Report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development

Report to Scrutiny Board (Children and Families)

Date: 13th December 2012

Subject: Recommendation Tracking – Improving School Attendance

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

Summary of main issues

1. This report sets out the progress made in responding to the recommendations arising from the previous Scrutiny review in Improving School Attendance published on the 26th of April 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 into Improving Attendance.

1   Background information

2.1   The Scrutiny Board (Children and Families) was tasked by Council with carrying out a piece of work this year on each of the three Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) obsessions. The second of these relates to school attendance.

2.2   At its meeting in April 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 Directors Response was presented to the Scrutiny Board at the meeting on the 26th of July 2012. Having considered the response the Board accepted that recommendation 5 could not be implemented by the Director of Children's Services as a zero tolerance policy to term time holiday absence is unlawful and can potentially expose schools/the authority to legal challenge.

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 into Improving School Attendance 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.
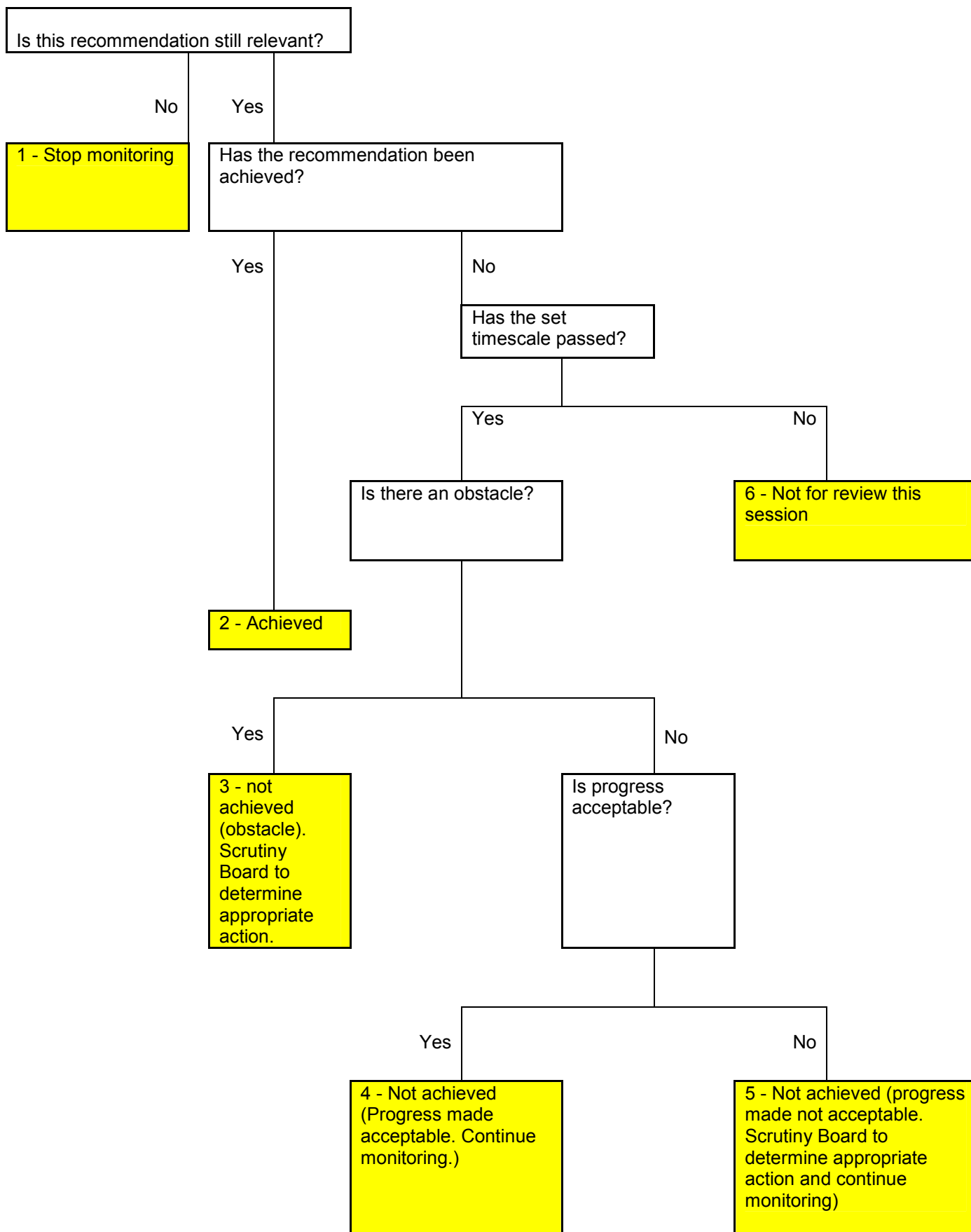- Note the recommendations where satisfactory progress is being made.

