

SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN'S SERVICES)

THURSDAY, 6TH DECEMBER, 2007

PRESENT: Councillor W Hyde in the Chair

Councillors C Campbell, J Chapman, J Elliott,
R D Feldman, S Hamilton, R Harington, A Lamb,
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)
Mrs S Knights - Parent Governor Representative
(Primary)

**CO-OPTED MEMBERS:
(NON-VOTING)** Mr T Hales - Teacher Representative
Ms C Foote - Teacher Representative
Ms J Morris-Boam - Leeds VOICE Children and
Young People Services Forum
Representative
Ms T Kayani - Leeds Youth Work Partnership
Representative

66 Chair's Opening Remarks

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

67 Late Items

In accordance with his powers under Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chair admitted to the agenda draft terms of reference for the Board's inquiry into education standards in Leeds, which were to be considered as part of agenda item 10. The draft terms of reference were not available at the time of the agenda despatch and needed to be considered for approval, as the first session of the inquiry was to take place at the next meeting of the Board, which was scheduled for 17th January 2008 (Minute No. 74 refers).

The Chair also admitted to the agenda a copy of the Leeds Play Strategy, which was to be considered as part of agenda item 12 entitled, 'Inquiry into Services for 8-13 Year Olds'. The document was not available at the time of agenda despatch and needed to be considered alongside the range of other evidence which had been submitted to the meeting as part of the third and fourth formal sessions of the Board's inquiry (Minute No. 76 refers).

68 Declaration of Interests

Councillor Murray declared a personal interest in relation to agenda item 8 entitled, 'Support for Parents and Families in Leeds', due to being Chief Executive of the Learning Partnerships organisation. He also declared a personal interest in relation to agenda item 10 entitled, 'Education Standards - Draft Terms of Reference', due to being a Director of igen and Chief Executive of the Learning Partnerships organisation. Finally, Councillor Murray declared a personal interest in relation to agenda item 12 entitled, 'Inquiry into Services for 8-13 Year Olds', due to being an LEA Governor of Garforth Community College and a Trustee of the School Partnership Trust (Minute Nos. 72, 74 and 76 refer respectively).

Mrs S Knights declared a personal interest in relation to agenda item 8 entitled, 'Support for Parents and Families in Leeds', due to her position as Chair of the North West Specialist Inclusive Learning Centre (SILC) Parents' Forum, which was currently working with the Parent Partnership Service (Minute No. 72 refers).

69 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Councillors B Lancaster, J Langdale, Mr I Falkingham and Mrs S Hutchinson.

70 Minutes of Previous Meeting - 8th November 2007

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the previous Scrutiny Board (Children's Services) meeting held on 8th November 2007 be approved as a correct record, subject to Councillor S Hamilton's apologies for absence from the meeting being included within Minute No. 53.

71 Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 9th October 2007 be noted.

72 Support for Parents and Families in Leeds

The Board received a report from the Director of Children's Services which introduced the new Family Support and Parenting Strategy for Leeds, and provided Members with a summary of the work currently being undertaken by the **Parent Partnership service** throughout the city.

A copy of the '**Family Support and Parenting Strategy**' was appended to the report for Members' consideration.

Barbara Newton, Strategic Leader - Partnership and Participation, Children's Services, and Wendy Winterburn, Parent Partnership Co-ordinator, Education Leeds, were both in attendance to present the report and answer Members' questions.

Having received an overview of the key issues detailed within the report, in addition to a summary of the work which had been undertaken to produce the parenting strategy, a question and answer session then ensued. The main areas of debate were as follows:-

Promoting and Consulting upon the Support Available to Parents and Carers

- Members acknowledged the range of support which was currently available to parents and carers in Leeds, and enquired how **parents' awareness of such provision** could be maximised. In response, the Board noted that via a range of initiatives, such as an **advocacy service** which operated throughout the city, parents and carers were provided with as much information and support as possible, in a format that was easily accessible;
- Having noted the level of consultation with parents and carers which had been undertaken throughout the development of the Family Support and Parenting Strategy, Members referred to the 335 questionnaires which had been completed by parents as one element of the consultation, and asked what the number of respondents was as a proportion of all parents and carers residing in Leeds. In response, Members were advised that this information would be provided;
- Members further discussed the range of methods used to publicise the support available to parents and carers, and learned that **face to face contact** was still most parents' preferred method of interaction.

