

Scrutiny Board (Children and Families)

Attendance

Terms of reference

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Scrutiny Board has been tasked with carrying out a piece of work this year on each of the three Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) obsessions. The second of these relates to school attendance.
- 1.2 The council has adopted an Outcome Based Accountability (OBA) approach to addressing the obsessions, drawing up plans to 'turn the curve' and improve performance. Each 'cluster' (local groups of schools and services that work closely together to meet the needs of children and young people through an integrated approach) has undertaken or committed to undertake an OBA exercise in relation to attendance, leading to a multi-agency action plan.
- 1.3 In relation to this inquiry, the Board agreed to follow a similar approach to that successfully adopted for its inquiry last year on combating child poverty and raising aspiration. We identified 2 'case study' areas of the city and instead of our formal Scrutiny Board meeting, half of the members went to each area for the morning. In both areas, Members had the opportunity to talk to local practitioners and to undertake some additional visits in smaller groups, including meeting local people, before reconvening for a round table discussion with senior officers about their findings. We found this to be a very effective way of working.
- 1.4 For this inquiry we will visit 2 clusters with higher than average levels of persistent absence: Inner East and Rothwell.

2.0 Scope of the inquiry

- 2.1 The purpose of the Inquiry is to make an assessment of and, where appropriate, make recommendations on:
 - Multi-agency efforts to address persistent absence from school.
- 2.2 The Board hopes that its findings will provide a timely and positive contribution to tackling this particular obsession within the Children and Young People's Plan.

3.0 Comments of the relevant director and executive member

- 3.1 This inquiry is included in the Scrutiny Board's terms of reference, reflecting one of the three obsessions in the Children and Young People's Plan, which is the multi-agency city priority plan.

4.0 Timetable for the inquiry

- 4.1 The inquiry will take place in November and December 2011, with a view to issuing a final report in the spring of 2012.
- 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 – 10 November 2011

The following evidence will be required for the Board meeting:

- The CYPP action plan relating to the Attendance obsession, as background and context to the inquiry
- Obsession progress report to the Children's Trust Board
- Information on progress against the CYPP action plan
- Data on Leeds levels of school attendance and persistent absence
- Information on the reasons for absence
- Information on local initiatives and activity to address attendance, including cluster OBA activity plans and cluster level funding
- Information on the latest changes in government requirements in relation to the definition of persistent absence
- Information on best practice from other local authorities
- The report of previous work on school attendance carried out by the Scrutiny Board in 2009/10
- Research on persistent absence commissioned by Education Leeds

5.2 Scrutiny Board meeting - 8 December 2011

The Board will split into two groups, who will each visit one of the two identified clusters to carry out more detailed field work.

Members will receive information about the local context and data in relation to attendance, including information about local OBA activity.

In each area, members will visit relevant local services in smaller groups (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.

The Board will then consider emerging conclusions and recommendations to inform the production of the final inquiry report.

5.3 Visits

In addition it is planned that, between the two Board meeting dates, some members will have the opportunity to accompany front-line Attendance Improvement Officers and staff who work with Children

Missing Education in the course of their duties, in the two identified clusters.

6.0 Witnesses

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

Children's Services officers

Cluster Chairs and Cluster Managers

Representatives of multi-agency partners at local level, for example Schools, Early Years providers, Police, Extended Services Clusters, Area Inclusion Partnerships

Other local authorities/C4EO (Centre for Excellent Outcomes) – re good practice

6.2 The Board will always seek to include the views of children and young people and their parents and carers as evidence to its inquiries wherever possible and practicable.

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.