

## **SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN AND FAMILIES)**

**WEDNESDAY, 30TH NOVEMBER, 2022**

**PRESENT:** Councillor R. Stephenson in the Chair

Councillors H Bithell, J Bowden, A Forsaith,  
J Heselwood, Z Hussain, L Martin,  
K Renshaw, L Richards and T Smith

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

Mr E A Britten - Church Representative (Catholic)

Mr A Graham – Church Representative (Church of England)

Ms J Ward – Parent Governor Representative (Secondary)

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

Ms H Bellamy – School Staff Representative

Due to the absence of Councillor Alan Lamb a nomination was sought to appoint a Chair for the meeting.

A nomination was made and seconded on behalf of Councillor Ryan Stephenson.

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

There were no appeals against the refusal of inspection of documents.

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

There were no exempt items.

### **37 Late Items**

There were no late items of business.

### **38 Declaration of Interests**

There were no declarations of interest.

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor E Bromley, Councillor C Howley, Councillor A Lamb, Councillor D Ragan, Councillor J Senior and co-opted members K Blacker, N Tones and L Whitaker.

Councillor T Smith was in attendance as substitute member for Councillor A Lamb.

#### **40 Minutes - 7th September 2022**

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> September 2022 be approved as an accurate record.

#### **41 The visit of his Majesty The King**

The Chair invited the Executive Member for Adult and Children's Social Care and Health Partnerships, Councillor Fiona Venner, to brief the Board on the recent visit to Leeds by his Majesty The King. The Board was informed that as part of his visit, The King had unveiled a special plaque to mark the 10th anniversary of the Child Friendly Leeds initiative, which was launched by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in 2012. The King also met the newly elected Leeds Children's Mayor, Mason Hicks, and members of the UK Youth Parliament.

The Executive Member also took this opportunity to introduce Board Members to 'Ted' as the mascot of Child Friendly Leeds.

#### **42 Children and Families Workforce Recruitment and Retention in Leeds**

At the request of the Board, the Director of Children and Families submitted a report that set out the challenges involved with the recruitment and retention of the Children and Families workforce in Leeds and the efforts made by the directorate to address these challenges.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Councillor Fiona Venner, Executive Member for Adult and Children's Social Care and Health Partnerships
- Councillor Jonathan Pryor, Executive Member for Economy, Culture and Education
- Councillor Mary Harland, Executive Member for Communities.
- Julie Longworth, Director of Children and Families
- Ruth Terry, Chief Officer for Social Work
- Tim Pouncey, Chief Officer Resources and Strategy
- Val Waite, Chief Officer Learning Inclusion
- Erica Hiorns, Leadership and Management Lead

The Chair invited the Executive Members and the Director of Children and Families to provide a brief introduction to the report and in doing so, the Board was informed of the scale of the challenges facing the social care workforce nationally, particularly with employers struggling to recruit to posts. However, reference was also made to the recognition and role that Leeds plays in national improvements in the sector following senior appointments onto the Local Government Association National Board for Children and Young People

and the Children's Social Care National Implementation Board, which is tasked with delivering the recommendations of the Care Review.

Reference was also made to challenges with the recruitment and retention of school staff, with the National Education Union (NEU) survey in 2021 showing that nearly half of all teachers and leaders surveyed did not think they would still be working in schools in 5 years' time. It was noted that the common reasons cited related to workload pressures, lack of government trust and the reduced status of the profession. The NEU Sixth Form Colleges Strike, that was taking place on the same day as the Scrutiny Board's meeting, had also been acknowledged.

