



Report of the Director of Children's Services

Scrutiny Board (Children's Services)

Date: 14 December 2006

Subject: Children's Services Performance and Inspection and Children and Young People's Plan Review

Electoral Wards Affected:

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

1 Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the performance and inspection of children's services and sets out proposals for continuing this work through updating the Children and Young People's Plan and preparing for the Joint Area Review inspection.

2 Background

- 2.1 The first Leeds Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) was published earlier this year. The plan replaces many earlier statutory plans and now forms the overall citywide strategy for improving outcomes for children and young people for all local services and partners. The plan was developed with strong input from children and young people and from across the Children Leeds partnership, and runs from 2006-2009. Government guidance recommends an annual review and update process.
- 2.2 Children's services are monitored and by central government, OfSTED and other inspectorates. The main processes for this include:
- Annual Performance Assessment (APA): an annual process of self-evaluation that is then considered by inspectors and used to provide an overall grading for the effectiveness of local services. This process produces the 'APA letter' that provides the gradings for services and a summary and commentary on performance and management. The overall grade for children's services is then used to contribute to the overall council Comprehensive Performance Assessment rating

- DfES Priorities Meeting: an annual meeting between DfES, OfSTED and the authority that reviews the output of the APA process and other information such as school exam results to agree priorities for each local authority's children's services.
- Joint Area Review (JAR): a three yearly inspection that will focus on areas of underperformance highlighted in the APA, and on outcomes for vulnerable groups of young people such as those Looked After by the authority. For Leeds the Joint Area Review will be in 2007, with an on-site inspection for two weeks from December 3rd.

2.3 It is important to note that DfES, OfSTED and other inspectorates are currently reviewing the respective role and processes for APA and JAR. This has not yet been finalised but more guidance is expected by Christmas.

3 The APA Letter

3.1 The Leeds APA Letter was published on 1st November and is attached as Appendix A to this report. The letter gives a grading in line with the new OfSTED descriptors:

Grade	Service descriptor	Capacity to improve descriptor
4	A service that delivers well above minimum requirements for users	Excellent / outstanding
3	A service that consistently delivers above minimum requirements for users	Good
2	A service that delivers only minimum requirements for users	Adequate
1	A service that does not deliver minimum requirements for users	Inadequate

The gradings for Leeds were all '3', as shown in the table below.

Areas for judgement	Grade awarded
The contribution of the local authority's children's services in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people	3
The council's overall capacity to improve its services for children and young people	3
The contribution of the local authority's social care services in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people	3

3.3 In addition to the overall grades the APA letter provides a commentary on service delivery and management, and sets out key strengths and areas for improvement, as shown in the table below.

Key strengths	Key areas for improvement
<p>Being healthy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • joint commissioning arrangements • community based health services through schools and children's centres • prompt referrals for young offenders manifesting acute and non-acute mental health difficulties • schools enabling learners to be healthy. 	<p>Being healthy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduce the incidence of teenage pregnancy • improve the access of young offenders to substance misuse assessment and intervention services.
<p>Staying safe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • robust and well embedded case file audit system • social worker allocation to children on the register and looked after children • effective child protection registration system reflected in reviews, duration on the register and repeat referral rates • stable placements for most looked after children • good transition planning for children with disabilities • schools ensuring learners stay safe. 	<p>Staying safe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improve the timeliness of reviews for looked after children • improve the completion of core assessment within prescribed timescales • all residential care provision fully meeting the national minimum standards.
<p>Enjoying and achieving:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • early years provision • number of schools causing concern • range of innovative ideas to tackle weaknesses in attendance. 	<p>Enjoying and achieving:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • attainment at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 • reduce the levels of unauthorized absence.
<p>Making a positive contribution:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • innovative ways of engaging young people to encourage them to participate and contribute to planning processes • minimise the risk of looked after young people offending • year-on-year increases in the proportion of young people reached through publicly funded youth services. 	<p>Making a positive contribution:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the engagement of looked after children in their reviews.
<p>Achieving economic well-being:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • childcare regeneration services that enabled parents to receive training and employment • support offered to care leavers • opportunities in school to prepare for future well-being • development of a robust 14 to 19 strategy. 	<p>Achieving economic well-being:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improve attainment levels for 14 to 19 year-olds.
<p>Management of children's services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clarity of vision and innovative approach to council structure • needs analysis to improve services • approaches to workforce planning and development. 	<p>Management of children's services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • none

3.3 Lastly the letter identified areas for consideration in the Joint Area Review, listed below:

- Effectiveness of the directorate structure to deliver the agenda of Every Child Matters.
- Effectiveness of the contraception and sexual health services for young people.
- Effectiveness of measures to raise attainment at Key Stages 3 and 4.
- Success of the programme to reduce unauthorised absence.
- Actions taken on the outcomes of the 14 to 19 strategy reviews.

