

**Report of Children's Trust Board**

**Report to Children's Scrutiny Board**

**Date: 14 March 2013**

**Subject: Review of Partnership Boards**

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input 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. This report responds to the request from the Children's Scrutiny Board to review progress of the Children's Trust Board (CTB).
2. The CTB took the review as an opportunity to involve young people in the work of the board and seven young people attend a special meeting of the board and worked alongside board members in answering the questions raised by scrutiny.
3. The CTB members also spent time reflecting on their role as board members and the contribution they and their services/organisations make to delivering the outcomes for the children and young people of Leeds.

**Recommendations**

Members are recommended to:

Consider the progress made by the Children's Trust Board

Highlight any areas of best practice and/or areas for development in the role and effectiveness of the Children's Trust Board

## **1.0 Purpose of the report**

- 1.1 This report was commissioned as part of a citywide review of partnership arrangements. Partnership working across the city is changing with the reform of the Leeds Initiative and the need to reflect the new national context, and the new approaches of the Council and its partners.
- 1.2 Scrutiny Board procedures state that each Scrutiny Board should act as a 'critical friend' for the main partnership board for their area of responsibility. As part of the review of citywide partnership arrangements, it has been proposed that all Scrutiny Boards consider the following key questions:
  - How successfully are the Board's partnership arrangements working?
  - What contribution is the Partnership Board making to tackle poverty and inequality, and the progress being made against this?
  - To what extent are significant benefits being seen from partnership working? How has the partnership ensured increased pace of change to address the issue in hand?
- 1.3 Once all Scrutiny Boards have completed this work, the Scrutiny Support Unit will produce a summary report, identifying best practice and common challenges. This summary report will then be considered by Full Council.
- 1.4 This report is structured around the three key questions highlighted above, and seeks to identify strengths and areas for development. In line with Children's Services' commitment to Outcomes Based Accountability, the sections on the impact of partnership arrangements on improving outcomes are considered first. This report is informed by work with children and young people and partner organisations to reflect on the progress and effectiveness of the Children's Trust Board to date. This included a joint session of the Board in December that was led by children and young people. The outcome of this work has informed the report below.

## **2.0 Background information**

- 2.1 The Leeds Children's Trust Board was established in April 2010. Children's Trust Boards were a statutory requirement at that time, but this has since been changed by the new government. The Children's Trust Board (CTB) replaced earlier forms of partnership working in Leeds and had the following remit:
  - Improving outcomes for children and young people
  - Bringing together statutory partners to strengthen co-operation arrangements
  - Having a local vision for children, young people and families.
  - Overseeing the development and implementation of a Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) as the single, shared citywide strategy for improving outcomes
- 2.2 Current membership of this Board is included at Appendix A and includes all major

public sector organisations, and the third sector. The board is fully constituted in accordance with the Councils procedures for establishing significant partnerships and minutes of the Board's meetings are submitted to full Council. The Board meets at least six times a year and in addition holds special meetings as required.

2.3 In addition to the main board there are additional citywide and local groups that report to the Children's Trust Board (CTB). Initially three sub-groups were set up to concentrate on specific areas of work: Commissioning and Finance; Performance Management and Workforce Development. Since that time several sub-boards have been established that report directly to the CTB and manage shared priorities such as the 'Families First' programme. The Leeds Education Challenge (LEC) Board has also been set-up and reports directly to the Trust Board. These boards are all multi-agency and bring together partners from across all aspects of children's services within the city. In addition to these citywide groups there are joint working arrangements in 'Clusters' of schools and services that are accountable to the CTB. Structure diagram attached at Appendix B

### 3.0 The effectiveness of partnership working in improving outcomes for children and young people

3.1 In line with Outcomes Based Accountability, the first and most crucial test of the effectiveness of Leeds' partnership work is to what extent it is helping to improve outcomes for children and young people. Importantly, strong progress can be seen and that the work of agencies across the city are together helping to 'Turn the Curve' on the 'obsessions' and shared priorities in the CYPP. Examples include:

- The number of **children looked after** has decreased by 80 (5.4%) since the end of the 2011-12 financial year, with the figure for December 2012, 56 (3.9%) lower than the same month last year. Current children looked after numbers of 1,395 are at a 30-month low.
- At the end of December there were 1374 young people in Leeds not in **education, employment or training** (6.0%). This is down from 8.8% in June 2011.
- **Attendance** in Leeds primary schools improved by 1.1 percentage points in 2011/12, more than double the improvement seen in 2010/11. Attendance in Leeds primary schools is now above national and statistical neighbours. Leeds is now ranked in the top quartile for primary attendance.
- More vulnerable children and families are having their needs met through joined up local services. Referrals to social care are reducing. Local services are becoming more confident and able to meet needs locally. Support through the Common Assessment Framework meets the majority of needs. Feedback from parents and carers is very positive.
- Children in need of protection are supported more quickly. Partners are now very effective at responding quickly when a child is in need of protection. More Child Protection Conferences take place within timescales than in similar areas or the national average.

