

Overall Performance Improvement Plan: exceptions report to the Leader and Chief Executive from the meeting of the Board on 21 December 2006

Children and young people's services - Status Amber

It was always the attention, agreed with Government and the inspectorates, that the Joint Area Review (JAR) Improvement Plan, produced in response to the JAR report in late 2005, should be substantially completed by the end of 2006, with any remaining actions taken forward as part of mainstream programmes for the improvement of children and young people's services.

The JAR Plan having mostly been completed, the GOWM Herefordshire Council Improvement Project Board has agreed that the continuing work should be rolled up into the wider programme of the Children and Young People's Directorate Improvement Board. This has now happened.

This involves no let up in the pace of improvement: the implementation of the JAR Improvement Plan has laid foundations on which has to be built sustainable long-term success. The coming months, in particular, are crucial, as the GOWM Board takes stock of the Council's progress and performance and recommends to the Government Minister whether the GOWM Board needs to continue beyond 31 March 2007.

In that context, it is significant that, at the GOWM Board meeting on 20 December 2006, the GOWM representatives accepted the attached statement of the achievements the Council had made with its partners in 2006.

Within the context of this record of significant overall achievement, the Overall Performance Improvement Plan Board draws attention to two elements of the original JAR Improvement Plan that will not be achieved within the target timescales.

The first is the **targets for the completion of initial and core assessments of children in need**: initial assessment completion is likely to be 65% to the end of March 2007, against the stated target of 75%; and core assessment completion is likely to be nearer to 70% than the target of 80%.

This is the result of the earlier reported good news about the enormous increase in referrals of children in need. This has meant that, while many more assessments are being carried out, it has not yet been possible to attain the numbers necessary to reach the targets.

Robust arrangements are in place to ensure that all priority needs are being identified and addressed. There is also a well-developed programme to continue to improve performance.

All this was reported to the GOWM Board at its December meeting and accepted by GOWM as a sound response.

The second exception is the **delay in developing a full, multi-agency workforce strategy for children and young people's services**. This was originally scheduled for May 2006 and then, following more detailed consideration of what would be involved, for December 2006.

A Project Initiation Document has now been approved by the Children and Young People's Partnership Board (CYPPB). It is intended that the finalised strategy and implementation plan will be submitted to CYPPB for approval in May 2007.

The GOWM representatives expressed concern about these delays at the December meeting of the GOWM Board. A meeting is to take place between the lead Cabinet member and the Director of Children and Young People's Services and GOWM's Children and Young People's Services Adviser in early January to discuss this and other issues that may affect the Government's judgement as to the need for the continuation of the GOWM Board beyond the end of March 2007.