

SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN AND FAMILIES)

WEDNESDAY, 7TH JUNE, 2023

PRESENT: Councillor D Cohen in the Chair

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

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (VOTING)

Mr E A Britten - Church Representative (Catholic)

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (NON-VOTING)

Helen Bellamy - School Staff Representative
Mr N Tones – School Staff Representative

CHAIRS OPENING COMMENTS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, saying he was delighted to have been appointed as Chair of the Children and Families Scrutiny Board.

He went on to thank the previous Chair Cllr Alan Lamb for all the work he had done whilst Chair of the Children and Families Scrutiny Board. He said that one of the things essential for Scrutiny was a non-partisan basis and the only reason Board Members were selected was for the Children and Families of the City, and this reason he knew was very much taken to heart by Cllr Lamb.

The Chair also thanked previous Members who were no longer serving on this Board, they were: Cllr Linda Richards, Cllr Hannah Bithell, Cllr Denise Ragan, Cllr Zara Hussain, Cllr Chris Howley and Cllr Ann Forsaith.

The Chair provided a brief introduction and background on himself for the Board Members, and invited each person present to do the same.

1 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

There were no appeals against refusal of inspection of documents.

2 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There were no exempt items.

3 Late Items

There were no late items.

4 Declaration of Interests

No declarations of interests were made at the meeting.

5 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Blackburn, J Senior, R Stephenson and co-opted members Andrew Graham and Laura Whittaker.

Councillor Amanda Carter attended the meeting as substitute for Councillor Stephenson.

The Chair informed the Board that Cllr Stephenson was not present at the meeting as he and his wife had recently welcomed a baby. All were doing well, and he sent congratulations to them.

6 Minutes - 29 March 2023

RESOLVED – To approve the minutes of the previous meeting held on 8th March 2023 as a correct record.

7 Co-Opted Members

The report of the Head of Democratic Services provided guidance to the Scrutiny Board about the appointment of co-opted members.

The Scrutiny Board Procedure Rules within the Council's Constitution outlines the options available to Scrutiny Boards in relation to appointing co-opted members.

The Board were advised of the following points:

Statutory voting co-optees

In addition to the options available to all Scrutiny Boards, there are also legislative requirements regarding the appointment of specific education representatives onto the Children and Families Scrutiny Board. The report set out how this statutory requirement had been met and in doing so, the Board welcomed back its voting education representatives which included:

- Andrew Graham as the nominated Church of England diocese representative
- Tony Britten as the nominated Roman Catholic diocese representative.
- There are currently two vacancies related to the parent governor positions on the Board. The primary position was currently in the process of an election with three interested parent governors. Work was ongoing to fill the secondary position with plans to write to the secondary parent governors this month.

Non-voting co-optees

The appointment of no-voting school staff representation has been a longstanding approach adopted by the children and Families Scrutiny Board.

This year, both Nick Tones and Helen Bellamy had been nominated again by the School Joint Consultative Committee to continue their role on the Scrutiny Board.

Laura Whitaker had been nominated again to represent Young Lives Leeds, as the representative from the third Sector.

In addition to this, two past co-opted parent governor board members have expressed an interest in continuing as non-voting co-opted members after coming to the end of their terms of office in 2022/23. The Board were asked to consider appointing Kate Blacker and Jackie Ward as co-opted board members for this municipal year.

Responding to questions from the Board the Principal Scrutiny Adviser provided the following information:

- The secondary and primary representatives can be appointed separately.
- It was noted that the Boards Terms of Reference would be changing slightly with locality Youth Services moving to the remit of another Board. However, this would be clarified once the Constitution had been published.
- The elections of secondary and primary voting co-opted members would be undertaken by qualifying parent governors via online voting. It was noted that the closing date was 23rd June 2023 for the primary parent governor representative.

