



---

## Report of the Director of Children's Services

### Executive Board

1<sup>st</sup> April 2009

### Response to the Children's Services Scrutiny Board's Inquiry into the Multi-Agency Support Team (MAST)

---

#### Electoral Wards Affected:

Ward Members consulted  
(referred to in report)

#### Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Eligible for Call In

Not Eligible for Call In  
(Details contained in the report)

---

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report provides the Executive Board with details of the recommendations from the recent Children's Services Scrutiny Board inquiry into the Multi-Agency Support Team (MAST) and details how the Director proposes to respond to these recommendations. The report asks the Board to approve the proposed response.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

2. Executive Board are recommended to:

Approve the proposed responses to the Scrutiny Board's recommendations.

## **Purpose Of This Report**

- 1.1 This report provides the Executive Board with details of the recommendations from the recent Children's Services Scrutiny Board inquiry into the Multi-Agency Support Team (MAST) and details how the Director proposes to respond to these recommendations. The report asks the Board to approve the proposed response.

### **2.0 Background Information**

- 2.1 In late 2008 and early 2009, following a request for scrutiny from Councillor Brian Selby, the Children's Services Scrutiny Board conducted an inquiry into action taken by children's services around the MAST, which works with the Seacroft Manston family of schools. The request had followed concerns about proposals to reduce aspects of funding to the service and the subsequent handling of activity relating to this. The final scrutiny report, containing full details is attached at appendix 1.
- 2.2 The report makes six recommendations for action. The Director of Children's Services has accepted these recommendations and actions are underway or planned to address them. The Director has also acknowledged the importance of learning from the issues that the MAST has raised. The actions proposed by the Scrutiny Board will support this and will be monitored by the board as part of its regular recommendation monitoring activity.

### **3.0 Main Issues**

- 3.1 Below, each of the Scrutiny Board's six recommendations are listed along with a response from the Director of Children's Services.

3.2 Recommendation One:

*That the Director of Children's Services ensures that the staff of the MAST team are given clear information about the current plans for the future of the team as a matter of urgency, and that the staff are kept regularly updated on progress.*

The Director of Children's Services has required that the Locality Enabler (East) has met with all staff, meets regularly with the manager of the team and for any HR processes associated with the team to be routed through him to ensure that a co-ordinated approach is retained. The Locality Enabler will keep the Director informed of progress.

3.3 Recommendation Two:

*That the present MAST team is retained until revised service proposals are in place*

The MAST team will all remain in place to August '09 with the expectation that they will have opportunity to be part of the re-aligned BEST service in East Leeds.

3.4 Recommendation Three:

*That the Director of Children's Services informs the Scrutiny Board of plans for future provision of the type of service offered by MAST, in the East area of the city and city-wide.*

The Scrutiny Board will be informed of this through the Leeds Inclusive Learning Strategy (LILS). Recommendations for change through the LILS will be finalised for approval during the summer 2009 term.

3.5 Recommendation Four:

*That the Director of Children's Services ensures that the local knowledge of staff is properly recognised and retained. Also that the MAST name is retained in some way if it works for local people.*

It is anticipated that the current staff will be an important part of the new arrangements and the DCS will encourage local 'cluster' partnerships and services to have a high-regard for the knowledge of local staff and to use this in developing more integrated working around activities like the common assessment framework.

The DCS expects that the local cluster partnership will undertake a proper assessment before any change in name that adversely impacts on service delivery. The Locality Enabler (East) will monitor this.

3.6 Recommendation Five:

*That the Director of Children's Services produces clear guidelines which support partners to manage existing and future jointly funded activities, projects or teams, with clear lines of accountability for key areas such as personnel and performance management.*

A new financial planning framework established in 2009/10 will ensure that all aspects of children's services financial planning are considered together.

Detailed guidance will also be developed by a small partnership group. This will be completed by September 2009.

3.7 Recommendation Six:

*That the Director of Children's Services produces a protocol with partners which promotes proper consultation with all partners involved in jointly funded activities, projects or teams before the removal of funding. The protocol should allow for the consideration at a strategic level of the implications of the potential loss of any such service within the overall priorities for Children's Services.*

A partnership working group will be established to progress this recommendation, which will be completed by September 2009. This will link in to the financial planning framework outlined in recommendation 5 above.

## **4.0 Implications For Council Policy And Governance**

- 4.1 There are no specific implications for Council Policy and Governance. The financial planning framework, guidance and protocol being developed that relate to recommendations 5 and 6 will all take account of wider existing council policy relevant to these areas.

## **5.0 Legal And Resource Implications**

- 5.1 The funding to maintain the MAST team at its current level until August 2009 is secured within the approved children's services budget for 2009/10.

## **6.0 Conclusions**

- 6.1 The Children's Services Scrutiny Board's Inquiry into issues around the MAST for Seacroft Manston has identified some important learning for children's services. The recommendations it makes will help services to strengthen practice and enable the Scrutiny Board to monitor progress in this area. The actions proposed in response to these recommendations will ensure that this is the case and that work with staff and service users involved in the MAST is taken forward effectively in the future.

## **7.0 Recommendations**

- 7.1 Executive Board are recommended to:

Approve the proposed responses to the Scrutiny Board's recommendations

## **8.0 Background Papers**

There are no specific background papers relating to this report.