

Report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development

Report to Scrutiny Board (Children and Families)

Date: 14 February 2013

Subject: Recommendation Tracking – Combating Child Poverty and Raising Aspirations - Appendix A

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 in Combating Child Poverty and Raising Aspirations published on the 20th June 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.

1 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 Combating Child Poverty and Raising Aspirations.

1 Background information

- 2.1 Poverty is the root of most poor outcomes for children and blights the life of too many children in Leeds. Poverty lies behind the common factors for poor outcomes and must continue to be addressed in order to narrow the gap between the most and least advantaged children, young people and families in the city. The Scrutiny Board (Children's Services) therefore decided to undertake an inquiry around the themes of raising aspiration and combating child poverty.
- 2.2 At its meeting in June 2012, the Scrutiny Board (Children and Families) agreed the final inquiry 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.

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 Combating Child Poverty and Raising Aspirations 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.

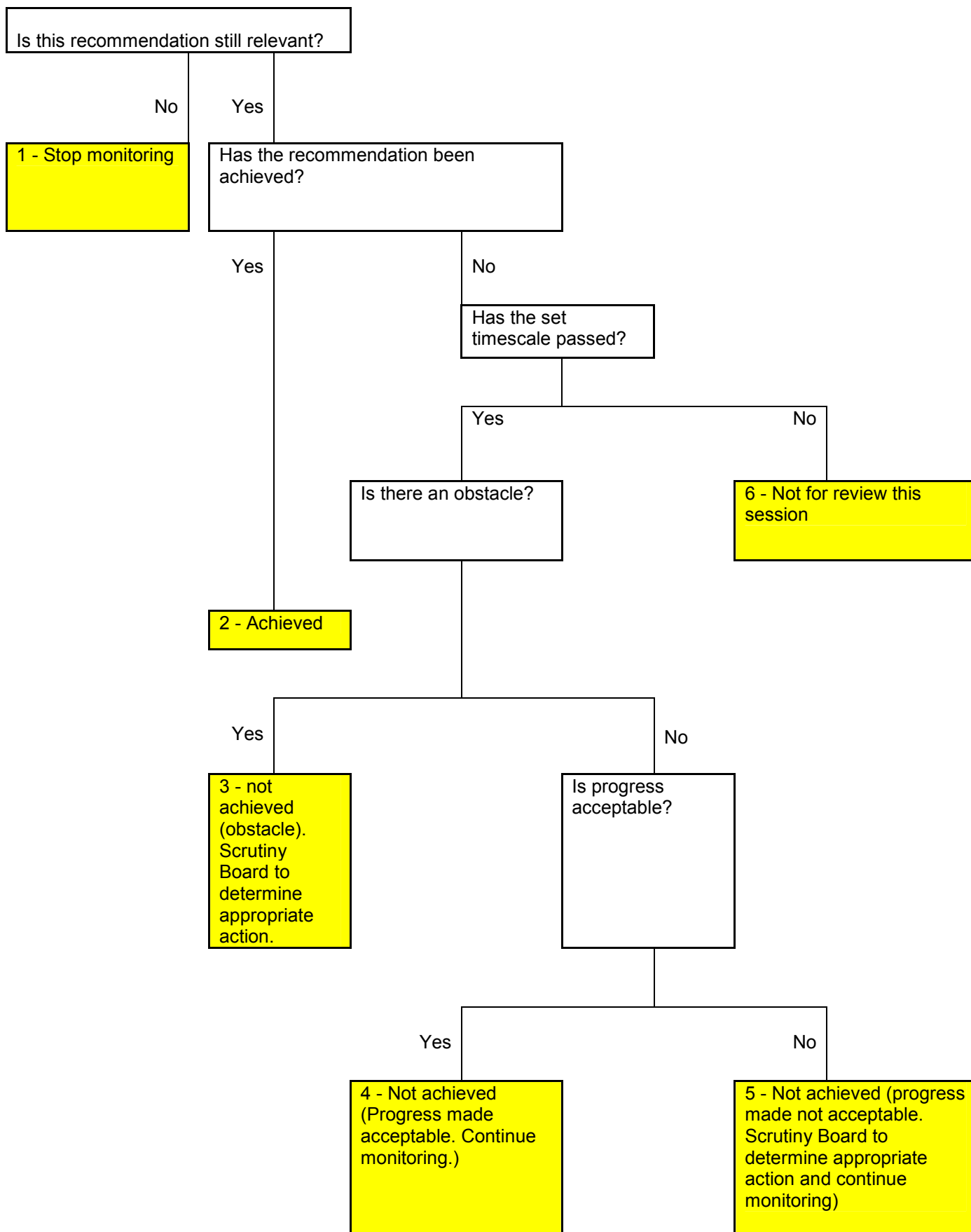
6 Background documents¹

6.1 Report of the Head of Scrutiny and Member Development to the Children and Families Scrutiny Board – Scrutiny Inquiry Final Report Combating Child Poverty and Raising Aspirations, 20th June 2012

6.2 Report of the Director of Children's Services to the Children and Families Scrutiny Board 'Response to Scrutiny Inquiry Final report - Combating child poverty and raising aspirations' 26th July 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 Combating Child Poverty and Raising Aspirations Inquiry (June 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 provides us with an initial update on progress with the Child Poverty Strategy when he brings the formal response to our recommendations in July 2012.</p>	<p>Directors Response The Child Poverty group will produce a formal response on progress for the Scrutiny Board (Children and Families) in July 2012.</p> <p>Current Position:</p> <p>An update on the Child Poverty Strategy and the national consultation on the definition and measurement of child poverty can be found in the recent report to the Children’s Trust Board (CTB) on February 1, attached as a separate paper to this appendix. An update on the four blocks of the Leeds Child Poverty Strategy can be found on pages 5-10 of the CTB report.</p> <p>The report includes a short section on the impact of welfare reforms, see paragraphs 3.6-3.7. Clearly, the cumulative impact of these reforms, other austerity measures and changes to the local government funding pose a significant risk in terms of an increase in</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Child Poverty Strategy to remain a regular agenda item for Scrutiny</p>	

