



**Report of: Director of Children's Services**

**Meeting: Executive Board**

**Date of meeting: February 2008**

**SUBJECT: The 'Children's Plan – Building Brighter Futures'**

<p><b>Electoral Wards Affected:</b></p>  <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 30px; display: inline-block; margin-right: 10px;"></div> Ward Members consulted (referred to in report)	<p><b>Specific Implications For:</b></p> <p>Equality and Diversity <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Community Cohesion <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Narrowing the Gap <input type="checkbox"/></p>
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Eligible for Call In

Not Eligible for Call In

(Details contained in the report)

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report brings to the Executive Board's attention the publication of the government's Children's Plan – Building Brighter Futures. It highlights some of the key implications within the plan for children's services in Leeds and it outlines how the themes within it will influence local planning and joint working over the coming years. The broad overview provided in the covering report is complemented by the summary of the plan attached at appendix 'A'.
2. The Children's Plan has been developed in view of the introduction of the new Department for Children, Schools and Families and following a national consultation in 2007, which included a variety of work in Leeds. The Plan was launched on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2007.
3. The Plan outlines the strategic approach that the government wishes to see across children's services work by identifying five principles that underpin it. A range of targets are outlined as the 'goals for 2020'. The Plan also discusses areas where funding is to be targeted over the next three years and where more specific policy reviews are scheduled or underway to inform more detailed strategies. Key themes within the Plan that are particularly important for planning ahead in Leeds include:
  - The central role of parents and families and the impact of poverty.
  - A new emphasis on enjoyment, emotional well-being and risk.
  - New approaches to schools

- The leadership role for Councils through children's trust arrangements.
- An emphasis on commissioning.

4. This report highlights the challenge for the authority to use the 'place shaping' and strategic leadership role reinforced in the Plan to not just follow central government but to take a lead role in shaping the national children's agenda. It outlines how work to revise Leeds' Children and Young People's Plan offers an opportunity to take the initiative with this work.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Approve the proposal for the authority to lead the development to renew the city's strategy for children's services through a revised Children and Young People's Plan.

## **1.0 Purpose of report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to summarise the key elements of the government's recent 'Children's Plan' and to highlight the implications for Leeds and the themes that will influence local planning and joint working in the next few years.

## **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 The reorganisation of central government last summer led to the creation of the Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), and the appointment of Ed Balls as Secretary of State. The role of the DCSF mirrors that of children's services in local government, with formal 'dual key' cross-government working with other departments on shared issues such as youth justice.
- 2.2 Soon after the creation of the DCSF it was announced that the department would be developing a 'Children's Plan' to set out their overall approach, supported by expert groups of stakeholders and a wide consultation exercise. The aim of the document was to set out the long term strategy for the government and to respond to the high profile 2006 UNICEF Report of Child Well-being which rated the UK very poorly for the outcomes of young people. The consultation exercise, 'Time to Talk', involved input from children, young people and parents at events, including one in Leeds in Autumn 2007. The Plan was launched on 11<sup>th</sup> December.

## **3 Summary of DCSF Children's Plan**

- 3.1 The Children's Plan tries to bring together a range of recent policy announcements within an overall approach that encompasses the DCSF's new wider remit. The Plan does this in two ways – first in terms of new emphasis, approach and overall strategy and second in more practical terms through a long list summarizing plans for funding and future policy reviews. The main points are set out below and in the summary of the Plan attached as Appendix 1. The full document is available at <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/childrensplan/>.