Meeting the Needs of Parents and Carers

- Members emphasised the importance of ensuring that appropriate provision was being delivered to **meet the needs of all parents and carers** throughout the city. In response, the Board noted that a more systematic understanding of parents' needs was being developed, which would enable the range of needs across the city to be mapped and addressed more consistently and effectively;
- Following Members' enquiries, the Board learned that the parenting strategy aimed to enable a **fully integrated and multi-agency approach** to be taken towards the delivery of provision, so that the needs of the family as a whole, rather than just the needs of the individual young person, were fully addressed;
- In response to the Board's enquiries, Members were assured that the aim of the advice and guidance given to parents and carers was to **inform and empower** them, in order to enable them to make informed decisions.

Performance Monitoring Issues

- The Board made enquiries into the extent to which the progress made by those parents, carers and young people receiving support was monitored. In response, the Board learned that although feedback was already being received from parents and carers, longer term **tracking mechanisms**, which would monitor the impact of the provision, were to be developed in order to enable the service to be improved. Members then highlighted the considerable length of time it could take to receive data from any such long term monitoring mechanisms, and noted that the timescales for such monitoring would depend upon the indicators which were used.

General Observations

- Members received further information relating to the **independent mediation service**, and the circumstances in which such a service would be provided;

- The Board discussed how the provision which was being established for parents and carers was working towards the Government's **localisation agenda**;
- Following Members' enquiries, the Board noted that further information relating to the availability of the '**Parent Line Plus**' advice service would be submitted to Members for information.

In conclusion, the Chair acknowledged that further consideration of this issue was required, and proposed that the matter was re-scheduled into the Board's work programme.

RESOLVED -

- (a). That the report and information appended to the report be noted;
- (b). That the additional information requested be forwarded to Members for consideration;
- (c). That the issue of support for parents and families in Leeds be re-scheduled into the Board's work programme for further consideration.

73 Young People's Scrutiny Forum

A report was submitted by the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development which updated Members on the progress which had been made in relation to young people's participation levels in the scrutiny process.

The Board was advised that following the recent **Youth Council** elections, the full Youth Council was scheduled to meet on 15th December 2007 to identify a topic which would be the subject of an inquiry by the **Young People's Scrutiny Forum**. Members noted that once an inquiry topic had been chosen, volunteers to sit on the Young People's Scrutiny Forum would be sought from the Youth Council and via the **Reach Out and Reconnect (ROAR)** organisation.

Members learned that with support from youth work staff and the Scrutiny Support Unit, draft terms of reference would be drawn up by the Young People's Scrutiny Forum, and later submitted to the Scrutiny Board for endorsement.

A volunteer from the Scrutiny Board was then sought to attend the December meeting of the Youth Council, in order to discuss potential scrutiny topics with the young people.

RESOLVED -

- (a). That the contents of the report be noted;
- (b). That Councillors Lamb and Renshaw be identified as the Board's representatives to attend the December meeting of the Youth Council, in order to discuss potential scrutiny topics with the young people.

74 Education Standards - Draft Terms of Reference

Members 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. A copy of the draft terms of reference had been circulated to Members prior to the meeting.

In accordance with Scrutiny Board Procedure Rules, the views of the relevant Director and Executive Member had been sought. Members agreed to incorporate the comments which had been received into the terms of reference.

The Board then proposed that issues previously raised by Her Majesty's Inspectorate in respect of Leeds' educational attainment levels when compared with the national average, were incorporated into the terms of reference.

RESOLVED -

- (a). That the contents of the report be noted;
- (b). That subject to the above comments, the terms of reference be approved.

75 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 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 December 2007 to 31st March 2008 which related to the Board's remit, together with the minutes from the Executive Board meeting held on 14th November 2007.

Further to a report considered at the November meeting which briefed Members on the **David Young Community Academy**, and how the Academy fitted into the provision of children's services in Leeds, the Board noted that the Principal of the Academy had agreed to attend the January meeting of the Board in order to provide further details on any related matters.