	<p>child poverty. It is hard to be specific about impact but broad conclusions are possible.</p> <p>Leeds is seeing a growth in Food banks which provide temporary respite for families who find themselves unable to provide essentials. We know that there are 2 under development, one established and one under consideration. Provided by the voluntary sector they are supported by the Trussell organisation. The Trussell organisation has a specific concern about the impact of changes to the social fund. They are concerned about meeting increased demand in a climate where there are reduced resources available. They are therefore happy to work with local authorities, but also wish to maintain their independence and focus on crisis intervention, and would not wish to be seen as a substitute for mainstream welfare funding.</p> <p>The primary reason for children becoming subject to Child Protection Plans or becoming 'Looked-after' by the local authority is 'abuse or neglect'. These situations are generally linked to parental mental health issues, domestic violence and/or parental substance misuse. Underlying risk factors in families include fractured parenting (children not living with both of their natural parents); parental unemployment/ household living on benefits and overcrowded/inappropriate living accommodation. There is a significant risk, associated with all of the changes to the benefit system that households will become more stretched leading to an increase in social care referrals and caseloads.</p> <p>An increase in personal debt is also a clear and significant risk to children, young people and their families. And given the role of affordable housing in tackling child poverty, then welfare reform changes pose further risks. In Leeds 14,200 households with children will lose an average of £2.61 per week as a result of the replacement of Council Tax Benefit with localised Council Tax</p>		
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	<p>support schemes. (Overall a total of 27,000 people will pay more and an additional 7,000 will have to pay for the first time as the result of the changes). Reductions in housing benefit for ALMO and Housing Association tenants assessed as having too many bedrooms affect just over 6,700 and 1,500 people respectively. Of these 1,633 and 552 respectively are households with children.</p>		
<p>Recommendation 2 - That the Director of Children’s Services reports to us within three months on how the council and its partners are seeking to ensure the continued viability of money advice and credit union facilities within the city.</p>	<p>Directors Response: A Community Development Finance Institution (CDFI) has been established in Leeds, in order to expand the availability of affordable financial services to low income households. Credit union increased membership in Quarter 4 and total number of members was 25,334 (of which 159 are new and 4,380 are junior). 1,206 loans were granted to financially excluded groups in Quarter 4 valued at £459,671. The set up costs for a telephone advice gateway with one common phone number for use across all advice agencies has been funded.</p> <p>Current Position:</p> <p>See pages 5-6 of the attached report to the CTB on February 1. Plus some latest figures for credit union activity: Credit union increased membership for quarter ended December 2012 and total number of members was 25,826 (of which 118 are new and 4,295 are junior). 2,359 loans were granted to financially excluded groups in this quarter valued at £946,179.</p>	<p>2</p>	
<p>Recommendation 3 - That the Director of Children’s Services reports back to us within three months on how he will ensure that workforce development plans are in place to increase front-line</p>	<p>Directors Response: The Child Poverty Strategy group has advised the Welfare Reform Strategy Group to ensure that factors affecting child poverty and the workforce needs are taken account of in the Council’s preparations for Universal Credit changes, including</p>		