### **Strategic approach – principles and goals**

- 3.2 The government state that the Plan is underpinned by five principles:
1. Government does not bring up children – parents and families do – so government needs to do more to back parents and families.
  2. All children have the potential to succeed and should go as far as their talents can take them.
  3. Children and young people need to enjoy their childhood as well as grow up prepared for adult life.
  4. Services need to be shaped by and responsive to children, young people and families, not designed around professional boundaries.
  5. It is always better to prevent failure than tackle a crisis later.
- 3.3 The Plan closes with 'Goals for 2020', a range of ambitious targets which further help set out the aims of the children's agenda.
1. Enhance children and young people's well-being, particularly at key transition points in their lives;

2. Every child ready for success in school, with at least 90 per cent developing well across all areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile by age 5;
3. Every child ready for secondary school, with at least 90 per cent achieving at or above the expected level in both English and mathematics by age 11;
4. Every young person with the skills for adult life and further study, with at least 90 per cent achieving the equivalent of five higher level GCSEs by age 19; and at least 70 per cent achieving the equivalent of two A levels by age 19;
5. Parents satisfied with the information and support they receive;
6. All young people participating in positive activities to develop personal and social skills, promote well-being and reduce behaviour that puts them at risk;
7. Employers satisfied with young people's readiness for work;
8. Child health improved, with the proportion of obese and overweight children reduced to 2000 levels;
9. Child poverty halved by 2010 and eradicated by 2020; and
10. Significantly reduce by 2020 the number of young offenders receiving a conviction, reprimand, or final warning for a recordable offence for the first time, with a goal to be set in the Youth Crime Action Plan.

### Funding

The majority of the national funding outlined in the Plan forms part of the recent Local Government Finance settlement for 2008/09, 2009/10 and 2010/11, which has been recognised in the Council's budget strategy for 2008/09 and beyond. The funding government highlighted in their plan includes:

- £225 million for renewing and rebuilding 3,500 playgrounds, and 30 new adventure playgrounds in deprived areas.
- £160 million to improve the quality and range of places for young people to go and things for them to do
- £100 million to extended the offer of free childcare places to 20,000 families in disadvantaged areas.
- £90 million of capital funding to improve facilities for disabled children to take short breaks
- £66 million jointly with the Home Office to target those most at risk of youth offending
- £34 million to fund to expert parent advisers in every authority
- Other funding for teachers and early years staff professional development; support for special educational needs learning; the Every Child a Reader scheme; home safety schemes; alternative provision; re-engaging young people who are not in learning; expanding family learning and Acceptable Behaviour Contracts.

### Plans and policy reviews

The Children's Plan signals the new department's desire to review and redirect a wide set of government policies.

The plan sets out intentions for new strategies and plans in the following areas:

- A Staying Safe Action Plan on safeguarding in early 2008
- A joint DCSF/Department of Health Children's Health Strategy by spring 2008
- A Play Strategy by summer 2008
- A youth alcohol action plan to be published by Spring 2008
- A Children's Workforce Action Plan in early 2008
- A Green Paper in spring 2008 on the education and reintegration for young offenders
- An action plan to address overcrowding in housing for families in 2008

In addition there are a long list of reviews of policy, grouped around two key areas – schools and young people's emotional and mental well-being:

- Schools: the plan sets out plans for reviewing many aspects of schools including:
  - The Rose Review of the primary curriculum
  - An OfSTED led review of the quality of special educational needs provision in 2009
  - Review progress and agreeing next steps on the Steer Report of school behaviour
  - Consultation on a new relationship between schools and parents, and also on reducing the size of governing bodies
  - Review approaches to zero carbon schools and co-located services in the Building Schools for the Future programme
- Mental and emotional well-being: the Plan includes a number of reviews that aim to respond to rising levels of mental and emotional well-being in the faces of changes in modern society. These include:
  - A review of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
  - An independent review of the impact of the commercial world on child well-being
  - The Byron Review of the impact of the internet and video games on young people

## **4.0 Discussion**

4.1 The information above and the wider Plan document have a range of key themes that are of particular significance. These are highlighted below:

1. *Central role of parents and families, and the impact of poverty:* the principles of the Plan reinforce the new department's greater emphasis on a wider focus around supporting families and parents, and the need for joined up work to address child poverty. This ranges from providing information to improving support services to intervention for families that face the most challenges.
2. *New emphasis on enjoyment, emotional well-being and risk:* the Plan marks a change in rhetoric and priorities for the government, in line with their consultation with young people and parents. This has led increased prominence for action to make life enjoyable for young people, with the main budget areas highlighted in the plan being around investment in play

and positive activities. In addition the government is giving greater emphasis to mental health and emotional well-being, as well as a new attempt to balance concern for safety with recognition that risk is both inevitable and needed to help young people grow up.

