

Cabinet – 8 November 2006

Annual Performance Assessment Judgement for Children and Young Persons Services

Portfolio: Councillor Zahid Ali, Children's Services

Service: Children's Services

Wards: All

Key Decision: No

Forward plan: Yes

Summary of report

This report informs members of OFSTED's judgement of the recent Annual Performance Assessment of services to children which noted the maintenance of continuing improvement in children and young people's services and confirmed the score of "3" or "Good" for Council and partner services.

This consolidated achievement reflects the investment and priority given by the Council and its partners to the care of the borough's most vulnerable children and families and the considerable efforts of senior managers, and all staff across the Children and Young People's Partnership. The APA letter outlines further areas for improvements including in the education attainment of looked after children. Details of the findings can be found at Appendix One of this report. The formal OFSTED letter is at Appendix Two.

Recommendations

- (1) That Cabinet welcomes the findings of the APA review and inspection of achievements during 2005-06;
- (2) That Cabinet commends managers, and all staff working with children and young people;
- (3) That Cabinet acknowledges the key contribution of agency partners; and
- (4) That Cabinet notes the improvement agenda for 2007-08 will be incorporated into the Children and Young Persons Plan, Directorate Plan

Resource and legal considerations

Any issues arising from the assessment that have potential implications for future resource deployment will be managed within existing budgetary and resource management processes.

Citizen impact

The APA judgement details improvements in the five outcomes and/or provision to service users many of whom are amongst the most vulnerable children and families in Walsall. The assessment considers the contribution of Council and partners services to children which enable them to

- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution and
- Achieve economic wellbeing.

The judgement demonstrates that Walsall children's services is well placed to bring further improvements to Walsall children through the Change for Children programme agreed by cabinet in September.

Community safety

Community safety is improved by ensuring that children and young people achieve at school and make a positive contribution to the communities in which they live. In addition, child protection support to vulnerable children and families, disabled children and young people from BME groups which keeps them safe promotes community cohesion.

Environmental impact

Promoting the life chances of young people to enable them to achieve economic wellbeing will support community regeneration contributing to improved environment for Walsall residents.

Performance and risk management issues

The Annual Performance Assessment requires a data return which measures performance in key areas across social care, education and children's services. The council's performance management framework supports the monitoring of key performance indicators as part of the children's balanced scorecard. Children and Young Persons Directorate has improved performance, and maintained a risk management register that reinforces its prospects for further improvement.

Equality implications

The Directorate's commitment to the equality standard underpins the change agenda commended in this assessment. Services work with children and young people to assist their development of spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness and actions to challenge bullying, racism and other forms of harassment. It also ensures services are able to meet the needs of Walsall's diverse population.

Consultation

The engagement of children and young people is a specific requirement of the Every Child Matters agenda and Walsall has been particularly keen to ensure the voices of its most vulnerable and disengaged young people is heard and informs service improvement.

Vision 2008

This report demonstrates that Children and Young people's services have contributed to the following pledges:

1. [Ensure all people are safe and secure](#)
2. [Make our schools great](#)
3. [Make Walsall a healthy and caring place](#)
4. [Encourage everyone to feel proud of Walsall](#)
5. [Make it easier to access local services](#)
6. [Strengthen the local economy](#)
7. [Listen to what local people want](#) and
8. [Transform Walsall into an excellent local authority](#)

Background papers

- *2006 Annual Performance Assessment Of Services For Children And Young People In Walsall Local Authority*

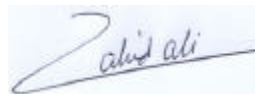
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Executive Director

17 October 2006



Councillor Zahid Ali
Portfolio holder

17 October 2006

1. THE PERFORMANCE AND ASSESSMENT CYCLE 2006 OVERVIEW

1.1 The assessment of Children and Young Persons services involves a series of direct inspections of select services, separate annual planning exercises, including the Children's Joint Annual Performance Assessment (APA) and a specific follow up inspection.

1.2 LINKS TO THE COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT (CPA)

The assessment of Children and Young Persons services by CSCI, Ofsted, the Audit Commission and the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), of education provision, and joint work with partners directly impacts on the revised Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA).

2. IMPROVEMENTS OBSERVED IN CHILDREN'S YOUNG PERSONS SERVICES (2005-06)

2.1 This Annual Performance Assessment commended the following areas of improvement in its Children and Young Person's services under the specific Every Child Matters themes:

Being healthy:

- The healthy schools initiatives, obesity plan, actions to address teenage pregnancies, the delivery of the Community Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), actions to promote the health of Looked after Children and packages to address substance misuse.

