

Children and Young People

This report highlights key issues raised by the indicators included in the Q4 performance report. These are grouped under the Every Child Matters five outcomes.

Be Healthy

Key Issue: Teenage Conceptions

Why is it important?

This is a key issue because reducing teenage conceptions is a national PSA target for central government and an important local target for children's services in the Children and Young People's Plan. One reason that this is a national target is because teenage conception rates in the UK are significantly higher than in other comparable countries. It is a local target because reduction in teenage conception in the city has been slower and less consistent than in many other areas. Teenage conception is an important measure as it is a good proxy measure for young people's wellbeing.

What are we doing about it?

The lead services within the children's partnership for teenage conception, the PCT and Education Leeds, were tasked with reviewing partnership and commissioning arrangements. This is now complete and an action plan has been agreed and is now being implemented.

Stay Safe

Key issue: the proportion of children coming into care

Why is it important?

This is a key issue because the children are placed in care due to severe problems in their home life, because children in care generally have poor outcomes, and because rising numbers poses a significant challenge to services in responding to the needs of these children and young people. A significant driver of rising numbers of children in care in Leeds is the growth of children and young people that arrive in the city as unaccompanied asylum seekers. It should be noted that this indicator needs to be used with care due to the number of factors involved. In particular, previous inspections of social care have indicated that thresholds are correct and children are placed in care appropriately.

What are we doing about it?

We are responding to this rise in numbers in a range of ways. Firstly there is a strong focus on wider preventative support and services through children's

trust arrangements and the associated growth in parent and family support services and improved assessment and early identification. Secondly work is underway within social care to improve information on children in need, particularly around unaccompanied asylum seekers.

Enjoy and Achieve

Key Issue: GCSE results

Why is it important?

GCSE results have seen sustained and significant improvement in standards over recent years, so that 2006 was the first year where over half of students in Leeds gained 5 or more grades A*-C. However, despite this improvement results are still below target and the national average. In addition results for vulnerable groups continue to be an area for development because, despite improvement, there remains a significant gap for many young people, as can be seen in the figures for Looked After Children. Lastly, measures of the progress made between Key Stages (value added) remains weak, in part because schools have focused on pupils at the borderline between grades C and D. Attainment is vital for young people in ensuring progression *to further work and learning and its role in determining future life chances*

What are we doing about it?

Secondary standards continue to be a key focus for schools, the authority, Education Leeds and partners. There are a wide range of programmes working to provide schools with support and challenge, from the work of the National Strategies team to the use of experienced headteachers as School Improvement Partners, to the No Child Left Behind programme that is developing collaborative networks of schools to support inclusion. Over the next year new projects will include: the Achievement for All initiative that will provide targeted support for schools facing the most significant challenges, the Personalisation Programme that will develop more tailored support for individual learners and lastly the recruitment and work of a headteacher to better coordinate support for Looked After Children within a 'virtual school'.

1.1 Key Issue: Attendance

Why is this important?

Attendance is important because it is one of the main statutory targets for schools as well as central and local government. Attendance is important because it is a proxy measure of each learner's engagement and enjoyment of school, as well as the support and commitment of parents and lastly the focus and effectiveness of schools. Attendance at school is important to children and young people because not only is it vital if they are to learn but also to ensure that they are in a safe environment and away from behaviours that could put themselves or others at risk.

What are we doing about it?

Education Leeds is working in close partnership not just with local schools but also with the DfES because of the challenges faced in Leeds as in many other big cities. Feedback from the DfES is very positive about the range and efficacy of the Attendance Strategy, and monitoring has shown a very positive impact on targeted schools. However, as can be seen from the data, attendance fell overall in the 2005/06 year, mainly due to a decline in attendance in schools not previously targeted by the Strategy. After a resultant review there has been agreement to enhance the local strategy with improved partnership working between attendance teams, wider school improvement services and networks of schools in order to share expertise and develop more capacity across the city.

Make a Positive Contribution

1.1.1 Key issue: Youth Services Outcomes

1.1.2 Why is this important?

Engaging young people through the youth service is important in providing positive opportunities within their communities. The recent Best Value survey and consultation for the Children and Young People's Plan emphasised that activities for young people was an important issue for young people, parents as well as the wider community. Accredited activities through youth provision are important to provide structure and achievement for young people and to support wider learning within school.

However, as the attached figures show, there is a high degree of uncertainty at present over the performance of the service due to weaknesses in management information. This was raised at inspection in 2004.

1.1.3 What are we doing about it?

The Youth Service is working with corporate services to address these weaknesses through priority work to improve data quality and procure and implement a new management information system.

Achieve Economic Wellbeing

No issues for comment on current performance report.