

**Select Committee on Children's Services – 14 September 2009**

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

**Directorate of Children's Services – Contextual Information regarding Performance in the Following Areas:-**

1. Rate of Teenage Conception
2. Attainment of looked after children
3. Proportion of care leavers who are not engaged in employment, education or training
4. Overall Percentage of 16-18 year olds not in education, employment or training
5. Number of young people (16-19 yrs) with learning difficulties and disabilities who are not engaged in education, employment or training
6. Proportion of supervised juveniles (young offenders) in full time education, employment or training
7. Attendance in primary and secondary schools
8. Achievement of 5 or more A\*-C grades at GCSE or equivalent including English and Maths

**Purpose of Report**

1. To inform members of the committee about performance measures, and factors affecting performance measures, in specific areas highlighted in the quarterly reporting process.

**Background**

2. The Directorate of Children's Services reports regularly to Select Committee on issues where we are performing below target in order to help members understand why this is the case, and what the Directorate of Children's Services and the Children's Trust is doing to improve. This report is based upon the performance measures within our revised Directorate Strategic Plan. In some cases performance measures have not changed since the report time as they are based upon data that is only reported annually e.g. examination results.
3. It should be remembered that these matters are reported in the overall context of Children's Services having been judged as good in the 2008 Annual Performance Assessment.

### **Rate of Teenage Conception (Rate per 1000 girls)**

	2005	2006	2007	Target 2009/10
Dudley	46.6	48.7	49.5	34.7
Statistical Neighbours	44	44		
National Average	42	41		

Our performance in this area is worse than that of statistical neighbours and the national average. The most recent validated data is always two years behind the current date. We have made steady progress in reducing conceptions in the 16 – 18 year age group but conceptions amongst young people below the age of 16 is a serious concern. We have an action plan in place that involves extensive partnership work with colleagues in schools, colleges, the PCT and other agencies. A key element of the plan is to make adolescent sexual health services more accessible to young people. Our present rate of overall progress means that it is unlikely that we will meet our government office target of a 50% reduction in teenage conceptions by 2010. However every effort is being made to improve the reduction rate.

### **Proportion of looked after children gaining 1+ A\* - G grades at GCSE or equivalent**

	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	Target 2008/09
Dudley	63% (17/27)	55.9% (19/34)	45.7% (16/35)	72%
Statistical Neighbours	53.3%	48.9%	52.8%	
National Average	53%	55.1%	57.3%	

(Figures in brackets indicate the actual number of young people achieving as a fraction of the relevant cohort size)

Annual Performance Assessment interpretation of Dudley performance - acceptable

Each year the cohort of relevant looked after children fluctuates in size but is relatively small. By Year 11 some of these young people have experienced very significant disruption in their lives and this seriously undermines their education performance. Some fail to attend school and some do not sit any GCSE qualifications.

Our virtual school for children in care provides support for all of these young people and works with schools to ensure that they remain engaged in their studies and are properly supported by their carers as far as educational activity is concerned.

Since April 2008 we have been investing heavily (£250,000) in the provision of private tuition for looked after children to improve their attainment. This is part of a government initiative and the funding is being provided by HSBC (The Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation). This is a long-term investment because many of the children taking part are in primary schools and Key Stage 3 and so the impact of the project on GCSE outcomes is not yet known.

**Proportion of care leavers who are not engaged in employment, education or training (Proportion of care leavers who were looked after in their 17<sup>th</sup> year who were engaged in education, employment or training aged 19, expressed as a ratio of total Dudley population of 19 year olds who were involved in education, employment or training)**

	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	Target 2008/09
Dudley	0.7	0.62	0.57	0.91
Statistical Neighbours	0.71	0.73	0.65	
National Average	0.76	0.76	0.78	

Annual Performance Assessment interpretation of Dudley performance – acceptable

Factors in relation to educational attendance and attainment (cited above) are highly relevant to this area too. In addition many young people in care find it very hard to make the transition from school to post-16 education for social as well as academic reasons. Actual performance in Quarter 1 of 2009 is 45.4% as opposed to 55.6% in the same period of 2008.

In recognition of our declining performance in this area the members of the Board of the Children and Young People’s Trust, which contains all the major public sector employers in Dudley, has agreed to regard looked after children in Year 11 as a priority group for employment, training and extended work experience opportunities when they leave school.

Looked after children are being targeted for extra support from our Connexions Service in order to help them find positive destinations on leaving school, and our Employer Engagement Team in our 14-19 office is working with employers to find appropriate placements. Some of the young people in question are amongst the most challenging individuals that we work with and they will need considerable support once found a placement, to remain within that setting.

Also European Social Fund projects are becoming more targeted to support specific vulnerable groups. A programme is currently being developed called Tackling NEET, which is specifically targeting care leavers. Both Dudley College and Stourbridge College are providing programmes supporting care leavers to achieve qualifications and work experience.

We have a NEET Steering Group in place, which is also making each of the vulnerable groups a priority particularly care leavers.

