

SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN'S SERVICES)

THURSDAY, 8TH NOVEMBER, 2007

PRESENT: Councillor W Hyde in the Chair

Councillors J Chapman, J Elliott, R Harington,
A Lamb, B Lancaster, 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)
Mrs S Knights	- Parent Governor Representative (Primary)

**CO-OPTED MEMBERS:
(NON-VOTING)**

Ms C Foote	- Teacher Representative
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50 Chair's Opening Remarks

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

51 Late Items

In accordance with his powers under Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chair admitted to the agenda a report outlining a range of adoption related data from the past six months, which had been requested by the Scrutiny Board, and was to be considered as part of agenda item 10, entitled, 'Recommendation Tracking'.

The report was unavailable at the time of the agenda despatch, and needed to be considered as part of agenda item 10 (Minute No. 58 refers).

52 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Murray declared a personal interest in relation to agenda item 8 entitled, 'Performance Management Quarter 2 2007/2008', due to his wife's position as a Reviewing Officer for Social Services, and a personal interest in relation to agenda item 13, entitled, 'Review of 14-19 Education and Training Provision in Leeds', due to being Chief Executive of the Learning Partnerships organisation (Minute Nos. 56 and 61 refer).

Councillor Chapman declared a personal interest in relation to agenda item 16, entitled, 'Work Programme', due to her involvement in issues concerning the proposed fencing of playing pitches at Tinshill Recreation Ground, which was detailed within the Executive Board minutes from the meeting held on 17th October 2007 (Minute No. 64 refers)

Mr E A Britten declared a personal interest in relation to agenda item 13, entitled, 'Review of 14-19 Education and Training Provision in Leeds', due to his position as Governor of Notre Dame Sixth Form College (Minute No. 61 refers).

Further declarations of interest were made at later points in the meeting (Minute Nos. 56, 58, 60, 61 and 62 refer).

53 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Councillors C Campbell, R D Feldman, Mr T Hales, Mrs S Hutchinson and Ms J Morris-Boam.

54 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the previous Scrutiny Board (Children's Services) meeting held on 11th October 2007 be approved as a correct record.

55 Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 11th September 2007 be noted.

56 Performance Management Quarter 2 2007/2008

The Head of Policy, Performance and Improvement submitted a report which invited the Board to consider key performance issues from quarter two of 2007/2008, which were considered to be of corporate significance for the Scrutiny Board (Children's Services). The report also advised Members of a predicted **Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA)** score for 2007/08.

Appended to the report was a table detailing all relevant Performance Indicators for the Board.

Councillor Richard Brett, Lead Executive Member for Children's Services, Councillor Richard Harker, Executive Member with responsibility for Learning, Rosemary Archer, Director of Children's Services, Dirk Gilleard, Deputy Chief Executive, Education Leeds, Edwina Harrison, Chief Officer, Children and Families, and Stuart Cameron-Strickland, Commissioning Manager, Performance and Quality Assurance, both of Social Care, were all in attendance to present the report and answer Members' questions.

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

Issues Relating to Looked After Children and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

- The Lead Executive Member for Children's Services made reference to the rise in the number of **Looked After Children** in Leeds, with particular reference being made to the recent rise in **unaccompanied asylum seeking children** who were entering the city. Members were also advised that parental mental health and parental drug misuse were common

- features in families where children had become looked after;
- Following Members' enquiries, the Board learned that as of September 2007, there were **104 unaccompanied asylum seeking children** in the authority's care, the majority of which were 16-17 year olds. The Board was then assured that every effort was made to identify such individuals, and when they came to the authority's attention, each individual was placed in the most appropriate setting for their needs;
- Members noted that latest figures showed that there were about **1,360 Looked After Children in Leeds**, which was higher than the national average. However, the Board learned that the provision for Looked After Children in Leeds was being improved via a series of initiatives, such as the recruitment of a 'virtual' Head Teacher for all Looked After Children in the city;
- The Board sought information on the number of Looked After Children in Leeds who had statements or were otherwise deemed to have special educational needs, and were advised that such information would be submitted.

