



Report of the Director of Children's Service

Scrutiny Board (Children's Services)

Date: 8th January 2009

Subject: Children's Services and the Children and Young People's Plan
Priorities Update (Looked After Children Focus)

Electoral Wards Affected: All	Specific Implications For: Equality and Diversity <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Community Cohesion <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Narrowing the Gap <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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1.0 Background

- 1.1 The Children's Services Scrutiny Board has a well-established process of receiving regular update reports providing a broad and brief overview of key developments across the children's trust arrangements and discussing progress against specific priorities within the Children and Young People's Plan.
- 1.2 These reports aim to give members: a feel for the strategic 'direction of travel' across children's services; an insight into key initiatives and developments; and a 'manageable' way of looking across the various priorities within the Children and Young People's (CYP) Plan over the course of the year.
- 1.3 The first of these reports in September 2007 focused on the CYP Plan priorities of: Improving the assessment and care of children in need; and reducing the proportion of vulnerable groups not in education, employment or training. The second report, received in November 2007 addressed the CYP Plan priorities of: reducing teenage conception; and enabling the engagement of parents and young learners in early years and primary schools. The third report, in February 2008 considered the priorities to: reduce bullying and improve services for children, young people and families with additional mental health needs. The latest report, in October 2008, looked at the priorities of reducing anti-social behaviour and reducing obesity and raising activity. Members agreed that within their next update they would consider the various priorities of the Children and Young People's Plan, but focus specifically on work to improve these for looked after children in Leeds.

- 1.4 Like the previous 'update' reports brought to the board, this report follows the structure of firstly providing a brief overview of recent key developments across children's trust arrangements and then, for the majority of the report, highlighting the range of work being done to improve priority outcomes for looked after children in Leeds.

2.0 Children's trust arrangements update

- 2.1 Each element of the children's trust arrangements has continued to progress work to help address priority areas, the following provides a very brief summary of some of the key areas covered since the latest update report to Scrutiny in October:

Children Leeds Partnership

- 2.2 The Children Leeds Partnership has met twice since the latest update report to scrutiny. The first of these meetings was an extraordinary meeting as part of the consultation process for the development of the new Children and Young People's Plan. Young people were significantly involved in this meeting. More details of this meeting are in the CYP Plan 2009 Update section below.
- 2.3 The second meeting in early-November, helped bring delegates up-to-date on and enabled them to shape several key areas of work, specifically: the Disabled Children and Young People's Strategy 2008-2011; the Leeds Inclusive Learning Strategy; the Attendance Strategy; and an update on developments relating to the 14-19 agenda. The Partnership's next meeting is in January 2009.

Integrated Strategic Commissioning Board

- 2.4 The integrated Strategic Commissioning Board (ISCB) has also met twice since the latest update report to Scrutiny. At its October meeting the Board took an overview of how partners are working together to address child poverty and the 'family focused' approach being taken in Leeds to achieve this. The Board linked this in with a review of progress against the family support and parenting strategy. The Board carried out its overview and planning role with early consideration of the 2009/10 budget and undertook its performance monitoring role with an early review of progress against the Joint Area review Action Plan, more detailed consideration of this progress will be given later in the year. The Board also considered the strategic commissioning framework for children's services.
- 2.5 At its December meeting the Board considered performance monitoring information for quarter 2 (being presented to Scrutiny). It also looked in detail at the range of policy and research recently presented to support the strengthening and further development of local children's trust arrangements. This includes:

- Children's Trust arrangements - new Statutory Guidance
- Consultation on "Statutory guidance on the roles and responsibilities of the Director of Children's Services and Lead Member for Children's Services".
- Audit Commission Report "Are we there yet?"

2.6 The Board has proposed that a future 'Governance Seminar', possibly in the spring of 2009, should be held to enable partners to take stock of the new national 'thinking' and best practice in relation to children's trust arrangements so that Leeds can continue to be pro-active in taking forward this agenda.

The Leeds Safeguarding Children Board

2.7 A separate report on the Scrutiny Board's January 2009 agenda considers in some detail the role and work of the Leeds Safeguarding Children Board. As such, members are advised to refer to this report for the latest information on the Board's work. The Chair of the Board and the Safeguarding Manager will be present to discuss this further with members.

