

SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN AND FAMILIES) - CONSULTATIVE MEETING

WEDNESDAY, 9TH JUNE, 2021

PRESENT: Councillor A Lamb in the Chair

Councillors H Bithell, E Flint, B Flynn,
A Forsaith, C Gruen, Z Hussain,
J Illingworth, S Lay, A Marshall-Katung,
K Renshaw, L Richards and J Senior

Co-opted Members (Voting)

Mr E A Britten - Church Representative (Catholic)
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

1 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests.

2 Minutes - 3rd March 2021

RECOMMENDED– That the minutes of the Children and Families Scrutiny Board meeting held 3rd March 2021 be noted.

3 Co-opted Members

The Head of Democratic Services submitted a report which sought the Board's consideration for the appointment of co-opted members.

The Board noted that the following nominations for statutory voting co-opted members had been received:

One Church of England diocese representative – Mr A Graham
One Roman Catholic diocese representative – Mr E A Britten

Parent governor representatives were noted as follows:

Parent Governor (Primary) representative – Kate Blacker

Parent Governor (Secondary) representative – Jacqueline Ward

Members noted and welcomed that non-voting co-opted Members, Celia Foote and Helen Bellamy, had been nominated again by the School Staff Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) to continue their role on the Scrutiny Board and to also be acknowledged in their role as representing school staff more broadly.

Members also noted that the Board had previously invited co-opted member representation from other relevant key areas which have included Early Years, Looked After Children/Care Leavers and the Third Sector (i.e. Young Lives Leeds). However, due to other commitments, the co-opted members previously representing these areas are no longer continuing on the Scrutiny Board. The Chair suggested that the Board considers the approach to further co-opted Members once the work programme for the municipal year has been finalised, including the potential for more formal contributions from children and young people. The Executive Member for Adult and Children's Social Care and Health Partnerships recognised the value of representation from Young Lives Leeds and the third sector more broadly and therefore encouraged exploration of options to particularly have the voice of the third sector represented in the work of Scrutiny.

RECOMMENDED –

- a) That the nominations of the Roman Catholic Diocese and Church of England Diocese to the Children and Families Scrutiny Board in accordance with statutory requirements be noted;
- b) That the appointed parent governor representatives to the Children and Families Scrutiny Board in accordance with statutory requirements be noted.

4 Scrutiny Board Terms of Reference

The Head of Democratic Services submitted a report that presented the Board's terms of reference for information.

RECOMMENDED – That the Board's terms of reference be noted.

5 Sources of work for the Scrutiny Board

The Head of Democratic Services submitted a report on potential sources of work and areas of priority within the Board's terms of reference.

The following information was appended to the report:

- Best Council Plan 2020-2025
- Leeds Children and Young People's Plan 2018-2023

- A summary of the Council's 2021/22 budget proposals relevant to the remit of the Children and Families Scrutiny Board.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor Jonathan Pryor, Executive Member for Economy, Culture and Education
- Councillor Fiona Venner, Executive Member for Adult and Children's Social Care and Health Partnerships
- Councillor Mary Harland, Executive Member for Communities
- Sal Tariq, Director of Children and Families
- Julie Longworth, Deputy Director of Children and Families
- Tim Pouncey, Chief Officer Resources and Strategy
- Ruth Terry, Chief Officer Social Work
- Val Waite, Head of Service, Learning Inclusion
- Dave Clark, Head of Service, Learning Improvement

Suggestions for future areas of work from Members and officers in attendance included:

- *COVID-19 Recovery.* It was suggested that the Board may find it helpful to retain the approach adopted last year in terms of receiving regular updates on how the Children and Families Directorate is working with partners and communities in continuing to address the impacts of Covid-19 across its service areas. However, it was also suggested that the Board may wish to focus on recovery actions linked to education settings and issues surrounding mental health, access to food and resources and attainment gaps, which are particularly linked to disadvantaged groups. Related to this, Members noted the importance of access to extracurricular activities and sports facility access for all age groups that aid the development of young people's softer skills, resilience, and self-esteem.
- *Youth Work Review.* It was suggested that the Board oversee the implementation of recommendations of the recent Youth Work Review in Leeds.
- *Future in Mind Strategy.* In reference to previous sessions, Members noted that an update report to the Board has already been scheduled later in the year to focus on the Future in Mind Strategy and young people's mental health and well-being.
- *Early Help and Prevention.* Members were advised that a review of early help and prevention resources and programmes is ongoing, and the directorate would welcome the Board's contribution. Related to this, it was noted that a recent inspection found that in Leeds, BAME boys and young men in prisons often have had no contact with services prior to sentencing, which evidences the need for early help and prevention resource in this area.
- *Climate Emergency.* Recognising young people's concern about addressing the Climate Emergency, Members suggested the Board looks in greater detail at related topics such as journeys to school.

