

SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN AND FAMILIES)

Meeting to be held in Civic Hall, Leeds, LS1 1UR on
Wednesday, 4th October, 2023 at 10.00 am
(A pre-meeting will take place for ALL Members of the Board at 9.30 a.m.)

MEMBERSHIP

Councillors

- D Blackburn - Farnley and Wortley;
J Bowden - Roundhay;
E Bromley - Horsforth
D Cohen (Chair) - Alwoodley;
R Downes - Otley and Yeadon;
O Edwards - Guiseley and Rawdon;
C Gruen - Bramley and Stanningley;
J Heselwood - Weetwood;
N Manaka - Burmantofts and Richmond Hill;
L Martin - Roundhay;
K Renshaw - Ardsley and Robin Hood;
J Senior - Morley South;
T Smith - Pudsey;
R. Stephenson - Harewood;

Co-opted Members (Voting)

- Mr E A Britten - Church Representative (Catholic)
Mr A Graham - Church Representative (Church of England)
Vacancy - Parent Governor Representative (Primary)
Vacancy - Parent Governor Representative (Secondary)

Co-opted Members (Non-Voting)

- Mr N Tones - School Staff Representative
Ms H Bellamy - School Staff Representative
Ms L Whitaker - Young Lives Leeds
Mrs K Blacker
Ms J Ward

Principal Scrutiny Adviser:
Rob Clayton
Tel: (0113) 37 88790

Produced on Recycled Paper

Please Note: Please do not attend the meeting in person if you have symptoms of Covid-19 and please follow current public health advice to avoid passing the virus onto other people.

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[Council and democracy \(leeds.gov.uk\)](http://leeds.gov.uk/council-and-democracy)

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A G E N D A

Item No	Ward/Equal Opportunities	Item Not Open		Page No
1			<p>APPEALS AGAINST REFUSAL OF INSPECTION OF DOCUMENTS</p> <p>To consider any appeals in accordance with Procedure Rule 25* of the Access to Information Procedure Rules (in the event of an Appeal the press and public will be excluded).</p> <p>(* In accordance with Procedure Rule 25, notice of an appeal must be received in writing by the Head of Governance Services at least 24 hours before the meeting).</p>	
2			<p>EXEMPT INFORMATION - POSSIBLE EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To highlight reports or appendices which officers have identified as containing exempt information, and where officers consider that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, for the reasons outlined in the report. 2. To consider whether or not to accept the officers recommendation in respect of the above information. 3. If so, to formally pass the following resolution:- <p>RESOLVED – That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following parts of the agenda designated as containing exempt information on the grounds that it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the press and public were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information, as follows:</p> <p>No exempt items have been identified.</p>	

3

LATE ITEMS

To identify items which have been admitted to the agenda by the Chair for consideration.

(The special circumstances shall be specified in the minutes.)

4

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

To disclose or draw attention to any interests in accordance with Leeds City Council's 'Councillor Code of Conduct'.

5

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTES

To receive any apologies for absence and notification of substitutes.

6

MINUTES - 6 SEPTEMBER 2023

7 - 16

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 6th September 2023

7

LEEDS SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP - UPDATE

17 - 34

To receive a report from the Head of Democratic Services which provides an update on Leeds Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) activity. This follows discussion at the Board's 8 March 2023 meeting where it was resolved that a further update would be brought to the Board in the Autumn.

8

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE UPDATE

35 - 74

To receive a report from the Director of Children and Families setting out information on school attendance in Leeds. This follows Board requests for more information on reduced attendance rates compared to pre-pandemic levels.

9		<p>IMPACT OF VAPING ON CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN LEEDS</p> <p>To consider a report from the Head of Democratic Services that provides an update on the planned work on the impact of vaping on children and young people in the city, following news that the government intends to make disposable vapes illegal.</p>	75 - 78
10		<p>PROVISION OF EHCP SUPPORT IN LEEDS - WORKING GROUP NOTES</p> <p>To consider a report from the Head of Democratic Services that provides a summary note from the Provision of EHCP Support Working Group held on 22 September 2023</p>	79 - 100
11		<p>WORK PROGRAMME</p> <p>To consider the Scrutiny Board's work schedule for the 2023/24 municipal year.</p>	101 - 120
12		<p>DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING</p> <p>The next public meeting of the Board will take place on 29 November 2023 at 10.00am. There will be a pre-meeting for all board members at 9.30am</p>	

THIRD PARTY RECORDING

Recording of this meeting is allowed to enable those not present to see or hear the proceedings either as they take place (or later) and to enable the reporting of those proceedings. A copy of the recording protocol is available from the contacts on the front of this agenda.

Use of Recordings by Third Parties – code of practice

- a) Any published recording should be accompanied by a statement of when and where the recording was made, the context of the discussion that took place, and a clear identification of the main speakers and their role or title.
- b) Those making recordings must not edit the recording in a way that could lead to misinterpretation or misrepresentation of the proceedings or comments made by attendees. In particular there should be no internal editing of published extracts; recordings may start at any point and end at any point but the material between those points must be complete.

SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN AND FAMILIES)

WEDNESDAY, 6TH SEPTEMBER, 2023

PRESENT: Councillor D Cohen in the Chair

Councillors D Blackburn, J Bowden,
E Bromley, Amanda Carter, R Downes,
O Edwards, C Gruen, J Heselwood,
N Manaka, L Martin, K Renshaw and
T Smith

26 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

There were no appeals.

27 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There were no exempt items.

28 Late Items

There were no formal late items.

29 Declaration of Interests

No interests were raised.

30 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies were received on behalf of Cllr Senior and Cllr Stephenson.
Councillor Amanda Carter attended in place of Councillor Stephenson.

Apologies were also received from Co-Opted Member Mr Andrew Graham
and Julie Longworth, Director of Children and Families.

31 Minutes - 5 July 2023

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the previous meeting held 5th July 23, be approved as an accurate record.

**CHAIRS COMMENT - JOINT OFSTED/CQC THEMATIC VISIT -
ALTERNATIVE PROVISION**

The Chair indicated that the Board would briefly turn to an item that was not contained in the agenda pack for the meeting. This was an update on a Joint Ofsted/CQC Thematic Visit of alternative provision in Leeds. Given the timing of the visit it was felt appropriate to hear a brief update on this visit to Leeds.

Phil Evans, Chief Officer Service Transformation and Partnerships, provided the update.

The purpose of the visit is to:

- find out the extent to which alternative provision is meeting the health, care and/or education needs of children and young people
- better understand the purposes for which alternative provision is used
- identify the enablers and barriers to local area partners working together to commission and oversee alternative provision placements
- highlight good practice in commissioning and oversight arrangements for alternative provision

Inspectors from Ofsted and the CQC will be in person in Leeds week commencing 18th September and in the interim period colleagues across the Council and partners will be preparing information for the visit and will be sharing that with the inspectors.

This type of visit should not be confused with Area Joint SEND Inspections. Whilst similar in length there are important differences in the focus of the two types of visit. An Alternative Provision thematic visit looks at alternative provision from a national, systems perspective, which means that all of the findings will be collated into a national report. There is no judgement attached to the visit, and no published letter or report that covers specific Leeds findings.

Following questions from Board Members, the following additional detail was provided:

- The visit will include meetings with parents, children and practitioners with a survey provided to these groups for completion as part of the evidence gathering process.
- Formal feedback from the thematic visit will be provided on the final day of the three-week visit to the nominated officer from the Council and also the ICB.
- The report from the visit is expected to be published in November.

32 The independent review of children’s social care (Macalister Review) – Implementation Update

The report of the Director of Children and Families provided a summary of the national Independent Review of Children’s Social Care, led by Josh MacAlister, and the government response to this review and implementation of its recommendations – the ‘Stable Homes Built on Love’ strategy and consultation. This item also considered the work in Leeds to keep and bring Leeds children closer to home, both through preventative and edge of care support and the approach to placements and the residential estate for children looked after.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Farrah Khan, Chief Officer Family Help
- Clare Slaney, Head of Service Area Social Care
- Councillor Pryor Executive Member for Economy, Culture and Education

- Councillor Venner, Executive Member for Children’s Social Care and Health Partnerships

Councillor Venner, Executive Member for Children’s Social Care and Health Partnerships introduced the report setting out the similarities in approach between existing practice in Leeds and the approach recommended in the Independent Review, a key theme being the moving of resource from crisis prevention into early intervention and prevention which has been a key focus in practice in Leeds for a number of years.

It was noted that Leeds is not a pathfinder local authority area which are being established as part of the government response to the independent review, and it was felt that this was to encourage local authorities who had not previously been involved in that type of activity, or who had been assessed as outstanding via Ofsted inspection, to be identified as pathfinders and to develop best practice approaches.

In terms of the Leeds response to the recommendations in the MacAlister Review, Cllr Venner highlighted the ongoing expansion of Early Help Hubs from three to seven, increases in the number of children’s homes to address issues around sufficiency of placements and edge of care work in Leeds is already active in terms of keeping children close to home and in their families where it is safe to do so. Kinship care is already a key element of the services offered by Leeds with many more placements in kinship care than the national average and Leeds has previously been highlighted by an All-Parliamentary Group in terms of good practice in relation to kinship care.

The Chair added that when looking through the report it is clear that Leeds is an exemplar in terms of practice that is already embedded in how the city works.

Responding to question from members the following discussion points were raised:

- On recruitment and retention there are significant workforce pressures in social work currently. Leeds has already established a newly qualified social work programme over a two-year period which includes well-being support and resilience. However, recruitment remains a problem with less people coming into the profession and more social workers leaving. Leeds does offer an apprenticeship programme with 13 unqualified staff working towards qualification through apprenticeships and also the ‘step up’ programme which supports recruitment to the profession.
- In terms of recent recruitment and existing vacancies, there are 71.5 vacancies across the 500 FTE social work posts (14%), this is offset by 26.5 agency social workers and a programme of additional social work assistants, unqualified staff used to support social work teams where there are vacancies and also additional advanced practitioners used to increase capacity. A further recruitment effort has seen 13 internationally recruited social workers with provision for a total of 20 to be recruited from that source.

- In response to a question around targeted early help and the concept of family help, it was explained that this was about reducing barriers to early help meaning that support can be available without a social work referral. Family help is aimed at reducing the steps that families have to go through to get support and retaining staffing consistency in the people that children and families deal with. Furthermore, family help means family help, in that it is available to the whole family and enhances consistency in support.
- On placement sufficiency board members were keen to understand more about smaller group children's homes and any recruitment challenges that are faced given some of the complex needs and challenging behaviours that can be displayed in those settings. Residential staff now receive enhanced therapeutic training designed to meet additional needs and support requirements. Recent recruitment has also factored in the support available through the therapeutic social work team, which has led to a successful recruitment campaign into the residential support team.
- In relation to children's homes, and children looked after generally the challenges around transition are particularly difficult to manage and can lead to problems around transition planning. However, the overall aim in Leeds is to plan for transition early and have early discussions with colleagues in adult services and in health services to ensure that support is in place and that transition between children's and adult services is as smooth as possible from a commissioning point of view.
- The Board were keen to understand the use of the third sector in residential settings in Leeds. Children are placed in third sector settings and it is often used to increase capacity and retain children from Leeds in Leeds based settings. The private sector is also used and more funding is spent in that sector, compared to the third sector, with a key aim of keeping children and young people closer to home. These settings are monitored and visited regularly to determine how care is provided and this is supported by an independent reviewing officer who reviews care plans to ensure placements are appropriate. This also applies to children and young people who are placed outside of Leeds.
- The Board expressed concerns about profit margins in the private sector both through Independent Foster Agencies and private residential care homes and also the funding available to foster carers through the private sector where often a foster carer is able to receive a higher allowance for their work. To try to address this an additional £2m was put into the budget for 2023/24 to provide an uplift in foster carer pay which has led to Leeds being the top paying authority regionally for some age ranges. In addition, foster carers are supported by a comprehensive package of support which includes the 'mockingbird hubs' where more experienced foster carers support a network of foster carers in their roles.
- Following further questions from members details were provided on the frequency of visits made to children and young people placed in the private sector, which is a minimum of one per month often supported by advocates and/or independent reviewing officers. There can be logistical issues in terms of staff time having to travel further to see the

child in care when they live outside Leeds. Overall visits are regular, but they can vary depending on the needs of the child in care.

- Discussion also covered private homes established in Leeds which are used for external placements by other local authorities and the difficulties in identifying these homes when they are established, with the planning process often the only means by which new homes of this nature can be identified. Once children are placed in these private sector homes the Council is informed of this and becomes aware of the facility but during set up of a new home of this nature it is not always the case that the 'home' local authority is aware. However, in Leeds this has been reviewed and there are now links between planning and children and families to deal with these types of children's homes when they are being established. Private sector providers are subject to the same inspection process through Ofsted who regulate children's homes and where any concerns about care arrangements can be picked up. Children's homes Ofsted inspections take place annually along with other regulation 44 visits.
- On SEND needs which can often be difficult to meet capacity has recently been expanded to increase capacity in the city for complex needs and will facilitate more children returning to care arrangements in Leeds as opposed to being placed externally which will have benefits to the families as well as financially to the city.
- The Board were reassured that the Council is looking into increasing diversity within the foster carer cohort in the city to diversify the workforce in line with the Council's EDI ambitions and to enhance the range of settings available to those requiring care, this is an active workstream currently.

RESOLVED –

- a) To note the update given in this report and the work underway to implement the recommendations of the Josh MacAlister review.

33 Impact of asylum changes on children in Leeds

The report from the Director of Children and Families set out how recent changes to the asylum system in the UK has impacted children in Leeds.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Farrah Khan, Chief Officer Family Help
- Patsy Burrows, Head of Service Corporate Parenting
- Sara Townend, Principal Legal Officer
- Jonathan Nevill, Service Delivery Manager
- Councillor Pryor, Executive Member for Economy, Culture and Education
- Councillor Venner, Executive Member for Children's Social Care and Health Partnerships

Councillor Venner, Executive Member for Children's Social Care and Health Partnerships introduced the report highlighting the particular impact of recent changes on Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC). These children often arrive in Leeds having experienced significant trauma, in some

cases having escaped difficult, inhumane conditions and very difficult journeys to arrive in the United Kingdom. This means that they often present in Leeds with very complex needs and mental health challenges. A further challenge relates to the age at which young people arrive in Leeds, typically aged 16/17 years old meaning that they often very quickly become care leavers and are at an age where finding placements in foster care can be difficult due to availability of suitable places.

The Executive Member also highlighted some funding challenges linked to meeting the needs of UASC both in Leeds and nationally with a particular impact on border area councils such as Kent. In addition, there are problems associated with age assessments for UASC arriving in the country. This has led to young people being wrongly identified as an adult and subsequently being placed in inappropriate provision. 30 out of 35 UASC who were referred for further assessment due to concerns about the accuracy of age assessments were then identified as being a child or young person.

Despite this Leeds delivers positive work in this area an example highlighted by Cllr Venner was the 'Cooked with Love' project which saw the creation of a cookbook through a joint project between the Council and British Library containing recipes from the UASC young people that have arrived in the city. The book will live in the British Library forever and is provided to all UASC that arrive in Leeds.

Responding to question from members the following discussion points were raised:

- In terms of age assessments and UASC being wrongly identified as adults, the board were informed that the age assessment carried out in the ports in Kent are not as detailed as those carried out in Leeds. Following identification of an individual who may be under 18 through welfare assessment in the hotels used in Leeds, a 'Merton Assessment' is carried out promptly, often within days of arriving in Leeds. This is a full assessment which can lead to a more accurate picture of age being determined. This can be time consuming and involve several appointments with appropriately qualified social workers and interpreters these can take between 6 and 8 weeks to finalise. There are no additional costs associated with this other than the use of officer time. It was also noted that age assessments do not feature medical assessments.
- The Board also heard a legal view on age assessments and the potential for challenge when an age assessment is made, potentially through Judicial Review. There have been examples of this in Leeds usually relating to those assessed as being over 18 who have sought to challenge that.
- Support available to UASC arriving in Leeds was an area of interest for board members. UASC receive a welcome meeting which is funded through Department of Health and Social Care funding this means that professionals meet the new arrivals provide a welcome pack and also put them in touch with other UASC and the networks that are available. The UASC groups and networks are often led by UASC who have

become care leavers and who are able to pass on their knowledge and experiences to new arrivals. Many of the new arrivals are Muslims so appropriate faith related support is provided such as the provision of prayer mats. Welfare assessments in terms of health checks are also provided through looked after children nurse appointments.

- In addition, there is now a thriving football team for UASC who have been successful winning a cup and achieving promotion last season. This can involve as many as 50 UASC and care leavers supported by staff and wider volunteers.
- In terms of countries where the most UASC arrive from these were listed as Somalia, Afghanistan, Eritrea, Sudan, Syria, Iraq and a small number from Chad.
- The Board was interested in how protected characteristics are dealt with and how that impacts the approach to newly arrived UASC. This has not yet been requested by any new arrivals, but it was accepted that more work is required in this area to see if there are any additional services or support that can be provided. It was noted that work on integration into the city and identity is part of the approach taken by the team in Leeds.
- In term so the type of accommodation that UASC use in Leeds the Board were informed that typically UASC are housed in supported lodgings which is a family home but is not a foster placement and semi-independent living. On the latter this is a mature type of accommodation aimed at groups of UASC over the age of 16 who live in supported group settings. UASC under the age of 16 live in foster placements and this offer can be extended to those over 16 who have additional or more complex needs that would be better supported through living in a family home.
- The Board were interested in forced removals which form part of the Illegal Immigration Act (July 2023). As yet the implications of this new legislation have not been felt in Leeds. For those UASC that become care leavers they are supported by Personal Assistants in the same way as all care leavers. Given the possible impact of legislation the service is trying to ascertain the legal status of UASC before they turn 18 to provide more certainty for them about their status and potential to stay in the UK.
- The Board were also interested in support and access to education for UASC. All Looked After Children have an education plan which is personal to them and will also be supported by social workers to identify additional support requirements. In addition, there are some schools in Leeds that have a strong approach to diversity and welcoming young people from diverse communities and backgrounds.
- The Board were also interested in UASC who were younger than the most common age group 16-17.5. These are relatively uncommon with two arrivals in the past year with these often being 'sent' by family members in their home countries and arriving at Leeds Bradford Airport. These arrivals have typically experienced challenging circumstances in their home settings.

RESOLVED –

Draft minutes to be approved at the meeting
to be held on Wednesday, 4th October, 2023

- a) Scrutiny noted and endorsed this update report.
- 34 Provision of EHCP support – Terms of Reference**

The report of the Head of Democratic Services set out Terms of Reference for Board Members to agree to guide the inquiry into the Provision of EHCP support in Leeds.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Councillor Pryor, Executive Member for Economy, Culture and Education
- Councillor Venner, Executive Member for Children Social Care and Health Partnerships
- Farrah Khan, Chief Officer Family Help
- Phil Evans, Chief Officer Transformation and Partnerships
- Ben Allchin Statutory Provision & Assessment Lead
- Sandra Pentelow Deputy Head of Business Administration

The Principal Scrutiny Advisor presented a report setting out the revised Terms of Reference for the inquiry into the provision of EHCP support in Leeds. This followed consideration of a draft terms of reference at the July Board meeting with the Terms of Reference presented today taking account of member amendments made in July.

Members were also informed of a change in the scope of the inquiry which will now feature the findings of independent work being carried out by Price Waterhouse Cooper (PWC) into EHCP support in the city.

The Board were also reminded that a remote Working Group on the EHCP inquiry will take place on 22 September at 10.00AM.

The Chief Officer Transformation and Partnerships provided some additional context on the PWC work. They are currently conducting the work and will attend the planned working group on the 22 September, at that meeting an update will be provided by PWC on their initial findings and hypotheses. In addition, discussion will take place on future work both in terms of PWC and the Children and Families Scrutiny Board and seeking to align those two work streams.

Responding to questions from members the following discussion points were raised:

- The Board were keen to ensure that stakeholder consultation was thorough, and that parents, young people and carers were contacted as part of the PWC work and were keen to be involved in engagement with stakeholders as part of the inquiry, if appropriate and in conjunction with PWC.
- The Board also raised wider concerns around school SEN support for children who have additional needs but do not fall into the EHCP support category. In Leeds there is Funding For Inclusion (FFI), and it

was thought that the inquiry could cover aspects of this around timeliness of funding being provided to support children and young people in school. The Board were also assured that the PWC work is broader than just the statutory framework of EHCPs and will cover FFI as well.

RESOLVED –

The Board:

- a) Approved the Terms of Reference for the Inquiry into the Provision of EHCP Support in Leeds, including the work being undertaken by PWC
- b) Noted the scheduling of a remote Working Group on 22 September at 10.00AM to begin consideration of this inquiry through a report from the directorate and attendance from PWC.

35 Work Programme

The report of the Head of Democratic Services presented a report setting out the Board's work programme for the 2023/24 municipal year. Appended to the submitted report were a copy of the work programme and the Executive Board minutes from the meeting held Wednesday, 26th July 2023.

Responding to a question on the planned school attendance update scheduled for the October Board meeting, The Principal Scrutiny Adviser noted that the item has been scoped based on member comments from the June meeting of the Board and will include some of the challenges linked to children and young people who are struggling to attend school settings due to additional needs and support requirements, particularly in light of the Covid-19 pandemic but also more broadly.

RESOLVED – To note the contents of the report and work schedule for the 2023/24 municipal year.

36 Date and Time of Next Meeting

RESOLVED – To note the date and time of the next meeting as Wednesday, 4th October 2023 at 10am (with a pre-meeting for Board members at 9:30am)

The meeting concluded at 12.05PM.

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Leeds Safeguarding Children Partnership - Update

Date: 4 October

Report of: Head of Democratic Services

Report to: Scrutiny Board (Children and Families)

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

Brief summary

- In 2022/23, the Board considered a number of work items in relation to the Notification of Serious Child Safeguarding Incidents. The board requested and received a number of updates from the LSCP Executive throughout this period the last of which was during the meeting on 8 March 2023.
- The 8 March 2023 public meeting provided an opportunity for an update on the review of the notification process and for the LSCP Executive to discuss its general priorities, with particular reference to key cross cutting themes identified through the LSCP review processes and general activity through an overview of the then forthcoming annual report. At that meeting it was agreed that a further update item from the LSCP would be considered in Autumn 2023 and some specific areas of interest were also identified and included in the minutes.
- The Board may wish to consider having an update of LSCP activity as a standing item for the Board's annual work programme which would enable an annual 'check in' on activity and could be complemented by future iterations of the LSCP annual report.
- In addition, the LSCP Executive has provided an update report which is appended for the Board's consideration at Appendix 1.

Recommendations

1. Members are requested to consider the content of the attached report from the Leeds Safeguarding Children Partnership and determine appropriate next steps, if any.
2. Consider whether an annual update on LSCP activity would be an appropriate standing item for the Board's work programme.

What is this report about?

1. In March 2023, the Children and Families Scrutiny Board held a public meeting dedicated to safeguarding and the work of the LSCP in the city with a particular focus on cross cutting themes and learning from the review of notifications processes that had taken place in 2022 along with an overview of the then forthcoming LSCP Annual Report.
2. Following a constructive discussion in March, the Chair sought Board agreement for next steps on this issue. Following discussion, and recorded in the minutes from March 2023, the following were agreed as areas of focus for an update report in September or October 2023:
 - The findings from the LSCP Executive's twelve-month review of its revised notification processes, which will be undertaken in July 2023.
 - Progress on the work being undertaken around practitioner escalation and resolution of concerns.
 - Capturing the voice of the child and evidencing how the learning stemming from reviews is being disseminated and is improving outcomes for children and young people.
 - Addressing the use of language and jargon and understanding the use of definitions used in the sector.
 - The work being undertaken to ensure the use of accurate and timely risk assessments and improving awareness and understanding amongst practitioners around differing risk assessment processes.
 - The Leeds input into the review of the Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 guidance, with an update on progress dependent upon the timing of the national review process.
 - Clarification of the levels of oversight, including democratic oversight, that surrounds those Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews that are notified to the National Safeguarding Practice Review Panel.
3. This item has therefore been brought forward to reflect the agreed position taken by the Children and Families Scrutiny Board in municipal year 2022/23.
4. Furthermore, as noted above Board members may wish to consider a more regular update approach to consideration of issues and activity related to the LSCP, potentially through an annual work item that can be included in the Work Programme as a standard item each municipal year.

What impact will this proposal have?

5. The information presented to the Scrutiny Board will assist Members in determining appropriate next steps and will ensure that actions agreed by the Board in previous years are taken account of and dealt with appropriately and to agreed timescales.

How does this proposal impact the three pillars of the Best City Ambition?

Health and Wellbeing Inclusive Growth Zero Carbon

6. One of the eleven priorities set out within the existing Leeds Children and Young People's Plan is ensuring that the most vulnerable are protected.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected:

Have ward members been consulted? Yes No

7. The Director and Deputy Director of Children and Families; the Chair of the Leeds Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP); the Executive Member for Adult and Children's Social Care and Health Partnerships; and the legal adviser to the LSCP had attended the Scrutiny Board's meeting in March 2023 and previous public meetings that have considered these issues to contribute to the discussion and address any questions from Board Members.
8. In addition, the former Chair of the Leeds Safeguarding Children Partnership was joined by other partner members of the LSCP Executive in providing an update to the Scrutiny Board.
9. Members of the LSCP Executive have again been invited to today's meeting to present the appended reports and address any questions from Board Members.

What are the resource implications?

10. This report has no specific resource implications.

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

11. Details of any associated risk management implications will be reflected as part of the appended report from the LSCP.

What are the legal implications?