- The proportion of schools judged good or better by Ofsted in 2011/12 has increased. Currently, using the latest inspection grade, 68% of primary and 58% of secondary are judged good or better, with 30% of primary and 34% of secondary judged satisfactory.
- At Key Stage 4 there have been a number of improvements in Leeds against most benchmarks in 2011-12 for example the number of students gaining 5+ A\*- C grade GCSEs including English and maths rose by 1.1% to 55% which is greater than that seen nationally . Also, the proportion of students gaining five good passes in any GCSE or equivalent subject rose by 2.1% to 83.7% in 2012. Leeds therefore remains above the national figure and above the average for statistical neighbours.
- Teenage conception rates have reduced by 21% since Q4 2008. Rates in the majority of priority wards have either stabilised or reduced. The latest national data shows the rates in Leeds are 39.8 conceptions per 1000 15-17 year old females (June 2011), compared to 50.8 per 1000 in December 2008. This equates to 116 under 18 conceptions in the second quarter of 2011, compared to 148 under 18 conceptions in the same period of the previous year.

3.2 However, we know we have more to do and that improvement has to be sustained and has to cover a wide range of issues. Key challenges include:

- Reductions on the number of **children looked after** have been achieved by improved case planning supporting children to achieve permanence more quickly. There has been little change in the numbers of children looked after in particular age groups, particularly those under 5 years of age and those under 1. This is only to be expected. It will take time for preventative and early intervention strategies to have a full impact. However, it illustrates the scale of the challenge;
- Our biggest challenge around **attendance** is to tackle persistent absence and unauthorised absence in our secondary schools. This is fundamental to supporting the aims to improve educational attainment set out in the CYPP and the Leeds Education Challenge. Our widest performance gap to our statistical neighbours and nationally is in the secondary phase. The over-representation of specific cohorts of pupils in absence is also an issue e.g. Free school meal eligible pupils, some ethnic groups such as Gypsy/Roma/Traveller, and some Children Looked After cohorts;
- As we continue to make progress on reducing NEET, the focus of more and more effort is around addressing the needs of young people with the most significant and complex barriers to progression. Specialist personal advisers do intensive work with children looked after, care leavers and young people facing challenges around a wide range of issues such as housing, finance, mental health, substance abuse, parenting and domestic violence;
- Although plateauing, rates of childhood obesity are far too high. 1:3 children

in Year 6 are at risk of developing obesity related health issues.

- 3.3 Improving outcomes have been supported by greatly strengthened local working through 'Clusters' of schools and services. Improvements include: local partners have invested in enhanced leadership for clusters; social work services have been restructured to create local teams for better links with schools and partners and health services have developed closer cooperation.
- 3.4 These improved outcomes have been supported by the Boards' shared understanding of the priorities for the city's children and a shared commitment to protect and prioritise investment in these shared priorities. Examples of this include:
- £5.2 million of funding from Schools Forum provided for joint working in local Clusters
  - £3 million of NHS funding for work including CYPP priorities
- 3.5 The Board has also helped lead, develop and promote new integrated working arrangements and better joint commissioning. This has been led by multi-agency working through subgroups of the Board on Workforce Development, Finance and Commissioning and Performance. This better partnership working has made a crucial difference in developing more joined up working with children and families and efficiencies at a time of budget pressures. Examples include:
- Developing new joined up safeguarding work. Examples include the new 'Front Door' arrangements for dealing with referrals, or the co-location of social work staff in Police to help deal better with domestic violence incidents;
  - Early Start – the early start service has been jointly developed by the Council, NHS and wider private and voluntary service. Early Start brings together Children's Centres and Health Visitors and stronger links to a named social worker;
  - Teenage Adolescent Mental Health Service: schools, NHS and the Council worked together, bringing additional funding from local clusters to develop this important improved service for troubled teenagers;
  - Infant Mental Health Service: As mentioned above, early years outcomes are crucial and this service has been jointly commissioned by NHS Leeds and the council to provide crucial support for parents and young children as well as provide training and consultancy.
- 3.6 These better integrated approaches to funding and commissioning are making a crucial difference, but there are still areas where we need to do more, including:
- Developing more structured, consistent approaches to governance and the pooling of funding as is successful elsewhere in the Council such as Adult Services;
  - Ensuring the full integration of new public health functions and staff within

children's services.

#### **4.0 The contribution of the Children's Trust Board in reducing poverty**

4.1 The Children's Trust Board takes a proactive leadership role in addressing the growing challenge of child poverty. The Board has set up a subgroup, the Child Poverty Outcomes Group that is chaired by Councillor Blake. The CTB receive regular progress reports and updates from the Child Poverty Outcomes Group highlighting progress against the Leeds Child Poverty Strategy. The latest report is attached in Appendix C, and the highlights are set out below.

