



Report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development

Scrutiny Board: Children's Services

Date: 11 June 2009

Subject: Corporate Governance and Audit Committee referral

Electoral Wards Affected:

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

1.0 Introduction

1.1 A referral for scrutiny has been received from the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee.

1.2 At the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee meeting on 30 April, Members considered the annual audit and inspection letter 2007/08 for Leeds City Council.

1.3 During the discussion the Committee highlighted the following areas of concern:

- *The outcomes relating to Children and Young People, particularly infant mortality, fostering and the timeliness of reviews of looked after children, and whether they were caused by problems with leadership and management or resources;*
- *The high proportion of young people not in employment, education or training;*

1.4 As a result of the discussion, the Committee resolved

“That the Children’s Services and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Boards be asked, as a matter of urgency, to follow up the Committee’s concerns.”

1.5 A copy of the annual audit and inspection letter is attached as Appendix 1. Paragraphs 14-16 deal particularly with issues relevant to the Scrutiny Board (Children's Services).

- 1.6 Members should note that the 2007/08 audit letter draws its evidence on children's services from the Annual Performance Assessment (APA) which was published in December 2008 and was discussed by the Scrutiny Board in February 2009.
- 1.7 In considering how to respond to the referral from Corporate Governance and Audit Committee, the Board may also find it useful to refer to the attached JAR (Joint Area Review) and APA progress monitoring report which was presented to the Children's Services Scrutiny Board in April 2009, as part of the Scrutiny Board's ongoing monitoring activity. This provides a more up to date assessment of the progress being made in tackling these areas of concern, and should be helpful to the Board in identifying potential areas of work.
- 1.8 The progress monitoring report self-assesses progress on infant mortality rates as 'good', including the recent launch of an action plan. This issue would fall within the remit of the Health Scrutiny Board.
- 1.9 The self-assessment of progress regarding the fostering inspection is 'satisfactory', and regarding the timeliness of reviews for looked after children is 'good'. The fostering service is due to be re-inspected during July. Members may also be aware that a new Chief Officer for Children and Young People's Social Care started in post on 1 June following a review of the management of the service.
- 1.10 The Scrutiny Board is already engaged in inquiries on safeguarding and the 14-19 education review, which link to issues raised in the audit letter.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 The Board is asked to consider the referral from Corporate Governance and Audit Committee, and agree any work to be undertaken.

Background papers

Corporate Governance and Audit Committee minutes – 30 April 2009