Issues Relating to Attendance and Absenteeism

- Members made enquiries into the actions taken to reduce the number of persistent absentees in Leeds. In response, the Board noted that Education Leeds and its partners had worked with the **Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF)** in order to revise its approach towards attendance, however it was acknowledged that such arrangements now needed to be turned into results;
- Having emphasised the strong link between **attendance and attainment**, Members noted the actions being taken to address the issue of pupils being withdrawn from school, due to family holidays during term time;
- Having highlighted the need for **parental participation** when tackling the problem of persistent absenteeism, the Board noted that the approach taken needed to place an emphasis upon personalisation and intervention;
- Members made reference to the need for the appropriate curriculum to be delivered, in order to keep young people in attendance at school. In response, the Board learned that a curriculum was being developed, particularly in relation to Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3, which would be delivered through an entitlement for all young people, and which would enable regular intervention to take place with individuals, whenever it was required.

General Observations

- In response to Members' comments regarding the decline in secondary school performance against the national minimum '**floor targets**' for **Key Stage 3**, the Board was advised that although such results did reflect the national trend, a more unified and less subject based approach was being taken to address this issue;
- The Board learned that the '**Payment for Skills**' programme aimed to recruit a greater number of foster parents in Leeds;
- In response to Members' enquiries, the Board was advised of the intention to continue to increase the provision of work based learning in Leeds;
- Members discussed the impact that a possible increase in the number of

- academies in Leeds could have in relation to school term times;
- Following Members' enquiries, the Board learned of some of the actions which were being taken to engage with and address the needs not only of the children and young people of Leeds, but also their families and the wider community.

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 Lancaster declared a personal interest in relation to this item, due to her respective positions as Governor of the North West Specialist Inclusive Learning Centre (SILC) and Governor of Carr Manor High School)

(Mrs S Knights declared a personal interest in relation to this item, due to being a foster parent)

57 Children's Services and the Children and Young People's Plan - Update

Further to Minute No. 33, 13th September 2007, the Board received a report from the Director of Children's Services which updated Members on several key areas of work being undertaken across children's services, and provided an overview of the progress made in relation to the **Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP)** for Leeds. In order to assist the Board in monitoring the progress made in relation to the delivery of the CYPP's priorities, the report focussed upon two of the CYPP's priorities: reducing teenage conception; and enabling the engagement of parents and young learners in early years and primary schools.

Appended to the report was a chart illustrating Leeds' Children Trust arrangements, in addition to Leeds' CYPP priorities.

Councillor Richard Brett, Lead Executive Member for Children's Services, Rosemary Archer, Director of Children's Services, Stephanie Taylor, Parent Partnership Officer, Education Leeds, Andrea Richardson, Quality and Standards Manager, Early Years, and Martin Ford, Head of Commissioning – Children and Maternity Services, Leeds Primary Care Trust, were all in attendance to answer Members' questions.

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

Issues Relating to Parental Participation

- With reference to the priorities of the CYPP, Members emphasised the need to ensure effective **parental participation** when pursuing such priorities, which needed to be undertaken in a multi agency way, in order to address the needs not just of young people, but of the whole family;
- Members made enquiries into the existence of performance related data concerning the work which had been undertaken in relation to the engagement of parents and young learners in early years and primary

schools. Having made reference to research which had been carried out by Durham University on the outcomes achieved by the **Surestart programme**, Members were advised that relevant data would be submitted to the Board for information.

General Observations

- Members highlighted the need for Leeds to continue to publish a plan which was dedicated to all issues and priorities concerning children's services, rather than such issues being subsumed within a larger, strategic plan. In response, the Board was assured that there continued to be a statutory requirement to publish a dedicated CYPP, and noted that discussions were currently ongoing on the most appropriate way to incorporate these issues within the **Leeds Strategic Plan**;
- The Lead Executive Member for Children's Services made reference to the fact that approximately 500 young people from the 8,000 in each Year 11 cohort were identified as **disengaged**. He suggested that this was a cross-cutting issue which needed to be addressed in a multi-agency way, and a matter which the Board may wish to consider in the future;
- With regard to the **levels of teenage conception in Leeds**, Members were advised that Scrutiny Board (Health and Adult Social Care) were currently undertaking a piece of work on this issue, and that following an invitation from that Scrutiny Board, Councillor Lancaster had been nominated to participate in the piece of work, as a representative of Scrutiny Board (Children's Services).

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.

