

SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN'S SERVICES)

THURSDAY, 11TH OCTOBER, 2007

PRESENT: Councillor W Hyde in the Chair

Councillors J Chapman, R D Feldman, S Hamilton,
R Harington, A Lamb, J Langdale, T Murray and
K Renshaw

**CO-OPTED MEMBERS:
(VOTING)** Mr E A Britten - Church Representative (Catholic)
Prof P H J H Gosden - Church Representative (Church
of England)
Mr I Falkingham - Parent Governor Representative
(Special)

**CO-OPTED MEMBERS:
(NON-VOTING)** Ms C Foote - Teacher Representative
Mrs S Hutchinson - Early Years Development and
Childcare Partnership
Representative
Ms J Morris-Boam - Leeds VOICE Children and
Young People Services Forum
Representative
Ms T Kayani - Leeds Youth Work Partnership
Representative

40 Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed all in attendance to the October meeting of the Scrutiny Board (Children's Services).

41 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Murray declared a personal interest in relation to agenda item 10 entitled, 'Services for 8-13 Year Olds', due to being Chief Executive of the Learning Partnerships organisation (Minute No. 47 refers).

Further declarations of interest were made at later points in the meeting (Minute No. 47 refers).

42 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Councillors C Campbell, J Elliott, B Lancaster and Mr T Hales.

43 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the previous Scrutiny Board (Children's Services) meeting held on 13th September 2007 be approved as a correct record.

44 Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 2nd July 2007 be noted.

45 Consultation on Strategic Outcomes and Improvement Priorities for the Leeds Strategic Plan

A report was submitted by the Assistant Chief Executive of Planning, Policy and Improvement which provided Members with background to the development of **Leeds Strategic Plan**, and details of the associated consultation process. The report also gave Members the opportunity to consider and comment upon the draft strategic outcomes and improvement priorities within the plan which aimed to **meet the needs of the city's children and young people**. A table detailing the draft strategic outcomes and improvement priorities was appended to the report for Members' information.

Mariana Pexton, Deputy Director – Innovation and Change, Children's Services, and Jane Stageman, Senior Policy Manager, Policy, Planning and Improvement, were both in attendance to answer Members' questions.

Having received a brief summary of the key issues detailed within the report, the Board viewed a promotional video which was being used as part of the consultation process, and which outlined the plan's **draft strategic outcomes and improvement priorities**. A question and answer session then ensued. The main areas of debate were as follows:-

Draft Strategic Outcomes and Draft Improvement Priorities

- Members highlighted the importance of, and recognition that was given to the '**Every Child Matters**' agenda, and suggested that in order to reflect this, the plan should make explicit reference to this issue;
- Members proposed that consideration was given to including a specific reference within the plan to improved outcomes for **Looked After Children**, which could possibly be added to the health and wellbeing theme;
- The Board emphasised the need for the plan to acknowledge the importance of **parental involvement** in young people's learning;
- Members proposed that reference was made within the plan to the importance of young people having a better understanding of both their own **culture**, and of the many other cultures which made up the city;
- Members acknowledged the draft priority which aimed to **reduce emissions** from public sector buildings, operations and service delivery, but emphasised the need for the plan to also encourage the private sector to reduce emission levels. The Board proposed that the plan should take a broader focus, which recognised the need for the behaviour of all sectors to change, in order to improve the city's environment;
- Having noted that the Council still had a statutory requirement to produce a **Children and Young People's Plan** (CYPP), Members made reference to the strong links which existed between the priorities within the CYPP and the draft strategic outcomes of the Leeds Strategic Plan. The Board also acknowledged that in the context of the strategic plan, most of the outcomes were applicable to the general population of Leeds, rather than

children and young people specifically. Members were then advised of how the plan would sit in terms of the statutory planning framework.

Issues Relating to the Associated Consultation Exercise

- The Board discussed the actions being taken to ensure that the strategic plan was inclusive of young people from all sections of society;
- Having commented upon the style and content of the video, the Board learned of its intended audience, and how it would be used as part of a **consultation process**;
- The Board was advised of the agencies which would be involved in the consultation process, and that following all Scrutiny Board responses being considered at Overview and Scrutiny Committee, a revised version of the relevant draft strategic outcomes and improvement priorities would be submitted to the Board in January 2008 for further consideration.

General Observations

- Following Members' questions, the Board learned of the administrative arrangements which had been established to help form and deliver the strategic plan;
- The Board acknowledged the relationship between the strategic plan and the **Council's Mission**, which was to 'bring the benefits of a prosperous, vibrant and attractive city to all the people of Leeds', but emphasised that in order to achieve this, a greater level of equality needed to be established throughout the city;
- Members made specific enquiries into the methods which would be used to implement the draft outcomes and priorities, and how long this process would take to complete.