Staying safe:

- The multi agency ownership and commitment to the safeguarding board, the delivery of fostering/adoption, the promotion of road safety, and the child protection in schools, and the promotion of preventative services.

Enjoying and achieving:

- The development of the 14-19 plan, improvements in attendance and provision for SEN, School Improvement services and the coherence and consistency between plans.

Making a positive contribution:

- The inclusion of schools councils, the participation of Looked after Children and children with disabilities, reducing the numbers of young people not in education, employment or training "NEET" particularly amongst vulnerable groups, and the development of personal education plans for target groups.

Achieving economic well-being:

- The development of business partnership links, the breadth and depth of partnerships established for 14-19 developments, support for vulnerable young people at key transition points, and an improving vocational offer post 14.

Management of children's services:

- There was a clear strategic vision from senior leaders, detailed needs analysis, effective partnership working, performance management linked to plans, and corporate parenting that was child focussed.

3. IMPROVEMENTS RECOMMENDED FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES

3.1 Despite this very positive assessment there is no room for complacency and it was agreed during inspection and confirmed in the assessment that there are further areas for specific and additional improvement, these include

Being healthy:

- Reducing the access waiting times for CAMHS, and improving the timeliness of Initial health assessments of Looked after Children.

Staying safe:

- Reducing the numbers of core assessments and safely manage a further reduction in the numbers of children on the child protection register.

Enjoying and achieving:

- Further improvements in the levels of attainment especially at KS4, vocational offers in secondary schools; the levels of educational attainment of Looked after Children, closing the gap with national levels of attainment for vulnerable groups including boys, minority ethnic groups and the more able.

Making a positive contribution:

- Reducing final warnings and cautions given to Looked after Children.

Achieving economic well-being:

- Increasing the number of young people applying to Higher Education, improving "economic awareness" in primary schools and monitoring the impact of the Children's Centre provision.

Management of children's services:

- Reviewing some targets to ensure they continue the previous ambition of the council and monitor the effectiveness & impact of recruitment and retention of key staff.

3.2 Consolidation and further improvements in services will be monitored by the Children and Young Persons Strategic Performance Board. There will be close partnership working via the Children Executive Group. Key actions will be incorporated into the Children and Young Persons Plan and cascade into the Directorate Plan and service plans for Children and Young Persons directorate.

4. Conclusions

4.1 Inspectors form a combined judgment against the following themes or "service descriptors":

- The contribution of the local authority's children's services in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people;
- The council's overall capacity to improve its services for children and young people; and
- The contribution of the local authority's social care services in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people. Authorities are awarded separate grades for each of these areas and an aggregate "overall capacity to improve its services for children and young people".

4.2 There are four levels of performance for the descriptors:

- Excellent/Outstanding (4): A service that delivers well above minimum requirements for users;

- Good (3): A service that consistently delivers above minimum requirements for users;
- Adequate (2): A service that delivers only minimum requirements for users; and
- Inadequate (1): A service that does not deliver minimum requirements for users.

4.3 The inspectors concluded that Walsall should be assessed as meeting each descriptor with a “good” appraisal (a score of 3).

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5 October 2006

Dear Colleagues,

2006 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN WALSALL LOCAL AUTHORITY

This letter summarises the findings of the 2006 Annual Performance Assessment process for your local authority. We are grateful for the information which you provided to support this process and for the time made available by yourself and your colleagues to discuss relevant issues.

Summary

Areas for judgement	Grade awarded ¹
The contribution of <i>the local authority's children's services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people.	3
The council's overall <i>capacity to improve</i> its services for children and young people	3
The contribution of <i>the local authority's social care services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people	3

Being healthy

¹

Grade	Service descriptors	Capacity to improve descriptors
4	A service that delivers well above minimum requirements for users	Excellent / outstanding
3	A service that consistently delivers above minimum requirements for users	Good
2	A service that delivers only minimum requirements for users	Adequate
1	A service that does not deliver minimum requirements for users	Inadequate

The Council's contribution to outcomes in this area for children and young people is good. There is strong evidence of partnerships working which is effective across the borough in promoting the health and well being of children and young people.

