

Update report – Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) on serious youth violence in Leeds

Date: 19th June 2024

Report of: Director of Children & Families and Director of Communities, Housing and Environment

Report to: Executive Board

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

Brief summary

Leeds was subject to a three-week Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) in March 2024. This inspection looked at the response of the multi-agency partnership of local authority, police, violence reduction partnership and health services to children affected by serious youth violence.

This report provides an overview of the requirements of a JTAI inspection, as set out in the inspection framework, and the experience of the inspection in Leeds.

Please note that, due to the pre-election period, publication of the report was delayed. The final report was published on the 16th May 2024.

The JTAI inspection report is written as a letter addressed to the Director of Children's Services which is attached to this report. The published report recognises the strength of the partnership approach in Leeds in dealing with Serious Youth Violence.

Recommendations

- a) That Executive Board note the contents of this update report.
- b) That Executive Board note the findings in the published inspection report.
- c) That Executive Board note that the Children and Families directorate accept the findings of the inspection and will address any areas for improvement for the local authority in partnership with Safer Leeds, as identified by the inspection team.
- d) That Executive Board note that Leeds City Council is the principal authority and should prepare a written statement of proposed action responding to the findings outlined in the report. This should be a multi-agency response involving the individuals and agencies that this report is addressed to. The response should set out the actions for the partnership and, when appropriate, individual agencies. The local safeguarding partners should oversee

implementation of the action plan through their local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.

What is this report about?

- 1 This report provides an overview of the Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) that Leeds was subject to in March 2024. It details the requirements of the inspection, as set out in the [inspection framework](#), the preparations that Leeds has undertaken for a potential JTAI, and the experience of responding to a multi-agency inspection.

Joint Targeted Area Inspections (JTAs) – an overview

- 2 JTAs were first introduced in 2016. They are intended to explore and assess the effectiveness of multi-agency partnership working in a local area for a particular cohort of children, young people and families according to particular themes. They are carried out by Ofsted, which inspects local authority children's services, the Care Quality Commission (CQC), which inspects health services, and His Majesty's Inspectorate of the Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS). Depending on the theme, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) may also participate in conducting the inspections. The JTAI lead inspector is always from Ofsted.
- 3 In April 2022, the inspectorates introduced a second type of JTAI, which looks at multi-agency arrangements for the 'front door', where practitioners and members of the public can make contacts and referrals if they have concerns about the safety or welfare of children. The front door JTAI inspection framework runs continuously and does not change its theme, so any local area could be subject to a front door JTAI or themed JTAI at any time.
- 4 A JTAI is a three-week inspection, with the first two weeks ordinarily focused on preparations and supplying the inspection team with requested data and information, and one week of fieldwork where inspectors are on-site in the local area meeting with senior leaders, managers and staff in relevant local authority service areas, police and health services, as well as representatives from the local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements (MASA; in Leeds, this is the LSCP - Leeds Safeguarding Children Partnership) and children and families affected by the theme of the inspection.
- 5 Themes since 2016 have included: child exploitation (both sexual exploitation and criminal exploitation); neglect; domestic abuse; sexual abuse within a family environment; children living with mental ill health; and early help. There are usually 6-8 inspections conducted under each theme, and reports are published on each local area's Ofsted web page.
- 6 Leeds received notification for a JTAI on the theme of exploitation in February 2020, but after two weeks of preparation, the fieldwork for the inspection was cancelled due to the developing situation with the Covid-19 pandemic and imminent national lockdown. No JTAs took place between this time and April 2022, when inspections resumed under the theme of child criminal exploitation (CCE). West Yorkshire Police were subject to a CCE inspection in Kirklees in June 2022 as part of this theme.

JTAI preparation in Leeds

- 7 Since 2016, Leeds has had in place a multi-agency JTAI Working Group, led by the local authority and chaired by a Head of Service. The group meets monthly to consider preparations for a JTAI inspection on the current theme. This group is well established and well attended, with consistent representation from the Integrated Care Board (ICB) and the three health trusts in Leeds, West Yorkshire Police, various local authority services working with children and families; and Probation services.