3.0 Children and Young People's Plan 2009 Update

3.1 Work has been progressing to consult on and develop the new Leeds Children and Young People's Plan for 2009 and beyond. The main period of widespread consultation concluded in autumn 2008 and following this the Integrated Strategic Commissioning Board were presented with and approved the overall structure and approach for the plan as well as contributing to the formulation of the main priorities list.

3.2 A special Children Leeds Partnership meeting then brought adults and young people together from across the city to consider the priorities that had emerged. This was an important session because, as a direct result of young people's input an additional priority was added that had not been captured sufficiently in the earlier consultation – young people were particularly keen that 'places to go and things to do' should be an explicit priority within the Plan.

3.3 Workshops have recently been run, themed around the main priorities, to develop more intricate knowledge of the current position and future plans around these. Work is also being done to link in the Plan's development with the current planning of the 2009/10 budget, with a view to targeting resources towards priority areas.

3.4 All of the work above is being brought together to support the creation of the new Plan. It is expected that a draft will be presented to the Children's Services Scrutiny Board in early spring 2009.

4.0 Leeds Annual Performance Assessment (APA) 2008

4.1 Ofsted carried out an annual performance assessment of local authority services for children and young people early in November. The assessment was primarily based on evidence requested by and submitted to Ofsted,

complemented by a one-day visit to speak in more detail with officers. It is important to note that whereas the Joint Area Review inspection (published May 2008) looked at all services for children and young people across the city and how they work together, the APA looks specifically at services provided by the local authority (including Education Leeds). The APA letters were published on 17th December 2008. This year Leeds received the following scores:

Overall effectiveness of children's services	2
Being healthy	2
Staying safe	2
Enjoying and achieving	3
Making a positive contribution	3
Achieving economic well-being	2
Capacity to improve, including the management of services for children and young people	2

Inspectors make judgements based on the following scale
4: outstanding/excellent; 3: good; 2: adequate; 1: inadequate

- 4.2 A report on this year's Annual Performance Assessment will be submitted to the Council's Executive Board in January. Following consideration of this report further information can be brought to Scrutiny Board members as requested.

5.0 The National Context and the Impact In Leeds

- 5.1 There has been significant national press and public attention focused on children's services across the country in recent months. This primarily reflects interest in and the implications of the Baby P case in Haringey. The Baby P case has highlighted some important and immediate questions about child protection practice for every local authority.
- 5.2 The case has also had deeper implications in sharpening the focus on safeguarding as a shared responsibility of all those who work with children and young people, highlighting the importance of developing practice that enables different services to work across boundaries and build around the needs of individual children and families.
- 5.3 Following the Baby P case, the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families has written to each local authority asking them to review their practice, particularly in light of the findings of the urgent Joint Area Review in Haringey, conducted in the wake of the Baby P case. Leeds is conducting such a review and the local authority is working very closely with its partners involved in child protection to do so. In addition, ensuring that effective arrangements are in place for leadership and accountability in children and young people's social care, has also been a principal focus of the Director of Children's Services both prior to and in the context of the publicity surrounding the Baby P case.

- 5.4 It is likely that the Baby P case will contribute to changing practice in the way that children's services locally are monitored and assessed. This sits alongside changes already proposed to the way local children's trust arrangements, and responsibilities within these, operate – putting an even greater onus on different agencies working together. The roles of different agencies and individuals in safeguarding work needs to be clearly understood by all and implemented consistently. A stronger focus within inspections on safeguarding, will intensify the emphasis on different services locally being able to demonstrate how they work together around the needs of children and families with the most challenging, complex and often high-risk cases. It will also raise the profile of training and support to ensure staff can feel confident in the assessments they make and the work they are doing with families.
- 5.5 All of the above is reflected in positive work already taking place in Leeds (with initiatives like head teachers and social work managers shadowing each other's roles, or moves towards a more integrated approach to delivering services at local level). More details on this type of work can be provided for members on request. A paper complementing this one, describing the work of the Local Safeguarding Children Board in Leeds has also been submitted to Scrutiny and gives a wider sense of the type of work going on across the city.
- 6.0 CYP Plan Priority Focus: Improving Outcomes for Looked After Children**
- 6.1 All LCC services and their partners undertake work that encompasses looked after children as part of their daily work. That is especially true of Children & Young People's Social Care, which is responsible for the day-to-day support of looked after children and their carers. However, the purpose of the following information is not to detail all the work done every day by social workers, residential care workers and foster carers, but rather to concentrate on specific work being done in response to the priority that the current Children and Young People's Plan has attached to looked after children. As such it summarises the particular targeted approaches adopted under the auspices of the Multi-Agency Looked After Partnership (MALAP) and related agencies as well as some of the 'next steps'.