There has been progress on improving access to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) by reducing the waiting times, and the health care needs of Looked After Children (LAC) continues to be very good with a designated doctor and nurse specifically focussing on LAC. Additional support is provided for LAC who need access to CAMHS. Support groups for foster carers offer guidance, consultation and practical ways of managing children and young people with mental health needs in order to maintain children in their placements. Walsall has further plans to improve access waiting times to the CAMHS service as identified in their plans. Whilst the timeliness of the initial health assessments of LAC is improving it remains one of the priorities for the council.

Walsall have a range of healthy living initiatives which is evident in all schools but particularly in primary schools. Inspection evidence shows this to be generally good. The opening of three children's gyms is linked to the strategy to reduce obesity particularly amongst the 4 to 11 age range which is one example of good partnership working. The promotion of health awareness amongst children and young people at risk of substance misuse is positive and improvements in these services have reduced the waiting times for initial referrals and subsequent treatments to 5 days and 10 days respectively.

Teenage pregnancy continues to decline with support provided as necessary. The strategy to reduce the number of teenage pregnancies successfully involves schools, youth service and health professionals. An award winning 'Sex, Lies and Love' Programme from the Youth Offending Service (YOS) provides an art and drama based intervention for girls at risk of sexual exploitation. These developments and measures have impacted positively on the current reduction in teenage pregnancies and have improved awareness of sexual health.

Staying safe

The Council's contribution to outcomes for children and young people in this area is good. A local safeguarding board has been established and has strong support from all agencies.

There is an increasing amount of joint working which is evident in the multi agency support panel for children and young people who might otherwise become looked after. The Children's and Young Persons Plan shows strong support and commitment to improving this outcome for all Walsall children.

Social care has contributed to improving this outcome, particularly through the increased number of children looked after in foster placements or placed for adoption. As a result of concerted action and a preventative strategy, the number of core assessments has reduced although it remains higher than IPF and national averages. This is an area that will require further input to make a difference. The stability of placements for children remains very good although the long-term stability of children has only marginally improved.

The extent to which schools keep their pupils safe is good. Child protection in schools is generally secure and training up to date for staff. The Local Authority evaluates the impact of this training thoroughly. In particular improvements in the support offered to LAC are good. Although the numbers of children and young people on the Child Protection Register (CPR) remains above national average there has been a decrease in the number of children and young people placed on the register in Walsall. A high number of children and young people were deregistered from the CPR over the past year in Walsall and whilst the number of repeat referrals has not risen significantly and is similar to other councils, these indicators need to be closely monitored to provide an understanding of why the numbers are changing with appropriate action taken to deal with emerging issues. The establishment of a children's board has helped involve young people in the broader staying safe agenda. The contribution of community groups is described as 'good' and features in several plans.

Concerted action is ongoing to bring child protection indicators nearer to IPF figures. A growing range of preventative services underpins this area of work and is improving outcomes for children and young people, including children who have disabilities.

Enjoying and achieving

The Council's contribution to outcomes in this area is good overall however standards of attainment remain below national averages at all key stages. This masks significant improvement in some areas, notably Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 where the progress pupils make has improved to close to national levels. Progress made from Key Stage 1 to 2 was slightly above national averages for the first time in 2005.

The Local Authority has made significant changes to the way they manage early years provision since 2005 and as a result some of the plans and actions are in the early stages of development. However there are early signs of promise, in particular the way provision is more closely integrated with other plans. An example of this improved management has been a reduction in the number of actions issued to childcare providers at registration and inspections show that most providers are now judged to be satisfactory or good. This is an improving picture. There are improved links between voluntary and maintained providers and the Authority has identified the need for a full audit of the range and quality of provision to be completed in the autumn. Access to child care is good.

Whilst standards of attainment remain below average in all key stages, this is especially so at Key Stage 4. The Local Authority recognises this and has completed an audit of which aspects of school performance need to be improved to change this. The results of this audit have featured in several strategic plans but have yet to produce significant positive outcomes. In the primary phase although standards are below national averages they have improved in comparison to similar authorities and the progress pupils make is generally in line with national levels. There remain too many schools that fail to achieve more than 64% level 4 in mathematics by age 11 although this picture has improved in English. Although standards of attainment generally have improved in recent years they

have matched national improvements and the gap between local and national levels has remained consistent. In particular the attainment of boys, some minority ethnic groups and the more able remain as priorities.