12. The Wood Review of 2016 led to an amendment of The Children's Act 2004, resulting in the removal of the statutory requirement of local authorities to have a Local Safeguarding Children Board and placed the responsibility for safeguarding equally with local authorities namely children and family services, police and health (Clinical Commissioning Groups).
13. The Children Act 2004 (as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017), the associated regulations and statutory guidance, 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018' set out the duties placed on the three agencies to work in partnership and to define the local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. It also places a duty on other partner agencies to co-operate with the new arrangements albeit the local authority is designated as the accountable body for the Notification arrangements.
14. Members are requested to note that given the legal restrictions it will not be appropriate for there to be any discussion of and/or reference to individual cases which fall within the notification arrangements.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Update Report of the Leeds Safeguarding Children Partnership
- Appendix 2 – Partnership Serious Child Safeguarding Incident Notification Form

Background papers

- None.

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Report to: C&F Scrutiny Board

Report from: LSCP Executive

Title of report: Actions From C&F Scrutiny Board

Date: 4th October 2023

1.0 Purpose of report

On 8th of March 2023, the Leeds Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) Executive attended a meeting of the Children and Families Scrutiny Board.

The purpose of this meeting was to provide an update of the review undertaken by the LSCP Executive on the notification process in relation to Serious Child Safeguarding Incidents (SCSI)

The LCC Scrutiny Committee have requested that the LSCP Executive attend a meeting on the 4th of October 2023 to update them on progress on the seven actions contained within the minutes of that meeting.

2.0 7 Actions from the minutes

1) The findings from the LSCP Executive's twelve-month review of its revised notification processes, which will be undertaken in July 2023.

The previous Independent Chair, who initiated the review of the notification process has expressed their assurance to the LSCP Executive that the new system for notification and decision making is now robust. A formal review of the notification process has not yet been undertaken however, this has not precluded robust, open, and transparent discussion amongst partners that has enhanced the process and relationships between LSCP partners. The LSCP have now recruited a new Independent Scrutineer whose role it will be to examine the LSCP arrangements and provide rigorous challenge of the safeguarding system. This will provide an opportunity for the Independent Scrutineer to formally review the notification process from their independent perspective.

The development and continual monitoring of the LSCP notification process has ensured that agencies represented on the LSCP know how and when to report to the LSCP Review Advisory Group (RAG) any case which may meet the threshold for notification to National Panel.

The threshold for notification can be found in Chapter 4 Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018. All cases which may meet this threshold are notified to the LSCP Business Unit, Independent Chair, and the RAG.

A Partnership Serious Child Safeguarding Incident Notification Form (Appendix 2) was developed to allow all partner agencies to refer cases to the RAG which may meet the criteria for notification in a consistent way. The form, which is submitted to the LSCP Business Unit or a RAG member, ensures that cases which are raised are done so in line with the notification criteria and that partners can provide their rationale for referral. The form allows identification that the referral has been undertaken in discussion and agreement with the referrer's agency safeguarding lead (or RAG representative where applicable).

Since April 2023, this form has been used to refer three cases to RAG. Two cases were notified to the National Panel and a rapid review was initiated and the third case, after further investigation, was found to be an accidental injury. The RAG reached a unanimous decision on all cases that were considered and have expressed full confidence in this process.

Furthermore, the LSCP Independent Chair provides independent scrutiny within both the RAG and the LSCP Executive where the decision to notify, or not, are considered. The LSCP Legal representative also provides legal advice on these decisions.

Further examples of where serious child safeguarding incidents may also be identified and referred for further consideration by the RAG are:

- Multi-agency strategy discussions: Children's Social Work Services are duty bound to hold a strategy discussion whenever there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm whether or not a criminal offence against a child has been committed. A strategy meeting/discussion is an opportunity to share information between agencies and to consider if a case should be referred to RAG.
- Sudden Unexpected Deaths in Childhood (SUDIC) which must be undertaken within 7 days of a child death. This multi-agency meeting follows the unexpected death of any child. The LSCP Manager attends these meetings to consider if a death may need to be referred to the RAG.
- The Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP): another statutory function under Working together to Safeguarding Children 2018, this is an opportunity to apply further scrutiny on the deaths of all children in Leeds, how agencies worked together and whether a case should be retrospectively referred to the RAG for further consideration.

2) Progress on the work being undertaken around practitioner escalation and resolution of concerns.

The Concerns Resolution Process (CRP) found [here](#) provides practitioners with a step by step process on why, when and how to use it. The CRP is also reiterated through our LSCP Pt 1 and Pt 2 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' training and our LSCP refresher training. This training is accessed annually by over 2500 practitioners across Leeds. The CRP is also promoted through our LSCP Bulletins which have over three thousand subscribers.

At the LSCP Bi-Annual meeting in March 2023 the CRP was discussed with front line practitioners in Leeds and again, the CRP was reiterated. Further promotion of this process was undertaken through LSCP Third Sector Safeguarding Group in September 2023.

The LSCP have also published this process on the West Yorkshire Consortium Procedures allowing agencies that provide services over more than one local authority area to be aware of the CRP in Leeds and can be found [here](#).

3) Capturing the voice of the child and evidencing how the learning stemming from reviews is being disseminated and is improving outcomes for children and young people.

Leeds child friendly city vision is promoted and encouraged throughout the LSCP safeguarding arrangements. Within the LSCP notification process the LSCP

Partnership Serious Child Safeguarding Incident Notification Form-Section 3 requests that the voice of the child is captured. Where notifications become a rapid review, again, the child's lived experience will be discussed and considered.

In addition, the LSCP Executive commission independent authors to undertake Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPR's) to ensure the integrity and transparency of investigations. Independent authors will reach out and offer to meet with families, children and young people to explore what day-to-day life was like for them, their experience of agencies supporting them and what children's experience of living in the family environment was like. Families are always offered the opportunity to read the final draft of the report to ensure it reflects their views prior to publication.

To ensure learning is disseminated across the partnership the LSCP use:

- Learning from review sheets which are used across the partnership in team meetings and staff briefings to highlight learning.
- Bulletins sent out to practitioners with learning from reviews highlighted.
- Briefing Sessions for professionals.
- LSCP Website hosts specific sections highlighting learning from reviews.
- Learning is incorporated into our LSCP Training programme.

Action plans that are developed following all our reviews clearly demonstrate changes to safeguarding systems and processes across the city and these are monitored by the RAG.

There are further opportunities for 'testing' impact as part of the LSCP Executive reset plan and this will pave the way for further scrutiny and rigorous approach to measuring the impact of reviews on children and families. The Performance Management Subgroup (PMSG) and Learning and Development Subgroup (LDSG) will be directly accountable to the LSCP Executive. This will allow the LSCP Executive to seek direct assurance of impact of reviews through:

- 1) Commissioning the PMSG to undertake audits that relate to learning and impact. This will track learning from our reviews right through to front line practice to evidence demonstratable outcomes for families.
- 2) Our learning strategy which includes our training and development offer. This will continue to embed learning across the partnership and seek opportunities to explore further creative ways of disseminating learning.

4) Addressing the use of language and jargon and understanding the use of definitions used in the sector.

Multi-agency training developed and delivered by the LSCP explores how different language and terminology may be used by different professionals. Working Together to Safeguard Children training outcomes are:

- Greater awareness of their own role and that of others in safeguarding children and young people and the prevention of abuse
- Develop skills in undertaking effective assessments, along with understanding their own individual responsibilities for assessing risk.
- Improved knowledge of the legislation, guidance and local procedures that exist to safeguard children.
- An understanding of individual roles and responsibilities within multi-agency working and the associated skills around this.

- Better understanding of, and development of skills to increase effective professional practice when safeguarding children.

The way that our training is delivered means that practitioners from different agencies come together to share learning together. Language is explored in these sessions to support common standards regarding language used in risk assessments. All LSCP training is delivered in line with the standards set out in the Yorkshire and Humber Multi-Agency Safeguarding Trainers Training Standards.

The LSCP multi-agency policy and procedures are developed with a range of agencies to ensure there is a common approach to language and safeguarding procedures. This is also reflected in the West Yorkshire policies and procedures covering a wider geographical area.

Leeds conversation model of assessments within the Front Door provides opportunities to discuss safeguarding assessments allowing professionals to explore any language/jargon contained within agencies risk assessments.

5) The work being undertaken to ensure the use of accurate and timely risk assessments and improving awareness and understanding amongst practitioners around differing risk assessment processes.

Safeguarding children and young people is a complex, challenging and multi-factorial activity. It is often undertaken in a rapidly changing multi-agency context of relative uncertainty. Dynamic risk assessments are those which recognise that the level of risk is not static, it can fluctuate over time and therefore has the potential to change and take this into consideration within the assessment. Dynamic risk assessments are promoted throughout the safeguarding system through its training offer.

It was identified within CSPR A that different agencies use different assessment tools, when assessing adults who pose a risk to children. New guidance for all practitioners have been developed and is promoted on the [LSCP Website](#) and included in LSCP training.

When a child or young person is identified as requiring help, support, or protection all professionals can access advice and guidance through the Front Door Safeguarding Hub. The Front Door is accessible to all who work with children and families and support strong assessments and responses to safeguarding and child protection. This co-location of agencies supports an understanding of differing risk assessments that may be used within different agencies.

It is also of note that following the LSCP Executive attendance at Scrutiny in March 2023, Cllr Venner sent a cross party letter to the Child Protection Ministerial Group drawing national attention to risk assessments across different agencies. The Minister's response references the commitment to an evaluation of multi-agency safeguarding hubs through its Children's Social Care Reform, 'Stable Homes Built on Love.' The DfE references that they are happy to include feedback from Leeds in this work.

6) The Leeds input into the review of the Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 guidance, with an update on progress dependent upon the timing of the national review process.

The national consultation of Working Together to Safeguard Children closed on the



6th of September 2023 and the LSCP have promoted and encouraged all members of the LSCP to participate in this consultation.

The LSCP Executive fed their experience and views into the update of Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018.

Once the new guidance is published, the LSCP will consider any changes made and embed this into its safeguarding arrangements.

7) Clarification of the levels of oversight, including democratic oversight, which surrounds those Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews that are notified to the National Safeguarding Practice Review Panel.

Scrutiny and oversight on cases that may or may not become a notification to the National Panel is well embedded within the LSCP arrangements. The RAG along with the Independent Chair and Business Manager are informed of all serious child safeguarding incidents that may have reached the threshold for notification to the National Panel. When cases are notified, the RAG will hold an initial meeting to jointly consider if it meets the criteria for notification to National Panel.

Once a decision has been made that the criteria for notification to National Panel has been met, the RAG partners enter a 15-day rapid review Process. This requires them to gather and analyse detailed information about multi-agency involvement with the child/family and to consider the criteria and guidance under Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018, to determine whether to recommend to the LSCP Executive that:

- A national or a local CSPR should be undertaken.
- Another type of learning process would be more appropriate e.g., a single agency review or,
- No further action is required.

At every stage of a rapid review, multi-agency meetings are held to ensure all partners within the RAG have an equal opportunity to share their professional opinion and contribute to any decisions. Minutes of these meetings are used to capture the rationale for any recommendations made.

The LSCP Executive oversee the recommendations made by the RAG and these are then sent to the National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel. The rationale for these decisions must be provided to the National Panel who will then either agree with the decision, make a recommendation for the LSCP to reconsider its decision and may also provide additional feedback.

Information regarding the number cases considered for a notification, those cases that are notified, and those cases that become CSPRs are published within the LSCP Annual Report and published on its website.

In addition, all CSPRs, when complete, are published locally on the LSCP Website unless it may put the anonymity of the child/family at risk. Any CSPR not published requires agreement from the National Panel.

LCC Scrutiny have provided democratic oversight of the notification process in receiving and considering the report into notifications discussed at its meeting on the

8th March 2023 and again in consideration of this update report.





Partnership Serious Child Safeguarding Incident Notification Discussion (PSCSIND)

This form is to be used by an LSCP partner agency / organisation to refer a potential Serious Child Safeguarding Incident¹ (SCSI) to the LSCP RAG and to support a discussion in relation to the possible need for notification².

Please see guidance notes when completing this form.

1. Demographic Information

Child					
Name	DoB	DoD if applicable	Ethnicity	Faith	Disability / additional needs
Address					

- Is the child known to Children Social Work Services?
If yes in what capacity? Yes / No / Don't Know
CP / CiN / Child Looked After
- Is the child known to other services?
If yes please provide further details: Yes / No / Don't Know

Immediate family members (and any significant extended family) including siblings					
Name	DoB	Ethnicity	Disability / additional needs	Relationship to Child	Address (if different to child's address)

¹ A serious child safeguarding incident (SCSI) is one whereby a child has died or been seriously harmed, and abuse or neglect of a child is known or suspected (Working Together to safeguard children and d Young People 2018)

² Working together to Safeguard Children 2018 outlines the duty of the Local authority to notify the National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel within five working days of becoming aware that a serious child safeguarding incident has occurred

- Are there any additional considerations in relation to equality such as additional needs, need for interpreters, cultural considerations for the child or any family member?
If yes please provide further details:
- Please provide a genogram of the family if this would be beneficial

2. Summary of incident or Significant Events & your agency / organisation's involvement:
If possible, please include SUDIC Information, highlight any emerging themes or things for consideration including your concerns and if escalation processes have been applied

- Is there an ongoing police investigation? Yes / No / Don't Know
If yes please provide further details:
- Is the child currently in hospital (if applicable) Yes / No / Don't Know
If yes please provide further details:

3. Where appropriate have you (or someone else) spoken with the child? Have you (or someone else) captured their voice? What do you believe to be the impact on the Child?

4. Your Rationale for referring the incident to the LSCP RAG meeting:
Please outline why you believe the criteria, as set out in Working Together 2018 has been met for a notification as set out below:³

Has the child died? Yes / No

If no has the child suffered serious harm⁴? Yes / No
 If yes please detail below in relation to the definition of serious harm in Working Together 2018

Is abuse or neglect known or suspected? Yes / No
 If yes please detail below in relation to the definitions of abuse or neglect in Working Together 2018⁵

³ Please see guidance notes for further information on the Working Together 2018 criteria.

⁴ Please see guidance notes for further information on the Working Together 2018 definition of serious harm

⁵ Please see Appendix A for definitions

5. Have you and / or others been involved in multiagency discussions regarding this child / family?

Please give a summary inc. dates:

Outcome of the discussion:

6. Referrers details

Name of Officer completing form:

Agency:

Contact Email:

Contact Phone:

Date:

Has this referral been discussed with your LSCP Review Advisory Group (RAG) member (Local Authority, Health and Police⁶) or your agency / organisation's safeguarding lead where there is no RAG representative? Yes / No

If yes please provide details of who the discussion was with, the date of the discussion and any key discussions / agreements:

If no please provide rationale as to why not:

Please return to lscp.info@leeds.gov.uk within 2 working days of the incident occurring;
subject: SCCI notification FAO LSCP Manager

⁶ Contact details for LSCP RAG representatives can be obtained from the LSCP Business Unit:
lscp.info@leeds.gov.uk

LSCP Review Advisory Group (RAG) Record of Discussion

This page to be completed by Leeds Safeguarding Children Partnership Business Support Unit Only

Date of RAG Discussion:

List of RAG members involved in the discussion:

Name	Role	Agency

Summary of the Discussion:

Decision, Rationale & Next Steps – to include where there is not a consensus:

If the decision of CSWS is to notify the National Panel the following should be completed:

Name of Officer who made the notification to the National Panel:

Date National panel were notified:

Have OFSTED and the Secretary of State been notified (death of a looked after child)?

Yes

No

If yes

Name of Officer who notified OFSTED and the Secretary of State:

Date OFSTED and the Secretary of State were notified:

Name of LSCP Officer completing form:

Contact Email:

Contact Phone:

Date:



Information for Partnership Notification Discussion (IPND) **Guidance on completion of template**

1. Demographic Information

Please provide full accurate details of the child and all relevant family members, including extended family if they are significantly involved in the care of this family. Please check spellings of all names and addresses to ensure this are correct.

Please answer the bulleted questions in relation to if the child is known to Children Social Work Services (CSWS), or is a looked after child, providing further details where applicable.

It is essential for this section to be completed fully if you have the required information in particular ethnicity and relationships as that are sections often left incomplete. The information assists the discussions and the subsequent outcome.

2. Summary of incident or Significant Events & your agency / organisation's involvement

Please provide a summary of the incident or significant events which you are referring for consideration as a SCSI. Please include any significant dates and relevant historical context.

Please provide a brief summary of your agency / organisation's involvement with this child / family.

If a child has died and the initial SUDIC meeting has taken place, and you are able to, please provide a summary of any relevant information.

Please answer the bulleted questions in relation to any ongoing police investigation and hospitalisation of the child, providing further details where applicable.

3. Impact on the Child / Voice of the Child

Please consider the impact of the incident, and any significant events leading up to it, on the child.

Have you been able to hear the voice of the child and are you able to consider their experience from their point of view? Have there been any key indicators such as changes in behaviour, developmental delay, emotional distress? If so please summarise these here.

4. Your Rationale for notification to this meeting (based on criteria in Working Together to safeguarding Children 2018)

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 states that the National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel should be notified of incidents whereby:

a child has died or been seriously harmed

and

abuse or neglect of a child is known or suspected

Within this section please provide the rationale for referral based on the two elements of the criteria (outline above).

Where you consider a child has been seriously harmed please outlined how taking into considering the definition of Significant Harm within Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018:

Serious harm includes (but is not limited to) serious and/or long-term impairment of a child's mental health or intellectual, emotional, social, or behavioural development. It should also cover impairment of physical health. This is not an exhaustive list. When making decisions, judgment should be exercised in cases where impairment is likely to be long-term, even if this is not immediately certain. Even if a child recovers, including from a one-off incident, serious harm may still have occurred.

In addition it is noted that The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel: practice guidance (April 2019) states:

When deciding whether the level of harm to a child is serious, often this judgement is quite straight forward. For example, because the child has a life-changing and long-term injury or an injury that is clearly life-threatening, for example, requiring resuscitation or intensive care treatment. However, some incidents are not so straight forward and, in these circumstances, a judgement about seriousness is likely to be made.

When considering if abuse or neglect is known or suspected please detail this with reference to the Working Together 2018 definitions at Appendix A.

5. Have you been involved in multiagency discussions regarding this child / family?

To your knowledge, have there been any multi-agency discussions about the child/family prior to the Serious Child Safeguarding Incident? If so please summarise the nature of the discussions and the outcomes such as planned meetings and/or actions

6. Referrers details

Please complete your details including name, agency, role and contact details.

All referrals for a SCSi notification discussion should be discussed with your agency / organisations LSCP Review Advisory Group (RAG) representative (for Local Authority, Health and Police) or your agency / organisation's safeguarding lead where there is no RAG representative in order to ensure that the rationale for referral is aligned to the notification criteria and that your agency is in support of the referral. Please indicate this has taken place, including who with, the date of the discussion and any key discussions or agreements.

For further information or support in completing the form please contact the LSCP Business Manager via lscp.info@leeds.gov.uk or 0113 3786018

Appendix A: Definitions of neglect and abuse

Item	Definition
Abuse	A form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Harm can include ill treatment that is not physical as well as the impact of witnessing ill treatment of others. This can be particularly relevant, for example, in relation to the impact on children of all forms of domestic abuse. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others. Abuse can take place wholly online, or technology may be used to facilitate offline abuse. Children may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.
Physical abuse	A form of abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.
Emotional abuse	The persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.
Sexual abuse	Involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse. Sexual abuse can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.
Neglect	<p>The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment) b) protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger c) ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers) d) ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment <p>It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.</p>

School Attendance

Date: 4th October 2023

Report of: Children Missing out on Education and Exclusions Monitoring Lead

Report to: Children and Families Scrutiny Board

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

Brief summary

This report provides:

- **an overview of the national school attendance picture**
- **the Leeds data**
- **an overview of actions the LA has taken to support schools in their work to improve attendance**
- **a summary of planned actions the LA will take to support schools in their work to improve attendance and reduce absence**

Recommendations

- a) Children & Families Scrutiny to note the contents of the report.

What is this report about?

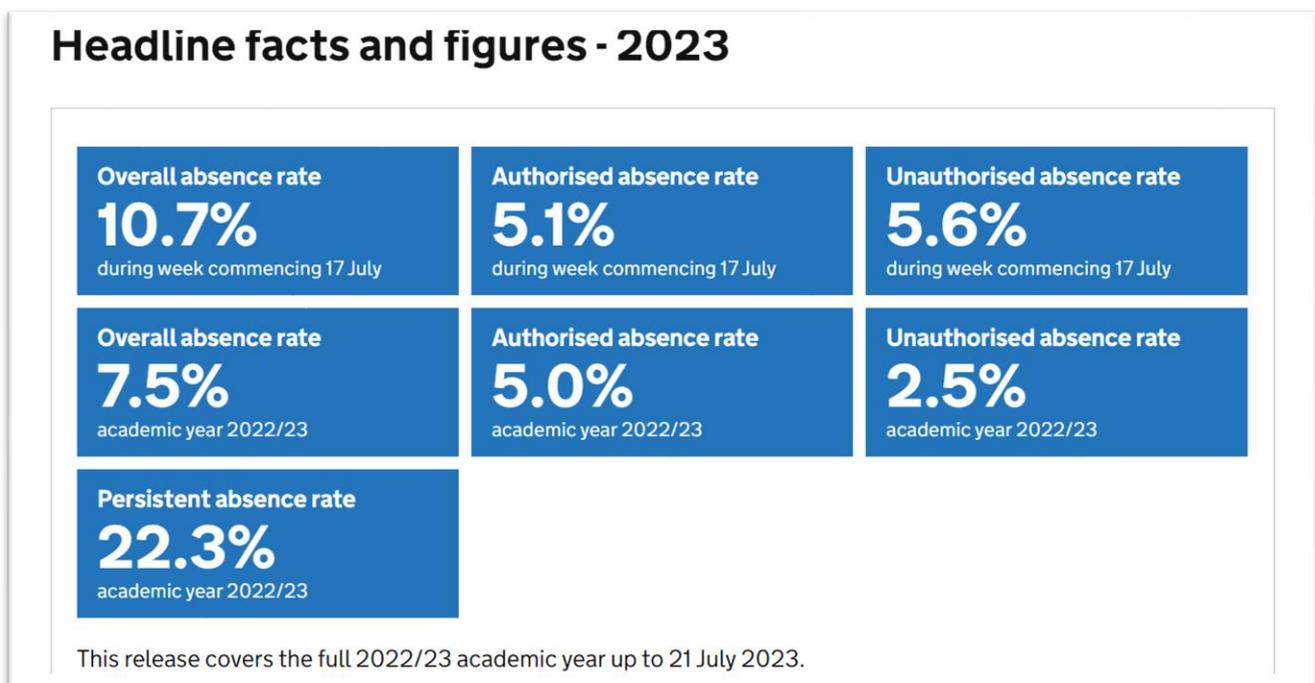
1 Children and Families Scrutiny Board has set out an interest in looking more deeply at school attendance after this was highlighted in the annual performance report (June 2023). This report provides an overview of the national context; school attendance in Leeds; a summary of the Leeds City Council Learning Inclusion Service support for schools to improve attendance; and the planned next steps for increasing attendance and reducing school absence.

2 School attendance – nationally

2.1 The DfE published [‘Working together to improve school attendance’ guidance - May 2022](#) following a period of consultation, in a bid to improve school attendance following the Covid-19 pandemic. The new guidance aimed to be statutory by September 2023, with all LAs and schools encouraged to prepare and work in the spirit of the guidance in advance of this date. The guidance sets out new expectations on schools and LAs, along with the development of a national attendance data dashboard to support schools to target pupils most vulnerable to poor attendance; and establishing a national “Attendance Action Alliance”.

2.2 The Alliance is chaired by the Education Secretary and the Schools Minister, and includes members such as the Children’s Commissioner, HM Chief Inspector, and school and union leaders, with the single aim of raising attendance and a single belief that ultimately children are better off in education – and all barriers to this should be removed. The minutes of the meetings of the Alliance are published by the [Department for Education](#). Attendance hubs and mentoring programmes have been piloted and developed for areas with the highest levels of pupil absence (Doncaster, Salford, Stoke on Trent and Knowsley) and Leeds City Council is committed to engaging with the learning and outcomes from these activities.

2.3 National attendance data headlines:



This national data dashboard is informed by regular data automatically submitted to the DfE by **participating schools** (including state funded primary, secondary and special schools).

By school type, the **absence rates** across the academic year 2022/23 were:

- 6.0% in state-funded primary schools (4.3% authorised and 1.7% unauthorised)
- 9.3% in state-funded secondary schools (5.8% authorised and 3.5% unauthorised)
- 13.1% in state-funded special schools (10.0% authorised and 3.1% unauthorised)

By pupil characteristics, the absence rates across the academic year 2022/23 were:

- 11.4% for pupils who are eligible for free school meals and 6.2% for pupils who were not eligible for free school meals
- 13.3% for pupils with an Education, Health, and Care plan (EHCP), 11.1% for pupils with SEN support and 6.9% with no identified SEN
- 7.4% for boys and 7.6% for girls

Across the academic year 2022/23, 22.3% of pupil enrolments missed 10% or more of their possible sessions and are therefore identified as **persistently absent**. By school type, the persistent absence rate across the academic year 2022/23 was:

- 17.2% in state-funded primary schools
- 28.3% in state-funded secondary schools
- 38.7% in state-funded special schools

2.4 Nationally, absence generally peaks in the weeks prior to planned school holidays – peaking at 14.1% in the final full week of the Autumn term (the week prior to the Christmas break), and 10.7% in the final week of the Summer term. There were additional peaks in absence during the week prior to the Summer half term (8.8%) and the week commencing 26 June (9.9%) when there was high absence due to religious observance around Eid al-Adha.

