

# Public Document Pack

## **Late Item for 15<sup>th</sup> December 2010 Executive Board**

Agenda Item 20 – Ofsted's Annual Children's Service Assessment for Leeds

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Originator: Adam Hewitt

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**Report of the Director of Children's Services**

**Executive Board**

15<sup>th</sup> 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 15<sup>th</sup> 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 9<sup>th</sup> 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)

9 December 2010

Mr Nigel Richardson  
Director of Children's Services  
Leeds City Council  
6th Floor, East Merrion House  
110 Merrion Centre  
Leeds, West Yorkshire LS2 8DT

Dear Mr Richardson

## **Annual children's services assessment**

Ofsted guidance published in July 2010 explains that the annual assessment of children's services is derived from the performance profile of the quality of services and outcomes for children and young people in each local area. This performance profile includes findings from across Ofsted's inspection 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 data from the relevant indicators in the National Indicator Set (NIS).

In reaching the assessment of children's services, Ofsted has taken account of all inspected and regulated services for children and young people, arrangements for making sure children are safe and stay safe and performance against national measures. More weight has been given to the outcomes of Ofsted's inspections and regulatory visits (Blocks A and B in the performance profile).

The annual assessment derives from a four point scale:

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

Within each level there will be differing standards of provision. For example, an assessment of 'performs excellently' does not mean all aspects of provision are perfect. Similarly, an assessment of 'performs poorly' does not mean there are no adequate or even good aspects. As in 2009, while the performance profile remains central to Ofsted's assessment, meeting or not meeting the minimum requirements alone does not define the grade. The assessment has involved the application of inspector judgement.

## Leeds City Council children's services assessment 2010

<b>Children's services assessment</b>	<b>Performs poorly (1)</b>
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Children's services in Leeds City Council perform poorly.

Following an unannounced inspection of front-line child protection services which identified two areas for priority action, children's services were judged to be inadequate in 2009. A full inspection of safeguarding arrangements and provision for looked after children subsequently took place. This found that the overall effectiveness of services to ensure children and young people were safe was inadequate with provision for looked after children rated as adequate. The judgement of inadequate for overall effectiveness in safeguarding from this inspection is applied as a limiting judgement to the children's services assessment. As no other inspection has taken place in the intervening period since November 2009, this judgement stands and must therefore limit the annual assessment to performs poorly.

A large majority of types of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or better. All three domestic childcare settings and five of the six special schools are good or better and the sixth form college is outstanding. Around two-thirds of primary schools and local authority children's homes are good. Secondary schools, school sixth forms and further education colleges do not do as well. Not enough of these settings are good and a few are inadequate. The local fostering and adoption agencies are both good.

National performance measures show the large majority of outcomes are in line with the averages for England or for similar areas. Results in national tests and examinations are in line with similar areas for children at the end of the Reception year and for 11- and 16-year-olds. The gaps in achievement between children and young people who come from low-income families and their peers remain too wide at both the age of 11 and 16. Nineteen-year-olds from low-income families in Leeds do not gain as many qualifications as those from similar backgrounds across the country.

### Key areas for further development

- 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.

## **Outcomes for children and young people**

Ofsted's inspections show that most services and settings successfully promote healthy lifestyles. However, some inconsistencies in health outcomes remain in the local area. Good outcomes are seen in the increasing numbers of mothers who are still breast-feeding their babies after six weeks. Similarly, a growing number of young people think their parks and playgrounds are good. Children in care receive timely support for their emotional and mental health needs but there is still more work to do to improve services for all children and young people with these difficulties. The number of children who are too overweight at the ages of five and 11 has risen faster than in similar areas. The number of young women under the age of 18 who become pregnant is still not reducing and this is a key priority for improvement in the local area.

The full inspection of safeguarding arrangements and provision for looked after children judged the overall effectiveness of safeguarding to be inadequate and identified a number of areas for development. These included improving the timeliness and quality of social work responses for assessments, case planning and recording. However, the good contribution of Education Leeds to the broad safeguarding agenda was acknowledged as was the good engagement of health partners. It was also noted that the local authority had recently undertaken significant work to prioritise improvements in front-line child protection services. Since this inspection, significant activity has taken place and reports to the Improvement Board by the local authority show better performance against some of the areas for improvement, including the timeliness of social care assessments. Ofsted's inspections of schools show that arrangements for keeping children and young people safe are mostly good. Hospital admissions are high and continue to rise. Services for children who have run away from home or overnight care have not been developing as fast as services nationally, although recent data show improvement. Feedback from children and young people indicates that Leeds continues to have low and decreasing levels of bullying.

