



Report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development

Scrutiny Board (Children's Services)

Date: 13 July 2006

Subject: Formal Response – Children Act Inquiry

Electoral Wards Affected:

Specific Implications For:

Ethnic minorities

Women

Disabled people

Narrowing the Gap

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 During 2005/06, the Scrutiny Board (Children and Young People) carried out an inquiry into the implementation of the Children Act 2004 in Leeds. The board issued two reports during the course of its inquiry, an interim report in January 2006 and a final report in April 2006.
- 1.2 It is the normal practice to request a formal response from departments to the board's recommendations, once a final report has been issued. A formal response to the interim report was received in March 2006. This identified further reports to scrutiny in April and July 2006. The July update is attached as appendix 1
- 1.3 A formal response to the final report has now been received. This is attached as appendix 2.
- 1.4 Members are asked to consider the responses provided, and to decide whether any further scrutiny involvement is required. In particular members are requested to consider the frequency of any future progress reports against the recommendations originally contained in the scrutiny board's reports.
- 1.5 In deciding whether to undertake any further work, members will need to consider the balance of the board's work programme.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 Members are asked to consider the responses provided and to decide whether further scrutiny involvement is required.

Implementation of the Children Act in Leeds – Interim Report - Scrutiny Action Plan

Recommendation	Action taken/proposed	Responsibility	Timescale
<p>1. That the Chief Executive facilitates a review in order to identify the most appropriate local democratic arrangements for the discharge of the role of Lead Member for Children’s Services (Executive Member in Leeds), including any designated member support for the role, and any consequent implications for the Executive Board as a whole.</p>	<p>Proposals to be developed including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an explanation of the new arrangements under the officer delegation scheme and its interrelationship with the role of Executive Member • précis of legislative requirements and statutory guidance re role of Executive Member and any support Members • explanation of implications of individual Executive member decision making • consideration of available options and identification of preferred option 	Chief Executive	Report to 6 April 2006 Scrutiny Board
<p>2. That all elected Members are made aware of the outcome of the review requested in recommendation 1, well in advance of the Leader appointing the Executive Board for the new municipal year.</p>	<p>Members will be made aware via the report to Scrutiny Board referred to above.</p>	Chief Executive	Report to 6 April 2006 Scrutiny Board

Recommendation	Action taken/proposed	Responsibility	Timescale
<p>3. That the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development produce proposals for the future management of Scrutiny in relation to Children's Services, in order to address the Board's concerns about the workload implications caused by one Scrutiny Board having such a broad remit, whilst recognising the desirability of integrated scrutiny of the Children's Services domain.</p>	<p>Proposal at AGM of Council that Scrutiny Board (Children's Services) be re-established and that a report be brought to an early Scrutiny Board meeting with proposals re effective operational arrangements for the Board to ensure its broad remit is appropriately considered.</p> <p><u>Action update</u> At its first meeting in June, the Scrutiny Board (Children's Services) agreed to set aside its meeting in October as a monitoring meeting, where Members can assess progress on a number of key issues, as part of their role in holding the Executive to account.</p> <p>If successful, it is suggested that this approach could be repeated at regular intervals (say 3 monthly) throughout the year, in order to assist the Board in maintaining an overview of the children's services portfolio. It may be necessary to hold additional meetings to accommodate this.</p>	<p>Head of Scrutiny and Member Development</p>	<p>July 2006 cycle of Scrutiny Board</p>

Recommendation	Action taken/proposed	Responsibility	Timescale
<p>4. That the Director of Legal and Democratic Services develops criteria for determining whether member or officer representation (or both) is appropriate on external bodies and partnerships relevant to the Children's Services portfolio, taking account of models from elsewhere and also the constitutional arrangements for executive decision making.</p>	<p>Review current external bodies and partnerships re children's services involving Member/officer representation.</p> <p>Identify possible future external bodies/partnerships re children's services likely to require Member/officer representation</p> <p><u>Action update</u> The Director of Children's Services is continuing to work with the current partnership arrangements whilst this review work is undertaken (for example, a successful half-day Open Forum with more than 400 people working in the city across a wide range of organisations) and continuing the city-wide CYPSP and district arrangements.</p> <p>The review work is under way and is expected to be concluded in the Autumn, as is the review of district arrangements for Children and Young People being undertaken within the Leeds Initiative.</p>	<p>Director of Children's Services</p>	<p>Autumn 2006</p>

