

Report of Director of Children's Services

Report to South (Outer) Area Committee

Date: Monday 15th July 2013

Subject: Update Report from Children's Services



Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s): Ardsley and Robin Hood, Morley North, Morley South, Rothwell	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input 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

Children's Services directorate provide six monthly area committee reports in March and September. At the Area Committee meeting in March members discussed a range of issues resulting from the report and asked for an update report for the July committee. This report provides a summary of information in relation to the three Children's Services obsessions for the three clusters in the Committee's area to support the committees' understanding and involvement in work to improve outcomes for children and young people in the area.

Recommendation

The Area Committee is requested to note the contents of the report and consider how it can further support work in the area to improve outcomes for children and young people.

1 Background information

- 1.1 This is an update report as requested at the meeting of the Committee in March 2013. It complements information in the report to Members at that meeting.

2 Main issues

2.1 CONTEXT

- 2.2 This report provides a summary of information in relation to the three Children's Services obsessions for the three clusters covering the Committee's area. It includes information about key indicators covering updated information available at the time of preparing the report.

- 2.3 Ardsley and Tingley Cluster has 1 children's centre, 4 primary schools and Woodkirk Academy. The current population of 0-18 year olds is 3,663 (Jan 2013 data).

- 2.4 Morley Cluster includes 3 children's centres, 10 primary schools, Bruntcliffe High School and Morley Academy. The current population 0-18 is 8,955 (Jan 2013 data).

- 2.5 Rothwell Cluster includes 2 children's centres, 10 primary schools, Rodillian Academy and Royds High School. The current population 0-18 is 6,620 (Jan 2013) and this represents a population decrease of 15% from previous figures largely due to Sharp Lane primary moving to the JESS cluster in April 2012.

2.6 UPDATE ON INFORMATION AND LOCAL WORK TO IMPACT ON THE THREE CHILDREN'S SERVICES OBSESSIONS

2.7 Safely reduce the number of children looked after

- 2.8 This area of work continues to be a key priority for local cluster partnerships and each has a local action plan with a range of agencies involved. For example, the Rothwell cluster held an Outcomes Based Accountability session in October 2012 and from this there are a number of actions such as:

- Work across cluster partners to identify families requiring early help to ensure support is in place for those who need it and to try and prevent escalation to social work service involvement
- Training and support for a range of staff to use the common assessment framework (CAF) when working with local families
- Increase awareness and information for families of early intervention
- Gather and build on examples of good practice of support offered to parents to enable children looked after to return home as early as possible
- Closer working with adult services, including mental health services
- Increase access to sexual health services across the cluster, including work to help prevent teenage pregnancy

- 2.9 From information available covering the period to the end of year 2012/2013 some key points are:

- The number of children looked after in the Area Committee's area has remained similar in recent months. There were 83 children looked after from Outer South at 31/3/13 (81 at 31/12/12).
- The number of children on child protection plans has decreased in the area in recent months, with 60 on a plan at 31/3/13 (72 at 31/3/12).
- The number of CAFs initiated in 2012/13 was similar to the number initiated in 2011/12. The total number of CAFs open at 31/3/13 was 11 in Ardsley and Tingley, 36 in Rothwell and 52 in Morley. All three clusters have an ambition to significantly increase the number of CAFs in 2012/13 as part of their early intervention and prevention work.
- The number of requests for service to the social work duty and advice team over 2012/13 was down slightly across the area compared with 2011/12.
- The number of requests for service leading to a referral to the social work teams across the three clusters was down over 25% from 1,131 in 2011/12 to 830 in 2012/13.

2.10 Children's Social Work Service

2.11 This is the professional service that carries out the Local Authority's duties under the Children Act 1989 and related legislation in relation to making enquiries about children who may be suffering significant harm; acting as key worker for those who need a child protection plan and those who are Looked After in care; and representing the Local Authority in care proceedings. There is a legislative requirement that it is qualified social workers who carry out these functions. In addition there is a requirement to assess and provide services to children in need and in Leeds this is most often undertaken by qualified social workers but this is not a statutory requirement.