The increase in illness absence at the end of the Autumn term was in line with increases in rates of seasonal flu and other seasonal respiratory illnesses, as shown in [UK Health Security Authority data](#). Although it decreased after the Christmas break, illness absence (which includes positive COVID cases) remained higher than pre-pandemic levels, at 3.7% during Spring term and 3.0% during Summer term compared with around 2.5% pre-pandemic.

The table below shows the increase in national persistent absence since 2016:

	2016/17 Autumn Term	2017/18 Autumn Term	2018/19 Autumn Term	2019/20 Autumn Term	2020/21 Autumn Term	2021/22 Autumn Term	2022/23 Autumn Term
Persistent Absence rate (%)	11.6%	11.7%	10.9%	13.1%	13.0%	23.5%	24.9%

National persistent absence rate in England between 2016 and 2022

2.5 In January 2023, the Education Committee announced an inquiry into [“causes and possible solutions to the growing issue of children’s absence from school.”](#) The inquiry planned to examine links between pupil absence and related factors such as economic disadvantage, special educational needs and disabilities, ethnic background, and whether a child or a family member is clinically vulnerable to Covid-19. It also intends to examine the impact on attendance of support for pupils and their families both inside and beyond the school system, such as breakfast clubs, free meals, and after-school or holiday activities.

As part of the enquiry the Education Committee convened in June 2023 where they discussed the great concern about the slow recovery from the pandemic. The School’s Minister responded with detail about flu and scarlet fever having a direct effect on persistent absence alongside the resurgence of covid – with two thirds of national persistent absence coded as illness. Longer term consequences of the pandemic were also questioned, asking what schools are doing to address this. The committee voiced concerns that nationally parents are more cautious about sending children to school. Some say it is easier to allow a child

to stay at home now - more parents/carers are working at home, and this means children can stay at home too. The committee raised concerns that there were increasing mental health issues before the pandemic and now there seems to be a further increase after the pandemic.

The inquiry report has not yet been published and we await the findings with interest.

2.6 In May 2022, the Schools Bill was published and proposed to:

- Require local authorities to work to improve school attendance in their area, and to have regard to any related guidance produced by the Secretary of State
- Require all schools in England to have an attendance policy
- Allow the Secretary of State to make regulations to set out when a fixed penalty notice for school absence should be considered, and for coordination of these processes locally
- Extend the Secretary of State's power to regulate the granting of leave of absence from school to include all academies

The Schools Bill, however, was abandoned in December 2022. The Education Secretary cited wider pressures, outside education, for leading to the Bill being dropped. The Education Secretary has said that post-pandemic attendance levels remain a focus for the Government.

2.7 Nationally, it is worth noting that school absence due to Covid saw variations across local authorities and regions. This reflects the differences in community level transmission of Covid and also different local restrictions across the country (known as 'tiers'). Covid related absence was highest in the North West region (22.6%) and lowest in the South West (19.3%).

2.8 Attendance levels since schools returned to usual patterns following lockdowns during the Covid pandemic have caused widespread concern. Particular concerns have been raised that increased persistent absence is concentrated among disadvantaged pupils, such as those who receive free school meals. The referenced article below suggests some of the many reasons why children have not returned to school after the pandemic. *'Some have experienced crippling anxiety and a loss of social and academic confidence. Others have been struggling to pay for bus travel. Perhaps most troubling of all, some families appear to have lost their belief that attending school regularly is necessary for their children. Some parents are openly questioning whether the return to schooling is needed, given that results were so good last year, when many pupils were absent due to COVID.'* [Rising school absences: the post pandemic education divide | British Politics and Policy at LSE](#)

Ofsted's Chief Inspector, Amanda Spielman, has said that, since the pandemic, some parents have come to see school as optional:

"I think there's been a very clear social contract ... the clear expectation is that parents should get their children to school every day, unless the child is too ill to go [...]. The pandemic disruption and the expectation that children should be kept at home broke that. [...]"

Post-pandemic, a minority of families have just sort of lost sight of the importance of that consistency of getting children to school every day — that it's not an optional thing. It's not a 'when you feel like it, and not when you don't.'

Ms Spielman was speaking in the context of [Ofsted's annual report](#), published in December 2022, which noted that "initial high levels of absenteeism have fallen, but there are still concerns about a smaller number of persistent absentees."

2.9 Ofsted continue to include a focus on attendance and punctuality when inspecting schools and have reported in "[Securing good attendance and tackling persistent absence](#)" (Ofsted, 2022) that there are attendance challenges including sporadic attendance because of disaffection following the national lockdowns and other barriers to attendance include pupils who see parents facing more stress or facing financial hardship, or pupils from families experiencing domestic violence.

2.10 The Centre for Social Justice think tank [published a report in January 2022](#) which said that the pandemic had created a generation of 'ghost children' who had not returned to school and were at significant safeguarding risk as well as educational disadvantage.

The consultation document which led to the ‘working together to improve attendance’ guidance highlighted the impact of the pandemic on attendance and argued that this, alongside the wider importance of school attendance, required action from the Government:

‘We recognise the impact that the pandemic is continuing to have on children’s education, and although recent trends in attendance levels have been largely driven by covid, the government is determined to address the wider underlying causes of children not being in school, because it is the best place for their development and wellbeing. To that end it is more important than ever that agencies work together to secure the regular attendance of pupils and minimise unnecessary non-covid absence as much as possible.’

2.11 In response to the data trends, and the recognised issues, school attendance is being prioritised nationally as ‘everyone’s responsibility’. GPs have been advised to encourage attendance and to advise that children should go to school even if they have a cough or a cold but stay at home if they have a fever.

Chief police officers have had the same message to encourage all children back to school and the Chief Social Worker has been running seminars supporting social care with best practice guidance to support the return to school. This multi-sector approach is one that Leeds has been part of both pre and post pandemic.

2.12 Summer 2023 saw a reinforcement nationally of the importance of attendance driven by letters from the principal social worker Isabelle Trowler issued to principal social workers across the country, and the secretary of state for education – The Rt Hon Gillian Keegan who wrote to all schools and Directors of Children & Families Services. Copies of these can be found at Annex A.

The School attendance service in Leeds has a strong record of supporting schools through a partnership approach and will continue with the support through an attendance offer that is working in the spirit of the new DfE guidance.

3 School Attendance in Leeds

3.1 All data regarding school attendance is collated from a multitude of sources and is used locally on an operational basis. The linked document below outlines these sources of data, yet all are incomplete and so we rely on published DfE statistics as the only verified data. [SPO-CFIPS - Sources of School Attendance Data - All Documents \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

3.2 The latest **published / verified** attendance data for Leeds (2021/22)

Indicator	Pupil Category	Leeds 2018*	Leeds 2019*	Leeds 2020*	Leeds 2021*	Leeds 2022*	Change	Latest National
Attendance in primary schools	All pupils	95.9	96.0		96.4	93.9	-2.5	93.9
	Non SEN	96.1	96.2		96.8	94.3	-2.5	94.1
	SEN Support	94.5	94.7		95.0	92.2	-2.8	92.0
	Statement/EHCP	93.4	92.0		91.7	90.1	-1.6	90.3
Attendance in secondary schools	All pupils	94.2	94.2		94.3	90.8	-3.5	91.0
	Non SEN	94.7	94.7		94.9	91.6	-3.3	91.7
	SEN Support	90.8	90.3		90.8	85.7	-5.1	87.3
	Statement/EHCP	91.7	91.1		87.3	85.0	-2.3	86.3
Attendance in special schools	All pupils	88.5	88.0		83.9	86.2	2.3	91.0
	Non SEN							
	SEN Support	78.9	77.6		86.3	85.9	-0.4	87.3
	Statement/EHCP	88.7	88.2		83.9	86.2	2.3	86.3

*the year denotes the year the academic year ended, eg Leeds 2018 is the academic year 2017/18

The Department for Education monitors pupil absence levels using two key measures; **overall absence rate** and **persistent absence (PA)** rate. These key measures are calculated for pupils who are of compulsory school age (between 5 and 15 as at the start of the academic year).

Overall absence is the aggregated total of all authorised and unauthorised absences. Authorised absence is absence with permission from a teacher or other authorised representative of the school. Unauthorised absence is absence without permission from the school. This includes all unexplained or unjustified absences and arrivals after registration has closed.

Persistent absence -10% is when a pupil enrolment's overall absence equates to 10 per cent or more of their possible sessions.

Severe absence - 50% is when a pupil enrolment's overall absence equates to 50 per cent or more of their possible sessions ranking.

3.3 Secondary Pupil attendance has decreased when compared to pre-pandemic levels and although there have been increases in authorised and unauthorised absence, it has been larger within authorised absence due to illness.

- The attendance rate for 2021/22 for Leeds' secondary schools is 90.8 per cent; this is below the pre-pandemic attendance rate of 94.2 per cent and below national and Statistical Neighbours. Out of 151 local authorities, Leeds is ranked in 91st position, placing it in quartile band C for performance.
- The authorised absence rate is below all comparators with 5.2 per cent of absences recorded as authorised, but above the rates seen in Leeds prior to the pandemic and is driven by an increase in the number of sessions missed due to illness which equate to 318,290 school days lost. Out of 151 local authorities, Leeds is ranked in 31st position, placing it in quartile band A for performance.
- 4 per cent of pupil absences were categorised as unauthorised absences in Leeds secondary schools; this is above the national figure of 2.8 per cent and all other comparators except Core Cities. The figure is also above the rates for the pre-pandemic years where it ranged from 2.3 per cent in 2017 to 2.7 per cent in 2019. Leeds is ranked in 131st position, placing it in quartile band D for performance.
- 27.2 per cent of pupil enrolments (equivalent to 13,229 pupil enrolments) in secondary schools are classed as being persistently absent (missing 10 per cent or more of their sessions); this is almost double the rate for the average for the three years preceding the pandemic. Despite this increase, the 2022 figure is below the national figure of 27.7 per cent as well as all other comparators. Leeds is ranked in 64th position, placing it in quartile band B for performance.
- Severe absence rates (pupil enrolments who have missed 50% or more of their possible sessions) has also increased from 1.7 per cent to 3.6 per cent; this is above the national figure and all other comparators and equates to 1758 pupil enrolments.
- Secondary school pupils who are eligible for Free School Meals and pupils who have an EHCP had the lowest attendance rates across all pupil groups, 85.2 per cent and 85 per cent respectively reflecting national trends although the rate is slightly higher nationally. For both groups, this was due to higher levels of authorised absence. For both groups, the authorised and unauthorised absence rate was above the city average for secondary age pupils.
- In terms of persistent absence, almost five in every 10 pupil enrolments who are FSM eligible were recorded as missing 10 per cent or more of their overall sessions. In total, this equates to 5,733 pupil enrolments.
- When compared to non-FSM eligible pupils, more than twice as many FSM eligible pupil enrolments are recorded as being persistently absent.
- White pupils and those in Year 10 and 11 had the lowest attendance rates, 89.9 per cent and 89.2 per cent, respectively.
- Black pupils in Leeds had the highest attendance rate of all ethnicities (95.6 per cent)

3.4 Primary Pupil attendance has decreased when compared to pre-pandemic levels and can be attributed to an increase in authorised absence due to illness.

- The attendance rate for Leeds primary schools for 2021/22 is 93.9 per cent; this is below the pre-pandemic rates, but above the national figure of 93.7 per cent. Out of 151 local authorities, Leeds is ranked in 54th position, placing it in quartile band B for performance.

- The authorised absence rate is 4.1 per cent, which is the highest it has been in the last five years. The total number of sessions missed due to illness equates to 380,285 school days lost. Despite this, Leeds primary schools have a lower rate of authorised absence than all comparators which is reflected in the ranking position of 14th out of 151 local authorities, placing Leeds in quartile band A for performance.
- Unauthorised absence in Leeds is above national, statistical neighbours and Yorkshire and Humber with 1.9 per cent of absences being recorded as unauthorised. Out of 151 local authorities, Leeds is ranked in 129th position, placing it in band D for performance.
- Persistence absence rates in Leeds are lower than all comparators with 17.1 per cent of pupil enrolments recorded as being persistently absent (missing 10 per cent or more of their own possible sessions). This equates to almost 10,500 pupil enrolments. Leeds is ranked in 70th position, placing it in quartile band B for performance.
- Severe absence rates (pupils who have missed 50 per cent or more of their possible sessions) has also increased from 0.3 per cent in 2019 to 0.6 per cent in 2022. Performance is in line with national.
- Primary age pupils who are eligible for Free School Meals and pupils who have an EHCP had the lowest attendance rates across all pupil groups, 91.4 per cent and 90.1 per cent respectively reflecting national trends. Although this was largely driven by high authorised absence rates, for both groups the authorised and unauthorised absence rates were above the city average for primary age pupils. Nationally, the authorised absence rate is higher than in Leeds, but the unauthorised rate is lower.
- In terms of persistent absence, just over three in every ten pupil enrolments who are FSM eligible or have an EHCP were recorded as missing 10 per cent or more of their overall session.
- Black pupils in Leeds had the highest attendance rate of all ethnicities (96.4 per cent) and Asian pupils the lowest (93.2 per cent).

3.5 Termly data

Although as yet 'unverified data' the termly statistical first release has been provided by the DfE for Autumn term of the 2022/23 academic year. Key take aways indicate that whilst absence remains much higher than pre-pandemic this is largely in line with national increases – however where we stand out compared to national data is in relation to severe absence, particularly in secondary schools (rank 135) and for unauthorised absence across all phases.

3.5.1 All schools

Attendance for the autumn term across all Leeds schools in 2022 is 92.5%; this is the lowest figure in the seven-year period covered by the Statistical First Release (SFR) for this measure and is 3.1 percentage points below the pre-pandemic figure of 95.6%. Despite this, the figure is in line with national.

The lower attendance rate is due to an increase in the authorised absence rate (from 2.7% in 2019 to 4.6% in 2022); this figure is however below the national figure of 5.4%. In Leeds, and nationally the majority of absence was due to illness. (Government health data referred to in the national picture supports the trend of increased absence being due to illness and normal health spikes around flu and scarlet fever and a resurgence of covid).

Unauthorised absence is 2.9%; this is above both the pre-pandemic figure of 1.7% and above the national figure of 2.1%. Reasons for unauthorised absence which show a notable change include 'holidays' (0.6%), although this could be correcting lower rates in previous years as holidays may have been postponed due to the pandemic, and 'other reasons' (2.1%).

The persistent absence rate (a pupil missing 10% or more of their possible sessions) has more than doubled since 2019, 23.2% pupil enrolments compared to 11.5% in 2019, and is the highest in the seven years period covered in the SFR for this measure. This figure is equivalent to 25,724 pupil enrolments. Despite this significant growth in persistent absence locally, it is broadly in line with the national figure which is one percentage point above the Leeds figure.

The severe absence rate (pupil enrolments missing 50 per cent or more of their own possible sessions) has also more than doubled from just under one per cent of pupil enrolments in 2019 to 2.2% (2420 pupil enrolments). This is above the national rate of 1.7%.

For attendance, Leeds ranks equal 74th out of 152 local authorities and is in band C for quartile performance. For authorised absence Leeds ranks equal 14th and is in band A, but for unauthorised absence, Leeds ranks equal 133rd and is in band D. For persistent absence (10%), Leeds ranks equal 51st and is in band B and for severe absence 50%, Leeds ranks 141 and is in band D.

3.5.2 Primary schools

Attendance for Leeds primary schools is 93.9%; this remains below pre-pandemic levels when it was 96.3%, but slightly above the national figure of 93.7%. This is in the main caused by higher levels of authorised absence (4.3%). Whereas the authorised absence rate is below national, the unauthorised absence rate is just above (1.8% versus 1.4% nationally) and is the highest it's been in the 15-year period covered by the SFR. The persistent absence rate remains high with 20% of pupil enrolments missing 10% or more of their own sessions (equivalent to 11,981 pupil enrolments); this is however slightly below the national figure of 20.9%. The persistent absence rate for pupil enrolments missing 50 per cent or more of their own possible sessions is 0.7% (425 pupil enrolments) and is in line with national.

For attendance, Leeds ranks equal 43rd out of 151 local authorities and is in band B for quartile performance. For authorised absence Leeds ranks equal 13th and is in band A, but for unauthorised absence, Leeds ranks Equal 116th and is in band D. For persistent absence (10%), Leeds ranks equal 44th and is in band B and for persistent absence 50%, Leeds ranks 88th and is in band C for quartile performance for both measures.

3.5.3 Secondary schools

Attendance for Leeds secondary schools is 90.9%; this remains below pre-pandemic levels when it was 94.8% and below the national figure of 91.2%. This is caused by higher levels of authorised absence (4.8%). This figure is below the national figure of 6%, however, the unauthorised absence rate of 4.3% is above national rate of 2.8%. The persistent absence rate remains high with 26.6% of pupil enrolments missing 10% or more of their own sessions (equivalent to 13,114 pupil enrolments). The persistent absence rate has varied over the years and although the autumn figure is not the highest, it is considerably above the average of 19.4% for the preceding 16 years. Despite this, the rate is below the national figure of 27.4%. The persistent absence rate for pupil enrolments missing 50 per cent or more of their own possible sessions is 3.8% (1882 pupil enrolments). Not only is this the highest rate in the 17-year period covered by the SFR, but it is also above the national rate of 2.8%

For attendance, Leeds ranks equal 92nd out of 151 local authorities and is in band C for quartile performance. For authorised absence Leeds ranks equal 22nd and is in band A, but for unauthorised absence, Leeds ranks 137th and is in band D for quartile performance.

For persistent absence (10%), Leeds ranks 65th and is in band B for performance but for persistence absence (50%), Leeds ranks equal 135th and is in band D for performance.

3.5.4 Special Schools

Attendance for Leeds secondary schools is 86.8%; this is the lowest figure in the seven-year period covered by the SFR, but above the national figure of 86.6%. This is mainly driven by higher levels of authorised absence (9.2%). This figure is below the national figure of 10.5%, however, the unauthorised absence rate of 4% is above national rate of 2.8%.

The persistent absence rate remains high with 37.5% of pupil enrolments missing 10% or more of their own sessions (equivalent to 629 pupil enrolments). This figure has seen an increase in each of the autumn terms since the pandemic, however, the national figure of 40.9% is higher. The persistent absence rate for pupil enrolments missing 50 per cent or more of their own possible sessions is 6.7% (113 pupil enrolments); this above the national rate of 5.8%

For attendance, Leeds ranks equal 73rd out of 149 local authorities and is in band C for quartile performance. For authorised absence Leeds ranks equal 29th and is in band A, but for unauthorised absence, Leeds ranks 125th and is in band D for quartile performance.

For persistent absence (10%), Leeds ranks Equal 34th and is in band A for performance but for severe absence (50%), Leeds ranks equal 107th and is in band C for performance.

3.6 **Analysis** indicates that in Leeds, there are more pupils who have 'unauthorised' absence than nationally, which is perceived to be due to the clear commitment that Leeds headteachers have made to only authorising absence in exceptional circumstances – in line with the statutory guidance, and to ensure that there is a clear message to all families about the importance of school attendance. However, the data indicates that there are also more pupils who have severe persistent absence (absence greater than 50%) which indicates that steps need to be taken to return pupils to school quickly following absence.

One challenge faced is that the data available does not provide a clear indication of the underlying reasons for pupil non-attendance at school. This understanding is currently informed by school and practitioner casework and records.

Attendance of pupils with identified special educational needs continues to be of concern, and it is acknowledged that parental confidence in mainstream schooling for pupils with SEND and the increasing demand for special school places may be leading to a reduction in parental commitment to ensuring attendance in mainstream schools. In response, as part of the annual review process for all pupils with an EHCP, attendance is reviewed and the ongoing suitability of the plan and intervention described is considered through that review process. In addition, the monitoring and quality assurance framework (MQA) for schools also includes attendance as a key indicator to be considered and assessed. It is proposed that a significant school absence panel is also introduced to ensure that all cases where parents consider that their child is 'unable' to attend school – leading to extended absence - are considered by a multi-professional panel and a decision made about whether an alternative education needs to be offered, or whether support needs to be enhanced to ensure the pupil returns to their mainstream school offer.

4 Legal Intervention

4.1 There are a range of legal interventions that schools and LAs can use to improve a child's attendance at school. The DfE published the Parental Responsibility Measures 2021/22 Statistical First Release (SFR) on 15 December 2022. It includes data on:

- penalty notices
- attendance case management
- parenting orders and parenting contracts
- education supervision orders

Penalty notices are issued to parents for failing to ensure that their child attends school. The amount payable is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt rising to £120 if paid after 21 days. If the penalty is not paid within 28 days, the local authority must either prosecute for the original offence (of failing to ensure their child attends school) or withdraw the notice. The information is based on data collected from local authorities in England through the parental responsibility measures attendance census. The analysis included in this paper only focuses on penalty notices and the reasons they have been issued.

The SFR can be accessed on the DfE's website using the following link: [Parental Responsibility Measures](#).

4.2 When looking at the data it is important to take the impact of the pandemic into account as outlined below:

- School attendance was significantly disrupted in the 2020/21 academic year. As such all figures should be treated with caution when comparing to other years. Except for the two periods of lockdown set out below, the DfE have made clear that schools and local authorities are able to use their usual measures to improve attendance where appropriate.
- No data is available for 2019/20 as a decision was made not to run the data collection exercise for the 2019/20 academic year. This data has not been retrospectively collected and is therefore not available. Care should therefore be taken when looking across time periods that would otherwise include 2019/20.

- Due to the pandemic, the Secretary of State for Education issued legal notices, under the Coronavirus Act 2020, disapplying section 444(1) and (1A) of the Education Act 1996. These notices covered the period 7 January 2021 to 6 March 2021 which coincided with the period of national restrictions. These notices disapplied offences relating to the failure of parents to secure regular attendance at the school of a registered pupil and guaranteed that parents would not be prosecuted or receive a criminal conviction for not sending their children to school during this period. This was in line with the Secretary of State's commitment that no parent would be penalised for following public health advice.

4.3 From a service perspective the overall approach taken by Leeds attendance service is to encourage all schools to follow the statutory attendance processes. Support is available for schools to do this and to answer queries about process and how to interpret guidance. With the national and local drive to improve attendance schools have been supported with the use of Penalty notices as part of the approach to improving attendance. Communication regarding attendance processes, including the use of penalty notices, goes through the school's bulletin, meetings in schools, Family of school's meetings and Cluster meetings.

The service streamlined processes in 2021/22 to support schools to access the process easily, including an easy to access eForm for schools to request penalty notices to be issued where families have taken a holiday in term time.

Anecdotally the School Attendance Service noted that some of the holidays in term time were due to the number of cancelled holidays during the pandemic. (Some of which had originally been booked out of term time).

4.4 Key headlines from the Parental Responsibility Measures SFR include:

- In 2021/22 the total number of penalty notices issued in Leeds was 5,192.
- This equates to 469 per 10,000 pupil enrolments; this is above the national and Core Cities rate, but below the Statistical Neighbour and Yorkshire and Humber rate of 480.
- 96% (4974) were issued due to unauthorised family holidays and the remaining four per cent for 'other reasons.' There were no notices issued in Leeds for students being late.
- The rate of penalty notices per pupil enrolment issued in Leeds has increased from 4.1 in 2018/19 to 4.7 in 2021/22; compared to a reduction amongst comparators for the same period.

Nationally, the use of penalty notices varied greatly by local authority. Three LAs issued no penalty notices, nine LAs issued less than 100 and six local authorities, including Leeds, issued more than 5,000. Three of these authorities, along with Leeds, are in the bottom quartile for performance for unauthorised absence for half terms 1-4 2021/22.

Out of 152 local authorities, 27 (17%) accounted for over 50% of all penalty notices. When the number of penalty notices issued are converted to the rate per 10,000 pupil enrolments, Leeds has a rate of 469, which is above all comparators.

Number of penalty notices issued for unauthorised absences

	2017/18		2018/19		2020/21		2021/22	
	Number	Rate per 10,000						
Leeds	2,907	278	4,349	411	1,062	98	5,192	469
National		370						
	260,877		333,388	467	45,809	65	218,235	300
Stat. Neighbours	2,008	487	2,614	640	438	119	1,938	480
Core Cities	2,876	412	3,939	555	294	39	2,870	336
Yorkshire & Humber	38,627	537	51,853	717	8,221	113	35,180	480

Data source: DfE SFR PRM 2021/22

Data notes: 2020/21 data is not directly comparable with other years due to attendance being disrupted due to the pandemic, and for two months measures being disapplied when schools were not open to all pupils.

Similar to Leeds, 85% of penalty notices nationally were issued due unauthorised family holidays; 14% were issued for 'other reasons' and one per cent for being late.

Reasons for the penalty notices

	2018/19			2021/22		
	Holidays	Late	Other	Holidays	Late	Other
Leeds	4,070	0	279	4,974	0	218
National	288,239	1,164	43,985	186,281	1,269	30,685
Statistical Neighbours	2,358	4	252	1,676	63	200
Core Cities	2,671	1	1,267	2,608	77	185
Yorkshire & Humber	48,557	28	3,268	32,113	610	2,457

Data source: DfE SFR PRM 2021/22

Data notes: 2018/19 comparison provided rather than 2020/21 due to attendance being disrupted due to the pandemic, and for two months measures being disapplied when schools were not open to all pupils.

Between 2009/10 and 2012/13, Leeds issued between 192 and 266 penalty notices. From 2013/14, there was a sharp increase to 1,795 followed by a year-on-year increase with the exception of 2017/18 and 2020/21 where the numbers were lower. In 2017/18 Leeds bucked the national trend with a 34% decrease in the number of penalty notices being issued despite unauthorised absence increasing in the same period for primary, secondary, and special schools. The large decreases seen in the data for 2020/21 covers the period of the pandemic when attendance at school was heavily disrupted, and for two months measures were disapplied when schools were not open to all pupils.

