

SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN AND FAMILIES)

WEDNESDAY, 13TH OCTOBER, 2021

PRESENT: Councillor A Lamb in the Chair

Councillors K Brooks, J Dowson, E Flint,
A Forsaith, C Gruen, J Illingworth,
K Renshaw, L Richards, J Senior,
R Stephenson and P Wray

Co-opted Members (Voting)

Mr E A Britten - Church Representative (Catholic)
Mr A Graham – Church representative (Church of England)
Mrs J Ward – Parent Governor Representative (Secondary)

Co-opted Members (Non-Voting)

Ms C Foote – School Staff Representative
Ms H Bellamy - School Staff Representative

11 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

There were no appeals.

12 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There were no exempt items.

13 Late Items

There were no late items.

14 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interests.

15 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A Marshall-Katung, Z Hussain, H Bithell and S Lay. Councillors J Dowson, P Wray and K Brooks were in attendance as substitutes.

Apologies were also received from co-opted members Laura Whitaker and Kate Blacker.

16 Minutes of previous meetings

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the minutes of the meeting held on 8th September 2021 be approved as an accurate record.
- (b) That the note of the consultative meeting held on 15th September 2021 be noted.

17 Youth Justice Plan 2021 - 24

The Director of Children and Families submitted a report that presented the new Leeds Youth Justice Plan 2021 – 24 for the Board's consideration.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor Jonathan Pryor, Executive Member for Economy, Culture and Education
- Councillor Fiona Venner, Executive Member for Adult and Children's Social Care and Health Partnerships
- Sal Tariq, Director of Children and Families
- Ruth Terry, Chief Officer for Social Work

The Executive Member for Adult and Children's Social Care and Health Partnerships introduced the report, drawing attention to the outcomes of a recent inspection which largely supported the preventative approach and practice in Leeds to reduce youth offending, but also found that black and minority ethnic (BAME) boys and young men in custody often have had no contact with services prior to sentencing.

Members discussed a number of matters, including:

- *Identification of at-risk young people.* In recognition of the need to target at-risk groups of young people, such as BAME boys and children looked after, Members queried the methods in place to identify at-risk young people at the earliest opportunity. Members were advised that early help teams help to identify children at risk, and strong links exist between the Youth Justice Board and schools. Members were advised that the Equality and Diversity Strategic Group is also focusing on the steps to be taken to ensure that systemic disproportionality is addressed across the system. It was also confirmed that the Corporate Parenting Board includes police representation to support early identification and support for children looked after at risk of youth offending.
- *Consulting the views of the Corporate Parenting Board.* The Scrutiny Board suggested that the Corporate Parenting Board be given the opportunity to consider and also provide comment on the new Youth Justice Plan. In response, the Director of Children and Families agreed to ensure that the Plan be submitted to the Corporate Parenting Board

following consideration at Executive Board, with flexibility to adapt the plan accordingly following its input.

- *Delays within the criminal justice system.* In response to a query, Members were advised that court backlogs are impacting youth cases. It was also noted that delays can also result in children becoming adults and being sentenced as such.
- *Timeframes for support following custodial sentences.* In response to a query, members were advised that support following custody is determined on an individual basis with early help/social work teams as part of the resettlement programme to support the child and their family. It was noted that resettlement services nationally require more resource.
- *Support for individuals with poor social and emotional mental health.* It was confirmed that additional resource has been introduced in the form of life coaches in the youth services, which will help to identify young people at risk of offending.
- *Support for third sector projects.* Members recognised the value of preventative and restorative projects delivered by the third sector, and the need to include support to third sector organisations as part of the plan.

The Chair suggested that the Board maintains a watching brief surrounding the implementation of the Plan. It was therefore proposed that a formal update be brought back to Scrutiny within 12 months and that the Board hears directly from relevant local community groups and services as part of the next update.

RESOLVED –

- a) That the contents of the report, along with Members comments, be noted.
- b) To note that, subject to any further feedback arising from the consultation with the Corporate Parenting Board, the Scrutiny Board (Children and Families) collectively endorse the Youth Justice Plan 2021-24.
- c) That an update on the Youth Justice Plan 2021-24 is brought back to Scrutiny within the next 12 months.