58 Recommendation Tracking

The Board considered a report from the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development which provided Members with an opportunity to monitor the progress of recommendations which had been previously made by the Board, in line with the new, more formal system of recommendation tracking which had been adopted by Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Appended to the report for Members' information was a flow chart which helped Members classify and consider the progress of its recommendations, in addition to a table summarising the current position of all relevant recommendations. In addition, a report which summarised a range of adoption related data from the past six months had been circulated to Members prior to the meeting.

Rodger Walker, Resources Team Manager - Children's Social Care, was in attendance to answer Members' questions.

Members emphasised the need to promote the work undertaken by **Adoption Panels** in Leeds, and suggested that more could be done to encourage

Elected Members' involvement in such panels, for example by encouraging them to observe a Panel meeting.

With regard to the Board's inquiry into **adoption in Leeds**, Members received an update on the progress which was being made in relation to the issues raised by Members during the inquiry, with particular reference being made to the time taken for the judicial processes in adoption cases to be completed.

RESOLVED –

- (a). That the report and information appended to the report be noted;
- (b). That the status of each recommendation be agreed as set out within the report;
- (c). That it be agreed for the Inclusion Working Group, initially established to consider the objectives of the Inclusion Strategy, to consider an update on the progress made against the recommendations of the SILCs Inquiry.

(Councillor Lancaster declared a personal interest in relation to this item, due to her position as Chair of the Foster Carers' Liaison Group, and due to her position on the Elmete Adoption Panel)

59 Request for Scrutiny

A report was submitted by the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development detailing a request for scrutiny which had been received from Executive Board. The request related to the processes currently in place to initially publish Key Stage 4 results, with a view to ensuring that the level of risk that incorrect results may be published was minimised.

Councillor Richard Harker, Executive Member with responsibility for Learning, Dirk Gilleard, Deputy Chief Executive, and Gary Milner, 14-19 Strategy Co-ordinator, both of Education Leeds, were in attendance to answer Members' questions.

Members noted that on 17th October 2007, Executive Board considered a report relating to the progress being made at South Leeds High School. Having noted the 2007 GCSE results for the school which had been detailed within the report, Executive Board highlighted an inconsistency in the provisional results which had been published in August, and requested that the Scrutiny Board examined the processes whereby Key Stage 4 results were initially published, with a view to ensuring that the level of risk that incorrect results may be published was minimised.

In considering the request, the Board noted that an explanation for the discrepancy between the initial provisional results and the published results had been subsequently provided to Executive Board Members. The Board learned that the discrepancy had been due to a recent change in the national criteria, whereby English and Maths results were only counted at GCSE level, and not equivalent qualifications. The two schools involved had initially reported the equivalent qualifications.

Having noted the explanation for the miscalculation, a question and answer session ensued. The main areas of debate were as follows:-

- Members learned that the change in criteria for recognising English and Maths qualifications would last until 2010, when the accreditation for **'functional skills'** in both subjects would include both GCSE and non GCSE qualifications;
- The Board highlighted the importance of **vocational qualifications**, raised concerns in relation to the **lack of national recognition for GCSE equivalent levels of attainment**, and recommended that locally, such results were submitted to Members in the interim period, alongside the nationally defined results;
- Members received clarification on the attainment levels required to achieve **alternative Level 2 qualifications in English and Maths**.

Having considered the explanation for the discrepancy, Members agreed that there was no requirement for the Board to undertake any further scrutiny on this matter.

RESOLVED –

- (a). That the request for scrutiny be noted, and that no further scrutiny be undertaken by the Board on this matter;
- (b). That Executive Board be invited to endorse the Board's concerns regarding the lack of national recognition for GCSE equivalent levels of attainment, in addition to the Board's recommendation that locally we continue to recognise these levels of attainment, and that such results are provided to Members in the interim period, alongside the nationally defined results.

60 David Young Community Academy

The Board received a report from the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development which sought to brief Members on the David Young Community Academy, and how it fitted into the provision of children's services in Leeds.

Appended to the report was a briefing paper on the issue, which had been submitted by Education Leeds in consultation with the Principal of the Academy.

Pat Toner, Strategic Manager, Human Resources, Education Leeds, was in attendance to present the briefing paper and answer Members' questions.

