

**Select Committee on Children's Services – 23 January 2008**

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

**Annual Performance Assessment (APA) of Children's Services**

**Purpose of Report**

1. To inform the Select Committee of the process for the Annual Performance Assessment of Children's Services.
2. To inform the Select Committee of the feedback received following the Annual Performance Assessment.

**Background**

3. The Children Act 2004 placed a requirement on all children's services authorities to submit an annual self-assessment of their work on delivering the five outcomes in Every Child Matters:
  - **be healthy**
  - **be safe**
  - **enjoy and achieve**
  - **make a positive contribution**
  - **achieve economic well-being**

In 2007, the self assessment took the form of a review of Dudley's Children and Young People's plan. The review was submitted to Ofsted at the end of May.

4. An onsite meeting was held on 13 September 2007 to discuss elements of the review in more detail and at the end of the meeting the Ofsted Inspection Team gave their preliminary feedback. The feedback was then confirmed in a draft APA letter which, after a process including local checking for factual accuracy and national moderation, was communicated to the authority in final draft form on 30 October 2007. The final APA letter (attached as Appendix 1) was published by OFSTED on 26 November 2007 alongside the APA letters for all children's services authorities.

5. The APA letter identifies areas where Ofsted judged that we are performing well, it also identified areas for possible improvement. The letter includes grades on the following scale.

1 – unsatisfactory, 2 – adequate, 3 – good, 4 – outstanding.

6. The grades were as follows:

Overall effectiveness of Children’s Services	Grade 3
Being healthy	Grade 3
Staying safe	Grade 3
Enjoying and achieving	Grade 3
Making a positive contribution	Grade 3
Achieving economic wellbeing	Grade 3
Capacity to improve, including the management of children’s services	Grade 3

7. These grades were in line with those in our original submission to Ofsted. The grades show an improvement from those achieved in the Joint Area Review (2006) in that the grade for economic well-being has improved from 2 (adequate) to 3 (good).

8. These grades will feed into the overall Comprehensive Performance Assessment for the Council.

9. In summary, the key areas of good performance were:

Being healthy –

- partnerships continue to be effective in supporting health of young people;
- healthy lifestyles are promoted effectively;
- teenage pregnancy is declining faster than nationally;
- good progress has been made on smoking cessation programmes.

Staying safe –

- local Safeguarding Children Board is well managed and proactive;
- the Local Authority promotes preventative services well;
- performance in completing core assessments is high;
- stability of placements for looked after children is good;
- the authority demonstrates excellent performance in supporting and planning for the transition from children’s services to adult services for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Enjoy and achieve –

- Key Stage 2 and 3 results show a better rate of improvement than nationally;

- value added to Key Stages 2 to 4 is good and above the national average;
- the proportion of students achieving at least 1 GCSE is much higher than the national average;
- overall, looked after children and young people achieve well;
- children and young people enjoy school and appreciate the range of activities on offer;
- schools are effectively supported.

Making a positive contribution –

- the Youth Service makes an effective contribution in providing activities that enable young people to make a positive contribution;
- children and young people looked after by the Authority feel that their views are listened to;
- mentoring in schools is becoming increasingly effective;
- action to reduce anti-social behaviour is effective.

Achieve economic well-being –

- there is a thorough and comprehensive strategic plan for learners aged 14-19;
- very good progress has been made in reducing the number of 16-19 year olds not in education, employment or training;
- the provision for vulnerable groups and children from disadvantaged communities is good;
- young people have good advice and guidance at key transition points;
- achievement in work-based learning is improving.

Capacity to improve, including the management of Children's Services –

- there is strong corporate leadership;
- the Children and Young People's plan provides an accurate analysis of strengths and weaknesses and sets out a clear direction of travel;
- priorities are supported by effective partnership working;
- good progress has been made in establishing the Children's Trust;
- overall, the Council has demonstrated good progress in meeting the recommendations from the Joint Area Review (2006).

10. The areas for improvement were:

- increase the number of mothers who breast feed;
- increase the number of initial assessments completed within time limits;
- improve results in mathematics;
- reduce the number of exclusions especially secondary schools;
- reduce young people's fear of crime and anti-social behaviour, especially on public transport;
- increase the numbers of looked after children and young people participating in their reviews;

- improve outcomes, progression and participation rates post-16;
- invest further in providing preventative services in order to achieve balance of spend between early intervention services and statutory services for looked after children and young people.

11. These areas for improvement are being considered in the context of the development of the Children and Young People's Strategic Plan for 2008-11.

### **Finance**

12. There are no direct financial implications of this report.

### **Law**

13. The central legislation is the Children Act 2004 and associated Regulations and statutory guidance.

### **Equality Impact**

14. The APA Letter sets out a number of areas in which the work of Council has a positive impact on equalities, notably outcomes for looked-after children and for children with disabilities.

### **Recommendation**

15. That the Select Committee notes the information on the APA process.

16. That the Select Committee welcomes the contents of the APA Letter.



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## **List of Background Papers**

The under mentioned papers were used in the compilation of this report:

Review of the Children's and Young People's Plan

Children and Young People's Plan

APA letter

APA handbook