

Adoption in Leeds

Last update received July 2007

	Recommendation	Where we are up to	Stage	Complete
1	We recommend that the Director of Social Services informs us of the timetable and action plan for the third Adoption Panel to become fully operational, so that we can monitor progress	The third Panel is operational. The first meeting was held in May 2007.	2	✓
2	We recommend that the Director of Social Services reports back to us within three months on action that will be taken to reduce administrative delays in the adoption process	Recommendations for administrative support to the Fostering & Adoption Service will arise out of the full review of the service Timescale: October 2007	6	
3	We recommend that the Director of Social Services considers whether a similar organisational approach to that taken in Liverpool would benefit adoption in Leeds, and reports back to us with a view within three months	This proposal will be considered as part of the full review of the service as it represents a significant change to current practice and has budgetary implications Timescale: October 2007	6	
4	We recommend that the courts service advise us how a higher priority or additional resources can be allocated to redress the balance with private cases and improve performance against the targets for dealing with care orders. The Scrutiny Board will raise this issue at a national level with the Local Government Association	The courts service has provided information on national, regional and local action that has been or is being taken to address delays. The Scrutiny Board has written to the LGA and the Ministry of Justice about the need for more resources for the courts.	2	✓
5	We recommend that the Director of Children's Services explores, with the inter-agency group, the case for change in adoption processes to make more effective use of combined resources, whilst protecting the integrity of decision-making in the child's best interests. We request a report back within three months	This proposal will be taken to the next Family Justice Council to begin discussion on how the court process might be streamlined.	4	

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6	We recommend that the Director of Social Services reports back to us within three months on the potential for the regional consortium to develop a more strategic role to complement its successful 'marketplace' function	The Adoption Consortium has invited the Coordinator of Adoption 22 to come to one of their meetings to discuss the suitability of a more strategic approach by the local Consortium.	4	
7	We recommend that the Director of Social Services develops arrangements for keeping prospective adopters engaged and informed whilst they await matching, and reports back to us within three months	New arrangements have been introduced.	2	✓
8	We recommend that the Chief Officer – Human Resources reports back to us within three months on the potential for addressing the barriers to recruitment where staff face losing accrued employment benefits	4 areas were identified: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adding bodies to the statutory requirement to recognise previous service. Unlikely to be approved by government and therefore not recommended • Financial incentives where appropriate • Promoting the benefits of working for the Council • Recruitment campaigns 	2	✓
9	We recommend that the Director of Social Services commissions appropriate activity to raise general awareness of the range of people who can adopt children and reports back to us on initiatives proposed within three months	Consideration will be given to increasing the recruitment budget. The current budget has not been increased for several years and is probably insufficient. The service review will report on this and make recommendations. Timescale: April 2008 Continue current involvement with the Adoption Consortium on raising awareness about adoption at a regional level particularly about BME children needing adoption	6	

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	Recommendation	Where we are up to	Stage	Complete
10	We recommend that the Director of Social Services reports back to us regularly on the progress of the adoption recruitment strategy and the number of black and minority ethnic prospective adopters recruited	The Local Authority is required by Adoption Regulations to provide a 6 monthly report on Adoption Agency activity. This will provide the Scrutiny Board with a regular update on progress on all these matters.	6	
11	We recommend that the Director of Social Services reviews the upper age limit policy and reports back to us on the outcome of that review within three months	The current policy requires at least one of the adopters to be 60 or younger when the adopted child reaches 18. Consider increasing this age limit to 65. This age limit can be disregarded in special circumstances. Remove bar on adopting a child of 2 or younger if adopters already have children. Remove bar on adopted children needing to be younger than existing children in the family but maintain 2 year age difference. Timescale: September 2007	4	
12	We recommend that the Director of Children's Services considers the appointment of an independent reviewing officer for adoption, and reports back to us with a view within three months	The manager of the Independent Reviewing Officers will consider this proposal and make recommendations. Timescale: July 2007	4	
13	We recommend that the Director of Social Services and the Chief Executive of Education Leeds produce an action plan within three months for improving the education support to adopted children, in order to ensure a more consistent quality of experience for adoptive families. This should cover awareness raising for schools; social services staff awareness of education resources; and parental awareness of education support particularly for special educational needs	There is a piece of work currently being undertaken to develop practice in respect of the education of looked after children. The proposals regarding the education of adopted children will be similarly considered and added to the current piece of work. Timescale: April 2008	6	