Number of penalty notices

Year	No. of penalty notices issued	
	Leeds	National
2009/10	192	25657
2010/11	192	32641
2011/12	266	41224
2012/13	233	52370
2013/14	1795	98259
2014/15	3322	151125
2015/16	4269	157879
2016/17	4401	149321
2017/18	2907	260877
2018/19	4349	333388
2020/21	1062	45809
2021/22	5192	218235

Data source: DfE SFR PRM 2021/22

The changes in trend since 2015/16 follow the Isle of Wight Council v Jon Platt cases where the local authority issued proceedings against a parent who had taken their child on a term time holiday. Local authorities with large increases were asked to provide reasons and many cited the Supreme Court judgement, either as a result of returning to pre-court case levels following a slowdown or from a change in behaviour since the ruling. Further information on the cases is given below:

- October 2015 - The magistrates' court ruled that the parent had no case to answer.
- May 2016 – The High Court supported the earlier ruling.
- April 2017 - the Supreme Court, however, ruled that no children should be taken out of school without good reason and clarified that 'regularly' means 'in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school'.

The DfE attendance guidance suggests local authorities should be issuing penalty notices when pupils are absent, and the abandoned Schools Bill included an intention to standardise the approach to issuing penalty notices recognising the variations in use across the country. Although the Local Authority is the body responsible for issuing penalty notices, schools are required to submit the request and evidence to enable this to happen.

The use of fixed penalty notices in Leeds as a response and intervention to improve attendance is mixed, and the expectation of the nationally standardised approach was welcomed. In partnership with schools, we

will be considering a locally standardised approach, taking into account the impact of penalty notices on improving attendance, considering our restorative approach and taking into account the financial impact of penalty notices on families who may already be facing financial challenges.

Analysis of the unauthorised absence rate for half terms 1-4 2021/22 for the six local authorities who issued the most penalty notices shows three of the six are in the bottom quartile for performance, and the remaining three are spread across the first, second and third quartile. This suggests that penalty notices are used as both a tool to prevent unauthorised absence, and also in response to high unauthorised absence rates.

5 Actions from the LA to support schools to improve attendance

- 5.1 The School Attendance Service is in a period of transition and has been developing and building on existing procedures and processes alongside considering the new guidance 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' published in May 2022. The expectation that has been outlined through a DfE webinar program is that the Local Authority and schools will begin to implement elements of this guidance, described as 'working in the spirit', prior to it becoming statutory.
- 5.2 The LA will continue to support schools by working towards the approach outlined in the guidance and a clear phased plan has been developed to take us towards these. We are mindful that the new guidance places more emphasis and expectation on the role of schools in relation to attendance, and as such, phase 1 (March – Sept 2023) included the ceasing of the LAs traded offer; roll out of training and briefings for schools to support schools to understand their role under the new guidance; register checks; and confirming processes for schools seeking attendance advice – this is primarily through attendance improvement officers and day to day queries are managed on a rota basis via the attendance email address to ensure that there is ongoing capacity to respond to queries in a timely manner.
- 5.3 We must be ready for legislative changes and plans began last year to accommodate the changes. September 2022 to March 2023 introduced an interim offer for the summer term 2023. We have a new phase of the offer in place for all schools from September 2023, and launched our 2023/2024 offer at the end of August, which will be in place from November 2023.
- 5.4 Expectation of parents and schools' summaries were prepared (in line with the guidance recommendations and feedback from DfE webinars) and were uploaded to Leeds for Learning from September 2022.
- 5.5 Risk factors were identified which may impact on the ability of the LA school attendance team to be able to fulfil the existing, and new statutory duties of the local authority in relation to the requirements of the attendance guidance. Until Spring 2023, it was expected that the guidance would be statutory from September 2023. Current indications are that this will not be statutory guidance before Sept 2024 at the earliest. It is noted that a significant increase in operational capacity will be required to meet all the expectations of the LA outlined in the 2022 DfE guidance – which currently remains non-statutory.
- 5.6 There are existing pressures on the service, with no ring-fenced funding allocated by the DfE. Some of the work that was previously traded to schools will become mandatory for LAs to provide when/if the guidance becomes statutory. This has required a resourceful and creative approach to the traded offer. More online training events and pre-recorded training is necessary to manage the changes in guidance. Once the status of the guidance is confirmed, the service we will be seeking to expand the school attendance service so that additional services can be offered to schools on a traded basis, recognising the pressure on schools that the 2022 guidance introduces.
- 5.7 The interim core offer from the School Attendance Service (Phase 1) was effective from 1st April 2023 and during the summer term the SAS team committed to work with schools, agencies, and other LA partners to identify, respond, and resolve any working issues. Detail of the SAS offer in response to the DfE 2022 guidance is detailed in Appendix B.

5.8 Schools have expressed concern about the reduction in capacity to support school directly with casework. This is being addressed through our Phase 3 November onwards offer. We are using data to target schools with the greatest concerns, and we are bringing groups of schools together through the cluster model to support the new targeting support meetings and examples of good practice will be shared and cases discussed collectively as there are many common themes around poor attendance. We ultimately aim to increase the service capacity but await clarification on the status of the guidance becoming statutory in nature.

5.9 Attendance has always been at the heart of children's council plans, and we have always encouraged being an effective practitioner in supporting the 3As in work with Children and Families. When talking to families about their children's attendance, attainment and progress, practitioners deploy all their restorative and relational skills: these aren't 'tick-list' questions, they invite practitioners to be engaged, curious and enabling in those interactions with the parent/carer/young person.

5.10 The School Attendance Service have worked on best practice guidance with other services in the LA and encouraged all practitioners to take an interest in school attendance – seeking to embed school attendance as a core element of every frontline role. This includes encouraging practitioners to ask questions in their regular interactions with children and families such as:

- where do the children go to school
- do they enjoy good relationships with their friends and adults and teachers at school
- can they talk about adults they trust and who help
- can they enjoy success in different aspects of school life
- are parents/carers supportive of their children's attendance and engagement in learning
- do parents/carers themselves experience good communication with school and feel included in their children's progress as well as experiencing a sense of belonging to the school community
- do children look forward to going to school and talk about their school day and
- do parents experience any challenges

This helps to ensure practitioners can think about what might be helpful to the child/young person/family. We want practitioners to work with families to understand any barriers to good attendance and provide the right support to help overcome those barriers, at the right time.

5.11 In the Leeds Children and Young People's Plan which ran from 2018 to 2023, there were three obsessions. One was "improve achievement, attainment and attendance at school." To address that obsession the 3As Strategy was developed. The intervention of Covid meant that some of these priorities changed, therefore in June and July 2021, a series of discussions with educationalists from early years to further education were held to find out what they considered to be the barriers to achievement, attainment, and attendance at school.

As a result of those consultations, the Refreshed 3As Plan was drawn up, with five priorities of:

- All children in Leeds are supported to improve their fluency in reading taking into account their individual needs.
- All children, young people and families are supported to access and regularly attend early years education settings, schools, and post-16 education settings to benefit from learning opportunities, protective factors, and enrichment activities.
- Children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and their families receive timely and appropriate support to achieve their best possible outcomes and prepare for adult life.
- All children and staff working in learning settings are supported with their wellbeing.
- All children make the best start to each stage of their learning.

As we approach the launch of the new Leeds Children and Young People's Plan, it is also the right time to update the 3As Plan. It takes account of the change to one of the obsessions which is that "young people in Leeds attend school, achieve, and attain well," and they also "continue their route of a sustained education, apprenticeship or employment destination."

5.12 Through roundtable events and Families of Schools' meetings, school leaders told us what their concerns are and what they need from the local authority. These will be reflected in the new 3As plan, which

is our way of marshalling our combined LA forces and energy so we can help the school leaders to undertake their duties in the service of young people in the city.

The Refreshed 3As Plan Update is the means by which the local authority will provide services to education settings to enable them to improve the outcomes of the children they work with through constant interaction. The sections reflecting the importance of attendance are:

Priority 2 – Support education providers to ensure children and young people regularly attend.

Why we have chosen this priority:

Children who have strong attendance in learning settings are more likely to fulfil their potential and achieve their best possible outcomes in education. Access to education settings also keeps children safe from harm, promotes protective factors such as positive relationship with adults and access to targeted services that sit around schools and settings, and enables them to get involved with enrichment activities such as sports, the arts, and volunteering. Regular attendance also enables them to develop good routines and habits which prepare them well for the world of work.

We know that Attendance in schools is much lower than it was before the pandemic and that the number of young people excluded from Leeds' schools is also rising, which has an impact on attendance figures. There is an extensive evidence base that children who are excluded from school face further adverse life experiences. Supporting children to stay in school often leads to higher educational attainment and more opportunities in the future, and ensures children remain in a safe environment.

What education leaders in the city have told us needs to sit under this priority:

- *A shared commitment to not permanently excluding young people.*
- *For Social Care to support schools when children are not attending and continue to be involved with the family.*
- *Making attendance a big priority for the city, for example, by having a very visible advertising campaign.*
- *Consistent policy on fines, clear steer from LA for one approach for all schools and HTs.*

The new DfE guidance, although currently non-statutory is explicit about the LA and school roles in improving attendance (See appendix C for the LA responsibilities outlined in the guidance)

We have worked on what attendance support looks like at its best and contributed to the leadership standards amongst other areas of the whole school SEND review and audit tool.

It is crucial we are prepared for the new guidance becoming statutory, however there are restrictions on making changes to the current School Attendance Service offer due to the non-statutory nature of the guidance, lack of clarity on when it may become statutory, and the current financial challenge and recruitment freeze in place.

The new guidance makes it clear that we should have an early intervention approach and schools should identify attendance concerns early on and address these issues. The LA takes a "support first" approach and encourage all schools to follow the same model.

5.13 Making attendance everybody's responsibility

To embed the message 'Attendance is everyone's responsibility' and equip LA teams and other agencies to support, signpost and guide with 'all things' Attendance, the School Attendance Service delivered attendance briefings during the summer term to

- AIP's
- Clusters
- Early help hubs

Alongside this, work is being developed on attendance good practice guides for social care and teams and services are regularly invited to Children Missing Out on Education (CMOOE) team meetings including Youth Justice, the Virtual school, SENSAP and admissions. Joined up practice and sharing of information is one of the keys to making attendance everyone's business. Members of the attendance team are sitting on MACE panel to guide and help first hand with vulnerable students who need to improve attendance as a safety factor.

Some examples of the cross-service work are below. All services within Learning Inclusion have met regularly and attendance has been a focus for the last term.

See appendix C for school attendance service offer for the summer holidays and Phase 2 offer – September 2023.

Further support will be rolled out over the academic year and will include additional training and briefing opportunities for all schools, additional guidance documents and templates including parenting contracts.

5.14 A range of interventions and support are currently offered by the School Attendance Service and other teams within Children & Families Services with the aim of improving school attendance, either by upskilling and supporting schools in their work, or promoting the importance of school attendance to all practitioners. These are detailed in Appendix D, including:

D1: Primary School Case Study – impact of register checks

D2: Letters issued to partners and schools to support children to “Be a Top Attender in September”

D3: Virtual School support to improving attendance

D4: Educational Psychology team support to improve attendance – focussing on Extended School Non-attendance (ESNA)

D5: Safe task force support to improve attendance

6 Future actions the LA will take to support schools

6.1 Working with the DfE The attendance service has utilised the offer of a DfE attendance advisor. An initial meeting has been held and we have submitted our plans for the coming year and an audit of current service delivery. We have primarily asked for the advisor to support the School Attendance Service around the sharing of good practice to reduce persistent absence particularly across vulnerable groups.

6.2 Significant absence panel. A new development to be piloted in Autumn 2023, this will offer a specific focus on children who have been absent from school for 15 days or more and will ensure that schools have a clear route of notification to the LA, ensuring that appropriate support is given to the schools to explore any options they may not have considered and the sharing of good practice. This approach will also help us to understand more about the underlying reasons for non-attendance in our schools, so that support, training and appropriate intervention offers can be identified.

6.3 School Attendance Service offer Autumn 2023 and onwards Significant planning and preparation has taken place in response to the new DfE school attendance guidance. We know that it is schools who deal with the vast amount of the challenging work required to have any significant impact on improving attendance levels in Leeds, and one of the current priorities is ensuring that schools are equipped and supported to fulfil these crucial roles in supporting children and young people back into learning. It is also true that we need to ensure that school attendance is everyone’s responsibility, as the impact of poor attendance risks significant impact on children’s outcomes. As such, children, families and schools need all services to respond and work towards providing the support needed to enable families to prioritise attendance in education.

6.4 Sport and the arts to improve attendance The Education Endowment Fund is currently undertaking a study to understand more about the practice of the use of sports and the arts to engage children in education. We intend to utilise this study to determine opportunities for building on existing good practice.

6.5 Safe Taskforce A government funded pilot, this project aims to target vulnerable young people at risk of involvement with youth crime and violence. A statistical analysis highlighted that poor attendance at school indicated a risk factor for engagement with youth crime and violence. The KPIs for this project

include sustained attendance at school and engagement in learning. This project is being evaluated nationally by RAND, and runs from 2022 – 2025.

What impact will this proposal have?

- 7 No proposals included – this paper outlines the existing and planned interventions of the LA in relation to school attendance.

How does this proposal impact the three pillars of the Best City Ambition?

Health and Wellbeing

Inclusive Growth

Zero Carbon

8

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected: All

Have ward members been consulted?

Yes

No

What are the resource implications?

- 9 As yet, the DfE Working Together to Improve School Attendance Guidance is non-statutory, however there is a clear expectation that the LAs begin to ‘work in the spirit’ of the new guidance. This guidance places additional burdens on both schools and the Local Authority in relation to improving school attendance, and has resulted in the previously traded offer to schools being ceased, as the guidance describes the previously traded activity as a core responsibility of the LA.

Increasing the focus on school attendance risks an increase in the number of requests by schools for legal intervention to be undertaken by the Local Authority. There is a risk that the current capacity within the LA team to process these requests and ensure that appropriate legal action is insufficient. There continues to be an expectation that supportive rather than pejorative action is taken wherever possible, and the LA will continue to support schools with this approach whilst ensuring that the importance of good school attendance is promoted to all families and communities.

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

- 10 The uncertainty relating to the statutory nature of the DfE Guidance poses a risk to the LA in terms of the expectation of the role in improving school attendance. The guidance is explicit in the role it expects LAs to take, however the abandonment of the Schools Bill which would have provided the legislative basis for the guidance, and the subsequent instruction to ‘act in the spirit of the guidance as though it were statutory’, is of concern for both schools and the LA. This risk is being managed by working in partnership with schools to ensure that they receive support from the LA to understand how they can best support children and families to improve school attendance.

What are the legal implications?

- 11 As noted above, at present the guidance for schools and LAs is non-statutory, however the LA is seeking to work within the spirit of the guidance, as though it were statutory.

Appendices

- Appendix A – National letters to encourage widespread commitment to improving school attendance:
 - Letter to LA Principal Social Workers from Isabelle Trowler and Principal Social Worker Chairs
 - Letter to all Local Authorities on school attendance July 2023 (Education Secretary)
- Appendix B – School attendance Service core offer (Phase 1 and Phase 2)
- Appendix C – Summary of responsibilities re School Attendance - LA and Schools, from Working Together To Improve School Attendance 2022
- Appendix D – Case studies
- Appendix E – Articles relating to school attendance for reference and further reading

Appendix A Letter to LA Principal Social Workers from Isabelle Trowler and Principal Social Worker Chairs



Office of the Chief Social Worker –
Isabelle Trowler

Principal Social Worker Network
Chairs –
Rob Tyrrell
Paul McGee
Clare Poyner

10 July 2023

Dear Principal Social Workers,

We are writing to you today because we would like to highlight the school attendance figures of some of our most vulnerable children and ask for your continued commitment to addressing these absences.

Attending school is vital to all children's educational progress, for their wellbeing and for their wider development. Non-attendance can cause significant pressures for families already under strain. For children with a social worker, attending school is often also a protective factor, offering a safe space when home is not. You might have seen the recent Channel Four documentary, '[Surviving Dad](#)', which highlighted the importance of identifying low attendance, and understanding the possible underlying reasons for that.

As the Chief Social Worker for Children and Families, Isabelle is a member of the Attendance Action Alliance. Chaired by the Secretary of State, Gillian Keegan MP, the aim of the Alliance is to raise school attendance, and to provide visible leadership on removing barriers to education for all children. Isabelle has pledged to work with the PSW Network to help reach the whole community of practitioners across children's social care, to promote the importance of attendance and champion attendance in the government's programme of children's social care reform.

Data published recently by the Department for Education (DfE) showed that:

- there has been an increase in the overall absence rate across children on Children in Need plans, Child Protection Plans and children in care for less than 12 months (with the exception of children in care for at least 12 months) since the 2020/21 academic year and across all groups since 2018/19.
- pupils in all social care groups were more likely to be persistent absentees than the overall pupil population with the exception of children in care for at least 12 months (19.1%).

- pupils on Child Protection Plans at 31 March had the highest proportion of (56.2%) persistent absences. This equates to missing more than 7 weeks on average compared with around 5 weeks pre-Covid. ¹

As Principal Social Workers you play such an important role in working with local partnerships to put the right support in place for this cohort of children to attend school. Last year we ran some great webinars in which we highlighted best practice and discussed how to encourage attendance for children known to children's social care.

We are asking you all to give school attendance your renewed attention and use your knowledge, skills and networks to reduce absences. The DfE's [Working together to improve school attendance guidance](#) sets out what support is available for school and academy staff, local authority attendance staff, social workers, virtual school heads, safeguarding partners, parents, carers and how we can all work together to tackle attendance challenges.

By the end of this year the DfE will issue the new statutory Children's Social Care National Framework, which will set out the purpose and principles of children's social care, and the outcomes we should meet for children and families. The National Framework will highlight the important role children's social care should play in improving attendance.

We would like to thank you all for your continued hard work and the many ways that you ensure vulnerable children are given the opportunities they deserve, attending school and accessing the support they need.

Warm regards,



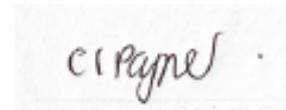
Isabelle Trowler
Chief Social Worker for
Children and Families
(England)



Rob Tyrrell
Co-chair of National
Children's Principal
Social Worker Network



Paul McGee
Co-chair of National
Children's Principal
Social Worker Network



Clare Poyner
Co-chair of National
Children's Principal
Social Worker Network

¹ [Outcomes for children in need, including children looked after by local authorities in England, Reporting year 2022 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](#)



The Rt Hon Gillian Keegan MP
Secretary of State for Education

Sanctuary Buildings 20 Great Smith Street Westminster London SW1P 3BT
tel: 0370 000 2288 www.education.gov.uk/contactus/df

19 July 2023

Dear Chief Executives,

LETTER TO LAs: CALL TO SUPPORT STRONG ATTENDANCE FROM THE FIRST DAY OF TERM.

I am writing to thank you for your hard work and dedication over the past school year in supporting school attendance, and to ask for your continued support in ensuring strong attendance from day one of the new academic year.

Together, we have begun to turn the tide on one of the biggest challenges that COVID-19 has posed to children and young people, their academic and wider development and safety. Over 350,000 fewer pupils were persistently absent in Spring 2023 compared to Summer 2022 and this is due to the collective efforts of the public services that support children and families. Councils up and down the country have responded with purpose to [new school attendance guidance](#) which sets out how schools and local authorities should work together to tackle absence, focusing on a 'support first' approach.

However, as I said at the [LGA conference](#) earlier this month, there is more to do, with absence rates still well above pre-Covid levels, and the most vulnerable children more likely to be absent. Improving attendance is a critical priority for me and the Department, for the Levelling Up agenda, and I know for local authorities as well. We know attendance has long term impacts on a child's life chances, including attainment, employment prospects and future earnings. We need to work together on this issue. To that end, I have written to schools to recognise their efforts and ask them to prepare for the warmest possible welcome for all children and families this September - including those who may have struggled with attendance in the past. We know that those first days back in school really matter. Evidence from a [recent Children's Commissioner report](#) showed that children who miss days 2, 3 and 4 of the new term for unauthorised reasons had a predicted overall absence of almost 45%, or 31 days across the term, compared to children who missed days near the end of term, with a predicted overall absence of 20-30%.

To make the most of the new start that September represents, local authorities have an important role to play in ensuring that as many children as possible are attending from day one of the new academic year.

Firstly, I ask that your school attendance support team takes forward the most ambitious possible preparations for September. In line with the attendance guidance, good practice here involves rigorous analysis of absence data to identify the pupils, cohorts and schools that need the most support, ensuring join-up and data-sharing is established with relevant agencies such as children's social care and SEND, and communicating the area-wide school attendance strategy across the council.

Secondly, over the summer I urge you to mobilise your wider services and staff who have contact with parents and children to help to communicate the importance of a strong return to school. I believe we have a real opportunity to reset the system, if we can ensure that trusted voices are giving the same messages.

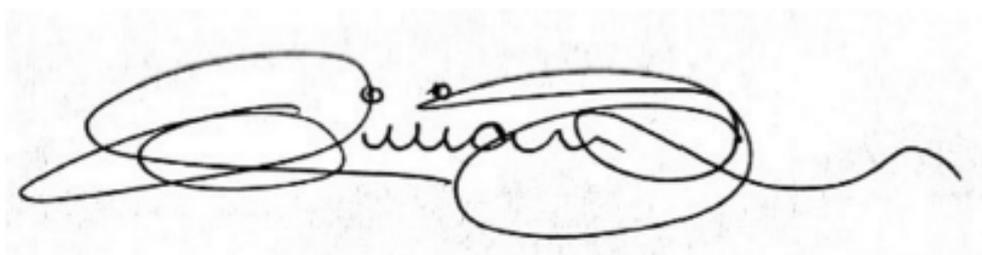
Some great examples I have seen across the country include:

- social workers and early help workers ensuring that that every conversation with a pupil and family involves school attendance and addressing any barriers
- school nurses identifying and working with pupils who are anxious about returning to school
- family hubs giving out information to parents on [illness and absence](#) and sharing our attendance [guidance for parents](#)

Thirdly, it is essential that services are ready in those early weeks of the new Term, working in partnership with schools, to intervene early where problems emerge, and particularly for children and families with more complex circumstances. A joined-up local effort will be critical.

Thank you once again for your commitment to reducing pupil absence and helping to lead the local response. I look forward to continuing to work with you, schools, trusts and partners in health and beyond, so every child and young person starts the next academic year as strongly as possible.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gillian Keegan', with a large, stylized flourish extending to the right.

**The Rt Hon Gillian Keegan MP
Secretary of State for Education**

APPENDIX B

Summer Term 2023 – Phase 1 Core Offer

School Attendance Service

Actions Phase 1	Notes
School Attendance Support Team – School Attendance Service	The team includes 1 CMOOE officer, 5 Team Managers, 16.5 FTE AIO'S
All schools have access to School Attendance Service mailbox (Schoolattendanceservice@leeds.gov.uk)	This is a busy mailbox that receive queries from parents, schools, agencies etc. To enable a timely response to queries additional staff are going to be allocated to this mailbox and trained to respond appropriately. (AIO's)
Attendance Toolkit (Leeds for Learning)	The Toolkit is available for all schools on LfL and is currently being updated for the summer term. The toolkit contains useful documents and guidance including how to refer a case for legal intervention.
Leeds for Learning – Attendance Articles to be added throughout the summer term	The School Attendance Service has made a commitment to produce Attendance articles on LfL the content will be determined by attendance trends and themes and commonly asked questions.
Attendance updates in Headteachers newsletter	The School Attendance Service will use the half termly HT newsletter to keep Senior Leaders up to date with Attendance communication.
Attendance Manager in attendance at Family of Schools meetings	CMOOE officer/Team Managers will attend FOS meetings, this will improve communication and will also be an opportunity to address concerns/issues in a timely manner.
All schools to receive individual school data giving comparative data to primary/secondary cluster and primary/secondary Leeds city wide data.	Through Targeted Support Meetings and Register checks school will be given a copy of their data. This data will form part of the discussions within these meetings.
Enforce attendance through Legal action	A change to the traded package for schools in the summer term will add additional capacity for the team to complete Legal intervention.
Targeted Support Meeting offer for all schools	In the summer term the School Attendance Service have an aspirational target to offer all schools Target support meetings. The priority schools will be offered in the first instance. Priority by attendance data.
Register Checks offered to schools where attendance has been highlighted as a concern	Register Checks will continue in the summer term. Register checks are an opportunity for the LA to closely analyse school registers, offer recommendations, celebrate good practice, and challenge processes/coding when appropriate.
Model Attendance Policy will be available on Leeds for Learning	The School Attendance Service is responding to the new guidance and requests received from schools by developing a Model Attendance Policy template that will be available on LfL
Themed attendance drop-in sessions e.g., Removing barriers to Attendance	The School Attendance Service will be offering three drop-in sessions for schools these sessions will look at key areas and be an opportunity for schools to share good practice.

Attendance briefing session ' What the new guidance means for schools' will be available to book on Leeds for Learning	This briefing session will support schools in implementing the new guidance in their own setting. This session will be repeated four times during the summer term.
Attendance briefing session ' What the new guidance means for the LA' will be available to book on Leeds for Learning	This briefing session will outline to schools the expectations/responsibilities of the LA in implementing the new guidance in their own setting. This session will be repeated four times during the summer term.

Traded Training

In addition to the core offer of training there is an additional eight training sessions available during the summer term for schools to purchase.