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	<p>Identify possible options for Member involvement in Children's Services portfolio generally (eg Reg 33 etc)</p> <p>Identify models from elsewhere</p> <p>Draft report to set out proposed framework for Member involvement in Children's Services including section on implications of individual decision making by Executive Members</p> <p><u>Action update</u> Executive Board will discuss the role of elected members as Corporate parents, including a Corporate Parenting Framework and Corporate Parenting Guarantee at the July meeting.</p> <p>During the Autumn, a series of members' Seminars has been planned (among other things) to cover the kinds of issues raised through the Scrutiny process.</p>		

Recommendation	Action taken/proposed	Responsibility	Timescale
<p>5. That the Director of Legal and Democratic Services ensures that awareness is raised with regards to the existing guidelines for the level of support that will be provided to Members representing the Council on external bodies and partnerships.</p>	<p>Review effectiveness of existing guidelines and include paragraph re monitoring of that support</p> <p>Upon appointment to an external body/partnership, the Member/officer will be provided with a copy of the guidelines and advised of the support provided.</p> <p><u>Action update</u> Once roles are determined, then appropriate support will be given.</p>	<p>Head of Governance Services</p>	<p>Autumn 2006</p>

Proposed Scrutiny Action Plan – Children Act 2004, consultation and engagement

Recommendation	Action taken/proposed	Responsibility	Timescale
<p>1. That the Director of Children's Services discusses with the Corporate management Team how to embed the routine assessment of the impact on children and young people within the policy development and review activity across the Council, along the lines described in the Child Impact Statement model.</p>	<p>Corporate Management Team will be asked to consider, alongside revisions to developing corporate guidance on the delivery of services, awareness-raising measures such as including an extra paragraph in each Executive / Delegated Decision report. This will ensure that children's and young people's issues are routinely taken into account when planning the activity described in each report or decision.</p> <p>Other measures to improve awareness of the need to embed consideration of impact of the Council's activity on children and young people will include presentations at Departmental Management Teams, Elected Member briefings and seminars.</p>	<p>Director of Children's Services</p>	<p>Autumn 2006</p> <p>Currently under way</p>
<p>2. That the Corporate Communications Team should give consideration to the Child Impact Statement model as a model of good practice.</p>	<p>The Corporate Communications team, in liaison with Children's Services will consider including the Child Impact Statement model in the work currently underway on a policy and toolkit for all council consultation and engagement activity.</p>	<p>Chief Officer, Executive Support – Corporate Communications team and Children's Services</p>	<p>Finalised toolkit currently out for consultation, with formal adoption scheduled by Executive Board in autumn 2006.</p>

Recommendation	Action taken/proposed	Responsibility	Timescale
	<p>The council recognises the importance of involving young people in decision making and will ensure that examples of good practice such as these Statements are included in any material produced in relation to consultation and engagement activity.</p>		
<p>3. That the consultation and engagement strategy being developed for the council addresses the routine involvement of children and young people and their parents and carers by all departments</p>	<p>The development of the council's approach to consultation and engagement has involved the development of a policy and toolkit. This approach ensures that the council understands the importance of engagement in relation to various elements of legislation, which includes the Children - Act 2004. The CYPSP is one of the key corporate drivers for council activity. Within the toolkit, the issue of consulting with young people is specifically covered – it refers to the work of the CYPSP and other key forums such as The Project, ROAR and the Youth Council, as well as using schools, youth centres and involvement advocates. This policy and toolkit is now out for final consultation.</p>	<p>Chief Officer, Executive Support – Corporate Communications team and Children's Services</p>	<p>Finalised toolkit currently out for consultation, with formal adoption scheduled by Executive Board in autumn 2006.</p>

Recommendation	Action taken/proposed	Responsibility	Timescale
<p>4. That the Director of Children's Services continues to regularly report on progress in implementing the Children Act in Leeds to the Scrutiny Board.</p>	<p>The Scrutiny Board will receive quarterly up-dates</p>	<p>Director of Children's Services</p>	<p>The next update will be on 12 October, with further reports coming to the 11 January and 19 April meetings of Scrutiny Board.</p>