2.12 All CSWS team managers and service delivery managers in the south of the city are engaging positively with cluster arrangements. Working relationships are strong, a clear benefit of the new structure.

2.13 It is anticipated that, as new working arrangements embed in the clusters, the quality and quantity of early intervention work (such as common assessments) will increase. This is expected to lead to a reduction in requests for service made of the social work service and a consequential reduction in referrals to the service; assessments undertaken and social work caseloads. There are early signs of this starting to occur in the clusters though this has not led to significant changes to date in workloads in the Area Committee's area.

2.14 Early Start

2.15 As indicated in the previous report to the committee, early start teams are now being embedded in each area and work is taking place to improve links in each cluster between early start teams, social work teams, cluster staff and access to targeted services such as intensive family support.

2.16 Targeted Support

2.17 Targeted Services Leader (TSL) arrangements were in place in all three clusters by January 2013 and all three clusters supported a commissioned TSL arrangement. This is ensuring close working with the cluster teams in each area which vary in size and make up according to the size and needs of the cluster. In Ardsley & Tingley cluster there are 2 part time family support officers and 1 part time children's counsellor. The cluster has recently recruited another full time family support officer to meet the growing need of the cluster to support families and young people. In Morley there are 2 full time family support officers, a recently recruited deputy cluster manager, part time adult counsellor and a children's counsellor. In Rothwell there are 3 full time family support officers, a recently recruited part time Community and Activities Co-Ordinator, a parent counsellor and a children and young person's counsellor.

2.18 The clusters have made applications to support targeted mental health work in schools (TaMHS) and will shortly be commissioning a specialist mental health provider. With support from cluster funding this will provide additional support for children and young people in the cluster over a two year period initially.

2.19 Reduce the number of young people who are NEET

2.20 The number of young people NEET tends to fluctuate a little over the course of the year. In the previous report the level of NEET in Outer South had fallen from 3.6% to 2.9%. Data for 31/3/13 shows 105 young people NEET in Outer South, representing an increase to 3.8%. This compares with a city level of 5.5% on 31/3/13. At 31/3/13 there were 19 young people classified as NEET in Ardsley and Tingley Cluster, 44 in Morley and 42 in Rothwell.

2.21 A comprehensive report outlining the range of work being done to tackle levels of NEET across the city was recently presented to the Children's Trust Board and this is available to any members who would like a copy. The report highlighted that to successfully address NEET and achieve our ambition to become a child friendly NEET free city we must tackle a range of complex inter-related issues affecting the most vulnerable. Our work with young people around the development of the Child Friendly City, our review of post-16 provision, the development of the Leeds Youth Offer and the major programmes that are now underway around the Youth Contract and Families First initiatives are coming together to support our collective ambition for all young people aged 16-19 to be productively engaged in education, employment or training.

2.22 The Raising of the Participation Age (RPA) means that young people will remain in education or training for an additional academic year after Year 11 from September 2013 and until age 18 from September 2015. In addition to efforts to increase participation in education or training we are also focusing on providing employment opportunities and ensuring that young people have the skills to succeed in the workplace. Ensuring there are jobs for all our young people will be the major challenge over the coming years, especially in the most deprived communities.

2.23 The three local clusters are supporting a range of work to help prevent and reduce the number of young people who are NEET and this complements area based work on NEET across SE Leeds supported by a range of services (this includes a SE Leeds Outcomes Based Accountability session which recently took place).