Review of 14-19 Education and Training

Last update received July 2007

	Recommendation	Where we are up to	Stage	Complete
1	That the Scrutiny Board's concerns must be raised by Education Leeds when responding to the green paper 'Raising Expectations'.	The response submitted by Education Leeds incorporated issues raised by the Board	2	✓
2	That Education Leeds, and in particular the LSC, ensure that young people are adequately consulted on the proposals for change before any final decisions are made.	Commitment to consultation given.	6	
3	That Education Leeds report back to us on how the Scrutiny Board's many concerns about the 14-19 review are being addressed.	Initial response to concerns provided. Check against final proposals.	6	

Catching the Bus

Last update received July 2007

	Recommendation	Where we are up to	Stage	Complete
1	That First Bus review its fare structure so that the fare paid better matches the distance travelled. That First Bus review its fare structure in the light of the forum's findings on the barrier cost represents to young people. And, that First Bus report its conclusions/intentions to Scrutiny Board (Children's Services) in July 2007.	First has agreed to re-examine this issue when fares are next reviewed, although the scope for change may be limited.	6*	
2	That Metro should investigate the possibility of developing a concessionary scheme whereby young people pay for the first few journeys in the usual way and then get one/two free (buy four, get one free for example but avoiding the need to pay up front) and report their findings/actions to Scrutiny Board (Children's Services) in July 2007.	Metro has agreed to consider this approach.	6*	
3	That Metro and the bus companies should co-operate to develop a day pass which can be used on all buses and that Metro report progress to Scrutiny Board (Children's Services) in July 2007.	Practical issues may present obstacles to progress.	6*	
4	That Metro reviews the effectiveness of its marketing strategies with regard to young people's concessionary schemes and report its progress to Scrutiny Board (Children's Services) in July 2007.	Metro has offered to work with the Director of Children's Services on this issue.	6*	

* The Scrutiny Board agreed in July 2007 to set up a working group of Scrutiny Board members, young people and relevant officers to progress the recommendations from this inquiry.

Catching the Bus

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	Recommendation	Where we are up to	Stage	Complete
5	That Metro develop a text messaging comments and complaints system, promote this amongst young people and report progress to Scrutiny Board (Children's Services) in July 2007.	Metro will consider this further following the launch of their young people's website	6*	
6	That Metro and First Bus investigate the possibility of developing CCTV systems on buses to record sound as well as pictures and report their findings to Scrutiny Board (Children's Services) in July 2007.	Metro and First are willing to consider this further, but warn that cost is an issue here.	6*	
7	That the Director of Children's Services ensures that the barriers young people face with regard to transport are taken into account by ALL decision makers and that they are a key part of the Child Impact Statement process. We ask that she report back to Scrutiny Board (Children's Services) in July 2007.	The Director of Children's Services has given a commitment to this recommendation. The scrutiny working group is one way of promoting progress.	6*	
8	That the Director of Children's Services investigates adding travel concessions to the other benefits of the Breeze card and reports back to Scrutiny Board (Children's Services) in July 2007.	There are some technical issues that need to be addressed. Metro and Leeds City Council have agreed to closer joint working on publicity, events and discounts.	6*	

* The Scrutiny Board agreed in July 2007 to set up a working group of Scrutiny Board members, young people and relevant officers to progress the recommendations from this inquiry.

Catching the Bus

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	Recommendation	Where we are up to	Stage	Complete
9	That the Director of Children's Services orders a review of how school transport monies are being spent in Leeds to see if there is a better way in which it could be spent and reports back to Scrutiny Board (Children's Services) in July 2007.	A review is taking place. Metro is developing a pathfinder bid for November 2007.	6*	
10	That the Youth Council and ROAR lead a campaign with one aim - to achieve free bus travel for all young people - and that everyone who works with and for young people joins with and supports them in achieving it.	The Youth Council and ROAR are carrying out a campaign.	6*	

* The Scrutiny Board agreed in July 2007 to set up a working group of Scrutiny Board members, young people and relevant officers to progress the recommendations from this inquiry.

The Implications of Trust Schools for the Local Authority

Last update received July 2007

	Recommendation	Where we are up to	Stage	Complete
1	<p>That the Chief Executive of Education Leeds and the Director of Children’s Services take a proactive strategic approach to maximise the potential that Trust Schools might have for improving outcomes for children in deprived communities in Leeds by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • exploring potential trust models for clusters of schools in deprived areas with a view to instigating trusts • issuing advice to strategic partners about how to target their partnership support to schools and areas most in need • informing our proactive approach to wider planning issues (BSF, 14-19 review, etc). 	<p>Proposals for the development of a Central Leeds Learning Trust were agreed by Executive Board in June 2007. This is to be a formal partnership as opposed to ‘Trust Schools’ as defined in the Act.</p>	4	
2	<p>The Chief Executive of Education Leeds and the Director of Children’s Services consider the resource and other practical implications of a policy requiring the Authority to request membership of every trust that is established in Leeds.</p>	<p>Implications considered. Agreed to request membership of every trust.</p>	2	✓

