

Inquiry Report - Provision of EHCP Support in Leeds

Date: 18 April 2024

Report of: Head of Democratic Services

Report to: Children and Families Scrutiny Board

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

Brief summary

Children and Families Scrutiny Board has identified Education Health and Care needs Plans (EHCPs) as an item for detailed scrutiny in the 2023/24 municipal year.

As such the Board has initiated an inquiry into the provision of EHCP support in the city with the intention of supporting and providing check and challenge on the concurrent improvement work being led by the Children and Families directorate supported by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC). This is similarly aimed at delivering effective, sustainable change to improve outcomes for children and families accessing EHCP and SEND support services in Leeds.

The board has considered issues related to the provision of EHCP support throughout the 2023/24 municipal year both in the public board meetings and through working group sessions held in September and November. Appendix 1 to this report provides the inquiry report which brings together conclusions from this work taking account of the evidence heard during the municipal year and the comments and amendments suggested by board members and witnesses at the meeting held on 27 March 2024.

The Board targeted completion of the inquiry in the 2023/24 municipal year and this report seeks to deliver against that timeline. The directorate led improvement is ongoing and will extend beyond the timeframe of the inquiry. Appendix 1 therefore contains a recommendation that ongoing check and challenge from the Board should be a feature of the Board's work programme in the 2024/25 municipal year.

Recommendations

Children and Families Scrutiny Board is asked to:

- a) Agree the inquiry report on the Provision of EHCP Support in Leeds, following consideration of this issue throughout the 2023/24 municipal year and a draft inquiry report at the Board's March meeting.
- b) Agree that in line with Recommendation 11 ongoing check and challenge should be recommended as a work item to the successor Board in 2024/25.

What is this report about?

- 1 The Scrutiny Board procedure rules (Part J, Paragraph 52) require that: 'Before finalising any recommendations to be made the Scrutiny Board shall invite advice from the appropriate Director(s). The Director shall consult with the appropriate Executive Member before providing any such advice. The detail of that advice shall be reported to the Scrutiny Board and considered before the Board's recommendations are finalised.' The Board meeting held on 27 March 2024 provided this opportunity through consideration of a draft inquiry report and comments and amendments are now reflected in the report attached at Appendix 1.
- 2 Appendix 1 contains details on when the Board heard evidence on this issue, the witnesses that have contributed and a summary of the evidence heard. The timeline for this work is as follows:
 - 5 July 2023 Public Board Meeting – Consideration of Inquiry Terms of Reference
 - 6 September 2023 Public Board Meeting – Agreement of Inquiry Terms of Reference
 - 22 September 2023 Working Group – focussed on the planned Improvement work being led by the Children and Families Directorate supported by PwC
 - October 2023 – Working group Summary considered at the Public Board Meeting
 - 23 November 2023 Working Group – Stakeholder Engagement with the Leeds Parent Carer Forum (LPCF)
 - 24 January 2024 Public Board Meeting – Working Group Summary and update on the directorate led improvement work
 - 22 February 2024 Public Board Meeting - overview of the engagement work that the directorate has done and a summary of findings from an ongoing survey of parents, carers, children and young people on EHCP and SEND support in Leeds.
 - 27 March 2024 Public Board Meeting – Consideration of the Draft Inquiry Report
 - 18 April 2024 Public Board Meeting – Consideration of the Final Inquiry Report

What impact will this proposal have?

- 3 The Council's Vision for Scrutiny contained in Article 6 of the Constitution sets out the nationally agreed four principles of good scrutiny. Within these are a commitment to promote scrutiny as a means to ensure the voice and concerns of the public can be heard and to improve public services by ensuring that reviews of policy and service performance are focused.
- 4 Consideration of this inquiry in 2023/24 has responded to performance data that has suggested a decline in meeting deadlines associated with EHCP processes and also anecdotal evidence from elected members through casework that has indicated that services in this area have not been consistently meeting the expectations of children and families in the city.
- 5 It is hoped that the inquiry into the provision of EHCP support, in conjunction with the directorate's own improvement work will lead to improved services in the city.

How does this proposal impact the three pillars of the Best City Ambition?

Health and Wellbeing

Inclusive Growth

Zero Carbon

- 6 The terms of reference of Scrutiny Boards in Leeds promote a strategic and outward looking Scrutiny function that focuses on the priorities of the Best City Ambition. This work item is aimed at having a particular impact against health and well-being and inclusive growth by seeking to review and improve services for children and families who access EHCP support.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected:

Have ward members been consulted? Yes No

- 7 At the 7th of June Children and Families Scrutiny Board discussion with the Director and Executive Board members suggested that the Provision of EHCP Support would be a positive area of focus for the Board in 2023/24 and the Board supported the inclusion of the EHCP inquiry in its work programme for the year.
- 8 The draft terms of reference and final terms of reference for this inquiry have also been before the Board for comment and agreement in July and September along with a summary of a previous Working Groups held in September and November and ongoing inquiry sessions at public board meetings linked to this work stream.
- 9 The draft inquiry report was considered by the Board at its meeting on 27 March 2024 providing an opportunity for further comments and amendments from board members, attending officers and Executive Board members.

What are the resource implications?

- 16 There are no specific resource implications associated with this report.

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

- 17 There are no specific risk implications associated with this report.

What are the legal implications?

- 18 There are no specific legal implications associated with this report. Although it should be noted that any new or revised arrangements should be legally sound and reflect the legal framework governing the EHC process.

Options, timescales and measuring success

What other options were considered?

- 19 Not applicable.

How will success be measured?

- 20 The completion of an inquiry report in the 2023/24 municipal year and a commitment to ongoing work in this area as part of the Scrutiny Board's future work programming.

What is the timetable and who will be responsible for implementation?

- 21 The timetable has been dictated by the Board through regular consideration of the work programme at each public meeting that is held and during the inquiry work itself. The Board, in consultation with the Principal Scrutiny Advisor, will be responsible for production of the inquiry report.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Provision of EHCP Support – Inquiry Report

Background papers

- None