

Report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development

Report to Scrutiny Board (Children and Families)

Date: 8th November 2012

Subject: Recommendation Tracking – External Placements

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

1. This report sets out the progress made in responding to the recommendations arising from the previous Scrutiny review of External Placements published on the 28th of February 2012.
2. The Scrutiny recommendation tracking system allows the Scrutiny Board to monitor progress and identify completed recommendations; those progressing to plan; and those where there is either an obstacle or progress is not adequate. The Board will then be able to take further action as appropriate.

Recommendations

3. Members are asked to:
 - Agree those recommendations which no longer require monitoring;
 - Identify any recommendations where progress is unsatisfactory and determine the action the Board wishes to take as a result.
 - Note the recommendations where satisfactory progress is being made.

Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report sets out the progress made in responding to the recommendations arising from the previous Scrutiny review of External Placements.

1 Background information

- 2.1 It was agreed in June 2011 that the Childrens and Families Scrutiny Board that the first major piece of work for 2011/12 would be an inquiry on which would look into reducing the need for children to be looked after by the local authority.
- 2.2 At its meeting in February 2012, the Scrutiny Board agreed a report summarising its observations, conclusions and recommendations.
- 2.3 The Scrutiny recommendation tracking system allows the Board to monitor progress and identify completed recommendations; those progressing to plan; and those where there is either an obstacle or progress is not adequate. The Board will then be able to take further action as appropriate.
- 2.4 The Board considered progress against recommendations at the meeting on the 26th of July 2012. The Board concluded that recommendations 2,3,5,8,11 and 12 were complete and therefore no further tracking is required.

2 Main issues

- 3.1 A standard set of criteria has been produced to enable the Board to assess progress. These are presented in the form of a flow chart at Appendix 1. The questions in the flow chart should help to decide whether a recommendation has been completed, and if not whether further action is required.
- 3.2 To assist Members with this task the Principal Scrutiny Adviser, in liaison with the Chair, has given a draft status for each recommendation. The Board is asked to confirm whether these assessments are appropriate and to change them where they are not. Details of progress against each recommendation is set out within the table at Appendix 2.

3 Corporate Considerations

3.1 Consultation and Engagement

- 3.1.1 Where internal or external consultation processes have been undertaken with regard to responding to the Scrutiny Board's recommendations, details of any such consultation will be referenced against the relevant recommendation within the table at Appendix 2.
- 3.1.2 The Executive Board Member for Children's Services has been consulted on the response to the recommendations.

3.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

- 3.2.1 Where consideration has been given to the impact on equality areas, as defined in the Council's Equality and Diversity Scheme, this will be referenced against the relevant recommendation within the table at Appendix 2.

3.3 Council Policies and City Priorities

3.3.1 This section is not relevant to this report.

3.4 Resources and Value for Money

3.4.1 Details of any significant resource and financial implications linked to the Scrutiny recommendations will be referenced against the relevant recommendation within the table at Appendix 2.

3.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

3.5.1 This report does not contain any exempt or confidential information.

3.6 Risk Management

3.6.1 This section is not relevant to this report.

4 Conclusions

5.1 The Scrutiny recommendation tracking system allows the Board to monitor progress and identify completed recommendations. Progress in responding to those recommendations arising from the Scrutiny review of External Placements is detailed within the table at Appendix 2 for Members' consideration.

5 Recommendations

6.1 Members are asked to:

- Agree those recommendations which no longer require monitoring;
- Identify any recommendations where progress is unsatisfactory and determine the action the Board wishes to take as a result.
- Note the recommendations where satisfactory progress is being made.