Traded Offer to schools from September 2023

Traded - Training	Cost	Notes
Attendance Analysis and Persistent absence Virtual training	£110	Cost per delegate. Next session 27/06/2023
Admissions and CME Virtual training	£110	Cost per delegate. Next session 09/05/2023
Casework Virtual Training	£110	Cost per delegate. Next session 17/05/2023
Fast Track and Penalty Notice Virtual training	£110	Cost per delegate. Next session 13/06/2023
eLearning - Parenting Contracts	£150	Per setting (Training to be devised)
eLearning – Attendance Policy and procedures	£150	Per setting (Training to be devised)
eLearning – Legal, ESO's, PO's (3 separate modules)	£150	Per setting (Training to be devised)

		Admissions Procedures, Children Missing Education (CME)	09/05/2023	04/07/2023
		Casework	17/05/2023	21/06/2023
		Fast Track and Penalty Notices	03/05/2023	13/06/2023
		Attendance Analysis and Persistent Absence	23/05/2023	27/06/2023
Working together to Improve School Attendance Briefing (Expectations of Schools)	Working together to Improve School Attendance Briefing (Expectations of LA)			
11/05/2023	25/04/2023			
16/05/2023	08/06/2023			
25/05/2023	20/06/2023			
22/06/2023	04/07/2023			

Actions Phase 1	Updates
All schools have access to School Attendance Service mailbox (Schoolattendanceservice@leeds.gov.uk)	Mailbox training for all SAS staff on 10/05/2023 to include training manual. Rota for SAS staff to be sent to all staff on 05/05/23. Implementation of new process commences 15/05/2023 This has now commenced, and the response time is reducing, and we are responding to everything within 3 days.
Attendance Toolkit (Leeds for Learning)	Toolkit is reviewed and updated. Uploaded to Leeds for Learning by 05/09/2023

Leeds for Learning – Attendance Articles to be added throughout the summer term	Various supportive articles added and updated
Attendance updates in Headteachers newsletter	All bulletins and updates include attendance. The Learning Inclusion bulletin is the main mechanism for distributing attendance news.
Attendance manager in attendance at Family of Schools meetings	There will be an attendance service staff members to all meetings possible. Effective communication with FOS support and feedback provided to meetings if attendance not possible.
All schools to receive individual school data giving comparative data to primary/secondary cluster and primary/secondary Leeds city wide data.	The Data is currently being sent to schools at the same time they are offered register checks. Schools are using the DFE attendance tool.
Enforce attendance through Legal action	Development of a more streamlined penalty notice process is being looked at by the transformation team and a specific legal action guide is being developed to be in place by December 2023. We are waiting for new DFE guidance being released after a consultation last year.
Targeted Support Meeting offer for all schools	Summer term – 39 offered – 24 completed
Register Checks offered to schools where attendance has been highlighted as a concern	April to July – 82 offered, 40 completed, 27 booked in Sept/Oct 2023.
Model Attendance Policy will be available on Leeds for Learning	Available on L4L
Themed attendance drop-in sessions e.g., Removing barriers to Attendance	Bookable on L4L – will become targeted as themes emerge this year – planned already are support for mental health concerns and navigating the legal processes
Attendance briefing session ' What the new guidance means for schools' will be available to book on Leeds for Learning	Dates 11/05/2023, 16/05/2023, 25/05/2023, 22/06/2023 58 schools attended
Attendance briefing session ' What the new guidance means for the LA' will be available to book on Leeds for Learning	Dates 25/04/2023, 08/06/2023, 20/06/2023, 04/07/2023 59 schools attended and 2 clusters

Traded Training Academic Year 22/23	Number of schools attended
Admissions and CME	7
Fast Track and Penalty Notices	41
Casework Training	23
Attendance Analysis and PA	23

CMOOE - School Attendance Service – Phase 2

School Attendance Service (SAS) – September 2023

The Phase 2 universal core offer from the School Attendance Service will become effective - 1st September 2023.

Further support will be rolled out over the academic year and will include additional training and briefing opportunities for all schools, additional guidance documents and templates including parenting contracts.

September 2023 – Phase 2 Universal Core Offer (All schools)

The school attendance service is part of the Children Missing out on Education team (CMOOE)

Lead – Alison Finley alison.finley@leeds.gov.uk

School Attendance Support Team

The team includes 1 Lead officer – Tracey Black – tracey.black@leeds.gov.uk , 5 Team Managers, 16 FTE AIO'S

Please note – elements with an * were previously traded and are now part of the universal core offer to all schools.

September offer - Phase 2	Notes
All schools have access to School Attendance Service mailbox (Schoolattendanceservice@leeds.gov.uk) *(some elements)	This mailbox is managed by the School Attendance Service staff both attendance improvement officers and team managers to ensure a timely response to school queries. (Target response - 3 Days)
Attendance Toolkit (Leeds for Learning)	The toolkit is available for all schools on LfL (Leeds for Learning). The toolkit contains useful documents and guidance including how to refer a case for legal intervention.
Attendance updates in newsletters	The school attendance service will use Leeds for Learning newsletters to keep Senior Leaders and Attendance staff up to date with attendance communication.
SAS manager attendance at FOS (Family of Schools meetings) *	CMOOE (Children Missing Out on Education) officer/team managers will be available to attend FOS meetings upon request, this will improve communication and will also be an opportunity to address concerns/issues in a timely manner.
SAS manger attendance at cluster meetings * (some elements)	CMOOE (Children Missing Out on Education) officer/team managers will be available to attend cluster meetings, this be an opportunity for attendance leads/officers to come together to share good practice and remove area wide barriers to attendance.
All schools to receive individual school attendance data including the Leeds picture	Through targeting support meetings and register checks school will be given a copy of their data. This data will form part of the discussions within these meetings.
Enforce attendance through legal action	The school attendance service have trained additional staff to support with the increase in request for legal intervention. Schools are reminded to continue with attendance processes after submission and that all avenues of support need to be exhausted.

Targeting support meeting offer for all schools *	Each school will be offered a termly targeting support meeting. These meetings will be an opportunity to discuss individual pupils and create targeted action plans.
Register checks offered	An annual register check will be offered to all schools. register checks are an opportunity for the LA (Local Authority) to closely analyse school registers, offer recommendations, celebrate good practice, and provide challenge to processes/coding where appropriate.
Model attendance policy available on Leeds for Learning	The school attendance service has responded to the new guidance and requests received from schools by developing a Model Attendance Policy template which is now available on LfL.
Themed attendance drop-in sessions *	The school attendance service will be offering half termly online drop-in sessions for schools. These sessions will look at key areas identified through work with schools and are an opportunity for schools to share good practice and ask questions. These can be booked on LfL.
Attendance briefing session ' What the new guidance means for schools' will be available to book on Leeds for Learning *	This briefing session will support schools in implementing the new guidance in their own setting. This session will be repeated half termly.
Attendance briefing session ' What the new guidance means for the LA' will be available to book on Leeds for Learning *	This briefing session will outline to schools the expectations/responsibilities of the LA in implementing the new guidance in their own setting. This session will be repeated half termly.

Traded training

In addition to the universal core offer there are 20 established virtual training sessions available for schools to purchase on Leeds for Learning.

These include:

- Admissions and CME (Children Missing Education)
- Attendance casework
- Fast track and penalty notices
- Attendance and persistent absence

Bespoke training will remain available throughout the academic year 2023/24 – you can request through Leeds for Learning. (Subject to staffing availability)

Over the academic year 2023/24 the school attendance service will look to expand and develop further traded offers in response to DFE guidance and local issues.

School Attendance Service (SAS) – Autumn term 2023 – Phase 3

The Phase 3 universal core offer from the School Attendance Service will become effective no later than - 1st November 2023.

Further support will be rolled out over the academic year and will include additional training and briefing opportunities for all schools, additional guidance documents and templates including parenting contracts.

Autumn 2023 – Phase 3 Universal Core Offer (All schools)

The school attendance service is part of the Children Missing out on Education team (CMOOE)

Lead – Alison Finley alison.finley@leeds.gov.uk

School Attendance Support Team

The team includes 1 Lead officer – Tracey Black – tracey.black@leeds.gov.uk , 5 Team Managers, 16 FTE AIO'S

Please note – elements with an * were previously traded and are now part of the universal core offer to all schools.

Autumn term - Phase 3	Notes
All schools have access to School Attendance Service mailbox (Schoolattendanceservice@leeds.gov.uk) *(some elements)	This mailbox is managed by the School Attendance Service staff both attendance improvement officers and team managers to ensure a timely response to school queries. (Target response - 3 Days)
Attendance Toolkit (Leeds for Learning)	The toolkit is available for all schools on LfL (Leeds for Learning). The toolkit contains useful documents and guidance including how to refer a case for legal intervention.
Attendance updates in newsletters	The school attendance service will use Leeds for Learning newsletters to keep Senior Leaders and Attendance staff up to date with attendance communication.
SAS manager attendance at FOS (Family of Schools meetings) *	CMOOE (Children Missing Out on Education) officer/team managers will be available to attend FOS meetings upon request, this will improve communication and will also be an opportunity to address concerns/issues in a timely manner.
SAS manger/CMOOE attendance officer facilitate attendance meeting for AIP, Cluster and Early Help staff	CMOOE (Children Missing Out on Education) officer/team managers will facilitate a citywide meeting, this will be an opportunity for staff to come together to share good practice and remove area wide barriers to attendance.
All schools to receive individual school attendance data including the Leeds picture	Through targeting support meetings and register checks school will be given a copy of their data. This data will form part of the discussions within these meetings.
Enforce attendance through legal action	The school attendance service have trained additional staff to support with the increase in request for legal intervention. Schools are reminded to continue with attendance processes after submission and that all avenues of support need to be exhausted.
Targeting support meeting offer for all schools *	Each school will be offered a termly targeting support meeting through the cluster model. These meetings will be an opportunity to anonymously discuss individual pupils

	and create targeted action plans, as well as an opportunity to share good school practice.
Register checks offered	An annual register check will be offered to all schools. register checks are an opportunity for the LA (Local Authority) to closely analyse school registers, offer recommendations, celebrate good practice, and provide challenge to processes/coding where appropriate.
Model attendance policy available on Leeds for Learning	The school attendance service has responded to the new guidance and requests received from schools by developing a Model Attendance Policy template which is now available on LfL.
Themed attendance drop-in sessions *	The school attendance service will be offering half termly online drop-in sessions for schools. These sessions will look at key areas identified through work with schools and are an opportunity for schools to share good practice and ask questions. These can be booked on LfL.
Attendance briefing session ' What the new guidance means for schools' will be available to book on Leeds for Learning *	This briefing session will support schools in implementing the new guidance in their own setting. This session will be repeated half termly.
Attendance briefing session ' What the new guidance means for the LA' will be available to book on Leeds for Learning *	This briefing session will outline to schools the expectations/responsibilities of the LA in implementing the new guidance in their own setting. This session will be repeated half termly.
Fair Access Panel (FAP) cases admissions meeting.	All schools/academies can request an admission meeting with the parent/carer chaired by an Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO) to support integration on to the school roll. (Effective September 2023)
Year 7 pupils (23/24) with no identified school place.	SAS officers have been working with families who have failed to secure a year 7 place for September 2023 and will continue this work during the Autumn term.
'Attendance is everyone's responsibility'	CMOOE team members will continue to be available to attend key partner meetings. To discuss CME, EHE, Attendance and exclusions.
Year 6 (22/23) persistent absence (unauthorised absence)	Attendance letter has been sent reminding parent/carers of the importance of regular attendance. (School Imported Data – SID)
Penalty Notice policy	Penalty Notice policy to support school with the implementation of requesting penalty notices including updated penalty notice code of conduct. (Effective December 2023)

Traded training

In addition to the universal core offer there are 20 established virtual training sessions available for schools to purchase on Leeds for Learning.

These include:

- Admissions and CME (Children Missing Education)
- Attendance casework
- Fast track and penalty notices
- Attendance and persistent absence

In the autumn term the School attendance service are introducing three new traded elements as detailed below:

- eLearning module 'Parenting Contracts' includes template document and guidance.
- eLearning module on 'Punctuality' includes template letters.
- 'Year 7 or Reception pupils who have failed to take up school place in September' an Attendance Improvement Officer will complete enquires including a home visit to support the return to school.

Bespoke training will remain available throughout the academic year 2023/24 – you can request through Leeds for Learning. (Subject to staffing availability)

Targeting support meetings

*As patterns of attendance are habitual, early identification and support is essential for individual pupils in need of help. Where barriers go beyond the classroom, this requires schools, local authorities, and other partners to work together to put joint support in place as quickly as possible. **Working together to improve school attendance DfE 2022***

Each school/academy will be invited to a cluster targeted support meeting, prior to the meeting data analysis will be undertaken by the School Attendance Service. Each school/academy will receive their individual data in preparation.

Agenda - Targeting support meeting

1. Introduction/check in
2. SAS updates
3. Staffing updates
4. Traded updates
5. Training updates
6. Data analysis
7. DFE updates
8. Common themes/sharing good practice to improve attendance including:
 - Barriers to attendance*
 - Improving attendance*
 - Reducing absence*
 - Mental health support*
9. Case work discussion
10. Topics for discussion next meeting
11. AOB

Summer 2023 school holiday plan

Action

- Identify all current year 6 without an allocated school Those on roll in year 6 on waiting lists
- Those with no current roll (further identify CME (CHILDREN MISSING EDUCATION) status WK (Whereabouts Known) or WUK (Whereabouts Unknown))
- EHE cases that want school places to be supported to find a place -1153 Total number of EHE children and young people
- EHE cases that have not provided any detail for over one year of the education to be received by the child to be referred to CME or where the whereabouts are unknown
- Letter to all partner agencies to reinforce our attendance message (DFE message) and importance of first day attendance in September
- Investigate if we can use SID data to identify the vulnerable learners who have PA or SA prioritise current year 6 and 9 with PA/SA letter/email
- mailshot all families with any child who has SA/PA Mail merge – Blanket PA email that excludes authorised absence
- DfE Daily Attendance Data - monthly webinar for schools, trusts and LA
- DFE attendance data collection to promote with schools on the same letter as webinar reminder. Upload to LfL
- Poverty Board – 66 families in emergency accommodation
- Attendance working with the GRT team preschool starting - GRT team offer drop-in session for families, support with school applications and encourage regular school attendance.
- Inform other services on CME WK referral route. Including health, CSWS, and police
- Extra ordinary attendance cases – identified as vulnerable learners (non-attenders) at MACE or through TSM/Reg check
- ESNA – Briefing /training attended by all CMOOE officers
- ESNA advice been given to parents and other professionals to support regular attendance.
- Expectations set to high schools through register checks and TSM to target year 6 pupils with low attendance e.g., summer visits and communication with families
- CSWS drop-in service continues over the summer. An opportunity for social workers to discuss attendance concerns for pupils with a social worker. Advice and guidance given to support regular school attendance.
- School Attendance Service Mailbox continues to be available over the summer to answer parent/carers and professional queries pertaining to attendance. An opportunity to promote and set high expectations for attendance.
- Continue with statutory duties (Legal intervention including SAO's and PN's to enforce attendance)

Appendix C

[Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

- Have a strategic approach to improving attendance for the whole area and to make it a key focus of all frontline council services.
- Have a School Attendance Support Team that works with all schools to remove area-wide barriers to attendance.
- Provide each school with a named point of contact in the School Attendance Support Team who can support with queries and advice.
- Offer opportunities for all schools in the area to share effective practice. The phased plans have addressed all the expectations and are working through delivery to schools and some changes in practice.
- For pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent the LA must hold a termly conversation with every school to identify, discuss and signpost or provide access to services for pupils who are persistently or severely absent or at risk of becoming so.
- Where there are out of school barriers, provide each identified pupil and their family with access to services they need in the first instance. If the issue persists, facilitate a voluntary early help assessment where appropriate.
- Take an active part in the multi-agency effort with the school and other partners.
- Provide the lead practitioner where all partners agree that a local authority service is best placed to lead.
- For Persistently absent pupils continued support as for pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent and: Work jointly with the school to provide formal support options including parenting contracts and education supervision orders. Where there are safeguarding concerns, ensure joint working between the school, children's social care services and other statutory safeguarding partners. Where support is not working, being engaged with or appropriate, enforce attendance through legal intervention (including prosecution as a last resort).

For severely absent pupils continued support as for persistently absent pupils and: All services should make this group the top priority for support. This may include a whole family plan, consideration for an education, health and care plan, or alternative form of educational provision. Be especially conscious of any potential safeguarding issues, ensuring joint working between the school, children's social care services and other statutory safeguarding partners. Where appropriate, this could include conducting a full children's social care assessment and building attendance into children in need and child protection plans.

Support for cohorts of pupils with lower attendance than their peers. Using data to help school identify these cohorts and look at support packages.

Track local attendance data to prioritise support and unblock area wide attendance barriers where they impact numerous schools.

Support for pupils with medical conditions or SEND with poor attendance – we are currently working with one of the monitoring quality and assurance officers in SENSAP.

Appendix D1

Primary School Case Study – impact of register checks

July 2023 register check - an example of a school that has improved their attendance. Overall Review

X Primary School has 207 pupils whose attendance is monitored daily by the Safeguarding and Attendance Officer and the data is analysed every half term by the Head teacher. X Primary school have a good relationship with their families and the community in which they live. The school works hard, along with their dedicated Attendance Governor to encourage good attendance which then supports positive educational outcomes.

X Primary School have highlighted their attendance policy on the school website which shows expectation and support which is explained as the 3 P's Prevention, Punctuality and Promotion and the RAG table is used to show parents what good attendance is to the level of concern and intervention if needed.

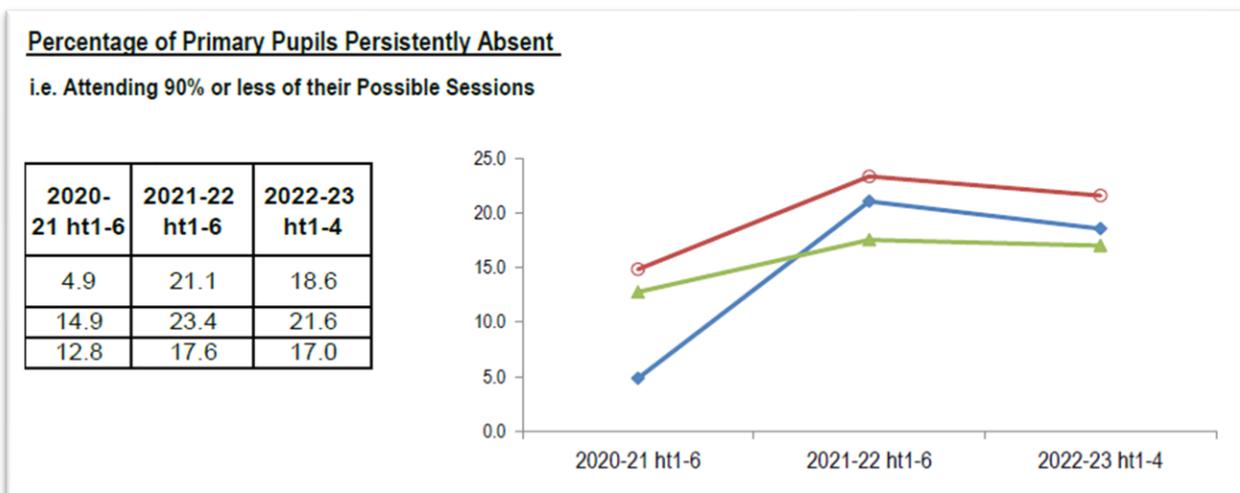
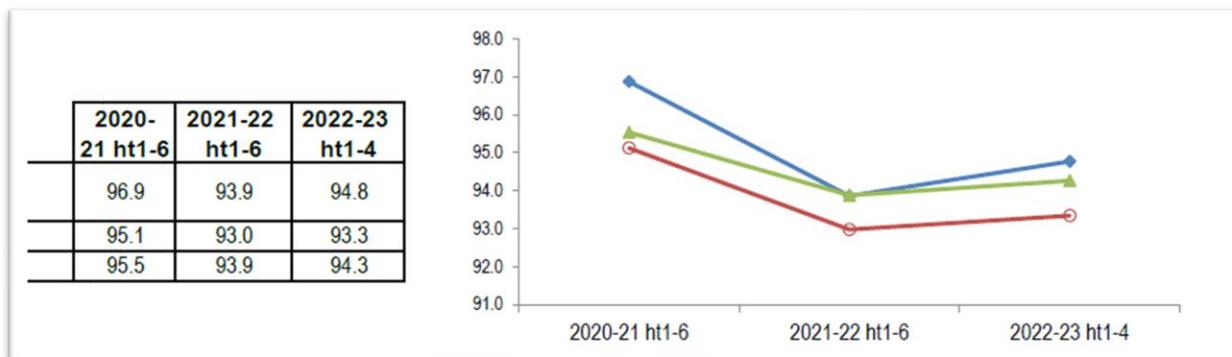
X Primary School use the code analysis to address any low patterns of attendance and as well as keeping an updated analysis with their vulnerable groups. This group have individual attendance plans which is a contract signed by the parent.

X Primary School is part of the X Cluster and whilst X oversees and follows the attendance process in school the Cluster AIO supports with home visits.

The attendance codes are used correctly however one suggestion is that school use the 'U' Code as per guidance 30 minutes after the register closes instead of 20 minutes after registration as this might also increase the overall school attendance.

There are plenty of attendance charts around school, a school council in which pupils also discuss attendance, classopoly is an inventive attendance monopoly board in which each class competes with their attendance moving around the board each week. Attendance prizes range from certificates to a prize draw for money vouchers.

The good overall school attendance reflects the hard work and commitment that goes into working on a daily basis with the families to improve their children's attendance.



Key - Primary school Cluster Leeds City wide primary

Appendix D2

Letters issued to partners and schools to support children to “Be a Top Attender in September”

Letter sent to services across Leeds this summer to encourage a good start in September.

CALL TO SUPPORT STRONG ATTENDANCE FROM THE FIRST DAY OF TERM

We are asking for everyone’s support to improve school attendance across the whole of our city of Leeds. You are part of a service that has members of staff that will have contact with parents, carers and children over the summer and we want all our trusted voices communicating the same message about the importance of a strong return to school in September.

‘Be a top attender in September’

‘Get off to a flying start in September’

Absence rates are still well above pre-Covid levels, and the most vulnerable children and young people are more likely to be absent. We need to work together on this issue and make improving attendance a critical priority for everyone.

Schools have worked so hard to improve attendance and we all have an opportunity to work with schools to reduce absence.

We would like all professionals and trusted voices, when you meet with children, young people, and families over the summer to include attendance in every conversation.

We know attendance has long term impacts on a child’s life chances, including attainment, employment prospects and future earnings. Your support on this issue is essential as we all work together to improve the outcomes for children and young people across Leeds.

The importance of a strong return to school

We know that those first days back in school really matter. We know many children have struggled with attendance and that the return to school is one of the biggest challenges that COVID – 19 has posed to children and young people. Evidence from a recent Children’s Commissioner report showed that children who miss days 2, 3 and 4 of the new term for unauthorised reasons had a predicted overall absence of almost 45%, or 31 days across the term, compared to children who missed days near the end of term, who had a predicted overall absence of 20-30%.

We are determined as a local authority to make the academic year 2023/24 a fresh start for attendance for all children and young people in Leeds and we would like to see this reflected in attendance on the first day of term. With your help we can support families to get ready for the new term.

We believe we have a real opportunity to make a difference and support children and young people to return to school and make a flying start in September. With a ‘support first’ approach we want to encourage everyone to include school attendance and the importance of being there at the start of term in conversations over the summer.

Let’s help all children and young people get ready to start in September and be ready to learn. Please ask all your staff to include the importance of good attendance and starting back on the first day in all conversations over the summer.

Thank you for your continued support with children and young people and their families in Leeds.

Alison.Finley@leeds.gov.uk

Tracey Black
Attendance Lead Officer
Tracey.Clegg@leeds.gov.uk

Useful links

[Leeds School Uniform Exchange - Leeds School Uniform Exchange \(leedsuniformexchange.org.uk\)](http://leedsuniformexchange.org.uk)

[Directory \(leedslocaloffer.org.uk\)](http://leedslocaloffer.org.uk)

[Home | Family Information Service Leeds](#)

[Is my child too ill for school? - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)

[Back into School | Children's Commissioner for England \(childrenscommissioner.gov.uk\)](http://childrenscommissioner.gov.uk)

[Resources for families | Children's Commissioner for England \(childrenscommissioner.gov.uk\)](http://childrenscommissioner.gov.uk)

[Let's get ready for September | Children's Commissioner for England \(childrenscommissioner.gov.uk\)](http://childrenscommissioner.gov.uk)

[What are 'ghost children' and why is school attendance important? - The Education Hub \(blog.gov.uk\)](http://blog.gov.uk)



Appendix D3

Virtual School support to improving attendance

Attendance work with the Virtual School

Support for pupils with a social worker is clear in the new guidance. In light of this, the Virtual School have:

- delivered training to Child Protection Conference chairs as part of the extension of the VS functions to include children with a social work intervention. CP chairs are now including attendance as key aspect of plan, and this has been evidenced in audits where children's attendance is now captured on CO plans
- arranged meeting with principal social worker, School Attendance Service, and workforce development to consider how to respond to letter from Isabelle Trowler with proposal to ensure front door, child and family assessments and CiN plans capture attendance and workforce development/training requirements.
- ensured that Personal education plans for CLA have to capture child's attendance and activity/intervention when required and PEP co-ordinators support all children new to care with first PEPs so earliest possible intervention at point children become looked after
- ensured DSL networks are being supported by EP service to deliver extended non-school attendance training during autumn term 2023
- ensured the Virtual School DT/DSL visit framework requires schools to review the attendance of the cohorts for whom VS have responsibility i.e., looked after, previously looked after and children with a social worker
- offered Attendance Team Manager and Virtual School focussed attendance 'consultations' for schools who have accessed their DT/DSL visit
- influenced School Attendance Service register checks to include query around attendance of CLA/PCLA/CWSW
- a SAS team manager seconded to VS team to present fortnightly reports on children persistently absent using attendance monitoring system Iris Looked After Call
- attended foster carer networks to promote school attendance
- Drop-in sessions to social workers from VS and SAS
- A SAS team manager delivering training through DSL network
- The CMOOE lead attending the DSL network
- supported Youth Justice Education Officers meetings and use 3A's as strategy
- embedded 'lines of enquiry' document in YJS Asset assessments with focus on 3A's

Appendix D4

Educational Psychology team support to improve attendance – focussing on ESNA

Attendance work with the Educational Psychology team (EPT)

During the pandemic, the DfE Wellbeing for Education funding led to the provision of online resources for schools including access to training which include supporting the evidence base related to school anxiety.

