

Scrutiny Board (Children's Services)

Combating child poverty and raising aspirations inquiry

Terms of reference

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Reducing the number of children in poverty is an improvement priority in the Leeds Strategic Plan for 2008-2011. It will be a cross-cutting theme in the new Children and Young People's Plan for 2011-15, which is currently being developed.
- 1.2 The Child Poverty Act 2010 requires local authorities and their partners to cooperate to reduce, and mitigate the effects of, child poverty in their local areas. This includes carrying out a child poverty needs assessment and developing and delivering a child poverty strategy. This local action is complemented by national government targets aimed at reducing the number of children in poverty.
- 1.3 The Children's Services Scrutiny Board decided in October 2010 that it wished to carry out an inquiry into child poverty, linked to the raising of aspirations, as its second major piece of work for 2010/11.
- 1.4 A working group of Board members met with officers from a range of council services in November 2010 to scope the inquiry and proposed that the Board should look at two clusters and/or Super Output Areas as case studies, to obtain a detailed picture of services for families in areas of deprivation, as well as looking at local examples of work aimed at raising aspirations. The inquiry will aim to identify examples of good practice.
- 1.5 The Board is particularly interested in transition, and the different levels of support available to children and families at different stages of their life.
- 1.6 In December 2010 the Cabinet Office published the report of the independent review on Poverty and Life Chances chaired by Frank Field, "The Foundation Years: preventing poor children becoming poor adults". The scrutiny inquiry will consider how the findings of this review may impact on the child poverty strategy for Leeds.

2.0 Scope of the inquiry

- 2.1 The purpose of the Inquiry is to make an assessment of and, where appropriate, make recommendations in relation to good practice in, and barriers to,
 - the delivery of effective joined-up services and solutions for children and families in poverty

- initiatives aimed at raising aspirations and breaking the cycle of poverty

2.2 The Board hopes that its findings will provide a timely and positive contribution to development of the city's Child Poverty Strategy.

3.0 Comments of the relevant director and executive member

3.1 The Director of Children's Services and lead Executive Member welcomed the cross-cutting nature of this inquiry, involving partners from other council directorates as well as partners throughout the city.

4.0 Timetable for the inquiry

4.1 The inquiry will take place in January and February 2011.

4.2 The inquiry will conclude with the publication of a formal report setting out the board's conclusions and recommendations.

5.0 Submission of evidence

5.1 Scrutiny Board meeting – 20 January 2011

Receive national and local context in relation to work on combating child poverty and raising aspirations

Receive information about the child poverty needs assessment and the draft child poverty strategy

Receive data about 2 specific clusters/Super Output Areas

5.2 Scrutiny Board meeting - 17 February 2011

The Board will split into two groups, who will each visit one of the clusters/SOAs identified for detailed study

In each case, members will visit local services in groups of 2 or 3 (including meeting service users where appropriate).

This will be followed by a round table meeting in the chosen locality to discuss issues arising from the visits and consider the overall impact of work in the locality

6.0 Witnesses

6.1 The following witnesses have been identified as potential contributors to the Inquiry:

- Chief Officer for Early Years and Integrated Youth Support Service – lead officer for Child Poverty Strategic Outcome Group
- Representatives from each of the four building blocks of the child poverty strategy
 - Education, Health and Family
 - Employment and Adult Skills
 - Housing and Neighbourhoods
 - Financial Support for Families
- Local service providers and families in the 2 clusters/SOAs identified for detailed study

7.0 Equality, Diversity and Cohesion and Integration Issues

- 7.1 Where appropriate, all terms of reference for work undertaken by the Scrutiny Boards will include
 “To review how and to what effect consideration has been given to the impact of a service or policy on all equality areas, as set out in the council’s Equality and Diversity scheme, and on the council’s Cohesion and Integration Priorities and Delivery Plan.”
- 7.2 The objectives of this inquiry particularly reflect the following theme from the council’s Equality and Diversity scheme:
 Service Delivery – Leeds City Council provides fair access to services which meet the needs of our diverse communities and individuals.

8.0 Monitoring Arrangements

- 8.1 Following the completion of the scrutiny inquiry and the publication of the final inquiry report and recommendations, the implementation of the agreed recommendations will be monitored.
- 8.2 The final inquiry report will include information on the detailed arrangements for monitoring the implementation of recommendations.

9.0 Measures of success

- 9.1 It is important to consider how the Board will deem whether its inquiry has been successful in making a difference to local people. Some measures of success may be obvious at the initial stages of an inquiry and can be included in these terms of reference. Other measures of success may become apparent as the inquiry progresses and discussions take place.
- 9.2 The Board will look to publish practical recommendations.