RESOLVED - To:

- a) Consider and approve the appointment of non-voting co-opted members to the Children and Families Scrutiny Board including Jackie Ward and Kate Blacker as set out in paragraph 12 of the report.
- b) Note the nominations of the Roman Catholic Diocese and Church of England Diocese to the Children and Families Scrutiny Board in accordance with statutory requirements.
- c) Note the ongoing efforts to appoint parent governor representatives to the Children and Families Scrutiny Board in accordance with statutory requirements and specifically the forthcoming primary parent governor election that should lead to a new co-opted board member at the July meeting.

8 Scrutiny Board Terms of Reference

The report of the Head of Democratic Services sets out the Children and Families Scrutiny Board Terms of Reference for Members' information.

It was noted that Appendix 2 Article 6 – Scrutiny Boards was still being updated by colleagues in Legal as part of the wider constitution update. When updated this will be circulated to Members.

Appendix 3 of the submitted report provided an overview of how each of the Council's five individual Scrutiny Boards this year have been aligned to Officer Delegated Functions and Executive Portfolios.

RESOLVED – To note the Scrutiny Boards Term of Reference.

9 Sources of Work for the Scrutiny Board

The Report of the Head of Democratic Services provided information and guidance about potential sources of work and areas of priority within the Scrutiny Board's Terms of Reference.

In attendance for this item were:

- Cllr Fiona Venner – Executive Member for Children's Social Care and Health Partnerships
- Cllr Jonathan Pryor – Executive Member for Economy, Culture and Education
- Julie Longworth – Director of Children and Families
- Shaheen Myers – Deputy Director of Learning
- Val Waite – Chief Officer Learning Inclusion
- Dave Clark – Chief Officer Learning Improvement
- Farrah Khan – Chief Officer Family Help

Members were informed that the Children and Young Peoples Plan is currently being refreshed and this would be circulated to the Board following approval at full Council as a potential source of work for the Board.

The Executive Members and the Director of Children and Families were invited to share their views on potential areas of work for the Board.

Cllr Pryor suggested EHCP's as the numbers had increased since Covid and there had been changes to legislation. He informed the Board that the Council had been working hard to process all the EHCP's it had received and was able to report that all the EHCP's had now been processed. However, lessons to be learned and work was being done on this. He would be happy to bring this to the Board as soon as possible.

Cllr Venner explained that the Josh McAlister Independent Review of social care had informed the priorities of Government. It would be important to keep checking the review as it was implemented.

Cllr Venner also listed Thriving -The Child Poverty Strategy and Future Mind Strategy were important and work on these should continue. It was noted that the impact of poverty and increase in mental health issues in children and young people were top priorities for the directorate.

The Director of Children and Families supported the proposed work sources of the Executive Members and suggested the Board invite the Voice Influence

Team to come to Scrutiny Board, so Members could see what they do and ensure the voice of young people is heard.

The Director also said work was needed to continue to deliver efficiencies and use the resources to the best effect to continue a culture of excellence and respond to emerging needs. Work on the Transformation agenda and delivery board was therefore suggested as a possible work item.

Members were of the view that changes to asylum rules may impact children and had concerns that unaccompanied children could be trafficked. It was the view that it was important to keep Leeds as a safe sanctuary for them.

The Chair informed the Executive Members and Officers that during the pre-meet Members had highlighted potential work sources, many of which matched the suggestions made by the Director and Executive Board Members, which had included:

EHCP's.

- It was the proposal that an in depth, end to end approach should be looked at. It was suggested that a full report be brought to the September meeting to begin consideration of this item.

Attendance

- Members had suggested attendance as there were concerns that this was an issue for the city and not just at secondary school level, but also at primary school level. It was recognised that after Covid with school routines affected some children were struggling to cope with the school environment. Members discussed potential support groups for parents whose children were struggling to attend school and sharing of best practice across the city.
- Members had also suggested partnership working to address attendance to involve young people, with Leeds Rhinos, Opera North as suggested partners. It was the view that young people should be consulted and involved in this as to what they wanted.
- Behaviour Hub could be paired up with schools to address attendance issues.
- Members were of the view that the Community Committee Youth Summits had been successful and engaged with the young people to find out what they wanted. It was suggested the information from these events could feed into this work.

