

SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN AND FAMILIES) - CONSULTATIVE MEETING

WEDNESDAY, 15TH SEPTEMBER, 2021

PRESENT: Councillor A Lamb in the Chair

Councillors K Brooks, E Flint, B Flynn,
A Forsaith, C Gruen, J Heselwood,
Z Hussain, S Lay, A Marshall-Katung,
K Renshaw, L Richards and J Senior

Co-opted Members (Voting)

Mr E A Britten - Church Representative (Catholic)
Mr A Graham – Church representative (Church of England)
Mrs K Blacker - Parent Governor Representative (Primary)
Mrs J Ward – Parent Governor Representative (Secondary)

Co-opted Members (Non-Voting)

Ms C Foote – School Staff Representative
Ms L Whitaker – Young Lives Leeds Representative

14 Chairs Opening Comments

At the start of the meeting, the Chair welcomed Laura Whitaker to her first meeting of the Scrutiny Board as the co-opted representative for Young Lives Leeds.

The Chair also welcomed Councillor Linda Richards, who had recently replaced Councillor Billy Flynn as a standing member of the Scrutiny Board. Councillor Flynn was in attendance as a substitute member for Councillor Stephenson and therefore the Chair took the opportunity to thank Councillor Flynn for his contribution to the work of the Scrutiny Board.

15 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interests.

16 Meeting note of 7th July 2021

RECOMMENDED – That the note of the Children and Families Scrutiny Board Consultative Meeting held on 7th July 2021 be noted.

17 Update on Thriving: The Child Poverty Strategy for Leeds

The Director of Children and Families submitted a report which provided an overview of 'Thriving: The Child Poverty Strategy for Leeds', and the work that sits underneath the strategy.

The following were in attendance:

- 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
- Sal Tariq, Director of Children and Families
- Julie Longworth, Deputy Director of Children and Families
- Shaheen Myers, Deputy Director Learning
- Ruth Terry, Chief Officer Social Work
- Val Waite, Head of Service for Learning Inclusion
- Dave Clark, Head of Service for Learning Improvement
- Erica Hiorns, Leadership and Management Lead

The Executive Member for Adult and Children's Social Care and Health Partnerships introduced the report, providing an update for each of the workstreams since the last report in March 2021, including a new 'access to green space' work stream in response to the experiences of many families across the city during the pandemic.

Members discussed a number of matters, including:

- *Green space and planning priorities.* Members were pleased to hear that children and young people have been engaged and consulted throughout the Local Plan Update process but recognised that more meaningful engagement is required across the whole planning process. Related to this, Members were advised that there has been an increase in corporate support across the city for green space priorities for children and young people. The Board requested that the next update report on the Strategy work, due in March 2022, has a focus on the new green spaces workstream. Linked to this, it was also suggested that the Chair extends an invitation to the Chief Planning Officer to contribute to the March meeting as well as reiterating the Board's views regarding children's access to green spaces and their involvement in future planning consultations. The Executive Member for Adult and Children's Social Care and Health Partnerships also recommended that the Board extends an invitation to representatives from the Parks and Countryside Service too.
- *Impact of poor-quality housing on children with disabilities.* Members sought clarity on the action taken to support children and families with disabilities and were advised that the council provides adaptations to social and private housing to support families with additional needs. It was noted that the selective licensing scheme also offers further opportunities to identify needs in some of the most deprived areas in the city.
- *Access to holiday activities for children and young people.* In response to a query, Members were advised that limited holiday programme funding has been allocated to the most deprived areas in the city, and

activities are delivered in partnership with schools and community hubs.

- *Destination and pathways support.* In response to a query, Members were informed of several programmes to support vulnerable young people into their next stage of education or employment – including Virtual School links with third sector/voluntary providers providing employability skills and mentoring, and follow-up calls from schools to GCSE leavers from the 2020 cohort to monitor destinations and provide support for next steps.
- *Mitigating impact of reduced finances.* In reference to the upcoming changes to the benefits system, Members queried the support available to families with low income. Members were also particularly interested to understand the potential impact on children and their families once the furlough scheme ends and requested further information in relation to how many families would be affected across the city. Members were advised that the cross-council workstream will be making this a key priority in the coming months.

RECOMMENDED –

- a) That the contents of the report, along with Members' comments, be noted.
- b) That further information is provided to Board Members surrounding the potential impact on children and their families once the furlough scheme ends.
- c) That the Board receives a further update report in March 2022, with a particular focus on the new green spaces work stream.

