

## SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN AND FAMILIES)

WEDNESDAY, 29TH MARCH, 2023

**PRESENT:** Councillor A Lamb in the Chair

Councillors H Bithell, J Bowden, E Bromley,  
A Forsaith, J Heselwood, Z Hussain,  
L Martin, K Renshaw, L Richards,  
R. Stephenson and E Taylor

### **CO-OPTED MEMBERS (VOTING)**

Mr E A Britten – Church Representative (Catholic)  
Mr A Graham – Church Representative (Church of England)  
Ms J Ward – Parent Governor Representative (Secondary)

### **CO-OPTED MEMBERS (NON-VOTING)**

Mr N Tones – School Staff Representative  
Ms L Whitaker – Young Lives Leeds

#### **69 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents**

There were no appeals against refusal of inspection of documents.

#### **70 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public**

There were no exempt items.

#### **71 Late Items**

There were no late items.

#### **72 Declaration of Interests**

There were no declarations of interests made at the meeting.

#### **73 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Ragan, Cllr Howley, Cllr Senior, Helen Bellamy (School Staff Representative) and Kate Blacker (Co-opted Member)

Cllr Taylor attended the meeting as substitute for Cllr Ragan.

#### **74 Minutes - 8th March 2023**

A point of accuracy was brought to the Board's attention under minute no.66 (Leeds Safeguarding Children Partnership Update). It was noted that the draft minutes would be amended to also reflect the attendance of Gill Marchant as Head of Safeguarding/Designated Nurse Safeguarding, Children and Families, Leeds Health and Care Partnership.

**RESOLVED** – That subject to amendment outlined above, the minutes of the meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2023 be approved as a correct record.

**75 Thriving: The Child Poverty Strategy for Leeds**

The report of the Director of Children and Families provided an overview of 'Thriving: The Child Poverty Strategy for Leeds', and the work that sits underneath the strategy, including work that has occurred during the pandemic. The report also provided an update on each of the workstreams in terms of recent activities, outcomes and next steps.

In attendance for this item were:

- Councillor Fiona Venner - Executive Member for Adult and Children's Social Care and Health Partnerships
- Councillor Jonathan Pryor - Executive Member for Economy, Culture and Education
- Julie Longworth - Director of Children and Families
- Shaheen Myers - Deputy Director Learning
- Ruth Terry - Chief Officer Social Work
- Farrah Khan - Chief Officer Family Help
- Dave Clark - Chief Officer Learning Improvement
- Val Waite - Chief Officer Learning Inclusion
- Julie Devonald - Head of Service, Workforce Development and Change

The Executive Member for Adult and Children's Social Care and Health Partnerships and the Director of Children and Families gave a brief introduction to the report and particularly highlighted the following:

- While the report reflects figures from 2020 showing that 24% of children (36,496) in Leeds were living in relative low-income families, it is anticipated that the updated statistics expected to be published by the end of March 2023 will show an increased figure.
- The recently published Joseph Rowntree Foundation UK Poverty report acknowledges that the temporary £20 uplift to Universal Credit had helped some families. However, it also highlights that the subsequent removal of this at a time when the cost-of-living crisis was also having an impact, has resulted in more families now struggling.
- The Joseph Rowntree Foundation UK Poverty report also showed that one in six (18 per cent) children were living in persistent poverty, which meant spending at least three out of the last four years in poverty. It was noted that for young children, that is nearly their whole life.
- In Leeds the birth rate is fast growing, and the Council has a moral imperative to ensure that no child lives in poverty.
- Leeds would continue to provide Breakfast Clubs and Healthy Holidays to ensure that children did not go hungry.
- Under the workstream around providing financial health and inclusion support directly to families, particular reference was made to the positive work being undertaken through the Gypsy and Traveller Energy Support Pilot Project, particularly for those families living on LCC settled sites and engaging with the Gypsy and Traveller Exchange (GATE).

- Reference was made to the workstream around housing and provision, with Children's Services and Housing working together on various issues including support for renters.
- The importance of maintaining the new workstream around improving access to green spaces for children to access and play.
- The Barnardo's report in October 2022 evidenced that families had cut back on food spending in the last 12 months with one in five parents saying they had struggled to provide sufficient food due to the current cost of living crisis. 26% of parents also said that their child's mental health had worsened due to the situation.
- It was noted that some groups such as children, lone parents, those with disabilities and people from ethnic minorities are more likely to experience poverty, to remain in poverty for longer and to experience deeper poverty than others. This caused feelings of exclusion and feelings of being ashamed and can affect young people for the rest of their lives. With this strategy, Leeds is working to ensure that individuals do not suffer for the rest of their lives.

