



Report of the Director of Children's Service

Scrutiny Board (Children's Services)

Date: April 2008

Subject: Implementation of the Family Support and Parenting Strategy in Leeds

Electoral Wards Affected: All

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 In December 2007 the Board considered the new Family Support and Parenting Strategy for Leeds, and received 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. This report provides an update on progress in implementing the Family Support and Parenting Strategy and indicates some of the opportunities and challenges this presents.

2.0 Background

2.1 The Family Support and Parenting Strategy recognizes that parents and carers are the single most important factor in making sure that children are happy, healthy, safe, successful and free from the effects of poverty. It is entirely in line with the national 10 year Children's Plan, Building Brighter Futures, published by the DCSF in December 2007, which places great emphasis on supporting parents and families and states: "families are the bedrock".

2.2 This report provides an update on progress in implementing the strategy and gives an indication of key projects and initiatives underway across the Children Leeds partnership to support parents and carers.

3.0 Implementation of our Family Support and Parenting Strategy

3.1 The Family Support and Parenting 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. These are described as universal; additional needs; multiple additional needs and specialist needs. The strategy also outlines the next steps to be taken in providing for the different levels of need, 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.

3.2 A Family Support and Parenting Board has been established and has already met three times. Draft terms of reference for the Board are attached at Appendix 1. The Board includes representatives from the key delivery agencies : Children's Social Care Services Education Leeds; Early Years and Youth services , Youth Offending, the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector, Children's Fund and Leeds PCT. Work is underway to secure representation from adult services as this is essential to the delivery of an holistic approach to the needs of families.

3.3 A one-year secondment to the post of manager of the Parenting Unit has been advertised. Interviews are scheduled for 9 April. The Parenting Unit will bring together from across Children Leeds a small number of staff who are already working on parenting issues. The formulation of a core and extended team, with a base at the East Leeds Family Learning Centre in the first instance, will facilitate closer working together and maximize effort.

3.4 A number of key workstreams have already been identified to take the work forward.

These are :

- i) mapping of the range of services currently available for parents across the city and ensuring these are recorded on the Family Hub, which is the children's services directory
- ii) auditing which practitioners have been trained to deliver parenting courses and establishing their level of experience, in order to identify future training needs
- iii) looking at how services are evaluated to determine which ones are most effective in improving outcomes for children and young people

Three working groups are looking at these issues in advance of the full establishment of the Parenting Unit, so that momentum is maintained.

3.5 It is important that clear links are established between frontline work with parents and carers and strategic developments. Each of the Children Leeds Wedge partnerships already has a Family Support subgroup and the Family Support and Parenting Strategy proposes a strengthened role for these in terms of assessing local need, maintaining dialogue with local families and bringing together providers of support services. This is under discussion currently across the Wedge Partnerships.

- 3.5.1 The strategy recognizes that parents' and carers' knowledge and experience are essential to understanding how to improve services. We therefore need to continue to build on current levels of parental involvement and participation. Two existing central parent participation groups have been brought together in order to strengthen their impact and parent participation sessions in each of the Wedges are planned, on a rotating programme. Parents will be involved in the recruitment of the Parenting Unit Manager.

4.0 National, regional and local initiatives

- 4.1 Family support is high on the central government agenda. Consequently a number of local authority programmes are in place. These include Parent Support Advisers, for which Leeds is a pilot authority ; provision of funding for two "parenting experts" for each authority , and other family intervention programmes. Leeds has been invited to take part in the Parenting Implementation Project, which involves two authorities from each Government Office region. We will work on identified commissioning and delivery themes to support the implementation of our strategy.
- 4.2 Leeds PCT has been successful in its bid to become part of the Family Nurse Partnership Programme. This is a two-year programme which will target vulnerable young parents with intensive home visiting support. Part of our overall approach to supporting families, this is based on personalized, preventative ways of working. The programme will report into the Family Support and Parenting Board, so that the work undertaken can be aligned with other initiatives and support the implementation of our Family Support and Parenting Strategy. A similar approach will be adopted with any other successful bids for family support programmes.

5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1 The Family Support and Parenting Strategy provides a framework to take forward essential work to improve outcomes for children and young people in a coordinated, focused way and in partnership with parents themselves. Good progress is being made in implementing the strategy, although it is clear that there is a substantial amount of work to be done if we are to secure and maintain the quality and breadth of support for families that we wish to achieve.

6.0 Recommendation

- 6.1 It is recommended that members note and comment on the content of this report.

Appendix 1

Leeds Family Support and Parenting Board

Draft Terms of Reference.

March 2008

The Leeds Family Support and Parenting Board is an inter-agency group with responsibility for the strategic direction of family support and parenting provision in Leeds, taking account of national and local developments and requirements.

The Board is part of Leeds' Children's Trust arrangements but will have clear links to both children's and adults' commissioning processes and service provision.

The Board has responsibility for:

- 1) Ensuring its membership includes all relevant agencies and key stakeholders required for the effective delivery of holistic family support.
- 2) Oversight of the implementation of the Family Support and Parenting Strategy. This entails:
 - i) Monitoring and evaluation of the implementation plan.
 - ii) Identification and removal of barriers to effective implementation.
 - iii) Influencing commissioning of family support and parenting.
 - iv) Continual review of ongoing needs for family support and parenting services.
 - v) Encouraging close working between adults' and children's services in relation to family support and parenting.
- 3) Oversight of the operation of the Parenting Unit
- 4) Central co-ordination of family support and parenting projects and initiatives across the children's trust and adults' services arrangements
- 5) Ensuring that parents' and carers' views are appropriately represented and influence the delivery of family support and parenting services.
- 6) Annual review of the Family Support and Parenting Strategy.

Members of the Board are responsible for ongoing communication within their own agencies with regard to family support and parenting issues and for bringing relevant activities to the board.

Members are expected to attend regularly.