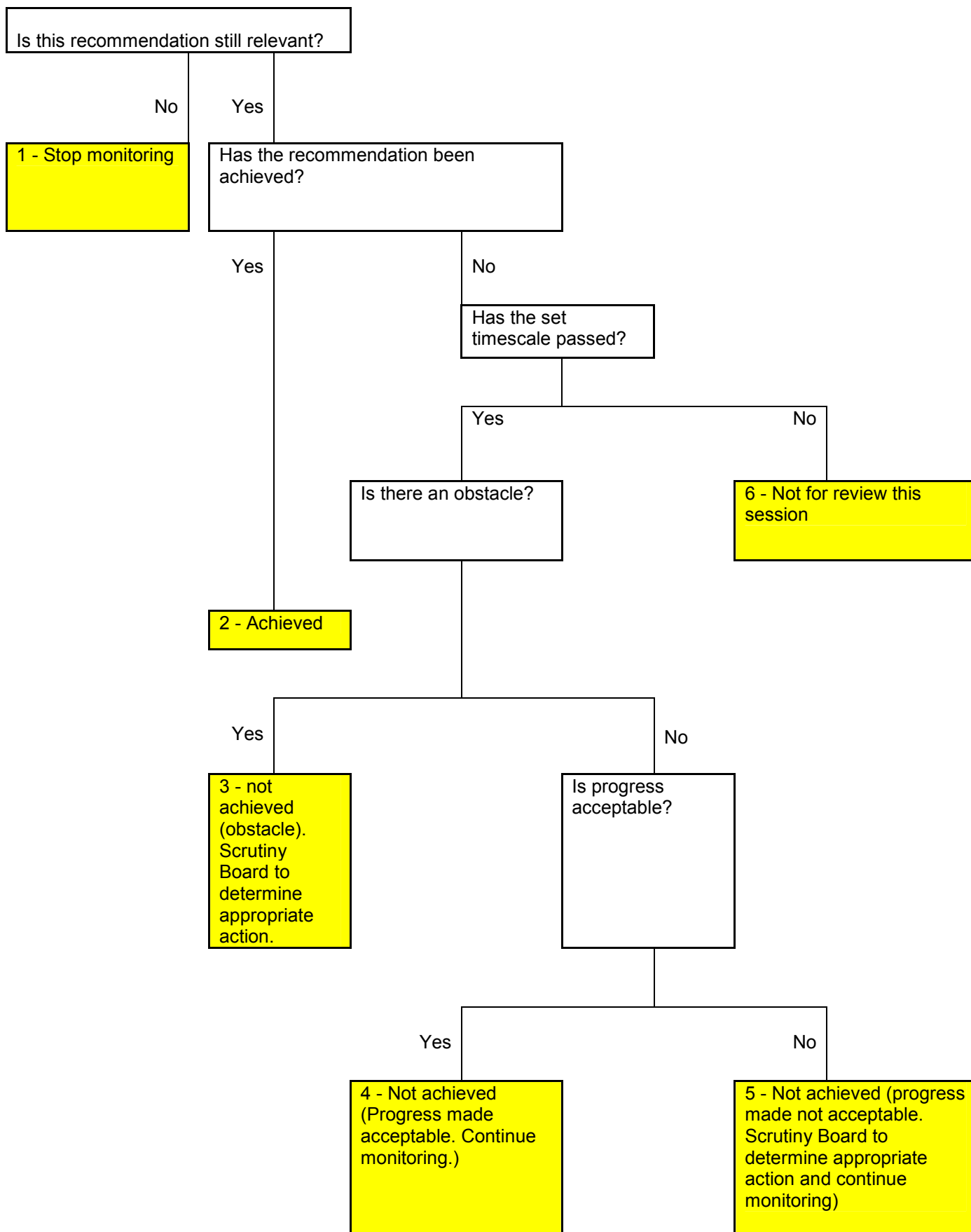
6 Background documents¹

6.1 Report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development to the Children and Families Scrutiny Board – Inquiry on External Placements 9th February 2012

6.2 Report of the Director of Children's Services to the Children and Families Scrutiny Board 'Response to Scrutiny inquiry report – external placements' 26th April 2012.

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.

Recommendation tracking flowchart and classifications:
Questions to be Considered by Scrutiny Boards



Review of External Placements Inquiry (February 2012)

Categories

- 1 - Stop monitoring
- 2 - Achieved
- 3 - Not achieved (Obstacle)
- 4 - Not achieved (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring)
- 5 - Not achieved (Progress made not acceptable. Continue monitoring)
- 6 - Not for review this session

Recommendation for monitoring	Evidence of progress and contextual information	Status (categories 1 – 6) (to be completed by Scrutiny)	Complete
<p>Recommendation 1 That the Director of Children’s Services reports back to us on how local communities can be more proactively engaged in the support to vulnerable families.</p>	<p>26th July position: The ambition for Leeds to be a Child Friendly City is predicated on getting the whole city community behind children. The strategy to develop more cluster based services supported by local schools, Early Start Centres and Children’s Social Work Teams is intended to support this ambition at a local level by providing a framework that enables services to be developed locally in response to the needs of children and families in the communities in which they live. Arrangements to support cluster working already have some community engagement through the involvement of elected members, school governors and third sector partners. It is hoped that as cluster working develops, supported by Targeted Service Leaders who are being rolled out across the City, communities will become more involved and engaged in supporting vulnerable children for example by volunteering, mentoring, peer support, fostering and informing the development of services. We will be exploring with clusters the feasibility of having community</p>	4	

