

Executive Summary

Why are we making this bid? We want to transform the care system in Leeds – a huge ambition for the second largest local authority in the UK outside London, with more than 180,000 children and young people. We want Leeds to be the best city in the UK and to enable that we have to become the best city for children and young people to grow up in – a child friendly city. A child's biggest influence is their family. Children live in families, families create communities and communities create cities - we believe that family remains the most important utility of the 21st century. The care system in England does not support this approach. Too often children are taken into care without exploring the full potential of what more could be done to support a healing process, where the people with the greatest emotional investment in seeing the child safe and secure – their wider family and friends – are invited to play their part in seeking a better solution. By over-looking these options, our care system undervalues the wider family as a source of greater continuity and care for the child and a more financially sustainable option than the state.

Our ambitious innovation fund bid of £4.85m aims to embed wide-scale culture and practice change, creating a much more family support oriented model, by enabling practitioners to use restorative techniques that work *with* children, young people to safely and appropriately find their own solutions to the difficulties they face *before* the need for more significant social care intervention. Leeds has made significant improvements across social care in recent years and the use of restorative practices has been a key part of this, but without the innovation fund this impact will be limited to specific strands of practice. With the fund, our aim is that across the city we can realise the following entitlement for children, young people and families in Leeds:

- *The default behaviour of children's services in all its dealings with local citizens/partners and organisations will be restorative - high support with high challenge*
- *Children's Services in Leeds will ensure that families, whose children might otherwise be removed from their homes, are supported to meet and develop an alternative plan before such action is taken*
- *In all other cases where there are concerns about the safeguarding or welfare of a child or children, we will work safely and appropriately with the family to support them in helping to decide what needs to happen*

To make this possible we must work right across the people and organisations in our children's workforce to implement a common language and approach that creates a more consistent, higher quality experience for the citizens of Leeds. Implementing restorative practices across the city will make that possible and our ambition is to train thousands of staff in these techniques and ensure they are used daily throughout work with children, young people and families to address issues earlier in the life of the problem.

At the forefront of this restorative programme will be an expansion of family group conferencing (FGC): an internationally recognised methodology that facilitates family members to support and challenge one another to find solution to their problems and ultimately improve outcomes for the child(ren) affected. Leeds has already started to use FGCs successfully, working with internationally recognised experts to create a city-wide service. Now we want to go further and faster, using this model on a scale

not seen before in England to make the offer outlined above a reality, innovating by expanding FGC's into areas – such as domestic violence – where there is significant potential to change outcomes and referral patterns.

As we make these changes we will make sure we offer and commission the right services to meet the needs emerging from restorative, family-centred approaches, ensuring the right support is in place so that when the extended family and friends do take on more responsibility they do not do it alone.

The public sector is changing, but the pressures on the care system continue. Realising this ambition will underpin the wider implementation of a new social contract between the state and citizens, where local public services for vulnerable and troubled families focus on facilitating and enabling problem solving, rather than attempting to solve the problems.

The social and economic imperatives for this system change are clear. Working *with* families, rather than doing things to them or for them builds resilience, enhances problem solving skills and fosters compassion over aggression. Finding a safe, appropriate and well-supported family-centred solution for more children can reduce the need for so many children to be taken into care and offer a significant saving for the public purse. The wider use of FGCs in Leeds has already contributed to a significant reduction in looked after children numbers. An investment of approximately £1m in our FGC service has yielded estimated savings of £4m. Conservative projections in appendix B indicate that further expansion leading to ongoing reductions in looked after children numbers could return savings of almost £7m per year as the model becomes embedded. The prize therefore, is significant.

We recognise that implementing system transformation on this scale requires flexibility. It will be essential to give our workforce the trust and support to embed cultural change. Family group conferences and other restorative approaches take time because they are based on building relationships, but the long-term gains from investing this time are significant. To create the conditions for making this possible and if our bid is successful, Leeds would value further discussions with the Department for Education and the Chief Social worker around 'relaxing' certain current requirements regarding statutory timescales and processes. We have thought through safe and appropriate ways to do this, our aim is always to put the child at the heart of everything we do.