Vaping among Children and Young People

- A letter to the Board was read out which suggested that Scrutiny Boards Children and Families and Adults, Health and Active Lifestyles should consider this as a potential area for work due to the concerns of the number of children and young people vaping was increasing and the affects this could have on them. It was suggested a report should be brought to the Scrutiny Board and would be facilitated as soon as possible.

The Chair provided a summary of the potential sources of work which included:

- Vaping
- Attendance
- EHCP's
- Transformation agenda
- Looked after children and foster children
- MacAlistair Review
- Future in Mind and child poverty
- Changes in asylum rules

RESOLVED –

- a) To reflect on the information and guidance provided within the submitted report when considering potential areas for scrutiny for the forthcoming municipal year.
- b) That a revised work programme will come to the July Board reflecting this discussion for further comment from Board members.

10 Performance Update

The report of the Director of Children and Families provided the latest performance information which showed progress against measures in the Children and Young People's Plan.

In attendance for this item were:

- Cllr Fiona Venner – Executive Member for Children's Social Care and Health Partnerships
- Cllr Jonathan Pryor – Executive Member for Economy, Culture and Education
- Julie Longworth – Director of Children and Families
- Val Waite – Chief Officer Learning Inclusion
- Shaheen Myers – Deputy Director of Learning
- Dave Clark – Chief Officer Learning Improvement
- Farrah Khan – Chief Officer Family Help
- Peter Storrie - Head of Service Performance Management and Improvement
- Chris Hudson – Policy, Planning and Procedures Leader

It was noted that this would be the last update on this 2018-23 Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) and included progress on the 3 Obsessions. A refreshed CYPP is to be presented to full Council for adoption on 12th July 2023. The Annual Standards Report would be presented to the Board in July and would provide details on attainment outcomes across the city for 2021/22 academic year.

Responding to a question from the Board on the figures for NEET and Not Known and general board member questions the following information was provided leading to discussions on the following points:

- NEET and Not Known remains one of the obsessions within the CYPP. A lot of work has been ongoing in this area, there is a 14-19 Strategic Board in the city, the Director has recently written out to all the head teachers in the city asking for them to nominate individuals so there is a broad range of attendance at the meetings. The directorate is looking to second individuals into the local authority who will work 2 days a week as a strategic lead for this obsession.
- Recently an appointment has been made for a Positive Destination Manager, one of the areas this person is focussing on is a partnership approach for tracking and supporting young people through voluntary and community organisations.
- It was the view that an Outcomes Based Approach would be a good way to track what was being done and what success was being achieved in this area.
- The Pathways Team and Life Coaches have a specific role to play in the NEET agenda. Members were keen to see the same resources provided to education to prevent a cycle of criminality.
- Members were of the view that the use of numbers as well as percentages were of benefit in the report.
- It was recognised that early intervention and prevention was the way forward which would be evidenced by data. It was acknowledged that work within this area of NEET and Not Known would only be successful if the services could build trusted relationships.
- Tracking of individuals was required for a city the size of Leeds to ensure if young people decided to change their pathway from school education to courses this was captured.
- The Members were of the view that any engagement with young people needed to be on an equal basis using plain English. It was acknowledged that teaching staff and partnership staff needed to be upskilled to teach and support child development and the adolescent brain development as part of their role.
- It was noted that the numbers of children looked after were increasing. However, the numbers were not going up as much as other core cities and nationally and it was the view that this was due to the effective early prevention work done in Leeds.
- It was the view that Life Coaching was an essential part to all that had been discussed at the meeting.

RESOLVED – To:

- a) Discuss and comment on the updates provided on the progress being made against the current Children and Young People’s Plan (2018-2023), specifically the three obsessions.
- b) Note that this was the last performance update being provided on the Children and Young People’s Plan (2018-2023), with the first report on the refreshed plan (2023-2028) scheduled for January 2024.