Members enquired when further consideration could be given to the issues relating to the levels of **support given to parents and families** in Leeds, a topic which had been discussed earlier in the meeting. In response, the Board was assured that the issue would be incorporated into an appropriate space within the Board's work programme.

RESOLVED - That subject to the above comments, the Board's Work Programme, as appended to the report, be approved.

76 Inquiry into Services for 8-13 Year Olds

Further to Minute No. 47, 11th October 2007, the Board received a report from the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development which introduced the evidence to be considered as part of the third and fourth formal sessions of the Board's inquiry into services for 8-13 year olds.

Sally Threlfall, Acting Chief Officer, and Jason Tabor, Programme Officer – Out of School Activities Project, both of Early Years and Youth Service, Maggie Smith, Deputy Manager, and Wendy Gledhill, both of Youth Offending Service, Barbara Newton, Strategic Leader - Partnership and Participation, Children's Services, Mark Hopkins, Strategic Manager – Study Support, Education Leeds, Deborah Howe, Children's Involvement Advocate, Mark Law, Chief Executive of Bramley and Rodley Community Action (BARCA), Chris Finnigan, Social Care, Frank O'Malley, Leeds Play Network and Jody Sheppard, Leeds Children's Fund, were all in attendance to introduce the range of evidence which had been submitted and to answer Members' questions.

Appended to the report for Members' information were the agreed terms of reference for the inquiry, a range of information regarding current summer holiday provision being delivered in Leeds, and a briefing paper entitled, 'Use of PFI Schools by Community Groups and Third Party Groups'. This was in addition to a summary of the 'short break' services provided for disabled children in the city, a briefing paper which related to the 'all relative' programme, a copy of the 'Leeds Children and Young People's Participation Strategy 2007', and a copy of the 'Leeds Play Strategy'.

The evidence which had been submitted was then introduced and presented to the Board by relevant officers, together with representatives from the voluntary, community and faith sector. A wide ranging discussion then ensued, which was divided into several different aspects of service provision for 8-13 year olds. The main areas of debate were as follows:-

Voluntary Sector

- The Chief Executive of **BARCA** provided Members with an overview of the range of services which were provided for 8-13 year olds by the voluntary sector in Leeds. The Board learned that voluntary sector organisations were significant providers of extended services in Leeds, and remained vital in respect of plugging any gaps in provision;
- Members noted that overarching organisations such as BARCA provided a framework for smaller service providers within the voluntary sector, and that effective communication between such voluntary sector organisations was essential in order to ensure that a co-ordinated service was delivered;
- The Board was also advised of the **innovative approach** taken by many organisations within the voluntary sector, when attempting to address issues, such as meeting the needs of the family unit as a whole.

Extended Services/Holiday Schemes

- Members received a summary of the work being undertaken to deliver extended services, holiday schemes and out of hours provision in Leeds, which included an overview of the **Breeze initiative** and the progress which was being made in respect of **clustering arrangements** throughout the city;
- The Board learned that Leeds was one of the top performing Local Authorities in respect of the proportion of schools providing the core extended services offer, with 76% of schools within Leeds currently

- delivering such provision, compared to the national average of 63%;
- Members discussed attendance levels at the series of Breeze events which had been held throughout the summer, and the ways in which such attendances could continue to be improved. Members then noted that by 2010, every young person in Leeds should have access to **extended services**, as there would be greater and more varied levels of provision available;
- The Board enquired about the extent to which the public was aware of the clustering arrangements being developed throughout Leeds. In response, Members' comments were acknowledged, and the Board was advised of the actions being taken to promote the initiative, which included the development of **Advisory Boards** including parent representation, and a range of work being undertaken via the '**Family Hub**' and the Breeze initiative. The Board then discussed the monitoring role that Education Leeds played in relation to the development of the clusters;
- Members sought further details relating to those schools which currently did not provide out of school activities in Leeds, and made enquires into the actions which were being taken to encourage such schools to extend their provision. In response, the Board learned that there were 114 schools currently delivering such provision in Leeds, and that those schools which currently did not provide such services were being encouraged to do so. Members then requested that further statistical information relating to this issue was submitted to the Board for consideration;
- The Board referred to those young people who were educated within a specialist setting which was not located within the vicinity of their home, and enquired about the access such young people had to their local clusters. In response, the Board learned that there was evidence that such individuals were accessing extended provision within their own locality, and it was agreed to provide some case studies;
- The Board discussed the levels of access that young people residing in certain areas of the city had to the series of events organised as part of the Breeze initiative. In response, Members learned that the Breeze programme was promoted in every school throughout the city, and that wherever possible, neutral venues were used for the main events. With regard to Breeze cards, Members noted that such cards were not only used to access Breeze events, but could also be used to engage in a number of leisure activities throughout the city;
- Members then received further information relating to the line management and staff development arrangements in place for the Cluster Co-ordinators who had been appointed.