In response to questions from Members the Board was provided with the following information:

- The use of the word ashamed was used to show the strength of feeling and impact poverty has on young lives.
- Gambling had been included as an issue within the strategy due to the My Health My School Survey as it was considered important to focus on this growing issue. Gambling among young people has become worse since lockdown, and it was concerning the number of children who gambled and the age of those gambling. Gambling, unlike other addictions, is not easy to spot and there was a need for support in this area. Members also raised concerns about the increased pressures on children and families in relation to add on features in gaming products and requested that this be explored and reflected in future reports.
- It was noted that while there was no data surrounding teachers gambling, this issue could be explored further with school leaders. Reference was also made to the recent tragic death of Head Teacher Ruth Perry in Reading in terms of highlighting the need to address workforce stress within the teaching profession.
- The Board discussed the importance of LGBT+ children having a supportive environment particularly within schools and welcomed that schools are continuing to look at ways of making this more impactful.
- The Board requested definitions of Relative Poverty and Absolute Poverty:
  - *Relative Poverty* – Where households have less than 60% of contemporary median income
  - *Absolute Poverty* – Where households have less than 60% of median income as it was in 2010-11 uprated by inflation
- Reference was made to the work undertaken with the Third Sector, faith groups and community leaders linked to the Strategy priority in tackling inequality in accessing services and support. This includes listening exercises to ensure that families voices and experiences are

heard and generating greater awareness of the Leeds offer of Early Help. It was also highlighted that an anti-racist offer had been developed with the local University that provides free support for schools to access.

- The Board noted that Leeds was leading by example and had decided to have a Child Poverty Strategy when other authorities had chosen not to have one. It was the view that 'moral imperative' was a good use of language for this strategy.
- Children's Services had noticed an increase in use of online services such as the Baby Buddy App with a high percentage of fathers using this particular app. The Service was looking to increase online services.
- The Board noted that the removal of the £20 uplift had impacted those working and not working with 22% of the Leeds population in relative poverty. It was also noted that the challenges of poverty were facing both professional and vulnerable families.
- Children now recognise poverty and work was being undertaken to remove the stigma of poverty so vulnerable families can receive the help they require. Children are becoming increasingly aware of poverty and were becoming distressed and worried, with poverty forming part of the 12 wishes made by children. It was critical to do restorative work with a strength-based approach to deliver high quality and timely support. There was a need to have difficult conversations and a commitment to the approach to ensure children fulfil their potential.
- Members were of the view there was a need to put mechanisms in place for Ukrainian families as they moved from sponsorship.
- Leeds was proud of its work at the 56 children centres which offered Sure Start in the poorest areas of the city, the Leeds School Uniform Exchange, and Healthy Holidays provision.
- Work would continue to reduce child deaths, some of which were a result of co-sleeping, with the Council signing up to be a bed poverty free city.
- Future reports on the progress of the strategy would include further work within private lettings and a map of green spaces in the city showing the types of activities in each of the greenspaces.
- The Board was encouraged to hear that all schools in Leeds had signed up to the My Health My School survey this year compared to 181 in the previous year.

**RESOLVED – To:**

- a) Acknowledge the ongoing strategic framework in place to mitigate the impact of child poverty, and the work being undertaken by the council and other partners in the key areas of activity.
- b) Acknowledge the need to promote the work of the Thriving strategy across the city and across council directorates and through our wider city partnerships in order to highlight the impact of poverty on children and their families.
- c) Note the responsible officer is the Chief Officer Family Help Children and Families.

**76 The refreshed 3As Plan**

Minutes approved at the meeting  
held on Wednesday, 7th June, 2023

The report of the Director of Children and Families provided an update on the refreshed 3A's Plan which runs from August 2021 – August 2023 with information on each priority and each action's KPI using the latest data available. A full list of the five priorities and fourteen actions linked to the Plan was appended to the submitted report at Appendix 1.

In attendance for the meeting were:

- Councillor Fiona Venner - Executive Member for Adult and Children's Social Care and Health Partnerships
- Councillor Jonathan Pryor Executive Member for Economy, Culture and Education
- Julie Longworth - Director of Children and Families
- Shaheen Myers - Deputy Director Learning
- Ruth Terry - Chief Officer Social Work
- Farrah Khan - Chief Officer Family Help
- Dave Clark - Chief Officer Learning Improvement
- Val Waite - Chief Officer Learning Inclusion
- Erica Hiorns - Leadership and Management Lead

The Executive Member for Economy, Culture and Education and the Deputy Director Learning gave a brief introduction to the report and highlighted the following:

- The 5 priorities of the 3A's Plan are reading, attendance, SEND, wellbeing and transition. It was noted that nearly all of the KPI's are on track to achieve their targets, with some of the KPI's in relation to reading having already exceeded their targets.
- A further refresh of the Plan will be undertaken during the Summer in engagement with school leaders and other stakeholders.
- The work of Headteachers and teaching staff was recognised for the incredible work they are doing as well as their ongoing commitment and desire for continual improvement.

