

Scrutiny Board (Children's Services)

Update on working group activity

This report provides an update on the activities of the Board's various working groups, since the last meeting on 9th July.

Safeguarding

There was a joint meeting of both Safeguarding working groups on 30th July. Members received a presentation from Jackie Wilson and Bryan Gocke on the national perspective, in particular Lord Laming's report and the government response; the Social Work Task Force report published the previous day; and the new Ofsted inspection framework.

A timetable has now been set for the remainder of the working group meetings, throughout September and October. There are five sessions planned for the Resources working group and four for the Preventative Duty working group.

A further joint meeting will be organised at the end of this process for the working group members to discuss the conclusions and recommendations they wish to bring back to the full Scrutiny Board.

Safeguarding – Resources

This working group met on 21st August with Elizabeth Shingler and Ann-Marie Norman, who took members through the various stages of the journey that a child experiences from initial referral through to a potential child protection plan. Members were given information about the various assessments and decision making processes, and the key staff involved. They also discussed some of the work being undertaken to review the referral and assessment processes, and in response to the Ofsted unannounced inspection.

The next two sessions of this working group will have taken place by the time that the Board meets on 17 September. These involve Members visiting a duty team to observe their work; and a session with care management staff and a core group for child protection plans.

School Organisation Consultations

This working group met on 3rd September. The working group heard from Councillors Ewens and Pryke in relation to their concerns about the methodology of the consultation over the future of City of Leeds High School. Ms Beeson - a parent - also attended, having written to the Chair about her

concerns. Pat Toner and Dee Reid attended and discussed the approach to school organisation consultations in general, as well as specific details in relation to City of Leeds High School.

A number of ideas about possible improvements to the process emerged from the meeting, but it was agreed that a further session was required before the working group presents its conclusions to the full Scrutiny Board.