

## **SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN AND FAMILIES)**

**WEDNESDAY, 6TH JULY, 2022**

**PRESENT:** Councillor A Lamb in the Chair

Councillors H Bithell, J Bowden, E Bromley,  
K Brooks, P Carlill, A Forsaith, C Howley,  
Z Hussain, D Ragan, R. Stephenson and  
E Thomson

### **CO-OPTED MEMBER (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 – School Staff Representative  
Ms H Bellamy – School Staff Representative  
Ms L Whitaker - Young Lives Leeds

### **OPENING REMARKS**

At the start of the meeting, the Chair informed the Board that the Director of Children's Services, Sal Tariq, will be moving onto a new role in September where he will be working to support other councils on the Strengthening Families, Protecting Children programme. It was noted that while Sal was unable to attend today's meeting, an invitation had been extended for him to attend the Board's next meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> September 2022.

The Chair also announced that Celia Foote was retiring and will therefore no longer be a co-opted member of the Scrutiny Board. The Chair paid tribute to Celia for representing teachers and other school staff in the work of scrutiny over the last 20 years and highlighted that her longstanding commitment had also been acknowledged by the Lord Mayor. The Board then joined the Chair in relaying their thanks and best wishes to Celia.

#### **14 Appeals Against Refusal of Inspection of Documents**

There were no appeals against the refusal of inspection of documents.

#### **15 Exempt Information - Possible Exclusion of the Press and Public**

There were no exempt items.

#### **16 Late Items**

Draft minutes to be approved at the meeting  
to be held on Wednesday, 7th September, 2022

There were no late items of business.

## **17 Declaration of Interests**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **18 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor J Heselwood, Councillor L Martin, Councillor K Renshaw, Councillor L Richards and Councillor J Senior.

Councillor P Carlill attended as substitute for Councillor Heselwood.  
Councillor K Brooks attended as substitute for Councillor Martin.  
Councillor Thomson attended as substitute for Councillor Renshaw.

## **19 Minutes - 8th June 2022**

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2022 be approved as an accurate record.

## **20 Ofsted Inspection Report**

In introducing this item, the Chair explained that last year the Scrutiny Board had considered the findings of Ofsted inspectors following the two-day focused visit to Leeds Children's Services in July 2021 and more recently in relation to the inspection of children's social care services that was undertaken in late February/early March 2022 in accordance with the ILCAS framework.

The report submitted by the Director of Children and Families presented an update on the outcomes of the ILACS inspection that relate to the front door focused visit recommendations, as well as setting out the planned actions to respond to the recommendations that had stemmed from the ILACS inspection.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Councillor Fiona Venner, Executive Member for Adult and Children's Social Care and Health Partnerships
- Julie Longworth, Deputy Director of Children and Families
- Shaheen Myers, Deputy Director of Learning
- Ruth Terry, Chief Officer for Social Work

The Executive Member for Adult and Children's Social Care and Health Partnerships gave a brief introduction and in doing so, had made reference to the Child Friendly Leeds Awards event which had taken place on 5<sup>th</sup> July 2022 and marked the celebration of Child Friendly Leeds' 10th birthday. The event had showcased the diverse talent and achievements of the city's

children and young people, as well as highlighting and celebrating those people, places and organisations that are dedicated to making Leeds a child friendly city. Linked to this, the Executive Member particularly acknowledged the strong commitment and hard work of frontline staff and other key partners in maintaining an outstanding judgement by Ofsted, but also stressed that the Council would not become complacent and is keen to continue to learn and improve in collaboration with partners and also via the engagement of scrutiny.

The Deputy Director of Children and Families then gave a brief overview of the planned actions in place to respond to the recommendations that had stemmed from the ILACS inspection.

In consideration of the report, the following issues were discussed by the Board:

- *Improvements to contingency planning* – The Board acknowledged that a program of practice improvement is to be developed in relation to contingency planning and that part of this work will include a review of the electronic record that is used to record children’s plans to ensure there is a clear and usable section for contingency planning, which will also help prompt regular reviewing of such plans.
- *Caseloads of social workers* – The Board discussed social worker caseloads and sought clarification of current caseload levels for children's social workers, particularly as it was acknowledged by Ofsted that caseloads are high for some workers, including for some newly qualified workers. The Deputy Director of Children and Families acknowledged again that caseloads are not what they want them to be and that while the service is working to address this matter locally, the position is reflective of challenges facing the social work sector nationally in terms of workforce vacancy rates and recruitment difficulties. A Board Member put forward a suggestion that the Board may want to explore a way of obtaining a representative view from the social work sector.
- *Response to a personnel query* – In response to a query raised by a Board Member in relation to a personnel matter involving social work staff, the Deputy Director of Children and Families and Executive Member for Adult and Children’s Social Care and Health Partnerships advised that it would not be appropriate for them to comment on any confidential personnel matters and particularly within a public meeting. The Board Member then sought legal clarification surrounding access to information rights of Scrutiny Boards, to which the Chair agreed to progress after the meeting and to share with Board Members in due course.

**RESOLVED –**

- (a) That the contents of the report and the comments made by the Board be noted.

- (b) That specific progress on recommendations from the front door focused inspection be noted and that the Board approves completion of the actions taken.
- (c) That the recommendations from the ILACS inspection and the actions set out in relation to these be noted.
- (d) That the Chair progresses the request for legal clarification surrounding access to information rights of Scrutiny Boards and shares this with Board Members in due course.

