

SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN'S SERVICES)

THURSDAY, 17TH SEPTEMBER, 2009

PRESENT: Councillor W Hyde in the Chair

Councillors B Cleasby, D Coupar, G Driver,
R D Feldman, B Gettings, Johnson, G Kirkland,
B Lancaster, K Renshaw, B Selby and E Taylor

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (VOTING):

Mr E A Britten	- Church Representative (Catholic)
Mrs S Knights	- Parent Governor Representative (Primary)
Mr B Wanyonyi	- Parent Governor Representative (Secondary)

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (NON-VOTING):

Ms C Foote	- Teacher Representative
Mrs S Hutchinson	- Early Years Development & Childcare Partnership Representative

26 Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed all in attendance to the September meeting of the Scrutiny Board (Children's Services). In particular, the Chair welcomed Councillor Coupar to her first meeting of the Scrutiny Board (Children's Services).

27 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

28 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted by Co-opted Members, Professor P Gosden and Ms J Morris-Boam.

29 Minutes - 9th July 2009

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 9th July 2009 be confirmed as a correct record.

30 Matters Arising from the Minutes

Minute No. 22 – Youth Service user and non-user surveys 2009

The Board agreed to establish a Working Group to review the proposals for the next youth service non-user survey, in order to ensure that the Board's concerns regarding the involvement of young people through schools was adequately addressed.

Minute No. 19 – Request for Scrutiny – City of Leeds High School

One Member requested an update on the current situation at City of Leeds High School. It was reported that a Working Group meeting involving Pat Toner, Education Leeds, had taken place and there were still some outstanding issues to resolve. The Board was advised that in light of recent demographic and funding developments that a report was expected to be submitted to the Executive Board in October.

It was agreed that the Working Group would meet again as soon as possible following the Executive Board meeting.

Minute No. 20 – Scrutiny Inquiry – 14-19 Education Review

One Member requested an update on results for key stage 4. It was advised that the interim results were due to be presented to the Executive Board in October. The final results would be available in November. It was agreed to provide a report back to the Scrutiny Board, following the report to Executive Board.

31 Quarter 1 Performance Report 2009-10

The Head of Policy, Performance and Improvement submitted a report which presented the quarter one performance results for Children's Services.

The following information was appended to the report:

- Accountability Reporting Guidance;
- Children's Services 2009/10 Quarter 1; and
- Updated 2008/09 Year End Results.

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Councillor Golton, Executive Member (Children's Services) and Councillor Harker, Executive Member (Learning).

In addition, the following officers attended the meeting:

- Chris Edwards, Chief Executive (Education Leeds);
- Keith Burton, Deputy Director of Children's Services;
- Jackie Wilson, Chief Officer for Children and Young People's Social Care;
- Nicola Engel, Head of Policy and Performance, Learning and Leisure; and
- Joan Haines, Head of the Sensory Service and Improving Outcomes Learning Difficulties and Disabilities (LDD) (Sensory Service).

Key performance issues were highlighted and in brief summary the main areas of discussion were:

- Concern about some of the judgements using the traffic lights system, particularly CYPP-P9-3 (the proportion of residential homes judged by Ofsted to be good or better), which had been allocated amber against a predicted full year result of 77%. The Department advised that the robustness of all indicators was being checked as part of a corporate review.
- Issues around the inspection of a particular Children's Home and other ongoing actions. Members highlighted the need to ensure that sufficient safeguards were in place to protect young people. The Scrutiny Board agreed to receive a report back at a future meeting. It was noted that this item would be exempt due to confidentiality issues.
- Officers were thanked for including numbers as well as percentages in the performance report.
- Concern about NI 103A / NI 103B (Special Educational Needs – statements issued within 26 weeks) and the need for closer engagement with families and carers.
- Actions taken to address concerns involving severe and complex cases, including joint working with the Parent Partnership and developing a detailed action plan. It was agreed to forward copies of the action plan to Scrutiny Board Members.
- Clarification about the time taken to issue statements beyond 26 weeks. It was agreed that information relating to statements issued beyond 26 weeks would be forwarded to Scrutiny Board Members.
- Confirmation that the two Independent Reviewing Officers posts were being advertised shortly.
- Concern about NI 59 (Percentage of initial assessments within 7 working days of referral) and NI 60 (The percentage of Core Assessments that were completed within 35 working days of their commencement). It was reported that a multi-agency project was being undertaken to screen referrals. In addition, advanced practitioners were being employed to work as mentors and assist with reviewing complex cases.
- Confirmation that the study in relation to LSP-HW2B(I)A (Number of looked after children) had not yet been completed.
- Concern about CYPP-P9-3 (The proportion of residential homes judged by Ofsted to be good or better). It was reported that there had been an improvement in Quarter 2 figures.

RESOLVED – That the report and information appended to the report be noted.

32 Children's Services and the Children and Young People's Plan Update (September 2009)

As part of the process of receiving regular progress reports on the Council's Children and Young People's Plan, the Board considered a report submitted by the Director of Children's Services which included updates on two particular aspects of the Plan;

- The CYP Plan priority of reducing the number of children and young people not in education, employment or training (NEET); and
- The strategic development around the transfer of powers from the Learning and Skills Council to the local authority in relation to the commissioning of all 14-19 learning and skills provision, and 14-25 provision for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities.

