

SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN AND FAMILIES)

WEDNESDAY, 5TH JULY, 2023

PRESENT: Councillor D Cohen in the Chair

Councillors D Blackburn, Mr E A Britten,
E Bromley, J Dowson, O Edwards,
Graham, N Manaka, K Renshaw,
R. Stephenson and J Tudor

14 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

There were no appeals.

15 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There were no exempt items.

16 Late Items

There were no formal late items.

17 Declaration of Interests

No interests were raised.

18 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies were received on behalf of Councillors Downes, Gruen, Martin, Senior and Smith. Councillor Dowson attended in place of Councillor Martin and Councillor Tudor attended in place of Councillor Gruen. Councillor S Arif further submitted her apologies.

Apologies were also received Co-Opted Members Andrew Graham, Helen Bellamy and Kate Blacker.

19 Minutes - 7 June 2023

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the previous meeting held 7th June 23, be approved as an accurate record.

20 Impact of Vaping on Children and Young People

The report of the Head of Democratic Services presented an item regarding a summary briefing from the Public Health service setting out the possible impacts of increased vaping on children and young people in Leeds (Appendix 1) and to consider what, if any, scrutiny actions could follow.

The Principal Scrutiny Adviser set out the basis for the item coming forward at the Board meeting, following discussions from the meeting held on 7th June 2023. Prior to the meeting Board members suggested that a working group be established to look into the item further and in conjunction with the Adults, Health and Active Lifestyles Scrutiny Board chaired by Councillor Scopes.

The following were in attendance for this item:

Draft minutes to be approved at the meeting
to be held on Wednesday, 6th September, 2023

- Julie Longworth, Director of Children and Families
- Kathryn Ingold, Chief Officer Public Health
- Heather Thomson, Head of Public Health
- Councillor Pryor, Economy, Culture and Education
- Councillor Venner, Executive Member for Children Social Care and Health Partnerships
- Councillor Lay, Otley and Yeadon Ward
- Councillor Scopes, Chair Adults, Health, and Active Lifestyles
- Rob Clayton, Principal Scrutiny Adviser

The Chief Officer (Public Health) introduced the item and thanked the Board for highlighted the importance of the issues associated with young people vaping. The following was highlighted:

- There is a clear role for vapes to assist smokers quit smoking, but not non-smoking children using them.
- Vapes contain nicotine that can be highly addictive and there is evidence of unregulated vape products with higher nicotine concentrations being sold.
- It is reported that the proportion of children experimenting with vapes has increased by 50% nationally; in Leeds the data position is similar based on data from the 'My Health My School' survey.
- The primary reason for young people trying them are experimental and whilst the vaping harm is significantly less than smoking, it is not risk-free and the long-term health impacts on young people are un-known.
- There are concerns with the sale and regulation of vaping products. There are no restrictions on shop displays and the industry is clever at marketing vaping products.
- Action is underway in terms of producing educational materials, presentations to key partners and working alongside West Yorkshire Trading Standards.

Councillor Lay, as one of the elected members that raised concerns about the impact of vaping on children and young people, shared his concerns with the Board, explaining that there are a number of issues in relation to marketing, production, and distribution of vapes and the impact this has on young children in terms of the health implications and the uncertainty of the side effects that they cause. Councillor Lay explained that everybody should be doing their utmost to protect children from harm and highlighted a route that Australia has taken in terms of making sure that vapes are only accessible via prescription. Councillor Lay set out a number of suggestions in terms of:

- National legislative changes.
- Taxing disposable vapes.
- Education and awareness, including prevention programmes in the school curriculum and drawing emphasis on the importance of making healthy choices.
- Providing accurate information on the harmful effects of nicotine and addiction.
- Restricting markets and advertisement and incorporating stricter regulations around the use of vapes.

Councillor Scopes, as Chair of the Scrutiny Board Adults, Health and Active Lifestyles acknowledged the negative health implications of children and young people vaping, and set out three points of interest in terms of:

- 1) What can be done locally in terms of restricting advertisement.
- 2) Working with partners such as West Yorkshire Trading Standards to understand the work they're doing to stop underage sales and where there are specific problems in terms of local shops near schools.
- 3) Pressuring the Government on national legislation around sales and advertisement.