11 Review of Youth Justice Plan

The report of the Director of Children and Families provided an overview of the Youth Justice Plan 2021-24 and the work that sits underneath the strategy. It provided an update on each of the workstreams in terms of recent activities, outcomes and next steps. It also considered the impact that the national cost of living crisis was having on children and their families, and how that impacts on offending behaviours.

In attendance for this item were:

- Julie Longworth – Director of Children and Families
- Cllr Fiona Venner – Executive Member for Children’s Social Care and Health Partnerships
- Cllr Jonathan Pryor – Executive Member for Economy, Culture and Education.
- Farrah Khan – Chief Officer Family Help
- Helen Burton Youth Justice Service Delivery Manager
- Patsy Burrows – Head of Service Corporate Parenting

Members were provided with the following information:

- This Plan has been presented at full Council last year and comes to the Scrutiny Board on a regular basis. The report refers to the Child First Philosophy which means that the service sees the children in the Youth Justice Service as children first. It was noted that this did not negate the fact that sometimes they have committed serious crimes, but that they were children.
- The Executive Member encouraged the Board to visit the team, who she said showed compassion and commitment and that the work that they do was inspiring.
- The report refers to issues of poverty and the impact this has on increased offenses being committed. Part of the work the Youth Justice Service do is to support the families and it was noted that the Executive Member had been out visiting to deliver food parcels to the families.
- The service have positive partnerships with CAMHS, the Police the Youth Service and the third sector.
- The service had been part of a HMIP Thematic Inspection which looked at a particular theme of the service and had found disproportionality in Leeds black and dual heritage boys and young men were in the Youth Justice system. It was found in Leeds that a number of the boys and young men were not in contact with the services and had SEND and SEHM needs which had not been identified and therefore they had missed out on opportunities which could help them address this. Members were informed that access to education was important to the service. The Skill Mill which is at Kirkstall Forge is a good example of the work that is ongoing to support to young people, it was noted there is a positive partnership with Skill Mill.
- The report showed that at the last inspection in 2019 the service had received a judgement of ‘requires improvement’. The action plan to

address the judgement was included within the submitted report with most of the actions completed. Another Thematic Inspection had taken place recently with positive comments received, although the final results had not been received yet, although the Service was confident, they are on track to improve from out of the 'requires improvement' assessment.

- The complexity of the work by the Youth Justice Service was highlighted as well as the seriousness of this work. It was noted that not only was there a duty of care to the young people, the families and the community but also to the workforce, and to provide the required training and skills to deal with the complex issues.

In response to questions and comments from the Board the following information was provided:

- It was recognised that there was disproportionality within the Youth Justice system of black and dual heritage boys and young men, however it was noted that there were also many white boys and young men also within the system from disadvantaged backgrounds. Members were of the view they would like to have more data on black and minority groups in the system and what support is available.
- It was noted that the cohort for white/ British was a bigger cohort, and that the disproportionality in the Youth Justice System related to certain diverse communities and children looked after, and it was based on numbers in population rather than just volume. The Chair highlighted pages 22 – 23 of the report which provided information on background, and this was helpful.
- Members were advised that there was good work ongoing with education and support in relation to violent offending, with secondary schools keen to engage with the service on this area of work. The Youth Violence Area meetings which currently take place in the East of the city were going to be opened up across the city, these are chaired by the police with third sector and local community services invited. These assist with early identification of young people when they are disengaging and showing signs of vulnerability to being exploited or gang affiliation. A task and finish group was to be set up with head teachers to see what challenges they are facing and how best to support them working together. Members were reminded of the work by Listen up Leeds and Black Boy Joy which told how boys and young men were treated by the services and why they had a distrust in justice services. This was being used to inform work going forward. Members noted that in some areas of the city they were seeing the impact of working class disadvantaged white boys in their wards who were not coping with boundaries around them and were causing harm and disruption.
- It was the Board's view that the report was right to have a child first approach, understanding the voice of the child and the motivations for their behaviours was correct. It was suggested that positive case histories could be provided to the Board at a future meeting to assure the Board this approach was successful.

