

Report of Head of Scrutiny and Member Development

Report to Scrutiny Board (Health and Well-Being and Adult Social Care)

Date: 21 March 2012

Subject: Health Inequalities – Looked After Children

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

Summary of main issues

1. Health inequalities was identified as a specific work area at the Board's meeting in July 2011. To date, the Board has considered the development and production of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), in addition to some of the data sets available as a result. The Scrutiny Board also specifically considered details associated with two specific Medium Super Output Areas (MSOAs) from the City to help highlight and demonstrate the inequalities that exist across the City.
2. Draft action plans from the Health and Wellbeing City Priority Plan (2011-15) were presented to the Shadow Health and Wellbeing Board at its meeting on 26 January 2012, which focus on delivering the following strategic priorities:
 - Help protect people from the harmful effects of tobacco
 - Support more people to live safely in their own homes
 - Give people choice and control over their health and social care services
 - Make sure the people who are the poorest improve their health the fastest
3. The priority 'Make sure the people who are the poorest improve their health the fastest' essentially relates to addressing health inequalities across the City. Within this priority area, the following priority actions are outlined with a range of supporting activities:
 - Minimise the impact of poverty on health of under 5s
 - Action on housing, transport and environment to improve health and wellbeing
 - Support people back into work and to healthy employment

- Increase advice and support to minimise debt and maximise income
 - Ensure equitable access to services that prevent and reduce ill-health
4. The above priority areas are being used to provide the focus for a series of working group meetings to deliver this aspect of the Scrutiny Board's work. At the time of the Board meeting, working group meetings will have taken place covering the following areas:
- Minimise the impact of poverty on health of under 5s
 - Action on housing, transport and environment to improve health and wellbeing
5. Due to the timing of the meeting, the working group meeting that considered 'Minimise the impact of poverty on health of under 5s', this did not focus on any specific details associated with Looked After Children. As such, the purpose of this report is to present some information to allow the Board to specifically consider this area.

Looked After Children

6. At its meeting on 7 March 2012, Executive Board considered a report of the Director of Children's Services that provided an update on the number of looked after children in the city and advising of the key outcomes for children. The report also set out the key initiatives being taken forward to reduce the number of looked after children and to ensure that those children looked after by the City of Leeds receive high quality care. The Executive Board report is attached at Appendix 1. The extract from the draft minute from the Executive Board meeting is set out below:

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report providing an update on the number of looked after children in the city and advising of the key outcomes for children, for whom Members act as a corporate parent. In addition, the report detailed the key initiatives that were being taken forward to reduce the number of looked after children and to ensure that those children looked after by the City of Leeds were in receipt of high quality care.

Copies of the recently published Scrutiny Board (Children and Families) Inquiry Report entitled, 'External Placements 2012' had been circulated to Board Members prior to the meeting, by way of some background information.

Members highlighted the need to ensure that more placements were undertaken by in-house carers and less by the Independent Fostering Agency and welcomed the related review which had been undertaken by the Scrutiny Board (Children and Families). In addition, Members emphasised the need to ensure that the communications process with such foster carers was clear and effective. In response to the comments made, the Executive Member for Children's Services paid tribute to and thanked the Scrutiny Board for all of the work it had undertaken in the past year, which had been very constructive and helpful. The suggestions made regarding the recruitment of in-house foster carers were acknowledged, however it was emphasised that the such recruitment was complex and did not solely relate to financial incentives.

In conclusion, the Executive Member for Children's Services reassured the Board that Children's Services would not be complacent in respect of its efforts to continue to improve the levels of service provided to young people.

RESOLVED –

(a) That the progress made by Children’s Services in stabilising numbers of looked after children be noted.

(b) That the strategy and key actions being taken by Children’s Services and partners to ‘Turn the Curve’ on the number of looked after children in Leeds be endorsed.

7. It should be noted that the Deputy Director (Safeguarding, Specialist and Targeted Services) has been invited to attend the meeting and address any questions raised by the Board.

Recommendations

8. To consider the information presented and identify any specific issues to be included in the Board’s report relating to health inequalities.

Background documents

- None used