Officers in attendance added the following points:

- The importance of providing factual information on the risks and harm associated with vaping.
- The opportunity to be involved in a working group was welcomed by officers.
- It was acknowledged that national legislation changes would have the biggest impact moving forward and noted that taxing changes in Scotland has been proven effective.
- Further targeted data reporting can be undertaken, and it is acknowledged that the figures may not be completely accurate due to this being self-reported data from children.
- The reduction in smoking rates has largely been achieved through legislative and regulatory measures including reducing marketing and access to tobacco products.
- There is still a balance to be taken in encouraging the use of e-cigarettes to help adults stop smoking but there is work to be done in terms of dissuading experimentation and ensuring young people who do experiment, do not become into regular users.

The Board discussed the following matters:

- What is currently being done locally and the partners involved. It is noted that educational materials are already being considered and LCC are working with academic colleagues and Trading Standards on underage sales and un-regulated vapes. It was acknowledged that vapes have become easily accessible and a concentrated piece of work is on-going with partners on retail education and responding to complaints of underage sales.
- 'My Health My Schools' survey. It was confirmed that colleagues have re-assessed the questions to make sure they align with national survey to assist with comparison.
- The Board commented that some of the marketing seems to be directly related to young people and there are a variety of different flavours that young people may find appealing. It was reported that young children are not keen on menthol and tobacco flavoured vapes but do favour fruit flavours which can be the subject of marketing.
- The difference between vapes and cigarettes. It was noted that regulated vapes contain a lot less nicotine and tend to be used as more of a 'grazing' approach and to manage nicotine dependency.

- Test purchasing and penalties on business in regard to underage sales. It was confirmed that a recent case saw a person being fined £2,000 for a business selling to an underage person. It is not certain whether that fine is enough to be a deterrent for businesses and how their business will be impacted as a result of this. It was added that anecdotally, concerns have been expressed that the city-centre is where children are able to purchase vape products largely unchallenged.
- Members believed that the data as set out in the submitted report potentially underestimates the problem, and that usage is much higher in reality.
- There is also an environmental impact in terms of disposable vapes and there is evidence of increased littering around schools in Leeds.
- It was suggested that the local authority work with partners to tackle online underage sales.

In summary, the Board agreed to take this item forward in a working group involving relevant partners such as West Yorkshire Police, Trading Standards, LCC Public Health, LCC Children and Families, as well as the relevant Scrutiny Boards. The Board agreed that the promotion of vaping products needs to be looked at, as well as the health and behavioural implications associated with young children using them. It was noted that there is a possibility for the Scrutiny Board, as part of the working group, to write to the Government department to set out actions the Board feel to be appropriate in terms of marketing, distribution, and advertisement.

The Chair thanked everybody for their attendance and explained the working group as suggested and agreed by Board members will look at:

- What the Scrutiny Board want the Government to do nationally about this issue.
- To work with partners such as Trading Standards specifically on underage sales and what work can be done with local businesses. As well as liaison with colleagues in health and education.
- What Leeds can do locally to ensure the local authority are seen as an exemplar city in taking an active role in tackling young people vaping. One possible option might be to consider a voluntary code of conduct on marketing vapes amongst businesses in the city seeking to get a commitment to not market vapes at young people.

RESOLVED –

- a) To note the contents of the report, and in particular the information provided on vaping usage and its impacts on children and young people as contained in Appendix 1 of the submitted report.
- b) To agree to establish a working group in conjunction with the Adults, Health and Active Lifestyles Scrutiny Board and various partners from Public Health, Children and Families as well as Trading Standards, West Yorkshire Police and Board members.

21 Provision of EHCP Support - Draft Terms of Reference

The report of the Head of Democratic Services presented a report setting out the draft Terms of Reference for the scrutiny inquiry into the provision of EHCP support in Leeds.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Julie Longworth, Director of Children and Families
- Ben Allchin, Statutory Assessment and Provision Culture and Education
- Farrah Khan, Chief Officer Family Help
- Councillor Pryor, Executive Member for Economy, Culture and Education

The Scrutiny Adviser to the Board set out some background context in terms of the inquiry and set out some direction for the Board in terms of taking the inquiry forward. The Board suggested this form part of a working group, and it was confirmed that this will provisionally commence in September.

The Director of Children and Families explained how nationally this is a significant issue and challenging for all schools across the region. The rise in demand is reported at 118% since 2016, and it is acknowledged that more work needs to be done to meet the needs of young people and families in Leeds.