The following Members and officers attended the meeting and responded to Members' questions and comments:

- Councillor Golton, Executive Member (Children's Services);
- Councillor Harker, Executive Member (Learning);
- Keith Burton, Deputy Director of Children's Services; and
- John Paxton, Head of Integrated Youth Support Services.

Also in attendance was Terry Walsh from Prospects, to respond to Members' queries and comments around reducing NEETs.

In brief summary, the main areas of discussion were:

- Concern that the NEET figure for Leeds (currently 10.1%) had not improved. It was reported that taking into account the significant increases in unemployment figures nationally as a result of the recession, the standstill in Leeds figures compared with other authorities with increasing NEET figures.
- The need to engage young people in worthwhile activities and the effect on NEET figures.
- Ensuring that the offer of learning met the needs of all young people.
- Concern that some young people were rejecting courses which they felt would not assist them to find suitable employment.
- The need to develop learning provision at schools and colleges and publicising the types of courses available.
- Concern about individuals with special learning needs being left behind.

RESOLVED – That subject to the above comments, the update report be received and noted.

(Councillor Renshaw left the meeting at 11.45 am and Mr Wanyonyi at 12.02 pm, during the consideration of this item).

33 Formal Response to Scrutiny Recommendations - Education Standards - Entering the Education System

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which presented the formal response to the Board's recommendations on 'Education Standards – Entering the Education System'.

The following officers were in attendance at the meeting to respond to Members' questions and comments:

- Keith Burton, Deputy Director of Children's Services;
- Christine Halsall, Head of Primary School Involvement; and
- Andrea Richardson, Quality and Standards Manager (Early Years).

In relation to the review of Children's Centres, it was agreed that details of the outcomes from the review would be forwarded to Members.

The Board then considered the formal response to scrutiny recommendations as follows:

Recommendation 1 – Sign off (Category 2);
 Recommendation 2 – Report update in 6 months on levels of attendance at leadership and management forums and cluster meetings (Category 4);
 Recommendation 3 – Sign off (Category 2);
 Recommendation 4 – Report update in 12 months on take up of the Transition Record (Category 4);
 Recommendation 5 – Sign off (Category 2);
 Recommendation 6 – Sign off (Category 2);
 Recommendation 7 – Scrutiny Board to be updated quarterly on progress against Action Plan (Category 4);
 Recommendation 8 – Scrutiny Board to be further updated on review around funding for young children with disabilities across all sectors (Category 4); and
 Recommendation 9 – Scrutiny Board to be updated quarterly on progress towards January 2010 against target for all Children's Centres to have Advisory Boards (Category 4).

RESOLVED – That the Board approves the status of the recommendations, as detailed above.

(Councillor Selby left the meeting at 12.22 pm during the consideration of this item).

34 Formal Response to Scrutiny Recommendations - Protecting our Environment

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which presented the formal response to the Young People's Scrutiny Forum's third inquiry on 'Protecting our Environment'.

Members discussed establishing a joint working group consisting of Board Members and Youth Council Scrutiny Panel members to consider the responses to the recommendations contained in the 'Protecting our Environment' report. It was advised that membership of Youth Council Scrutiny Panel Members would be confirmed following the Youth Council annual elections in October.

It was also noted that the Executive Members would be attending the Youth Council to discuss the report.

RESOLVED – That a joint working group consisting of Board Members and Youth Council Scrutiny Panel members be established following the Youth Council annual elections in October to consider the responses to the recommendations contained in the ‘Protecting our Environment’ report.

35 Recommendation Tracking

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which requested Members to confirm the status of scrutiny recommendations (Children’s Services).

Appended to the report was the recommendation tracking flowchart and draft status of recommendations.

The following comments were made in respect of the outstanding recommendations:

- In relation to recommendation 3 ‘Adoption in Leeds’, it was reported that the Adoption Officer posts had been re-advertised and interviews were taking place shortly.
- Members welcomed the information that had been provided at a local level on holiday activities.

RESOLVED –

(a) That the report and information appended to the report be noted; and
(b) That the Board agrees the status of recommendations, subject to recommendation 3 on ‘Adoption in Leeds’ and recommendation 9 on ‘Services for 8-13 year olds’ being given a status of 4, continue monitoring, and recommendation 3 on Multi-Agency Support Team (MAST) being given a status of 2 , achieved.

(Mrs S Hutchinson and Councillors R F Feldman and E Taylor left the meeting at 12.37 pm, Councillors B Cleasby and B Gettings at 12.40 pm, and Councillor G Driver at 12.44 pm, during the consideration of this item).

36 Work Programme

A report was submitted by the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development which detailed the Scrutiny Board’s work programme for the remainder of the current municipal year.

Appended to the report for Members’ information was the current version of the Board’s work programme, an update on working group activity, an extract from the Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period 1st September 2009 to 31st December 2009, which related to the Board’s remit, together with the minutes from the Executive Board meetings held on 22nd July and 26th August 2009.

The Principal Scrutiny Advisor agreed to e-mail the Board to invite Members to serve on the working groups relating to Youth Service surveys, and Protecting our Environment.

RESOLVED – That subject to the comments raised at the meeting, the work programme be approved.

37 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Thursday 15th October 2009 at 9.45 am with a pre-meeting for Board Members at 9.15 am.

(The meeting concluded at 12.46 pm.)