

Work Schedule

Date: 7th November 2023

Report of: Head of Democratic Services

Report to: Scrutiny Board (Adults, Health and Active Lifestyles)

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

Brief summary

- All Scrutiny Boards are required to determine and manage their own work schedule for the municipal year. In doing so, the work schedule should not be considered a fixed and rigid schedule, it should be recognised as a document that can be adapted and changed to reflect any new and emerging issues throughout the year; and also reflect any timetable issues that might occur from time to time.
- The Scrutiny Board Procedure Rules also state that, where appropriate, all terms of reference for work undertaken by Scrutiny Boards will include 'to review how and to what effect consideration has been given to the impact of a service or policy on all equality areas, as set out in the Council's Equality and Diversity Scheme'.
- The latest version of the Board's work schedule is attached to this report for the Board's consideration.
- This report also references key issues and actions stemming from the Board's working group meeting on 23rd October 2023 in relation to children's neurodiversity.
- Also appended is a letter from the Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust that has been directed to all Councillors and provides an update on its mortuary service, which relates to the earlier engagement work with the Adults, Health and Active Lifestyles Scrutiny Board on its out of hours bereavement arrangements.

Recommendations

Members are requested to note this report and consider the Scrutiny Board's work schedule for the 2023/24 municipal year.

What is this report about?

1. All Scrutiny Boards are required to determine and manage their own work schedule for the municipal year and therefore the latest version of the Board's work schedule for the remainder of the municipal year is attached as Appendix 1 for Members' consideration.
2. The latest Executive Board minutes from the meeting held on 18th October 2023 are also attached as Appendix 2. The Scrutiny Board is asked to consider and note the Executive Board minutes, insofar as they relate to the remit of the Scrutiny Board; and consider any matter where specific scrutiny activity may also be warranted.

Developing the work schedule

3. When considering any developments and/or modifications to the work schedule, effort should be undertaken to:
 - Avoid unnecessary duplication by having a full appreciation of any existing forums already having oversight of, or monitoring, a particular issue.
 - Ensure any Scrutiny undertaken has clarity and focus of purpose and will add value and can be delivered within an agreed time frame.
 - Avoid pure "information items" except where that information is being received as part of a policy/scrutiny review.
 - Seek advice about available resources and relevant timings, taking into consideration the workload across the Scrutiny Boards and the type of Scrutiny taking place.
 - Build in sufficient flexibility to enable the consideration of urgent matters that may arise during the year.
4. To deliver the work schedule, the Board may need to undertake activities outside the formal schedule of meetings – such as working groups and site visits. Additional formal meetings of the Scrutiny Board may also be required.

Scrutiny Working Group Meeting on Children's Neurodiversity

5. During its consideration of the existing all age Leeds Mental Health Strategy, the Adults, Health and Active Lifestyles Scrutiny Board had raised the issue of children's neurodiversity assessments and services in Leeds. It was subsequently agreed that the Board would hold a working group meeting to further explore the existing challenges surrounding children's neurodiversity and the actions being taken/planned to address such challenges.
6. A working group meeting was held on 23rd October 2023 to which all Board Members were invited to attend. An invitation was also extended to the Executive Member for Children's Social Care and Health Partnerships and the Chair of the Children and Families Scrutiny Board. Representatives from the Leeds Health and Care Partnership; Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust; and the Children and Families Directorate were in attendance to present a briefing to the working group and address Members' questions.
7. In summary, the following key points were raised and discussed during the meeting:
 - *Increasing demands* - In Leeds, referrals for neurodiverse assessments for children aged between 0 and 5 years increased from 159 per year in 2016 to 585 per year in 2022. Referrals for neurodiverse assessments for children aged between 5 and 18 years have increased from 361 per year in 2016 to 1455 per year in 2023 (part year). It was acknowledged that this increasing demand for assessment and support for children and young people who are neurodiverse mirrors the national picture.

