

Children Leeds

The Role of the Area Committee Children and Young People's Champion

Introduction

A report to the Council's Executive Board in July 2008 detailed the proposed role for Area Committees. In the appendix to this - 'Area Committee Roles for 2008/09' - the role of Committees in supporting locally the delivery of the Leeds Children and Young People's Plan was outlined. This document highlighted the role for members to work as 'champions for children's services and act to influence where appropriate'. It proposed that 'area committees also have specific strategic theme related champions' providing a clear link between the area committee and (in this case) the wider children and young people's agenda.

Then, following from this, in the November/December 2008 cycle of meetings Area Committees received papers on-

- **The Children and Young People's Plan 2009-14 and the development of local priorities for action**
- **Revised Children's Services arrangements for more effective locality working with families**

The papers recommended that area committees nominate an Elected Member -where they had not done so already - to work with the Locality Enabler to take forward the developments outlined in these papers. The 10 Area Committees nominated one Children's Champion for each area. The Champions for April 2009-March 2010 are now confirmed as –

South

Inner - Angela Gabriel (Lab)
Outer – Bob Gettings (MBI)

North East

Inner – Richard Harker (Lib Dem)
Outer – Alan Lamb (Cons)

West

Inner – Alison Lowe (Lab)
Outer – Mick Coulson (Lab)

North West

Inner – Penny Ewens (Lib Dem)
Outer - John Bale (Cons)

East

Inner – Vonnie Morgan (Lab)
Outer – Tom Murray (Lab)

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It was agreed that work would be done to further discuss the role and develop a role description so that members, officers, and partners were provided with clarity on its purpose and function.

The role of the Executive Member for Children's Services

Leeds City Council has an Executive Lead Member (ELM) for Children's Services – Cllr Stewart Golton – as designated under section 19(1) of the Children Act 2004. The ELM has a strategic function in respect of local authority children services in the same way as functions are exercised by other members of the Executive. He/she provides leadership across a range of local authority children's services and through engagement with partners. The ELM exercises these functions within a framework of accountabilities established under the local authority's constitution and is held to account in doing so through the local authority's scrutiny process. The ELM cannot exercise decision-making functions in relation to other agencies in the public, private, voluntary, community, or faith sectors. However, he/she works with these agencies through partnership arrangements so that together services effectively improve outcomes for and address the needs of children and young people in the local area.

The local authority may make arrangements for the ELM to share aspects of these responsibilities with other members of the Executive or other elected members provided that the ELM maintains an effective overview and overall political accountability for the full range of local authority children's services. Councillor Golton is currently supported by the following Lead Members for Children's Services:

- Councillor Ben Chastney (also Deputy Executive Member for Children's Services)
- Councillor John Bale

Leeds also has a separate Executive Lead Member for Education, Councillor Richard Harker, who works closely with the Executive Lead Member for Children's Services. Councillor Harker is currently supported by the following Lead Members for Education:

- Councillor Penny Ewens
- Councillor Alan Lamb

Purpose of the Area Committee Children's Champion

- To promote commitment to the wider children and young people's agenda through the active engagement of elected members, local authority children's services, and local partners.
- To increase understanding of the needs of children and young people and the issues and barriers they encounter in their daily lives
- To help change attitudes and behaviors to address the stigma and exclusion that children and young people can experience
- To contribute to the raising of standards and ensuring that we are ambitious for our children and young people

The role of the children's champions does not involve any formalised decision-making responsibilities or accountabilities (other than the expectation of regular reporting to the relevant Area Committee, with support from the Locality Enabler). However, it is a key influencing and advocacy role that is likely to evolve and develop as more is learnt about how it can impact positively on children and young people's lives. Key features of what is and isn't involved initially are:

Appendix 6

What is the role of the Area Committee Children's Champion?

1. To be a focal point for Children's Services issues
2. To be a focal point for engagement with the ELM for Children's Services
3. To support and where appropriate contribute to processes that promote accountability of children's services locally.
4. To champion the participation of children and young people, parents and carers
5. To be informed about and help to promote the positive work of children's services
6. To help bridge the gap between the city-wide and the local context for elected members
7. To work with the Locality Enabler to influence and shape area delivery plan priorities in the context of the city's CYPP 2009-14 and cluster business plans
8. To work with those in children's services locally to ensure that those priorities are shared, understood and being delivered.
9. To work with small groups of elected members to probe relevant local children's services issues
10. To work with the Locality Enabler to shape regular Children's Services agenda items of interest to members
11. To know the priorities and issues of extended services clusters in the area and to support their development
12. To champion the effective integration (partnership working) of children's services.

What isn't the role of the Area Committee Children's Champion?

1. Not the area committee expression of the Executive Lead Member as articulated under section 19(1) of the Children's Act 2004.
2. Does not exercise decision making functions in relation to other bodies, e.g. voluntary, community, faith sector.
3. Has no delegated powers from the ELM for Children's services
4. Is not the corporate carer role – although both could be done by the same individual if its feasible.
5. Does not have political responsibility for education services, social services, health services, interagency cooperation
6. Has no decision making powers
7. Does not performance manage services

Links to the Executive Lead Member for Children's Services

To support information sharing and a coordinated approach to the work of member champions across the city, it is envisaged that the member champions will meet at appropriate intervals during the year with the Executive Lead Member for Children's Services, with support for the meeting(s) from within the Director of Children's Services Unit.

The regularity and nature of these meetings will be discussed with all the Children's Champions before further guidance is provided.