The Multi-Agency looked After Partnership Executive (MALAP Exec.)

- 6.2 The MALAP Exec. brings together key strategic leaders from across Children Leeds and those leaders responsible for the operational leadership of services to looked after children. Over the last year it has also provided 'governance', challenge and support for the Leeds Extended School for Looked after Children (LEXS) which was set up in September 2007 with the secondment of Alun Rees, Headteacher of Boston Spa School, as its first Head.
- 6.3 The Head of the Leeds Extended School for LAC is a member of the Children & Young People's Social Care (CYPSC) Senior Leadership Team and also maintains close links to Education Leeds, the Director of Children's Services Unit, and with colleague Headteachers. In creating this role the local authority created a strong advocate for the educational priorities of looked after children who could make the case for improved services on behalf of individual children and young people and for them as a group.
- 6.4 As Leeds' first strategic post with a focus purely on looked after children the Headteacher provides a focus for cross-service support for looked after children as well as being an agent for change both in what support is offered and how it is offered. That has included increasing leadership and management of the colleagues across Education Leeds and Children & Young people's Social Care with day-to-day responsibilities for education support to these vulnerable children and young people.
- 6.5 The MALAP Exec is now equipped to quality assure services to looked after children across Children's Services and beyond. It has agreed the performance indicators relating to looked after children and delegated them to the most appropriate working group reporting to it. Currently the working groups comprise:
- The Leeds Extended School for Looked After Children (LEXS);
 - A health group made up of the looked after children's nurses and their team leader;
 - The Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) group; and the post-16/Care Leaver group.
- 6.6 It has also established good links to the Youth Offending Service (YOS), which has its own action plan relating to looked after children. The YOS and the extended School collaborated on an Innovations grant to support looked after children at risk of offending onto very successful dance activities.
- 6.7 The MALAP Exec. is discussing with the Integrating Services Group how a model for joint commissioning of services might ensure:
- the welfare and safety of children and young people in their own families and communities is sufficiently strong that numbers entering care are minimised;
 - those who came into care have the best possible opportunity to move to adoption or be re-united with their families if that is what is most appropriate;
 - those who do remain in care receive services that allow them to progress and be successful on a par with their non-looked after peers.

6.8 Work with, and on behalf of, looked after children has covered all the Every Child Matters outcomes in 2007-2008 as well as preparatory work, overseen by the Head of LEXS in partnership with professor Nick Frost (Leeds Met University), for the implementation of Care Matters. The first concrete outcome from this process will be the Leeds Pledge to Looked after Children, which has been widely consulted on with children and young people. The initial draft will come to the Elected Members Corporate Carer group in the New Year.

Enjoy & Achieve

6.9 The Leeds Extended School for Looked after Children (LEXS) has gained Innovations Grant funding to offer approximately 200 looked after children 1-to-1 tuition by a trained teacher. The tuition takes the form of 12 x 1 hour sessions and takes place outside the school day. This means children need not feel sensitive at being singled out in school. Initially this intervention is being targeted at children with whom it is likely to have the greatest medium term impact: Year 10 & 11 students preparing for GCSE. In the Spring the offer of support will be broadened to Year 9 and then to other Year groups. The first feedback from young people and carers is expected in the Spring.