18 Covid-19 Update - Early Years, Early Help and Children's Social Care

The Director of Children and Families submitted a report that presented an update on the focused work being undertaken to support children and young people in Leeds through the early years, early help and children's social care services.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor Jonathan Pryor, Executive Member for Economy, Culture and Education

- Councillor Fiona Venner, Executive Member for Adult and Children's Social Care and Health Partnerships
- Sal Tariq, Director of Children and Families
- Ruth Terry, Chief Officer for Social Work

The Executive Member for Adult and Children's Social Care and Health Partnerships introduced the report, providing an overview of the key highlights for the sector since the previous update.

Members discussed a number of matters, including:

- *Changes to staffing.* Members recognised the continued dedication of the social care service throughout pandemic despite significant pressure within the system.
- *Impact of limited socialisation for young children.* Members recognised the importance of take-up of early years support available at children's centres in Leeds, due to the reduced social contact with people outside of their immediate families and closure of early years educational settings during the pandemic. Members were advised that the impact of the pandemic on young children has become apparent in educational settings and will be an area closely monitored moving forward.
- *Early Years Foundation Curriculum.* Related to above, it was noted that teachers have reported that delivering the curriculum alongside the support necessary to boost children's social and emotional skills is proving a challenge.

RESOLVED – That the contents of the report, along with Members comments, be noted.

19 Ofsted Focused Visit Improvement Plan

The Director of Children and Families submitted a report that provided a further update surrounding the Improvement Plan linked to the recent Ofsted Focused Visit to the Leeds Children and Families Front Door Service in July 2021.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor Jonathan Pryor, Executive Member for Economy, Culture and Education
- Councillor Fiona Venner, Executive Member for Adult and Children's Social Care and Health Partnerships
- Sal Tariq, Director of Children and Families
- Ruth Terry, Chief Officer for Social Work

The Executive Member for Adult and Children's Social Care and Health Partnerships introduced the report, highlighting that attendance of all parties at strategy meetings has significantly increased since the last meeting.

Members discussed a number of matters, including:

- *Returning to offices.* Members queried the staff reaction to returning to some office based working, and were advised that the approach is to provide flexibility to allow for a mixture of homeworking and office working, based on the benefits of each, which has been largely supported by the workforce.
- *Use of data and metrics within update reports.* Members requested that future reports include clear metrics to allow the Board to monitor the progress against the recommendations of the action plan.
- *Visit to the Front Door Team.* The Chair suggested that it may be helpful for a small number of Scrutiny Members to undertake a visit to the Front Door Team and the Director agreed to help facilitate this.

RESOLVED –

- a) That the contents of the report, along with Members comments, be noted.
- b) That arrangements are made for a small number of Scrutiny Members to undertake a visit to the Front Door Team.

20 Inquiry into Exclusions, Elective Home Education and Off-rolling (Part 2) - Draft Terms of Reference

The Head of Democratic Services submitted a report that presented draft terms of reference for part two of the Scrutiny Board's ongoing Inquiry into Exclusions, Elective Home Education and Off-rolling.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor Jonathan Pryor, Executive Member for Economy, Culture and Education
- Councillor Fiona Venner, Executive Member for Adult and Children's Social Care and Health Partnerships
- Sal Tariq, Director of Children and Families

The Chair introduced the report and sought Members views on the draft terms of reference appended to the report.

There was some discussion and suggestions made to change elements of the evidence gathering sessions as follows:

- To defer consideration of the latest local figures relating to permanent and fixed term exclusion rates until the final evidence session scheduled for February 2022. However, the Board felt it would still be helpful to receive a brief general overview of attendance across local schools as part of session one.
- To switch sessions two and three so that the experiences and views of young people and their families are gathered earlier in the inquiry.

- To include Chair of Governor representation as part of the list of identified witnesses to the inquiry.

RESOLVED – That, subject to the above amendments being made, the Scrutiny Board approves the terms of reference relating to part two of its ongoing Inquiry into Exclusions, Elective Home Education and Off-rolling.

21 Work Schedule

The Head of Democratic Services submitted a report that presented the draft work schedule for the forthcoming municipal year.

RESOLVED – That the work schedule be updated to reflect requests made during the meeting.

22 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Wednesday, 3rd November 2021 at 10.00 am (pre-meeting for all Board Members at 9.45 am)