styles, the maturity of clusters, their differing needs or size, internal relationships and different resources. Nevertheless, this could be challenging and on occasion frustrated efforts to provide an effective package of support.

108. The differences in offer was also seen as a barrier to cross boundary work, particularly where a child attended school in one cluster area and lived in another. We were advised that a significant number of children travel to school in the EPOS Cluster from outside the area, therefore, we sought to clarify which Cluster Partnership would take responsibility to support a particular family where this situation existed. We were advised that this should be identified from a good quality assessment. Practitioners stated that they would ensure that communication happens regardless of where a family resides to provide a joined up approach

between the two Cluster Partnerships. A family would receive support regardless of which partnership was providing the resources. It was brought to our attention however that there has been tension. Some Cluster Partnerships are more rigid about who would qualify for support in their area which has created additional pressure on resources in other partnerships.

**Recommendation 14 – That the Director of Children’s Services works in collaboration with Cluster Chairs to agree and document a clear concordat for cases where cross cluster support is required. This should clarify the mechanism for expected financial and/or resource contribution in such cases.**

**Recommendation 15 – That the Director of Children’s Services works in collaboration with Cluster Chairs to identify and record the core offer in each Cluster Partnership and ensure that this information is accessible to all practitioners supporting Cluster Partnerships.**

109. On a strategic level, we were advised that efforts are being made to develop a more formal approach to the sharing of best practice, for example meetings of cluster chairs and the delivery of a 'cluster market place event'.

110. We were advised that there are various ways in which best practice is shared between Cluster Partnerships. This is supported through the cluster meeting structure as follows:



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- Cluster chairs – one meeting per area per term. Focus on sharing latest developments and best practice as well as information sharing
- Cluster chairs/cluster managers/Elected Members/local authority partners/Targeted Service Leaders – one meeting per area per term. Focus on sharing information about what's going well, problem solving and cross boundary issues
- Targeted Service Leader meetings – take place in each area every half term to look at targeted service work and families first

111. We are acutely aware of the ground breaking work taking place in Cluster Partnerships, we are also aware that many practitioners are working intensively to meet demand in their area. It was evident that sharing of good practice across Cluster Partnerships is not widely facilitated on an operational level, however, practitioners are very proud of their achievements and would grasp to the opportunity to share their experiences city-wide. We were advised about some of the good initiatives in place in individual partnerships.

112. One Cluster Partnership has retained a funding pot, referred to as 'Family Support Pot' a sum of money available to help individuals and families in a variety of ways, ranging from translation services to a new pair of school shoes. We were told that such small interventions could and have turned lives around. We were advised that few Cluster Partnerships have such a fund.

113. An initiative that is being shared and adopted by a growing number of Cluster Partnerships was highlighted to us

which provided a good example of Cluster to Cluster support. This centres around improving quality assurance by neighbouring Cluster Partnerships auditing case files for each family. In some cases it identified inconsistencies in files and variations in case file quality. This has led to:

- key practice development messages going direct back to frontline workers via supervision and through cross cluster practice improvement workshops. Agreed a model and sharing of best practice.
- Development of model file template, standardised agreed file contents and recording processes,
- Improved use of tools and methods.
- Practice sharing of useful tools and methods – CAF cards, impact review questions, etc.

114. During the scrutiny inquiry into Tackling Domestic Violence and Abuse<sup>11</sup> the Scrutiny Board (Safer and Stronger Communities) learned that the Domestic Violence Team has prioritised work in cluster areas. During the inquiry it was acknowledged that the Inner East Leeds Cluster Partnership has prioritised this challenge and has developed a robust framework for supporting families in their locality.

115. The Board recognised the unique work in the Inner East partnership and concluded that there is merit in utilising the example of the Inner East Partnership and exploring the feasibility of developing a customised domestic violence charter mark scheme for Cluster Partnerships. The Board were mindful and concerned that there is no formal mechanism for ensuring that all

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<sup>11</sup> Agreed June 2014



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25 cluster partnerships would proactively engage in working towards attaining this charter mark. The Scrutiny Board (Safer and Stronger Communities) has recommended the development of a customised domestic violence charter mark that is based around a set of minimum standards for cluster partnerships to aspire to. This clearly demonstrates one very important initiative taking place in the Inner East Cluster Partnership which other partnerships could adopt and implement to prevent and tackle domestic violence.