6.10 The second Innovations Grant won by the Extended School has focussed on looked after children in Year 9 who have either begun to disengage from learning during Year 8 or begun to disengage during Year 9. The Extended School has deployed a dedicated Connexions Personal Advisor since September to work closely with a cohort of up to 30 young people across the city. The aim is to identify the barriers that the young people perceive as reducing their commitment to education and then seeking to re-engage them with learning. Initial anecdotal feedback suggests the young people feel they are getting personalised support, which is focussed on their needs. While it is early to identify a wider impact, the attendance rates among the cohort have been good so far this term compared to the end of Year 8.

6.11 The Extended School has also found funding to extend the contract of a dedicated Looked After Children Attendance Improvement Officer (AIOs) funded last year by the Attendance Service from a grant. She has worked with school based AIOs to increase their understanding of looked after children and the issues that can impact their attendance as well as with schools to improve attendance practice relating to looked after children. Relationships with residential homes in particular have benefited from this approach and schools speak highly of her capacity to help get children into school. She has also been able to embed the protocol agreed between Children and Young People's Social Care and Schools which means that carers and social workers are now getting letters of either congratulation or concern about attendance termly. This term she will extend her work to ensure that information on looked after children is shared more quickly between Social Care and Schools and support the work of the Extended School team in building relationships with designated teachers in schools.

- 6.12 Education Leeds' Performance Management and Information Team now provide the Extended School with the same analysis service of outcomes available to mainstream schools as well as more specific analysis and research. They are sponsoring a research project aimed at identifying the key barriers looked after children themselves, particularly those in residential care, perceive in their engagement with learning. This research will inform the continuing response to the JAR priority relating to bringing down fixed term exclusions for looked after children.
- 6.13 There is also now a clear route through the Extended School for the dissemination of performance information for looked after children to partners in Education Leeds School Improvement Service and Integrated Children's Service teams; CYSPC Social Workers and Residential Worker teams; and the Elected Member Corporate Carer group.
- 6.14 In addressing the JAR priority to reduce fixed term exclusion among looked after children, the Extended School has offered advice and guidance to carers and residential workers so they are better equipped to work with a school to avoid exclusion and respond more robustly in ruling out 'unofficial' exclusion or 'cooling off time' out of school. In partnership with the Pupil Planning Team, advice has been offered to schools where there was evidence of this approach being followed and school exclusion procedures relating to looked after children have improved as a result. That has had the predictable effect of increasing the number of exclusions logged by one or two schools but that is against a background that saw total numbers of exclusions of looked after children from mainstream schools decline in the first months of this academic year compared to the same time last year.
- 6.15 However, the Extended School has also worked closely with the Integrated Support and Psychology Service (ISPS) within Education Leeds to ensure looked after children at risk of exclusion are more likely to come to the attention of a school's educational psychologist. ISPS has also allocated the time of an experienced educational psychologist as a link between the Head of the Extended School and the service. This has decreased the risk of delays in seeing looked after children and will have an impact on the quality of their learning.
- 6.16 ISPS has also collaborated with the Extended School to provide best practice advice to schools in relation to looked after children and that is being disseminated not just to schools but also within CYPSC and to governors. The two teams will next explore the provision of advice to classroom based staff on how to make the learning of looked after children even more inclusive.
- 6.17 The Head of the Extended School has worked with the members of the Education Protects Team and the Fostering and Adoption Service to change their way of working from a more centrally based advice and guidance service to a more pro-active service. From January officers will be going out to meet designated teachers for looked after children, initially in secondary schools, and discussing the individual attendance, progress and needs of looked after children at the school. They will then be able to allocate the 1-to-1 tuition,

Connexions or attendance support described above to where they are likely to have most impact. They will also be able to put together a clear agenda of professional development for those designated teachers. Discussions are ongoing as to how this team of committed professionals can be firmly placed within the Extended School.

- 6.18 'Stepping Stones' continues to offer looked after children enormous support in developing their aspirations and capacity to achieve success. Under the AimHigher banner Stepping Stones continues to channel large numbers of young people into further and higher education and maintains very close and effective links to the Leeds HEIs. Stepping Stones delivers through a variety of mentoring and study support interventions as well as activities aimed at encouraging looked after children and their carers to learn together and build self-esteem.
- 6.19 The Early Year's Service have been proactive in seeking links with the Leeds Extended School and have embedded the concept of the 'virtual children's centre' in their service planning. The intention is to ensure that looked after children have priority access to an early years place and that this is the default provision for all looked after children. They are also keen to work closely with foster carers to provide appropriate support and guidance.