<p>staff's ability to recognise needs such as debt advice and fuel poverty and signpost people appropriately.</p>	<p>training the workforce. Training sessions available across the city for front line staff. Briefing sessions at Children's Trust Board Workforce Reform and Practice Development sub group, Children's Services leadership team and for cluster staff have taken place.</p> <p>Current Position:</p> <p>The Children's Services Workforce Development team will be running a series of roadshows around the city in June and July. Issues of child poverty (including free school meals, debt advice and fuel poverty) will be addressed in these roadshows along with guidance on signposting for more detailed information and advice.</p> <p>The Welfare Reform Strategy Board has implemented a range of activity preparing for the April 2013 reforms. This includes briefings for front line staff working for the Council or other key partners.</p> <p>There is also a city wide review of the provision and commissioning of advice services. See separate paper attached to this appendix.</p>	<p>4</p>	
<p>Recommendation 4 - That the Director of Children's Services reports back to us in three months on how the concerns raised about information sharing can be addressed.</p>	<p>Directors Response: An information sharing agreement has been formally agreed between Leeds Community Health Trust and Children's Services around sharing data around all families under 5 years. As a direct result of this there has been a significant increase in registration of under 2 year olds in Children's Centers from around 30% to 60% and the identification of 2 year olds for vulnerable children's places is meeting the increased targets from 280 to place to 680 places by April next year</p> <p>Current position:</p> <p>The target is now for 1,000 additional places by March 2013, rising to 2,500 in March 2014. Part of the Council's work on the</p>	<p>4</p>	

	<p>Budgetplus proposals is to maximise the opportunities to ensure a cost efficient and effective service is developed from the expansion of early learning for disadvantaged 2-year olds.</p>		
<p>Recommendation 5 - That the Director of Children’s Services reports back to us within three months on what is being done to increase the proportion of children and young people eligible for free school meals who are registered for this entitlement.</p>	<p>Directors Response: An OBA workshop on Free School Meals was successfully undertaken on 22 February with partner actions identified. A Free School Meals Working Group has been established to implement the outcomes of the workshop. The first meeting took place on 12th June and was very well attended by school academies and other stakeholders. Draft terms of reference have been drawn up.</p> <p>Free school meal uptake is reported on a financial year basis. Results for 2011/12 are currently being finalised. They are likely to be inline with 2010/11 for primary schools with an increase in uptake in secondary schools.</p> <p>Current position: Leeds FSM take-up is consistently below national levels, with around 5,000 children and young people not taking their entitlement. In the 2011-12 financial year the gaps to national continued to narrow at secondary, but increased significantly at primary.</p> <p>Data for 2011/12 shows take up in Primary at 76.7% (76.6%) in Leeds compared to 81.8% (79.8%) nationally, and take up in</p>	<p>4</p>	