3. *New approaches to schools:* whilst the Plan shows the new wider concerns of the DCSF compared to the old Department for Education and Skills, schools remain as an important part of the Children's Plan. The Plan aims to make schools central to their communities, working in new ways with stronger links to parents and wider services such as the NHS. Schools and services will be encouraged to co-locate through new guidance and investment in Building Schools for the Future. The Children's Plan also sets out changes for expanding 'Age not Stage' testing (i.e. tests timed to respond to the progress of each pupil rather than at set times), a far-reaching review of the primary curriculum and support for leadership and professional development.
4. *Leadership role for council through children's trusts:* the Plan emphasises government's expectations of a lead role for local authorities working in partnership to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families. The Plan commits the DCSF to close monitoring of the progress of trusts, support for their development and suggests possible further legislation to strengthen their role.
5. *Commissioning:* the plan continues to stress the importance of commissioning in improving local services. The DCSF plan to support commissioning through support programmes with the LGA and I&DeA to support 'world-class systems', and a new 'Centre for Excellence and Outcomes' to inform evidence based commissioning.

## **5.0 Next steps – developing the children's agenda in Leeds**

- 5.1 The council will now need to work with its partners to consider how best to respond to the new directions set out in the Children's Plan. The challenge for the authority is to use the 'place shaping' and strategic leadership role reinforced in the Plan to not just follow central government but take to take a lead role in shaping the national children's agenda.
- 5.2 Leeds is well placed to take this lead role. The development of the local children's trust arrangements, leadership and capacity for further improvement have all been praised by OfSTED. The city is leading development for re-engineering the way schools work together and with partner services. Leeds is ahead of national targets for developing extended services, and is a national pathfinder for developing school collaborative working through the No Child Left Behind programme. Leeds is recognised nationally for its leading practice in service delivery and integration, for example in the national pathfinder project for Budget Holding Lead Professional project and national awards such as Beacon Status for Healthy Schools and Early Years. The authority and its partners are already making progress with the new national priorities, having agreed new strategies for Family and Parent Support and Play in the last year. Local partnership working is developing strongly with increasingly links around clusters of schools, and between local partnerships and Area Committees.
- 5.3 There is now a timely opportunity for the authority and its partners to incorporate

the themes of the Children's Plan into work this revise our Children and Young People's Plan.

- 5.4 Leeds first Children and Young People's Plan was originally written in 2006 as a three year plan for children's services in the city. A review of the Plan was conducted in 2007 to ensure the original priorities and approach remained relevant to Leeds' needs and changing context. As such the original Plan was refined where appropriate. In 2009 the next plan will be developed to run for 3-5 years.
- 5.5 Knowing that a major review will be needed offers an excellent opportunity to begin planning for that process now. Doing this will give us the chance to align budget and service planning with the priorities emerging for the new Plan. With this in mind, the process for reviewing the Plan was highlighted and discussed at a Children's Services Open Forum on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2008. Delegates were encouraged to complete, implement and review their service and financial planning between now and September 2008 so that in September we are well placed to start a full consultation and review process for 2009.
- 5.6 Before that major review takes place it will be necessary to refresh the current Children and Young People's Plan for 2008/09 to make sure the existing priorities have the appropriate focus and identify any significant areas not adequately covered at present. This 'lighter touch' refresh will take into account a range of learning and inputs, including the Children's Plan, the Joint Area Review, Annual Performance Assessment, performance data and crucially, local wedge based children and young people plans. The January Open Forum was also used to launch this 'refresh' and a consultation form is to be made available on the Children Leeds website for anyone who wants to contribute. More details will be provided as this work progresses.

## **6.0 Recommendations**

The Board is recommended to:

- 1) Approve the proposal for the authority to lead the development to renew the city's strategy for children's services through a revised Children and Young People's Plan.