The number of students who attain at least 5 A* - C grades at GCSE is low and too few LAC manage this. Similarly the number staying on to further study at age 16 is low and the Authority has rightly identified performance in this area as a priority. However a recently completed 14-19 strategy plan and a growing range of vocational opportunities in partnership with other providers has started to show signs of improvement. There is an ambitious plan to establish a 14-19 college which will help increase the provision further and raise the numbers of students going on to Higher Education, which at present remains low. The planning at this stage is impressive and detailed and includes a wide range of partners. For example, the leadership development programme is a thoughtful response to identified need, both in improving provision but also helping recruitment difficulties at this level. Similarly there is an increasing use of expertise, including specialist colleges to support areas of need and innovation.

The strategic partnership between Walsall Council and Education Walsall is developing well and is now a genuine strength. The quality of the school improvement support on offer to schools is very effective and has helped to provide both support and challenge where appropriate. In particular the successful use of various intervention strategies and an innovative approach to long term problems has significantly raised levels of progress. This support increasingly uses a wide range of partners from across the service and is both rigorous and responsive in identifying need. The Excellence in Walsall Education plan is a detailed and evaluative document that rests on an accurate view of local priorities and which drives the allocation of resources well. This has led to significant improvements, for example, in provision for young people with learning difficulties or disabilities.

The number of schools in categories of concern has risen slightly since September 2005 but remains low overall. This represents significant improvement and Education Walsall has a record of providing good and decisive intervention to improve these schools quickly. The balance of support and challenge, coupled with regular and detailed monitoring has helped provide an accurate view of trends in performance although inspection outcomes tend to cluster around the satisfactory to good with few outstanding. The increasing use of pupil level data to track progress is impressive. Attendance has improved considerably since 2005 although it is better in secondary schools than primary.

There are improved opportunities for young people to socialise and achieve accredited outcomes through the Youth Service Centres and the support offered to those who return from out of area placements is significantly improved.

Making a positive contribution

The Council's contribution to outcomes in this area is good. This is demonstrated in the drive to engage with children and young people. The range and number of projects and initiatives have furthered the agenda so that all children and young people including those from vulnerable groups have an opportunity to become involved in contributing to the work that is ongoing.

The Local Authority has made concerted efforts and has involved young people (including those with disabilities and LAC) in the development of an impressive range of initiatives including: peer mentoring, Sex Lies and Love programme, Walsall's Youth Opinions Unite (YOU) consultation and participation forum and Ready Steady Summer. 'Ready Steady Summer' is a multi agency project to which the Local Authority and other significant partners contributes to a mixed agenda of initiatives, making a positive difference to a range of issues including a reduction in crime and anti-social behaviour and a mentoring scheme for young people by young people. As a result a wider group of young people now make a positive contribution to their future. A high proportion of LAC and vulnerable young people are involved in and contribute to their review and personal education plan and they are actively encouraged to take responsibility to monitor their own health care needs. Whilst there is strong involvement of other partners (e.g. youth offending service) in addressing the offending and preventative agenda the numbers of final warnings, reprimands and convictions of children looked after remains high and the Local Authority now needs to take action to reduce this number in a concerted and sustainable way. Inspections indicate a growing involvement of school councils ensuring that the pupils' voice is heard and responded; the personal development and well being of children and young people is often judged as good.

Achieving economic well-being

The Council's contribution to outcomes in this area is now good. There is increasing access to child care and the quality of that care is improving. This is linked to the needs of local communities more effectively. The plans to host Children's Centres in Local Neighbourhood Partnerships are ambitious and appropriate although the monitoring of this provision is unclear at present and it remains a priority to develop.

The Local Authority has successfully reduced the number of young people not in education, employment or training, especially for those leaving care. This reduction is impressive. There is an increasing range of partnership working and multi agency planning which has helped ease the transition of vulnerable young people from one phase to the next and this has helped secure improvements in the support offered to teenage mothers and those with disabilities.

The educational attainment of LAC has improved although few achieve 5 A*-C at GCSE level. There is also an increasing range of links evident between schools and enterprise partners, such as the Education Business Partnership that has helped improve the quality

of placements and competitions available to young people. Opportunities available for vocational pathways have improved but remain a priority for the Authority.

The breadth and quality of the support on offer at Year 9 transition reviews have helped vulnerable young people with career planning and the links with the LSC and Connexion service are strong and reflected in the 14-19 strategy planning document. However attainment levels at age 16 and retention rates remain low. There are examples of innovation designed to improve this, including an embryonic use of ICT based routes to vocational training. The plans to widen the range of Higher Education Institutions as destinations for school and care leavers have yet to significantly improve outcomes. The range and type of accommodation available to care leavers has improved with support offered to maintain independence.

