

Report of the Head of Corporate Governance and Scrutiny Support

Report to Scrutiny Board (Children's Services)

Date: 23 February 2017

Subject: Scrutiny Inquiry Session 3– Children's Centres

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

At its meeting on the 16 of June 2016, the Scrutiny Board expressed a desire to undertake an inquiry which would consider the value of Children's Centres and how they deliver the aspirations defined in the Children and Young People's Plan. Terms of reference for the inquiry were agreed in on the 15th of September 2016 when the Scrutiny Board stated its wish to understand how services provided through Children's Centres:

- a) impact on the lives of children, particularly in their early years,
- b) improve the lives of their associated family,
- c) deliver wider economic and social benefits,

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

- The strategic and operational approach to making a positive difference in the lives of children and their families through the provision of Children's Centres.
- The roles and responsibilities of Leeds City Council and Partners in the provision and resourcing of Children's Centres and the effectiveness of those partnerships.
- The range, quality and impact of services provided by Children's Centres, including the recognition and sharing of good practice.
- Aspirations for the development of Children's Centres and exploring opportunities to secure a sustainable future.

To date two sessions of the inquiry have been undertaken. The third session will enable the Scrutiny Board to share information gathered during the visits to four Children's Centres on the 26th of January. A representative from the Leeds Clinical Commissioning Groups will also be in attendance to promote further understanding about the value of Children's Centres to Health Services.

2. Recommendation

The Scrutiny Board (Children's Services) is recommended to:

- a) Note the information contained within this report and presented at the meeting
- b) Make recommendations as deemed appropriate.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report provides information to support the 3rd session of the Scrutiny Boards inquiry into Children's Centres.

2 Focus for Session 3

- 2.1 Previous sessions of the Scrutiny Board's inquiry have focused on legislation, and statutory and local governance frameworks, including Ofsted inspection. The Board has also received evidence regarding the various services delivered, voice and influence, relationships and partnership working, particularly with health services and known challenges, sustainability and risk.

Visits to Children's Centres

- 2.2 On the 26th of January members of the Scrutiny Board visited four Children's Centres, Bankside, New Bewerley, Boston Spa and Burley. The purpose of the visits was to meet with professionals and service users at the Children's Centres in order to gain a better understanding of what is being delivered and achieved "on the ground", to understand any barriers to progress, and to listen to ideas and aspirations for the future.
- 2.3 Reflecting on the terms of reference for the inquiry and evidence considered at previous inquiry sessions, members of the Scrutiny Board focused on the following key areas during the visits.
- Best Start & Preparation for Learning
 - Improving outcomes for families with multiple needs and supporting parents
 - Service user views about the Children's Centre and what they value
 - Partnership working
 - Progress, achievement, value for money, barriers to be overcome
 - Aspirations and future plans
- 2.4 The member leading at each visit is requested to provide feedback to the Scrutiny Board during session 3. This will facilitate greater understanding of the unique challenges at each Children's Centre, and enable comparative and contrasting approaches and practices to be identified along with common themes.
- 2.5 Representatives from Children's Services and Public Health have been invited to respond to matters raised by the Board and provide further clarity where required. Supporting families with multiple needs, safeguarding and safely reducing the number of children looked after were identified as core responsibilities at each of the Children's Centres visited and therefore a representative from Children's Social Services has been invited to provide the Scrutiny Board with further information regarding the integrated work delivered within Children's Centres.

Clinical Commissioning Groups

- 2.6 At the second session of the Scrutiny Inquiry (November 16) the Scrutiny Board focused on Children's Centre sustainability, discussing investment and funding models. Unfortunately a CCG representative was unable to attend this session,

however the briefing note (appendix 1) was provided to aid consideration of the programmed areas of focus.

2.7 It has been confirmed that Sarah Lovell, Associate Director of Commissioning will be attending the meeting on the 23 February 2017 in order to provide further clarity relating to aspects raised by the Board during previous inquiry sessions, these are:

- Children's Centre investment from the 3 CCG's in Leeds, the funding model and how reductions in CCG funding may impact on Children's Centre funding/investment in the future.
- CCG views about how Children's Centres can be improved or how services could evolve to support CCG objectives.
- Return on investment from the services provided, CCG views on the health benefits received from investment.

The Scrutiny Board may wish to take the opportunity to raise additional lines of inquiry arising from the Children's Centre visits which relate to CCG commissioning, funding and investment..

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 could be undertaken.

3.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration.

3.2.1 Equality Improvement Priorities have been developed to ensure our legal duties are met under the Equality Act. 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 2015-2019 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 the information contained within this report and presented at the meeting
- b) Make recommendations as deemed appropriate.

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.