

SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN'S SERVICES)

THURSDAY, 10TH DECEMBER, 2009

PRESENT: Councillor W Hyde in the Chair

Councillors D Coupar, G Driver, R D Feldman,
B Gettings, G Kirkland, B Lancaster, K Renshaw,
B Selby and E Taylor

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (VOTING):

Mr E A Britten	- Church Representative (Catholic)
Prof P H J H Gosden	- Church Representative (Church of England)
Mr B Wanyonyi	- Parent Governor Representative (Secondary)

CO-OPTED MEMBERS (NON-VOTING):

Ms C Foote	- Teacher Representative
Ms C Johnson	- Teacher Representative
Ms J Morris-Boam	- Leeds Voice Children and Young People Services Forum Representative
Ms T Kayani	- Leeds Youth Work Partnership

65 Chair's Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed all in attendance to the December meeting of the Scrutiny Board (Children's Services).

66 Late Items

The Chair admitted to the agenda as additional information the Corporate Area Assessment and Children's Services Annual Rating, which was to be considered under agenda item 7, Performance Report 2009/10 Quarter 2 (Minute No. 71 refers).

67 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest made at this point, however a declaration was made at a later point in the meeting (Minute No. 72 refers).

68 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted by Councillor Cleasby and Co-opted Member Mrs S Hutchinson.

69 Minutes - 12th November 2009

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 12th November be confirmed as a correct record.

70 Matters Arising from the Minutes

Minute No. 61 - Connexions Intensive Support Wedge Based Services

The Board was provided with an update on the delegated decision to award the Connexions Intensive Support Wedge Based Services contract to igen. The Chair advised that a letter had been submitted to the Chief Executive highlighting the Board's concerns, particularly whether decisions were being taken at the appropriate level. The Board expressed concern that no response had been received to date. The Chair also advised that the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee had discussed some of the issues raised by the Scrutiny Board.

71 Performance Report 2009/10 Quarter 2

The Head of Policy and Performance submitted a report which presented an overview of performance against the priority outcomes relevant to the Children's Services Scrutiny Board, including an analysis of performance indicator results at the end of Quarter 2.

The following information was appended to the report for Members' information:

Appendix 1 – Summary sheet showing the overall progress rating against the improvement priorities relevant to the Children's Services Scrutiny Board.

Appendix 2 – Amber and red rated action trackers, including a contextual update and key performance indicator results.

Appendix 3 – Performance Indicator report containing quarter 2 results for all performance indicators which can be reported in year from the National Indicator set and relevant key local indicators.

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Councillor Golton, Executive Member (Children's Services) and Councillor Harker, Executive Member (Learning).

In addition, the following officers attended the meeting:

- Keith Burton, Deputy Director of Children's Services;
- Chris Edwards, Chief Executive (Education Leeds);
- Jackie Wilson, Chief Officer for Children and Young People's Social Care; and
- Nicola Engel, Head of Performance, Policy and Improvement, Children's Services.

The Deputy Director of Children's Services reported on particular areas of concern following the recent inspection of Children's Services:

- Outcomes for looked after children
- The number of children needing to go into care
- Safeguarding procedures
- NEET
- Educational achievement of vulnerable groups and
- Attendance levels.

Key performance issues were then highlighted and in brief summary the main areas of discussion were:

- The need to focus on performance indicators allocated an amber traffic light status, particularly those at risk of becoming red.
- Concern about overall progress made in relation to teenage conception. The Board was advised that appropriate actions were now in place and that this was recognised at the national level of monitoring.
- The role of housing services in supporting young parents.
- Preventative work with young men, and support for young fathers, especially in ensuring access to relevant services.
- The socio-economic context, particularly issues around NEET figures and teenage conception.
- The role of Area Committees in monitoring local performance, identifying priorities and recommending improvements to localised delivery.
- Concerns about the increase in social care referrals. The Board was advised that 8 Advanced Practitioners were due to start in the new year.
- Confirmation that the post of Head of Integrated Services for Looked After Children was being advertised shortly.
- The recently announced Improvement Board, and the relationship with the Scrutiny Board.

RESOLVED – That the report and information appended to the report be noted.

72 Children's Services and the Children and Young People's Plan Update (December 2009)

As part of the process of receiving regular progress reports on the Council's Children and Young People's Plan, the Board considered a report submitted by the Director of Children's Services which included updates on two particular aspects of the Plan;

- The CYP Plan priority of providing young people with places to go and things to do; and
- The strategic development of locality working arrangements for children's services.