- It was noted that whilst the partnership working has been successful, offending in the city had increased. It was the view that the cost of living crisis and poverty were one of the factors and there had also been a rise in the population of adolescents in the inner city areas. The service believed that the plan going forward would assist in reducing offending. The Board were informed that the Early Help Hubs located in areas of highest deprivation were crucial in assisting to reduce violent crimes. The Hubs provided an area co-ordination of various services from Police, mental health co-ordinators and third sector organisations. There was evidence to support the work of the Hubs in reducing anti-social behaviour through data, intelligence, and targeted work. There is a proposal to expand the Hubs from 3 to 7 across the city.
- In Leeds we use Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) arrangements and there are different levels within MACE. Bronze operational arrangements have colleagues from Police, social care, education, third sector and Children Services meet routinely to share information from their systems. It was recognised that there were issues with databases and the McAlistair Review had highlighted these issues, so it was to be looked at nationally. The Silver tier, this is a risk and vulnerability sub- group which sits under the local child safeguarding partnership, which again is a meeting attended by multi-agencies and focuses on strategies to provide a clear vision. The Gold level is at executive level. The Board were informed that there is also a MACE contextual meeting with partners from across the city looking at themes, trends, peer groups of concern and locations of concern. An example was provided of where the voice of the child had influenced action taken.
- It was acknowledged that this plan focuses on the Youth Justice Service and the children engaged with that service. A key priority is early intervention and prevention, the data is accurate from our own internal databases and from systems owned by partners. The Family Help Service will be multi-disciplinary delivered on a local dedicated geographical area. This will provide an opportunity to have conversations to shape the Family Help Service.
- Members were advised that the Youth Justice Service has three nurses seconded into the service, one is a physical nurse and the other two deal with mental health, so there is immediate access to nurses for those who are referred to the service.
- The Board were informed that work was taking place to address exploitation of young people with partnership working looking at how to disrupt patterns of the perpetrators across the city.

RESOLVED –

- a) That the Scrutiny Board acknowledges the ongoing strategic framework in place in order to prevent children from entering the youth justice system, and to support and divert those who have entered into the youth justice system in order to have a positive impact on the lives of children, their families and communities, and the work being undertaken by the council and other partners in key areas of activity.

- b) That the Scrutiny Board acknowledges the need to promote the work of the Youth Justice Service Plan across the city, across council directorates and wider city partnerships in order to reduce offending behaviours in children and young people across the city.
- c) To note the impact of disproportionality on young people from Black and Ethnic minorities with the youth justice cohort to highlight systematic inequalities.

Cllr Heselwood left the meeting at 12:35 towards the end of this item.

12 Work Programme

The report of the Head of Democratic Services requested Members to consider the Board's work programme for 2023/24 municipal year.

The Principal Scrutiny Adviser informed the Board that Appendix 1 was the first draft of the work programme of the year. The Chair and the Board had provided significant input to the work programme, and he would work on the suggested sources of work for the next meeting.

The Principal Scrutiny Adviser suggested Board Members may like to look at forming working parties to approach some of the work suggested, as the items were broad and inclusive, and this could be fed back to the Scrutiny Board.

Members also suggested that site visits may be a useful dimension to certain items being scrutinised.

RESOLVED – To consider the Board's work programme for the 2023/274 municipal year.

13 Date and Time of Next Meeting

RESOLVED – To note that the next meeting Scrutiny Board (Children and Families) will be on Wednesday 5th July 2023, at 10.00am with a pre-meeting for Board Members at 9.30am.

CHAIRS CLOSING COMMENTS

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and for making his first meeting as Chair a smooth meeting. He said he looked forward to working with the Board over the coming year.

The meeting concluded at 12.45.