	Recommendation	Where we are up to	Stage	Complete
3	<p>That the Director of Children’s Services has regard to this report when responding to any school consulting on becoming a Trust School.</p> <p>In particular the points raised in this report regarding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • proposed partner organisations sharing the same vision for the school • any proposed changes to the school’s admissions policy • potential for the proposals to help or hinder “narrowing the gap” • balance of trust appointed governors on the governing body <p>and to consider how the individual proposals will contribute to community cohesion and delivering the Every Child Matters agenda.</p>	<p>Commitment given</p> <p>No further formal proposals received to date</p>	6	

Departmental Communications

Last update received July 2007

	Recommendation	Where we are up to	Stage	Complete
1	<p>That a Children's Services communications project be set up, including all the relevant partners, to enable the new Directorate to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • take a lead on communications • assess current practice • draw the partners together • assist the Communications Manager, Children's Services in his role to influence and share best practice • draft a communications strategy 	Network established	2	✓
2	<p>That costs for departmental publications 2006/2007 be supplied to a future meeting of Scrutiny Board (Children's Services), to establish a baseline figure for departmental publications produced by Education Leeds for comparison with future years.</p>	<p>Comprehensive costs for 2006/07 not available Costs for 2007/08 being monitored Scrutiny Board agreed to this as an alternative. Review at end of 2007/08 financial year</p>	6	
3	<p>That the Director of Children's Services obtain costs for publications relating to Children's Services 2006/2007 from Council Departments and external partners, where available, to supply to a future meeting of Scrutiny Board (Children's Services).</p>	<p>Response indicated amount of work required to achieve recommendation. Board agreed that information would be sought from council departments only in the first place, for 2007/08 Review at end of 2007/08 financial year</p>	6	
4	<p>That information on any monitoring process(es) used to evaluate the effectiveness of the corporate communications published by Education Leeds and Children Leeds be supplied to a future meeting of Scrutiny Board (Children's Services).</p>	Information provided	2	✓

Specialist Inclusive Learning Centres (SILCs)

Last update received July 2007

	Recommendation	Where we are up to	Stage	Complete
1	That Education Leeds reviews the funding model for the SILCs, to reflect changing patterns of service delivery and the levels of funding required to support them.	A fundamental review of funding to SILCs, partnership schools and resourced provision is due to report in October 2007. Any recommendations for change will be taken through Schools Forum.	6	
2	That Education Leeds carries out further analysis of the projected future numbers of pupils and their distribution between partnership and SILC sites, in order to inform further work on funding, accommodation and partnership development.	Education Leeds are recruiting an officer to analyse patterns and predict future need, linking into the review of funding above.	4	
3	That Education Leeds considers the place of partnership models such as Holly Bush, where specialised SILC units are sited on mainstream school campuses, within the overall accommodation strategy for the SILCs.	Accurate pupil level data is now available and will be used to demonstrate where pupils are making the best progress.	4	
4	That the Director of Children's Services and Education Leeds produce clear, co-ordinated and updated information, in a readily accessible manner, to guide parents and professionals through the maze of services for children with special educational needs.	The Children and Families directory has been updated. A local information section has been drafted for the Early Support Programme. There is a proposal to develop a parent partnership website. The parenting strategy is out for consultation. Documentation for parents will be updated following the finalisation of the refreshed Inclusion Strategy.	4	
5	That the Director of Children's Services and Education Leeds devise a programme of training/visits to enable professionals to gain first-hand experience of current inclusion practice.	A comprehensive training programme is being developed in partnership with the SILCs, Leeds University and the National College of School Leadership, as well as social services and health.	4	
6	That Education Leeds leads in developing a communications strategy for the SILCs strategy, to ensure that parents are engaged in the ongoing development of the SILCs and also kept informed of progress and choices in relation to their own child's educational provision.	Individual SILCs have developed newsletters, and SILC Principals are working with the Communications Team to develop this model. A review has taken place of systems and procedures for placements of pupils with SEN. The Choice Adviser and Parent Support Advisers are in place.	4	

Specialist Inclusive Learning Centres (SILCs)

