

Select Committee on Children's Services – 21st January 2009

Report of the Director of Children's Services

Annual Performance Assessment of Children's Services 2008

Purpose of Report

1. To inform members of the committee of the outcome of the Annual Performance Assessment of Children's Services 2008

Background

2. The final Annual Performance Assessment letter from OfSTED to the local authority dated 17 December 2008 is attached to this report as an appendix. The evaluations and judgements in the letter draw on a range of data and information which covers the period 1 April 2007 to 31 March 2008. The Annual Performance Assessment is mainly based upon a "desktop" analysis by OfSTED as opposed to inspectorial visits. However the findings of other inspections such as those of schools and our fostering service were taken into account, alongside our own self assessment. The majority of the information which informed the Annual Performance Assessment judgements is national data supplied by OfSTED and other national agencies.
3. Judgements are based upon a four point scale with 4 being outstanding and 1 being inadequate. Our services were judged to be good (3) in all respects. The report is not just an evaluation of services provided by the LA. It also provides an insight into how effectively we are collaborating with partners within the Children's Trust to improve outcomes for children and young people.
4. The letter identifies key "strengths" in our services, and important "weaknesses and areas for development". In all cases to do with the five Every Child Matters (ECM) Outcomes where weaknesses and areas for development were identified, we were already aware of the issues and have appropriate action plans in place.

Finance

5. Our action plans concerning improvements to the 5 Every Child Matters areas are based upon existing budgets. In terms of service management a review of the use of existing resources will be necessary in order to respond to the comment that we have insufficient qualified social workers in post. In addition this needs to be set in the context of a national recruitment and retention problem for social care staff, and the impact on recruitment of the death of Baby P in Haringey.

Law

6. OfSTED is required by section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act of 2006 to undertake an annual review of the children's services provided by each council and to provide a performance rating for them. This process will cease in 2009 and become part of the Comprehensive Area Assessment.

Equality Impact

7. OfSTED judges that Dudley's Services for all children and young people are good but agrees with our self assessment that the progress of children in care and those with learning difficulties/disabilities should continue to be seen as priorities for improvement.

Recommendation

8. That the report be noted by the committee.



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Jane Porter
Interim Director of Children's Services

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List of Background Papers

APA letter from OfSTED to John Freeman (former Director of Children's Services) 17 December 2008