

10 November 2008

COUNCIL BIDS FOR A FULL HOUSE OF BEACON AWARDS

A team of government assessors will visit Leeds this week to consider whether the council should retain its unbeaten record of ten Beacon awards.

Leeds has been short-listed in the latest round of national Beacon Awards for its work to prevent and tackle child poverty. The council has already been successful in achieving ten Beacon awards in the past nine years and is the only authority in the country to have this record. The honour has been achieved across a range of services, including Early Years, procurement, asset management, partnership working and healthy schools.

Three assessors, from the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA), the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) and an independent adviser, will visit Leeds on Monday where they will find out about the work the council is already doing to make a difference in the lives of children, young people and families across Leeds.

The council will showcase the work it is doing to prevent and tackle child poverty, and will specifically look at five areas:

- **Tackling worklessness** through economic development, regeneration, job creation, childcare sufficiency and supporting parents work-life balance;
- **Promoting work-readiness and adult skills** through new enterprise, basic skills and skill progression, confidence and self esteem building, job taster sessions and volunteering;
- **Financial inclusion and capability** by supporting those on low incomes, offering financial advice, basic skills training, one stop shop and outreach services, the use of the Credit Union.

- **Tackling the entrenched causes of poverty:** raising aspirations and expectations, inter-generational disadvantage, family support and parenting advice, rapid response teams;
- **Raising attainment** to improve outcomes for all children.

Councillor Stewart Golton, executive member responsible for Children’s Services said:

“Child poverty is one of our greatest challenges, but one which we are tackling head on. We believe that all children in Leeds should have the same chances in life, regardless of their background.

“Just being short-listed for this award is a great accolade and we have so much to show the assessors I have little doubt they will be impressed with the innovative work we are doing.”

The assessors will be meeting with key council representatives responsible for delivering services for children and young people in Leeds, including the Chief Executive Paul Rogerson, the council leader Richard Brett, strategic directors and key partners from the voluntary sector and Job Centre Plus.

They will also visit a ‘market place’ at the East Leeds Family Learning Centre to see a series of stalls which will showcase some of the key projects and activities the council run which tackle the child poverty agenda.

As well as meeting with front-line council staff the assessors will also have the opportunity to meet some of the people who have experienced these projects first-hand, to listen to their stories about how being involved has impacted on their lives.

The Beacon Award scheme is run by the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) and sponsored by the Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG). It is a national award scheme that recognises innovation and excellence. The Beacon scheme is unique in that it is not just an accolade for good practice but it is also about sharing knowledge and new ways of working. Each year the scheme focuses on a number of different themes and invites applications for beacon status in these specific areas.

ENDS

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