RESOLVED – That subject to the above comments, the proposed strategic outcomes and improvement priorities of the Leeds Strategic Plan which are aimed at meeting the needs of children and young people in the city be noted, and that the revised draft of the plan be submitted to the January 2008 meeting of the Board.

46 Development of the Specialist Inclusive Learning Centres (SILCs)

Further to Minute No. 114, 8th March 2007, a report was submitted by the Chief Executive of Education Leeds updating the Board on the progress which had been achieved in relation to the development of the Inclusive Learning Strategy, with particular reference being made to the second strategic objective concerning 'the further development of specialist provision, including the role of the SILCs'.

Carol Jordan, Strategic Manager for Integrated Children's Services, Andrew Hobbs, Team Leader – Organisational Change Team, and Bob Stott, No Child Left Behind Project Director, all of Education Leeds, were in attendance to answer Members' questions.

Appended to the report for Members' information was a revised version of the Leeds Inclusive Learning Strategy, a project brief for the further development of specialist provision, which included the role of the SILCs, and details of

forthcoming discussion events which aimed to ensure that all relevant partners were signed up to the next stages of the strategy's development.

Having received a summary of the key points detailed within the report, a question and answer session ensued. The key areas of debate were as follows:-

Issues Relating to Consultation and Communication

- Members emphasised the importance of ensuring that effective consultation mechanisms were established with parents. In response, the Board learned that there would be more of an opportunity for **parental involvement** via the statutory assessment process, which was in addition to the specific consultation events being organised and the recruitment of Parent Support Advisors;
- Having discussed the forthcoming market place event which had been organised by **North West SILC Parents' Forum**, Scrutiny Board Members were encouraged to support and attend the event;
- Members reiterated the need to ensure that young people from all backgrounds, including the **black and minority ethnic (BME) and traveller communities**, were involved in any consultation exercises which took place in relation to the Inclusive Learning Strategy.

General Observations

- The Board received an update on the recent progress which had been made in relation to the provision of services delivered by SILCs in Leeds;
- Following Members' questions, the Board learned of the actions being taken to ensure that appropriate provision for those individuals with more **complex educational needs** was being delivered. Members noted that this included the formation of a new central team, which would enable the processes involved in monitoring an individual's achievement to be developed. Having discussed the **tracking system** currently in operation, Members learned that as part of the strategy, further training on the current tracking system was to be provided to members of staff;
- The Board discussed the apparent confusion surrounding the number of pupils attending SILCs;
- The Board emphasised that in addition to academic outcomes being tracked, the quality of teaching also needed to be monitored, with reference being made to both a lack of specialist teachers and the number of Teaching Assistants in mainstream education;
- Members sought clarification on several of the key performance indicators detailed within the report.

RESOLVED –

- (a). That the report, and information appended to the report, including the revised Inclusive Learning Strategy, be noted;
- (b). That Members' comments relating to the Inclusive Learning Strategy be noted.

47 Services for 8-13 Year Olds - Session 1 and Session 2

The Board received a report from the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development which introduced the evidence to be considered as part of the

first and second formal sessions of the Scrutiny Board's inquiry into services for 8-13 year olds.

Mark Hopkins, Strategic Manager – Study Support, and Richard Smith, Team Leader, Governor Support Service, both of Education Leeds, Sally Threlfall, Acting Chief Officer, Ian Green, Strategic Data Manager, and Jason Tabor, Programme Officer - Out of School Activities Project, all of Early Years and Youth Service, and Rosie Wilks, Breeze Card Development and Communications Officer, Chris Finnigan, Social Care, and Frank O'Malley, Leeds Play Network and Leeds Children's Fund, were all in attendance to answer Members' questions.

Appended to the report for Members' information were the agreed terms of reference for the inquiry, in addition to a report from the Chief Officer for Early Years and Youth Service entitled, 'Inquiry into services for 8 to 13 year old children in Leeds', which was accompanied by a range of information relating to the progress made against the provision of the Extended Services Core Offer, the governance arrangements for those bodies providing extended services, and statistics relating to the take up of various extended services which had been delivered in Leeds.

Having received a brief overview of the information which had been submitted to the Board, a question and answer session ensued. The main areas of debate were as follows:-

Extended Services

- Clarification was sought on Leeds' performance in terms of the percentage of schools providing the full core offer;
- The Board enquired about the actions being taken to ensure that those **private finance initiative (PFI) schools** built prior to the establishment of relevant targets relating to extended services provision were meeting such targets. In response, Members learned of the challenges faced when delivering extended services provision through PFI facilities, and how such challenges could be overcome. It was then proposed that a response to this issue was submitted to the Board as part of the next session of the inquiry;
- Following Members' questions, the Board noted that currently there were **24 cluster co-ordinators in post**, and was advised of the issues which had been faced in relation to the recruitment of co-ordinators in Leeds;
- Members paid tribute to the progress which had been made in relation to the provision of extended services in Leeds, and emphasised that although the development of such provision may be gradual, the services provided were an integral part of improving the quality of life for young people;
- Members made enquiries into the geographical approach taken towards the provision of extended services in Leeds, and sought data which related to the take up of **services provided throughout the summer period** across the different wedges in Leeds. In response, the Board noted that provision was delivered on a cluster rather than a wedge basis, and that the clusters in place were currently at varying stages of development;

