

Report of the Director of Children's Services

Report to Executive Board

Date: 14th December 2011

Subject: The Ofsted Annual Assessment of Children's Services in Leeds

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

1. This report presents the findings of Ofsted's Annual Assessment of Children's Services in Leeds. The Assessment is reported in the form of a letter to the local authority, which was published on the Ofsted website on the 8th November 2011 and is attached as appendix 1 to this covering report.
2. The Annual Assessment does not relate to one specific inspection, but is derived from the performance profile of the quality of services for children and young people in each local area. This performance profile includes findings from across all Ofsted's inspections and regulation of services and settings for which the local authority has strategic or operational responsibilities, either alone or in partnership with others, together with other published data.
3. This year Leeds has been assessed as 'performing adequately'. Following the positive outcome of the announced re-inspection of safeguarding in Leeds (reported to Executive Board on 12th October) this is another significant milestone highlighting the improvements made since children's services was rated 'performs poorly' in the Annual Assessment in 2010.
4. This assessment mirrors the view of the Children's Services Improvement Board and our own self assessment work by indicating that Leeds Children's Services are moving forward positively and making the improvements needed, but with still much more to do to reach the consistently high standards of service we want for all our children and young people. As such this assessment provides a further building block in creating the confidence and recognition of progress within the service to enable us to continue our improvement.

5. This assessment also has wider implications as it will be an important contributing factor to the Department for Education's (DfE) judgement as to how Leeds is performing against the Improvement Notice placed on Children's Services early in 2010. Discussions about the status of this Improvement Notice along with the ongoing role of the Improvement Board are currently taking place and more information will be shared with members as this becomes known.

Recommendations

6. Members are recommended to note and consider the content of the Ofsted Annual Assessment letter attached at appendix 1 and to support the ongoing improvement work taking place across the service.

1.0 Purpose of this report

1.1 This report presents the findings of Ofsted's Annual Assessment of Children's Services in Leeds. The Assessment is reported in the form of a letter to the local authority, which was published on the Ofsted website on the 8th November 2011 and is attached as appendix 1 to this covering report.

2.0 Background information

2.1 In line with their guidance published in April 2011, Ofsted produce an Annual Assessment for Children's Services in each local authority across the country. These assessments have been published annually for several years. This year the format of the annual assessment letter has changed because some of the evidence that previous letters were drawn from is no longer available or no longer statutory, such as the National Indicator Set and the Children and Young People's Plan. As such, this year the assessment letter is based principally on the Ofsted local authority performance profile (discussed below) and on the following sources of evidence:

- Notes of Ofsted link HMI visits
- Information from substantiated complaints received by Ofsted, including through whistleblowing.
- Judgements and evidence from Ofsted assessments, inspection, monitoring Visits and surveys
- Inspection evidence from the other inspectorates, for example, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation inspections of youth offending services
- Information from the local authority website, for example, local scrutiny reports, consultation arrangements, any recent review and/or any existing self-evaluation
- Information from local authorities on services commissioned from private and voluntary sector providers.

2.2 The performance profile has been used as the key measurement tool for annual assessments by Ofsted since 2009, the profile is drawn from all the inspections of settings and services that Ofsted carry out during a year, along with key performance information. There are three 'blocks' to the profile:

- Block A: inspected services, settings and institutions – including schools and colleges, children's centres, childcare providers and children's homes.
- Block B: safeguarding and looked after children inspections; unannounced inspections of contact, referral and assessment arrangements; inspection of private fostering arrangements; and evaluation of serious case reviews
- Block C: the impact indicators and other published data

2.3 Within this profile Ofsted give particular weighting to those inspections in block B and especially to the unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements and the announced inspection (or re-inspection) of safeguarding and looked after children's services. These usually act as limiting judgements on the annual assessment outcomes (as was the case in Leeds in 2010), which is why the

improvements made in the unannounced and announced inspections carried out in Leeds this year are so important in this context.

3.0 Main issues

3.1 This year Leeds has been assessed as 'performing adequately'. This is a positive development since 2010 when Leeds was assessed as 'performs poorly'. However, it also indicates that there is still much development and improvement work still to be done. Leeds has a clear ambition to become a child friendly city and this means providing more services that are consistently rated as outstanding.

