

SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN AND FAMILIES)

THURSDAY, 25TH APRIL, 2013

PRESENT: Councillor J Chapman in the Chair

Councillors B Gettings, C Gruen,
A Hussain, A Khan, A Lamb, P Latty,
M Rafique, K Renshaw, A Sobel and B Urry

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (VOTING):

Mr E A Britten – Church Representative (Catholic)

Ms A Craven – Parent Governor Representative (Primary)

Ms J Ward – Parent Governor Representative (Secondary)

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (NON-VOTING):

Ms C Foote – Teacher Representative

Ms C Raftery – Teacher Representative

125 Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed all in attendance to the April meeting of Scrutiny Board (Children and Families). The Chair also thanked Members and officers for their positive contribution to the Scrutiny Board's work throughout the 2012/13 municipal year.

126 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests.

127 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence were submitted by Co-opted Members, Mrs S Hutchinson, Ms T Kayani and Ms J Morris-Boam.

128 Minutes - 14th March 2013

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 14th March 2013 be approved as a correct record.

129 Welfare Reform and Child Poverty

The Chief Officer (Partnership Development and Business Support), Children's Services, submitted a report which provided the Scrutiny Board with additional information in relation to the questions raised at the April Scrutiny Board meeting when it considered a number of issues in relation to child poverty and welfare reform.

The following information was appended to the report:

- Cluster funding 2013/14
- Response from the Housing Investment Manager, City Development, in relation to the programme of building new council homes and how this tied in with targeting families currently occupying council properties where there was under occupancy.

The following Executive Member and officers attended the meeting:

- Councillor Blake, Executive Member (Children's Services)
- Nigel Richardson, Director of Children's Services
- Steve Carey, Chief Revenues and Benefits Officer
- Rob McCartney, Head of Housing Support
- Jim Hopkinson, Head of Targeted Services
- Andrea Richardson, Head of Early Help Services
- Clare Walker, Head of Policy, Planning, Procedures and Information
- Simon Darby, Head of Finance, Children's Services
- Sarah Ritty, Headteacher, Bankside Primary School.

The key areas of discussion were:

- Update on recent work undertaken by clusters, particularly in relation to family intervention. New initiatives being established to support those individuals most in need.
- The important role of targeted services and early years.
- The key role of governors, particularly in terms of accountability and ensuring good practice.
- A request for Members to be provided with a ward breakdown of the number of families on the Families First programme in each ward. Officers agreed to provide the Scrutiny Board with this information.
- Confirmation that benefits and welfare advice was to be provided as part of the Families First programme. All staff to be trained in signposting families to the right areas for support.
- The impact of the benefit cap and under occupancy. In Leeds, the number of families affected by both of these was less than 50.
- Hardship scheme funding of £2.8m approved by the Executive Board to support families sustain homes.
- The need to develop good practice across all schools in relation to clothing exchange schemes.
- Confirmation about the process for the allocation of social housing.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the report and appendices be noted
- (b) That the issues raised be used to help inform the Scrutiny Board's work programme for 2013/14
- (c) That the Director of Children's Services be requested to provide regular updates to the Scrutiny Board covering the impact of welfare reform on children, young people and their families.

(Councillors A Khan and A Lamb withdrew from the meeting at the conclusion of this item at 10.55am.)

130 Recommendation Tracking - Combating Child Poverty and Raising Aspirations

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which set out the progress made in responding to the recommendations from the previous Scrutiny review into Combating Child Poverty and Raising Aspirations.

The following information was appended to the report:

- Recommendation tracking flowchart
- Recommendation tracking table detailing progress against each recommendation
- Leeds Children's Trust Board – update on progress and national consultation
- Members' Briefing Note (December 2012) – Advice Service Review and Commissioning.

The status of recommendations were agreed as follows:

- Recommendation 1 – achieved. Child Poverty Strategy to remain a regular agenda item for scrutiny
- Recommendation 2 – achieved
- Recommendation 3 – not achieved. Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring
- Recommendation 4 – not achieved. Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring
- Recommendation 5 – not achieved. Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring
- Recommendation 6 – not achieved. Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring
- Recommendation 7 – not achieved. Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the report and appendices be noted
- (b) That the Scrutiny Board approves the status of recommendations as set out above.

131 Update on recent inspections

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report which provided the Scrutiny Board with an update on recent external inspection and assessments.

The following Executive Member and officers attended the meeting:

- Councillor Blake, Executive Member (Children's Services)
- Nigel Richardson, Director of Children's Services
- Steve Walker, Deputy Director, Safeguarding, Specialist and Targeted Services
- Rob Murray, Head of Service (Looked After Children).

The main areas of discussion were:

- Update on work undertaken as part of the care planning process. Members were informed that work had been undertaken with 2 professors at York University resulting in 4 key work streams being identified as follows:
 - Assessment
 - Permanency
 - Care leavers
 - Special guardianship.
- Changes to the Ofsted framework resulting in a single 4 week inspection programme. The new programme was likely to commence in September 2013.
- Confirmation that the number of looked after children in Leeds was 1,385. It was agreed to provide the Scrutiny Board with a ward breakdown of this information.

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report be noted.

(Councillors A Khan and A Lamb re-joined the meeting at 11.05am, during the consideration of this item.)

132 Work Schedule

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which presented the Executive Board minutes held on 13th March 2013.

RESOLVED – That the minutes of Executive Board held on 13th March 2013, be noted.

133 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Thursday, 25th April 2013 at 11.45am (Call In Meeting)

(The meeting concluded at 11.25am.)