The Chair highlighted a concern in terms of the timeliness with annual reviews and suggested that work be looked at in terms of exploring digital options. It was confirmed that there is an issue nationally with recruitment and retaining colleagues. The team are looking at digitalisation and bureaucracy whilst still providing quality services for children and families.

Members suggested an alteration to the Terms of Reference regarding witnesses, and highlighted the importance of school staff, Leeds Parent Carer Forum, and Trade Union representation forming part of the inquiry. In particular, members highlighted the importance of hearing from school staff, the Leeds Parent Carer Forum and potentially staff representation from those working on the frontline. Further to this, officers explained that Health should be included in the conversation as part of the inquiry.

The Chair also referenced the need to specifically include the SENSAP Team more broadly in the terms of reference document.

The Chair thanked those in attendance and heightened the importance of progressing on the inquiry to improve the lives for young people with additional needs in the city.

RESOLVED –

- a) To note the contents of the report and note that a revised draft Terms of Reference will form part of the Board's agenda in September 2023 including the comments as set out above.

- b) That a Working Group is set up to consider the planned directorate report on EHCPs later in September and the outcome of that be reported to the October meeting of the Board.

22 The Annual Standards Report

The report of the Director of Children and Families presented a report on performance data for pupils in Leeds in 2022 that has been externally validated following the statutory assessments and examinations which took place in 2022. The data reviews outcomes from early years to Post 16 and outcomes in Leeds are compared with national figures.

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
- Julie Longworth, Director of Children and Families
- Dave Clarke, Chief Officer Learning Improvement
- Erica Hiorns, Leadership and Management Lead
- Sam Golia, Area Lead Primary Learning Improvement
- Jayne Ford, Early Years Foundations Stage Improvement

The Director of Children and Families presented the report and explained that the data is from 2022 due to data being validated throughout the year. The report reviews actions taken by the Learning Improvement team throughout the year to respond to emerging issues and what further actions are planned to address them. The following information was highlighted:

- Attainment was impacted as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and results were generally lower than in 2019 when assessments and examinations were taken, However, the fall in attainment in Leeds has been generally less than those seen nationally and, as a result, results are now broadly in line with national.
- The work of the Learning Improvement Team was also highlighted in terms of the continuing positives they bring to school performance in the city.
- The percentage of children in early years attaining a good level of development is lower than national. Colleagues recognise that this may primarily be due to a number of residents in Leeds having English as a second language and those children may not be around English speakers in the first years of their life during Covid, impacting on their English language development.
- There are a number of positive outcomes in terms of the data for Leeds, those being, the percentage of children achieving the required standard in the Phonics Screening Check at the end of Year 1 is now in line with national; attainment at the end of KS2 is much closer to national than it was previously; Y4 pupils multiplication performed better in this check than pupils nationally.
- Progress data at the end of primary school and secondary school places Leeds in band A (the top of 4 bands).

- It was acknowledged that whilst good progress has been made, there is still work to do in terms of closing some gaps. An example being the percentage of pupils in KS2 meeting the expected standard for reading, writing and maths is lower than pupils nationally.
- There is a clear focus to support children who are particularly vulnerable and identified as needing additional support.

The Executive Member for Economy, Culture and Education set out some positive highlights in the submitted report in terms of children achieving higher than the national data and explained this is due to a joint effort with headteachers, teachers and support staff across Leeds and it would be remiss to overlook those involved with achieving good results.

In responding to questions from the Board, the following was confirmed:

- Yorkshire and Humber and Leeds were impacted more negatively in terms of attendance due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Clarity on the progression of children at the end of KS2 and KS4. At KS4 this measure looks at attainment in a suite of 8 subjects. Outcomes in these subjects per pupil are then compared to outcomes for pupils with similar starting points (i.e. results achieved in KS2 SATs) and compared. Whilst the progress 8 number reported looks small (+0.12) this is actually comparatively high.
- It was requested that the next annual report include a breakdown of data per school and how this information will help in terms of being able to identify what is working best across schools to support and maintain schools who are performing less well. Further to this, officers commented that it is only 2 LA maintained schools which have negative progress data and it is important to look at the breakdown of headline data to understand which areas in a school have performed strongly, and which less so. There is also a mixed picture in terms of academies and their progress data, with some performing very strongly, and others less well.
- An issue was highlighted in terms of specialised subjects being covered by substitute teachers who do not specialise in that area, and the impact this can have on attainment. It was acknowledged that there is a national issue in terms of recruitment and retention and work is ongoing with school leaders and teachers. Further to this, the importance of staff well-being was highlighted and the importance of staff having a safe space and opportunities to develop professional expertise. It was also discussed that classrooms have become more complex and diverse, and there has been an increase in children with vulnerabilities.
- There is a difference in development of children in terms of date of birth within an academic year and this can impact on levels of attainment, continuing on for children moving onto primary, secondary and university level. There is sometimes a 12 month age difference between children in the same academic year and there can be a disparity in development in terms of social skills, language, and emotional well-being.
- A lot of work has taken place around Early Years settings and information and materials are provided to nursery staff and child

