

Exclusions, Elective Home Education and Off-rolling

Date: 7th July 2021

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

What is this report about?

Including how it contributes to the city's and council's ambitions

- During 2019/20, the Children and Families Scrutiny Board commenced an Inquiry into Exclusions, Elective Home Education and Off-rolling and anticipated its inquiry work to continue into the 2020/21 municipal year. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic emergency, the Board agreed to temporarily pause its inquiry while focusing its attention on how the Council and its partners worked to support all children and their families during such an unprecedented and difficult period.
- This report provides a summary of the inquiry work undertaken to-date by the Scrutiny Board, as well as presenting the latest reported data that was shared with the Executive Board in November 2020 for Members' information.
- In consultation with the relevant Director and Executive Board Members, the Board is asked to reflect on the information presented within this report and to consider appropriate next steps. The views of Members during today's meeting will then inform terms of reference for the Board's ongoing inquiry work.

Recommendations

Members are requested to reflect on the information presented within this report and to consider and discuss appropriate next steps in relation to its ongoing Inquiry into Exclusions, Elective Home Education and Off-rolling.

Why is the proposal being put forward?

1. The Children and Families Scrutiny Board has given a commitment to recommence its inquiry work this year in relation to exclusions, elective home education and off-rolling. This report therefore provides a summary of the inquiry work undertaken to-date by the Scrutiny Board, as well as presenting the latest reported data that will also assist the Board in determining appropriate next steps. The views of Members during today's meeting will then inform terms of reference for the Board's ongoing inquiry work.

What impact will this proposal have?

Wards affected: All

Have ward members been consulted? Yes No

2. In discussing appropriate next steps, the Board is asked to reflect on the evidence sessions that have already been undertaken by the former Children and Families Scrutiny Board, as summarised in Appendix A.
3. Also appended for Members' information is the report of the Director of Children and Families that was presented to the Executive Board in November 2020 (see Appendix B). This report provided an update on the trends in relation to elective home education and permanent exclusions in the academic year 19/20 and to the verified fixed term exclusion data from 2018/19. The report also set out the trends seen in autumn term 19/20, but at that stage was acknowledged to be unverified data. Linked to this, Members are asked to note that more recent verified data from the Department of Education is expected to be made available by September / October this year.
4. The appended Executive Board report also highlights the work of Children and Families during the latter part of 19/20 when the schools closed in regard to changes in policy and practice leading to the newest policy and approach by DfE and in Leeds.
5. The views of Members during today's meeting will inform terms of reference for the Board's ongoing inquiry work and therefore Members are particularly asked to consider the following:
 - An appropriate timescale to recommence its inquiry work.
 - Further key areas and information to explore as part of the evidence base.
 - Identifying key witnesses to engage in future evidence sessions.
 - Potential co-opted member appointments linked to the inquiry.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

6. Appendix A provides a summary of the evidence gathering sessions previously held as part of the Board's Inquiry, which had already included the engagement of lead Executive Board Members, the Director of Children and Families and other senior officers and also members of the Leeds Youth Council.
7. The Director of Children and Families and relevant Executive Board Members have also been invited to today's meeting to contribute to the Board's discussion around appropriate next steps for its ongoing inquiry.

What are the resource implications?

8. Linked to the Vision for Scrutiny, the Board is required to ensure any Scrutiny work undertaken has clarity and focus of purpose and will add value and can be delivered within an agreed time frame.

What are the legal implications?

9. This report has no specific legal implications.

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

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

Does this proposal support the council's three Key Pillars?

Inclusive Growth

Health and Wellbeing

Climate Emergency

11. Ensuring children and young people “do well at all levels of learning and have the skills they need for life” is a key outcome of the Best City Council Plan.
12. The latest Best Council Plan also highlights the challenges to education settings as it states, “As a Child-Friendly City, Leeds continues to invest in the future of our young people which has led to improvements in health and educational outcomes. However, we are acutely aware of the potentially significant immediate and longer-term impacts of Covid-19 on the health, wellbeing and learning of our children and young people and so now, more than ever, there is much more to do to ensure everyone is equipped with the education and skills they need to succeed in life. The council is working with families, schools and others to secure a brighter future for every child in Leeds.”

Appendices

13. Appendix A – Scrutiny Inquiry into Exclusions, Elective Home Education and Off-rolling - Summary of evidence to-date (July 2021)
14. Appendix B – Report of the Director of Children and Families to the Executive Board on Exclusions and Elective Home Education – Annual Update Report. 18th November 2020.

Background papers

15. None.