

Cabinet –17 September 2008

Joint Area Review Action Plan

Portfolio: Councillor Zahid Ali, Children's Services

Service: Children's Services

Wards: All

Key decision: No

Forward plan: No

1. Summary of report

The Joint Area Review (JAR) took place in January and February 2008 and the final report was published in June 2008. The judgement was that our services to children and young people 'were good with good capacity to improve'. The JAR report made a number of recommendations for improvement. This report describes how the JAR improvement plan has been embedded in our service plans and has utilised the Performance Management Information system (PIMS) to enhance our planning and review of progress.

2. Recommendations

That Cabinet note the JAR improvement plan submitted to the Secretary of State on 8 September.

3. Background information

- 3.1 The JAR was carried out in January and February 2008. Verbal feedback was given on recommendations for improvement in March 2008. The Directorate made a decision to integrate the JAR improvement planning into its service planning and the key improvement actions were allocated to Heads of Services who inserted them into their Service Plans by April 2008.
- 3.2 While the integration of the JAR improvement plan into service plans was efficient, it was anticipated that reports on progress on JAR improvements would be needed, rather than on the whole service plan. To save operational managers time and avoid multiple requests from reporting on progress, it was decided to develop PIMS in partnership with corporate performance management. This meant inserting or service plan objectives and actions, including those flagged as JAR action into the PIMS software.

- 3.3 In July 2008 as part of the first quarter review of service planning delivery, the directorate was able to report on progress on the JAR improvement actions separately. For the first time a directorate has been able to show its progress delivery of all service plan objectives using PIMS and at the same time showed progress on any selected subset or group of actions (in this case the JAR actions). Our education services partner, Serco, has agreed to integrate with the councils service planning processes, and as part of that, has agreed to report on progress on JAR improvement actions through the PIMS system.
- 3.4 **Appendix A** shows progress on the 10 JAR recommendations. Two have already been completed; distribution of findings of the JAR to Young People and all children's homes are at least satisfactory. Of the remainder all are on track for delivery in the required timescales.
- 3.5 All the JAR improvement actions are included within the children and young peoples plan 2008/9 to 2010/11.

4. Resource considerations

4.1 Financial:

- 4.1.1 Some of the JAR improvement actions have required investment and budget realignment this financial year. In particular, the need to invest in more social workers to meet the recommendation that a statutory visits are carried out on time, has been a challenge. In addition, the recommendations to improve disability services will require ongoing investment.

4.2 Legal:

- 4.2.1 The Children Act 2004 (Joint Area Reviews) Regulations 2005 requires that the Council carry out a number of actions:

- publish a written statement of action within the 70 days of the publication of the report – by the 8^h of September 2008
- send it to the Chief Inspector of Schools, and the Secretary of State and all others who were sent JAR report
- supply a copy of the written statement to a member of the public on demand on payment of a reasonable charge.

4.3 Staffing:

- 4.3.1 A number of JAR recommendations require an increase in staffing in key services and they are currently being implemented.

5. Citizen impact

All of the JAR improvement actions have a direct and positive impact on citizens ranging from very large numbers such as developing a Borough wide 14 to 19 entitlement offer to particularly vulnerable groups of children such as those living in our children's homes.

6. Community safety

Community safety will be improved by ensuring that statutory visits are completed on time to children, subject to child protection plans and also looked after children as well ensuring that caseloads unmanageable to allow social workers to complete reviews on time.

7. Environmental impact

The JAR recommendation to increase the availability of transport for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to attend respite provision and leisure activities will be developed in a way that is efficient and minimises carbon emissions.

8. Performance and risk management issues

8.1 Risk

- 8.1.1 The JAR inspection found that service management was good. The recommendations for improvements are to a large extent, based on allocating sufficient resources to bring standards up to a safe and good level. All of the recommendations for improvement can be delivered within the existing (08/9) resource allocation to the directorate.

8.2 Performance management:

- 8.2.1 All of the JAR improvement actions are priorities for the Directorate and Partnership and some are already Cabinet Pledges (eg; Improve foster respite care and Improve attainment at Key Stage 4). Embedding the JAR improvement actions in the service plans has ensured that actions are taking place across all the relevant services at a detailed level. Progress toward delivering has already been measured through the first quarter service plan review and where necessary corrective actions are underway at an individual contributing action level. Across the 10 recommendations the improvements to have already been completed and the remainder are all on track the delivery in the required time.