- 8 Membership of the group is regularly reviewed, to ensure that the relevant local authority services are represented, as well as the appropriate multi-agency contacts with strategic or operational responsibility for children and young people affected by the new theme.

Preparation in relation to the serious youth violence theme

- 9 In September 2023, the JTAI theme changed from early help to serious youth violence. The scope of the inspection was to consider children aged ten and over, and the [inspection framework](#) uses the term ‘children affected by serious youth violence’, to cover children who are victims of violence, children who cause harm through violence and who are both victims and perpetrators (though the framework is clear that the term ‘perpetrator’ should be used with caution for this cohort of children). The theme uses the following definition of serious youth violence: *‘For the purpose of this JTAI theme, when referring to serious youth violence we will include specific types of crime committed by and affecting children outside of the home. We will use the scope outlined in the government’s [Serious Violence Strategy](#), which includes homicide and knife and gun crime, as well as emerging threats, such as the use of corrosive substances as weapons. We will also include intervention in localities in areas where violent crime is prevalent, for example in relation to county lines and drug-dealing activity.’*
- 10 The framework makes clear that the [Serious Violence Duty](#), introduced in April 2023, which requires councils and local services to work together to share information and target interventions to prevent and reduce serious violence, is an important part of the policy context for the inspections. The inspection framework notes that: *‘The duty is based on a public health approach, which requires cooperation and collaboration, including data sharing, across a range of partners. A public health approach to tackling violence means looking at violence not as isolated incidents or solely as a police enforcement problem. It is about taking a multi-agency approach to understanding the causes and consequences of serious violence and focusing together on prevention and early intervention.’*
- 11 The membership of the JTAI group was changed, to include colleagues from Safer Leeds and the probation service, as well as changes to police personnel to ensure that officers with the appropriate portfolio were invited to the group. For the local authority, it was noted that the Children’s Social Work Service, the Youth Justice Service and the Safe Project would be key services and would be the most significantly involved in any serious youth violence inspection; both CSWS and YJS are standing members of the group, and Safe Project SDMs were invited to join. Probation colleagues were re-invited, having not been involved in the previous early help theme, and colleagues from the West Yorkshire Violence Reduction Partnership were invited, in line with references to Violence Reduction Units in the inspection framework.
- 12 Between October and December 2023, the JTAI Working Group considered the requirements of the new theme and findings from the published JTAI inspection in Manchester, as well as colleagues undertaking a formulation looking at partnership working around serious youth violence in Leeds. In this way, colleagues were well prepared for what a JTAI inspection would involve, as well as having the opportunity to discuss and consider the current position of policy and practice in relation to serious youth violence in Leeds.

The Leeds serious youth violence JTAI – 19th February to 8th March 2024

- 13 On 19th February 2024, Leeds received notification of a JTAI on the theme of serious youth violence. This was ten days before the start of the inspection fieldwork, which took place in Leeds between Monday 4th and Friday 8th March 2024.
- 14 The inspection team consisted of twelve inspectors; four from Ofsted, three from the CQC, three from HMICFRS and two from HMIP. The lead inspectorate was Ofsted, and the local authority had a link with the lead inspector for co-ordination of the overall work of the inspection team. Each of the other inspectorates established a lead contact with their relevant agency, i.e.

HMICFRS with West Yorkshire Police, the CQC inspectors with the Leeds ICB (Integrated Care Board) and HMIP with the Youth Justice Service.

