

# **Report to Children's Services Scrutiny Board 12/11/09**

## **The Impact of Population Growth on Children's Services in Leeds**

Produced by Education Leeds on behalf of Children's Services

### **Introduction**

1. This report addresses the second part of the scrutiny inquiry into the impact of population growth on children's services in Leeds. This first part of the inquiry focused 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?
2. The focus for this second part is the third objective
  - What service changes do we need to make because of population growth?

### **The second session**

3. It is proposed to address the third objective at the session on 12/11/09 by asking representatives of the service areas to present to and discuss with members the issues for their areas. They will do this by using the template provided in the terms of reference for the inquiry:
  - 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
4. In addition the presentation will explore the extent to which services have the capacity to respond to population changes by making relatively minor changes to existing service provision as opposed to changes which require significant changes to the structure and funding of provision.
5. The session will provide members with an opportunity to understand how services are responding to the challenges of population change, and to engage in an exploration of the ways forward and the issues that need to be addressed.

### **The structure of this report**

6. This covering report summarises the key messages about understanding population change arising from the first part of the inquiry; highlights some broad service changes that are already in place, particularly in the area of school place planning; and, offers recommendations that seek to embed effective analysis of and responses to population change in the Council's strategic and service planning processes.

### **Context- understanding population change**

7. A number of clear conclusions arise from the discussion of the papers presented to the first session by the expert witnesses and representatives of Children's services and the Council:

- The current school place planning methodology compares well with best practice nationally. More work needs to be done to improve population and school place forecasting at the “local area” level (eg. wedge, ward, local community). The local picture varies significantly in different parts of the city.
- Estimating population change has become more difficult because of complex patterns of international and national migration. These factors are especially important in a large and diverse areas such as Leeds which include significant student populations.
- Work is underway to improve the accuracy of national and official statistics but in the short to medium term there is unlikely to be any step changes. Analysis of migration patterns is challenging. Different long term forecasts for Leeds varying significantly, and there is a concern over the accuracy of some of the latest estimates. However, they do indicate the broad parameters for service planning and predicting the changes that could be required.
- Population changes at the “local level” (eg. wedge, ward, local community) are especially difficult to analyse and predict with certainty. Data at this level can be improved in a number of ways. Children’s services and the Council as whole will need to focus on improving methods of neighbourhood or locality planning. However, caution needs to be exercised. Change at this level is often rapid and unpredictable; requiring the development of flexible, sophisticated planning responses allied to work to improve the basic data sets where possible, including improving information sharing.

### **Service changes**

8. The service where there has been an obvious, immediate impact on provision is the planning of school places. In response to emerging pressures in some areas of the city, Education Leeds has developed proposals to increase the admission limits at 17 primary schools with effect from September 2010. Proposals for further expansions in 2011 and 2012 are being developed. Capital costs of the 2010 proposals are currently estimated at £12.2m. If the trends continue the Council’s ability to respond to the need through the expansion of existing school sites will become more challenging and new schools may be required. Even with some central government funding, the 2010 proposals will require a significant reprioritisation of the Education capital programme. Despite an increasing overall primary population there are and will be areas or schools with stable or falling pupil numbers.
9. This starkly illustrates the complexity of assessing and responding to population change at the local level. This is especially so in the light of the fact the projection methodology in Leeds compares well to national practice. Continually updating this methodology, improving data and the way it is shared, and engaging partners across local educational communities in discussion of the possible local solutions to changing patterns of supply and demand, are the key strands of the current response. In each case, an area review takes a local view of the particular factors affecting that area and produces a recommendation appropriate for that community and for the particular circumstances it faces. Discussion of complex changes to secondary school place provision will need

follow as the current primary cohorts grow older and progress through the school system. This is likely to begin to impact around the year 2020. A series of area-based round table discussions covering the whole city will take place this term to inform and update schools and governors of the current population trends and their implications, promote local engagement with the issues, and start a process of generating creative and constructive options to respond to these issues.