The following areas were also discussed during the Board's consideration of the report:

- Promoting trade union engagement with all local schools.
- Concerns surrounding the shortfall in DfE recruitment targets to secondary initial teacher training courses.
- The innovative approaches being undertaken by local schools in addressing recruitment challenges, which includes developing close relationships with local universities and maintaining close links with their Sixth Form pupils and offering them a paid year long internship to support them into employment.
- Efforts in reducing reliance on expensive Agency Social Workers, including the Memorandum of Co-operation with other Directors of Children Services from across the region to commit to a maximum hourly rate of pay (£35) for Agency Social Workers that will be fully implemented by 1 April 2023, having begun in September 2022 for new agency assignments.
- The importance of raising the profile and acknowledging the value of both teaching and social care professions in order to attract and also retain an effective workforce moving forward.
- The value of adopting a 'Grow Your Own' ethos and exploring further options to develop the talent pipeline for the future in terms recognising and developing the talent already within the Leeds City Council workforce alongside encouraging new routes of access into the directorate and providing opportunities for career progression.
- The importance of maximising opportunities to increase diversity at every level.
- The work being undertaken to support the health and wellbeing of social care staff, as well as highlighting the support provided to school staff through teacher unions and the council's school improvement team. Importance was also placed on the role of Ofsted in ensuring that schools are prioritising the wellbeing of staff.

#### **RESOLVED –**

- (a) That the contents of the report be noted
- (b) That the Scrutiny Board maintains a watching brief of progress against the broader strategy work being undertaken by the Children and Families directorate around the recruitment and retention of the workforce.

### 43 **Everyone's included: the Leeds SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2022-2027 - Update**

The Director of Children and Families submitted a report which presented an update surrounding the new Leeds strategy 'Everyone's included: the Leeds SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2022-2027'. A copy of the strategy was appended to the report for Members' consideration.

The Chair explained that last year, the Scrutiny Board had considered and welcomed the emerging draft version of the new Leeds SEND and Inclusion Strategy and agreed to maintain a watching briefing surrounding the implementation of the new Strategy.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Councillor Fiona Venner, Executive Member for Adult and Children's Social Care and Health Partnerships
- Councillor Jonathan Pryor, Executive Member for Economy, Culture and Education
- Julie Longworth, Director of Children and Families
- Val Waite, Chief Officer Learning Inclusion
- Natalie Samuel, Best Practice Development Officer
- Sally Townend, Designated Clinical Officer – SEND, Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust

The Chief Officer Learning Inclusion gave a brief introduction to the report and explained that the new strategy responds to a changing and challenging national and local context. Reference was made to the Green Paper '*The Send Review: right support, right place, right time*' which proposes significant reforms to services for children and young people with SEND across learning, health and care services. Linked to this, the Board was informed that the findings and recommendations of the SEND review mirror the priorities that local families and partners have shared with the service and therefore these already form the basis of the new local strategy. It was highlighted that the strategy, as appended to the report, will be published alongside a much shorter 'quick and easy read' format and will be accessible on the Leeds Local Offer website. The Board was also informed that a communication plan is in production to ensure that the strategy is widely communicated from December 2022.

The Board then received a presentation by the Best Practice Development Officer and the Designated Clinical Officer (SEND) from Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust, which highlighted the following key points:

- A recap on the 6 priorities for change set out within the new Strategy and how these will be addressed as part of phased approach over the five-year period.
- Key actions to support the priorities and outcomes in phase 1, which includes:

- The production and launch of a new Leeds SEND and Inclusion Practice Framework which will bring together national and local policies and best practice principles with learning, resources, and practical tools, all in one place.
- Developing high-quality plans across the continuum of SEND support and services.
- Promoting multi-agency early identification and support for learners who are vulnerable to permanent exclusion, missing education or dis-engaging from education, and vulnerable to criminal activity or exploitation and sexual exploitation.
- Developing the local offer of provision (schools and other learning places and services) for Leeds' growing population of children and young people with diverse needs.
- A commitment to review and improve the multi-agency pathway to identify, assess and meet the needs of those with social communication difficulties and autism (the neurodevelopmental pathway).
- Developing a new city-wide programme to embed trauma-informed practice and reduce the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) such as experiences of domestic violence, substance abuse, and mental-ill health in the family.
- An overview of next steps being undertaken, which includes strengthening governance arrangements; strengthening the multi-agency implementation group delivering the strategy; ensuring that the Strategy aligns and interacts with the Future in Mind: Leeds strategy; and regularly reporting progress to the SEND Partnership Board and the integrated health and care CYP's Population Board.