18 Covid-19 Update - Learning

The Director of Children and Families submitted a report which provided an update on the focused work being undertaken to support learning settings to support the learning of children and young people in Leeds, including work to reframe the 3As Strategy in the context of Covid-19.

The following were in attendance:

- 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
- Sal Tariq, Director of Children and Families
- Shaheen Myers, Deputy Director for Learning
- Val Waite, Head of Service for Learning Inclusion
- Dave Clark, Head of Service for Learning Improvement
- Erica Hiorns, Leadership and Management Lead

The Executive Member for Economy, Culture and Education introduced the report, setting out the key developments for education in Leeds since the previous update and the beginning of the Autumn term, including an overview

of the information captured during the consultations with learning settings across the city, which took place in July 2021.

Members discussed a number of matters, including:

- *Ventilation in schools.* Members queried the measures taken to ventilate school buildings in Leeds to limit the spread of Covid-19. The DfE is providing all schools with CO2 monitors and will issue further guidance regarding their use and further measures which can be taken.
- *GCSE and A Level examinations.* In recognition of the significant missed learning for pupils, Members expressed concern for pupils sitting exams in 2021/22. Members were advised the DfE have suggested reducing the topics that will be included in exams in a recent consultation, but that there will also need to be a 'plan b' in the event of lockdown measures. Related to this, Members queried the value of teacher assessed GCSE and A Level awards in employment and higher education and were advised that it will take some time to understand and compare results from the pandemic. Reflecting on the approach adopted by the Scrutiny Board last year, it was suggested that the Board holds a working group meeting to consider the implications of forthcoming guidelines for GCSE and A level assessments for 2022, as well as discussing issues linked to transition arrangements too.
- *Vaccinations for 12 to 15 year olds.* Members queried the support for schools in delivering the vaccination programme for the 12 to 15 year old cohort, and were advised that colleagues are working with health partners to support schools in managing this challenge.

RECOMMENDED –

- a) That the contents of the report, along with comments from Members, be noted.
- b) That the Board holds a working group meeting to consider the implications of forthcoming guidelines for GCSE and A level assessments for 2022, as well as issues linked to transition arrangements too.

19 Ofsted Focused Visit

The Director of Children and Families submitted a report detailing the two-day Ofsted Focused Visit to the Leeds Children and Families Front Door Service conducted on the 20th and 21st July 2021.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor Fiona Venner, Executive Member for Adult and Children's Social Care and Health Partnerships
- Sal Tariq, Director of Children and Families
- Julie Longworth, Deputy Director of Children and Families
- Ruth Terry, Chief Officer Social Work

The Executive Member for Adult and Children's Social Care and Health Partnerships introduced the report and provided an overview of the key findings of the Ofsted report and recommendations, along with plans to immediately address issues raised through the Children and Families Focused Visit Action Plan. Members were also advised of a recent external peer review of the front door commissioned by the local authority, which identified areas of good practice, but also identified similar areas for development found in this focused visit.

The Director provided a detailed response to each of the recommendations and the challenges and pressures experienced with delivering services as a result of Covid-19.

Members discussed a number of matters, including:

- *Process driven recommendations.* Members commented that there is evidence of a decline in practice, as set out in the report, that are not solely process driven and therefore sought clarity on the reasoning for this. The Executive Member advised that the impact of the pandemic had been a significant challenge and felt that this had not been fully considered by Ofsted.
- *Attendance of key safeguarding partners at strategy meetings.* In response to a query, Members were advised that the local authority are working closely with other key safeguarding partners and have a commitment from those partners to resolve the issue. Members were also advised that where attendance at strategy meetings was not possible, NHS partners continued to provide relevant information to be considered. The Chair noted that input from key safeguarding partners at future discussions with the Scrutiny Board on this matter would be useful.
- *Improvement Action Plan arising from the focused visit.* In response to a query, Members were provided with details of action taken for each recommendation to date and assurance was given that each of the recommendations will be addressed within the timeframes set out in the Improvement Action Plan.

The Chair requested that the Board maintains a watching briefing of the Improvement Action Plan, with updates (which may involve verbal updates) being provided at each meeting for as long as the Board feels it is appropriate.

RECOMMENDED –

- a) That the contents of the report, along with Members comments, be noted.
- b) That the Scrutiny Board maintains a watching briefing of the Improvement Action Plan, with updates (which may involve verbal updates) being provided by the Director at each meeting for as long as the Scrutiny Board feels it is appropriate.

20 Work Schedule

The Head of Democratic Services submitted a report that presented the draft work schedule for the forthcoming municipal year.

RECOMMENDED – That the work schedule be updated to reflect requests made during the meeting.