- 15 During the two off-site weeks, Leeds was required to produce a range of multi-agency information and data to tight timescales, and a significant volume of strategic, operational and management documents outlining the multi-agency arrangements for responding to serious youth violence in Leeds.
- 16 During the first two weeks following the notification of the inspection, there were also a handful of meetings taking place virtually, including with representatives of the LSCP and senior leaders from the relevant organisations to discuss the strategic approach to serious youth violence in Leeds, including outlining the extensive Leeds partnership governance arrangements. Inspectors were invited to attend relevant multi-agency meetings taking place, including the Contextual MACE (multi-agency child exploitation) meeting. Work to develop and refine the complex multi-agency inspection timetable continued throughout the two off-site weeks.
- 17 Amidst the multi-agency communication and co-ordination required to work towards tight timescales, inspection preparation was impacted by the ongoing difficulties with the fire alarm system at Merrion House, and its office closure during the first week of the inspection. The Children and Families directorate would like to use this opportunity to formally thank colleagues at Civic Hall and in the Chief Executive's office for their support during this time, in finding an alternative space at Civic for the duration of the inspection, and to thank those colleagues who vacated their own workspace to accommodate the inspection team. Their cooperation and responsiveness were appreciated and ensured that the disruption and impact on the inspection was minimised. Safer Leeds and Children and Families have been working closely together on Youth Violence establishing effective cross directorate working and learning and the inspection activity and management mirrored the work on Youth Violence for the local authority, very much a collaborative approach cross directorate and with partners.
- 18 As outlined above, timescales were tight for the submission of requested information, and good communication and co-ordination was required to meet each deadline. Fortunately, colleagues in Leeds have a strong record on partnership working and a focus on the importance of relationships, and this was a helpful starting point in order to respond to the demands of the inspection.
- 19 Through the work of the JTAI Working Group over a number of years, the methodology for undertaking multi-agency audits had been developed and continually refined; This preparation work was helpful in supporting the audit work required for this inspection. During days seven and eight (27th and 28th February), six multi-agency audits took place in relation to the cases selected by the inspection team. The audits took place in person at Civic Hall, and practitioners from all agencies who knew each child were invited to the discussions, as well as a core group from the JTAI Working Group. Each discussion was chaired by the Deputy Director for Social Care, with support from the Head of Service who chairs the JTAI Working Group.
- 20 All audits were well attended, with practitioners from social care, the youth justice service, schools, alternative provision providers, therapeutic services, clusters, health services and police teams taking part in valuable discussions about each of the children and the complexity of their work in this area of practice. Given the short notice dictated by the inspection timescales, their commitment to this piece of work was admirable. Comprehensive and balanced discussions took place, with contributors giving an honest assessment of the strengths and areas for development with each case, which was captured on the audit tool for sharing with inspectors.
- 21 The discussions also served as useful preparation for the practitioners involved in each case, in the knowledge that they would be meeting with inspectors to discuss the selected child during the fieldwork week. From these discussions, colleagues in the children's social work service

noted a number of strengths, including the persistence of practitioners in establishing good working relationships with children and their families, their commitment to advocating for children in complex and risky situations, and their commitment to maintaining children in Leeds, within their families and home communities wherever possible, and managing those risks where safe and appropriate to do so.

- 22 In their feedback, the inspection team's findings in relation to these cases matched our own, and inspectors did not bring to our attention any discrepancies between our audit findings for each of the six cases and their assessment of the multi-agency practice in each case.
- 23 The twelve inspectors in the inspection team attended a total of 79 meetings with Leeds partners – in addition to the set-up discussions with senior leaders in week one. This included visits to Children and Families social care, Project Shield daily risk management meeting, the emergency department at Leeds General Infirmary and to police specialist safeguarding and neighbourhood policing teams, as well as visits to youth justice colleagues, the Safe Project and some of our third sector commissioned providers.
- 24 A considerable amount of co-ordination and multi-agency co-operation was required to develop the timetable and arrange the logistics for these sessions and to liaise with the inspection team about changes and to confirm who they wished to speak to. The master timetable was managed by the local authority, with considerable input from our multi-agency colleagues to ensure the right people were in each meeting.