**Recommendation 16 – That the Director of Children’s Services works collaboratively with Cluster Chairs to implement a process which maximises the sharing of strategic and operational good practice across all Cluster Partnerships.**

## The Potential

116. It is already acknowledged that some Cluster Partnerships are more evolved in their development and performance than others and therefore better equipped to take the next evolutionary step in meeting the challenge of providing locally based support.

117. A series of seminars were conducted by the Economic and Social Research Council on breaking the link between education, disadvantage and place<sup>12</sup> when it was stated that the effectiveness of initiatives that focus on disadvantaged places will depend partly on an underlying shift from ‘area-based’ to richer ‘place-orientated’

understandings of what initiatives need to achieve.

118. Professor Alan Dyson and Dr Kirstin Kerr (University of Manchester) who undertook this research also later worked with Save the Children to produce ‘Developing Children’s Zones for England’ July 2012 and later ‘Developing Children’s Zones for England, What’s the evidence?’ 2013. The former report states that ‘Policies aimed at creating a more equal society and at supporting families living in poverty wherever they live are important. However, they need to be supplemented in the most disadvantaged areas by local initiatives.’

119. It argues that English children’s zones, which draw on the principles underpinning the Harlem Children’s Zone (HCZ) in New York, offer a way of improving outcomes for children. It states that the Harlem Children’s Zone is so distinctive because it offers a template for action which is both simple in purpose and great in ambition. It recognises that inequalities in outcomes cannot be tackled unless the causes of those inequalities in family and community contexts are also tackled. It has set up a system for addressing inequalities which is:

- focused on a particular local area, seeking to understand and tackle the dynamics of disadvantage in that area, and to meet the diverse and multiple issues facing the children and families who live there
- doubly holistic, working with children over time to develop a cradle-to-career ‘pipeline’ of support, in the wider context of the families and communities in which they live

<sup>12</sup>What future for area-based initiatives (ABIs)? 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 2010 – 31<sup>st</sup> October 2010.





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- able to act strategically for children and families in the area. HCZ is funded, governed and led in such a way that it can concentrate all its energies on the single task of improving a wide range of outcomes for children and young people; it can do this in a strategic and integrated way, and can sustain this over time.

120. It is our view that the foundations to develop English Children's Zones exists in the form of Cluster Partnerships, the difference being that the partnerships are area based, some over a considerable area. The children's zone principle refers to a concentrated place or community for specific focus.

121. The report states that English Children's Zones should focus on the most disadvantaged areas and will not, therefore, be needed everywhere. Children's zones which focus on and involve specific communities have the potential to develop bespoke initiatives which we believe could really make a difference. It is already acknowledged that there are multiple factors that can shape a child's life, these include services in an area, transport connections, leisure facilities, employment opportunities and quality of housing stock. We believe that there is considerable merit in a cross organisational approach in piloting Children's Zones in Leeds in a community that faces multiple challenges.

122. We sought to clarify if this research had been considered as a project in Leeds. We were advised that the research undertaken by Manchester and Save the Children provides a framework for change and an evidence base that

demonstrates success. There needs to be an appetite and willingness from communities to make this work. We were also advised that there is no specific pot of funding to run a Children's Zone pilot although there is potential to bid for grant funding or develop a pilot further with the assistance of interested partners.

**Recommendation 17 – That the Chief Executive and Director of Children's Services considers the research in the reports 'Developing Children's Zones for England' and 'Developing Children's Zones for England, What's the evidence?' and reports back to the Scrutiny Board (Children and Families) on the potential for establishing and maintaining a Children's Zone in Leeds which brings a holistic focus and effort in improving a community or place that is experiencing multiple challenges.**

123. It is our belief that the true value and purpose of Cluster Partnerships is not widely known or fully appreciated, certainly outside of the spectrum of services that provide direct support to children. Discussion with our Elected Member colleagues highlighted that there is a need to promote a deeper understanding and highlight the many attributes of bringing a network of services and support together. Our visits to the Cluster Partnerships were to facilitate the collection of evidence to inform this inquiry. We did however find much of the discussion much more enlightening. We had not anticipated the full extent of benefits associated with partnership working.