The council's management of its services for children and young people, including its capacity to improve them further

The capacity to improve is good and developing.

There is effective leadership and direction from senior officers and elected members resulting in an increasingly shared vision and focussed priorities and targets, which are then shared with children and young people. CYP are increasingly engaged in strategic planning and make a difference in key areas. The vision and priorities are supported well by a range of detailed and specific planning. Financial plans are in place to deliver the plans and improve the quality mainstream services. The Local Authority have conducted a detailed needs analysis across all services and are using this to inform future planning and distribution of resources.

The retention and recruitment strategies have been reviewed and a single strategy is now in place across health, social care and education services with the exception of the early years department. The importance of this area in securing continued improvements is recognised by the council and although the numbers of vacancies has decreased over the past year the rate of vacancies remains above national average.

The self-evaluation completed was a detailed, thoughtful and comprehensive assessment demonstrating a clear understanding of strengths and weaknesses. However some elements within it remain descriptive rather than evaluative and there were few targets that related to expected outcomes. In particular the voice of the child was not represented as clearly as some of the respective plans suggest.

Priorities are supported by co-ordinated multi agency plans. However the targets set particularly in well performing areas are cautious and un-ambitious. Strong partnerships both in planning and in practice are evident and are working well. The capacity to improve the management of services is good. Managers have taken robust and rigorous actions to secure improvements in target areas such as NEET, LAC and some schools. In particular the management and approach to health care is very good. One good example of where the authority having identified an underperforming area took robust action is in establishing a service tailored to meet the needs of Walsall travellers. This is an indication

of an increasingly proactive approach to solving long-term problems utilising strengths already available within the area.

Key strengths and areas for improvement

Key strengths	Key areas for improvement
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • healthy schools initiatives • obesity plan • teenage pregnancies • CAMHS • health of LAC • substance misuse. 	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CAMHS – reduce access waiting times • the timeliness of Initial health assessments of LAC.
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • safeguarding board – multi agency ownership • fostering/adoption • road safety • child protection in schools • preventative services. 	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • core assessments remain high • management of CPR.
<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the 14-19 plan • improvements in attendance and provision for SEN • School Improvement services • the coherence and consistency between plans. 	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improve levels of attainment especially at KS4 • increase the vocational offer in secondary schools • increase the levels of attainment of LAC • close the gap with national levels of attainment for vulnerable groups including boys, minority ethnic groups and more able.
<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • schools councils • participation of LAC and children with disabilities • reducing NEET particularly amongst vulnerable groups • personal education plans for target groups. 	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduce final warnings and cautions given to LAC.
<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p>	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reductions in the number of those not in employment, education and training. • business partnership links. • the breadth and depth of partnerships established for 14-19 developments • support for vulnerable young people at key transition points • an improving vocational offer post 14. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increase the number of young people applying to Higher Education • improve economic awareness in primary schools • monitor the impact of the Children's Centre provision.
<p><i>Management of children's services:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clear strategic vision from senior leaders • detailed needs analysis • effective partnership working • performance management linked to plans • corporate parenting child focussed. 	<p><i>Management of children's services:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • some targets lack ambition • monitor the effectiveness & impact of recruitment and retention of key staff.

Aspects for focus in a future joint area review or the next APA

Being Healthy

- The impact of measures to reduce waiting times for CAMHS.
- The timeliness of initial health assessments for LAC.

Staying Safe

- The management of referrals and repeat referrals to the CPR.
- Effectiveness of measures taken to reduce the number of core assessments.

Enjoying and achieving

- The achievements and attainments of all pupils, especially boys, BME, LAC & more able pupils.
- The implementation of the 14 to 19 strategy.

Making a positive contribution

- Final warnings and cautions given to LAC.

Achieving economic well being

- Vocational opportunities for young people.
- Children centre provision.
- Plans for those not in employment, education and training.

We confirm that the children's services grade will provide the score for the children and young people service block in the comprehensive performance assessment (CPA) and will

be published to the Audit Commission. The social care judgement is for CSCI information only.

Yours sincerely



Flo Hadley

Divisional Manager
Office for Standards in Education



Jonathan Phillips

Director – Quality, Performance and Methods
Commission for Social Care Inspection

NOT FOR WIDER PUBLICATION