4 The DfES Priorities Meeting

- 4.1 The Priorities Meeting between DfES representatives and senior managers from Leeds took place in early November. The meeting considered the APA letter and also input from other recent meetings between the Council and government agencies that had considered social care, school standards and 14-19 learning. The discussion was used to agree a set of priorities for partners in Leeds for the next year.
- 4.2 The priorities agreed at the meeting were based closely on the areas for improvement identified in the APA letter but also included the following additional issues:
- Dental services for children and young people
 - Wider attainment issues from Foundation Stage (age 5) to Key Stage 4, particularly for Looked After Children and Black and Minority Ethnic pupils

5 Next steps

- 5.1 The APA and Priorities Meeting have already been valuable in bringing local and national partners together to evaluate performance and agree priorities for improvement. The next steps are to: ensure areas of underperformance are being addressed; to include the feedback in work to review and update the Leeds Children and Young People's Plan; and lastly to integrate all this work into preparation for the Joint Area Review inspection of children's services in the city.
- 5.2 In order to do this we propose to spend the next six months working with local services and partners on the following tasks. This work will help to develop better planning and services in Leeds, and at the same time help prepare for the inspection in December next year.
- **Improving services and service management:** The APA letter and DfES Priorities Meeting produced a set of priorities for improvement, and agreed the actions local partners would undertake to address them. Many of these are already included in the CYPP and service plans but where they are additional they will be included in the revised CYPP and the JAR project plan.
 - **Updating the needs analysis:** this will include two main elements – firstly using commissioned research and local reviews to examine individual case files. This will help us to better identify gaps in provision and highlight poor practice and shared working. Secondly we will undertake more extensive detailed data

analysis, bringing together data from across services and analysing outcomes for different areas of the city and different groups of children and young people. This will help us to further improve understanding of outcomes, and will help planning and service delivery within the wedge partnerships.

- **Participation:** last year's work for the CYPP involved thousands of young people and hundreds of parents, carers and staff in developing the plan. We will build on this work with an online survey for pupils in schools that will include questions from across the five Every Child Matters outcomes, and also with more detailed work with children and young people around local priorities, focusing on what they think are the priorities for addressing the problems we face. We will also work with local services, partners and Elected Members over the forthcoming months to engage them in this work.
- **Undertaking a more detailed evaluation of progress and impact in the CYPP:** Children's services now has an emerging shared performance management framework, and we will further embed this during the next two quarters of the financial year to engage partners in robust monitoring and evaluation of the plan. We will work with the corporate performance team to provide this information to the Board in the spring.
- **Updating the action plan in the Children and Young People's Plan:** In light of the discussions and processes above we will review the action plans in the CYPP by April and update them where necessary.
- **Developing specific action plans for the most vulnerable groups:** National research raised concerns that children's plans were not sufficiently clear or detailed about how authorities would improve outcomes for the most vulnerable children and young people, such as those in need of safeguarding, those in care, or those in the most deprived communities. This reflects local concerns and the agreed priorities for improvement in Leeds, so therefore we intend to include more detailed action plans specifically for vulnerable groups in the next plan.
- **Publishing a formal review and update of the Children and Young People's Plan:** At the end of this process we will publish a formal review and update of the plan which will summarise how we have progressed against the targets and key actions of the CYPP in the past year, and will set out the revised action plans for the next year. This should be complete by May.

5.3 In order to involve members in this process we propose to ask for input, comment and approval at regular stages over the next six months. This will include:

- **Scrutiny December 2006:** Update on performance and priorities. Consultation on process and next steps.
- **Members workshop December 2006:** Interactive session to update members on the CYPP and JAR
- **Members' workshop February 2007:** Follow up session that will consider each member's input on the issues for children and young people in their ward. Will also include consideration of the developing CYPP draft
- **Scrutiny February 2007:** Detailed session to consider member and partnership input and the developing CYPP draft
- **April/May 2007:** Formal approval of the CYPP review and updated action plan.

Please note that the timescales above may be subject to change, depending on the implications of the revised guidance for children's services inspection and planning from central government.

6 Recommendations

6.1 Scrutiny Board are asked to:

- Comment on the issues raised by the APA letter
- Comment on the proposed next steps for reviewing the plan and preparing for inspection