

Dawn Primarolo: Agreed Action to improve Leeds City Council's Children's Services

Children's Minister Dawn Primarolo today wrote to Leeds City Council setting out the agreed action to be taken to improve the Council's children's services.

Following concerns raised through Ofsted's unannounced inspection of Leeds' contact, referral and assessment arrangements within children's services, and subsequent discussions with the Council, the Children's Minister has agreed specific action with them.

The Minister said she was pleased with the council's co-operation in acting swiftly to help secure improvements, and that there was agreement that more focused action now needed to be taken. This includes other areas of children's services, in particular performance in secondary schools, sixth forms and special schools, and to further reduce the high number of young people not in education, employment or training.

The Minister has agreed with the Council to both:

- establish an Improvement Board; and
- for Bill McCarthy to be the independent chair of the new Board.

Children's minister Dawn Primarolo said:

"Due to the concerns identified, and other issues across Children's services in Leeds Council, I am keen to support the Council by establishing a focused improvement board with a new independent chair. I am delighted to agree to the appointment of Bill McCarthy who will report to me and the council leader bi-monthly on progress.

"I am pleased the council have agreed to take necessary steps to secure improvements required in children's services through the new improvement board. This will build significantly on action already being taken by the Council to improve performance in its secondary schools, including plans - to be published by Leeds shortly - for delivering radical improvement in its most vulnerable National Challenge schools. I will though want to consider further with the Council what specific action is to be taken once they have the results of Ofsted's full inspection of safeguarding and looked after children which will be published in January.

Councillor Andrew Carter, Leader of Leeds City Council, said: "I am pleased that we have been able to agree with the Minister specific action to support our improvement efforts here in Leeds. We will be working closely with the new Board and are grateful to Bill McCarthy for agreeing to take on the important role of Chair."

Notes to Editors

1. **The unannounced inspection** was published on 19 August 2009. Ofsted found evidence of strengths within the social care services, but there were a number of concerns highlighted for development and priority action. The areas identified for priority action included responses and action relating to child protection cases not meeting statutory guidance. The full report can be found at:
[http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/oxcare_providers/la_view/\(leaid\)/383](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/oxcare_providers/la_view/(leaid)/383)
2. **Leeds City Council's plan for its most vulnerable National Challenge schools** sets out the action the Council is taking to ensure that these schools exceed the floor target of 30% of pupils achieving 5 more good GCSES including English and maths by 2011. The plans which are subject to Council procedures and consultation, include proposals for two new Academies, a new 14-19 hub and school to school support.
3. **The safeguarding and looked after children inspection** took place between 23 November and 4 December. Ofsted's full report will be published in January 2010. Leeds City Council will then be responsible for publishing the report locally within 30 days and prepare an action plan in response to the report's recommendations, consulting partners, within 70 days.
4. **Bill McCarthy** is Chief Executive at NHS Yorkshire and the Humber. An economist by training, he has operated at Board level in the NHS, central government and local government for the last 8 years. His previous role was Chief Executive at City of York Council. Before that he was Director General at the Department of Health (2005 -2007) responsible for health and social care strategy, system reform and policy development and implementation.