

SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN AND FAMILIES)

THURSDAY, 6TH OCTOBER, 2011

PRESENT: Councillor J Chapman in the Chair

Councillors G Driver, P Ewens, B Gettings,
A Khan, A Lamb, P Latty, K Maqsood,
A McKenna, M Rafique and K Renshaw

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (VOTING):

Mr E A Britten – Church Representative (Catholic)
Ms A Craven – Parent Governor Representative (Primary)
Ms J Ward – Parent Governor Representative (Secondary)
Ms N Cox – Parent Governor Representative (Special)

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (NON-VOTING):

Mrs S Hutchinson – Early Years Representative
Ms T Kayani – Leeds Youth Work Partnership Representative
Ms A Choudhry – Leeds VOICE Children and Young Peoples Services Forum Representative

32 Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed all in attendance to the October meeting of the Scrutiny Board (Children and Families).

33 Late Items

The Chair admitted to the agenda, further information and data in relation to the Scrutiny Board's inquiry into external placements. (Minute No. 37 refers)

34 Declarations of Interest

Ms J Ward declared a personal interest in relation to agenda item 7, Scrutiny Inquiry – External Placements, in her capacity as Parent Governor at Corpus Christi Catholic College. (Minute No. 37 refers)

35 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

An apology for absence was submitted by Ms C Foote.

36 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 8th September 2011 be approved as a correct record.

37 Scrutiny Inquiry - External Placements

Further to Minute No. 28 of the meeting held on 8th September 2011, the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which presented evidence in line with session 2 of the Scrutiny Board's inquiry into external placements.

The following information was appended to the report:

- Terms of reference for the inquiry into external placements
- Children's Placements Strategy and Sufficiency Action Plan
- Foster Carer Recruitment and Assessment Strategy
- Further information and data in relation to external placements which had been requested by the Scrutiny Board.

The Chair welcomed to the meeting, Councillor Hanley, Deputy Executive Member (Children's Services) and the following officers:

- Sarah Sinclair, Chief Officer – Strategy, Commissioning and Performance, Children's Services
- Saleem Tariq, Assistant Chief Officer, Children's Services.

A brief introduction was provided on work being undertaken as part of the Children's Placement Strategy and Sufficiency Action Plan; and the Foster Carer Recruitment and Assessment Strategy.

In brief summary, the key areas of discussion were:

- Improvements in planning for the number and types of placement required.
- Ongoing work in relation to foster carer recruitment.
- Development of internal provision and reducing the reliance on external placements.
- Confirmation of work being undertaken to retain LCC foster carers, development of the service and changes to the pay structure.
- Identifying local solutions and the role of clusters.
- Improvements in performance systems, particularly in terms of analysing the number of referrals on a weekly basis.
- Identifying hotspot areas in clusters.
- Further information requested in relation to boarding arrangements.
- Work being undertaken with the voluntary sector, particularly in relation to preventative approaches.
- Revised programme plan established to measure impact of recent improvements.
- Overcoming cultural barriers in reducing the number of referrals, developing work in localities with schools, clusters and the voluntary sector.

- Utilising the skills and experiences of existing foster carers, particularly in terms of sharing life stories with other individuals interested in becoming foster carers.
- Acknowledgement and support for Children's Centres.
- Support for individuals with learning disabilities.

RESOLVED – That the issues raised be incorporated in the draft report of the Scrutiny Board's inquiry.

(Councillor Khan joined the meeting at 9.55am during the consideration of this item.)

(Councillor A McKenna left the meeting at 11.15am and Councillor Gettings at 11.34am during the consideration of this item.)

38 Recommendation Tracking

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which requested Members to confirm the status of recommendations from previous inquiries.

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

The status of recommendations were agreed as follows:

- Entering the Education System (recommendation 4) – sign off
- Safeguarding Interim Report (recommendation 1) – subject to confirmation of satisfactory progress against Ofsted inspection report, monitor again in 12 months
- Meadowfield Primary School (recommendation 6) – sign off
- Outdoor Education Centres (recommendation 2) – monitor again in 3 months; (recommendation 4) – stop monitoring.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the report and information appended to the report be noted
- (b) That the Scrutiny Board approves the status of recommendations as set out above.

39 Work Programme

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

Appended to the report for Members' information was the current version of the Board's work programme, minutes of the Executive Board meeting held on 7th September 2011, together with an extract from the Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period 1st October 2011 to 31st January 2012.

Minutes approved as a correct record
at the meeting held on Thursday, 10th November, 2011

The Scrutiny Board was informed that the Ofsted inspection report had been scheduled for November and a report on outcomes for looked after children had been scheduled for January.

RESOLVED – That the work programme be approved.

40 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Thursday, 10th November 2011 at 9.45am with a Pre Meeting for Board Members at 9.15am

(The meeting concluded at 11.42am.)