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	Recommendation	Where we are up to	Stage	Complete
7	That Education Leeds considers how the outreach role of the SILCs can be further supported and developed.	A number of Service Level Agreements are in place, for example Hospital and Home Teaching Service, and physical needs. New arrangements are being developed covering further service areas.	4	
8	That Education Leeds facilitates a strategic review of the partnership provision associated with the SILCs and in particular the number of partnerships operated by the NW SILC, informed by future funding, accommodation plans and pupil number projections.	An initial review took place in 2006, focusing on the NW SILC. Further work was scheduled over the summer term 2007, linked to the fundamental review of funding and accommodation.	4	
9	That Education Leeds ensures that appropriate and robust professional support and expertise in relation to change management is available to all schools subject to reorganisation, in the best interests of the pupils whose educational experience will be affected by the changes taking place. Also, that Education Leeds ensures that the resources for this support are explicitly identified when proposals for reorganisation are put forward.	All the SILCs have continued to be supported by the Organisational Change team.	2	✓
10	That Education Leeds continues to provide the support and resources that are required for the leadership and management of the NW SILC in order to continue to build the trust and confidence of all in the future provision of excellent education and care for its pupils.	A task group was established for the NW SILC in September 2005. The SILC has subsequently received a very positive Ofsted inspection.	2	✓

Specialist Inclusive Learning Centres (SILCs)

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	Recommendation	Where we are up to	Stage	Complete
11	That the Director of Children's Services and Education Leeds work with partners to ensure that the following issues which emerged during our inquiry are given further attention, and that they report back to us on the action being taken on each issue:			
(1)	Clear transition plans for pupils at all transfer stages, developed in conjunction with parents	The annual review process and monitoring of individual progress are to be strengthened as part of a fundamental review of monitoring and assessment processes.	4	
(2)	The inclusion of information about the SILCs in admissions information and on the admissions preference form	This will be part of the review of admissions arrangements for September 2008.	4	
(3)	Ensuring that parents are kept informed from time to time of changes in policy or legislation which may affect the choices open to them for their children's education	The Parent Partnership Service has put a range of measures in place to ensure this is done in a more systematic and effective manner, including using the parents' forums at SILCs.	2	✓
(4)	Ensuring that information on services available to parents incorporates non-statutory services	An Information Officer has been appointed to the Parent Partnership Service, and her role includes the provision of information on voluntary services. Close links have been established with the Children's Information Service, with a view to producing a multi-agency community newsletter.	4	
(5)	Development of the parent partnership service's profile with SILC parents	The Service has been realigned to have a designated officer in each area.	2	✓
(6)	The possibility of the direct payments scheme being applied to children's care needs in education	<i>Last reported March 2007</i> No progress to report - timescale for proposals was July 2007	4	

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11	That the Director of Children's Services and Education Leeds work with partners to ensure that the following issues which emerged during our inquiry are given further attention, and that they report back to us on the action being taken on each issue:			
(7)	Reviewing funding to the Portage service	<i>Last reported March 2007</i> Vacant post filled, however case load remains high. Further work required.	4	
(8)	Exploring opportunities for the SILCs and their pupils and parents to benefit from the extended schools agenda	<i>Last reported March 2007</i> Action Plan due to be produced following planning day in March 2007.	4	
(9)	Tackling contractual barriers to the SILCs working with existing PFI schools	No barriers have been identified.	2	✓
(10)	Clarifying the meaning of "1:1" support to avoid misunderstanding of entitlements	1:1 support is no longer written into statements	2	✓
(11)	Providing opportunities for staff development in both mainstream and SILC settings in relation to inclusion and appropriate curriculum delivery, particularly at secondary level	A comprehensive staff development programme has been developed in partnership with the National Strategies team, available to all SILCs and mainstream colleagues.	2	✓
(12)	Developing an outreach role for staff in experienced partnership schools	Further development of the role of partnership schools is a key element within the revised Inclusion strategy.	4	
(13)	Partnership school representation on the SILC Board	A multi-disciplinary SILC Forum is now well established.	2	✓

Specialist Inclusive Learning Centres (SILCs)

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11	That the Director of Children’s Services and Education Leeds work with partners to ensure that the following issues which emerged during our inquiry are given further attention, and that they report back to us on the action being taken on each issue:			
(14)	Further development of health support to enable the most effective use of specialist resources	A Health Inclusion Group is well established, chaired by a health service manager. The group are working with key partners to review the most effective way of using resources.	2	✓
(15)	The need for future consultation to inform realistic and challenging discussion of proposals	<i>Last reported March 2007</i> Revised Inclusion Strategy to be the subject of consultation during summer and autumn 2007	4	
(16)	Consider appropriate governance structures to reflect the partnership nature of the SILCs	<i>Last reported March 2007</i> Governance arrangements for SILC partnerships are now part of a larger project developing new governance arrangements for the growing number of collaborative arrangements between schools. Some of these are currently being piloted and if they prove successful should be transferable to SILC settings by September 2007.	4	