# Conclusions and Recommendations

124. This report has highlighted the many strengths in Cluster Partnership working and the significant asset these partnerships are to the City. We reiterate what was stated at the beginning of this report, that the City is very fortunate to have Cluster Partnerships and we consider that the lives of children and young people are better as a result of these arrangements. We have presented a number of recommendations which we hope will support our overarching desire to ensure Cluster Partnerships are nurtured, supported and sustained for the future benefit of all children, young people and families. To consolidate this, improve awareness of the purpose and role of Cluster Partnerships, their governance and resource arrangements and their future vision and objectives, we propose that a strategically thought out, high level event is provided which will widely promote and define Cluster Partnerships. We feel this should build on the findings of our inquiry and should be attended (but not exclusively) by the Corporate Leadership Team, Community Committee Chairs, Cluster Chairs, Community Committee Elected Member Representatives, Members of the Health and Wellbeing Board and other relevant Partnership Boards and stakeholders.

**Recommendation 18 – That the Director of Children’s Services organises and provides a high level event which will promote and define Cluster Partnerships. This should clarify their value and purpose and consider future aims and development for governance and accountability, funding and resources, improving performance and future potential.**



## Monitoring arrangements

Standard arrangements for monitoring the outcome of the Board's recommendations will apply.

The decision-makers to whom the recommendations are addressed will be asked to submit a formal response to the recommendations, including an action plan and timetable, at the **October 2014** meeting.

Following this the Scrutiny Board will invite individuals or bodies to whom recommendations have been made review progress against those recommendations in **April 2015**.

## Reports and Publications Submitted

- Call In Briefing Paper, Head of Scrutiny and Member Development , 25 April 2013
- Call in information, 23 April 2013 re: Delegated Decision D39845
- Allocation of funding to clusters of schools, Head of Finance – Schools Services, 19 March 2013
- Minutes of Scrutiny Board (Children and Families), 25 April 2013
- Cluster Working in Leeds – Session 1 Power point presentation, 14 November 2013
- OS Maps defining wards, clusters and area committees, 14 November 2013
- Leeds Children's Trust Board report, Cluster update – governance and performance arrangements (and appendices), 5 September 2013
- Schools Forum Guide for Schools and Academies, Education Funding Agency, June 2013
- Table 1 – Schools Forums: Powers and Responsibilities 2013-14, Department of Education
- Council Representation on Children and Young People Cluster Partnerships, 4 June 2013, Member Management Committee
- Leeds Children's Trust Board Report - 5 September 2013, Sue Rumbold, - Recommended Cluster Membership
- Cluster Working in Leeds – Session 2 Power point presentation, 12 December 2013
- Children and Young Peoples Plan Key Indicator Dashboard – City Level: September 2013
- Children and Young Peoples Plan Key Indicator Dashboard – City Level: April 2013
- Children and Young Peoples Plan Key Indicator Dashboard – Cluster Level: September 2013
- Children and Young Peoples Plan Key Indicator Dashboard – Cluster Level: April 2013
- Monthly Obsession Tracker by Cluster – September 2013
- Number of Young People who are NEET by Cluster – October 2012 – October 2013
- Children and Young Peoples Plan outcome: Children and Young People are Safe from Harm – October 2013



## Reports and Publications Submitted

- Sharing Best Practice within and across clusters, Nicola Engel, 04 December 2013
- Working Together to Safeguard Children, Supporting Effective Early Intervention and Prevention Services in Leeds Clusters – Twenty Practice Points V2.0, Martyn Stenton 01 August 2013
- Demographic and Socio-Economic Statistical Information by Cluster, 28 November 2013
- Scrutiny Inquiry Report, Tackling Domestic Violence and Abuse 9th June 2014
- Best City Priority Plan 2013-2017
- Children and Young Peoples Plan 2011- 2015, Refresh 2013
- Website of the Economic and Social Research Council, Breaking the link between education, disadvantage and place: What future for area-based initiatives (ABI's) <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-451-26-0683/read>
- Developing Childrens Zones for England, What's the evidence? June 2013 – University of Manchester and Save the Children
- Developing Children's Zones for England - July 2012 - University of Manchester and Save the Children