6 Background documents[1]

6.1 Report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development to the Children and Families Scrutiny Board – Scrutiny Inquiry Final Report Improving School Attendance 26th April 2012

6.2 Report of the Director of Children's Services to the Children and Families Scrutiny Board 'Directors Response Scrutiny Inquiry into Improving Attendance' 26th July 2012.

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[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

Is this recommendation still relevant?

No

Yes

1 - Stop monitoring

Has the recommendation been achieved?

Yes

No

Has the set timescale passed?

Yes

No

Is there an obstacle?

6 - Not for review this session

2 - Achieved

Yes

No

3 - not achieved (obstacle). Scrutiny Board to determine appropriate action.

Is progress acceptable?

Yes

No

4 - Not achieved (Progress made acceptable. Continue monitoring.)

5 - Not achieved (progress made not acceptable. Scrutiny Board to determine appropriate action and continue monitoring)

Review of Improving School Attendance Inquiry (April 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
Recommendation 1 - That the Director of Children's Services continues to engage with all schools not under Leeds City Council Control, including Academies to ensure continued positive working relationships and continued persistent absence data collection.	**Directors Response:** LCC and Children's Services continue to use tools such as the dashboards to drive ownership of data at cluster/partnership levels. The Targeted Services locality model requires clusters to reflect aspirations around the numbers of CAFs undertaken, school attendance etc which tie in the commitment of all schools in achieving those aspirations. **Current Position:** **Work on-going as recommended. Sponsors are engaging in discussions with the authority prior to conversion and agreeing with the need for continued engagement in cluster-led activity as the model for support for vulnerable children and families.**	2	
Recommendation 2 - That the Director of Children's Services engages with School Governors to establish a special responsibility for one Governor in each	**Directors Response:** There is a specific training briefing for governors on attendance, available through the governor support unit and guidance has been issued to governors about utilising the		

school which includes challenging the attendance performance of the school and maintaining a focus on reducing absence levels.	committee framework to monitor and challenge attendance throughout the course of the school year. The advantage of the committee framework is embedding a shared understanding of attendance across the whole of the governing body. In schools with good attendance, distributive leadership across the whole organisation generates shared ownership. Schools with poor attendance often place responsibility for attendance with one particular role e.g. assistant headteacher, head of pastoral etc. Targeted Services regularly communicate to governors through the governors bulletin with respect to attendance and the role all governors can play in supporting their school improve policy and practice in order to raise attendance. **Current Position:** **Governor training on attendance is being delivered in the New Year and Targeted Services will be taking the opportunity to support the governor's marketplace event.**	4	
Recommendation 3 - That the Director of Children's Services formulates a strategy for targeting and improving school attendance during year 1, whilst promoting pre-school the benefits of good attendance.	**Directors Response:** The reconfiguring of Children's Services and the development of the Early Help teams offers opportunities for improving integration and communication between Targeted and Universal services, including Children's Centres. The development of Guidance and Support meetings in clusters is also engaging Children's Centre managers in identifying families in need and planning appropriate assessments and interventions that build the "team around the family". These processes drive approaches that go beyond the statutory school-age framework. Work is on-going with commercial radio partner, Radio Aire and Magic in developing a package of key messages to, potentially, be broadcast across the city/region which reinforce the importance of attendance even in the pre-school/primary phase. Analysis has also revealed that the rate of absence due to holidays		

	in term time (whether the school has agreed or not) is 3 times higher in the primary phase, which requires a response that addresses parental attitudes to the early curriculum and its importance in sequential learning. Data recently released by the Department for Education shows that primary attendance in Leeds matches national averages and exceeds that of our statistical neighbours. The on-going development and maturation of the newly reconfigured services is expected to consolidate and continue this positive trend. In addition, the newly established 0-11 Partnership Board has identified this is a particular area for development. To develop a city wide strategy for all early years providers an OBA session is to be held on 6th July 2012 from which a plan of action will be drawn up in time for the new school year in September. **Current Position:** **The 0-11 Partnership board now has an action plan following on from the OBA event in July with named action holders.**	2	
Recommendation 4 - That the Director of Children's Services works in collaboration with the clusters to identify the siblings of persistently absent children who are approaching school age in order to ensure support is in place from day one of their education.	**Directors Response:** The development of good Guidance and Support processes in clusters is enabling quality and appropriate information sharing about children in their family context. Representation at the meetings by Children's Centre managers, primary and secondary staff plus a range of services contributes to a "team around the family" approach. The 0-11 Learning Partnership are also holding an Outcomes Based Accountability workshop across the directorate where a key strand for the focus for the population of 0-11 year olds in the city will be both school attendance and the engagement of parents and carers of younger children with their local children's centre. The increase in the childcare offer for 2 year olds also offers a cross-cutting strategic development where predictors of poor attendance are poverty and		