Be Healthy

- 6.20 The PCT has commissioned additional support for looked after children including additional specialist dental health support to meet the needs of the cohort for regular dental checks. Additionally it has commissioned 3 WTE (whole time equivalent) looked after children's nurses (for appointment in December) and increased existing nurse time to 1.4 WTE. Additionally, over the last year, the Designated Nurse time for looked after children has increased from 0.5 to 1.0 WTE. This expanded capacity includes the mainstreaming of the sexual health nurse post working with looked after children which has been piloted over the last year and become highly regarded both by young people and other professionals.

Achieve Economic Well-being

- 6.21 The MALAP Post-16/Care Leaver working group has taken on responsibility for the second key JAR priority relating to looked after children: their progression to education, training or employment. They have adopted the relevant sections of the JAR Action Plan into the group's work plan and in pursuit of reducing the numbers of looked after children at risk of becoming NEET they have improved the exchange of information between Social Care, Igen/Connexions Service and Education Leeds. This means they can begin to identify more effective means of tracking an ever-changing cohort from Year 11 to 19+. The group has also begun to identify young people most at risk of becoming NEET earlier so that more pro-active support can be offered (see IYSS/ Targeted Youth Support, below). Now that the group is monitoring the NEET status of care leavers so regularly, patterns and trends can trigger intervention as soon as they appear rather than retrospectively.

- 6.22 The group has agreed a protocol to ensure that there is a designated tutor in each Leeds College and that those tutors know who the looked after children attending the college are and has Social Care contacts to ensure the rapid notification of successes or causes of concern.
- 6.23 Efforts have also been made to broaden the membership of the group beyond Children's Services to include other services vital to care leavers, such as Housing. The group will cooperate with the Extended School in making the case for priority access for looked after children and care leavers to work placements or apprenticeships within LCC services.

Stay Safe

- 6.24 The effective response to the recent inspection of the fostering service has increased the pace of change in support for foster carers and those they care for. In parallel the thorough review of residential care provision is creating the capacity for more individual and personalised care for young people.
- 6.25 OfSTED inspections of CYPSC Residential Children's Homes have shown a significant increase in standards over recent months including improvement to Good and Outstanding.
- 6.26 The Payment for Skills strategy – which rewards foster carers for the particular level of skill and experience that they offer - is now being implemented and will provide structured support for the 'professionalisation' of the foster care workforce and provide the necessary scaffolding for the implementation of Care Matters.

Make a Positive Contribution

- 6.27 As well as IYSS' partnership with the Extended School's Innovations bid for Year 9 Connexions support (above), every residential children's home now has a Youth Service contact, ensuring they are kept up-to-date with locally organised activities. IYSS is also taking direct referrals from social workers where the Positive Activities for Young People (PAYP) programme might be appropriate.
- 6.28 Breeze Cards are well used by looked after children and work under the 'Find Your Talent' banner should increase usage further. LCC is an important partner in the regional network that supports the MaxCard for looked after people across Leeds, Calderdale, Wakefield, North Yorkshire, Rotherham, Bradford, Kirklees, York, Doncaster, Barnsley, Hull, East Riding, North Lincolnshire and Sheffield. The MaxCard gives looked after children, their carers and other family members free entry to more than 90 museums and galleries across the participating authorities.
- 6.29 Targeted Youth Support are working with Children & Young People's Social Care to identify young people currently in Year 11 who may be at greatest risk of becoming NEET in the Autumn of 2009. The cohort identified will be

individually supported with personalised support from the end of Year 11 through to the Autumn in a concerted effort to increase the likelihood of them moving into education, training or employment.

Support for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children (UASC)

- 6.30 The UASC work group is the most recent to be incorporated within the MALAP structure but it has made significant strides in the provision of services to this particularly vulnerable group of looked after children and young people. The UASC cohort also provide an impressive case study of how services working together can create an effective framework of multi-agency support, coordinated by Children And Young People's Social Care, around a particularly vulnerable group of young people.

