



Children and Families Scrutiny Board 2021/22 Municipal Year Summary Report

Introduction

The role of Scrutiny is recognised nationally as a critical and integral part of the overall improvement landscape for local government, including the general accountability and governance arrangements for local councils and some other local statutory bodies.

The general Terms of Reference for all Scrutiny Boards are set out in Leeds City Council's Constitution – available here: [Scrutiny Boards \(leeds.gov.uk\)](https://www.leeds.gov.uk/scrutiny-boards).

While general Terms of Reference is applied to all Scrutiny Boards, the variations in the Scrutiny Boards' remits, together with their special responsibilities, are captured within [Article 6 of Leeds City Council's Constitution](#).

Article 6 also sets out the Council's agreed 'Vision for Scrutiny' which follows the nationally agreed 'Four Principles of Good Scrutiny' and sets out a number of conditions that need to be present to enable the vision to be fulfilled locally.

Scrutiny Boards usually meet in public, holding key decision makers to account, as well as providing 'critical friend' challenge and support whenever service delivery outcomes and performance expectations are not being met.

Purpose of the Scrutiny Board (Children and Families)

The remit of the Scrutiny Board (Children and Families) covers those areas of responsibility that fall to the Council's Director of Children and Families and therefore covers issues relating to education and children social care. Following the dissolution of the School Organisation Advisory Board (SOAB) in 2019, the Children and Families Scrutiny Board had considered what role the Scrutiny Board could play as part of the school organisation proposals and objections procedure, which relates to maintained schools, in terms of still allowing an appropriate level of rigour and challenge to continue to exist where formal objections are received following the publication of a Statutory Notice to close a school; open a new school; or make prescribed alterations to a school. In doing so, an approach was formally agreed by the Scrutiny Board in July 2019 ([Link to agreed approach](#)).

Membership

Membership of all Scrutiny Boards broadly reflects the political balance of the Council and cannot include members of the Council's Executive. There is also provision for Scrutiny Boards to appoint additional non-voting Co-opted Members. For Scrutiny Boards which cover the responsibilities of local education - in Leeds this is the Children and Families Scrutiny Board – the law also makes provision for parent governor and religious representatives to be co-opted onto the Scrutiny Board with voting rights. As well as meeting this statutory requirement, it has been a longstanding practice for the Children and Families Scrutiny Board to also appoint non-voting co-opted members from other relevant key areas. The Board membership for 2021/22 included school staff union and Third Sector representation.



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For the 2021/22 municipal year, the Scrutiny Board (Children and Families) included the following members:

- Councillor Hannah Bithell
- Councillor Emma Flint
- Councillor Ann Forsaith
- Councillor Caroline Gruen
- Councillor Zara Hussain
- Councillor John Illingworth
- Councillor Alan Lamb
- Councillor Sandy Lay
- Councillor Abigail Marshall Katung
- Councillor Karen Renshaw
- Councillor Linda Richards
- Councillor Jane Senior
- Councillor Ryan Stephenson

Further information about individual Councillors can be accessed by clicking the names above.

Voting Co-opted Members

- 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)

Non-voting Co-opted Members

- Ms C Foote - School Staff Representative
- Ms H Bellamy - School Staff Representative
- Ms L Whitaker - Young Lives Leeds

Principal Scrutiny Adviser: Angela Brogden

Telephone: 0113 37 88661 Email: Angela.Brogden@leeds.gov.uk

Scrutiny Board Chair

Councillor Alan Lamb was appointed as Chair of the Scrutiny Board (Children and Families) during the Council meeting held on Thursday 20th May 2021.

A Statement from the Scrutiny Board Chair acknowledging key areas of work undertaken by the Scrutiny Board during the 2021/22 municipal year is set out below.



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Completed Work Schedule for the 2021/22 Municipal Year

Each Scrutiny Board schedules eight formal or 'consultative'¹ meetings throughout the course of a municipal year which are open to the public. The decision to hold any additional meetings is left to the discretion of each Board.