	parental attitudes/aspirations. Through the targeted services offer, clusters are also committed to increasing the number of Common Assessments completed. A quality assessment will identify siblings within the family and also whether or not the lead professional will need to draw in a wider range of services to bring about change for families in need. **Current position:** **The roll out of the Early Help Teams is increasing the strategic capacity at a local level to drive such processes as Top 100 and Guidance and Support, both of which are aimed at providing early intervention in problems. Clusters are embedding whole-family approaches to needs, and the Families First data has been released which is also informing clusters of families with a range of problems.**	2	
Recommendation 6 - That the Director of Children's Services engages with National Health Service providers and General Practitioners in Leeds to identify how absence from school for health appointments could be reduced.	**Directors Response:** A small scale information gathering exercise in the CATTS (Ardsley and Tingley) cluster was undertaken during the Easter term to investigate what types of medical appointments children are missing school for. The findings have been shared with School Health, the lead for Emotional Health and Well-Being in the West North West and the Head of Commissioning Children and Families in NHS Leeds. Next steps planned are to repeat the investigation in a more inner-city/deprived area of the city and to try to expand the data captured to the number of appointments not attended, whether GP appointments were routine or responsive to illness and to establish if children returned to school in the afternoon – the greatest majority of appointments were during the morning. An Outcome Based Accountability workshop with Children's Services and partners in health is planned for the next academic		

	year. Preliminary discussions have already generated no-cost, low-cost ideas such as community paediatrics including text in their appointment letters advising parents that their child will be able to return to school following their appointment; for GP practice managers to be advised of school holidays to offer routine appointments during these periods which could also increase the likelihood of children attending the appointments. **Current position:** **Open XS cluster have agreed to undertake an investigation into the types of medical absence across schools in the cluster. This represents a much more diverse locality with much higher levels of deprivation.**	4	
Recommendation 7 - That the Director of Children's Services works in collaboration with the Cluster Chairs to undertake a review of the attendance improvement and family support service configuration. The purpose of this review would be to identify if there is sufficient resource appropriately allocated to each cluster.	**Directors Response:** Allocation of AIO resource is based on level of need which is a combination of the numbers of persistent absentees and the distribution of Targeted Services. Therefore clusters with the highest need in terms of Targeted Services will have the correspondingly higher level of AIO resource. The status of the schools in the cluster also has a bearing as academies are funded directly for the provision of support services for attendance and therefore do not receive any non-statutory provision from the local authority. Family Support Workers are school/cluster based staff and not a provision of service made by the local authority. The Family Intervention Service (FIS) that is provided by Children's Services is accessed by the Children Leeds Panels, at present. All cases that have been through Guidance and Support where it is felt that this level of intensive family support is now required can be referred for consideration of support (which includes Multi-Systemic Therapy, Signpost, commissioned FIS and Children's Services FIS). This resource is not allocated to clusters but through the integrated		

	processes, beginning with a CAF. This service has also been restructured and its capacity increased. In the past, the distribution of the attendance service has been reviewed annually to accommodate changes in patterns of absence across the city. However, this necessitated the movement of staff which schools and services reported to be highly disruptive to the development of working relationships and caused discontinuity in the service to families. **It is the view of the director that current arrangements need a significant period of time to embed and grow and that regular review of the dashboard and other data will continue to inform decisions about how resource is distributed.** **Current Position:** **Not for review at this session.**	6	
Recommendation 8 - That the Director of Children's Services establishes as part of the Youth Offer Review the possibility of providing Youth Service support for young people, who are persistently absent, from school from the age of 11 years.	**Directors Response:** The Youth Service priority age range is 13-19 (25) However, support is available from 11+ where there is identified need. Addressing persistent absenteeism and increasing engagement with young people most at risk of entering care or being NEET are priorities for the youth Service from age 11. **Current Position:** **Targeted work with 11+ continues. The city-wide Youth Offer review is on-going.**	4	
Recommendation 9 - That the Director of Children's Services engages with our neighbouring local authorities and schools within Leeds not in local authority control to explore the potential for co-ordinated planned school closure dates for holiday	**Directors Response:** Historically, different authorities set their key term and holiday dates around the manufacturing industry and factory closures, therefore, distinct patterns have emerged over time. The DfE continues to move towards more autonomy for schools and the freedoms permitted academies and free schools to determine		