Support from Children & Young People's Social Care (CYPSC)

- 6.31 As well as being the core service supporting this cohort of vulnerable young people day in day out the service is developing an information file for UASCs to be accessible in every placement. It will consist of useful information about living in Leeds and list services and activities available to UASCs in the city. Some of the information in these files will be available in the language spoken by the client.
- 6.32 CYPSC has also established links to Hyde Park Source through which UASCs have been able to access volunteering activities. They have also brokered free access to the Leeds Film Festival and to Party in the Park.

Sexual Health support

- 6.33 This is a rolling programme and consists of single language groups of 10 young people; the sessions facilitated by professionals from CART, Barnardos, Yorkshire MESMAC and LAC Nurses Team. The first group started on the 17th November. Sessions are held at The Archway Project. Funding has been secured from the Risk Project to pay for room hire at Archway and Food from a local restaurant after each session. There is also funding available for an activity at the end of the course. The next course is due to start in March '09.

Support from Libraries Service

- 6.34 Young people have been producing a monthly newsletter since July '08. They meet at Chapletown Library every Thursday to write stories and design the layout of the newsletter. The sessions are facilitated by staff from Leeds Libraries and Information Services. This is an ongoing programme and will be further developed to incorporate a newsletter website. Whilst there, young people are encouraged to join the library and set up an email account. They are also informed about other services available to them. A camera has been bought from PAYP funding for the Newsletter.

- 6.35 Young people have also taken part in two bike clubs this year. The clubs are run in partnership with the Leeds Libraries Service, The Leeds Road Safety Team, Out of School activities Team and the Police. Young people learn about road safety and how to plan routes to get to various places around Leeds. Young people receive a free bike, helmet and bike lock at the end of the course. The next bike club will be in February '09.

IYSS Support

- 6.36 Gym Sessions at the DOJO gym in Chapletown have been funded from PAYP. Young people can attend the gym at any time. Two female members of staff from children & young people's social care facilitate a girls group at the gym on a Monday and Wednesday. These sessions are currently funded till April '09.
- 6.37 Young people attend football training sessions at Thomas Danby College facilitated by the Archway Project. Unaccompanied asylum seekers formed a team and entered a football tournament in July '08. They also entered a football tournament in Bradford through the Children & Young People's Social Care Pathway Planning Team. Plans are now being developed to enter one of the Leagues in Leeds, this will be done in conjunction with the Pathway Planning Team.
- 6.38 When available free Leeds United tickets are given to young people to attend matches at Elland Road.
- 6.39 A youth club aimed specifically at Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers takes place at the Archway Project every Thursday. PAYP Funding through the Out Of School Activities Team has been used to book facilitators to run art workshops, photography workshops, Kite making sessions and team building exercises. This funding has also provided board games for the youth club. Connexions PA's are also at hand to provide various information to the young people and have facilitated cooking sessions for young people. John Holmes from the youth service also attends the sessions to facilitate activities.

7.0 Conclusions

- 7.1 This report has provided an update on a number of key developments in children's services in Leeds. It has also focused particular attention on a key priority area – improving outcomes for looked after children. Taken together with the reports on quarter two performance and safeguarding presented to the board and the other update reports produced over the year, this report helps to give members an overview of the range of work to address priorities across the city. The report reflects progress made, but also the challenges remaining and the opportunities to continue addressing these through learning from recent activities and the 2009 review of the Children and Young People's Plan.

8.0 Recommendations

- 8.1 It is recommended that members note and comment on the content of this report and identify any areas where further information would be helpful.

Background Papers

Report to Children's Services Scrutiny Board : 13.09.07 – Children's Services and the Children and Young People's Plan

Report to Children's Services Scrutiny Board 08.11.08: – Children's Services and the Children and Young People's Plan (2nd Update)

Report to Children's Services Scrutiny Board : 14.02.08 – Children's Services and the Children and Young People's Plan (3rd Update)

Report to Children's Services Scrutiny Board: 16.10.08 – Children's Services and the Children and Young People's Plan