## Witnesses Heard

- Councillor Judith Blake, Executive Board Member, Children's Services
- Nigel Richardson, Director of Children's Services
- Sue Rumbold – Chief Officer, Partnership Development and Business
- Ken Morton, Head of Service, Young People and Skills
- Jim Hopkinson, Head of Service, Children's Services Targeted Services
- Martin Fleetwood, Vice Chair of Schools Forum, Targeted Service Lead Manager, Childrens Trust Board Representative and Principal TNHS
- Martyn Stenton, Area Head of Targeted Services
- Melanie Robinson, Targeted Service Leader
- Simon Toyne, Targeted Service Leader
- Nicola Engel, Performance and Accountability Lead
- Dennis Holmes, Deputy Director Adult Social Care
- Anne McMaster – Executive Officer, Citizens and Communities
- Cllr Javid Akhtar, Elected Member Cluster Representative and School Governor
- Cllr Barry Anderson, Elected Member Cluster Representative and School Governor
- Cllr Anne Blackburn , Elected Member Cluster Representative and School Governor
- Cllr Dawn Collins, Elected Member Cluster Representative
- Cllr Neil Dawson, Elected Member Cluster Representative and School Governor
- Cllr Judith Elliott , Elected Member Cluster Representative and School Governor
- Cllr Robert Gettings, Elected Member Cluster Representative
- Cllr Caroline Gruen, Elected Member Cluster Representative and School Governor
- Cllr Peter Gruen, Elected Member Cluster Representative and School Governor
- Cllr John Illingworth , Elected Member Cluster Representative and School Governor
- Cllr Josie Jarosz, Elected Member Cluster Representative and School Governor
- Cllr Alan Lamb, Elected Member Cluster Representative and School Governor
- Cllr Sandy Lay , Elected Member Cluster Representative and School Governor
- Chris Lees, Cluster Chair, Beeston, Cottingley and Middleton
- Johnathan Stevens, Targeted Service Leader Line Manager
- Joanne Hainsworth, Targeted Service Leader
- Leila Rothenburg, Deputy Head, Middleton Primary School
- Hedge Thurston, Attendance Advisor
- Tracey Stanley, Attendance Improvement Advisor
- Charlie Woodhall, Family Support Worker
- Ann Greenwood, Childrens Centre Manager
- Jayne North, Childrens Centre Manager
- Paula Groves, Early Start Manager
- Vikrant Bhatia, Health for all
- Stephanie Vollans, Health Service Practitioner
- Simon Johnson, Children's Social Work Service
- Jamie Martin, Housing Manager
- Lorrain Kupelain, Sign Post Manager
- Sue Barnes, West Yorkshire Police
- Robert McNichols, Youth Offending Service
- Caroline Robinson . Cluster Chair Temple Newsam



## Witnesses Heard

- Gemma Sargeant - Cluster Manager Temple Newsam
- Mark Hopkins - Local Authority Partner
- Lisa Oxley - Targeted Service Lead
- Louise Ellis - Attendance Improvement Officer
- Julie Pitts - Attendance Improvement Officer
- Mandy Voller - Attendance Advisor
- Jacquie Beattie - School Nurse
- Ann Gibson - Meadowfield
- Claire Cotton - Emotional Wellbeing
- Hannah Taylor -, CAMHS
- Bev Scott - Family Support
- Jan Ridsdale - Inclusion
- Kathy Lightfoot – Childrens Centre Manager
- Farhat Hussain – Leeds Family Intervention Service
- Sally Hoy – Re’New
- PC Trish Toes – Safer Schools Officer, West Yorkshire Police
- Shamce Hassan – NACRO (crime reduction)
- Jim Stanton – Senior Youth Worker
- Glen O’Mally – Youth Work Manager
- Jeremy Dunford - Cluster Chair Alwoodley
- Gillian Mayfield - Area Head of Targeted Services and Local Authority Partner
- Alison Shaffner - Targeted Service Lead
- Julie Cooke - Cluster Manager Alwoodley
- Dave Hewitt - Deputy Head, Allerton High School
- Julie Colley - Headteacher, Highfield Primary
- Waish Miah - Attendance Improvement Officer
- Gillian Paraskos -, Alwoodley Cluster Team
- Paul Styles - Alwoodley Cluster Team
- Anna Dalziel - Family support Worker
- Sadie Corbett– Children’s Centre Manager
- Louise Tatchell – Children’s Social Work Service Team Manager
- Jayne Belford– School Nurse
- Helen Stott – Head teacher, AllertonCofE
- Maria Cabry– Headteacher, St Pauls
- Karen Umpelby - iGen
- Carrie Fawcett - Assistant Housing Manager
- Sue Cookson - Sign Post Manager
- PC Steve Hartley - West Yorkshire Police
- Emma Ross - Multisystemic Therapy Manager



