

# IMPROVEMENT AND ANNUAL ASSESSMENT OF PERFORMANCE - CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S DIRECTORATE

**Report By: Sue Fiennes, Director of Children's Services**

## Wards Affected

County-wide

## Purpose

1. To advise on the progress on improvement and performance.

## Financial Implications

2. The allocated budget for JAR improvements is on track and has levered external advice and input to assist in the improvement delivered.
3. The recruitment of social workers and family support workers is giving a financial challenge in year (£120,000). However, the permanent recruitment position is alleviating spend on agency staff and where there are strong candidates we are recruiting above establishment.

## Considerations

4. The GOWM Improvement Board for Herefordshire has been put into place, starting in August. The meetings are planned monthly up to March 2007.
5. There are to be 3 reports to the Minister for Children & Families in this period. The first one went at the end of September and advised that the programme was on track. There has been no specific feedback from the first report which should be viewed positively.
6. The success criteria for the work programme and, therefore, the reports to the Minister have been agreed. They are attached at Appendix 1.
7. The JAR summary progress report as of 27th November is attached at Appendix 2.
8. The highlights from this report are:
  - The JAR inspection highlighted the low referral rate to the children's safeguarding and assessment service. The rate of referrals has steadily risen throughout this year from 175 per 10,000 children at the end of 2005/06 to 251 per 10,000 at the end of October 2006. This means that needs are being more promptly and effectively addressed. However, this increased workload is stretching the capacity of the service considerably.
  - Many more assessments of children are being completed. 142 more initial assessments were completed in September than in April. All child protection

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Further information on the subject of this report is available from Sue Fiennes, Director of Children's Services on 01432 260039

referrals are prioritised for urgent completion. However, there is some distance to travel to ensure that the rate of initial assessments completed and completed on time reaches the target for the year. In terms of the ratio of initial assessments to referrals this is standing at 53.7% at the end of September compared with the year-end target for March 2007 of 60%. The Children's Disability Team has increased the number of assessments completed in the last 6 months by 150%. The employment of two additional Family Support workers is contributing to management of the additional workload.

- The current Social Worker establishment is 12.3 per 10,000 population, a total of 46.1 posts. The 'ideal' establishment, subject to available funding, is considered to be 15.3 per 10,000. There are 46.47 substantive Social Workers currently in post although 3.87 of these are covered by Agency staff.
  - By comparison, the performance and outcomes for children with whom the Council is engaged are very positive as indicated by the Performance Assessment Framework (PAF) dataset with all except two of those PAF being banded within level 4 or 5 on the first CSCI cut for the 2005/06 outturn. The two exceptions – cost of services for children looked after (BVPI 51), final warnings/reprimands and convictions of children looked after – are both comfortably within band 3. The participation of children in their reviews has since been corrected and is now accepted as being in excess of 93%.
  - The final IPC (Institute of Public Care) report on the development of performance management in the Children & Young People's Directorate has been produced. The GOWM Improvement Board and the Council have accepted the programme of work and an implementation plan is agreed.
  - The number of families housed in bed and breakfast accommodation has been reduced from 40 in April to 7 at the end of October. The number of families housed in bed and breakfast accommodation for more than 6 weeks has fallen from 28 to 5 over the same period. This has also significantly reduced pressure on the homelessness budget.
  - Three additional properties have been secured for care leavers and nomination rights secured for 4 additional units. There are 14 care leavers who by March 2007 will be 19 and require suitable accommodation; as a result of the recent progress, they are all expected to be in suitable accommodation.
  - The Occupational Therapy Team are continuing to meet their locally set assessment target and have appointed a Team Leader.
9. The overall performance in the Safeguarding & Assessment service is good and this has been recognised in the text of the APA letter.
10. The APA letter is attached at Appendix 3. This confirms the Council's self-assessment agreed by Cabinet in May 2006. This means that with satisfactory scores of 2, the Council has secured a position where there are no inadequate assessments on "Stay Safe" or "Service Management".
11. This gives a good position for further improvement and provides evidence for the GOWM Improvement Board and for reports to the Minister.

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12. The JAR improvement plan comes to a logical end in December 2006. It has been agreed that any outstanding matters transfer to a new reporting arrangement covering the success criteria as outlined in Appendix 2. This will also take account of the priorities emerging from the APA letter (attached at Appendix 1) and the recent Government Office West Midlands' Priorities Meeting held on 13th November.
13. The intention is to integrate the improvement activity into the Children & Young People's Plan for Herefordshire. The Directorate Plan for 2007/08 and beyond will be the revised Children & Young People's Delivery Plan and will include the improvement needed.
14. The Children & Young People's Partnership Board have reviewed progress against the delivery plan and were satisfied with the progress to date.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

**THAT Committee note the performance update and comment on any aspects which may need further inquiry.**

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- Success Criteria Paper, JAR Summary 27th November and APA Letter.