



Report of the Director of Children's Services

Executive Board

15th December 2010

Ofsted's Annual Children's Services Assessment for Leeds

Electoral Wards Affected:

Ward Members consulted
(referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Eligible for call-in



Not eligible for call-in



Executive Summary

1. This report presents members with the letter that details Ofsted's 2010 Annual Assessment for Children's Services in Leeds. The letter is attached at appendix 1. The report provides brief background on the methodology and criteria for the assessment. It provides some very brief analysis of the assessment and the content of the letter, linking in with the Children's Services Improvement Update report which is also on the Executive Board's 15th December agenda.
2. The report asks members to note the full content of the letter in the context of the wider change and improvement work taking place in children's services.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Executive Board:

- (i) Note the content of the annual assessment letter attached at appendix 1 and the recognition within it of both our continuing challenges and areas of progress and achievement.
- (ii) Recognise the ongoing work, as reported separately to Executive Board, to deliver a range of improvements in children's services and ultimately better safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

1.0 Purpose Of This Report

- 1.1 This report presents members with the letter that details Ofsted's 2010 Annual Assessment for Children's Services in Leeds. The letter is attached at appendix 1. The report asks members to note the full content of the letter in the context of the wider change and improvement work taking place in children's services (and reported separately on the Executive Board agenda).

2.0 Background Information

- 2.1 An annual Ofsted performance assessment for children's services in each local authority has been published for a number of years. However the information and criteria that is used to inform this assessment has been modified somewhat during this time to reflect feedback, changes in Ofsted's wider inspection processes, changing requirements and expectations from government and the shifting national context in relation to children's services.
- 2.2 Ofsted published its most recent guidance relating to this assessment in July 2010. The guidance sets out how the annual assessment is based on the performance profile for each area. The performance profile brings together a summary of all the inspections and regulations that Ofsted has carried out on children's services and settings within a local area. This includes a wide range of providers including schools, colleges, children's centres, childminders and residential homes. It also includes specific parts of a service, such as fostering and adoption, as well overall service areas and responsibilities, such as the unannounced and announced inspections looking at safeguarding. It includes any serious case reviews that have been submitted for evaluation. Effectively, everything that Ofsted inspects where the local authority has strategic or operational responsibilities, either alone or in partnership with others.
- 2.3 The assessment is weighted in favour of the areas listed above, but in addition the assessment also draws on data from relevant indicators in the national indicator set.
- 2.4 Using this information, Ofsted will determine that the local authority receives one of four ratings, either:

4	Performs excellently	An organisation that significantly exceeds minimum requirements
3	Performs well	An organisation that exceeds minimum requirements
2	Performs adequately	An organisation that meets only minimum requirements
1	Performs poorly	An organisation that does not meet minimum requirements

- 2.5 Within its guidance, Ofsted includes a number of assessment principles, these guide the judgement that Ofsted can make by setting out how certain inspection outcomes must equate to the overall rating given. This is particularly important this year in the context of the assessment for Leeds, as discussed below.

3.0 Main Issues

- 3.1 The 2010 Annual Assessment was published on 9th December 2010. This year Leeds has been assessed as performing poorly. This assessment reflects ongoing concern about the need to make some key improvements in Leeds and the continuing challenge we face. However, this assessment needs to be understood in the context of the criteria Ofsted uses to make its judgment and the balanced picture of both achievement and areas for improvement discussed in the narrative of the assessment letter.
- 3.2 Within the assessment principles in its July 2010 guidance, Ofsted states that when a local authority has had an announced, or unannounced inspection of safeguarding, then where the announced inspection has found services to be 'inadequate', or the unannounced inspection has found one or more 'area for priority action', the local authority can be assessed as no better than 'performing poorly'. Ofsted will base this judgment on the last announced/unannounced inspection to have taken place.
- 3.3 Leeds' unannounced inspection (in July 2009) did identify two priority areas for action, whilst the announced inspection (in November/December 2009) found overall safeguarding to be inadequate. This has therefore limited the assessment Ofsted can make to 'performs poorly'. However, both these inspections took place in 2009 and as members know well from other reports to Executive Board, during 2010 a significant amount of work has been done to address the issues highlighted in those inspections. This work has been monitored closely by an independently chaired Improvement Board, which reports regularly on progress to the government. The feedback from the Improvement Board has consistently been that Leeds is moving in the right direction in terms of addressing its challenges.
- 3.4 The Improvement Board and Children's Services recognise that there is still much to do to improve key aspects of safeguarding and child protection services and that more focus is needed to improve outcomes in a number of other important areas. Nevertheless, progress has been made, notably against two national performance indicators relating to the safeguarding of children. It is important that recognition of this progress accompanies understandable concern about the continuing challenges services face.
- 3.5 The Annual Assessment letter recognises that our score is shaped by the limiting judgments that must apply because of our last unannounced and announced inspections. The letter then goes on to state that 'a large majority of types of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or better'.
- 3.6 There are a mixture of positives and challenges throughout the rest of the letter, critically three key areas for further development are highlighted:
- ▶ Improve the quality of safeguarding.
 - ▶ Improve secondary schools and sixth forms so that more are good or better.
 - ▶ Increase the number of young people from low-income families who achieve well at the ages of 16 and 19.
- 3.7 Children's Services will work to address these through our ongoing improvement activity and through the outcomes and priorities we are developing that sit under our vision of becoming a child friendly city (details reported separately to Executive Board). More widely we will use the letter to inform planning and prioritisation of activity into 2011.

- 3.8 Importantly, in terms of prospects for improvement the letter acknowledges that Leeds has undergone a number of changes this year that aim to further support continuing progress.
- 3.9 Overall the content of the letter is an important measure of service standards in Leeds at the current time and we take extremely seriously the need to draw on this learning to focus efforts and take services forward in the right areas.
- 3.10 The government has indicated on a number of occasions, including within its recent Education White Paper, that it intends to review the inspection regime for children's services. It is unclear therefore whether the Annual Assessment letter in its current form will remain in place.

4.0 Implications For Council Policy And Governance

- 4.1 Improvements in children's services are already a priority for the Council and the city. This assessment emphasises the importance of maintaining this focus. The assessment outcomes will be used to inform the planning of the new Children and Young People's Plan, due for completion by spring 2011.

5.0 Legal And Resource Implications

- 5.1 There are no specific legal or resource implications from this report.

6.0 Conclusions

- 6.1 The annual children's services assessment for Leeds this year highlights the continuing challenges that we face, but acknowledges that progress has been made. We are determined to move forward positively from this position and it is encouraging therefore that the content of the letter recognises the progress that has been made and the opportunities for further improvement. We will continue building on the work to deliver against our improvement plan and the wider transformation taking place to ensure that in future we deliver improved outcomes across the range of areas that Ofsted have highlighted.

7.0 Recommendations

- 7.1 It is recommended that Executive Board:
- (iii) Note the content of the annual assessment letter attached at appendix 1 and the recognition within it of both our continuing challenges and areas of progress and achievement.
 - (iv) Recognise the ongoing work, as reported separately to Executive Board, to deliver a range of improvements in children's services and ultimately better safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

Background Papers

Children's Services Assessment for 2010: Ofsted Guidance (published July 2010)

Children's Services Improvement Update Report: Executive Board (15.12.10)