The following areas were also discussed during the Board's consideration of the report:

- Invest to save proposals aimed at increasing capacity to support schools in the inclusion agenda around early intervention to help prevent difficulties escalating.
- An acknowledgement of increased pressures financially, including great pressures on the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant, which is the key source of funding for schools and education settings supporting children and young people with higher level SEND needs.
- The role of the new SEND Youth Forum and Parent/Carer Forum as invaluable mechanisms for engagement, linked to the SEND Partnership Board, as well as playing an active role in governance of the strategy and its implementation.
- Supporting social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) and the importance of this new Strategy aligning and interacting with the Future in Mind: Leeds strategy. It was suggested that the Scrutiny Board may benefit from receiving a more detailed update surrounding the broader work linked to the Future In Mind Strategy.
- Actions being taken to increase capacity and improve efficiencies within the service to help tackle the increased demands for Education, Health

and Care Plans (EHCPs) and to also strengthen communication links with schools.

- The role of the Children and Young People's Population Board in facilitating a collaborative approach with other key partners.
- The importance of staff engagement to help identify and address key concerns and barriers. A particular example was shared with the Board in relation to staff expressing difficulties around the cost of travel which resulted in Social Work teams being offered the opportunity of a one-off mileage advance which in effect brings their payments to being in advance rather than in arrears.
- The benefits of having a SEND and Inclusion Practice Framework to support consistent, high quality early support assessment and planning. It was highlighted that this will also provide a good foundation for more specialised assessment and planning if necessary.

The Chair thanked everyone for their contributions and relayed the Board's support surrounding the communication and implementation of the new Leeds strategy 'Everyone's included: the Leeds SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2022-2027'.

#### **RESOLVED –**

- (a) That the contents of the report and presentation, as well as members comments, be noted.
- (b) That the Scrutiny Board supports communication and implementation of the new Leeds strategy 'Everyone's included: the Leeds SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2022-2027'.

#### **44 Work Schedule**

The Head of Democratic Services submitted a report that presented the Board's latest work schedule for the forthcoming municipal year.

The Board's Principal Scrutiny Adviser raised the following key points for the Board's consideration and agreement:

- *Proposed rescheduling of the Board's February meeting* – It was highlighted that the Board's planned meeting on 15th February 2023 falls within the school half term holiday period and ordinarily efforts would be made to avoid any clashes with school holidays. To rectify this oversight, Members were informed that the Chair had proposed to re-schedule this meeting to Wednesday 8th March 2023 at 10 am.
- *Additional Board meeting on safeguarding* – Members were informed that the Chair had also proposed that the Board holds an additional formal public meeting dedicated to the issue of safeguarding, which is to take place as soon as possible and when all members of the Leeds Safeguarding Children Partnership Executive are available to attend too. The primary focus will be around the review of the notification process in line with the commitment of the Partnership Executive to come back to Scrutiny to discuss the findings and agreed actions stemming from this

review. However, this dedicated meeting will also allow for the Partnership Executive to share information surrounding its broader work around quality assurance and collective learning.

**RESOLVED –**

- (a) That the Scrutiny Board's planned meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> February 2023 be re-scheduled to 8<sup>th</sup> March 2023 at 10 am.
- (b) That the Scrutiny Board holds an additional formal public meeting on the issue of safeguarding, with a date to be confirmed.
- (c) That the work schedule be updated to reflect the above updates.

**45 Date and Time of Next Meeting**

Wednesday, 25<sup>th</sup> January 2023 at 10.00 am (pre-meeting for Board Members at 9.45 am)