



Report of Head of Scrutiny and Member Development

Report to Scrutiny Board (Health and Wellbeing and Adult Social Care)

Date: 23 January 2013

Subject: Services for Blind and Visually Impaired People in Leeds

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

1 Purpose of this report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to present the recent correspondence received from the acting Chair of the National Federation of the Blind (Leeds Branch), in order that the Scrutiny Board might determine what, if any, further scrutiny activity may be required.

2 Background

2.1 In October 2011, the Scrutiny Board (Health and Wellbeing and Adult Social Care) was presented with a request for scrutiny regarding the arrangements for meeting the needs of Visually Impaired adults in Leeds.

2.2 At that meeting, the Scrutiny Board noted that a deputation was due to be made to Full Council at its meeting on 16 November 2011. Following on from the deputation, Scrutiny Board established a working group to consider the issues raised, agreeing that this should arrange to meet prior to the Executive Board so that any findings and/or recommendations could be submitted back to the Executive Board to assist their consideration of the issues raised by the deputation at Full Council.

2.3 The working group sought to explore the issues raised in the deputation in more detail through a number of different elements of work. This included a site visit (9 December 2011) and discussions with a range of stakeholders as follows:

- Service users, including, but not exclusively, Dual Sensory Loss (DSL) service users;
- Leeds Vision Consortium (LVC) staff members;
- LVC managerial staff;
- Officers from Adult Social Services

- 2.4 The working group considered the content of the issues raised in the deputation and ancillary matters brought to the attention of Scrutiny Members. In response, a range of written evidence was produced by LVC and Adult Social Care officers. This allowed the working group to consider additional information that provided useful context to the current position in relation to the request for scrutiny.
- 2.5 The findings and recommendations from the working group were presented and agreed by the Scrutiny Board (Health and Wellbeing and Adult Social Care) at its meeting on 25 January 2012. The agreed report was subsequently presented to the Executive Board at its meeting on 10 February 2012.

3 Main issues

- 3.1 At its meeting on 26 September 2012, the Scrutiny Board (Health and Wellbeing and Adult Social Care) considered a report that provided an update on the Scrutiny Board's previously agreed recommendations and an overview of the services currently on offer to blind and visually impaired people across Leeds. A copy of this report is provided at Appendix 1 for information.
- 3.2 The main points of discussion at the meeting on 26 September 2012 related to:
- the fundamental shift in service design – moving from a centre based service to a community/ outreach based service, focusing on individual needs;
 - the need to provide a range of services for blind and visually impaired people across Leeds, to suit all age groups, especially younger people;
 - the referral process to services and the importance of the role of the hospital-based eye clinic liaison officer;
 - the importance of assistive technology in helping to maintain service users' independence;
 - the increased number of service users from BME groups;
 - the role of the employment officer; the scale of the challenge in securing employment opportunities for people with visual impairments in what was currently a difficult labour market ;
 - the outcomes achieved by people being assisted to find employment;
 - the raised expectations for people with disabilities as a result of the success and legacy of the Paralympics;
 - the importance of stakeholder involvement in shaping services.
- 3.3 Whilst welcoming the changes that had been made to services and noting the positive feedback from the recent visit to Fairfax House, the need to obtain direct feedback from those service users/ stakeholders that had previously presented the deputation to Full Council and made the Request for Scrutiny, i.e. the National Federation of the Blind (Leeds Branch).
- 3.4 At the meeting in September 2012, the Scrutiny Board resolved to request a further report in six months (i.e. March 2013) that included the following information/ details:
- The number and age profile of blind and partially sighted people across Leeds;
 - The number and age profile of service users accessing/ using the various elements of services commissioned by the Council and provided by Leeds Vision Consortium;

- Specific outcomes relating to employment service provided and take-up of employment, training and/or volunteering placements;
- The number and age profile of service users from BME groups;
- Direct responses from service users to the actions taken to address the concerns raised at Scrutiny Board (Health and Wellbeing and Adult Social Care) in October 2011.

3.5 However, in November 2011, further correspondence was received from the acting Chair of the National Federation of the Blind (Leeds Branch). Following discussions with the Chair of the Scrutiny Board, it was felt appropriate to present this correspondence to the Scrutiny Board for consideration, ahead of the 6-month update previously identified in September 2012.

3.6 The correspondence received from the acting Chair of the National Federation of the Blind (Leeds Branch) is attached at Appendix 2. Representatives from the National Federation of the Blind (Leeds Branch) have been invited to attend the Scrutiny Board meeting to outline and discuss the issues raised in Appendix 2, and address any questions raised by members of the Scrutiny Board.

4 Recommendations

4.1 Members are asked to consider the issues raised in this report and associated appendices and determine what, if any, further scrutiny activity may be required.

5 Background papers¹

None used

¹The 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.