	<p>engagement as an element of cluster plans.</p> <p>Current Position: Targeted Service Leaders are now in place in 23 of the 25 clusters. We are in the process of recruiting in the two clusters that do not currently have a Targeted Service Leader.</p>	2	
<p>Recommendation 4 That the Director of Children's Services reports to us in July 2012 with an update on progress against each of the key milestones in the programme plan, the majority of which are due to have been achieved by then.</p>	<p>26th July position:</p> <p>Overall good progress is being made in implementing the <i>Turning the Curve</i> Action Plan and the early indications are, as detailed in the response to recommendation 2, that the actions taken to date are having an impact on the number of looked after children.</p> <p>Current Position: We have continued to make positive progress in relation to <i>Turning the Curve</i>. There are fewer looked after children now than at the same time last year and we have made significant reductions in the number of looked after children in external residential placements.</p>	4	
<p>Recommendation 6 That the Corporate Carers group explores the potential to arrange social events and opportunities for foster carers and children to develop networks.</p>	<p>26th July Current position:</p> <p>Officers are working with the Corporate Carers to look at opportunities to develop social events for foster carers and children.</p> <p>Current Position: A Foster Carer appreciation event has been arranged on Saturday the 3rd of November at St Chads at Headingley. The event, which is open to carers from across Leeds, will include activities for both children and carers. A further event is being arranged for Christmas and more events will be held in the new year.</p>	4	
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<p>Recommendation 7 That the Director of Children’s Services reviews the payment structure for foster care with particular reference to the impact of the differential between in-house and independent fostering agency rates and reports to the Scrutiny Board with the outcome of this review in July 2012</p>	<p>26th July position:</p> <p>A review of the payment structure for Leeds foster carers has been completed and a number of options for increasing fees have been identified. It is planned that we will consult with carers on these options over the Summer and implement the new arrangements in September. The review of the arrangements has taken account of the payments made to carers by Independent Fostering Agencies, neighbouring authorities and the significant increase in the number of babies and young children becoming looked after in Leeds. It is recommended that a full report is presented to the Committee on the outcome of the consultation in September.</p> <p>Current position: Following consultation with carers we have agreed to undertake further work on the current payment structure. A working group with foster carers is being established and this will report on the options to carers in January 2013 and the revised structure will be in place from the 1st of April 2013.</p>	<p>4</p> <p>4</p>	
<p>Recommendation 9 That the Director of Children’s Services works with the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods to secure support from the ALMOs to meet the accommodation needs of foster carers.</p>	<p>26th July position:</p> <p>The directors of children's services and environment and neighbourhoods and their senior leadership teams meet regularly. There is already a protocol in place with environment and neighbourhoods and ALMOs which ensures that foster carers and kinship carers have priority status. Children’s services have established good links with Housing ALMOs and are working with them to identify suitable properties to support the redesign of residential services.</p> <p>Current position: We continue to work closely with colleagues in the environments and neighbourhoods directorate. For example,</p>	<p>4</p> <p>4</p>	

	<p>since the last meeting we have increased the funding available to support vulnerable children through housing options by £50,000</p>		
<p>Recommendation 10 That the Director of Children’s Services reports back to us in July 2012 on what formalised input foster carers should have into the review process for children they care for, and how improvements can be made to ensure that their input is considered in practice.</p>	<p>26th July position:</p> <p>Foster carers are an integral part of the team that supports looked after children. As the individuals involved in caring for the child on a day to day basis for sustained periods foster carers bring an important and unique perspective to the looked after child’s statutory review.</p> <p>The role and contribution of foster carers to the statutory review process is set out in the statutory guidance and regulations which support the Children Act 1989.</p> <p>In Leeds foster carers are supported to contribute to the statutory reviews of children in their care through completing a consultation record, which uses a series of questions and headings to assist the carer to structure their thoughts on the child’s progress and any comments they have on how the care plan for the child should be developed. Similar consultation records are completed by the child, parent and social worker. The completed consultation records are send directly to the Independent Reviewing Officer who is responsible for reviewing the care plan for the child and ensuring that it is meeting their needs. Foster carers also attend the review meeting to ensure that they are able to give their views. Independent Reviewing Officers are aware of the important role that foster carers plan in the lives of looked after children and should chair the meeting in such a way that ensures that the views of foster carers are heard and given proper consideration. Following a period where a number of agency staff were used Leeds has been successful in recruiting a number of permanent Independent Reviewing Officers.</p>	<p>4</p>	

	<p>Current Position: Since the last meeting the Deputy Director (Safeguarding, Specialist and Targeted Services) has attended two foster carers through Foster Carer Support Meetings to obtain feedback directly from carers. He has given a commitment to carers to meet with them regularly and to report back to them on any issues they raise with him.</p>	2	
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