The EPT recognised school attendance as an ongoing need, which was highlighted and exacerbated as a result of the pandemic. In response the EPT developed and offer of support called 'extended school non-attendance' (ESNA).

ESNA can be understood under the umbrella term of social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH) needs. SEMH is a term introduced by the SEND Code of Practice in 2014 in an attempt to move away from the word behaviour and to acknowledge that a behavioural presentation is a way of communicating something more significant, such as an unmet need.

The ESNA offer has been embedded into the EP team offer and is a free offer to all schools.

A significant focus of the ESNA offer is to provide free training offer to all settings to support the understanding, thinking, and developing practice around extended school non-attendance (ESNA). The aim of this training is to ensure practitioners understand what is meant by ESNA and is explicitly linked to the expectations on settings in light of the new DfE guidance [Working together to improve school attendance](#). The intended outcome of the training is to support understanding and exploring ESNA on an individual basis and provide suggested ways of meeting needs.

The training offer also supports developing understanding of anxiety in children and young people and how it can impact on their education and attendance. The training supports understanding how to manage anxiety and provide supportive interventions with the aim of improving school attendance. Across the city 53 schools, 2 AIPs and the Virtual School have accessed the training offer to date and the EPT are supporting the Virtual School to support and address ESNA for Children Looked After. Feedback from the training states relevance of the course to current need is 100% good or excellent, with 80% stating it is excellent. This is based on a small number of returns however it provides qualitative information on what went well; what could be better and impact on practice.

The team are also able to offer targeted individualised short-term intervention using psychological approaches to reduce anxiety to improve school engagement and attendance. These individuals are identified by the EPT through work with schools and other partners. Anecdotally there are increasing requests and concerns around ESNA. Individual casework at this time is held in a system which is coded for SEMH. The individuals have significant difficulties with attendance which are linked to wider needs which are complex. In the 2023-2024 we will be using goal-based-outcomes to further evidence the impact of ESNA individual intervention.

The EP team have made links with Parent/Carer forums to enable co-production and ensure the offer is reflective of needs and supports making a positive contribution.

Next steps are to strengthen the system wide approach within Learning Inclusion through the working party/strategic group. This will include a data informed approach to targeting the offer more effectively and continuing links with parent carer forums, in order to strengthen the ESNA offer overall. In preparation for next academic year the ESNA strategic group is intending to collaborate with wider partners, particularly within Health and Care. The action plan includes development of a Leeds Offer. Leeds EPT are currently finalising an ESNA resources page will be available on LfL as of 04/09/23 to link to a range of resources and documents to support settings to support improving attendance.



Appendix D5

SAFE Taskforce involvement with attendance in Leeds

The SAFE Taskforce is working on a mentoring programme that is aimed at young people who are vulnerable to being engaged in serious violence. Two of the key indicators for a young person to be referred is low attendance and more than one fixed term suspension.

Each referral made, currently 250, is reviewed and notes the young person's current attendance at school. During the course of the long-term intervention, the mentor monitors the young person's attendance. The mentor will liaise with school, the young person, parents and other agencies to agree on actions to reduce the young person's vulnerability, which includes increasing attendance at school and reducing negative behaviour.

The majority of the mentors are based in secondary schools across Leeds full time. They will often deal with matters relating to a young person's attendance and behaviour on a daily basis. With duties such as, checking attendance on school registers, calling home for absentees, home visits for low attending young people and school refusers. The intervention aims to help the young people regulate in school better, and access lessons more successfully by identifying and resolving potential barriers to learning.

The mentors have been involved in breaking down barriers to school attendance engagement. Meeting parents and young people outside of the school environment has been an effective approach to re-establish contact with hard to reach families. The mentors have put on successful, bespoke, after school activities on which are targeted at these low attending young people, taking into account their interest and personal preference of support.

The after school intervention has also been extended to holiday provision. This is where our mentors will put on activities in all school holidays to maintain engagement, reduce involvement in crime and to maintain a supportive link with the young people.

One of our mentors have been based within the attendance department in their targeted school.

The support team in the SAFE Taskforce has been trained on the vulnerability and long term impact, low attendance has on young people.

Appendix E

Articles related to attendance for reference and further reading

[Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

[Summary of responsibilities where a mental health issue is affecting attendance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](http://publishing.service.gov.uk)

[Support for pupils where a mental health issue is affecting attendance: effective practice examples \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](http://publishing.service.gov.uk)

[Attendance Action Alliance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

[School attendance, improving the consistency of support: new burdens assessment - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

[Draft of guidance changes \(education.gov.uk\)](http://education.gov.uk)

[School attendance consultation response \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](http://publishing.service.gov.uk)

[School attendance - Schools Bill Factsheet \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](http://publishing.service.gov.uk)

[Modernising school attendance and admission registers and setting national thresholds for legal intervention \(education.gov.uk\)](http://education.gov.uk)

[Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](http://publishing.service.gov.uk)

[Resources for families | Children's Commissioner for England \(childrenscommissioner.gov.uk\)](http://childrenscommissioner.gov.uk)

[School behaviour and attendance: parental responsibility measures - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

[Improving attendance: good practice for schools and multi-academy trusts - Case study - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

[What are 'ghost children' and why is school attendance important? - The Education Hub \(blog.gov.uk\)](http://blog.gov.uk)

[Why is school attendance so important and what are the risks of missing a day? - The Education Hub \(blog.gov.uk\)](http://blog.gov.uk)

[Back to school week – Everything you need to know about school attendance - The Education Hub \(blog.gov.uk\)](http://blog.gov.uk)

[How we plan to improve school attendance following the COVID-19 pandemic - The Education Hub \(blog.gov.uk\)](http://blog.gov.uk)

[Statistics: pupil attendance and absence - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

[Pupil attendance in schools, Week 29 2023 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](http://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk)

[Attendance: How to get looked-after children back to school \(schoolsweek.co.uk\)](http://schoolsweek.co.uk)

[Summary of responsibilities where a mental health issue is affecting attendance.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](http://publishing.service.gov.uk)

[Support for pupils where a mental health issue is affecting attendance effective practice examples.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](http://publishing.service.gov.uk)

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Impact of Vaping on Children & Young People - Update

Date: 4 October 2023

Report of: Head of Democratic Services

Report to: Children and Families Scrutiny Board

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

Brief summary

The Children and Families Scrutiny Board agreed to look into the impacts of vaping or electronic cigarette usage on children and young people (youth vaping) in 2023/24.

This followed a work item that was raised at the meeting of the Board on 7 June 2023 and correspondence from concerned members about the health impacts of vaping and potentially increased usage amongst children and young people in Leeds.

The Board considered the issue at its 5 July public meeting and agreed to conduct further work through a Working Group meeting to be held on 27 September.

However, in subsequent developments at Government level there has now been a strong indication and supporting media coverage suggesting that disposable vapes are to be made illegal in the near future. This has resulted in the postponement of the planned Scrutiny Working Group on 27 September as it was thought that many of the key aims established for the Board's work were being met through disposable vapes being made illegal.

This item is therefore brought to the Board to provide a full update and seek the Board's views on any further action, including the adoption of a 'wait and see' approach to understand the timescales for when the products will be made illegal and any other possible repercussions that might arise.

Recommendations

The Board is asked to:

- a) Note the Government proposals to make disposable vapes illegal.
- b) Agree to adopt a 'watching brief' on this issue to ensure that these plans come into practice quickly and that the Board is satisfied with what will be a new legislative framework covering disposable vapes.

What is this report about?

- 1 This report follows concerns raised by elected members about the impact of vaping on children and young people and agreement by the Board to consider additional information on this through a joint Working Group comprising members of the Children and Families and Adults, Health and Active Lifestyles Scrutiny Boards. However, in light of recent Government announcements and media coverage the Working Group has been postponed, with agreement from the Chair of Adults, Health and Active Lifestyles Scrutiny Board and other concerned members. The main reason for this change in approach being that it now seems very likely that the Government will be making disposable vapes illegal in the near future.
- 2 Much of the concern around youth vaping both nationally and expressed at the Children and Families Board meeting in July centred around key issues such as advertising, marketing, targeting at young people, free gifting of vapes, environmental impacts and a strong desire for a much tighter regulatory framework to be established. The main concerns focussed on disposable vapes.
- 3 Further work may well have led to firmer proposals and recommendations being developed by the Board but given that disposable vapes are now set to be made illegal many of these key areas have been addressed. In short, making these devices illegal is as strong a regulatory framework as there is available.
- 4 As a result, it is possible that any scrutiny work between now and the relevant legislation being passed ran the risk of duplicating or being superseded by the proposals being put forward by Government.
- 5 It should be noted that at the time of writing this report no firm action has yet been taken by the Government, but the proposals have been widely reported in the media. It is expected that the announcement will come when the Government responds to the call for evidence it had launched over the Spring and Summer months, this is expected in the coming weeks.
- 6 Despite this expected announcement it is possible that further work on youth vaping could develop either from the announcement itself or linked to timing of when the products will be made illegal. If that is the case the matter could come back to the Board for further consideration, this is reflected in the report recommendations which cover this possibility.
- 7 It is understood that vaping kits and non-disposable vaping will remain legal which should maintain the benefits that can be gained from cigarette smokers moving to use of vapes and the widely held belief that vaping is still an effective method to increase smoking cessation rates. However, whilst vaping is less harmful when compared to smoking the lack of available evidence on the long-term impacts of vaping has been noted as a concern by the Board.

Illegal Vapes

- 8 Whilst the response to the proposals from Government has been broadly positive, some concerns have been raised in relation to the potential spread of illegal vapes in response to the decision to make disposable vapes illegal.
- 9 There is already a significant issue with illegal vapes in the UK. Trading Standards agencies have been active in tackling the issue but have also described their work as the 'tip of the iceberg' despite seizing millions of illegal vapes nationally in the past three years. One possible implication of the decision to make disposable vapes illegal is that there is an increase and growth in this illicit market.
- 10 West Yorkshire Trading Standards have been no exception in terms of work done to tackle the illegal vape and tobacco markets, with £45,000 of illegal tobacco and vapes seized in August 2023 in Huddersfield which was part of a wider operation over the past year that has seen over £100,000 worth of goods of this nature seized and prevented from going on to be sold.

What impact will this proposal have?

- 11 The Board is asked to consider the information in this report and consider if any further action on youth vaping is required at this time.
- 12 The Vision for Scrutiny agreed by full Council sets out the nationally agreed four principles of good scrutiny. Within these is a commitment to 'Promote Scrutiny as a means by which the voice and concerns of the public can be heard.' Given the recent focus on vaping in the media and from health professionals this work item has sought to respond to both elected member concern and recent coverage that has raised the profile of this issue in Leeds and nationally.

How does this proposal impact the three pillars of the Best City Ambition?

- Health and Wellbeing Inclusive Growth Zero Carbon

- 13 The terms of reference of the Council's Scrutiny Boards promote a strategic and outward looking Scrutiny function that focuses on the priorities of the Best City Ambition.
- 14 This item has a stronger focus on the Health and Well-Being pillar, seeking to understand and challenge the health impact that vaping is having on children and young people in the city.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected:

Have ward members been consulted? Yes No

- 15 Children and Families Scrutiny Board discussed this issue at its meetings in June and July and agreed to consider it as part of its work programme in 2023/24, to include a Working Group to be established in September 2023.
- 16 The Adults, Health and Active Lifestyles Board also discussed this at its June meeting, identifying the impact of vaping on children and young people as an area of concern. This led to the development of a joint working group approach that has now been postponed due to expected legislative action from Government.
- 17 Before a decision was reached to postpone the planned working group on youth vaping consultation and engagement took place with the Adults, Health and Active Lifestyles Board through the Chair and with elected members who had raised concerns with the Chair of the Children and Families Board through correspondence.

What are the resource implications?

- 18 There are no specific resource implications associated with this item.

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

- 19 There are no specific risk management implications associated with this item.

What are the legal implications?

- 20 There are no specific legal implications associated with this item.

Options, timescales and measuring success

What other options were considered?

21 This is an information report it is possible that, depending on the views of the scrutiny board, further consideration of this issue could take place in the future.

How will success be measured?

22 Not applicable at this stage.

What is the timetable and who will be responsible for implementation?

23 This work stream has been impacted by a decision made by Government that has the potential to supersede any scrutiny recommendations that might have been made. Given that a final decision on making disposable vapes illegal has yet to be reached ultimately this matter now rests with Government.

Appendices

- None

Background papers

- None



Provision of EHCP Support – 22 September Working Group Update and Notes

Date: 4 October 2023

Report of: Head of Democratic Services

Report to: Scrutiny Board (Children and Families)

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

Brief summary

Children and Families Scrutiny Board has identified Education Health and Care needs Plans (EHCPs) as an item for detailed scrutiny in the 2023/24 municipal year.

The Board has expressed an interest in taking a whole system look at the provision of EHCP support in Leeds with a view to understanding and seeking to improve the service residents receive when they believe that their child has Special Educational Needs (SEN) that school SEN support cannot meet.

The work of the Board will be dealt with through an Inquiry with findings and recommendations to be produced in the current municipal year.

Having agreed Terms of Reference for the inquiry at the 6 September Board meeting a remote Working group has subsequently taken place on 22 September to consider further details from the children and families directorate in terms of the latest position on EHCP performance and other related matters set out in the Terms of Reference (Appendix 2). In addition, the working group also featured input from PWC as they conduct their independent review of EHCP processes in Leeds.

Attached at Appendix 1 are notes from the Working Group for the Board to consider and comment on.

Recommendations

Children and Families Scrutiny Board is asked to:

- a) Note the summary note provided of the Working Group into the Provision of EHCP support in Leeds which was held on 22 September 2023.
- b) Consider any future scrutiny activity or recommendations that might arise from this initial inquiry work.

What is this report about?

- 1 The 7 June meeting of the Board identified that EHCPs were an area of interest and should be the focus of significant work in 2023/24.
- 2 The key drivers for the work on EHCP support are year-on-year increases in the EHCP cohort, the increased complexity of the needs that are identified, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children and young people in terms of increased anxiety and potential need for additional support, resources within the directorate to deal with increased demand, potential legislative changes and the impact of all of these factors on children and families in Leeds.
- 3 The SEND Review being carried out by Government is an important element in this work along with the recently published SEND Improvement Plan and the Change Programme that will pilot some of the proposals in the Improvement Plan before legislating.
- 4 The Working Group also considered recently commissioned work being undertaken by PwC to review EHCP assessment and annual review processes to identify key opportunities for change and improvement in Leeds.
- 5 This report provides an update to the full Board meeting on the Working Group meeting which initiated the work on this inquiry, in line with scrutiny board procedure rules which state that '*A summary of issues considered by a Working group must be considered by a Scrutiny Board prior to recommendations being made.*' In this case this is being done at the earliest opportunity.

What impact will this proposal have?

- 6 The Council's Vision for Scrutiny contained in Article 6 of the Constitution sets out the nationally agreed four principles of good scrutiny. Within these are a commitment to promote scrutiny as a means to ensure the voice and concerns of the public can be heard and to improve public services by ensuring that reviews of policy and service performance are focused.
- 7 It is hoped that an inquiry into the provision of EHCP support will lead to recommendations that improve services in the city.

How does this proposal impact the three pillars of the Best City Ambition?

Health and Wellbeing

Inclusive Growth

Zero Carbon

- 8 The terms of reference of Scrutiny Boards in Leeds promote a strategic and outward looking Scrutiny function that focuses on the priorities of the Best City Ambition. This work item is aimed at having a particular impact against health and well-being and inclusive growth by seeking to review and improve services for children and families who access EHCP support.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected:

Have ward members been consulted?

Yes

No

- 9 At the 7th June Children and Families Scrutiny Board discussion with the Director and Executive Board members suggested that EHCPs would be a positive area of focus for the Board in 2023/24 and the Board supported the inclusion of the EHCP work item in its work programme for the year.
- 10 Appendix 1, the summary note from the working group, has also been subject to input from the Children and Families directorate.

11 The draft terms of reference and final terms of reference for this inquiry have also been before the Board for comment and agreement in July and September.

What are the resource implications?

12 The Vision for Scrutiny, agreed by full Council, recognises that like all other Council services, resources to support the Scrutiny function are under considerable pressure and that requests from Scrutiny Boards cannot always be met. Consequently, when establishing their work programmes Scrutiny Boards should:

- a) Seek the advice of the Scrutiny officer, the relevant Director and Executive Member about available resources;
- b) Avoid duplication by having a full appreciation of any existing forums already having oversight of, or monitoring a particular issue;
- c) Ensure any Scrutiny undertaken has clarity and focus of purpose and will add value and can be delivered within an agreed time frame.

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

13 There are no specific risk implications associated with this report.

What are the legal implications?

14 There are no specific legal implications associated with this report.

Options, timescales and measuring success

What other options were considered?

15 In weighing up the timing of this item consideration was given to initiating the work later in the municipal year. However, scheduling this work early in the municipal year should enable the inquiry and any recommendations to be finalised in 2023/24. Furthermore, the work can now be carried out in parallel with the PWC independent review of services in Leeds.

How will success be measured?

16 The completion of an inquiry report in the 2023/24 municipal year.

What is the timetable and who will be responsible for implementation?

17 The timetable will be dictated by the Board through regular consideration of the work programme at each public meeting that is held and during the inquiry work itself. The Board, in consultation with the Principal Scrutiny Advisor, will be responsible for production of the inquiry report.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Summary Note from the Scrutiny Working Group held on 22 September 2023.
- Appendix 2 – Provision of EHCP Support Agreed Terms of Reference

Background papers

- None

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Scrutiny Board (Children & Families)

Provision of EHCP Support Working Group

Inquiry Session Summary Note

Date: 22 September 2023





Working Group Aims and Objectives

Working group Attendance

Board Members: Cllr D Cohen (Chair), Cllr R Stephenson, Cllr L Martin, Cllr C Gruen, Cllr T Smith, Cllr R Downes, Cllr N Manaka, Cllr D Blackburn, Cllr O Edwards, Cllr K Renshaw, K Blacker, J Ward, L Whitaker

Witnesses: Cllr J Pryor (Executive Member Economy, Culture & Education), J Longworth (Director of Children & Families), C Lennon (Chief Officer Learning Capacity & Development), H Godwin (Children's Services Lead, PWC), L Knight (Senior Manager, PWC), J McKeivitt (Senior Associate, PWC)

Apologies: Cllr F Venner, Cllr J Heselwood, H Bellamy, T Britten, N Tones, P Evans

The provision of EHCP support in Leeds has been identified as a key area of work for the Children and Families Scrutiny Board in 2023/24. Draft Terms of reference were considered at the July Board meeting followed by agreement of the Terms of Reference at the Board meeting on 6 September.

This Working Group is therefore the first inquiry session through which the Board have looked in more detail at the issues facing the provision of EHCP Support in the city.

The Board's work is supported by parallel work being undertaken by PWC who are also carrying out an independent assessment of end to end processes associated with EHCPs in Leeds.

The agreed Terms of Reference identified a number of key areas for this Working Group inquiry session, these were as follows:

- An update position on performance and backlogs and effectiveness of enhanced resource and staffing restructure through a report from the Children and Families directorate.
- Demand monitoring, how has the increased demand for EHC assessment and EHCP continued over the summer months
- The impact of Covid-19 on SEND and EHCP demand
- Complexity of EHCPs
- Funding challenges
- Assessment of proposed legislative changes such as the SEND Improvement Plan and the linked Change Programme and the likely impacts in Leeds. To include assessment of digital EHCPs and possible mandatory mediation and their impact on the provision of EHCP support in Leeds.
- PWC to provide an overview of discovery work undertaken, and investigative work still to do as part of the ongoing review in to EHCP processes in Leeds.

All of these issues were touched upon in discussion at the working group with a particular focus on the work of PWC which was the subject of a presentation that has been shared with all board members. This provides important context and highlights key areas where service improvements can take place to drive up performance and enhance the services received by children and families in Leeds.



Summary of Issues Considered by the Scrutiny Board

EHCP Demand Challenges and Complexity of Needs

It was recognised that there is a significant increase in demand for EHC assessment and EHCPs at a national level and this demand issue is further exacerbated by increases in complexity of the support that is required by children and young people. In Leeds this has meant that there has been a 118% increase in demand since 2016, with these increases gaining further momentum following the pandemic. So it is clear that this is not an issue unique to Leeds and that local authorities across England are facing major increases in demand for EHCPs.

Whilst this national context is important it was also recognised that there are local challenges that are unique to Leeds and that these will also be addressed as part of the work being undertaken by the directorate supported by PWC.

It was noted that an important element of the issues faced in Leeds are related to staffing and resource. Coupled with the increased demand the SENSAP team experienced a number of significant challenges during the Covid-19 pandemic including changes to Business Administration, the loss of colleagues and loved ones to the virus, increased sickness absence, a substantial loss of a number of experienced managers and unprecedented issues with the recruitment and retention of key staff.

The Council has made significant investment in the SENSAP team in response to this and it was noted that work is ongoing to address these issues with some significant improvements in FTE staffing, staff productivity and reduction in sickness rates as a result.

Six Areas of Focus

The initial work by the Council and PWC has identified six 'lenses' to focus on in Leeds where there is potential for improvement and where quick wins and longer-term service improvements can be delivered.

Process — It was recognised that some of the structures and processes are too rigid and do not always take account of exceptional cases which has led to people being unhappy with support which in turn has led to increases in complaints and escalation of complaints to Ombudsman level. A key focus of ongoing work being carried out by the Council is to emphasise flexibility of practice to meet needs and not an over reliance on process — 'practice over process'.

Organisation — Some issues have been identified in terms of gaps between strategy and then execution of service delivery, or as or as a disconnect between strategy and tactical execution. Work is ongoing to address these problems by emphasising the importance of co-production including all key stakeholders such as staff, families, children and wider partners. The new SEND Strategy and refreshed SEND Partnership Board are key initiatives that will improve partnership and stakeholder engagement and enhance co-production of services and strategy. The Board noted an important analogy with the improvement journey in social care services in the city which was driven by putting the child at the centre of all the work being carried out and ultimately led to outstanding services.



Summary of Issues Considered by the Scrutiny Board

Six Areas of Focus (continued)

People — Recruitment and retention of staff are major issues facing not just Leeds but all local authorities. Therefore, ensuring staff resources are used to maximum capacity and are deployed effectively is a key ambition. A shortage of Educational Psychologists (EPs) has been a particular problem which is again replicated nationally, developing career progression within existing staff resources and looking at options for developing EPs internally could lead to improved capacity and is being developed. Career progression and succession planning is a corporate and directorate priority and was identified in the recommendations made in the LGA Peer Challenge. It was also noted that co-production with staff will be a key area in terms of embedding and revitalising culture and ensuring that the child centred ‘practice over process’ approach is embedded.

Information — Use of information and data is a challenge across the local government sector and the Board noted that there was a need to maximise the use of data and information to provide insight and inform decision making.

Technology — There is a need to make better use of the available digital offer, take advantage of new opportunities and to shape the use of technology to meet the needs of children and families to improve how they access services and reduce bureaucracy as opposed to focussing improved digital systems purely on the needs of staff, though clearly that is also important. It was felt that technology should be used to enhance engagement and partnership with children, families and wider stakeholders.

Governance — Strong leadership is a key element of the approach in this area and it was emphasised that at times there will be a need to ‘stay calm and hold firm’ to the agreed strategy and accept that not everything will be 100% all of the time. Where issues develop there will be a need to review, learn and improve. The Board also noted the need for clarity of roles and the importance of sharing information and communicating clearly with partners and stakeholders. Some new approaches have already been developed in this area to strengthen governance and partnership with the SEND Partnership Board now being chaired alternately by health partners.

As already noted co-production is an important theme supported by a ‘you said, we did’ approach to communication and service delivery.



Summary of Issues Considered by the Scrutiny Board

Board Member Comments and Emphasis

Following detailed discussion, Board members were keen to emphasise the following areas:

Culture — The improvement strategy was broadly welcomed with the child first approach and focus on effective practice being particularly welcome. However, the Board were keen to ensure that this higher level strategic approach was also clearly set out and absorbed by frontline staff and were keen to hear more about how that will be done. Members were reassured to hear that co-production with staff will be a vital feature of the work and that staff were ‘change ready’ and wanted to drive up performance standards. In addition, staff engagement had clearly shown that staff were aware of service challenges and wanted to improve. There was an emphasis from members to ensure that an environment was created where staff can progress and best practice flourish, that the workforce is given the tools and the support that will enable them to be their best. Members also noted plans for internal change champions to ensure that the new culture is embedded on the frontline.

Task and Finish Groups — Members also sought reassurance on engagement with schools, children and families and wider stakeholders. This has already taken place to some degree with the Director of Children and families having met with 17 families of schools with feedback collated and analysed as part of the improvement plans already being delivered by the directorate. This is now being supported by task and finish groups to address the issues that have been raised.

Early Intervention — Members sought to ensure that investment in early intervention was prioritised believing that this would ensure that children are able and supported to access mainstream school settings as far as possible. This would reduce the number of families who opted for non-mainstream settings or choose to home school. Plans were set out to enhance early intervention opportunities through the already established Early Help Hubs where existing domestic violence, substance misuse and mental health co-ordinators will be supplemented by SEND co-ordinators. It was noted that funding restrictions had led to some services being realigned and some areas of the city now sharing access to facilities such as Children’s Centres. Overall though members were reassured that early intervention is a priority and needs to be delivered as early in the life of the child and the potential problem including pre-birth.