minders. There are 1000 early years providers including child minders in Leeds and evening and weekend training opportunities are provided for those unable to attend during work hours. Significant support is provided to those who had challenges through Ofsted Inspections.

- There is positive impact from the work to ensure young people from all ethnicity groups achieve well. Officers referred to the new comprehensive EAL Strategy and focused work to help children with language barriers achieve the best results they can.

In terms of the Refreshed 3As plan, the Board were keen to see that Early Years and post-16 continue to be a priority within this plan. Officers confirmed that there are initial discussions on-going with stakeholders around the priorities for the refreshed plan and the need to focus on language and communication skills more generally in the plan. In terms of post-16, there is no data from GCSE to the end of A-Level, although colleagues continue to monitor this so it is impossible to evaluate progress. It was confirmed that the Scrutiny Board, Infrastructure and Inclusive Growth are looking at NEET figures and post-16 as well as this Board.

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance.

RESOLVED –

- a) To note the contents of the report, including information on performance against headline measures for pupils in Leeds 2022 in comparison to national data.
- b) To note the actions taken by the Learning Improvement Team to improve outcome in Leeds, and the planned actions for the coming year.
- c) To note the priorities contained within the Refreshed 3As plan for 2023-25, with a suggestion that greater emphasis be placed around Early Years.

23 SACRE Annual Report

The report of the Director of Children and Families presented a report that set out the priorities for SACRE over the last year and the progress made; the main areas of discussions at SACRE meetings; work to review RE provision in secondary schools in Leeds; the Welcoming Schools initiative; results in RE in external exams; production of a Sensitivity to Faiths document and details of the professional support and training offered by SACRE consultants.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Councillor Venner, Executive Member for Children Social Care and Health Partnerships
- Councillor Pryor, Executive Member for Economy, Culture and Education
- Julie Longworth, Director of Children and Families
- Dave Clark, Chief Officer Learning Improvement
- Erica Hiorns, Leadership and Management Lead

The Leadership and Management Lead presented the report and highlighted some key points:

- The Local Agreed Syllabus is followed by all maintained schools in Leeds. This is due to be updated in 2024 and the content will remain similar to the current syllabus.
- Secondary schools were asked to complete a brief survey about RE provision and all schools received individual responses to their survey and targeted support was provided where needed.
- Outcomes for Leeds in terms of RE examination results were positive and 3% higher than the national figure. Progress 8 performance was also positive.
- Professional support continued through two consultants. They provided training, RE networks and regular newsletters. The consultants also provided two helpful documents, Sensitivity to Faiths and Voices and Viewpoints providing specific views on areas covered in the RSHE curriculum.
- Leeds SACRE has been awarded a grant to support Religious Education. Two professionally produced films have been produced to introduce young people to a synagogue and gurdwara in Leeds.

The Board collectively thanked everybody on the SACRE committee and their important piece of work to help educate people on different faiths in the city. The positive impact on the delivery of the curriculum was also highlighted.

In responding to a question regarding the educational offer across the city, it was confirmed that there is a focus across all schools in the city on tolerance of faiths and religion; pupils are asked about their understanding of faiths during the inspection process and the LA agreed syllabus provides a broad sweep of religions.

RESOLVED – To note the context of the report and SACRE Annual Report 2021-22 as appended.

24 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 included a copy of the schedule and the Executive Board minutes from the meeting held Wednesday, 21st June 2023.

The Principal Scrutiny Adviser informed the Board that working groups on the Impact of Vaping on Children and Young People and the Provision of EHCP Support will be scheduled and invites circulated to Board members.

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

25 Date and Time of Next Meeting

RESOLVED – To note the date and time of the next meeting as Wednesday, 6th September 2023 at 10am (with a pre-meeting for Board members at 9:30am)

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to be held on Wednesday, 6th September, 2023

The meeting concluded at 12.25.