



Report of the Director of Children's Services

Executive Board

Date: 11th June 2008

Subject: Leeds Joint Area Review

Electoral Wards Affected:

All

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

(Details contained in the report)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.0 This report provides an update on the Joint Area Review (JAR) which took place in November and December 2007. The report was published on May 6th 2008. The inspection resulted in a positive report being published, with the judgements relating very closely to Leeds' own self assessment of performance. There is a formal requirement to prepare an action plan relating to the ten recommendations which are made in the report. Progress on the implementation of the action plan will be monitored by Government Office, and it will be factored in to the considerations of performance in the Annual Performance Assessment. The action plan will be reflected in the Children and Young People's Plan, and in the relevant Service Improvement Plans.

RECOMMENDATIONS

2.0 It is recommended that Executive Board:

- Note the outcome of the Joint Area Review and the actions now to be undertaken as a result of the review.
- Receive the JAR Action Plan at their meeting in July 2008.

1.0 Purpose Of This Report

1.1 To advise members of the outcome of the inspection and of the formal requirements on actions arising from the inspection.

2.0 Background Information

2.1 A three year programme of Joint Area Reviews is taking place between 2006 and 2009, with each Local Authority Area being subject to one JAR during the three year cycle. The JAR is linked to the Corporate Assessment (CA), and the outcome of the JAR forms the Children and Young People's block of the CA.

2.2 The JAR is a joint inspection of all publicly funded service provision in the local area, including those external to the Local Authority, and the inspection team is therefore drawn from a range of inspectorates, led by Ofsted.

2.3 Every JAR has a core of investigation areas which are scored on a 1-4 basis, where 1 is inadequate, 2 is adequate, 3 is good and 4 is excellent. The scored elements are :-

- Safeguarding
- Looked After Children (LAC)
- Children with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities (LDD)
- Service Management
- Capacity to Improve

2.4 In addition to these core elements, up to three additional areas of investigation can be added. In Leeds' JAR, two areas were added, these were :-

- Child and Adolescent Mental health Services (CAMHS)
- The impact of the 14–19 strategy in improving outcomes for young people

These additional elements are given a separate grade (inadequate, adequate, good or excellent) but these grades are not counted in the overall grading.

3.0 Outcome of the inspection

3.1 The grades awarded in the JAR were as follows:-

	Local services overall
Safeguarding	2
Looked after children	2
Learning difficulties and/or disabilities	3
Service management	3
Capacity to improve	3

- CAMHS Services were graded as 'Good'.
- 14-19 was graded as 'Adequate'

3.2 The ratings for children and young people’s services which this review fed into the Corporate Assessment were as follows:-

- Outcomes for Children and Young People – Good
- Be Healthy – Good
- Stay Safe – Adequate
- Enjoy and Achieve – Good
- Make a Positive Contribution – Good
- Achieve Economic Wellbeing - Adequate
- Service Management – Good
- Capacity to Improve - Good

3.3 The report identified key strengths and areas for development under each section. These were:-

Safeguarding

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Good collaborative work to develop local preventive safeguarding procedures.</p> <p>Effective single point of contact for social care enquiries and referrals – Contact Leeds.</p> <p>A high proportion of initial assessments undertaken.</p> <p>Effective accident reduction programme.</p> <p>The quality of, and access to, safeguarding training.</p>	<p>The quality of some assessments undertaken by social workers.</p> <p>Some core assessments and child protection conferences do not happen within the agreed timescales.</p> <p>The computer system does not ensure a secure audit trail of entries made.</p>

Looked After Children

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Good placement stability that is contributing well to improving outcomes.</p> <p>High quality support for carers and professionals.</p> <p>Successful early intervention programmes to prevent family breakdown.</p> <p>Good work with young unaccompanied asylum seekers.</p> <p>Good accommodation, support and re-engagement by care leavers at age 19.</p>	<p>Poor participation of looked after children in their reviews.</p> <p>The increasing number of fixed-term exclusions.</p> <p>The relatively high proportion not in education, employment or training at age 16 and 17.</p>

Children and Young People with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Good strategic plan for inclusion that is being well implemented.</p> <p>Good access for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to mainstream provision.</p> <p>Strong child-centred practice.</p> <p>Several examples of well-targeted work producing good outcomes for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.</p> <p>Low numbers of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities permanently excluded.</p>	<p>No comprehensive register of children with a disability.</p> <p>The variable quality of some respite care.</p>

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>High priority given to mental health and emotional well-being by all agencies.</p> <p>Well-established and very effective multi-agency approach to CAMHS.</p> <p>Good CAMHS strategy.</p> <p>Development of locally based services resulting in improved access.</p>	<p>No plan in place to address the changing needs caused by demographic change.</p>

The impact of the 14-19 strategy on improving outcomes for young people

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Good improvement in the proportion of pupils achieving five or more GCSEs at grade A*-C.</p> <p>Very effective re-engagement of young people in education and training through youth service activity.</p> <p>Good involvement of young people in the shaping of services.</p> <p>Extensive range of effective 14–16 collaborative provision.</p> <p>Well targeted projects, which have improved engagement and progression for some groups of young people.</p> <p>Good and some outstanding support</p>	<p>Above average proportion of young people leave school with no qualifications.</p> <p>Few schools have taken up the careers education and guidance monitoring arrangements provided by Connexions.</p> <p>High proportion of young people not in education, employment and training and whose situation is unknown.</p> <p>Low attainment at AS and A2 in half of schools with sixth forms and in the tertiary college.</p>

for learners as identified in Ofsted inspections.	
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Service Management