10. Changing patterns of supply and demand for school places reflects the need for Children's Services and the Council generally to plan for change across all services. While practice is good and consistent with national best practice there is scope for improvement in the integration and sharing of information sources and in the level of detail produced around localities and sub-populations. Better integration of information and information resources to improve business intelligence is an ongoing challenge that Leeds City Council, the NHS and other partners are committed to, and will at all times need to be underpinned by the highest information policy and data security standards.
11. The information available is well used in core areas within children's services. There is a recognition that existing information could be shared more widely and that there are gaps in our information. Addressing these will involve both improvements within children's services and ensuring children's services are involved in and supporting business intelligence developments at corporate and city levels. As a Children's services we need to share better what is already produced, join together to address gaps in information and support the ongoing development of the information infrastructure in Leeds, including IT systems.
12. The progressive move to locality based service provision and planning will assist by providing the capacity to identify and respond to changing patterns of the need and demand for services, including making the best use of enhanced IT infrastructure and systems.
13. A comprehensive needs analysis was undertaken in 2007 to inform the ongoing development of the Children and Young People's Plan. This used Office for National Statistics population projections to look at how the population will change. These projections focused on the whole of Leeds and are only disaggregated by set age bands. While providing an overview the information was not detailed enough to inform commissioning for particular age groups, areas of the city or groups of young people.
14. To date the development of children's services commissioning and planning has had a strong focus on addressing priority outcomes. It is recognised that a broader understanding of need including more detailed demographic information would improve commissioning and strengthen service planning, both for universal and targeted provision. Potential funding shortfalls will need to be identified at an early stage alongside areas where significant change rather than more modest adjustments are required. Children's services is therefore committed to the development of good business intelligence and to working collectively to achieve this, recognising that this agenda extends beyond children's services. The local neighbourhood index is an example of city efforts in this area. Significant improvement in demographic intelligence is likely to be long term and dependent on improved data collection, IT infrastructure improvements and robust data sharing arrangements. Though services are committed to developing incremental improvement where possible.

15. Accurate estimates and projections of population, both for specific groups and for areas of the city are required to inform commissioning of services for both children's and adults' services. The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) for health and well-being stated the need to develop further longer term projections. One of the key themes emerging from the JSNA is the changing population, including the impact of increased life expectancy, the rise in the number of older people, the changing age profile of ethnic minority communities and the impact of migrant workers. The need to enhance the forecasting element of the JSNA has led to a proposed project in NHS Leeds Information Services to improve population projections. Developing a detailed understanding of how the population of Leeds is likely to change going forward is regarded as an imperative, although it is acknowledged while there is scope to improve, forecasting gaps will remain. This process will be overseen by the Joint Information Group and will look at improving projections for localities as well as segments of the population. This group involves representatives of Leeds City Council including representatives of children's services.
16. The Early Years service uses 0-5 year olds data supplied from Leeds NHS for the planning of provision. The data is analysed at postcode level and then grouped into planning areas which align with Education Leeds and with children's centre reach areas. The planning area analysis has developed over the past 3 years and shows the trends at each age group within the various areas. This shows whether certain parts of the city need more early years provision (either private or maintained) due to an increase in numbers or whether there is too much provision as numbers or demand decline within a particular area. The 'sufficiency assessment' of child care provision is a statutory requirement. Following the first audit in 2007, a second is required by 2011. The Early Years service has developed a methodology which ranks providers in terms of whether they are full, have less than 5 surplus places or more than 5 surplus places. Currently contact is on an annual basis with a response rate of 97% of providers. Surveys of parents, including hard to reach parents are carried out to supplement the data from providers and the information provided by Leeds NHS data sets.
17. The children's centre reach areas were established within the last year and enable planning not just of childcare provision but also adult provision. These areas are essential for family outreach workers to target 'hard to reach' families and offer services within the local children centre.

## **Recommendations**

18. Population statements to be included in all Leeds City Council and Children's services strategic and service planning documents. Guidance on this, including advice on quality assurance and monitoring and evaluation, to be provided through the service and corporate planning processes.
19. Develop a partnership with the Local Government Associations analysis and research division to explore possible enhancements to the current methods for analysing and sharing population information.
20. Review existing children's services arrangements around data coordination. Ensure a strategic data group is in place to coordinate and share practice around key needs

analysis information including demographic data. The terms of reference should be sufficiently strategic with links into Children's Service Leadership Team.

21. Facilitate appropriate links between the above group and the Joint Information Group coordinating city-wide work in this area and other relevant city initiatives; including the Business transformation agenda and the work on population issues recently initiated in the Environment and Neighbourhoods service area.