Following a brief summary of the information provided, a question and answer session ensued. The main areas of debate were as follows:-

Attendance Levels and Permanent Exclusions

- Members referred to the number of young people who had been **permanently excluded** from the Academy, made enquiries into the reasons for such permanent exclusions, and sought information on the destinations of those young people. In response, it was emphasised that the Academy had worked closely with the local authority on any issues relating to exclusion, and that any permanent exclusions had been for serious offences. The Board was also advised that the destinations of the permanently excluded individuals and the grounds for such exclusions

- would be submitted to the Board;
- The Board acknowledged the serious nature of the offences which had led to the permanent exclusions at the Academy, and emphasised the need for the local authority to make appropriate provision for such individuals;
 - Members considered the impact that the Academy's approach towards **vocational opportunities** had on the Academy's level of permanent exclusions and attendance.

Timetabling and Curriculum Related Issues

- Following a discussion which related to the opportunities available at the Academy for both academic and vocational pathways, Members made enquiries into the respective status held by the alternative pathways;
- Having discussed the timetabling arrangements which had been established at the Academy, Members were advised that there was a strong expectation for pupils to attend 'session three' of the timetable, in which a range of activities were delivered.

General Observations

- The Board made enquiries into the levels of **trade union** support that employees of the Academy received, in addition to details of **staff turnover** at the Academy;
- In response to Members' enquiries, the Board was advised that details relating to the level of involvement that the relevant **Extended Schools Co-ordinator** had with the Academy would be submitted to the Board for information;
- Members made enquiries into the arrangements which were in place to ensure that appropriate **parental participation and engagement** was undertaken by the Academy.

In conclusion, the Board decided to schedule a further session into the work programme, with a representative of the Academy being invited to attend a future meeting of the Board, in order to provide further details.

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;
- (c). That the issue of the David Young Community Academy, and how it fits into the provision of children's services in Leeds, be rescheduled into the work programme, when a representative of the David Young Community Academy was able to attend, in order to provide further details on such matters.

(Mrs S Knights declared a personal interest in relation to this item, due to her position on the North West SILC Parent's Forum)

(Councillor Renshaw left the meeting at 11.50 a.m., during the consideration of this item)

61 **Review of 14-19 Education and Training Provision in Leeds**

The Board received a report from the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development which updated Members on the progress made in relation to the review of 14-19 education and training provision in Leeds. The report also invited the Board to consider the formal proposals for the reorganisation of **Further Education (FE)** in Leeds, which were to be published by the **Learning and Skills Council (LSC)**.

Appended to the report was the statement of the Scrutiny Board (Children's Services) entitled, '14-19 Review of Education and Training Provision in Leeds' which had been published by the Board in April 2007, in addition to a report approved by Executive Board on 17th October 2007 entitled, 'Transforming Secondary and Post-16 Provision in Leeds'.

Councillor Richard Harker, Executive Member with responsibility for Learning, Dirk Gilleard, Deputy Chief Executive, and Gary Milner, 14-19 Strategy Co-ordinator, both of Education Leeds, in addition to Cristina George, the Learning and Skills Council's Partnership Director for Leeds, were all in attendance to answer Members' questions.

Having noted that the LSC's formal proposals were yet to be published, the LSC's Partnership Director for Leeds provided the Board with a verbal briefing on the proposals. A question and answer session then ensued. The main areas of debate were as follows:-

Issues Concerning the Proposals for the Reorganisation of FE Provision in Leeds

- Members acknowledged the levels of support for the proposals, and enquired about the impact upon those institutions which were not involved in the reorganisation. In response, the Board noted that when a model for reorganisation had been agreed, the various sources of funding available to assist with the process would be fully utilised, in order to ensure that the most appropriate FE provision was delivered to all young people in Leeds;
- In response to Members' enquiries, the Board noted that **schools' sixth forms** would continue to play an important part in FE provision, however greater emphasis would have to be placed upon schools delivering such provision in partnership with other institutions;
- Following Members' enquiries into the FE provision which would be available for learners with **Special Educational Needs (SEN)**, the Board was told that such young people were comprehensively covered within the proposals, and that every child needed an individual learning plan, in order to maximise their chances of success;
- Members received a brief summary of Education Leeds' response to the LSC's proposals;
- The Board noted the proposed **timescales** in which the reorganisation of FE provision in Leeds would be delivered;
- Members discussed the revised **post-16 funding methodology** which was being established, and the impact that the revised funding methodology would have on the various institutions throughout Leeds.