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Good strategic management and Children's Trust arrangements.</p> <p>Good senior leadership and a strong sense of direction and vision.</p> <p>Determined and enthusiastic workforce.</p> <p>Good financial management and value for money.</p>	<p>Despite improvements in recent years, some outcomes, particularly for young people aged 14 and over, are below those of similar areas.</p> <p>Not all initial child protection conferences happen on time and not all core assessments are of good quality</p>

4.0 Inspection recommendations

4.1 The formal recommendations arising from the inspection were as follows:-

For immediate action

The local partnership should:

- ensure that an appropriate way is found for the successful dissemination of the findings of this report to children and young people in the area
- ensure all initial child protection conferences happen on time and all core assessments are of good quality
- reduce the number of fixed-term exclusions for looked after children.

For action over the next six months

The local partnership should:

- ensure the electronic case record system (ESCR) provides a fixed and permanent audit trail of entries made
- improve the proportion of looked after children in education, employment and training at age 16 and 17
- reduce the proportion of pupils who leave school with no qualifications
- increase the rate of progress made by pupils in low-performing secondary schools
- establish the mental health needs of the increasing number of 0-19 Black and minority ethnic population.

For action in the longer term

The local partnership should:

- complete the review of 14–19 provision and address the issues involving small school sixth forms, excessive competition and duplication of provision and the low outcomes for some vulnerable groups
- ensure there is sufficient good quality education and training for young people who offend.

5.0 Inspection Action Plan

- 5.1 Work to respond to and learn from the Joint Area Review has been ongoing and will continue. A multi-agency steering group has been in place for some time and has been working on the development of an Action Plan to set out clearly how Leeds will respond to the recommendations of the report. This is currently being finalised. This Action Plan will be presented to the Integrated Strategic Commissioning Board to ensure ownership of the actions by senior leaders across children's services partners. The Action Plan will then be presented to the Council's July Executive Board.

6.0 Implications For Council Policy And Governance

- 6.1 During the fieldwork, the inspectors expressed very positive views about the children's trust arrangements, and the report describes the arrangements as being innovative and as having stepped up the pace of change and having a positive impact. The report also notes that there is good leadership of the scrutiny function within children's services.

7.0 Legal And Resource Implications

- 7.1 The report is submitted by Ofsted to the Secretary of State, and it is also placed on Ofsted's and other relevant inspectorates' and commissions' websites. It is the responsibility of the LA to circulate the report locally. Within 30 working days of receiving it the authority is required to send a copy to its relevant partners, its Local Safeguarding Children Board partners, at least one local newspaper and at least one local radio station. It is also required to make a copy available for inspection, free of charge, at its offices, and to supply a copy on demand, for which it may make a reasonable charge. It is open to the authority to publicise the report in other ways, for example through its website or by sending copies to services or service users. All of these communication requirements have been met.
- 7.2 The local authority is required to make a written statement of proposed action, or action plan, in light of the formal recommendations made in the report. It has 70 working days from receipt to do this. It is required to send the action plan to those groups in receipt of the report; to Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, Ofsted, and the Secretary of State; to make it available for inspection, free of charge, at its offices; and to supply a copy on demand, for which it may make a reasonable charge.
- 7.3 The JAR action plan preparation is being overseen by the multi-agency group which acted as the steering group for the JAR. This group is also overseeing the production of the CYPP review and the preparation of the APA self assessment. The actions arising from the recommendations are being incorporated in to the CYPP, and also into the relevant Service Improvement Plans where appropriate. However, progress against the JAR recommendations will be separately monitored by Government Office, and this progress will inform judgments on performance in the Annual Performance Assessment.

- 7.4 Participation in the Joint Area Review has already incurred significant costs. A contingency fund and cost centre was set aside to deal with this, and the costs have been contained within that resource.
- 7.5 The actions arising from the recommendations should not incur significant additional costs. Most of the actions are already factored in to ongoing work, as they address priority areas which are already highlighted within existing strategic plans.

8.0 Conclusions

- 8.1 The Joint Area Review has resulted in a positive outcome for Leeds. The report's findings largely mirror the partners' own self assessment of performance, and the recommendations reflect priorities already highlighted within strategic plans.
- 8.2 Whilst the process of preparation for, and participation in the inspection was time and resource intensive, there were additional dividends. The partnership was strengthened through the joint approach to the process, and the outcome of the inspection endorsed the partnership's plans for future activity and development. The process also gave positive endorsement to the staff who work in children and young people's services, describing them as 'skilled people with the determination and enthusiasm to deliver (the partnership's) priorities'.

9.0 Recommendations

It is recommended that Executive Board:

- Note the outcome of the Joint Area Review and the actions now to be undertaken as a result of the review.
- Receive the JAR Action Plan at their meeting in July 2008.