

Scrutiny Board (Children's Services) Inquiry

The impact of population growth on children's services in Leeds

Terms of reference

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 According to the Office for National Statistics, the population of the Yorkshire and Humber region grew by 175,400 (3.5%) in the five years up to 2007. The latest forecasts indicate a further 19% growth – nearly a million people – by 2026. This includes a predicted increase of 180,000 people in the Leeds local authority area.
- 1.2 The council is currently feeling the impact of the rise in population in terms of needing to identify additional primary school places in some parts of the city.
- 1.3 In light of the information on population growth, the Executive Member for Children's Services and the Director of Children's Services suggested that it would be helpful to them if the Scrutiny Board carried out an inquiry into the wider impact of population growth for children's services in Leeds.

2.0 Scope of the inquiry

- 2.1 The purpose of the Inquiry is to make an assessment of and, where appropriate, make recommendations on:
 - The availability, timeliness and accuracy of local population change data;
(how good is our information and how do we make it better?)
 - The use that is made of available data in planning service provision;
(how well do we use the information, and how can we improve?)
 - The reasons for population growth, and the consequent implications for services in terms of both universal services and also specific areas of additional demand.
(what service changes do we need to make because of population growth?)
- 2.2 The Board hopes that its findings will provide a timely and positive contribution to the management of change.

3.0 Comments of the relevant director and executive member

- 3.1 This inquiry was proposed by the Executive Member for Children's Services and the Director of Children's Services.

4.0 Timetable for the inquiry

4.1 The inquiry will take place in October and November 2009, with a view to issuing a final report in early 2010.

4.2 The inquiry will conclude with the publication of a formal report setting out the board's conclusions and recommendations.

5.0 Submission of evidence

5.1 The following evidence will be considered by the Board

5.2 Session One – Scrutiny Board meeting – 15 October 2009

This session will focus on the first two objectives of the inquiry:

how good is our information and how do we make it better?

how well do we use the information, and how can we improve?

The following information will be required:

- An outline of what sources of population information are currently available to children's services management in predicting future demand for services
- Current population growth data, including any analysis of particular trends or patterns within the data
- How services use population information to predict demand and plan the supply of services
- National contributions on best practice in the collection and use of timely and accurate population data

5.4 Session Two – Scrutiny Board meeting – 12 November 2009

This session will focus on the third objective of the inquiry:

what service changes do we need to make because of population growth?

The following information will be required:

- Action already being taken by children's services in response to population growth
- Areas of children's services that will be affected by population growth and proposals for responding to new needs
- Other services relevant to children and young people that will be affected, eg housing

The board will then consider emerging conclusions and recommendations to inform the production of the final inquiry report

6.0 Witnesses

- 6.1 The following witnesses have been identified as possible contributors to the Inquiry:

Local witnesses

Children's Services
Education Leeds
NHS Leeds (PCT)
Information and Knowledge Management

National bodies

One or more from the following:

Office for National Statistics (ONS)
Local Government Association
City and County of Swansea Council (have done a scrutiny inquiry on population estimates)
Leeds University School of Geography

7.0 Monitoring Arrangements

- 7.1 Following the completion of the scrutiny inquiry and the publication of the final inquiry report and recommendations, the implementation of the agreed recommendations will be monitored.
- 7.2 The final inquiry report will include information on the detailed arrangements for monitoring the implementation of recommendations.

8.0 Measures of success

- 8.1 It is important to consider how the Board will deem whether its inquiry has been successful in making a difference to local people. Some measures of success may be obvious at the initial stages of an inquiry and can be included in these terms of reference. Other measures of success may become apparent as the inquiry progresses and discussions take place.
- 8.2 The Board will look to publish practical recommendations.