

## **SCRUTINY BOARD (CHILDREN AND FAMILIES)**

**THURSDAY, 10TH NOVEMBER, 2011**

**PRESENT:** Councillor J Chapman in the Chair

Councillors G Driver, P Ewens, B Gettings,  
A Khan, P Latty, K Maqsood, M Rafique  
and K Renshaw

### **CO-OPTED MEMBERS (VOTING):**

Mr E A Britten – Church Representative (Catholic)  
Ms A Craven – Parent Governor Representative (Primary)  
Ms J Ward – Parent Governor Representative (Secondary)  
Ms N Cox – Parent Governor Representative (Special)

### **CO-OPTED MEMBERS (NON-VOTING):**

Ms C Foote – Teacher Representative  
Mrs S Hutchinson – Early Years Representative  
Ms T Kayani – Leeds Youth Work Partnership Representative  
Ms A Choudhry – Leeds VOICE Children and Young Peoples Services Forum  
Representative

#### **41 Chair's Opening Remarks**

The Chair welcomed all in attendance to the November meeting of the Scrutiny Board (Children and Families).

#### **42 Late Items**

In accordance with her powers under Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Chair agreed to accept the following late information:

- Agenda item 7 – Ofsted annual assessment letter (Minute No. 46 refers)
- Agenda item 8 – additional information on the programme plan to 'turn the curve' on placements (Minute No. 47 refers)
- Agenda item 11 – draft terms of reference for the Scrutiny Board's inquiry into increasing the number of young people in employment, education and training (EET) (Minute No. 50 refers)
- Agenda item 12 – notes of the children's social care system review working group held on 24 October 2011 (Minute No. 51 refers).

#### **43 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **44 Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitutes**

Apologies for absence were submitted by Councillors Lamb and A McKenna.

(Councillor Ewens joined the meeting at 9.50am during the consideration of this item.)

#### **45 Minutes - 6th October 2011**

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> October 2011 be approved as a correct record.

#### **46 Findings of the Announced Inspection of Safeguarding Services for Children and Young People in Leeds**

The Director of Children's Services submitted a report which presented the findings of the announced Ofsted re-inspection of safeguarding services for children and young people in Leeds.

The Chair welcomed to the meeting, Councillor Blake, Executive Member (Children's Services) and Nigel Richardson, Director of Children's Services.

In brief summary, the key areas of discussion were:

- Acknowledgement of the significant progress reflected in the inspection report, and the ambition to build on this as services continue to improve.
- Concern that there had been further delays with replacement of the ESCR computer system.
- Concern about the comment in the Ofsted report that the quality of the information provided by the police was poor, and recognition of the need for improvements in this area.
- Challenges in terms of tackling domestic violence, linked to work being undertaken by partners, especially the Safer Schools Partnership.
- Acknowledgement of the role and contribution of the voluntary sector.
- The transition from Education Leeds to Children's Services and the impact of these changes on staff.
- The role of clusters.
- The role of Elected Members and governors.

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

(Councillor Rafique joined the meeting at 9.55am during the consideration of this item.)

## **47 Scrutiny Inquiry - External Placements**

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which presented additional information as part of the Scrutiny Board's inquiry into external placements.

A copy of the programme plan to 'turn the curve' on placements had been submitted to the Scrutiny Board as late information.

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

- Councillor Blake, Executive Member (Children's Services)
- Nigel Richardson, Director of Children's Services
- Sarah Sinclair, Chief Officer, Strategy, Commissioning and Performance
- Sue May, Head of Looked After Children, Children's Services.

In brief summary, the main areas of discussion were:

- Processes in place to reduce the number of external placements:
  - investment in family group conferencing
  - building in-house capacity
  - positive support and challenge
  - redesign of fostering service
  - weekly reviews of external placements.
- The need to develop family intervention practices.

The Chair requested a monthly update on progress against the plan, and agreed to keep the Board informed of progress.

### **RESOLVED –**

(a) That the issues raised by the additional information provided to the inquiry be noted.