2.24 Examples of work in Morley, Ardsley and Tingley includes:

- Collaborative work taking place with agencies to reduce the risk of poor outcomes, this includes work with the social work service, police and anti-social behaviour teams.
- The Youth Service is commissioned to run programmes for target groups at risk of becoming NEET. These are designed to be diversionary and offer positive experiences to those known to be at risk of either being or becoming vulnerable. These range from 6 week to 12 weeks courses including motorbike maintenance and stable management.
- In order to support the National Citizenship Programme cluster funding was allocated to ensure vulnerable young people who would not be able to afford to join the programme are able to do so.
- IGEN are working with targeted young people in the 3 high schools in both clusters.
- To provide positive experiences a range of out of school activities to both target and universal groups are offered with input from the cluster councils. These are made up of children from each of the schools in each cluster.

2.25 All three Outer South clusters are working together to develop proposals for Youth Contact monies to identify and work with young people that are already NEET who are 16/17 year old. In addition the Rothwell cluster is planning a focused Outcomes Based Accountability workshop regarding young people who are or are at risk of becoming NEET in the autumn term. Members may wish to attend this session and highlight agencies that should be invited to it to support local partnership efforts regarding NEET.

2.26 Reduce school absence in primary and secondary schools

2.27 All three local clusters have a focus on maintaining and improving school attendance and reducing persistent absence. At the time of preparing the report there was little updated published information available since the report to the Area Committee in spring 2013. Members may wish to look at attendance data in more detail in the autumn report which should cover attendance information for the 2012/13 school year. This section therefore informs members about managing attendance responsibilities and some key pieces of work currently underway.

2.28 Managing Attendance responsibilities

2.29 All children of compulsory school age are entitled to an education that is appropriate to their age, ability and aptitude. This right is embedded in law – both in the Education Act 1996 and Human Rights legislation. In order to secure regular attendance at school (because outcomes for children and young people who do not attend school regularly are far worse than for those that do attend), parents are held responsible for their child's regular attendance at school or otherwise. Failure to secure their attendance can result in legal enforcement action being taken. In Leeds

our Attendance Advisers are granted the power to discharge this statutory duty on behalf of the local authority.

- 2.30 All schools are responsible for their own attendance levels and although there is no longer a legal requirement for a school to set a target the Ofsted framework also sets out that when evaluating the behaviour and safety of pupils at the school, inspectors “*will consider pupil attendance and punctuality at school and in lessons*”.
- 2.31 Every school should have a current, effective attendance policy detailing the procedures and systems for encouraging regular school attendance and investigating the underlying causes for poor school attendance. There should be a clear escalation of intervention within the school which is understood by all teaching and non-teaching staff.
- 2.32 Children’s Services approach to managing attendance
- 2.33 Poor school attendance is often the symptom of much wider issues and in Children’s Services we are working towards a model of delivery in which the lead family practitioner (from whichever discipline they may come) is the best person to understand the needs within a family and how those needs can be supported. This means that attendance improvement officers are part of a wider workforce who can support families to overcome barriers to regular attendance.
- 2.34 There is a small team of attendance improvement officers and an attendance advisor working in Outer South. Officers are closely linked in to each of the clusters. Attendance improvement officers bring expertise and specialist knowledge and have close working relationships with schools, they also have specialist skills to work with families, including individual family case work – taking a lead family practitioner role - and fast track to attendance initiatives providing a less intensive intervention where attendance issues are emerging or are not yet problematic.
- 2.35 The attendance improvement officer’s strengths in the area of family support and expertise on attendance are complemented by attendance advisors who not only have a statutory enforcement function, but also support the clusters to be aware of national developments, changes to legislation and development of whole school/cluster policy; they support schools to prepare for Ofsted and to act as a critical friend to support the development of improvement action plans.
- 2.36 In Leeds we currently have a six stage process which sets out the roles and responsibilities of the school, local authority (non-statutory role) and local authority (statutory role). Each cluster has a guidance and support structure which is the main referral route for attendance cases from school requiring additional support.
- 2.37 The status of schools does have a bearing on services that can be provided by the local authority. Academies are funded directly for the provision of support services for attendance and therefore do not receive any non-statutory provision from the local authority. A service level agreement is in place for Academies which sets out the statutory provision and allows Academies the opportunity to buy in additional traded services.