Issues Relating to Consultation

- Following Members' enquiries, the Board was informed that parents were part of the consultation process relating to the proposals, and that learners' views would be sought via organisations such as the **Youth Council**. Members were assured that the education and training of our young people would not be disrupted, as the reorganisation was delivered;
- Members discussed the potential geographical locations of Academies which may be established in the future, in relation to clustering arrangements.

General Observations

- Members acknowledged the increasingly **mixed economy of education provision** in Leeds, and raised concerns in relation to the differing conditions of employment for staff delivering such provision. In response, Members noted that this issue needed to be addressed nationally, as such matters could not be approached on an individual institution basis;
- The Board discussed the extent to which there would be **democratic accountability** in respect of the partnerships which would be established as part of the arrangements for delivering education provision in the future.

In conclusion, it was proposed that as the LSC's proposals were yet to be published, the Board could not directly comment upon them, therefore Members gave their general support towards the concept of the proposed merger, as an element of the overall review of 14-19 provision in Leeds, and it was

RESOLVED -

- (a). That the report and information appended to the report be noted;
- (b). That in light of the fact that the LSC's formal proposals are yet to be published, the Board's statement entitled, '14-19 Review of Education and Training Provision in Leeds', which had been published in April 2007, following the Board's earlier consideration of the 14-19 review, be re-submitted to Executive Board for consideration, and that the Board recommends that Executive Board satisfies itself that the issues raised in the statement have been adequately addressed in responding on behalf of the council to the LSC's formal proposals.

(Councillor Murray declared a personal interest in relation to this item, due to his position as Chair of Governors at Thomas Danby College)

(Councillor Lancaster left the meeting at 12.33 p.m., during the consideration of this item)

62 Inquiry into Fountain Primary School

A report was submitted by the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development which sought Members' formal approval of the Scrutiny Board's inquiry report into Fountain Primary School.

A draft version of the inquiry report was appended for Members' consideration.

Having agreed to include several minor amendments to the inquiry report, it was

RESOLVED -

- (a). That the contents of the report be noted;
- (b). That the Scrutiny Board's inquiry report into Fountain Primary School be approved, subject to the inclusion of several minor amendments as agreed by the Board at today's meeting;
- (c). That relevant officers be requested to formally respond to the Scrutiny Board's recommendations, as detailed within the report, with such responses being submitted to the Board's meeting in February 2008.

(Councillor Elliott declared a personal interest in relation to this item due to her position as a Governor of Fountain Primary School)

(Councillor Harington left the meeting at 12.50 p.m., during the consideration of this item)

63 Education Standards - Draft Terms of Reference

The Board considered a report from the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development which sought the Board's approval of draft terms of reference for the inquiry into education standards in Leeds.

Members were advised that the draft terms of reference were still being prepared, and it was proposed that they were submitted to the next meeting of the Board for approval.

Members highlighted the proportion of **disaffected young people in each Year 11 cohort**, an issue which had been considered earlier in the meeting, and proposed that this issue be incorporated into the draft terms of reference.

RESOLVED – That the draft terms of reference for the Scrutiny Board's inquiry into education standards in Leeds be submitted to the December meeting of the Scrutiny Board for Members' approval.

64 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 November 2007 to 29th February 2008 which related to the Board's remit, together with the minutes from the Executive Board meeting held on 17th October 2007, in addition to the minutes from the Leeds Admissions Forum meeting held on 26th September 2007.

Members were advised that the work programme would be revised to reflect Members' requests relating to the David Young Community Academy.

The Board sought an update on the working group which had been established in July 2007 to monitor the progress, and help develop a response to the recommendations detailed within the inquiry report published by the **Young People's Scrutiny Forum** entitled, 'Catching the Bus'. In response, the Board was advised that elections for the Youth Council had recently been held, and an appropriate date for the initial meeting of the working group would be sought in the near future.

RESOLVED –

(a). That subject to the above comments, the Board's Work Programme, as appended to the report, be approved;

(b). That Mrs S Knights be appointed to the Inclusion working group.

65 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Thursday, 6th December 2007 at 10.00 a.m. in the Civic Hall, Leeds.
(Pre-meeting scheduled for 9.30 a.m.)

(The meeting concluded at 12.58 p.m.)