

Children's Services Select Committee – 21 June 2007

Report of the Director of Children's Services

Annual Performance Assessment

Purpose of Report

1. To bring to the attention of the Children's Services Select Committee details of the Annual Performance Assessment process for Children's Services 2007.

Background

2. Ofsted is required by section 138 of the Education and Inspection Act 2006, to undertake an annual review of each Local Authorities Children's Services and to award a performance rating for them –the Annual Performance Assessment.
3. In 2007, annual performance assessment will make judgements about the:
 - Council's Children's Services and the specific contributions they make to improving outcomes for children and young people;
 - contribution services make to improving each of the five Every Child Matters outcome areas;
 - Councils capacity to improve these services.
4. In 2007, local areas are statutorily required to review the progress made in implementing their first children and young people's plan in order to demonstrate their success in improving outcomes for children and young people. This review will also be used to provide key evidence for the APA. However, while the APA makes judgements about the council's services, the overall information provided in the review of the children and young people's plan will be wider since it will reflect the combined work of all children's services partners in the local area.
5. In reporting judgements about the impact of the council's work, the APA letter will comment on, and provide separate grades for, service contributions in each of the five outcomes achieved by children and young people. It will note strengths, areas for improvement and any progress evident in the previous 12 months, particularly indicating where the work of the council has made a measurable difference or

where further development is required. In assessing outcomes, the work of the Council's partners such as health and post-16 providers will be recognised. The final judgement on the Council's Children's Services will be based on published grade descriptors and drawn from this wider picture. A process overview is attached as Appendix 1.

6. By 14 June 2007, Authorities are required to present the review of their Children and Young People's Plan and its associated needs analysis, or the latest plan, for consideration by inspectors. The only additional information requested will be self-grading of the aspects detailed above in paragraph 4. In relation to this, a form for completion will be sent out on 14 May.
7. The format of the review is not fixed; guidance on content can be found in the DfES document. Annual review of the Children and Young People's Plan, as well as in the APA handbook. The emphasis is on councils and their partners demonstrating how their priorities have been selected through an analysis of need and evaluating the particular impact of their actions in improving outcomes for children and young people.
8. A specified set of published performance data and indicators supporting the APA and JAR key judgements has been agreed. It is expected, however, that to support their reviews of progress, particularly where joint working is referenced, authorities will also refer to other local indicators which they have access to and which influence their improvement programme.
9. For education functions, the information and data reflect performance in the previous school year (2005/06); however, inspectors will also take account of more recent data that demonstrate the progress being made in achieving local targets and plans. This includes provisional performance data for the 2006/07 academic year. For social care, the data reflect performance in the preceding financial year (2006-07); these data will be drawn from the collections undertaken by the DfES and the Information Centre for Health and Social Care. Four indicators remain as key thresholds and performance against these will be considered by inspectors when making judgements.
10. Evidence will be drawn from recent inspections of schools and other settings or providers and, where available, from inspections of services, such as youth offending teams or youth services. Healthcare Commission reports and the outcomes of the Annual Health Check already in the public domain may also be considered where these are relevant to the provision of council services. Briefing papers from the DfES children's services advisers in the government offices and from Ofsted inspectors with particular responsibilities (early years, 14–19 education and training) will also be considered. The findings of any previous joint area review, and of the previous APA, will be taken into account and progress made in addressing identified weaknesses and recommendations will be followed

up. Information from relevant surveys such as the Audit Commission's school perception survey and the Tellus2 survey will also be considered.

11. All judgements will be made on the following four-point scale:

Grade	Descriptor
Grade 4: A service that delivers well above minimum requirements for users	A service that delivers well above minimum requirements for children and young people, is innovative and cost-effective, and fully contributes to raising expectations and the achievement of wider outcomes for the community.
Grade 3: A service that consistently delivers above minimum requirements for users	A service that consistently delivers above minimum requirements for children and young people, has some innovative practice, and is increasingly cost-effective whilst making contributions to wider outcomes for the community.
Grade 2: A service that delivers only minimum requirements for users	A service that delivers only minimum requirements for children and young people, but is not demonstrably cost-effective nor contributes significantly to wider outcomes for the community.
Grade 1: A service that does not deliver minimum requirements for users	A service that does not deliver minimum requirements for children and young people, is not cost-effective and makes little or no contribution to wider outcomes for the community.

12. A draft letter will be sent to the council at the end of the scrutiny period, with comments on factual accuracy invited within five days. The final version of the letter, including the grades, will be sent to the council by the end of October. The APA draft letter will include the priorities meeting between advisers and the Council and its strategic partners will consider the APA letter. DfES Children's Services advisers will take forward the improvement agenda with Councils; intervention or follow-up of any authority where there is any scored judgement of 1, will be undertaken by the DfES Children's Services Interventions Unit or Government Office.

Finance

13. There are no financial implications connected to this report.

Law

14. 'The Council may do anything which is incidental to conducive to or which facilitates the discharge of it's functions (including those under the Children Act 2004) under section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972.'

Equality

15. The APA process acknowledges the inclusiveness of our work. Targeted work is undertaken and monitored to ensure that we deliver to the widest range of community members, including those from ethnic minority backgrounds and those with a disability.

Recommendation

16. That the Children's Services Select Committee notes and endorses process for the APA of Children's Services for 2007.



John Freeman
Director of Children's Services

Contact Officer: Chris Wrigley
Assistant Director for Policy, Performance and Information
Telephone: 01384 814387
Email: chris.wrigley@dudley.gov.uk

List of Background Papers:

Arrangements for the Annual Performance Assessment of Children's Services 2007
APA Handbook of procedures for 2007 (Ofsted)
Review of Children and Young People's Plan 2006 - 2009