4.2 Key successes of the Leeds Child Poverty Strategy include:

- Led joined up working across the Council and with partners to reduce child poverty
- Significantly improved the early years learning outcomes that are key to ensuring more deprived children do well in school and adult life
- Nationally recognised work on promoting the take up of Free School Meals
- Reduced infant mortality
- Improved services in the early years – including the Early Start Service and Family Nurse Partnership
- Launched the Apprenticeship Training Agency which will improve the availability and accessibility of Apprenticeships. Fully operational from end January 2013.

4.3 The main areas for development for the Leeds Child Poverty Strategy include:

- Improving the take up of Free Schools Meals in Leeds which still remains below the national average;
- Further developing support to young children and parents through the emerging Infant Mental Health Service;
- Continuing efforts to narrow the gap in Early Years learning outcomes for children from more deprived areas of Leeds;
- Ensuring a consistent approach to managing housing issues for families to help children and parents stay together and for children to thrive;
- Successfully managing the forthcoming changes to the Youth Service.

4.4 The Child Poverty Strategy will be reviewed by May by the CTB to ensure all partners are engaged in the next stages of this important work.

## **5.0 The effectiveness of the Children's Trust Board partnership**

5.1 In December 2012 a review of the CTB was undertaken in order to ensure that the current arrangements were still fit for purpose and to enable the Board to respond to the request for information about the Board from the Children's Services Scrutiny Board. A special meeting was arranged to undertake the review and members of the Youth Council and Youth Parliament attended the meeting and fully engaged in the process.

5.2 Key strengths in partnership working include:

- The Children's Trust Board has been successful in developing shared priorities, based around the CYPP, the 'Three Obsessions' and 'Child Friendly Leeds'. This has helped target joint working at both a city and local level;
- Lead partners on the Trust Board take a lead role as champions for obsessions and priorities in the CYPP that are different to their own work. This illustrates the commitment of all partners to the breadth of the agenda and making connections with theirs and other services/agencies;
- There are clear links between the Vision, the City Priority Plan and the Children and Young People's Plan and the Child Friendly Leeds initiative. Children's Services strategies flow from the citywide agenda and the needs of children and young people are well represented in citywide plans;
- Trust Board meetings are well attended by partners and children's services staff and every Board member has a nominated substitute;
- There is good representation from across different agencies that work with children and young people. This has helped bring together differing perspective and the needs and agendas of different sectors;
- Board members reported that they feel that there is a culture of partnership and although it has taken a while to develop it is definitely getting easier. Partners are using the same 'language' and are being open to working with new people and other agencies;
- Board members are all very senior leaders within their own organisations and can often influence change and direct resources when required to result in better outcomes for children and families;
- The Board has helped agree, develop and promote the Child Friendly Leeds initiative;
- The Board has become used to using 'Outcomes Based Accountability' (OBA) to help develop shared language and a focus on results. OBA approaches have been used at both a citywide and local level to develop shared plans, review performance and agree improvements;
- Partners are willing to make changes together and explore new ways of

working. This has been demonstrated by the new 'front door' arrangements at social care offices, where health and police professionals work alongside social care officers and are available to give advice and support to service users and professionals;

- The new sub-boards are all multi-agency and partners bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to the table in addition to the services they provide.

### 5.3 Key areas for development in partnership working include:

- At the review meeting partners said they would like to contribute more to the agenda. Although other organisations do take reports and presentations to the meetings, there was an acknowledgment that the agenda was driven by primarily by Council officers and in future agenda items will be sought from partner organisations;
- Children and Young People made a range of suggestions about how to improve the working of the partnership and Trust Board, including more simple, clear and less formal language and processes; more involvement of children and young people; and less paperwork. They also recommended the use of social media sites as a way of publicising the work of the Trust Board. All of the recommendations made are being considered by the Trust Board, who has already agreed to meet with young people twice a year. The first of these meetings is in March and will take the form of an OBA session to look at the impact of alcohol and substance misuse on children and families. The meeting will also include a session on the re-fresh of the Children and Young People's Plan.

## 6 Conclusion

As this report makes clear, the Children's Trust Board has achieved some notable successes in improving outcomes through promoting shared priorities, commitment and joined up working. Strengthened partnership is leading to new ways of working that are making a real difference to local children and families. The Board has reviewed its own progress and effectiveness and, in light of this learning and the feedback from the Scrutiny Board, is well placed to continue its work to make Leeds a Child Friendly City.

## 7 Recommendations

Scrutiny Board is recommended to:

- Consider the progress made by the Children's Trust Board
- Highlight any areas of best practice and/or areas for development in the role and effectiveness of the Children's Trust Board