## 21 Refresh of the Children and Young People's Plan

The Director of Children and Families submitted a report which provided an overview of the planned refresh process linked to the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP), which is the shared vision for everyone working with children and young people in Leeds.

In introducing the item, the Chair welcomed this opportunity for the Scrutiny Board to review the existing plan and to discuss areas that may be changed in the early planning stages of the refresh process.

The following were in attendance for this item:

- Councillor Fiona Venner, Executive Member for Adult and Children's Social Care and Health Partnerships
- Julie Longworth, Deputy Director of Children and Families
- Shaheen Myers, Deputy Director of Learning
- Ruth Terry, Chief Officer for Social Work
- Chris Hudson, Policy, Planning and Procedures Leader
- Hannah Lamplugh, Voice and Influence Lead

The Planning and Procedures Leader gave a brief introduction to the report, primarily setting out the timetable for the refresh process. The Voice and Influence Lead then gave an overview of the consultation work that was undertaken with children and young people to refresh the 12 Wishes (a copy of the refreshed 12 Wishes was circulated to Board Members for information) and highlighted the intention of ensuring that these are reflected as part of the refresh of the CYPP.

The following issues were raised during the Board's discussion:

- *Transport* – The Board felt that transport should remain a priority within the CYPP in recognition that transport issues would have an impact on delivering on a number of the 12 Wishes. Linked to this, particular reference was made to cost of bus travel and while acknowledging that bus companies are offering concessions to young people through the new Fair Deal scheme, it was highlighted that this concessionary price was only accessible using a digital App. Those unable to access this App would therefore be disadvantaged. Linked to this, the Chair agreed to write to the West Yorkshire Mayor to share the views of the Scrutiny Board on this issue.

- *Mentoring opportunities with local businesses* – The Board encouraged stronger links with local businesses to explore mentoring opportunities, particularly linked to the Wish around young people accessing a wide range of work experience opportunities.
- *Including a focus around travel* – It was recognised that by encouraging active travel opportunities, particularly in relation to traveling to and from school, then this would have a positive impact on protecting the environment as well as improving mental health and emotional well-being, which are already key priority areas identified by young people.
- *Recognising the importance of play* - The Board supported the inclusion of both creative and construction play as a priority within the refreshed CYPP and felt that the value of play also needs to receive greater recognition by regulators such as Ofsted.
- *Opportunities to enable different cultural experiences* – The Board recognised the valuable opportunity available through the Leeds 2023 year of culture to enable children, young people and their families to access different cultural experiences.
- *The use of meaningful language* – As well as reflecting the need for children and young people to feel safe, a suggestion was made for the words ‘nurtured’ and ‘loved’ to also be reflected into the refreshed CYPP linked to being a compassionate city.
- *Ownership of the CYPP across all directorates* – linked to the Board’s earlier inquiry work around Child Friendly Leeds, the Board emphasised the importance of all directorates having ownership of the CYPP in terms of successful delivery.
- *Working with other Scrutiny Boards* – The Board acknowledged the importance of other scrutiny boards having access to views raised by children and young people to inform the areas within their remits too.
- *Consultation process and online questionnaire* – The Board emphasised the importance of ensuring that a wide range of views are gathered by children, young people and their families, with particular efforts made in targeting particularly hard to reach groups. Members also recognised the importance of using meaningful language as part of the consultation process.

In conclusion, the Chair thanked everyone for their contributions and requested that the Board is given the opportunity to consider the consultation questions in advance of the consultation being launched, and to also consider the consultation feedback and draft Plan prior to approval.

## **RESOLVED –**

- (a) That the report and comments raised by the Board be noted.

- (b) That the Chair writes to the West Yorkshire Mayor to relay the views of the Scrutiny Board in relation to the Fair Deal scheme for young people travelling by bus.
- (c) That the Board is given an opportunity to consider the consultation questions in advance of the consultation being launched, and to also consider the consultation feedback and draft Plan prior to approval.

## 22 Work Schedule

The Head of Democratic Services submitted a report that presented the Board's latest work schedule for the forthcoming municipal year.

The Chair reminded everyone that during the Board's initial meeting last month, Members were presented with a draft work schedule for the forthcoming municipal year but were also invited to suggest any other areas of interest that may warrant further scrutiny. However, in recognition of the need to ensure that the work of the Scrutiny Board remains manageable, it was noted that the Chair had met with the Director of Children and Families to identify those areas of priority where it was felt that the Scrutiny Board could add value this year.

Linked to this, it was noted that three priority areas had been identified, which included the following:

- It was proposed that the Board undertakes an in-depth review of Children's Services Workforce Planning and that the September meeting is used to help determine the scope of the Board's review.
- It was proposed that the Board maintains a watching brief on the new Schools Bill and the consequential impacts locally and to hold an initial discussion on the Schools Bill during its September meeting.
- It was proposed that the Board Reviews the existing Leeds SEND and Inclusion Strategy within the context of recommendations and proposals stemming from the SEND and Alternative Provision Green Paper and the Independent Review of Children's Social Care. It was highlighted that an item on the Leeds SEND and Inclusions Strategy had been scheduled for the Board's November meeting.

As well as reflecting the above, it was noted that the Board's latest work schedule also still includes traditional items of scrutiny activity, such as performance and budget monitoring, and is still reflective of the Board's early commitments to track key strategic plans, including the 3As Plan, Youth and Justice Plan and Child Poverty Strategy.

**RESOLVED** – That the latest work schedule, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report, be approved.

## 23 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Wednesday, 7<sup>th</sup> September 2022 at 10.00 am (pre-meeting for Board Members at 9.45 am)