After the inspection

- 25 After each Ofsted inspection, there is a quality assurance process for the inspectorates to go through before the report is published.
- 26 Under standard circumstances, we would have expected to see the report published within 34 working days of the end of fieldwork. However, we were informed by the lead inspector at the beginning of the inspection that the expected publication date would fall within the pre-election period for local and mayoral elections on 2nd May 2024, and so the final publication would be delayed.
- 27 The final report was published on the 16th May and is attached at Appendix A. In line with feedback given to the partnership at the end of the inspection, it notes the strength of multi-agency relationships in Leeds, and that children benefit from effective multi-agency responses to serious youth violence and criminal exploitation.
- 28 The JTAI Working Group continue to meet, and at the meeting on 26th March 2024, they discussed the experience of the inspection and what could be improved next time, as well as considering a summary of the emerging themes from the multi-agency audits of the six cases. The May meeting of the group falls after the publication of the inspection report, and the group will use this time to consider the findings of the full report and its implications for policy and practice in Leeds. The group will also review the findings in the Leeds report in comparison with other published inspection reports; to date, JTAI serious youth violence reports have been published for inspections in Manchester and Merton, and we can expect further publications before this inspection theme concludes in May 2024.
- 29 The partnership accepts the findings of the inspection, and the Children and Families directorate will address any areas for development for the local authority identified by the inspection team in their final report.
- 30 The report concludes that Leeds City Council is the principal authority and should prepare a written statement of proposed action responding to the findings outlined in the letter. This is a standard requirement for JTAI reports. The written statement of action is due to be send to Ofsted by 23rd August 2024, and it will inform Ofsted's lines of enquiry at any future joint or single-agency activity by the inspectorates.

31 The local safeguarding partners should oversee implementation of the action plan through their local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.

What impact will this proposal have?

32 Not applicable – this is an update report, with no proposals included.

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

Health and Wellbeing

Inclusive Growth

Zero Carbon

33 The findings of the inspection, as outlined in the JTAI Inspection report at appendix A, relate to the health and wellbeing of children in Leeds who are affected by serious youth violence, and their families. The findings of the inspection will be used to inform further development and improvement to the work of the Leeds multi-agency partnership on this emerging area of safeguarding practice.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected:

Have ward members been consulted?

Yes

No

34 Not applicable – this is an update report, with no proposals included.

What are the resource implications?

35 A partnership action plan will need to be developed in response to the areas of improvement identified and consideration will need to be given in relation to any resource implication for single agencies or the partnership.

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

36 The partnership needs to ensure continued focus around Youth Violence and responding to this. The Governance arrangements in Leeds were recognised by the inspectors as a strength and this ensures continued focus on this issue as a city and partnership. The Leeds Safeguarding Children's Partnership have also identified Serious Youth Violence as one of 3 key priorities ensuring the partnerships commitment and continued joint up approach to working on this issue.

What are the legal implications?

37 The JTAI is an inspection of the multi-agency response to a particular area, for this inspection it was Serious Youth Violence. The inspection outcome places a duty on the Leeds City Council as the principal authority to prepare a written statement of action in response to the findings. The actions are multi agency and will inform single agency lines of enquiry for future inspections.

Options, timescales and measuring success

What other options were considered?

38 There are no other options that can be considered as the inspection places a duty on Leeds City Council to submit the written statement as described in the above section as a response to the inspection findings.

How will success be measured?

39 The actions identified in the written statement that will be submitted to OFSTED will be overseen by the Leeds Childrens Safeguarding Partnership Executive.

What is the timetable and who will be responsible for implementation?

40 Leeds Children and Families will lead on preparing the written statement of actions with partners to submit to OFSTED by 23rd August 2024. The lead officer for this will be the Deputy Director for Social Care.

Appendices

- Inspection report on the Leeds Serious youth violence JTAI, published on the Ofsted website. (Please note this report is written as a letter addressed to the Director of Children's Services)

Background papers

- None