



Report of the Director of Children's Service

Scrutiny Board (Children's Services)

Date: 6th December 2007

Subject: Support for Parents and Families in Leeds

Electoral Wards Affected: All

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 This report introduces the new Family Support and Parenting Strategy for Leeds, attached at appendix 1. It also gives a brief overview of the work of the Parent Partnership service, to provide a flavour of the sort of work being done with families and parents in Leeds.

2.0 Background

2.1 Helping parents and families to guide and support their children effectively is a key element of the remit of children's services. This is reflected in Leeds through the wide range of work that has been ongoing with parents and families for some time, through the priorities and messages within the Children and Young People's Plan, and now through the development across partners of a single 'Family Support and Parenting Strategy' for the city.

2.2 This report introduces that Strategy to members of the scrutiny board. The cover report briefly summarises the key points, with a full version attached at appendix 1. In addition, the cover report also provides a brief overview of the work of the Parent Partnership Service, which works on a practical level with parents in a wide variety of ways. The Parent Partnership service is an example of one of the many support services currently provided, which the strategy will help to increasingly co-ordinate.

2.3 Officers will be present at the scrutiny board meeting to provide both an overview of the strategy and details of Parent Partnership services, showing the relationship between the strategic direction that this area of work is taking and how this will affect services at the front line.

3.0 An Overview of our Family Support and Parenting Strategy

3.1 The Family Support and Parenting Strategy has been developed around the belief that parents, carers and those with parenting responsibilities are almost always the best placed people in a child's life to provide the emotional and practical support that each individual child needs.

3.2 As such, parents have been heavily involved in consultation leading to the development of the strategy. Parents and carers from a diversity of backgrounds completed a total of 335 questionnaires, helping us to better appreciate the range and levels of need across the city. Significant input from other stakeholders, including front-line staff, schools, senior leaders across our partners and elected members (a seminar was held over the summer) also helped to inform its development.

3.3 The strategy sets out the vision, principles and aims that will underpin our future work with parents. Crucially, it also clarifies the different levels of service and support parents can expect, based on their individual level of need. This is summarised below

	Level of Need	Definition of Need	Level of service delivery	Type of Support
1	Universal	All parent, carer and family needs met through universal provision	Universal Core Offer	Readily available support services such as self-help, information and signposting (Please see the universal offer)
2	Additional Needs	A parent, carer or family needing some additional support, at a particular time. Parents can self-refer, or may be directed to services	Early intervention and other targeted responses	Early intervention such as an informal drop-in, a 7-day response, a parenting course, or a Common Assessment Framework (CAF). Support may include a lead professional
3	Multiple Additional Needs	A family that has complex or multiple needs, requiring a targeted response from more than one service	Multiple targeted responses	Longer-term support where a lead professional brings together a range of services working to a multi-agency plan
4	Specialist Needs	Parents are not offering effective support to their children and are putting them at risk	Specialist	Intensive support delivered on a statutory basis

- 3.4 The strategy outlines the next steps to be taken in providing for the different levels of need detailed above, including the way that parents will be engaged in this process and the training that will be provided to support it. It focuses on the need to introduce a Parenting Unit to support this work, clarify the governance structures to take the agenda forward and introduce a commissioning plan to provide clarity and co-ordination around the future services to be provided.

Promoting the Strategy and Services to Parents, Carers and Families

- 3.5 A variety of work is being undertaken to raise awareness of the strategy and more importantly the services currently available for parents. A summary version of the strategy has been produced in partnership with parents and carers and includes information on where further support is available (for example the Family Hub). A major launch event also took place at Primrose High School on 27th November, at which over 40 stalls were run to showcase to parents the services available for them. More feedback from this event will be provided at the time of the scrutiny meeting.

4.0 An Example of our work with Parents: The Parent Partnership Service

- 4.1 The Parent Partnership Service in Leeds is a statutory service established in accordance with the SEN Code of Practice 2001. It is situated within Education Leeds so as to provide a strong link to schools. Education Leeds does not influence the nature of the advice that the service provides to parents, but it does assist in marketing the service's work to parents and supporting the management of information it holds.
- 4.2 The Service aims to provide a first class service to parents/carers, Education Leeds, schools and other voluntary and statutory agencies. It offers expert and knowledgeable support, advice and training with particular emphasis on service information (helping parents to know what support and options are available to them), and the referral service. More recently it has also hosted the Choice Advice Service, a statutory requirement under the 2006 Education and Inspection Act.
- 4.3 The information service ensures stakeholders know that Parent Partnership is available to parents and other partner agencies to offer the support they need. It facilitates appropriate information sharing between different agencies to help coordinate services for parents and it ensures that information provided is available in different languages and formats.
- 4.4 The referral service provides a helpline from 10am to 3pm each weekday. This provides impartial and confidential advice to parents around issues concerning the individual needs and circumstances of their child, including their rights, roles and responsibilities. It supports the provision of surgeries within local areas around referral based issues and it allocates an Independent Parent Supporter for all parents that need one. The service also ensures access to the Independent Mediation Service with a view to avoiding or resolving disagreements.
- 4.5 The Choice Advice Service recognises that making the transition between primary and secondary school can be one of the most challenging times for children and their parents and that whilst many parents will be able to navigate the process effectively

there will be those who find it difficult to understand. As such, it provides guidance, information and impartial advice to help parents choose the right secondary school for their children. The service's work can include: explaining the admissions process; arranging visits to schools for parents; helping parents to fill in the necessary forms and advising on (though not attending) the appeals process.

- 4.6 Parent Partnership aims to provide a service that is flexible, accessible and targets support where it can be particularly beneficial. As such it focuses on services for parents and carers whose children have additional needs in order to empower them to play an active and informed role in their child's education. It takes a pro-active partnership approach and will therefore have a key role to play as services for parents are coordinated within the context of the new Family Support and Parenting Strategy.

5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1 As the example of the Parent Partnership Service suggests, there is already a variety of very good work being done to support parents, families and carers in Leeds. It is essential that we build on this and the new Family Support and Parenting Strategy provides a framework to take this forward in a coordinated, focused way and in partnership with parents themselves.

6.0 Recommendation

- 6.1 It is recommended that members note and comment on the content of this report and particularly the strategy attached at appendix 1.