Responding to questions from Members the Board were provided with the following information:

- It was noted that the pressures on head teachers currently are considerable. As a result, the Children and Families directorate has retained the Head Teacher Support Service, which is working pro-actively with other teams across the Council to support head teachers. An event providing primary head teachers with the opportunity to network, hear uplifting speakers and to make contact with key local authority officers has been planned for October. Updates on this would be provided in future.
- It was noted that as part of the inspection framework it was now the role of school governors to support school leaders and it was important to embed this aspect as part of the school governor meeting.

It was noted that round table events would be offered to Chair of Governors to look at a package of support for school leaders. It was recognised that wellbeing and support was required for both school leaders and teaching staff during school inspections.

- It was suggested that the Strategy includes more emphasis around Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in terms of young people acknowledging that school is the start of life-long learning opportunities.
- It was noted that the funding associated with the national Catch-Up programme remains ongoing. This consists of subsidised tutoring via the National Tutoring Programme and the Recovery Premium, a sum of money allocated to support schools in education recovery and which is calculated according to the number of children in school who are looked after or have been in receipt of free school meals any time in the last six years.
- It was recognised that in the last 3 years there had been a number of teachers and Headteachers leaving the profession due to low morale and pressure of work. The Board were advised that Children's Services were raising issues in relation to recruitment and retention of teaching staff with the Department for Education and Ofsted. It was noted that the directorate was intending to hold a round table event with partners to understand the duty of care of the city and how to retain top quality staff in local schools.
- It was noted the directorate held no data in relation to vacancy levels, as there was no specific HR resource to hold data from all the schools and academies. Members were advised that the directorate was supporting schools and academies in succession planning to develop headteachers for the future.
- Cllr Stephenson declared an Other registrable interest as Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee on an Academy and shared his experience of work being undertaken by academies around recruitment and retention and suggested that future round table engagement events linked to the refresh of the Plan includes trustees and directors as well as school governors.
- It was acknowledged there was a need locally and nationally across all schools for recruitment and retention to be addressed. It was recognised that morale was low and teaching staff were leaving the profession due to cuts in budgets. It was noted that unless a pay rise was fully funded it would take money from school budgets.

In conclusion, the Chair highlighted that a further update report had been provisionally scheduled for the Scrutiny Board's October 2023 meeting to provide an opportunity for the Board to consider the revised Plan prior to it being finalised. Linked to this, the Chair emphasised the value of engaging with Scrutiny at the earliest opportunity.

**RESOLVED** - To note the content of the report.

**77 Youth Services - impact of new model**

The Head of Early Help Services presented a report which detailed the work that has been undertaken since March 2022 to progress the new model of youth work delivery in Leeds.

Attending for this item were:

- Councillor Fiona Venner - Executive Member for Adult and Children's Social Care and Health Partnerships
- Councillor Jonathan Pryor Executive Member for Economy, Culture and Education
- Councillor Jane Dowson - Deputy Executive Member
- Julie Longworth - Director of Children and Families
- Ruth Terry, Chief Officer Social Work
- Farrah Khan - Chief Officer Family Help
- Paul Money - Chief Officer Safer, Stronger Communities
- Liz Jarmin – Head of Locality Partnerships

The Deputy Executive Member explained that she was attending on behalf of the Executive Member for Communities (Cllr Harland), who had sent her apologies. The Deputy Executive Member and the Director of Children and Families then gave a brief introduction to the report and highlighted the following:

- There is a plan for Locality Youth Work teams to move from the Children and Families Directorate structure to the Safer, Stronger Communities Services from April 2023 to strengthen locality working, including links with Community Committees. It was noted that there will still be close relationships with the wider Children and Families Partnership including early help, statutory social work and broader youth service projects. It was highlighted that the following areas of responsibility would also remain within the Children and Families Directorate:
  - Return home interviews after a child has been missing.
  - The Pathways Team, who have a statutory duty to offer support to young people who are not in education, employment or training.
  - Life Coaches – with children on the edge of care, supporting those who are not in education, employment or training and support in relation to adolescent mental health.
- Six out of the eight posts for the Life Coaching Team had been recruited to, with the team expected to be at full capacity around May 2023. Reference was also made to the investment of Youth Working in Training posts and providing them with an opportunity to complete the Level 3 qualification in youth work as part of their job.
- The progress made since March 2022 linked to the new Life Coaching Service, locality-based youth work delivery, delivery of the enhanced youth work offers through the commissioning of Third Sector organisations and developments in relation to the youth work quality assurance framework.
- It was recognised that youth work is essential for every child growing up in the city to support them to become active citizens in the city. With partnership working this ensures delivery at a local level in the community

and helps young people to reach their potential, keeps them safe from harm, and promotes community respect and community resilience.