- The Board sought further information on the accessibility of school facilities during the summer holiday period, and the extent and variety of the activities which had been delivered at such schools during this time;
- Members made enquiries into the extent to which the local authority was working in partnership with the **voluntary sector** to provide extended services during holiday periods, and whether such initiatives had been able to use school facilities when delivering services. In response, the Board was advised that **80 play schemes** had operated during the summer with council and voluntary sector funding. Members also noted that the initiatives which had been undertaken in partnership with the voluntary sector during the summer had gained access to school facilities, resulting in greater levels of attendance by young people;
- In response to Members' questions, the Board was advised that all schools were required to become involved in the extended services agenda by September 2010.

Governance Models

- Members highlighted the need for the **voluntary sector** to be represented in any **governance arrangements** which were established to oversee the provision of school clusters and extended services. The Board then received an update on how models of governance were being developed in Leeds, and how **parental involvement** in such governance arrangements were being encouraged. Members then requested that the changes which had been made to the requirements for extended schools provision were relayed to all governing bodies in Leeds for information.

Summer Activities

- Members noted that as the performance data for those activities delivered over the summer period was currently incomplete, this issue would be considered in greater detail at the third formal session of the inquiry, which was scheduled for December 2007;
- The Board highlighted that even minimal **costs to parents** for their child to access extended services could prove to be prohibitive. In response, Members learned of the actions being taken to make events, such as the Breeze initiatives, as **accessible** as possible, and the range of events that were free to attend;
- Members learned that approximately 9,000 young people had accessed the series of Breeze events held throughout the summer, and discussed the methods of **publicity and communication** used to promote such events. The Board then highlighted the need to ensure that the methods of publicity used effectively reached all sections of society, and suggested that events such as parents' evenings and summer fairs could be an effective way of promoting such activities.

Issues and Threads

- Having received a demonstration of the **Family Hub Childcare Service website and the Breeze website**, Members were advised that to date, approximately 50% of young people in Leeds had been issued with a Breeze card and noted that judging from statistics gained at sports centres, approximately 80% of **Breeze card** holders were actively using

their card. The Board also learned that on average, there were 4,000 to 5,000 hits on the Breeze website per week;

- Members enquired about the extent to which the **Youth Service** delivered provision to the younger element of the 8-13 age group.

RESOLVED –

- (a). That the report and information appended to the report be noted;
- (b). That the information requested by the Board be forwarded to Members for consideration.

(Councillor Renshaw declared a personal interest in relation to this item, due to being a governor of a PFI school in Leeds)

(Ms T Kayani declared a personal interest in relation to this item, due to being the Chief Executive of a voluntary sector organisation)

(Councillors Murray, Renshaw and R D Feldman left the meeting at 12.00 p.m., 12.10 p.m. and 12.20 p.m. respectively, during the consideration of this item, and Councillor Chapman left the meeting at 12.35 p.m., at the conclusion of this item)

48 Work Programme

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

Appended to the report for Members' information was the current version of the Board's work programme, an extract from the Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period 1st October 2007 to 31st January 2008 which related to the Board's remit, together with the minutes from the Executive Board meeting held on 11th September 2007.

Further to consideration of the Inclusion Strategy earlier in the meeting, it was agreed that a working group be established to look at two of the four strategic objectives within the strategy: the further development of specialist provision, including the role of the SILCs; and the further development of the behaviour continuum and provision, including the role of the pupil referral units.

Members noted a proposal to cancel the additional Scrutiny Board (Children's Services) meeting which had been scheduled for Thursday, 25th October 2007. It was then suggested that as a result of the proposed cancellation, the **14-19 Review** could be considered at the November Board meeting, with the issue of **Behaviour Support** being initially considered by the Inclusion working group.

RESOLVED –

- (a). That subject to the above comments, the Board's Work Programme, as appended to the report be approved;
- (b). That the cancellation of the additional Scrutiny Board meeting scheduled for Thursday, 25th October 2007, be approved;

(c). That an Inclusion working group comprising of Councillors Hamilton, Langdale, Mr E A Britten, Mr I Falkingham, Ms C Foote, Professor P H J H Gosden and Mrs Hutchinson be established, with the working group's findings being submitted to the Scrutiny Board for approval.

49 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Thursday, 8th November 2007 at 10.00 a.m. in the Civic Hall, Leeds.
(Pre-meeting scheduled for 9.30 a.m.)

(The meeting concluded at 12.40 p.m.)