

Report of the Head of Governance and Scrutiny Support

Report to Scrutiny Board (Children and Families)

Date: 14 December 2017

Subject: Scrutiny Inquiry– The impact of Child Poverty on Attainment, Achievement and Attendance

Are specific electoral Wards affected?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):		
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?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number:		
Appendix number:		

Summary of Main Issues

- At its meeting on the 15 of June 2017, the Scrutiny Board considered potential sources of work for the 2017/18 municipal year. Following discussion with representatives from Children's Services the Board expressed a desire to undertake an inquiry which would consider the effect of child poverty on educational attainment, achievement and school attendance. The Scrutiny Board expressed a desire to understand how the impact of child poverty on a child's education is being challenged, strategically and practically, and also how the impact is managed in order to improve educational outcomes for children, particularly those who are vulnerable, in order to narrow the attainment/achievement gap and improve school attendance.
- The Scrutiny Board agreed the terms of reference and conducted the first part of the inquiry on the 20 July 2017. This meeting is the 5th inquiry session and provides an opportunity for Scrutiny Board Members to provide feedback from the visits to schools and the Inner East Cluster Partnership, which were conducted on the 23rd, 24th and 29th of November.
- Poverty Proofing the School Day**
Early in the inquiry the Board sought to identify the positive steps that are being proactively taken in other areas of the country to reduce the impact of poverty on the education of children, so that Leeds could identify good and learn from good practice. 'Poverty Proofing the School Day' is a project developed by the charity Children North East, with the North East Child Poverty Commission. The project provides a toolkit to reduce stigma and remove barriers to learning, and to assist

schools in exploring the most effective way to spend pupil premium allocation. 'Poverty Proofing the School Day' consists of an audit for each individual school, questioning pupils, staff, parents and governors. The result is an action plan tailored to each individual school to address any stigmatising policies or practices.

The project was first piloted in four North East schools (both primary and secondary schools) in 2013-14. Peer researchers were used in the pilot secondary schools, a team of young people in each year group were trained to carry out the audit and support the school in implementing actions. Following completion of the pilot, Newcastle University evaluated the impact of the project, and reported best practice. This evaluation is attached as appendix 1. The programme is still in its early stages so there are no longitudinal data about the longer term impacts. However, the evaluation report suggests the project has 'significant benefits' for schools, particularly in regard to a shift in whole school ethos, and notes early evidence for improved attainment and attendance of disadvantaged pupils. The report suggests that a whole-school buy in of the project with is crucial to its success, with Local Authority support.

Since the development of 'Poverty Proofing the School Day', Children North East have worked with a number of local authorities to provide audits in schools. The project launched in North Lincolnshire in 2014, with support from Children North East, and has been running in at least 6 schools, with 18 staff that the local authority trained to complete the audit process. There is a waiting list of at least 30 schools.

In 2015, the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG), in partnership with Glasgow City Council Education Services, and supported by Children North East, conducted research based on 'Poverty Proofing the School Day' with children, young people and school staff members to produce a research report, with a toolkit, called 'The Cost of the School Day'. The report included recommendations for schools, local authority services, Education Scotland, national government and other stakeholders. 'The Cost of The School Day' project has so far been facilitated in 8 Glasgow schools, with 339 young people and 111 staff.

In October 2017, Manchester City Council launched the 'Manchester Family Poverty Strategy 2017-22' despite the removal of their statutory duty to do so by the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016. The strategy outlines Manchester City Council's intention to produce their own poverty proofing toolkit to reduce the impact of child poverty on educational outcomes, with evidence taken from the 'Poverty Proofing the School Day' project. The toolkit will also be adaptable for different uses and different organisations, including health and the Voluntary and Community Sector, and will use a strengths-based approach and learning in line with the 'Our Manchester' ethos. The toolkit will be co-developed with the support of partners and key stakeholders as well as with residents, to ensure that it reflects what is important to residents and best meets their needs.

Following engagement by the Scrutiny Unit with Children North East a representative has offered to meet with members of the Scrutiny Board to provide further information regarding the poverty proofing initiative and its impact.

4. School Places

At the October session the Board raised concerns about the impact of school placement and in year school moves on families. Particularly in circumstances where siblings are not placed at the same school or a child has to move schools due to difficult circumstances such as fleeing domestic violence. The Board resolved to invite Viv Buckland to the December meeting to discuss how school placement can impact on or alleviate poverty and supports school attendance.

5. Commissioning

The terms of reference sets out the Scrutiny Boards wish to identify how child poverty strategies & plans in Leeds inform Children's Services commissioning and resources allocation for children and families in poverty, to support attainment, achievement and attendance. The report from the Director of Children's Services responds to the request for this information.

6. Mitigating the impact of Child Poverty on Attainment, Achievement and Attendance

At the October session of the inquiry the Scrutiny Board received a report which stated that 'the commitment to tackling child poverty has been seen as implicit across all directorates of the council'. The Scrutiny Chair has again extended the opportunity for Children's Services to provide a clear and coherent overview of the delivery and impact of Leeds City Councils implied approach to child poverty reduction. In response to this a presentation to the Scrutiny Board is planned for delivery at the meeting on the 14th December 2017.

7. Recommendations

The Scrutiny Board (Children and Families) is recommended to:

- a) Note the information contained within this report, and the information provided by the Director of Children and Families.
- b) Note the verbal information presented at the meeting
- c) Consider if the Board wish to discuss poverty proofing the school day further with Children North East.
- d) Make recommendations as deemed appropriate.