

**Report of Head of Governance and Scrutiny Support**

**Report to Scrutiny Board (Children and Families)**

**Date: 24<sup>th</sup> April 2019**

**Subject: Scrutiny Inquiry – Is Leeds a child friendly city?**

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

**1 Purpose of this report**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide additional information in response to requests made by the Scrutiny Board during the course of its main inquiry this year that asks the question ‘Is Leeds a Child Friendly City?’. The report also summarises and reflects on the findings of the engagement work undertaken with young people as part of the Board’s inquiry.

**2 Background**

2.1 At its initial meeting in June 2018, the Scrutiny Board agreed to adopt a thematic approach this year and undertake an inquiry based on the question ‘is Leeds a child friendly city?’ seven years on from the introduction of Child Friendly Leeds.

2.2 The Board agreed to theme its inquiry sessions around the five outcomes set out within the Leeds Children and Young People’s Plan (CYPP), with particular consideration given to how much the Council and partners have progressed towards delivering each outcome in relation to the following cohorts:

- All children
- Vulnerable Children
- Looked After Children

2.3 The Board’s themed discussions concluded in March 2019. However, during the course of its inquiry the Board identified and sought further information in relation to the following key areas:

- Parental engagement and influence on educational outcomes;
- The extent of young people's voice and influence beyond Children's Services with particular focus on the development of child friendly spaces through planning and city development processes;
- The extent to which young people's voice and influence is helping to identify and address the local transport needs of young people.

2.4 Additional information has therefore been provided within this report to act as a prompt for further discussion during the meeting in relation to the above key areas.

2.5 This report also summarises and reflects on the findings of the engagement work undertaken with young people as part of the Scrutiny Board's inquiry.

### 3. Main Issues

#### Parental engagement and influence on educational outcomes.

3.1 During its October meeting, the Scrutiny Board discussed the CYPP outcome that children and young people do well at all levels of learning and have skills for life. Linked to this, the Board acknowledged the importance of engaging with parents and enabling them to effectively support their child's education. The Board therefore agreed to hold a working group meeting to discuss this matter in more detail.

3.2 This working group meeting was held on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2019 and was attended by the Executive Member for Learning, Skills and Employment; the Deputy Director for Learning; the Interim Head of Learning Improvement; and the Voice Influence and Change Lead Officer. A brief summary of the key issues raised by the working group is set out below.

- *Lack of evidence nationally surrounding the long term impact of parental engagement on educational outcomes* – despite the lack of such hard evidence, it was acknowledged that positive relationships between schools and parents can only enrich a child's experience of school and therefore should be actively encouraged. However, it was noted that the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) is currently undertaking research around the potential long term benefits. The EEF is an independent charity aimed at supporting teachers and senior leaders by providing evidence-based resources designed to improve practice and boost learning.
- *Encouraging schools to use modern and targeted methods of communicating with parents* – It was felt that all schools need to be considering a variety of ways to communicate with parents and particularly embrace modern methods communication, such as SMS notifications; online portals and social media channels.
- *Promoting the awareness and use of existing online resource toolkits* - the working group received details of two nationally available online resource toolkits associated with parental engagement and schools. The first related to Parentkind<sup>1</sup> which is designed to help teachers, school staff, governors and

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.parentkind.org.uk/for-schools/Resources>

others engage and involve parents successfully. The second related to the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF)<sup>2</sup>. Whilst it was acknowledged that the Council no longer has a dedicated team tasked with disseminating such guidance amongst schools, it was acknowledged that other existing communication channels and forums could effectively be used to achieve this outcome.

- *Using parent forum volunteers to support wider engagement with parents* – the working group recognised that some parents may find it difficult to engage in a school environment, especially if their own experiences of school was not positive. As such, the working group recognised the potential benefits of schools having parent forum volunteers and exploring ways in which they could assist in building a positive relationship between the school and the wider parent community.
- *Utilising the Council's admissions process to disseminate information on where parental advice and support services can be accessed if needed* – the working group recognised the potential benefits of maximising existing processes that involve contacting all parents directly, such as the admissions process, as a way of disseminating key information surrounding parental advice and support services.
- *Mapping and sharing good practice of parental engagement across all local schools* – the parental engagement work being undertaken by Shakespeare Primary School in relation to its Parent Voice Group was cited as an example of good practice. Whilst acknowledging that different approaches are likely to be adopted by schools, the working group felt that it would be beneficial to try and capture this in some way across the city.
- *Mapping of local Parenting Skills provision* – the working group also felt it would be beneficial to have a map of existing Parenting Skills provision across the city.
- *The potential development of a Parental Engagement Strategy* – moving forward, the working group recognised the potential benefits of developing a Parental Engagement Strategy for the city.

#### The voice and influence of young people surrounding the development of child friendly spaces through City Development processes.

- 3.3 The Board expressed a particular interest in exploring the extent to which young people are having a voice and influence beyond Children's Services, with particular focus on the development of child friendly spaces through planning and City Development processes.
- 3.4 Recent examples of active engagement with young people by City Development has therefore been provided for the attention of the Scrutiny Board.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/tools/guidance-reports/working-with-parents-to-support-childrens-learning/>

- Close working with the Leeds Youth Ambassadors.