9. Equality implications

The JAR report recognised that the Council and its partners have a commitment to promoting equality for all and respect the diversity and human rights. The acknowledge that the Cabinet have prioritised the issue - for example in the Cabinet pledge to address the under attainment or Bangladeshi and Pakistani pupils. The report does make a recommendation to ensure that the needs of all sections of the community are systematically included in action plans and service delivery. This has already been addressed in part, by requiring all service plans to include an objective on addressing equality issues.

10. Consultation

The statutory regulations require that the action planning is consulted with our partners. This has been undertaken through the children and Young People's trust partnership arrangements

Background papers

Joint Area Review Cabinet Report 18 June

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4 September 2008



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4 September 2008

JAR Improvement Plan (Summary) as at September 2008

(nb; our service planning has all the JAR improvements broken down into actions for each service area)

Recommendation	Relevant 2008/9 Target in CYPP or outcome	Q2 performance and RAG	Key actions	When by	Who	Ref to CYPP
For immediate action						
1. 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		G	Report placed on Walsall Childrens Plan website and Childrens services Directory website.	June	DH	
			Child friendly summary presentation for Head Teachers & professional completed on Childrens Service Directory Website and briefing given at Head Teachers breakfast meeting.	June and July	JR	
			Design and print 'child friendly' version of Children and Young Peoples Plan (which includes JAR actions).	September	JR	
2. work to raise the standards in those children's homes judged to be inadequate	100%	G	Full audit of service provision against minimum standards in each children's home by external consultant.	July	AG	3.3 p33
			Refurbishment of Lichfield Road and Hilton Road Children's Homes to improve environmental conditions.	July	AG	
			Cabinet agreed the closure of Castleview by 30 th August 2008.	September	AG	

3. ensure allocated social workers visit all children with child protection plans and all looked after children in their placements/homes within expected timescales.	100%	G	Improved data recording process, and monthly monitoring by Performance Board of all statutory visits to ensure compliance, and corrective actioning in place with robust management actions.	April	LW/DB	3.3a p33
4. review capacity to ensure all caseloads held by qualified social workers are manageable	complete	G	Review completed by Head of Service.	March		12.7 p38
			Additional resources have been targeted on priority areas, improvements in recruitment and incentives for experienced staff.	April		
5. ensure that there is clarity about access to disability services in the authority		G	Improve clarity of potential users understanding regarding access to services.	XX	CB	2.5 p32
			The service has been transferred to Serco and transitional support is being provided by Childrens Services to ensure clarity of access.	August	CB	
6. increase the availability of respite care	+5%	G	Increase availability of short term breaks	April	CB	2.5 p32
			Marketing plan has been successful in recruiting additional foster carers to provide increased respite care.	June	DB	
7. increase the availability of transport for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to enable them to attend respite provision and leisure activities		G	Childrens services is providing direct support to Serco to ensure that transport is available when required and new contract reflects this.	March 09	CB	10.5 p37

8. ensure the needs of all sections of the community are systematically included in action plans and service delivery		G	CYPP needs analysis explores differing needs of communities and helps set priorities in CYPP	May	DH	11 p38
			Service Planning ensures that every service develops actions to improve equalities.	April	AS	
			EIA programme XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX			
			Childrens Trust re-configured to provide stronger leadership and support to user involvement and consultation.	April	JR	
9. develop a borough-wide 14 to 19 entitlement offer		G	Progress the Strategy for Change – BSF.			12.8 p38
			Improve links with employers to provide more and a greater range of learning opportunities.			
			Develop new courses to re-engage those who are most disaffected.			
10. improve attainment at Key Stage 4.	46%	G	Implement the Walsall Challenge Board to oversee the range of developments and effective use of resources.			4.3 p34
			Provide bespoke improvement programmes for National Challenge Schools.			
			Implement the new diplomas as per the national programme.			
			Provide revision materials through a range of media.			
			Provide specific support for looked after children through the virtual school.			