SENSAP Inbox — Members questioned whether, like other services such as highways, there was potential for specific email inboxes to be established to deal with specific Cllr / MP SEND or EHCP related queries. This could ensure that all queries of this nature are collated and dealt with as quickly as possible.

Resources and Capacity — It was acknowledged that resources have been stretched and there were some concerns around capacity for service transformation given that context. The directorate has recruited to a number of posts within the newly established Transformation Team.



Summary of Issues Considered by the Scrutiny Board

Board Member Comments and Emphasis (continued)

Restorative Practice — Members welcomed the commitment to restorative practice and the cultivation of a restorative culture to address situations where disagreement has occurred between families and services. There was reassurance around the key emphasis on listening to views and then resolving a situation rather than having a process driven approach.

Pre-2022 service issues — Members reflected on their own casework and believed that problems had been present in the service prior to 2022 which was something of a watershed year in terms of slipping performance particularly against KPIs. Additional capacity had in the past enabled resolutions to be delivered but a ‘perfect storm’ situation of increased demand and reduced capacity had led to reduced performance, with the pandemic also having a significant impact on services.

KPIs — Members asked about the existing KPIs in relation to timeliness and meeting statutory deadlines for completion of EHCPs. Members felt it would be helpful to look at the other performance measures, in particular there was a view that a KPI on escalation of complaints would add value and be a good indicator of how well the new approaches are impacting children and families in the city.

Final PWC Report— Board members were keen to hear more about the final report being produced by PWC. Will there be an assessment or rating as a concluding element of it and will the Board receive feedback from the work of PWC. The Board were informed that a report with recommendations and findings will be produced based on the six areas of focus already covered in the Working Group.

Additional Information — Members noted that backlog of cases was likely to be an issue both for new assessments and plans and for annual reviews and wanted additional details on this in terms of overall numbers and a breakdown of how many weeks or months cases were behind. Referring to paragraph 4.5 of the presented report the Board also requested the SEND improvement plan, SEND strategy and the SEND Self Evaluation as important background information to inform this ongoing work.

Next Steps

This Working Group summary will feature at the Children and Families Scrutiny Board meeting on 4 October where the full board will be able to input into discussion and shape the next steps in the inquiry, In addition to this the Work Programme for the Board has a Provision of EHCP Support inquiry session pencilled in for the meeting on 29 November.

More information about Leeds City Council's Scrutiny Service, along with the activity and membership of individual Scrutiny Boards, can be found on the Council's committee webpages.

You can also follow @ScrutinyLeeds on twitter.



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SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN AND FAMILIES)

PROVISION OF EHCP SUPPORT IN LEEDS

INQUIRY DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE

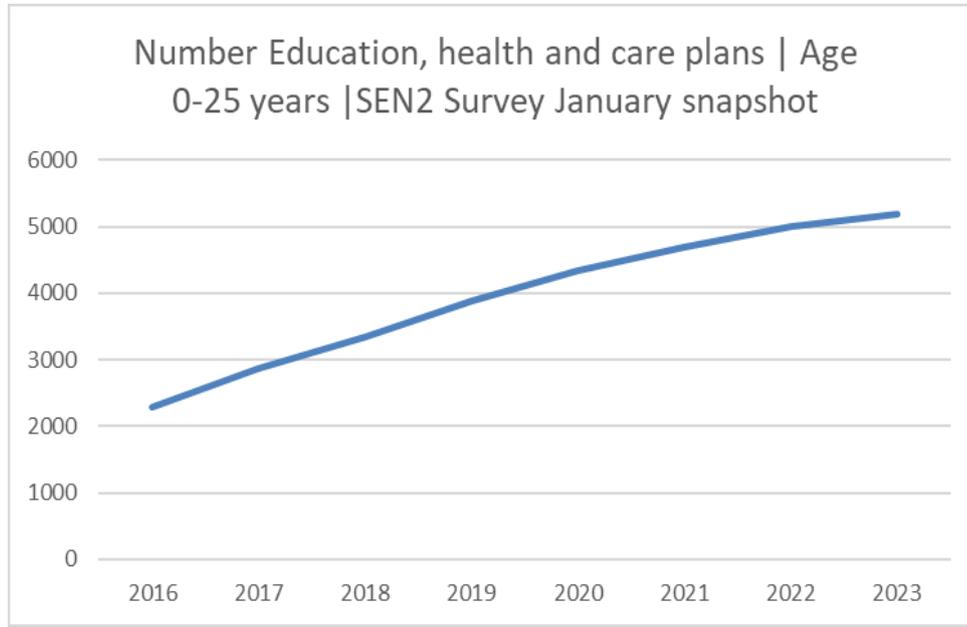
1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 In considering the future work programme for 2023/24 the Children and Families Scrutiny Board expressed a desire to look in more detail at Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) in Leeds.
- 1.2 Within its remit Children and Families Scrutiny Board has executive functions that cover the services that deal with EHCPs in the form of 'Learning including Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).
- 1.3 It is therefore proposed that the Board will conduct an inquiry into the provision of EHCP support. This will include a review of EHCP processes as well as other factors that impact on service provision for children with SEND and their families. The aim being to understand, analyse and where appropriate make recommendations to improve the services offered to children and families who believe that their children should have an EHCP.
- 1.4 At the 7th of June Children and Families Scrutiny Board meeting an item on Sources of Work was considered. This sought to take views from board members, Executive Board members and senior officers on potential areas of work for the municipal year. The item reached broad agreement on areas of focus for the year and sought to assess the viability of bringing work items to the Board and to prioritise work streams where the Board can add the most value in terms of recommendations and improving services for Leeds residents.
- 1.5 At the June meeting there was broad agreement from the Chair of the Board, board members, Executive Board Members and senior officers to a detailed piece of work on EHCPs in this municipal year.
- 1.6 Since the June meeting the Council has requested a review of EHCP processes. This is being carried out by PwC and the findings of this review, which will be running in parallel to the Board's work, will form part of the inquiry.
- 1.7 A key driver for this inquiry is the significant increase in demand for EHCPs in Leeds, a trend that has been mirrored nationally, and the resultant pressure placed on the Special Educational Needs Statutory Assessment and Provision (SENSAP) team that deals with EHCPs and statutory assessments. The scale of this challenge is perhaps best highlighted by overall volume, on 23 May 2023 there were 5,313 children and young people aged 0-25 with an EHCP in Leeds. The upward trend in EHCPs started in 2016 and the current figure is over

double the figure in January 2016 which stood at 2,287. There has been a 118% increase in demand since 2016.

Figure 1

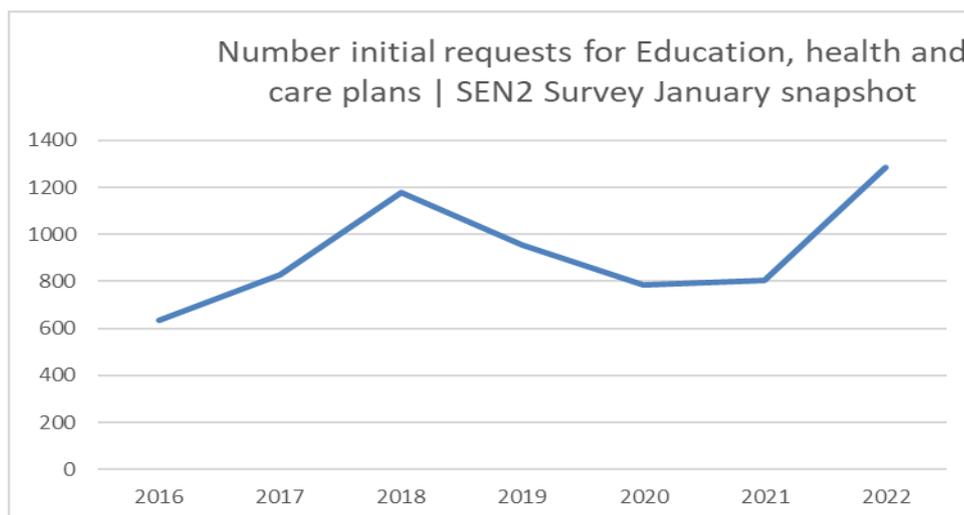
Figure 1 shows the scale of increase in EHCPs since 2016:



To provide the national context, the number of children and young people with EHCPs nationally is 473,330 after a 10 per cent increase in a year (figure from June 2023).

Figure 2

In addition, the increase in requests for EHCPs annually shows little sign of reducing. Figure 2 Highlights that 1,289 requests were made for an EHCP in 2022, the highest figure since 2018 when there 1,179 requests. This increased demand is continuing in 2023 with 479 requests made between January and April, suggesting that the 2022 figure could be surpassed.



1.8 Coupled with the increased demand the SENSAP team experienced a number of significant challenges during the Covid-19 pandemic including changes to Business Administration, the loss of colleagues and loved ones to the virus, increased sickness absence, a substantial loss of a number of experienced managers and unprecedented issues with the recruitment and retention of key staff. This resulted in a dramatic reduction of the percentage of EHCPs completed within the 20-week timescale in 2022.

1.9 Since that time a number of actions have been taken to try and address and where possible mitigate the presenting challenges:

- The council has now invested additional funding in the SENSAP team, and the team were able to recruit 15 full time equivalent staff over the summer of 2022 to new and vacant posts. The impact is already being felt with more staff available to work on EHC plans, mediation, tribunals and in responding to complaints. In addition, the structure has been redesigned, with more capacity at ground level.
- There exists still a significant backlog of cases that the team are working through, using agency staff with the aim of ensuring the backlog does not impact on capacity for new work.
- The team have also refreshed almost all their existing systems and processes to ensure that they are streamlining work and reducing duplication.
- Additional support from IDS to support and transform work-flow processes and automate where possible has been requested, ensuring all recording can be carried out on the Synergy system, reducing the need for attachments and separate spreadsheets.
- “Associate” Educational Psychologists have been brought in to provide interim agency support to meet demands.
- As recruitment of qualified Educational Psychologists has mainly been unsuccessful, a review of the structure of the EP team has been undertaken and creative solutions to recruit more trainee Educational Psychologists and Assistant Educational Psychologists in a “grow your own” model has been developed. The training of an

educational psychologist takes 3 years, and it is expected trainees will be able to learn practically on the job and be able to support writing of EHCP's within Leeds and stay on once they are fully qualified.

- A review of EHCP processes has been commissioned using PwC as external consultants to improve the performance of its EHCP processing against statutory deadlines whilst acknowledging the challenging circumstances that the workforce experience and increasing demands on them and the wider service.
- 1.10 It must also be noted that whilst there is a recognition that our EHCP processes and timeliness are of significant concern this does not mean that children and young people within our schools are not receiving additional funding to support identified need. In Leeds we have a funding system where monies are passported to schools from the high needs block without the need for an EHCP to support at the earliest level and in line with “right support at the right time.” This funding system is called Funding For Inclusion (FFI).
- 1.11 Further to this, a number of actions were undertaken by our BAS colleagues who are vital in supporting the SENSAP teams, and in particular the EHCP process. This includes filling outstanding vacancies, reducing levels of long-term sickness, use of a new telephony system (Avaya) to enhance the telephony service and reduce call waiting times, increased staffing provision at supervisor level and administrative assistants to reflect increased workloads and the need to address backlogs, more time being spent in the office to support new starters, enhance staff well-being and facilitate training and a refreshed approach to workflow based on the statutory dates for completion of work.
- 1.12 The inquiry will consider the impact of the changes that have been made and the impact of the ongoing increased demand at a national, regional and local level as a key element of this work at its September working group meeting (more detail below at paragraph 6).

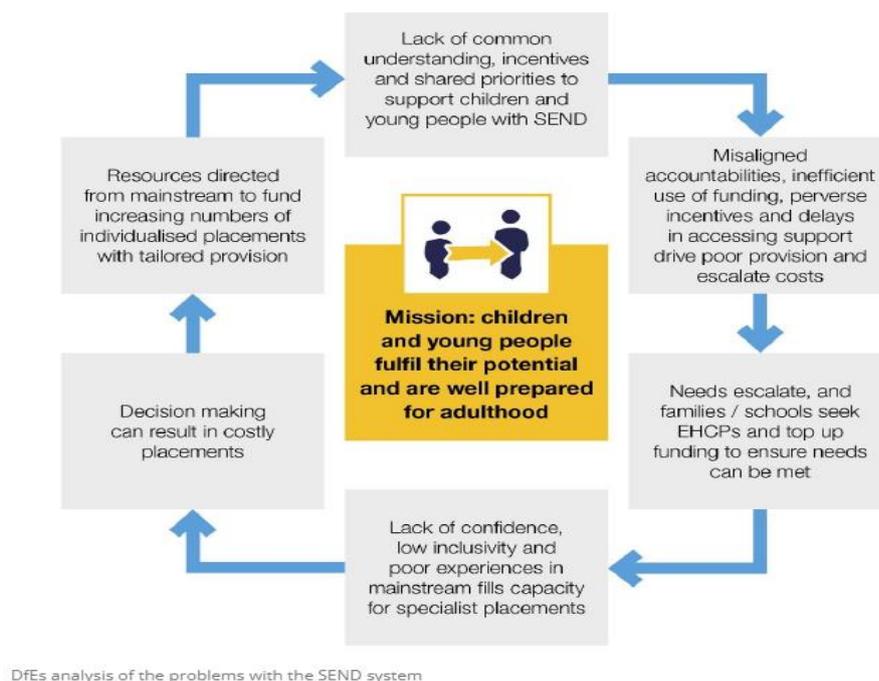
2.0 Scope of the inquiry

- 2.1 As noted above increased national, regional and local demand as well as particular local challenges and the impact on service provision are two key drivers for this work. However, there are other issues to consider as part of an end-to-end analysis of EHCPs and these are set out in more detail in the section below:
- **Impact of the Government’s SEND Improvement Plan in Leeds –**
The Government first launched its SEND Review three years ago and this year published the SEND Improvement Plan. Within this plan are a number of proposals that could impact Leeds not least through the £70m Change Programme that will pilot proposed legislative changes over the next two to three years. The Change Programme is expected

to impact as many as sixty local authority areas and will have a key impact on SEND and alternative provision as a whole, but also EHCP processes, some of which - such as digital EHCPs and proposed mandatory mediation - are detailed below. The Change Programme proposes to test, deliver and iterate the key reform proposals through 9 Regional Expert Partnerships. Each region will have a lead local authority linked to regional partners (number to be determined) and will build capacity and capability through a sector led taskforce approach.

- **SEND System** - Figure 3 provides the DfE analysis of issues in the SEND system. This inquiry is not about the SEND system as a whole as that is likely to be too big in terms of subject matter, but ‘the system’ does have an impact on the increase in EHCPs which is highlighted in the diagram *‘Needs escalate, and families/schools seek EHCPs and top up funding to ensure needs can be met’* so a preventative approach within the SEND system could reduce demand and improve outcomes:

Figure 3



- **Digital EHCPs** – Given that some of the challenge around EHCPs has been dealing with administrative backlogs and assessments, the proposed move to digital EHCPs in the Green paper could have a bearing on this inquiry and it will be important to understand the implications of this proposed change. One possible area of concern is that initially the digital approach will not be mandated, instead councils will be encouraged to use them, and they are not expected to be fully operational until 2024/25. That said the stated aim of the digital approach is to work with councils, suppliers and families to evaluate how “digital solutions might best improve their experiences of the EHC

process.” This suggests that ultimately this may speed up local authority processes.

- **Proposed Mandatory Mediation** – The Change Programme will also scope enhanced mediation between local authorities and families during the EHCP process. A significant issue within the existing process is the impact had on the system when tribunal appeal cases are instigated to contest decisions where an EHCP has not been issued or an EHC assessment has been refused. It is not currently clear what impact enhanced mediation would have on the current lengthy tribunal system process.
- **Workforce Challenges** – As highlighted by a recent Social Care Ombudsman case brought by a family in North Yorkshire local authorities face significant and systemic challenges in appointing specialist staff to conduct EHC assessments. In the specific North Yorkshire case from November 2022, the staffing shortage related to Educational Psychologists (EPs) and ultimately resulted in a delayed EHCP and a process that was found to be insufficiently thorough. However, this is not solely about EPs there are challenges throughout this specialist workforce particularly in areas such as speech and language therapy. These challenges have led to 114 SEND-related organisations and professional bodies writing to Government to call for solutions to workforce challenges through enhanced workforce planning in the SEND Improvement Plan. Therefore, understanding recruitment and retention challenges will also be an important factor.
- **Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic** – The increase in EHCPs and EHC assessments has also been impacted by the pandemic with children and young people now reporting increased anxiety and potential need for additional support.
- **Communication with Families** – Communication with families has been an issue in relation to individual cases. As part of this work, it will be important for the Board to understand the challenges faced and to monitor performance. In addition, it will be important to understand the work that is already underway to make the voices of families and children central to the delivery of services.
- **Funding** – A key question central to many of the above points but notably around government policy changes and workforce challenges is to assess whether the Council has sufficient resources to provide the best service it can on EHCPs. This would apply to both how much the Government is providing and allocation of available resources at the Council's disposal.
- **Growing Demand** – Predictions on service demand suggest that growth in requests for EHC assessments in Leeds will range between 7 and 14 per cent in the future. This presents an ongoing challenge for

the Council and is also linked to government funding and how sustainable that is at current levels.

- **Health Services** – Consider how enhanced partnership working with colleagues in health could facilitate early intervention to relieve workload pressures and increase timeliness of, for example, the annual EHCP reviews.
- **SENSAP Service** – Gain a broader understanding of the work of the team to review and analyse performance, challenges and the wider work that they carry out in Leeds.
- **PwC EHCP Review** – The Council has requested a review of current EHCP assessment and annual review processes to identify key opportunities for change and improvement. This will include establishment of the ‘as is’ position that will feature in the scheduled working group on 22 September. The PwC work will complement the work of the Board on EHCP processes and will enable Board members to ‘check and challenge’ the work as it develops.

3.0 Desired Outcomes and Measures of Success

- 3.1 It is important to consider how the Scrutiny Board will consider if their inquiry has been successful in making a difference to local children and families. Some measures of success may be obvious and others may become clear as the inquiry progresses and discussions take place.
- 3.2 However, the primary aim of this Inquiry is to aid in enhancing the services offered to children and families in Leeds and to make recommendations that could improve the provision of EHCP support to children and their families.

4.0 Comments of the relevant Director and Executive Member

- 4.1 In line with Scrutiny Board Procedure Rule 32, where a Scrutiny Board undertakes an Inquiry the Scrutiny Board shall consult with any relevant Director and Executive Member on the terms of reference. This item provides a draft terms of reference document for comment and adjustment by Executive Board members, senior officers and members of the Children and Families Scrutiny Board.
- 4.2 This follows initial consultation on work programming for 2023/24 at a meeting with the Director of Children and Families in May 2023. In addition, this item featured under the Sources of Work agenda item at the 7th of June scrutiny board meeting with broad agreement reached for work to be initiated on EHCPs in the 2023/24 municipal year.
- 4.3 Subsequent comments were made when a draft version of this document was considered at the July meeting of the Board. This included specific feedback on the scope of the inquiry from the Director

of Children and Families with a request that the scope is amended to include specific reference to Health services and the role they play in the provision of EHCP support in Leeds.

5.0 Timetable for the inquiry

5.1 The Inquiry will commence through consideration of this Terms of Reference report with further proposed items during the Autumn and potentially into 2024, with a commitment to try to deliver an inquiry report in the 2023/24 municipal year. As the work develops timescales are expected to become clearer in respect of inquiry and evidence gathering sessions.

6.0 Submission of evidence

6.1 6 September 2023 – Approve Terms of Reference &

To consider evidence in relation to the following:

- Agree final Terms of Reference

6.2 22 September - Working Group - Update report from Children and Families directorate

To consider evidence in relation to the following:

- Update position on performance and backlogs and effectiveness of enhanced resource and staffing restructure through a report from the Children and Families directorate. Report to also include:
 - Demand monitoring how has the increased demand for EHC assessment and EHCP continued over the summer months?
 - The impact of Covid-19 on SEND and EHCP demand.
 - Complexity of EHCPs
 - Funding challenges
 - Assessment of proposed legislative changes such as the SEND Improvement Plan and the linked Change Programme and the likely impacts in Leeds. To include assessment of digital EHCPs and possible mandatory mediation and their impact on the provision of EHCP support in Leeds.
- PwC to provide an overview of discovery work undertaken, and investigative work still to do as part of the ongoing review in to EHCP processes in Leeds.

6.3 29 November 2023 – PwC findings and wider witnesses

To consider evidence in relation to the following:

- Information on the findings of the PwC review. Which will include full discovery information and stakeholder engagement undertaken. Board to advise on any gaps that the Board still wish to explore.
- Hearing from wider witnesses – consider feedback received by the service through the PwC review from the learning community,

children and families and how this has impacted on service delivery and development.

6.4 24 January 2024 – Check and Challenge

To consider evidence in relation to the following:

- Opportunity for Scrutiny to ‘check and challenge’ the change strategy being developed for EHCP services and to feedback on any interim findings and recommendations to inform the development or finalisation of the changes and planned improvements.

6.5 February/March 2023 - Draft Inquiry Report/Statement

- Consideration of a draft inquiry report with opportunity for all to comment and amend as appropriate.

7.0 Witnesses

7.1 The following have been identified as possible contributors to the inquiry, however others may be identified during the course of the inquiry:

- Executive Member for Executive Member for Economy, Culture and Education
- Executive Member for Children's Social Care and Health Partnerships
- Director of Children and Families
- Deputy Director Learning
- Chief Officer Learning Inclusion
- Chief Officer, Service Transformation and Partnerships
- Statutory Assessment and Provision Lead Officer
- Service users (Leeds Parent Carer Forum)
- Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOs)
- Headteachers and/or teachers
- Frontline staff
- Health colleagues
- PwC

8.0 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

8.1 The Equality Improvement Priorities have been developed to ensure the Council’s legal duties are met under the Equality Act 2010. The priorities will help the council to achieve its ambition to be the best City in the UK and ensure that as a city work takes place to reduce disadvantage, discrimination and inequalities of opportunity.

- 8.2 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) will be a consideration throughout the Scrutiny Inquiry and due regard will be given to EDI through the use of evidence, written and verbal, outcomes from consultation and engagement activities.
- 8.3 The Scrutiny Board may engage and involve interested parties and individuals (both internal and external to the council) to inform recommendations.
- 8.4 Where an impact has been identified this will be reflected in the final inquiry report, post inquiry. Where a Scrutiny Board recommendation is agreed the individual, organisation or group responsible for implementation or delivery should give due regard to EDI when conducting impact assessments where it is believed appropriate.

9.0 Post inquiry report monitoring arrangements

- 9.1 Following the completion of the Scrutiny inquiry and the publication of the final inquiry report and recommendations, the implementation of the agreed recommendations will be monitored through update reports to the Board either on request from Board members or through an annual update approach for the Board to consider.

Work Programme

Date: 4 October 2023

Report of: Head of Democratic Services

Report to: Scrutiny Board (Children and Families)

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

Brief summary

- All Scrutiny Boards are required to determine and manage their own work programme for the municipal year. In doing so, the work programme should not be considered as fixed and rigid, it should be recognised as a document that can be adapted and changed to reflect any new and emerging issues throughout the year; and also reflect any timetable issues that might occur from time to time.
- The Scrutiny Board Procedure Rules also state that, where appropriate, all terms of reference for work undertaken by Scrutiny Boards will include ‘to review how and to what effect consideration has been given to the impact of a service or policy on all equality areas, as set out in the Council’s Equality and Diversity Scheme.’
- Reflecting on the information in this report, members are requested to consider and discuss the Board’s work programme for this municipal year.

Recommendations

Members are requested to:

- a) Consider the Board’s work programme for the 2023/24 municipal year.

What is this report about?

1. A draft work programme for the Children and Families Scrutiny Board is presented at Appendix 1 for consideration and discussion. Reflected in the document are known items of scrutiny activity, such as performance and budget monitoring, as well as other areas of work identified by the Board over the course of the municipal year.
2. The latest Executive Board minutes from the meeting held on 20 September 2023 are also attached as Appendix 2. The Scrutiny Board is asked to consider and note the Executive Board minutes, insofar as they relate to the remit of the Scrutiny Board; and consider any matter where specific scrutiny activity may also be warranted.
3. Members will note some minor adjustments to the work programme since the last meeting in September. These are limited to the removal of the Impacts of vaping on children and young people working group from the November meeting agenda which resulted from the announcement of an expected change in the law to make disposable vapes illegal and subsequent decision to cancel the planned Working Group into youth vaping. A brief update report on youth vaping and the Board's work on that issue features as item 9 on this agenda.
4. Members will also note that the Working Group into the Provision of EHCP support in Leeds has now taken place and a summary note from that meeting features as agenda item 10 at today's meeting.

What impact will this proposal have?

5. All Scrutiny Boards are required to determine and manage their own work programme for the municipal year.

How does this proposal impact the three pillars of the Best City Ambition?

Health and Wellbeing

Inclusive Growth

Zero Carbon

6. The terms of reference of the Scrutiny Boards promote a strategic and outward looking Scrutiny function that focuses on the Best City Ambition.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected:

Have ward members been consulted?

Yes

No

7. To enable Scrutiny to focus on strategic areas of priority, it is recognised that each Scrutiny Board needs to maintain dialogue with the Directors and Executive Board Members holding the relevant portfolios. The Vision for Scrutiny also states that Scrutiny Boards should seek the advice of the Scrutiny officer, the relevant Director and Executive Member about available resources prior to agreeing items of work.