Domestic child carers and the sixth form college are good at helping children and young people to do well and enjoy their learning. This is also true of the local authority's children's homes and local fostering and adoption agencies. Although inspections show most primary schools do well in this area, the number not reaching the expected standards rose in 2009. The local authority reports this number has reduced in 2010. Provision in pupil referral units and special schools is almost always good. Leeds has a large number of satisfactory secondary schools and sixth forms but too few are good or better. Pupils in their Reception year at school achieve at a comparable level to their peers in similar areas with a good improvement in standards in 2009. At the end of primary school and at the age of 16 attainment is comparable to that seen elsewhere although, by 2009, improvement had not been as fast as that of similar areas. Pupils from a number of minority ethnic groups do not do as well as others at the ages of both 11 and 16. However, the achievement of children in the care of the local authority shows good improvement at both the age of 11 and 16. Behaviour in secondary schools has improved considerably over the last three years, particularly in 2009. However, the number of secondary school

pupils who are often absent from school, while declining, remains higher than the national average and is a local priority for improvement.

The local area has a range of ways in which children and young people are involved in planning services. These include specific contributions to sexual health and anti-bullying work. Most services and settings are good at involving young people in decision-making and activity in their communities. Re-offending by young people in Leeds is worse than in similar areas although by most measures the youth offending service works reasonably well and was judged to have excellent capacity for improvement in its last published inspection. The number of young people who are offending for the first-time has reduced well over time. There has been a recent significant reduction in the number of young people involved in the court process who receive a custodial sentence. However, this number remains higher than in similar areas. More young people who offend have access to suitable housing than previously but this is not improving as fast as the national rate.

Most services and settings promote children and young people's future economic well-being reasonably well. Not all young people do as well as they can at the age of 19, particularly those from low-income families, although there has been steady improvement in gaining five good GCSEs or equivalent qualifications by this age. The number of 17-year-olds in school, college or other forms of training has improved but remains below that of similar areas. Local services have had good success in reducing the number of 16- to 18-year-olds not in education, employment or training. While recent data show a fall in the numbers of care leavers in education, employment or training this figure remains similar to that found nationally. The number of care leavers in Leeds who are given a suitable place to live when they leave care has fallen and is a focus for improvement in the local authority.

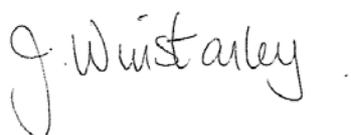
### **Prospects for improvement**

Leadership of children's services has undergone a number of changes over the last year. These include the appointment of both a new director of children's services from September 2010 and a new independent chair of the Local Safeguarding Children Board as well as significant changes to the leadership and functioning of the Children's Trust Board. The inspection of safeguarding and services for looked after children in 2009 identified some key weaknesses. These included shortfalls in staffing levels, safeguarding procedures and leadership and management, notably a lack of effective leadership from the Local Children Safeguarding Board and insufficient challenge from all key bodies. However, it judged that the local authority had adequate capacity to improve in this important area of work despite a variable track record of delivering improvement. Inspectors noted the strong corporate steer for improvement from the lead member and the then current chief executive. The recently appointed new chief executive and the new leader of the council have continued to provide strong corporate support. The local area's review of its Children and Young People's Plan sets out how priorities have to be delivered alongside the Children's Services Improvement Plan. It is clear about the work that still has to be done to improve services and acknowledges the pressures of recruitment and retention of social care staff. It is also clear about the priority to narrow gaps in

achievement. An improvement board providing external scrutiny and reporting to the Secretary of State has supported this work and notes that progress is being made as well as significant challenges remaining. Ofsted's monitoring visits to weaker schools show that the local authority is doing good work to help them get better. However, in addition to the major task of improving safeguarding, continued effort is needed to further improve the quality of secondary schools, school sixth forms and further education colleges as well as to improve outcomes for children and young people from low-income families and from a range of minority ethnic groups.

This children's services assessment is provided in accordance with section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Juliet Winstanley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Juliet Winstanley  
Divisional Manager, Children's Services Assessment

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