**Overall Percentage of 16-18 year olds not in education, employment or training**

	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	Target 2008/09
Dudley	8.4%	6.4%	5.6%	4.6%
Statistical Neighbours	8.5%	8.3%	7.5%	
National Average	8.2%	7.7%	6.7%	

Rates of participation in education, employment and training have improved considerably in recent years in Dudley. Our performance last year was better than the national average. We have an action plan to secure further improvement and recently the Cabinet Performance Management Sub Committee agreed to invest an extra £12,000 with our Connexions Service to enable more work to be done to identify and trace individual young people who are not engaged in education, employment and training. Although we are missing our target for 2008/09 we have recently been selected to take part in a survey being conducted by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Schools because it is recognised that there is much successful work in Dudley. The letter we received following the inspection was very complimentary about our effective partnership work, which results in the proportion of young people who are NEET being kept consistently low. Our figure of 5.4% for Quarter 1 is the same as our Quarter 4 return for last year. This is very positive given the current economic climate.

**Number of young people (16-19 years) with learning difficulties and disabilities who are not engaged in education, employment or training**

	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	Target 2008/09
Dudley	14.2% (226)	10.8% (209)	8.4% (161)	144
Statistical Neighbours	18.0%	17.9%	16.3%	
National Average	15.7%	15.1%	13.7%	

Our current performance is significantly better than the national average. As the LSC transfer funding arrangements for Local Authority are agreed this will need to be an area for development. In addition many young people with LDD (learning

difficulties and disabilities) find the transition from school to college very hard. It is currently difficult to provide the levels of support that are available in schools in the post-16 sector. Nonetheless colleges are very aware of this issue and are working to improve their provision and retention rates. LDD (learning difficulties and disabilities) NEET for Quarter 1 in 2009 has improved to 9% from 9.6% in the same period in 2008.

**Proportion of supervised juveniles (young offenders) in full time education, employment or training**

	July – Sep 2007	Oct – Dec 2007	Jan – Mar 2008	Apr – Jun 2008	Target 2008/09
Dudley	66.7%	73.4%	70.2%	70.9%	79%
Statistical Neighbours	70.8%	71%	71%		
National Average	70.7%	72.9%	72.5%		

Young Offenders are a priority group within our Targeted Youth Support Plan. Our Youth Offending Service (YOS) treat young offenders who are in danger of becoming NEET as a priority. There are monthly meetings attended by (YOS) Youth Offending Service staff, Connexions Personal Advisers and others to analyse data and to discuss action plans for individual “hard to engage” cases. Systems are in place with Connexions to support any young person who has completed their order and is still NEET. Advice and Guidance is offered to all NEET young people. A weekly job club has been developed specifically for young offenders. This has enabled some of the obstacles, which prevent engagement to be addressed. Post 16 providers meet young people face to face in order to support them into provision. The National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders has just been awarded a contract to specifically run a small programme targeting young offenders in Dudley. Also other programmes such as Kickstart Life are currently supporting this group.

No new data was available against this indicator at the time of compiling this report.

**Attendance/Absence in secondary schools**

	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
Dudley	92.26	91.94	92.22
Statistical Neighbours	92.03	91.97	92.93
National Average	92.20	92.09	92.31

### **Attendance in primary schools**

	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
Dudley	94.41	93.93	94.5
Statistical Neighbours	94.75	94.48	94.98
National Average	94.58	94.25	94.83

No Annual Performance Assessment interpretation is offered of this data.

This indicator is frequently reported using absence, as opposed to attendance data.

In Quarter 4 the percentage of half days missed in secondary schools was 7.57  
2008/09 target – 7.18

In Quarter 4 the percentage of half days missed in primary schools was 6.01  
2008/09 target – 5

Attendance in Dudley schools is broadly in line with the national average. Our efforts to improve attendance focus upon a minority of families and young people amongst whom there are high levels of persistent absence. Systems for checking absences and intervening where necessary have become much more sophisticated in schools in recent years, but there are inconsistencies in the way such systems are applied in which we are working to eliminate. We provide support and challenge to all schools to improve upon this position. In addition many schools still face problems caused by parents condoning short and/or extended absences for holidays and travel within term time.

Data in this area is collated from January/May census returns, rather than the Council's quarterly reporting process. Currently available data suggests that performance is at least broadly in line with last year.

### **Achievement of 5 or more A\*-C grades at GCSE or equivalent including English and Maths**

	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	Target 2008/09
Dudley	43.7	44.4	46.9	49.7
Statistical Neighbours	42.5	44.5	45.0	
National Average	44.7	46.5	47.6	

(Data Source; 2008 APA Data Set)

Annual Performance Assessment interpretation of Dudley performance – “In Line with National Average”

Although the LA has not reached its target 2008 represents a significant improvement on that achieved in 2007. These results are the “best ever” in Dudley and better than even of our eleven statistical neighbour authorities.

No validated data for 2009 is currently available.

### **Finance**

4. Our action plans concerning improvements in these areas are based upon existing budgets.

### **Law**

5. The main pieces of legislation governing these aspects of our work are the Children Act 2004 and the Education and Inspections Act of 2006.

### **Equality Impact**

6. 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**

7. That the report be noted by the committee.



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### **List of Background Papers**