What are the resource implications?

8. Experience has shown that the Scrutiny process is more effective and adds greater value if the Board seeks to minimise the number of substantial inquiries running at one time and focus its resources on one key issue at a time.

9. The Vision for Scrutiny, agreed by full Council also recognises that like all other Council functions, resources to support the Scrutiny function are under considerable pressure and that requests from Scrutiny Boards cannot always be met.
10. Consequently, when establishing their work programmes Scrutiny Boards should:
 - Seek the advice of the Scrutiny officer, the relevant Director and Executive Member about available resources;
 - Avoid duplication by having a full appreciation of any existing forums already having oversight of, or monitoring a particular issue;
 - Ensure any Scrutiny undertaken has clarity and focus of purpose and will add value and can be delivered within an agreed time frame.

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

11. There are no risk management implications relevant to this report.

What are the legal implications?

12. This report has no specific legal implications.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Draft work programme of the Children and Families Scrutiny Board for the 2023/24 municipal year.
- Appendix 2 – Minutes of the Executive Board meeting on 20 September 2023.

Background papers

- None

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Scrutiny Board (Children and Families) Work Schedule for 2023/2024 Municipal Year

June	July	August
Meeting Agenda for 7th June 2023 at 10 am	Meeting Agenda for 5th July 2023 at 10 am	No Scrutiny Board meeting
Co-opted Members (DB) Scrutiny Board Terms of Reference (DB) Potential Sources of Work (DB) Performance Update (PM) Youth Justice Plan Update (PSR)	Impact of Vaping on Children & Young People (PSR) Inquiry Terms of Reference – Provision of EHCP Support (PM) Annual Standards Report (PDS) SACRE Annual Report (PM)	
Working Group Meetings		
Site Visits		

Scrutiny Work Items Key:

PSR	Policy/Service Review	DB	Development Briefings
PDS	Pre-decision Scrutiny	PM	Performance Monitoring



Scrutiny Board (Children and Families) Work Schedule for 2023/2024 Municipal Year

September	October	November
Meeting Agenda for 6th September 2023 at 10 am	Meeting Agenda for 4th October 2023 at 10 am	Meeting Agenda for 29th November 2023 at 10 am
<p>The independent review of children’s social care (Macalister Review) – Implementation Update (PM)</p> <p>Impact of asylum changes on children (PSR)</p> <p>Provision of EHCP support – Terms of Reference (PM)</p>	<p>Leeds Safeguarding Children Partnership Update (PSR)</p> <p>School Attendance Update (PM)</p> <p>Impact of Vaping on Children and Young People (PSR)</p> <p>Provision of EHCP Support Working Group feedback (PM)</p>	<p>Inquiry Session - Provision of EHCP Support (PM)</p> <p>Children and Families Transformation Agenda (PDS)</p> <p>Refresh of the Leeds 3As Plan (PDS)</p>
Working Group Meetings		
<p>Provision of EHCP Support Inquiry Working Group – 22 September 10.00-11.30AM</p> <p>Impact of Vaping on children and young people – 27 September 2.30-4.00PM</p>		

PSR	Policy/Service Review	DB	Development Briefings
PDS	Pre-decision Scrutiny	PM	Performance Monitoring



Scrutiny Board (Children and Families) Work Schedule for 2023/2024 Municipal Year

Page 107

December	January	February
No Scrutiny Board meeting.	Meeting Agenda for 24th January 2024 at 10 am	Meeting Agenda for 22nd February 2024 at 2 PM
	Performance report (PM) Financial Health Monitoring (PSR) 2024/25 Initial Budget Proposals (PDS) Best City Ambition – Update (PDS) Future in Mind Strategy (PSR)	Leeds Child Poverty Strategy Update (PSR) Voice and Influence Team – hearing the voices of Young People (PSR) Draft Inquiry Report – Provision of EHCP Support (PM)
Working Group Meetings		
2024/25 Initial Budget Proposals (PDS) – <i>date to be confirmed</i>		
Site Visits		

Scrutiny Work Items Key:

PSR	Policy/Service Review	DB	Development Briefings
PDS	Pre-decision Scrutiny	PM	Performance Monitoring



Scrutiny Board (Children and Families) Work Schedule for 2023/2024 Municipal Year

March	April	May
Meeting Agenda for 27th March 2024 at 10 am	No Scrutiny Board meeting	No Scrutiny Board meeting
The independent review of children’s social care (Macalister Review) – Implementation Update (PM)		
Working Group Meetings		
Site Visits		

Page 108

Scrutiny Work Items Key:

PSR	Policy/Service Review	DB	Development Briefings
PDS	Pre-decision Scrutiny	PM	Performance Monitoring

EXECUTIVE BOARD

WEDNESDAY, 20TH SEPTEMBER, 2023

PRESENT: Councillor J Lewis in the Chair

Councillors S Arif, D Coupar, M Harland,
H Hayden, A Lamb, J Lennox, J Pryor,
M Rafique and F Venner

31 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public
RESOLVED – That, in accordance with Regulation 4 of The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following parts of the agenda designated as exempt from publication on the grounds that it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information so designated as follows:-

(A) That appendices 1 - 3 to the report entitled, 'Provision of a Loan to Leeds Culture Trust to cover Culture Sector Tax Relief', referred to in Minute No. 44 be designated as being exempt from publication in accordance with paragraph 10.4(3) of Schedule 12A(3) of the Local Government Act 1972 and be considered in private. This is on the grounds that appendices 1 – 2 present advice provided by Moore Kingston Smith which refer to the financial and business affairs of Leeds Culture Trust (LCT) and as such, it is considered that the public interest in maintaining the exemption from publication outweighs the public interest in disclosing this information. Regarding appendix 3, this appendix presents the findings of the related due diligence exercise which also refers to the financial and business affairs of LCT, and as such, it is considered that the public interest in maintaining the exemption from publication outweighs the public interest in disclosing this information.

32 Late Items
Supplementary Information – Leeds Inclusive Growth Strategy 2023 - 2030
With the agreement of the Chair, supplementary information was circulated to Board Members and published ahead of the meeting in relation to agenda item 13, 'Leeds Inclusive Growth Strategy 2023 – 2030' in the form of Appendix 2 which was the proposed strategy document. (Minute No. 42 refers).

33 Declaration of Interests
With regard to agenda item 15, 'Provision of a Loan to Leeds Culture Trust (LCT) to cover Culture Sector Tax Relief', Councillor Pryor drew the Board's attention to the fact that he is a Trustee of the Leeds Culture Trust, a role appointed to by the Council. Councillor Pryor confirmed that whilst this was

Draft minutes to be approved at the meeting
to be held on Wednesday, 18th October, 2023

not a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest and he was not required to declare an interest in relation to this under the Council's Code of Conduct, he wished to take the opportunity to clarify that in terms of his consideration of the submitted report as a member of the Executive Board, he would approach this based upon what he believed to be the best outcomes for the Council, notwithstanding his position as a Trustee of LCT. (Minute No. 44 refers).

34 Minutes

Further to Minute No. 20 (26 July 2023), the Chair highlighted that at the July meeting the Board had approved the minutes from the 21 June 2023 meeting as a correct record, subject to a matter of accuracy raised by Cllr Lamb (regarding Minute No. 6, '*Leeds Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2021/23*'), being noted and looked into. The Chair confirmed that the matter of accuracy had been considered and that in his position as Chair, he was satisfied that the 21 June Executive Board minutes were a correct record, as previously agreed by the Board.

Following this, the Board considered the draft minutes from the previous meeting (26 July 2023) and it was

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 26th July 2023 be approved as a correct record.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

35 Leeds Rail Infrastructure - Integrated Rail Plan for the North and Midlands

The Director of City Development submitted a report which provided an update on the Government's delivery of the Integrated Rail Plan and which sought endorsement of the SLCRail recommendation for a phased approach towards the delivery of rail capacity, frequency and connectivity for the eastern regions and in particular the initial delivery of a 'T' shaped station in Leeds and line to connect into an upgraded and electrified route from Sheffield to Moorthorpe.

Responding to an enquiry, the Board received information regarding the extent of potential impact upon existing site allocations within the city centre and its vicinity arising from the recommended approach of SLCRail and also in terms of the Government's proposals following its recent publication of Terms of Reference for the study into how to bring HS2 trains to Leeds. In terms of the latter, it was noted that specific impact would not be known until further detail on the Government's proposals was brought forward.

Further to this, an update was provided on the depth of the partnership working which continued in this area with other Authorities and key agencies including the Department for Transport.

Emphasis was placed upon the need to continue to be mindful of the strategic approach required to ensure that any proposals which were brought forward delivered sufficiency of capacity and effective integration across rail and other

public transport networks, including the bus network. Those comments were acknowledged, with an update being provided on how such matters were being taken into consideration.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the update on the Integrated Rail Plan for the North and Midlands, as detailed within the submitted report, be noted;
- (b) That the Board's endorsement be given to the SLCRail recommendation, as detailed within the submitted report and appendices, for a phased approach to delivering rail capacity, frequency and connectivity for the eastern regions and in particular the initial delivery of a 'T' shaped station in Leeds and line to connect into an upgraded and electrified route from Sheffield to Moorthorpe.

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE AND HEALTH PARTNERSHIPS

36 Outcome of consultation on a proposal to change the age range of Rothwell Primary School from 3-11 years to 4-11 years and permanently close the school nursery

The Director of Children and Families submitted a report presenting details of a proposal brought forward to change the age range of Rothwell Primary School from 3-11 years to 4-11 years and permanently close the school nursery. The report noted that a public consultation on the proposal took place between 30 June 2023 and 21 July 2023, with the report summarising the responses received. Finally, the report sought approval to publish a Statutory Notice on the proposal.

In presenting the report, the Executive Member provided details of the proposal and an overview of the consultation responses, as detailed within the report, with it being noted that relevant Ward Councillors had not expressed any concerns in relation to the proposal.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the outcome of the public consultation for this proposal, as detailed within the submitted report, be noted;
- (b) That the publication of a Statutory Notice on the proposal to change the age range of Rothwell Primary School from 3-11 years to 4-11 years and to permanently close the school nursery, be approved;
- (c) That it be noted that the implementation of the proposal would be subject to the outcome of the Statutory Notice;
- (d) That the intention for a further report to be presented to the December 2023 Executive Board meeting, be noted;
- (e) That it be noted that the responsible officer for the implementation of such matters is the Head of Learning Systems.

LEADER'S PORTFOLIO

37 Best City Ambition Update - Scoping

The Director of Strategy and Resources submitted a report which sought the Board's endorsement for the scope of the proposed Best City Ambition update and which recommended the submission of a further report to Executive Board in November 2023 presenting the initial proposals.

Whilst welcoming the consideration being given to measuring the Best City Ambition's performance, a Member made enquiries about how the success of the updated strategy would be defined. In response, the Board received further information on the factors being taken into consideration in this area, including the central role which would be played by data from the Leeds Social Progress Index. Also, it was undertaken that the comments made during the discussion would be noted and taken into consideration as part of the process in submitting the initial proposals to the Board in November 2023.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the scope of the update of the Best City Ambition, as set out within the submitted report, be endorsed;
- (b) That a further report presenting initial proposals for a draft update of the Best City Ambition be submitted to Executive Board in November 2023 ready for further consultation and engagement.

(The resolutions referred to within this Minute, given that they were decisions being made in accordance with the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules, were not eligible for Call In, as Executive and Decision Making Procedure Rule 5.1.2 states that the power to Call In decisions does not extend to those decisions made in accordance with the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules)

38 Annual Corporate Risk and Resilience Report

The Director of Strategy and Resources submitted a report presenting the Council's Annual Corporate Risk and Resilience report. The report provided an update on the risk and resilience activities undertaken by the Council, detailed the most significant risks currently on the Council's corporate risk register and provided details of summary assurances describing the key controls established and further actions planned to manage those risks.

In presenting the report, the Leader highlighted the importance of receiving this annual report to ensure that the Executive Board was aware of the key risks being faced by the Council and the actions being taken to monitor and mitigate those risks.

Members acknowledged that managing the Council's budgetary pressures remained key in terms of risk and resilience, however it was acknowledged that such matters would be considered in detail later in the agenda as part of the dedicated financial reports.

Responding to a Member's specific enquiry regarding the work which continued to mitigate the key risks around safeguarding children and the provision of services in that area, the Board received a detailed update on the challenges which continued to be faced both locally and nationally and the range of ongoing cross-directorate work and partnership working with other agencies that was being undertaken.

RESOLVED – That the annual risk and resilience report together with the assurances given on the most significant corporate risks which are in line with the Council's Risk Management Policy and Strategy, as detailed within the submitted cover report and appendix, be noted, with the Board's overarching responsibility for their management also being noted.

RESOURCES

39 Annual Corporate Performance Report 2022/23

The Director of Strategy and Resources submitted a report which provided an overall update on the Council's performance in 2022/23. Specifically, the report highlighted performance against the range of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) monitored, covering all five directorates.

In presenting the report the Executive Member highlighted the regular performance reporting which continued to take place via Scrutiny Boards and other committees as appropriate. Updates were also provided on the consideration being given to the metrics recently adopted by the Office for Local Government and how they would be reflected in the Council's performance monitoring moving forward, and also in relation to the most recent visit of the Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge, with it being noted that whilst the accompanying report from the visit was awaited, the feedback received had been positive.

Responding to an enquiry regarding Council employee sickness rates, the Board received an update on the actions being taken in this area, with an undertaking that a separate briefing would be provided to the Member in question regarding the implications arising from the Council's sickness rate in terms of the impact upon the budget, service delivery and other staff.

Again in response to a Member's enquiry, the Board received an update on the trajectory of the data regarding those killed or seriously injured in road traffic collisions. In terms of the actions being taken in this area, the partnership approach being undertaken as part of the 'Vision Zero' initiative was highlighted as a key programme with the ambition that by 2040 no one will be killed or suffer serious injuries on roads in Leeds. As part of this discussion, the importance of encouraging the wider behavioural change of road users was highlighted.

RESOLVED – That the Annual Performance Report for 2022/23, as appended to the submitted report, be noted, together with the progress which has been made during that period.

40 Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024/25 - 2028/29

The Chief Officer Financial Services submitted a report presenting the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (2024/25 – 2028/29) which is a five-year rolling strategy used to inform the Council's annual budget process. Included within the strategy was information providing wider context and details of the range of factors which influence the shape of this financial plan.

By way of introduction to the report, the Executive Member provided an overview of the key points within it, highlighting that the report noted that the estimated revenue budget gap over the period 2024/25 to 2028/29 was currently £251m.

In considering the challenges highlighted within the report, a Member made comments regarding the need to consider reviewing the approach taken so as to work more collaboratively with other partner organisations around areas such as service delivery. In response, the Board was advised that work in this area was ongoing both on a cross-directorate basis within the Council and also with external partners. It was acknowledged that difficult decisions would continue to be required, with it being noted that savings proposals would be received at future Board meetings as appropriate.

Members also considered the Government's model for funding in areas such as regeneration and transport and infrastructure, with emphasis being placed upon the importance of ensuring that the benefits of devolution were maximised. In considering such matters, the importance of collaborative working with partners such as WYCA was highlighted.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the updated Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2024/25 to 2028/29, as presented in the submitted report and appendices, be noted;
- (b) That it be noted that savings proposals will be received at future meetings of Executive Board in advance of the Proposed Budget for 2024/25 being received at this Board in December 2023.

41 Financial Reporting 2023/24 – Month 4

The Chief Officer Financial Services submitted a report presenting the Council's projected financial health position as at month 4 of the 2023/24 financial year in respect of both the General Fund revenue budget and the Housing Revenue Account.

In introducing the report, the Executive Member extended her thanks to the work that the Chief Officer Financial Services and her team continued to undertake in very challenging circumstances. The Board received an overview of the key points within the submitted report and noted the forecasted overspend of £33.9m on the Authority's General Fund as at Month 4 of the financial year.

Responding to a Member's comments and concerns around the level of projected overspend at this point in the financial year and how this linked to the budget setting process, the Board received further details and assurance regarding the timeframe for the budget setting process and its robustness, and the work which continued to monitor and mitigate the pressures faced, with clarification also being provided around the key messages which continued to be communicated across the Authority to support ongoing actions.

In addition, the Board specifically considered the challenges that continued to be faced around the delivery of services for Children Looked After, which reflected the position nationally. In considering this, Members specifically referenced increasing levels of demand and also the significant increase in costs for external placements. Responding to an enquiry, the Board received an update on the actions which continued to be taken in this area around mitigating the challenges faced, how Leeds was performing when considering the performance of other comparable Authorities and how such pressures were being monitored and responded to in terms of the budget setting process.

Further context was provided on a number of areas and processes which challenged the Council's ability to take a medium term approach towards its budgetary process, with it being highlighted that these were areas where Local Government needed to continue to work with national Government, in order to make those planning processes easier.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That it be noted that at Month 4 of the 2023/24 financial year the Authority's General Fund revenue budget is forecasting an overspend of £33.9m for 2023/24 within a challenging national context, and that a range of actions are being undertaken, or are proposed to achieve a balanced budget position;
- (b) That the virement of identified non-essential spend budgets out of respective Chief Officer budgets and into specific strategic cost centres within each directorate, be approved, as a measure to prevent further spend against these budgets where it has been identified that this spend is not required;
- (c) That the release of £1.3m from the Strategic Contingency Reserve to fund budgeted fleet savings which are not deliverable across the Council in year due to the impact of inflation, costs of maintaining an ageing fleet and increased demand for services, be approved;
- (d) That it be noted that where an overspend is projected, directorates, including the Housing Revenue Account, are required to present action plans to mitigate their reported pressures and those of the Council's wider financial challenge where possible, in line with the Revenue Principles agreed by Executive Board in 2019;

- (e) That it be noted that known inflationary increases including demand and demographic pressures in Social Care and known impacts of the rising cost of living, including the employer's 2023/24 NJC pay offer of £1,925 and the JNC pay settlement of 3.5%, have been incorporated into this reported financial position, with it also being noted that these pressures will continue to be reviewed during the year and reported to future Executive Boards as more information becomes available. That it also be noted that proposals would need to be identified to absorb any additional pressures;
- (f) That the Month 4 positions regarding the use of Invest to Save, Covid Backlog and Flexible Capital Receipt resources, be noted, with the additional planned use of £5.3m of Capital Receipts in 2023/24 also being noted which will support transformation projects and deliver savings in addition to the budgeted use;
- (g) That it be noted that at Month 4, the Authority's Housing Revenue Account is forecasting an overspend of £3.2m for 2023/24.

ECONOMY, CULTURE AND EDUCATION

42 Leeds Inclusive Growth Strategy 2023 - 2030

The Director of City Development submitted a report presenting the updated Leeds Inclusive Growth Strategy for the period 2023- 2030, with the updated strategy setting out nine refreshed 'Big Ideas' for how best to deliver growth that benefits all citizens and communities and which is set within the three themes of 'People', 'Place' and 'Productivity'.

Further to Minute No. 32, with the agreement of the Chair, supplementary information was circulated to Board Members ahead of the meeting in relation to this item in the form of Appendix 2, which was the proposed strategy document.

In presenting the report, the Executive Member provided an overview of the strategy's achievements to date together with a summary of the key proposals for the strategy moving forward.

Responding to an enquiry regarding how the success of the updated strategy would be defined, the Board received further details on how the progress being made by the strategy would be monitored and measured, with the Board also receiving further context on the range of factors which would need to be taken into consideration when judging the success of the strategy, with the Social Progress Index being highlighted as a key resource combined with other measures including the proposed submission of an annual progress report.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the new Leeds Inclusive Growth Strategy 2023 - 2030, as appended to the submitted report, be agreed, and that approval also be given for the strategy's publication;

- (b) That approval be given for the Director of City Development to lead on implementing the delivery of the Leeds Inclusive Growth Strategy 2023 – 2030;
- (c) That approval be given to the proposed approach towards stakeholder engagement in order to support the implementation of the strategy;
- (d) That moving forward, approval be given for an annual progress report to be submitted to Executive Board.

43 Learning Places Programme and School Condition Update Report

The Director of Children and Families and the Director of City Development submitted a joint report which presented an update on the current Learning Places Programme delivery including places across the school estate delivered over the last 18 months, schemes currently in delivery and the potential future work programme. In addition, the report provided information on managing the condition of the school estate, the challenges faced, potential solutions and the financial implications to effectively meet the Council's statutory duties.

In presenting the report, the Executive Member provided the Board with an overview of the key points including the number of places which had been delivered across the school estate, the response to the decline in the birth rate across the city and the actions being taken in response to the increased demand for Special Educational Needs learning places. An update was also provided regarding the annual school condition funding allocation and the current position with regard to backlog maintenance in the school estate.

The investment into Wetherby High School, as referenced within the report was specifically welcomed, with thanks extended to all those involved in securing that investment.

Regarding the issue of RAAC (reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete) in relation to schools. Further to the details within the submitted report, Members' attention was drawn to the update provided at the full Council meeting of 13th September 2023. Responding to comments about the potential for this to impact upon buildings other than schools, the Board received an update about the wider Council estate outside of school sites which confirmed that to date there have been no cases of RAAC identified in buildings that the Council is responsible for and that an audit into appropriate Council buildings continued.

From a wider perspective, it was suggested that it may be beneficial for further detail to be provided to Board Members in due course which covered the potential for structural issues more generally across the Council estate.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the progress made to date with the Learning Places Programme delivery, as detailed within the submitted report, be noted, together with

the current schemes in development and delivery across primary, secondary and SEN provision and the forward programme;

- (b) That the progress made regarding the Planned Maintenance Programme delivery, as detailed within the submitted report, be noted;
- (c) That the challenges and issues being experienced across the programme, together with the measures in place where possible to mitigate for these, be noted.

44 Provision of a Loan for Leeds Culture Trust to cover Culture Sector Tax Relief claims

The Director of City Development submitted a report which sought the Board's approval for Leeds City Council to provide a loan to Leeds Culture Trust (LCT) for the purposes of providing cash flow assistance to cover claims to HMRC for both Theatre Tax Relief and Museums and Galleries Exhibition Tax Relief for financial years 2022-23 and 2023-24, with the report noting that any loan provided would be repaid by LCT upon their receipt of Cultural Sector Tax Relief.

In presenting the report, the Executive Member highlighted that the provision of such a loan would allow LCT to maximise the amount of funding it could invest in LEEDS2023 in-year. In addition, it was emphasised that both LCT and the Council had respectively sought their own legal and financial advice in relation to this matter.

A Member raised concerns and confirmed their disagreement with the proposal, highlighting the risk involved for the Council, in the event that the proposed loan was not repaid.

Members discussed a number of areas relating to this matter including the level of funding which had been provided by the Council towards LEEDS2023 and the impact of national financial challenges upon the delivery of the initiative. As part of the discussion the provision of respective legal and financial advice to both the Council and LCT was reiterated. It was also further emphasised that the loan would allow LCT to maximise the amount of in-year funding it could invest in the programme.

Responding to a Member's specific enquiry regarding the risk involved, it was acknowledged that there were almost certain risks arising from the Council not providing the loan in terms of the potential impact upon the remainder of the LEEDS2023 programme. Conversely, with respect to the loan, it was confirmed that, although the level of risk to the Council is considered to be low, should the tax relief not be received by LCT, then the return of the monies advanced by the Council would be at risk.

Following consideration of appendices 1 - 3 to the submitted report designated as being exempt from publication under the provisions of Access to Information Procedure Rule 10.4(3), which were considered in private at the conclusion of the public part of the meeting, it was

RESOLVED –

- (a) That approval be given for Leeds City Council to provide an unsecured interest free loan to Leeds Culture Trust to a maximum value of £1,845,407 which would, subject to the resolutions below, be payable in 3 instalments;
- (b) That approval be given for Leeds City Council to pay a first instalment of £960,831 to Leeds Culture Trust in October 2023 for a term of up to 6 months, in order to cash flow the Trust's Theatre Tax Relief claim for the financial year 2022-23;
- (c) That in principle approval, which is subject to further due diligence on LCT's financial position in November, be given for Leeds City Council to pay a second instalment of £366,571 to Leeds Culture Trust in November 2023 for a term of up to 13 months, in order to cash flow the Trust's Theatre Tax Relief claim for the financial year 2023-24, and a third instalment of up to £518,005 to cash flow Museum Galleries and Exhibition Tax Relief (MGETR) for the financial year 2023-24 for a term of up to 13 months; with the payment of the third instalment being subject to a further assessment by independent advisors;
- (d) That approval be given for the necessary authority to be delegated to the Director of City Development, to enable the Director, in consultation with the Chief Officer Financial Services, to enter into a loan agreement with Leeds Culture Trust on the terms as set out within the submitted report / resolutions above;
- (e) That the decisions taken in relation to this report be exempted from the Call In process, due to matters of urgency and for the reasons as set out in section 47 of the submitted report, as any delay would impact upon the Year of Culture programme and seriously prejudice the public's interests.

(The Council's Executive and Decision Making Procedure Rules state that a decision may be declared as being exempt from the Call In process by the decision taker if it is considered that the matter is urgent and any delay would seriously prejudice the Council's, or the public's interests. In line with this, the resolutions contained within this minute were exempted from the Call In process, as per resolution (e) above, and for the reasons as detailed above and as set out within section 47 of the submitted report)

(Under the provisions of Council Procedure Rule 16.5, Councillor Lamb required it to be recorded that he voted against the decisions referred to within this minute)

DATE OF PUBLICATION: FRIDAY, 22 SEPTEMBER 2023

**LAST DATE FOR CALL IN
OF ELIGIBLE DECISIONS:** 5.00PM, FRIDAY, 29 SEPTEMBER 2023

Draft minutes to be approved at the meeting
to be held on Wednesday, 18th October, 2023