Scrutiny Boards also adopt other methods of evidence gathering outside of the public meeting setting, such as site visits and working group meetings. The primary purpose of a working group meeting is to obtain and/or develop information which cannot realistically be undertaken within the confines of a formally convened Scrutiny Board meeting. A working group cannot discharge the primary purpose of a Scrutiny Board i.e. it cannot undertake Inquiries independently from its parent Scrutiny Board, conduct Inquiries, issue reports/recommendations (other than to its parent Scrutiny Board) or in any way present itself to a third party as representing the views of the parent Scrutiny Board.

The completed work schedule of the Scrutiny Board (Children and Families) for the 2021/22 municipal year has been provided as part of this summary report. This presents an overview of all meetings held throughout the year and the work items considered as part of each meeting. The work schedule also includes links to the agenda papers, minutes and webcast recordings of the Scrutiny Board's publicly accessible meetings.

¹ Consultative meetings are held remotely and webcasted live to enable public access. However, they are not a public meeting held in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972.



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Councillor Alan Lamb **Chair of Scrutiny Board** **(Children and Families)**

“It is always a privilege to Chair the Children and Families Scrutiny Board as we work collectively to achieve a positive impact on improving outcomes for all children, while also recognising the need for outcomes to improve faster for children from disadvantaged and vulnerable backgrounds.”

Over the last twelve months, the Scrutiny Board has continued to reflect on the immediate and longer-term impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on the health, wellbeing and learning of our children and young people and in doing so, we explored how the Council and partners are working collaboratively to provide much needed support to children and their families, especially the most vulnerable. Linked to this, we particularly maintained a watching brief surrounding the delivery of the Leeds Child Poverty Strategy and also on the implementation of the Future In Mind Strategy. We also undertook valuable pre-decision scrutiny work in terms of sharing our views on the new SEND and Inclusion Strategy and the refreshed Leeds 3As Plan prior to them being finalised.

This year, the Board also considered the findings of Ofsted inspectors following a two-day focused visit to Leeds Children’s Services in July 2021. While there were no areas of serious weakness, three areas for improved practice had been identified. The Board therefore maintained a watching brief of progress against the associated Improvement Action Plan. In May 2022, we also considered the findings of the Ofsted inspection of children’s social care services during late February/early March 2022 as part of the ‘ILACS’ inspection framework. Linked to this, the Board was extremely pleased to learn that since the last full inspection of Leeds City Council in 2018, Ofsted has found that services for children have remained outstanding in their overall effectiveness. We also very much welcome the recognition that has been given to the role of scrutiny by Ofsted in terms of being robust and challenging.

The welfare of all children and young people is paramount and having been made aware of instances where differing views were evident within the Leeds Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) on whether to categorise a case as a notifiable Serious Child Safeguarding Incident, I ensured that this matter was brought to the urgent attention of my fellow Board Members. In February 2022, the Board heard directly from the Independent Chair of the LSCP and learned that a local review of the notification arrangements was being undertaken. A further update was presented to the Board in May 2022, along with the opportunity to engage with other partner members of the LSCP Executive. In doing so, a commitment was made for the Scrutiny Board to receive the full report on the outcome of the notification review once complete.

Linked to our own inquiry work around exclusions, elective home education and off-rolling, we recognise that forthcoming legislative changes, particularly in relation to the Schools Bill, will have significant implications that will warrant detailed and timely scrutiny during the 2022/23 municipal year.

The Scrutiny Board has again addressed a wide range of important issues this year and I would like to thank everyone who has actively contributed to the Board’s work. I am also very grateful to my fellow Board Members for their continued hard work and commitment in helping to make Leeds the best city in the UK for children and young people to grow up in”.



SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN AND FAMILIES) Work Schedule for 2021/2022 Municipal Year

June	July	August
Meeting Agenda for 9th June 2021 (Link to agenda papers, minutes & webcast)	Meeting Agenda for 7th July 2021 (Link to agenda papers, minutes & webcast)	No Scrutiny Board meeting
** Consultative Meeting** Scrutiny Board Terms of Reference and Sources of Work (DB) Performance Update (PM) Looked After Children and the EU Settlement Scheme – update position in Leeds (PSR)	** Consultative Meeting** Scrutiny Inquiry into Exclusions, Elective Home Education and Off-rolling – current position and determining next steps (PSR) Youth Work Review and Future Vision (PSR)	
Working Group Meetings		
Site Visits		

Scrutiny Work Items Key:

PSR	Policy/Service Review	RT	Recommendation Tracking	DB	Development Briefings
PDS	Pre-decision Scrutiny	PM	Performance Monitoring	C	Consultation Response



SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN AND FAMILIES) Work Schedule for 2021/2022 Municipal Year

September	October	November
Meeting Agenda for 8th September 2021 (Link to agenda papers, minutes & webcast)	Meeting Agenda for 13th October 2021 (Link to agenda papers, minutes & webcast)	Meeting Agenda for 3rd November 2021 (Link to agenda papers, minutes & webcast)
Co-opted Members (DB) Proposal to permanently increase learning places at St Edward's Catholic Primary School from September 2022 (PDS) Tackling the long-term impacts of Covid-19 on children and families – Formal ratification of final inquiry report (PSR)	Youth Justice Plan 2021 – 24 (PDS) Covid-19 recovery update with a focus on Early Years, Early Help and Children's Social Care (PSR) Ofsted Focused Visit Improvement Plan (PSR) Scrutiny Inquiry into Exclusions, Elective Home Education and Off-rolling (Part 2) - finalising terms of reference (PSR)	Scrutiny Inquiry into Exclusions, Elective Home Education and Off-rolling (Part 2) – evidence session 1 (PSR) DfE guidance for GCSE and A level assessments for 2022 (DB) SEND and Inclusion Strategy for Leeds (PDS) Leeds 3As Plan (PDS)
Meeting Agenda for 15th September 2021 (Link to agenda papers, minutes & webcast) ** Consultative Meeting**		
Leeds Child Poverty Strategy – Update (PSR) Covid-19 update with a focus on learning (PSR) Ofsted findings following a focused visit to Leeds Children's Services in July 2021 (PSR)		
Working Group Meetings		

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December	January	February
No Scrutiny Board meeting.	Meeting Agenda for 26th January 2022 (Link to agenda papers, minutes & webcast)	Meeting Agenda for 16th February 2022 (Link to agenda papers, minutes & webcast)
	Performance report (PM) Financial Health Monitoring (PSR) 2022/23 Initial Budget Proposals (PDS) Best City Ambition – Initial Proposals (PDS) Ofsted Focused Visit Improvement Plan (PSR)	Notification of Serious Incidents Review (PSR) - <i>Late item of urgent business</i> Future in Mind Strategy – Update (PSR) Covid-19 recovery update relating to those service areas that fall within the remit of the Children and Families Scrutiny Board (PSR) – <i>Deferred to a future meeting.</i> Tackling the long-term impacts of Covid - Formal Response (RT) – <i>Deferred to March meeting.</i>
Working Group Meetings		
2022/23 Initial Budget Proposals (PDS) – 16/12/21 @ 9.30 am.		
Site Visits		

Scrutiny Work Items Key:

PSR	Policy/Service Review	RT	Recommendation Tracking	DB	Development Briefings
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SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN AND FAMILIES) Work Schedule for 2021/2022 Municipal Year

March	April	May
Meeting Agenda for 30th March 2022 (Link to agenda papers, minutes & webcast)	No Scrutiny Board meeting	Meeting Agenda for 11th May 2022 (Link to agenda papers, minutes & webcast)
Annual report of the Leeds Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (PSR) New Youth Work Model – update (PSR) Leeds Child Poverty Strategy – Update with a particular focus on the new green spaces priority (PSR) Tackling the long-term impacts of Covid - Formal Response (RT)		Notification of Serious Child Safeguarding Incidents Review – Update (PSR) Ofsted Inspection Report (PSR)
Working Group Meetings		
Scrutiny Inquiry into Exclusions, Elective Home Education and Off-rolling (Part 2) – evidence session (tbc)		
Site Visits		

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