## Witnesses Heard

- Jon Lund – Youth Offending Service Manager
- Stan Rayner - Over 10's FIS Service
- Chris Maddison - 10 and under FIS Service
- Parvez Aziz – Youth Service
- Maria Wheeler – Anti-Social Behaviour Unit
- Jude Roberts- Families First
- Mo Duffy - Cluster Chair OPEN XS
- Jancis Andrew – Area Head of Targeted Services – West North West
- Dee Lazenby - Targeted Service Leader and Cluster Manager OPEN XS
- Azmina Ali - Attendance Advisor
- Suki Nandhra - Attendance Improvement Officer
- Gill Young - Head of Rosebank Primary (chair of Lantern Learning Trust Attendance Action Group)
- Nas Draxler – Children's Centre Manager
- Therese McNeice – Children's Centre Manager
- Vanessa Broadbent-Lucas - Early Start Manager
- Julie Stafford– Public Health
- Fiona Henry – Children's Social Work Service
- Lucy Gratton - iGen
- Catherine Omelia – Families First Team
- Jeanette Lowley – School Counsellor
- Sharmyn Kennedy - Sign Post Manager
- Rosaline Morley – Youth Offending Service
- Amanda Ogg – Barca
- PC Val Hope – West Yorkshire Police
- Gemma Neale - Family Support Worker



## Dates of Scrutiny

- 25<sup>th</sup> April 2013 – Call In Meeting, Delegated Decision D39845 – Allocation of Funding to Clusters
- 10<sup>th</sup> October 2013 – Terms of Reference
- 14<sup>th</sup> November 2013 – Session 1 Evidence Gathering
  - Overview remit and purpose of Cluster partnerships.
  - The different types of cluster partnerships
  - Cluster activities - the services expected to be delivered
  - Governance arrangements including lines of accountability
  - Role of Local Authority with regard to governance and performance
  - Role of Schools Forum with regard to Cluster funding and accountability
  - Performance monitoring arrangements
- 12<sup>th</sup> December 2013 – Session 2 Evidence Gathering
  - Cluster Performance and reasoning behind differences in performance.
  - Role of Local Authority in improving performance, providing intervention and providing support
  - Cluster to Cluster collaborative working, support and sharing of good practice.
  - Significant challenges including socio-economic impacts faced by specific Clusters
  - Distribution of funding and monitoring of expenditure to ensuring resources, financial or otherwise, are fully utilised and investment is made appropriately.
  - Cluster membership, partnership engagement, participation and effectiveness at a local level.
- 16<sup>th</sup> January 2014 – Visits to Temple Newsam and Beeston, Cottingley and Middleton Clusters
- 26<sup>th</sup> February 2014 – Session 3 Evidence Gathering
  - Clusters – increasing the potential for improved partnership working and support.
  - The role of Adult Social Care in providing locality based family focused support.
  - Area Committee Member Cluster Reps/ School Governors
- 13<sup>th</sup> March 2014 – Visits to Alwoodley and OPEN XS Clusters





# Appendix 1

## Recommended Cluster Membership

It is intended that clusters and partners work towards having a standing membership for each cluster that includes:

- Representative from each school in the area or agreed local representation via family of schools / joint collaborative committee
- Representation from each children's centre whose reach area includes part of the cluster area or representation on behalf of these children's centres
- At least one school governor to provide strategic governor input; recommended that this is a community or parent governor and not a staff governor
- Health representative e.g. school nurse coordinator – confirm through Leeds Community Healthcare
- Police e.g. Neighbourhood police team inspector – confirmed through West Yorkshire Police
- Voluntary, community and faith sector – confirmed through and accountable to Leeds VOICE
- Local Elected Members – confirmed by the local Area Committee
- Local Authority Partner – senior manager from Children's Services to provide strategic link to Children's Services and other council functions
- Relevant local managers for Leeds City Council children's services – confirmed through Children's Service Leadership Team (e.g. children's social work service area manager/service delivery manager; targeted services area manager; school improvement advisers etc).
- Cluster Partnerships may also wish to include additional partners and to establish a broader network for partners to progress priorities and help improve local communications. This could include key contacts from: local colleges, housing, regeneration, probation, youth offending service, job centres, area management, libraries, and from voluntary, community and faith groups.

**Scrutiny Board (Children and Families)  
Cluster Partnerships  
24<sup>th</sup> July 2014  
Report author: Sandra Pentelow**



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