

SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN AND FAMILIES)

WEDNESDAY, 8TH JULY, 2020

PRESENT: Councillor A Lamb in the Chair

Councillors H Bithell, P Drinkwater,
B Flynn, A Forsaith, C Gruen, C Howley,
A Hussain, J Illingworth, W Kidger,
J Lennox, A Marshall-Katung, D Ragan and
R. Stephenson

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (VOTING)

Mr A Graham – Church Representative (Church of England)
Mrs K Blacker – Parent Governor Representative (Primary)
Ms J Ward – Parent Governor Representative (Secondary)

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (NON-VOTING)

Ms C Foote – Teacher Representative
Ms H Bellamy – Teacher Representative
Ms E Holmes – Young Lives Leeds
Ms D Reilly – Looked After Children and Care Leavers

1 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents

There were no appeals.

2 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public

There was no exempt information.

3 Late Items

There were no late items.

4 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no declarations

5 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor K Renshaw and Mr T Britten.

Councillor D Ragan was in attendance as substitute.

6 Minutes - 4th March 2020

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 4 March 2020 were confirmed as a correct record

7 Update on Coronavirus (COVID19) Pandemic – Response and Recovery Plan

The Board was given a verbal update on the latest position with regard to those service areas that fall within the remit of the Children and Families Scrutiny Board. In particular, the briefing covered the following areas:

- Children's Homes
- Children's Social Care
- Early years/childcare provision
- Schools

A copy of the Executive Board report considered at its meeting on 24th June 2020 on developments surrounding the Council's Response and Recovery Plan had been appended to the Agenda.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Cllr Jonathan Pryor, Executive Member for Learning, Skills and Employment
- Cllr Fiona Venner, Executive Member for Children and Families
- Sal Tariq, Director of Children and Families
- Julie Longworth, Deputy Director Children and Families
- Val Waite, Head of Service Learning Inclusion
- Dave Clark, Head of Service Learning Improvement

Councillor Venner addressed the meeting and highlighted a number of key points relating to her portfolio, which included the following:

- The outstanding status of Children's Social Care in the city had been in evidence through the work carried out during the pandemic.
- Work to support families with social care needs and the continued work to identify those in need.
- Work with partners including schools and clusters.
- Recovery position – children's centres were gradually re-opening.
- Redeployment of staff to work in children's homes.
- Free school meals provision.

- Placements for looked after children had been sustained during the lockdown period.
- Work in schools for vulnerable children and key worker's children.
- Online teaching.
- Help provided for families for basic needs such as provision of food and how a multi-agency approach had supported this.
- There had been an increase in referrals to Social Care.
- Planning involved to keep critical services running throughout the pandemic. This included recruitment of staff.
- Early Years provision – meetings had continued online with child minders and day care providers.
- Creation of multi-agency Safeguarding Response teams.
- Work to identify those who became vulnerable due to and during the pandemic.
- Support for children and parents who were shielding.
- Work with special schools, those with complex needs and engagement of specialists for substance misuse, domestic violence and mental health.

In response to comments and questions, the following was discussed:

- Food deliveries were made to vulnerable children and families on a weekend. This was supported by the voluntary sector and food was also delivered to care leavers. There was a choice of hot and cold food available.
- Children with care plans – there had been a focus with the clusters and a multi-agency approach to providing the necessary support.
- With regard to Education and Health Care Plans, there had been some relaxation in legislation to give flexibility. All children with plans had been risk assessed as to whether their needs were best met at home or in school.
- There would be measures in place to provide continued support over the summer holidays.
- Work with the inclusion partnerships and children in danger of exclusion from school.
- Arrangements for the summer to support those with plans and allow head teachers and school leaders to have a break.

Councillor Pryor addressed the meeting and highlighted a number of key points relating to his portfolio, which included the following:

- Preparation for the summer and schools to return in September.
- The work in increasing the numbers of children returning to school.
- The need to build confidence for school staff and families and managing an effective and safe return to school.

In response to comments and questions, the following was discussed:

- School placements – there was new guidance in terms of the appeals process and appeals had been carried out online. The greatest pressures this year had been in the South and centre of the City. There was still a small number of pupils having to travel further to school.
- Testing – there was ongoing preparation in conjunction with Public Health to have capacity for testing.
- Pupils taking GCSEs and A Levels next year. It was reported that guidance was still awaited from the Department for Education and there was ongoing consultation. Funding had been set aside for catch up programmes.
- Planning for September had included a review of risk assessments to address concerns with the protection of staff and children and how to deal with any outbreaks. Transport to school would also be covered in the risk assessment.
- DfE guidance did not require the use of PPE. It would be used where there was an identified need and in some special school settings.
- Pupils who were transitioning – there had been some innovative work with secondary schools providing transition opportunities including virtual tours. Good practice was being developed in early years with phased entry proposed in September to help provide a positive experience.
- There had been special risk assessments for children with social care and mental health needs and those who did not speak English.

The Chair expressed thanks on behalf of the Board to all involved in working with children and families during this difficult period.

RESOLVED – That the update and discussion be noted.

8 Work Schedule

The report of the Head of Democratic Services presented the Board's work schedule for the remainder of the current municipal year.

It was reported that there was a continuing uncertainty about how future meetings will be hosted – they may be hosted remotely, be buildings-based or involve a hybrid approach. However, all meetings have been scheduled in such a way as to ensure they can continue to be resourced remotely if that is the required approach.

For the Board's next meeting in September, it was proposed that this includes a report summarising the evidence considered to-date on the Board's Inquiry that commenced last year into Exclusions, Elective Home Education and Off-Rolling in order to determine next steps.

It was also proposed that the Board receives a further update surrounding the Council's Covid-19 Response and Recovery Plan. In preparation for this meeting, it was acknowledged that the Board may wish to reflect on today's meeting to identify areas it would like to particularly focus its discussion on as

part of the update in September, as well as considering potential areas of priority for future meetings too.

RESOLVED – That the work schedule (as presented at Appendix 1) as the basis for the Board's work for the remainder of 2020/21 be agreed.

9 Date and Time of Next Meeting

There was a call in meeting of the Board to be held directly after this meeting at 1.00 p.m.

The next meeting to be held on Wednesday, 9 September 2020 at 10.00 a.m. (pre-meeting for all Board Members at 9.45 a.m.)