

SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN AND FAMILIES)

THURSDAY, 9TH FEBRUARY, 2012

PRESENT: Councillor J Chapman in the Chair

Councillors J Akhtar, G Driver, P Ewens,
B Gettings, 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)

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (NON-VOTING):

Ms C Foote - Teacher Representative

Ms A Choudhry - Young Lives Leeds

66 Chair's Opening Remarks

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

67 Late Items

In accordance with her powers under Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chair agreed to accept a late report, agenda item 8, Inquiry on External Placements - Draft Final Report and Recommendations, which was not available at the time of agenda despatch. (Minute No. 71 refers)

68 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Lamb declared a personal interest in agenda item 7, Scrutiny Inquiry Session 1 - Increasing the number of young people in employment, education or training (EET), in his capacity as a Member of the Prince's Trust - West Yorkshire Committee. (Minute No. 70 refers).

A further declaration of interest was made at a later point in the meeting. (Minute No. 70 refers)

69 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence were submitted by Councillor Khan and Co-opted Members, Ms Cox, Mrs Hutchinson and Ms Kayani. Notification had been received that Councillor Akhtar was to substitute for Councillor Khan.

70 Minutes - 12th January 2012

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 12th January 2012 be approved as a correct record.

71 Matters Arising from the Minutes

Scrutiny Board (Children and Families) – Membership update

Members were informed that Jeannette Morris-Boam was replacing Aqila Choudhry as the Young Lives Leeds representative from the March Scrutiny Board meeting onwards.

72 Scrutiny Inquiry Session 1 - Increasing the number of young people in employment, education or training (EET)

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report which presented evidence in line with Session 1 of the Scrutiny Board's Inquiry into increasing the number of young people in employment, education or training (EET).

The following information was appended to the report:

- Audit Commission summary report "Against the Odds" published in July 2010
- Information on the number of young people NEET, and comparison with other local authorities (November 2011)
- The latest Children's Trust Board report card relating to NEET (January 2012)
- Raising the Participation Age (RPA) – Action Plan for Leeds
- Training opportunities available to individuals claiming benefits
- Leeds City College - Flexible start short courses for 16-24 year olds
- Cross government strategy for 16-24 year olds "Building Engagement, Building Futures: Our Strategy to Maximise the Participation of 16-24 Year Olds in Education, Training and Work" (December 2011).

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

- Councillor Blake, Executive Member - Children and Families
- Nigel Richardson, Director of Children's Services
- Gary Milner, Head of 14-19 Strategy, Children's Services
- Ken Morton, Head of Young People and Skills, Children's Services
- Sue Wynne, Chief Officer, Employment and Skills, Environment and Neighbourhoods

The key areas of discussion were:

- Challenges associated with the current economic climate and rising youth unemployment.

- Development of careers provision and support from the voluntary sector. Joint working had been undertaken with schools to establish an approved provider list. Leeds Pathways website provided further information and support.
- Development of links with learning providers and the business community in supporting young people into employment. The Chief Officer, Employment and Skills, Environment and Neighbourhoods, agreed to provide the Scrutiny Board with an overview of the initiatives that were currently in place at the next meeting.
- The changing context of academies and the differences in governance arrangements which may impact on universal careers advice from September 2012.
- The importance of early intervention programmes and establishing a cohesive approach to this area of work.
- Building on work in communities to “reconnect disconnected communities”, raising aspirations and self-esteem.
- Concern about the increase in individuals recorded as not known.
- Support for young people with special educational needs and mental health difficulties.
- Ensuring that parents and carers were kept informed about the types of learning provision that were available.

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the relevant issues considered be incorporated in the draft report of the Scrutiny Board’s inquiry.
- (b) That further statistical data on NEETs age 19 – 24 by electoral ward be brought before the Scrutiny Board at the next meeting.
- (c) That further statistical data on long term or ‘sustained’ NEETs by individual circumstances be brought before the Scrutiny Board at the next meeting.

(Councillors Ewens and Rafique joined the meeting at 10.00am during the consideration of this item.)

(Councillor Gettings withdrew from the meeting at 10.55am, Ms Choudhry at 11.03am, Councillor Akhtar at 11.30am and Councillor A McKenna at 11.33am, during the consideration of this item.)

(Councillor Ewens declared a personal interest in this item in her capacity as LEA Governor at City of Leeds High School.)

73 Inquiry on External Placements - Draft Final Report & Recommendations

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which presented the conclusions and recommendations arising from the Scrutiny Board’s inquiry into external placements.

Sandra Newbould, Principal Scrutiny Adviser, presented the report.

The following comments / amendments to the draft final report and recommendations were agreed as follows:

- Concern about children being placed outside Leeds. It was advised that homes outside Leeds were subject to the same strict checks as those within the local authority area.
- An amendment under paragraph 137 to reflect the Scrutiny Board's concern about one of the independent care homes which was establishing its own school for in-house education.
- An amendment under paragraph 95 to emphasise that value for money should be expressed in terms of achieving the best outcome for young people and not about adopting the cheapest option.
- An amendment to recommendation 10 to read 'That the Director of Children's Services reports back to the Scrutiny Board in July 2012 on what formalised input foster carers should have into the review process for children they care for and how improvements can be made to ensure that their input is considered in practice'.

RESOLVED –

(a) That the Scrutiny Board's final report and recommendations, as amended, be approved.

(b) That a formal response to the recommendations be produced in line with normal procedures for scrutiny inquiry reports.

(Councillor Renshaw left the meeting at 11.51am during the consideration of this item.)

74 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 4th January 2012, and an extract from the Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period 1st February 2012 to 31st May 2012.

It was advised that the initial outcome to the residential care home review was being presented to the Scrutiny Board in April 2012.

RESOLVED – That the work programme be approved.

75 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Thursday, 15th March 2012 at 9.45am with a Pre Meeting for Board Members at 9.15am

(The meeting concluded at 11.55am.)