- *Workforce capacity impacts on waiting times* – It was noted that commissioning capacity has not kept pace with the significant and maintained increase in referrals. Locally, this has led to significant waiting times. The waiting times for assessment have also been exacerbated further by high turnover of clinical staff skilled in delivering assessments (often head hunted by private providers of neurodiverse assessments) resulting in vacancies which are hard to fill due to national shortages of key professionals such as psychologists and paediatricians. Work is therefore being undertaken to explore how other key elements of the workforce, such as Advanced Clinical Practitioners, can be maximised to help alleviate some of the pressures.
- *Adopting a needs-based approach* - Health, care and education partners in the city are undertaking a significant piece of work to define the strategy for the neurodiversity assessment service for children and young people. This focuses on a needs-based approach in recognition that whilst diagnosis of ADHD and autism is important, support and reasonable adjustment for children, young people and families should be universally available, with or without a diagnosis. Importance was placed on a family/carers having access to local support while waiting for a formal assessment, particularly in recognition that conversion rates from referral to diagnosis is high (about 95%). Such support sessions also provide a rich bank of observational data which can be used as part of the ongoing neurodiverse assessment. It was recognised that schools have a particular vital role in meeting the educational needs of pupils who are neurodiverse and will therefore require access to ongoing workforce support and training, such as that provided by the STARS (Specialist Training in Autism and Raising Standards) Team.
- *The patient's statutory right to choose* – Patients have a statutory right to choose an alternative assessment route with an alternative assessment provider who may have shorter waiting times. It was noted that work is underway to develop guidance for parents, carers and GPs on the choice of other providers available to support informed decision making. It was also acknowledged that any referral made to a qualified private provider under the NHS Right to Choose is paid for by the NHS and will therefore still have cost implications locally.
- *Health inequality impacts* – It was recognised that with an increasing demand for NHS assessments for children and young people who are neurodiverse then more affluent families/carers with the ability to purchase their own private assessment are more likely to do so to help speed up receiving a formal diagnosis, leaving those families living in more deprived communities at a disadvantage. It was noted that delays or unequal access to formal assessments may also impact on the ability to access vital welfare benefits, such as Disability Living Allowance.
- *Strengthening partnership working* - It was acknowledged that the solution for effective and sympathetic management of the neurodiverse population in children and young people in Leeds can only be achieved by continuing to strengthen partnership working. Workshops have therefore been held to understand the issue at scale and to bring partners (including families) together to identify and ultimately implement solutions. A further summit is also scheduled for December 2023.
- *Access to online information tools* - An information Hub has been established on the MindMate website about neurodiversity ([Neurodiversity information hub - MindMate](#)). This provides customised information for children, young people, their families and anybody working within the area of neurodiversity from definition through to support groups, strategies, financial support and real-life examples.

8. At the conclusion of the meeting, it was agreed that the Chair of the Adults, Health and Active Lifestyles Scrutiny Board and the Chair of the Children and Families Scrutiny Board would

send a joint letter to the government on this matter emphasising the urgent need for action to help local health services address the increasing demand pressures.

Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust – Mortuary Service

9. Appended to this report is a letter from the Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust which has been sent to all Councillors to provide an update on its mortuary service after undertaking a review of its out of hours bereavement arrangements. Having engaged with the former Adults, Health and Active Lifestyles Scrutiny Board in the early stages of its review process back in February 2023, the Trust has approached the Chair to arrange for an update report to be brought to a future meeting of the Scrutiny Board, which is to include an update on the introduction of a new statutory Medical Examiner System. It is proposed that this is scheduled into the work programme for the Board's January 2024 meeting.

What impact will this proposal have?

10. All Scrutiny Boards are required to determine and manage their own work schedule for the municipal year.

How does this proposal impact the three pillars of the Best City Ambition?

Health and Wellbeing Inclusive Growth Zero Carbon

11. The terms of reference of the Scrutiny Boards promote a strategic and outward looking Scrutiny function that focuses on the priorities set out in the Best City Ambition.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected:

Have ward members been consulted? Yes No

12. The Vision for Scrutiny states that Scrutiny Boards should seek the advice of the Scrutiny officer, the relevant Director and Executive Member about available resources prior to agreeing items of work.

What are the resource implications?

13. Experience has shown that the Scrutiny process is more effective and adds greater value if the Board seeks to minimise the number of substantial inquiries running at one time and focus its resources on one key issue at a time.
14. The Vision for Scrutiny, agreed by full Council also recognises that like all other Council functions, resources to support the Scrutiny function are under considerable pressure and that requests from Scrutiny Boards cannot always be met.
15. Consequently, when establishing their work programmes Scrutiny Boards should consider the criteria set out in paragraph 3.

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

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

What are the legal implications?

17. This report has no specific legal implications.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Latest work schedule of the Adults, Health and Active Lifestyles Scrutiny Board for the 2023/24 municipal year.
- Appendix 2 – Minutes of the Executive Board meeting on 18th October 2023.
- Appendix 3 – Letter from Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust updating local councillors on its Mortuary Service.

Background papers

- None.