

Report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development

Report to Scrutiny Board (Children and Families)

Date: 19 March 2015

Subject: Inquiry into Kinship Care

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

1. Summary of Main Issues

Leeds City Council has an ambition to be the best council in the UK: fair, open and welcoming with an economy that is both prosperous and sustainable so all our communities are successful. The vision encompasses the aim to be a Child Friendly City by 2030. The methodology for delivering this vision is defined in The Children and Young Peoples Plan which details five headline outcomes one of which is to ensure Children and Young People are safe from harm.

At its meeting on the 19th of June 2014, the Scrutiny Board considered potential sources of work for the 2014/15 municipal year. Following discussion with the Executive Board Member (Children and Families) and representatives from Childrens Services the Board expressed a desire to undertake an inquiry which would consider Kinship Care Services and Support. Terms of reference for the inquiry were agreed by the Scrutiny Board in October 2014

The purpose of the inquiry is to make an assessment of and, where appropriate, make recommendations on the following areas:

- Kinship Care and the impact this has on outcomes for children
- Consideration and assessment of the needs of the child and the family
- The support and assistance provided to children, their carers and their parents in Leeds by the Local Authority and partner organisations.

2. Recommendation

The Scrutiny Board (Children and Families) is recommended to:

- a) Note and consider the documented information provided and presented verbally to the Board on the 19 March 2015.
- b) Make recommendations as deemed appropriate.
- c) Note that this inquiry is not intended to extend beyond this meeting however the terms of reference may incorporate additional information to extend the inquiry should the Children and Families Scrutiny Board identify any further scope for inquiry or request further witness or evidence during this session.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report sets out the scope and framework for the Scrutiny Boards inquiry into Kinship Care Services and Support in Leeds.
- 1.2 Following the inquiry the Scrutiny Board will publish its report which will identify clear desired outcomes. These will be reflected in the recommendations made. The director or organisation to whom the recommendations have been made will be responsible for monitoring the impact of each recommendation and for advising the Scrutiny Board accordingly as the board reviews progress.

2 Scope of the Inquiry

- 2.1 In conducting the Inquiry the Board will reflect on the value and impact of Kinship Care Services and identify positive outcomes for carers, children and young people. The Scrutiny Board will endeavour to establish if robust strategies are in place and if sufficient support and intervention measures are implemented in order to ensure children can be safely cared for in the wider family network therefore preventing children from entering care. The inquiry will cover the following areas:

- Legislation and explanation of Kinship Care, including formal and informal arrangements, special guardianship and residence orders.
- Reasons why children become looked after by Kinship Carers
- Kinship Care- known outcomes for children. The pros and cons.
- Demographics of Kinship Carers and Kinship Care data for Leeds
- Considering the needs of the child and the family, seeking the views of the child and access to early advice for potential kinship carers.
- Supporting Kinship Carers and Children
 - Family and Friends Policy
 - Networks and peer support
 - Support to cope with challenging circumstances such emotional and behavioural difficulties, adult care commitments and carers with long term disability or illness.
 - Financial support
 - Respite arrangements
 - 'Staying Put' arrangements
 - Children returning to parental care, support for the whole family.

- 2.2 The following organisations have kindly agreed to participate in the inquiry to provide their view, perspective and experience of the service and support provided to Kinship Carers with a view to improving services in Leeds.

- Grandparents Plus
- Grandparents Association
- The Fostering Network
- Family Rights Group
- Home Start Leeds

Also in attendance will be the Deputy Director of Children's Services (Safeguarding, Specialist and Targeted Services) and supporting officers from Children's Services.

It is also hoped that Kinship Carers and individuals who have been cared for will be in attendance to share their experiences.

2.3 To support and inform debate the following evidence is appended to this report:

1. Update on the development of services and support to kinship carers in Leeds
2. Kinship Care Family and Friends Policy
3. Kinship Care Guide for England
4. Forgotten Children, Children growing up in Kinship Care – Grandparents Plus
5. Relative Experience, Issues and Challenges for Kinship Carers – Grandparents Plus/Family and Parenting Institute/Family Lives
6. Staying Put – The Fostering Network

3 Corporate Considerations

3.1 Consultation and Engagement

Where the board deems it appropriate to undertake in consultation in order to conduct the inquiry or gather necessary evidence consultation will be undertaken.

3.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration.

- 3.2.1 The Equality Improvement Priorities 2011 to 2015 have been developed to ensure our legal duties are met under the Equality Act 2010. The priorities will help the council to achieve its ambition to be the best City in the UK and ensure that as a city work takes place to reduce disadvantage, discrimination and inequalities of opportunity.
- 3.2.2 Equality and diversity will be a consideration throughout the Scrutiny Inquiry and due regard will be given to equality through the use of evidence, written and verbal, outcomes from consultation and engagement activities.
- 3.2.3 The Scrutiny Board may engage and involve interested groups and individuals (both internal and external to the council) to inform recommendations.
- 3.2.4 Where an impact has been identified this will be reflected in the final inquiry report, post inquiry. Where a Scrutiny Board recommendation is agreed the individual, organisation or group responsible for implementation or delivery should give due regard to equality and diversity, conducting impact assessments where it is deemed appropriate.

3.3 Council Policies and City Priorities

This inquiry will assist in achieving outcomes and priorities as defined in the Children and Young Peoples Plan 2011-2015 and the Child Friendly City Priority Plan.

3.4 Resources and Value for Money

There is no resource or value for money implications relating to this report. At the conclusion of the inquiry any identified impact will be reported in the final inquiry report.

3.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

None

3.6 Risk Management

There are no risk implications relating to this report. At the conclusion of the inquiry any identified risk will be reported in the final inquiry report.

3.7 Recommendations

The Scrutiny Board (Children and Families) is recommended to:

- a) Note and consider the documented information provided and presented verbally to the Board on the 19 March 2015.
- b) Make recommendations as deemed appropriate.
- c) Note that this inquiry is not intended to extend beyond this meeting however the terms of reference may incorporate additional information to extend the inquiry should the Children and Families Scrutiny Board identify any further scope for inquiry or request further witness or evidence during this session.

3.8 Background documents¹

None

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.