Provision for Children with Disabilities

- Members received an overview of the provision which was currently being delivered in Leeds to those 8-13 year olds with disabilities.

'All Relative' Scheme

- The Board noted that the '**All Relative**' scheme delivered a parenting programme to parents of 8-13 year olds who were at risk of engaging in **anti-social behaviour**;

- In response to the Board's enquiries, Members learned that although referrals to the scheme were often received through various agencies, such as schools and the anti-social behaviour unit, it was a **voluntary programme**, which the parents themselves agreed to undertake;
- Members discussed the geographical area which was covered by the scheme;
- Having noted that research conducted by the University of Bangor had concluded that the scheme had led to participants' **parenting skills being 'improved'**, the Board considered whether in the correct circumstances, certain elements of the scheme could be made compulsory;
- Members learned that the course was of 18 weeks duration, and in response to their enquiries, noted that it was hoped for a monitoring mechanism to be established, in order to **track the progress of the participants and their children** over a longer period of time;
- The Board then discussed the **funding arrangements** in place for the scheme.

Participation

- The Board received a brief summary of the work which had been undertaken to develop and produce the **Leeds Children and Young People's Participation Strategy**, and learned of the range of work currently being carried out throughout the city to improve the engagement and participation levels of children and young people, such as the '**5-13 Crew**' and '**Youth on Health**' initiatives;
- Following Members' enquiries into the '5-13 Crew' and 'Crew on the Move' initiatives, which aimed to engage with young people via the publication and circulation of a magazine composed and designed by the group's membership, the Board noted that the scheme was publicised via schools, the Breeze initiative and young people themselves. Members then discussed the broad age range of the young people involved, and how they worked together in producing the magazine;
- Having discussed the range of young people's views which were detailed within the participation strategy, Members emphasised the importance for all young people to be convinced that their views would be listened to and taken into consideration and that they would receive feedback.

Play Strategy

- Having received a brief overview of the actions taken to develop the **Leeds Play Strategy**, Members made enquiries into the proposed appointment of an individual officer who would be responsible for the wide ranging task of developing play facilities across the city, and the level of support which would be available to that individual. In response, the Board noted that through the establishment of the Play Strategy, the authority was now better placed to take a more **co-ordinated and multi-agency approach** towards developing play facilities in Leeds, and that there would be a range of agencies who would assist the authority in developing its play provision throughout the city.

Conclusions

- The Acting Chief Officer, Early Years and Youth Service, welcomed the Board's consideration of the range of issues associated with the provision of services for 8-13 year olds, assured Members that where it had been requested, further information would be provided, and emphasised the importance of the series of **site visits** that the Board was undertaking across a range of facilities as part of the inquiry;
- With regard to the development of services for 8-13 year olds, it was acknowledged that although every venue throughout Leeds would not be capable of delivering a full complement of **extended provision**, over time, a wide range of services would be developed across each locality;
- Members praised the range of **comments made by children and young people** which had featured within the participation strategy.

In conclusion, the Chair thanked all officers who had contributed to the inquiry for their time, and noted that further information which related to the findings from the series of site visits which were being undertaken by the Board, would be considered at the next meeting in January.

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.

(Councillors Chapman, Renshaw and S Hamilton left the meeting at 11.00 a.m., 11.55 a.m. and 11.57 a.m. respectively, during the consideration of this item)

77 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Thursday, 17th January 2008 at 10.00 a.m. in the Civic Hall, Leeds.
(Pre-meeting scheduled for 9.30 a.m.)

(The meeting concluded at 12.10 p.m.)