periods and teacher training days.	their own school calendar are also factors which have an impact on maintained schools. For example, academies are not required to adhere to the minimum number of days that the school should be open to pupils (190), whereas maintained schools are bound by this. (It was clarified to the Board at the July 2012 meeting that this recommendation is agreed and action would be undertaken on this recommendation.) **Current Position:** **The response from neighbouring authorities has not offered scope to develop this recommendation further. Other authorities have cited the academy programme as one factor where consistency has not been possible within authority, reflecting a similar challenge to that experienced in Leeds. As more schools in Leeds move to closer partnerships and trusts, there is likely to be closer correlation between dates. The through-school model also provides cross-phase solutions.**	3	
Recommendation 10 - That the Director of Children's Services works in collaboration with Cluster Chairs to identify gaps in specialist support and investigate which organisations are accessible to provide a comprehensive support network. In addition to also ensure that awareness is raised about supporting organisations in localities for relevant LCC and cluster based employees.	**Directors Response:** Children Leeds have recently re-launched an updated Practitioner's Handbook and the Family Hub which provides information on how to work with services and agencies, as well as identifying who the right service for a particular need might be. Part of the role of the Targeted Service Leader is act as both broker of and developer of local services that can provide family support and the attendance of representatives from the voluntary sector at both cluster JCC and Guidance and Support is actively encouraged. On analysis, the Outcomes Based Accountability workshops that have been undertaken in all clusters reflect a high degree of engagement with services beyond the Children's Services directorate and show the level to which local intelligence is securing key collaborative partnerships.		

	Current Position: **All of the 25 clusters now have a Targeted Service Leader who is developing the networks of agencies, including third sector, who can contribute to delivering the team around the family model.** **Targeted services leaders and clusters are using information from assessments to identify needs and commission appropriate services e.g. through the Youth Contract, funds for targeted work for 16/17 year old NEETS are being used to identify additional support to engage those young people in training or work opportunities by identifying their particular needs.**	2	
Recommendation 11 - That the Director of Children's services investigates the problems associated with transient neighbourhoods. In addition, investigates how the schools admissions system for Leeds could be adapted in our most deprived wards to ensure parents can place their children in schools close to their homes and siblings.	**Directors Response:** The problem of transient neighbourhoods is one that is limited to a small number of localities in the city, Inner East being one of these. The cluster have undertaken an Outcomes Based Accountability workshop for a host of services/agencies to look at this issue in their locality, which has a particular focus on the impact and needs of the Roma community. A pathfinder project has already begun to allow schools to accept applications directly from parents for in year admission transfers. The aim is to reduce the amount of time taken to find school places for children and young people. All schools will be managing admissions in this way by September 2013. There is a small working group of specialists within Children's Services considering the impact of admissions on children missing education particularly in transient neighbourhoods where there is a high degree of mobility between schools. We will continue to seek to provide additional permanent and temporary school places in areas where families are not always able		

	to secure a place at a reasonable local school. We want all children to have access to a good local school. **Current Position:** **The pathfinder was to be implemented in all schools by September 2013 but as the pathfinder project has been so successful it is to be rolled out across the city after the October 2012 half term holiday. A number of temporary solutions were also implemented at schools in Inner East and Inner South, two of the most deprived wards, for September 2012 and further proposals for permanent expansions will be brought forward.**	4	
Recommendation 12 - That the Director of Children's service in collaboration with Cluster Chairs identifies the most effective way of sharing case information with stakeholders involved in the support of children and their families, whilst adhering to required data protection legislation and safeguarding requirements.	**Directors Response:** There is an on-going review of ESCR and investigation into the procurement of a suitable solution which will need to provide a consistent case management tool for services and practitioners which will maximise the effectiveness and timeliness of communication and understanding about children and families and those who are working with them. The Targeted Service Leaders and Area Heads of Targeted Services are available to support clusters in developing robust information sharing agreements which safeguard children without causing unnecessary barriers to communication and intervention by services. There have been preliminary discussions as to how access to the Children's Services pupil database (not ESCR) could be extended to a range of practitioners that could include school SENCOs, Family Intervention Service and cluster based staff such as Family Outreach Workers. The Troubled Families initiative will also map out and test the information sharing protocols between the authority and clusters/partnerships/services.		

	Current Position: **Staff working across 9 clusters are now able to make use of the Synergy Gateway to both access child records to view and also to add notes in respect of actions and interventions and this model is being rolled out across the remaining 16 clusters. This is enabling practitioners to see which other services are engaged in work with children and also reducing the need to hold information about children in multiple locations.** **The Families First Information Sharing agreement has also enabled a much wider discussion across agencies in respect of families and households causing concern to a range of agencies that covers worklessness and crime and anti-social behaviour.**	4	