(b) That monthly updates on progress against the Plan be provided to the Chair of the Board.

(Councillor Khan and Maqsood left the meeting at 11.10am at the conclusion of this item.)

## **48 Scrutiny Inquiry - School Attendance**

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which presented evidence in line with session 1 of the Scrutiny Board's inquiry into school attendance.

The following information was appended to the report:

- Update on Children's Services Obsessions – Improving School Attendance – Report to Children's Trust Board, 12<sup>th</sup> September 2011
- Attendance OBA events reoccurring outputs and suggestions
- DfE press notice – Government changes definition of persistent absence to deal with reality of pupil absenteeism in schools
- DfE Reducing absence – ensuring schools intervene earlier
- Attendance Strategy persistent absence research report
- Scrutiny statement on attendance – March 2010.

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

- Councillor Blake, Executive Member (Children's Services)
- Nigel Richardson, Director of Children's Services
- Jancis Andrew, Head of Service, Attendance Strategy Team, Children's Services.

In brief summary, the key areas of discussion were:

- The multi-agency approach being adopted in relation to attendance.
- Provisional data for last year showed a good rate of improvement.
- Clarification that schools had a statutory duty to provide information regarding deletions from the school register and pupils that had more than 10 consecutive days of unauthorised absence.
- Issues around bullying and mental health.
- The importance of starting a culture of attendance from the early years.
- The work of clusters in tackling persistent absenteeism.
- The role of governing bodies in tracking attendance.
- Links to the Child Friendly City agenda

The Chair invited the relevant Executive Members and the Director to join the Board's site visits on 8 December if they were available.

**RESOLVED** – That the issues raised be incorporated in the draft report of the Scrutiny Board's inquiry.

#### **49 Review of Children's Congenital Cardiac Services in England: Inquiry Report**

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which summarised the main issues identified by the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Yorkshire and the Humber) arising from the review of Children's Congenital Cardiac Services in England.

A summary of the recommendations was appended to the report for Members' information.

The Chair welcomed to the meeting, Councillor Mulherin, Chair of the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Yorkshire and the Humber), and Steven Courtney, Principal Scrutiny Advisor, to present the report and respond to Members questions and comments.

**RESOLVED –**

- (a) That the issues and recommendations identified by the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Yorkshire and the Humber), be noted.
- (b) That the Board be kept informed of any updates.

(Ms Cox left the meeting at 12.10pm, Ms Choudhry at 12.23pm, Ms Foote at 12.25pm and Mrs Hutchinson, Ms Kayani, Councillor Gettings and Renshaw at 12.28pm during the consideration of this item.)

**50 Draft Terms of Reference - NEET Inquiry**

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which invited Members to agree terms of reference for the Scrutiny Board's inquiry into increasing the number of young people in employment, education and training (EET).

A copy of the draft terms of reference had been submitted to the Scrutiny Board as late information.

There were some minor amendments to the terms of reference to include reference to evidence of how provision reaches and meets the needs of this target group of young people, and information on programme participation rates and completion/achievement rates.

**RESOLVED –** That the terms of reference, as amended, for the Scrutiny Board's inquiry into increasing the number of young people in employment, education and training (EET), be approved.

**51 Work Programme**

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

Appended to the report for Members' information was the current version of the Board's work programme, minutes of the Executive Board meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2011, together with an extract from the Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the period 1<sup>st</sup> November 2011 to 29<sup>th</sup> February 2012.

A copy of the notes of the children's social care system review working group held on 24 October 2011 had been submitted to the Scrutiny Board as late information.

It was reported that a meeting of the youth services working group was being arranged. Sarah Sinclair and Paul Brennan would be attending the working group meeting.

**RESOLVED** – That the work programme be approved.

**52 Date and Time of Next Meeting**

Members were advised that as part of the Scrutiny Board's inquiry into School Attendance, the December meeting scheduled to take place on Thursday, 8<sup>th</sup> December 2011, was taking the form of site visits involving all Scrutiny Board members to the two selected clusters of Rothwell and Inner East.

(The meeting concluded at 12.30pm.)