- *Addressing Sexual Harassment.* Members suggested that the Board may wish to explore how, as a city, the issue of sexual harassment is being addressed with young people and particularly in terms of approaches being adopted within schools.
- *Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).* Members suggested the Board revisits how EHCPs for children are being quality assured and reviewed and how families are being engaged in that process.

RECOMMENDED – That the contents of the report, along with Members comments, be noted.

6 Performance Update

The Director of Children and Families submitted a report which provided a summary of performance information relating to outcomes for Leeds children and young people.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor Jonathan Pryor, Executive Member for Economy, Culture and Education
- Councillor Fiona Venner, Executive Member for Adult and Children’s Social Care and Health Partnerships
- Councillor Mary Harland, Executive Member for Communities
- Sal Tariq, Director of Children and Families
- Julie Longworth, Deputy Director of Children and Families
- Tim Pouncey, Chief Officer Resources and Strategy
- Ruth Terry, Chief Officer Social Work
- Val Waite, Head of Service Learning Inclusion
- Dave Clark, Head of Service Learning Improvement
- Peter Storrie, Head of Service (Children / Adults lead), Intelligence & Policy Service
- Chris Hudson, Policy, Planning and Procedures Leader, Children and Families

The Policy, Planning and Procedures Leader introduced the report, noting that the number of Looked After Children has reduced slightly over the last 12 months. It was also noted that there is no attendance information for the last academic year, however information has been collected from the schools census, removing COVID absences in Autumn 2020 to provide an insight, which was set out within the report. It was recognised that further work is to be undertaken in relation to young people Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET), however the data in relation to the September guarantee of offers for further education were very positive in September 2020 for those leaving school at Year 11.

Members discussed a number of matters, including:

- *Provision of additional attendance data from schools.* The Department for Education (DfE) have asked schools to provide attendance data to the local authority, and the majority of schools have provided this data, however, there has been some disruption due to COVID-19 and approximately 52% of schools are regularly submitting data. It was noted that more analysis is required to understand why some families are choosing not to attend school, beyond school closures and bubble collapses.
- *Elective home education.* In response to a query, Members were advised that the number of parents choosing to educate their children at home has not significantly decreased. The Council is therefore continuing to work with those families to understand their reasons and to also offer appropriate support, particularly if their reasons relate to perceived barriers that the council can assist in overcoming.
- *Cluster data presentation.* Recognising that home addresses do not always align with Cluster boundaries, Members requested that further reports include attendance data for families categorised by postcode, as well as by Cluster.

RECOMMENDED – That the contents of the report, along with Members comments, be noted.

7 **Looked After Children and the EU Settlement Scheme**

The Head of Democratic Services submitted a report relating to issues raised by The Children Society regarding looked after children and the EU Settlement Scheme.

The following were in attendance:

- Councillor Fiona Venner, Executive Member for Adult and Children’s Social Care and Health Partnerships
- Sal Tariq, Director of Children and Families
- Julie Longworth, Deputy Director of Children and Families
- Ruth Terry, Chief Officer Social Work

The Chair introduced the report, advising that the Children’s Society recently approached the Board highlighting its recent research which found that less than 40% of the looked after children and care leavers identified as needing to secure status have in fact made applications to the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS), therefore raising concerns that many of these children and young people could become undocumented once the EUSS closes on 30th June 2021. The Children’s Society has particularly highlighted that, according to recent government survey results, there are still 13 children in care or recently leaving care in Leeds who are eligible and yet to apply to the EUSS.

The Executive Member assured the Board that the directorate have been working on this issue for some time and will continue to ensure that the most

vulnerable children in the city are accounted for. The Director advised that there are differences in individual cases, particularly noting that the long term plan for some children is to return to their families in other countries. In addition, it was noted that accessing documentation from various authorities has been a challenge in some cases, however the Director assured Members that the relevant applications will be submitted by the deadline, and for children identified later in the year, arrangements will be made in line with specific guidance issued by the Department for Education.

RECOMMENDED –

- a) That the contents of the report, along with the verbal update provided, be noted;
- b) That the Chair writes back to The Children’s Society to relay the assurances that have been communicated to the Scrutiny Board by the Director and Executive Member.

8 Work Schedule

The Head of Democratic Services submitted a report that presented the draft work schedule for the forthcoming municipal year. This included the traditional items of Scrutiny work which involves performance monitoring, recommendation tracking and Budget and Policy Framework Plans.

RECOMMENDED – That the draft work schedule be noted.