Responding to questions from Members the Board were provided with the following information:

- When the posts for Life Coaches were set up it was the aim that they would focus on adolescent mental health as there had been an increase of adolescent mental health issues in the city. There were also increased numbers of adolescents coming into care and it was recognised that there was a need to target specific support to specific areas. The Service had also used the Trauma Informed approach and had secured investment from Health in relation to a trauma informed resource aimed at looking at workforce development through universal services, looking at schools and clusters providing opportunities to upskill staff. The Life Coaches will also work to the Leeds Practice Model which uses the Rethink Formulation. Life Coaches would provide a more intensive support to young people. The roles of Life Coaches can also offer opportunities to Youth workers to progress and take up another role. It was clarified that Life Coaches would have a different role to Youth Workers, although there would be some similarities.
- It was noted that Life Coaches had been a budget commitment from Baroness Blake when she was Leader of the Council and was in recognition of the increase in adolescent mental health and increased numbers of adolescents going into care. It was about providing an additional and specialist resource to the Youth Service in relation to mental health.
- It was acknowledged that there was now a degree in youth work which was welcomed and provided parity in relation to social work. It was noted that Leeds has also benefited from having a senior leader role with a youth worker background. Prior to the pandemic there had been an annual event of a youth workers conference and it was the view that this should be revived again.
- The report had referenced centre-based provision and mobile provision where the van is taken to communities where there is no centre based provision. It was noted there was a need for ongoing conversations with young people to find what provision was required and where required. It was acknowledged there was a need to engage and educate young people to look at responsibility and respect for greenspaces enabling them to become the citizens of tomorrow.

While acknowledging that elements of the Youth Service would now be transferring to the responsibility of the Communities, Housing and Environment Directorate, the Chair offered his view it would still be beneficial for oversight of the Youth Service to remain within the remit of the Children and Families Scrutiny Board and for this to be taken into consideration when determining governance arrangements.



**RESOLVED** - To support and endorse the approach being taken to continue developing a joined up and consistent approach to the quality assurance and promotion of the Youth Work Offer in Leeds.

**78 2022/23 End of Year Scrutiny Board Statement**

The Head of Democratic Services, as designated Scrutiny Officer, will provide an annual report to Council setting out how the authority has carried out its overview and scrutiny functions during the preceding twelve-month period. As such, this year's Annual Report will collate highlights of the work of all five Scrutiny Boards over 2022/23.

Each Scrutiny Board now produces an end of year statement to complement the broader Scrutiny Annual Report. The 2022/23 end of year statement for this Scrutiny Board had therefore been provided for Members' consideration and approval.

The statement document followed a standardised format to provide details of the Board's full work programme for the last municipal year, including links to the associated agenda packs, minutes and webcast recordings, as well as including a statement from the Chair that reflected on the key priorities for the Scrutiny Board over the last year.

**RESOLVED** - To endorse the end of year statement for the Children and Families Scrutiny Board

**79 Work Schedule**

The Principal Scrutiny Advisor explained that as this was expected to be the Board's final formal public meeting for the municipal year, a draft work schedule for the new municipal year had been set out in Appendix 1 of the report for Members' consideration. This included preliminary future meeting dates and reflected known items of scrutiny activity, such as performance and budget monitoring, as well as other identified areas of work that the Board had already recommended for the successor Scrutiny Board to pursue in the new municipal year.

**RESOLVED** - That the contents of the work schedule of the successor Scrutiny Board for 2023/2024 be noted.

**CHAIRS CLOSING COMMENTS**

The Chair took this opportunity to formally thank all Board Members for their contributions to the work of the Scrutiny Board and particularly acknowledged the valuable contributions made by Cllrs Ragan and Forsaith to the work of Scrutiny over the years as both would be retiring from the Council in May.

The Chair also paid tribute to Kate Blacker and Jackie Ward for their contributions to the Scrutiny Board as the statutory parent governor representatives over the years. While both were no longer eligible to reapply as a statutory co-opted member, it was noted that they had expressed an interest to return as non-statutory co-opted members in the new municipal

year. The Chair therefore gave his support for this to be explored further with the successor Chair and Board.

The Chair relayed his thanks to the Executive Members, officers and partners who helped to facilitate the work of the Scrutiny Board, as well as acknowledging the support provided by scrutiny and governance officers.

Finally, the Chair explained that after five years of chairing the Children and Families Scrutiny Board, he would no longer be continuing in this role and therefore passed on his very best wishes to the new successor Chair and Board.

**80 Date and Time of Next Meeting**

**RESOLVED** – That the next meeting of the Children and Families Scrutiny Board is provisionally scheduled for Wednesday 7th June 2023 at 10.00 am (pre-meeting for all Board Members at 9.30 am).

*The meeting concluded at 12:35pm*