The Leeds Youth Ambassadors (children age 8-17 years from across the city) have been working with the Council's planning department and developers to ascertain the needs of children and young people when developers are in the design stages of a housing development and beyond. The young people looked at their communities and the positives and negatives about where they live. This was then followed by what improvements would make the community child friendly. The ambassadors then voted for 5 representatives to deliver a presentation to developers presenting their needs for a child friendly community. This was really well received and the young people then joined the developers and planners to discuss child friendly communities.

- Engaging young people in the Leeds 'Our spaces' Strategy consultation.

In November 2018, the Council released its first ever draft strategy detailing the ambitions for public realm – Leeds Our Spaces Strategy. The draft strategy focuses on the city centre identifying a number of key projects such as City Square and The Headrow and outlining the big changes and also challenges that the city faces over the next eight to ten years in regards to public realm.

A public consultation on the draft Strategy was held from 27<sup>th</sup> November 2018 until the end of March 2019. Linked to this, the City Development directorate worked in collaboration with the Children and Families Directorate through its Voice, Influence and Change Team to find effective ways of actively engaging young people in the consultation.

Such engagement work included a facilitated discussion between representatives from the City Development directorate and members of the Leeds Youth Council at its meeting on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> March 2019. A bespoke questionnaire was also developed for young people surrounding public realm spaces, which was sent out to all members of the Leeds Youth Council (approximately 300 young people) in early February.

Representatives from City Development also attended the recent Youth Voice Summit Event on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2019 as having such a large and diverse range of young people in one place provided a great opportunity to undertake consultation and engagement work during the break times. This attracted approximately 120 respondents.

A special Playful Anywhere consultation was also undertaken which involved facilitated 'Playdome' chats at four locations across Leeds – Kirkgate Market, St Johns Centre, Park Square, The Tetley. This attracted approximately 200 respondents.

As the consultation process only finished at the end of March 2019, work is still ongoing in terms of analysing both the quantitative and qualitative responses arising from the consultation. However, at this stage the directorate is able to share the Youth Council questionnaire responses (see appendix 1) and to also highlight the 5 most popular answers from the Youth Summit Event, which were:

- Less traffic
- Accessible for all
- Outdoor play spaces
- Better transport links
- More green spaces

3.5 It is recognised that such cross directorate working will greatly aid children and young people's opinions being incorporated into the city centre vision going forward. Linked to this, a representative from City Development will be attending today's meeting to explain more about the ongoing efforts being made to ensure that young people continue to have a voice and influence in relation to future planning developments in Leeds.

The voice and influence of young people in identifying and addressing local transport needs.

3.6 The Scrutiny Board learned that as part of the annual UK Youth Parliament "Make Your Mark" ballot in 2017, just under 40,000 local young people participated and voted their top local issue as "Improving Transport – Make public transport cheaper, better and accessible for all". Improved and more connected public transport for young people has since become a new priority on the Leeds Children & Young People's Plan and therefore the Scrutiny Board expressed an interest to learn more about how young people have been involved in identifying and addressing local transport needs.

3.7 Linked to this, particular attention is given to the work undertaken last year when the Voice, Influence and Change Team at Leeds City Council and the Yorkshire and Humber Youth Work Unit worked with the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) to invite the Bus18 Board to meet with youth representatives to discuss improving bus travel for young people in the region and in turn encouraging more young people to become regular bus users. This meeting took place on 16<sup>th</sup> August 2018.

3.8 A report detailing the outcome of this meeting has therefore been attached for the Board's information (see Appendix 2). Moving forward, the Bus18 initiative is evolving into the West Yorkshire Transport Alliance and the Children and Families Directorate will continue to pursue progress surrounding the implementation of the recommendations as set out within this report.

3.9 It was reported to the WYCA Transport Committee in January 2019 that Transdev would focus on continuing to build on the initiatives offered to young people and the success of the Myday ticket uptake which currently stood at 56%.

3.10 Responsibility in the Children and Families Directorate for progressing the CFL Transport priority has now transferred from the Voice, Influence & Change Team to Children's Transport. Exploratory conversations were held in early April, and agreement in principle was reached, to support young people with a 'mystery shopper' type exercise to collate systematic feedback for operators in respect of progress following previous feedback that young people provided.

## Engaging young people in the Scrutiny Board's Inquiry.

- 3.11 The Scrutiny Board recognised the importance of ensuring that the views and ideas of young people are also being captured as part of its inquiry and expressed a wish to engage directly with young people to gather this information.
- 3.12 The Board therefore welcomed the opportunity to work with the Children and Families Directorate in using their annual youth voice summit event for youth and community groups as a platform to directly engage with the young people attending. The event was therefore themed around the Scrutiny Board's Inquiry and took place on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2019.
- 3.13 In addition to the summit event, local youth groups were also given the opportunity to express an interest in accommodating a visit from Scrutiny Board Members. In response, visits were undertaken with the following youth groups:
- Dance Action Zone Leeds (DAZL)
  - Youth Matters Group, Swarcliffe
  - The Market Place
  - Leeds Community Youth Ambassadors
  - Student Leeds Safeguarding Children Partnership.
- 3.14 At today's meeting, Board Members are being invited to share feedback in relation to the key issues raised by the young people during their visits.
- 3.15 The Board will also be reflecting on the views expressed by young people during the Youth Summit Event. To assist with this, the Voice, Influence and Change Team have produced a report of the event, which is attached as Appendix 3 for the Board's consideration.

## **4. Recommendations**

- 4.1 The Board is asked to note the content of this report.

## **5. Background papers<sup>3</sup>**

- 5.1 None used

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<sup>3</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.