3.2 The overall tone of the assessment letter is positive. Ofsted note that in Leeds *'the majority of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or better. The very large majority of provision supports children and young people well in staying safe and the large majority helps them to enjoy their learning'*.

3.3 Drawing on Ofsted inspection reports previously published, the letter also notes that:

- Arrangements to ensure children are safeguarded are now secure.
- The large majority of early years and childcare provision is good or better.
- The local authority has been effective in helping to bring about improvement in schools in Ofsted categories of concern.
- Behaviour in secondary schools continues to improve well.
- The very large majority of special schools are good or better.
- The local fostering and adoption agencies are good.
- The large majority of the provision that Leeds commissions in children's homes outside its own settings is good or better.
- The number of young people from low-income families achieving qualifications at the age of 16 and by the age of 19 has improved well.

3.4 However, in highlighting the opportunities for further improvement the Annual Assessment letter also highlights several areas that require further improvement and these include:

- Addressing the ongoing challenges highlighted in the announced re-inspection of safeguarding around quality of assessment and recording, timescales for child protection conferences, better use of the Common Assessment Framework and better information sharing arrangements in relation to domestic violence incidents.
- Making sure that more of our secondary schools, sixth forms and further education colleges are rated as good, or better in their future inspections.
- Reducing the amount of persistent absence in schools.
- Increasing the pace of improvement in educational attainment to bring Leeds closer to other places across the country.
- Improving the quality of our children's homes.

3.5 For each of these issues there is work already underway in Leeds to help us address the challenges and deliver the ambitions of the Children and Young People's Plan: an action plan that sets out how we will respond to the issues raised in the announced inspection; the Leeds Education Challenge to drive our shared

improvement agenda with schools; and a review underway to improve the quality of residential home provision for children in care in Leeds.

- 3.6 The assessment letter has been shared with all children's services staff and partners across the city.

Wider Considerations: Children's Services Improvement Notice

- 3.7 As discussed briefly in the improvement update report submitted to Executive Board in November 2011, this Ofsted assessment also has wider implications as it will be an important contributing factor to the Department for Education's (DfE) judgement as to how Leeds is performing against the Improvement Notice placed on Children's Services early in 2010. Discussions about the status of this Improvement Notice along with the ongoing role of the Improvement Board are currently taking place and more information will be shared with members as this becomes known.

4.0 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

- 4.1.1 There are no specific considerations under this heading.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

- 4.2.1 There are no specific considerations under this heading.

4.3 Council Policies and City Priorities

- 4.3.1 Improvements in children's services and particularly in services for vulnerable children and young people are a key priority for the city as reflected in key plans. This assessment is therefore an important measure of progress in this area that will shape the future prioritisation and direction of travel for this work.

4.4 Resources and Value for Money

- 4.4.1 There are no specific resource implications to this report, other than to note that the Council's investment in safeguarding services has played an important part in contributing to the improvements that have informed this assessment.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

- 4.5.1 There are no specific considerations under this heading.

4.6 Risk Management

- 4.6.1 There are no specific considerations under this heading.

5.0 Conclusions

- 5.1 The Council and its partners have invested significant focus and resource on making improvement across children's services since 2009. This assessment reflects positively on the impact made by that work and focus, but also highlights

that there is still more to do to reach the consistently high standards we want across services for children and young people in Leeds. Following on from the unannounced and announced inspection outcomes this year the assessment provides the basis for the continuing improvement that the service is looking to make into 2012 and beyond.

6.0 Recommendations

- 6.1 Members are recommended to note and consider the content of the Ofsted Annual Assessment letter attached at appendix 1 and to support the ongoing improvement work taking place across the service.

7.0 Background documents

- 7.1 Children's Services Assessment for 2011: Ofsted Arrangements and Guidance – published April 2011 and available on the Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk
- 7.2 Children's Services Improvement Arrangements – report to Executive Board, 10th March 2010.
- 7.3 Children's Services Improvement Update Report – Executive Board 2nd November 2011.