

SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN AND FAMILIES)

EXCLUSIONS, ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION AND OFF-ROLLING (PART TWO)

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 During 2019/20, the Children and Families Scrutiny Board agreed to undertake an Inquiry into Exclusions, Elective Home Education and Off-rolling, particularly in view of findings stemming from relevant national reviews undertaken by the former Minister of Children, Edward Timpson, and the Children's Commissioner, Anne Longfield. The Scrutiny Board had also acknowledged the Council's own commitment towards addressing such matters and aimed to assist in the effective delivery of the Council's own 3As Strategy, as well as exploring whether Leeds as a city will be in a position to respond effectively to any future reforms and expectations stemming from the national reviews by Timpson and the School Commissioner.
- 1.2 Having agreed the terms of reference for this Scrutiny Inquiry in November 2019, the Scrutiny Board held two evidence gathering sessions during February and March 2020. Having scheduled an additional evidence session in April 2020, the Board anticipated its inquiry work to continue into the 2020/21 municipal year.
- 1.3 However, on 16 March 2020, in light of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Council took the necessary step to cancel a number of planned meetings of various Committees, Boards and Panels. This included all Scrutiny Board meetings and any joint scrutiny arrangements where the Council acts as the lead authority.
- 1.4 During the 2020/21 municipal year, the Children and Families Scrutiny Board agreed to pause its inquiry work while focusing its attention on how the Council and its partners worked to support all children and their families during such an unprecedented and difficult period.
- 1.5 The Children and Families Scrutiny Board gave a commitment to recommence its inquiry work during the 2021/22 municipal year and utilised its meeting on 7th July 2021 to reflect on the evidence previously gathered and to consider appropriate next steps to inform the terms of reference for the second part of its ongoing inquiry.

2.0 Scope of the inquiry

- 2.1 The main purpose of this Inquiry, as originally agreed by the Children and Families Scrutiny Board in November 2019, remains relevant in terms of the Scrutiny Board making an assessment of and, where appropriate, making recommendations on the following areas:

- The data collated by the Council in relation to exclusions and EHE and any identified gaps that may need addressing;
- Methods of identifying and addressing the practice of off-rolling;
- The potential implications of any future reforms and expectations stemming from the recent national reviews by Timpson and the School Commissioner;
- Internal isolation approaches used by schools as a disciplinary measure;
- Examples of good practice locally in managing children identified as being at risk of exclusion and in reducing exclusion rates;
- The support available for schools in managing pupils who are at risk of exclusion, with particular reference to the role of local Area Inclusion Partnerships, and any identified gaps in this support;
- The provision of training for school governors in terms of their role in monitoring school exclusions and challenging head teachers on their strategies for reducing exclusion.
- The extent to which parents and carers are supported in understanding the exclusion process including arrangements for appeal.
- The views of young people, including case study evidence that provides an insight into the experiences of children at risk of, as well as having first-hand experience of, being excluded and the broader lessons that have been learned in terms of supporting the needs of such children.

2.2 In resuming its inquiry during 2021/22, the scope of the Board's work will also take into account the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

3.0 Desired Outcomes and Measures of Success

3.1 It is important to consider how the Scrutiny Board will deem if their inquiry has been successful in making a difference to local people. Some measures of success may be obvious and others may become apparent as the inquiry progresses and discussions take place.

3.2 The primary aim of this Inquiry remains the same in terms of assisting in the effective delivery of the Council's 3As Strategy, with specific focus on reducing the number of children excluded from school. Linked to this, the Inquiry will also be exploring whether Leeds as a city will be in a position to respond effectively to any future reforms and expectations stemming from the recent national reviews by Timpson and the School Commissioner.

4.0 Comments of the relevant Director and Executive Member

4.1 In line with Scrutiny Board Procedure Rule 32, where a Scrutiny Board undertakes an Inquiry the Scrutiny Board shall consult with any relevant Director and Executive Member on the terms of reference.

5.0 Timetable for the inquiry

5.1 Part two of the Scrutiny Board's Inquiry will take place over 3 sessions. It is anticipated that the Scrutiny Board will report on its inquiry findings by March 2022.

6.0 Submission of evidence

6.1 Session one (Part 2) – November 2021

To consider evidence in relation to the following:

- An update on any further developments stemming from earlier national reviews by Timpson and the School Commissioner.
- A general overview of attendance across local schools.
- Latest local figures relating to Elective Home Education (taking into account the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic) and the work being undertaken by the Council in offering support to those pupils, but also in terms encouraging and building confidence towards a return to mainstream education.

6.2 Session two (Part 2) – December 2021

To consider evidence in relation to the following:

- The experiences and views of young people and their families that have elected to be home educated.
- The experiences and views of young people and their families that have had first-hand experience of being excluded from school, including young offenders.

6.3 Session three (Part 2) – February 2022

To consider evidence in relation to the following:

- Latest local figures relating to permanent and fixed term exclusion rates, highlighting key trends and areas across the city with particularly high exclusion rates.
- The variations and effectiveness of School Behaviour Policies and exploring how the Covid-19 pandemic may have influenced such policies moving forward.
- The particular use of internal isolation approaches used by schools as a disciplinary measure;
- How schools are working closely with other partner organisations, including Youth Services, to engage with pupils particularly at risk of exclusion.

7.0 Witnesses

7.1 The following have been identified as possible contributors to this second part of the Board's inquiry work, however others may also be identified during the course of the inquiry:

- Executive Member for Economy, Culture and Education
- Executive Member for Adult and Children's Social Care and Health Partnerships
- Director of Children and Families
- Deputy Director for Learning
- Head of Service Learning Inclusion
- Head of Service Learning Improvement
- Head Teacher representation from local primary and secondary schools
- Chair of Governor representation from local primary and secondary schools
- Representation from young people and their families that have elected to be home educated.
- Representation from young people and their families that have had first-hand experience of being excluded from school, including young offenders.

8.0 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

8.1 The Equality Improvement Priorities have been developed to ensure our legal duties are met under the Equality Act 2010. The priorities will help the council to achieve its ambition to be the best City in the UK and ensure that as a city work takes place to reduce disadvantage, discrimination and inequalities of opportunity.

8.2 Equality and diversity will be a consideration throughout the Scrutiny Inquiry and due regard will be given to equality through the use of evidence, written and verbal, outcomes from consultation and engagement activities.

8.3 The Scrutiny Board may engage and involve interested groups and individuals (both internal and external to the council) to inform recommendations.

8.4 Where an impact has been identified this will be reflected in the final inquiry report, post inquiry. Where a Scrutiny Board recommendation is agreed the individual, organisation or group responsible for implementation or delivery should give due regard to equality and diversity, conducting impact assessments where it is deemed appropriate.

9.0 Post inquiry report monitoring arrangements

- 9.1 Following the completion of the Scrutiny inquiry and the publication of the final inquiry report and recommendations, the implementation of the agreed recommendations will be monitored.
- 9.2 The final inquiry report will include information on the detailed arrangements for how the implementation of recommendations will be monitored.