Appended to the report for Members' information was the following information:

- Executive Summary of Ofsted's 2008/09 Annual Report;
- Executive Summary of Consultation on New Statutory Children's Trust Guidance and New Children and Young People's Plan Regulations;
- Review of Leeds Children's Services' Leadership, Managerial and Partnership Arrangements – Scoping Paper;
- Monitoring Audit of Joint Area Review (JAR) Recommendations and Annual Performance Assessment (APA) Areas for Improvement; and
- Draft Terms of Reference and Constitution for Area Children Leeds Partnerships.

The following Members and officers attended the meeting and responded to Members' questions and comments:

- Councillor Golton, Executive Member (Children's Services);
- Councillor Harker, Executive Member (Learning);
- Keith Burton, Deputy Director of Children's Services;
- Chris Edwards, Chief Executive (Education Leeds);
- Jackie Wilson, Chief Officer for Children and Young People's Social Care; and
- John Paxton, Head of Integrated Youth Support Services.

In brief summary, the key areas of discussion were:

- Actions taken to address the number of looked after children, particularly around returning young people to their families.
- Concern about NEET figures, especially young people whose destination was not known.
Actions being taken to address this included:
 - Personal Advisors working with schools
 - Youth Services operating door knocking exercise
 - Joint working with colleges and universities to develop learning opportunities.
- The October NEET figure for Leeds was 22%, which equated to approximately 4,000 young people.
- Acknowledgement of work undertaken at Area Committee level as part of the Local Leadership Challenge, highlighting the need for further work with schools and children's centres.
- Concern about hard to reach groups, particularly the post-17 age group and challenges providing suitable courses, etc.
- Examples of good practice, e.g. Darlington transport scheme.
- Concern about limited public transport in some areas and the need to develop local youth provision e.g. mobile youth bus.
- Targeted work by libraries with autistic children. It was agreed to provide the Board with further information.
- New locality working arrangements, particularly the role of Members.

(Councillor Driver declared a personal interest in this item as a Member of the Corporation of Leeds College of Building.)

(Councillor Renshaw left the meeting at 11.43 pm, Councillor Driver at 12.05 pm, Councillor Coupar at 12.08 pm, Councillors R D Feldman, Gettings and E Taylor at 12.12 pm and Mr Wanyonyi at 12.15 pm, during the consideration of this item.)

RESOLVED – That subject to the above comments, the update report be received and noted.

73 Recommendation Tracking

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which requested Members to confirm the status of scrutiny recommendations (Children's Services).

Appended to the report was the recommendation tracking flowchart and draft status of recommendations.

The Principal Scrutiny Advisor provided a verbal update from Children's Services on the recommendation relating to services for 8-13 year olds as follows:

Recommendation

That the Director of Children's Services commissions an in-depth review of transport, to promote more effective use of existing resources and improve children and young people's access to services, and that she reports back to us within three months on progress

December 2009 update

'The current position is as previous updates. The prioritisation of time and capacity to other key areas of children's services work at the present time means that the in-depth review requested cannot be carried out in the immediate future. In the meantime there is continued support for the ongoing positive work that Metro are doing with young people.'

RESOLVED –

- (a) That the report and information appended to the report be noted; and
- (b) That the Board approves the status of recommendations, subject to recommendation 3 on 'Adoption in Leeds' and recommendation 9 on 'Services for 8-13 year olds' being given a status of 4, continue monitoring and that young people's views be sought to confirm that recommendations 2 and 5 on 'Catching the Bus' could be signed off.

74 Scrutiny Board Inquiry - The Impact of Population Growth for Children's Services in Leeds

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which proposed the remit of a further session of the Inquiry to be held in February 2010.

A copy of the agreed terms of reference were appended to the report for Members' information.

RESOLVED – That a further session of the Inquiry be held in February 2010.

75 Work Programme

A report was submitted by the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development which detailed the Scrutiny Board's work programme for the remainder of the current municipal year.

Appended to the report for Members' information was the current version of the Board's work programme, an update on working group activity, an extract from the Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period 1st December 2009 to 31st March 2010, which related to the Board's remit, together with the minutes from the Executive Board meeting held on 4th November 2009.

It was reported that the Safeguarding Working Group had agreed to undertake further work in the new year.

RESOLVED – That the work programme be approved.

76 Date and Time of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting would be held on Thursday 28th January 2010 at 9.45 am with a pre-meeting for Board Members at 9.15 am.

(The meeting concluded at 12.22 pm.)