2.38 Statutory Enforcement

- 2.39 Where efforts at working with families to improve a child or young person's attendance have not been successful, the local authority is obliged to make use of statutory enforcement tools to take legal action against parents. This represents a relatively small proportion of the total work with families and is only sought when all other avenues have failed to secure an improvement in attendance.
- 2.40 The range of such tools spans the use of Penalty Notices to Education Supervision Orders. The evidence base for their impact is a challenge as these families are those with the most deeply entrenched problems. The use of Fast Track to Attendance Initiatives is often successful as a very swift early intervention where a warning of the level of attendance is sufficient and they are widely used. Education Supervision Orders are an order that is placed on the child and the local authority is appointed by the court to supervise that child's education either at school or at home for a specified period of time. Education Supervision Orders are often successful when the parent is willing to engage with services but feels unable to bring about changes without significant support.
- 2.41 Although the evidence that the more punitive measures are not effective is hard to establish, their deterrent effect should not be discounted. When custodial sentences (which are extremely rare) have been publicised many schools reported increased attendance and that parents had an increased awareness about their responsibilities and the consequences of failing to meet those responsibilities. In a Child Friendly City with a focus on working restoratively with families we seek to avoid prosecution where possible and the Local Authority must consider applying for Education Supervision Orders before prosecuting parents.
- 2.42 Local authorities have the power to prosecute parents who fail to ensure their child's regular attendance at school, under section 444 of the Education Act 1996. Section 444 has two separate but linked offences; section 444(1) where a parent fails to secure the child's regular attendance; and section 444(1A) where a parent knows that the child is failing to attend school regularly and fails to ensure the child does so.
- 2.43 Examples of work taking place in the local clusters to support high levels of school attendance are:
- Focused work with primary schools including regular visits from attendance improvement officers, offering of advice on individual cases as well as whole school systems.
 - Focused work with maintained high schools and half termly meetings with Academies to discuss statutory cases.
 - Development and review of cluster attendance policies to support a consistent approach to attendance and punctuality issues.
 - Parenting support programmes and referrals to intensive family support services such as Signpost, Health for All and our in house Family Intervention Service.

- Schools, attendance staff and other partners delivering ‘attendance blitzes’ with visits to parents of pupils absent on the day of the blitz. A further programme is being planned for the autumn term.
- Fast track interventions – targeted interventions involving issuing of penalty notices – at primary and secondary level.
- Analysis of dips in attendance due to factors such as illness or severe weather. For example, the noro virus had an impact on many schools in the area at the end of Autumn Term and the beginning of the Spring Term. As schools follow the guidelines which state that children should be kept at home for 48 hours if they have any sickness bugs a widespread illness such as this can have a significant impact on attendance figures.

3 Corporate Considerations

- 3.1 There are no corporate considerations in the report which provides information and updates to the Area Committee.

4 Consultation and Engagement

- 4.1 This report is for the Area Committee and refers to clusters which all have a wide range of partners and stakeholders.

5 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

- 5.1 Equality issues are implicit in the information provided. The information shown reflects different levels of needs and outcomes in different localities. Additional equality analysis of the information provided is undertaken.

6 Council Policies and City Priorities

- 6.1 Information in the report relates to city priorities for children and young people and local priorities in the clusters.

7 Resources and value for money

- 7.1 There are no new resource implications in this report.

8 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

- 8.1 This report is not eligible for call in due to it being a council function.

9 Risk Management

- 9.1 The information reflected in this report is monitored through Leeds City Council performance, and where appropriate, risk management processes.

10 Conclusion

- 10.1 This report provides a summary of information in relation to the three Children’s Services obsessions for both clusters in the Committee’s area to support the

committees' understanding and involvement in work to improve outcomes for children and young people in the area.

11 Recommendation

- 11.1 The Area Committee is requested to note the contents of the report and consider how it can further support work in the area to improve outcomes for children and young people.

Background documents¹

There are no background documents associated with this report.

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.