The size of our bid reflects the scale of our challenge, but we have the vision, framework, partnership support and experience to make this happen. The innovation fund bid represents the next stage on our journey towards making Leeds the best city to grow up in and a genuinely child friendly city.



This image and those on the front cover are 'real time' reflections on the key messages being shared in the room at the Leeds Children's Social Work Conference, which took place in November 2014. They were produced by Leeds artist Tom Bailey.

GLOSSARY OF LETTERS

Ref:	NAME	POSITION	ORGANISATION
H(i)	Councillor Judith Blake Councillor Andrew Carter Councillor Stewart Golton Councillor Andrew Blackburn Councillor Bob Gettings	Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Children's Services Group Leader Group Leader Group Leader Children's Lead	Leeds City Council/ Leeds Labour Group Leeds Conservative Group Leeds Liberal Democrat Group Leeds Green Group Morley Borough Independents (representing the four opposition parties on Leeds City Council)
H(ii)	Councillor Lisa Mulherin	Chair	Leeds Health and Well-being Board
H(iii)	Tom Riordan	Chief Executive	Leeds City Council
H(iv)	Jane Held	Chair	Leeds Safeguarding Children Board
H(v)	Paul Money	Chief Superintendent	West Yorkshire Police
H(vi)	Doctor Andy Harris Philomena Corrigan Nigel Gray	Clinical Chief Officer Chief Officer Chief Officer	NHS Leeds South & East Corporate Commissioning Group (CCG) NHS Leeds West CCG NHS Leeds North CCG
H(vii)	Nick Wood	General Manager	Leeds Community Healthcare
H(viii)	Neil Evans	Director of Environment and Housing	Leeds City Council and on behalf of Safer Leeds: The Leeds Community Safety Partnership
H(ix)	Bridget Emery	Chief Officer Strategy and Commissioning (Public Health)	Leeds City Council and in the role of Chair of the Domestic Violence and Abuse Strategic Partnership
H(x)	Norma Thompson Ann Pemberton	Chair Chair	Third Sector Leeds Young Lives Leeds
H(xi)	Nancy Hillier	Designated Family Judge for West Yorkshire	Judiciary of England and Wales
H(xii)	Andrew Eastwood	Headteacher	Fountains Primary School – on behalf of Leeds Schools
H(xiii)	Professor Jeremy Higham	Dean	University of Leeds (Faculty of Education, Social Sciences and Law)
H(xiv)	Professor Ieuan Ellis	Dean and Pro-Vice Chancellor	Leeds Beckett University (Faculty of Health and Social Sciences)
H(xv)	Professor Ray Lloyd	Pro Vice Chancellor (Academic)	Leeds Trinity University
H(xvi)	Gary Hetherington	Chief Executive	Leeds Rhinos and Trustee of Leeds Rugby Foundation
H(xvii)	Nicola Furbisher	Deputy Editor	Yorkshire Evening Post newspaper
H(xviii)	Paul Nixon	Chief Social Worker	Child, Youth and Family Ministry of Social Development New Zealand
H(xix)	Professor Kate Morris	Professor of Social Work	University of Nottingham



**Executive Member for Children
and Families**

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Your ref

Our ref JB/HM

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We welcome the opportunity the Innovation Fund gives us to progress the ambition for Leeds to be the best city to grow up in through improving outcomes for children, young people and families. There is cross-party support for the proposal in the innovation bid to scale up restorative approaches - working *with* families, rather than doing things 'to them or for them'. We have seen the impact of family group conferencing on keeping children safely within their wider family network and have seen the impact this has had on reducing the numbers of looked after children.

We recognise the costs and complexities of social care is a challenge for all local authorities and welcome the opportunity for Leeds to lead on an innovative approach that has the potential to effect whole system change.

Yours sincerely

Councillor Judith
Blake – Deputy
Leader of Leeds City
Council

Councillor
Andrew Carter –
Leader of
Conservative
Group

Councillor
Stewart Golton
– Leader of the
Liberal
Democrat Group

Councillor
Bob Gettings
– Children's
Lead, Morley
Borough
Independents

Councillor David
Blackburn – Leader
of the Green Group