	<p>secondary at 68.9% (67.1%) in Leeds compared to 70.6% (69.3%) nationally. Brackets show 10/11 figures.</p> <p>Key areas in the FSM Working group action plan include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catering services in new schools • Meetings with catering contractors • Head teacher control over catering contracts • Inclusion of FSM issues in regular programme of meetings between Head teachers and School improvement advisers • Nomination of school governor FSM champions • Identification of FSM champion schools who can share best practice • Inclusion of FSM issues in cluster business planning • Training and advice for family support workers • Publicity campaigns 		
<p>Recommendation 6 - That the Director of Children’s Services reports back to us within three months on the potential for the Child Poverty Strategy to engage with private sector housing providers on a similar model to social housing providers in combating the effects of poverty.</p>	<p>Directors Response: Good attendance and engagement from housing has been secured for the Child Poverty Strategic group and the Head of Housing Support is attending the new Children’s Access to Service Panel (South). The Children and Young People’s Housing Plan has been made available for comment to children and young people’s ‘focus’ groups.</p> <p>Although there are some good examples of Housing Services, Leeds ALMO and CSW working imaginatively to put in place housing options that keep families together and help children to thrive, such action is not universally embedded. The Children and Young People Housing Plan will roll out such good practice.</p> <p>Current Position: Effective partnering work between Housing Services and Social Work services in the South and West wedges have been developed with named officers in Housing Services providing a ready access</p>	4	

	<p>point for Social Workers working with families who are in housing need. Priority awards for re-housing and financial interventions have been made to facilitate re-housing. Two recent examples include the re-housing of two families each with 8 plus children, where there was a risk of care placement: for one family by covering a bond/rent in advance payment to access a private rented tenancy and the second by purchasing furniture after a priority award led to a council housing let. There is work to do to develop comparable partnering arrangements in the east of the city. Housing Services and Children's Services are jointly funding a Housing Prevention Fund for Children that covers the cost of interventions as described above. The key criteria is that a failure to fund an intervention could result in higher costs being incurred: such as care placements. Housing Services is also working with the Children's Disability Team to provide a case work response around the two housing pathways of helping families stay in their existing homes, through adaptations, or make a planned move to alternative accessible housing. The Housing Prevention Fund is being used for such cases and agreement has been reached to jointly fund adaptation funds above the mandatory cap of £30k.</p>		
<p>Recommendation 7 - That the Director of Children's Services makes more information about services for children and families available at One Stop Centres.</p>	<p>Directors Response: There is increased Jobshop presence in One Stop Centres in support of the Universal Credit pilot activity. There has been a reinstatement of the £35,000 of funding for Children's Centre advice service following the original cut in funding. This should hopefully result in service being provided from a further 7 centres from October 2012 in addition to the 13 originally planned for 2012/13. The Children's Centres Advice Service is to receive ongoing funding in 2012/13 and it is proposed that this will become a permanent funding stream managed via the Advice Agencies Grant. The mainstreaming of the funding provides an opportunity to make longer term plans for the service, ensuring that as many clients as</p>		

	<p>possible benefit from it with the reduced level of resource available.</p> <p>A mail out has been completed to approximately 9,500 households who are likely to be eligible for the Government Warm Front scheme to try and increase take-up of heating and insulation measures through that scheme whilst still available. We are currently promoting 'Wrap up Leeds' free loft and cavity wall insulation scheme, which is available to everyone, but also targeted at areas of low income with a large number of suitable properties. Leeds has generated 37 hotspots referrals during January, 64 in February and 53 in March.</p> <p>Current Position:</p> <p>The Children's centre advice services are included in the city wide review of the provision and commissioning of advice services. See separate paper attached to this appendix. The commissioning scope of the new model is still being finalised, but will definitely include the current Environment and Neighbourhoods grant and advice via Children's Centres. Likely to also include outreach support via GP surgeries and for clients with mental health problems but this will not be included until April 2014. Progressing with market sounding exercise which will stay on the Council's tendering system until late January 2013.</p>	4	
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