

# ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT (APA) - UPDATE

**Report By: Director of Children's Services**

## Wards Affected

County-wide

## Purpose

1. To inform Members of the outcome of the Annual Performance Assessment (APA) process in Children's Services and the new priorities.

## Financial Implications

2. There are no financial implications directly from this report though under the Children's Trust the Director of Children's Services will be working with partners to review existing resources and to target these more effectively in future to support our key priorities.

## Background

3. The Annual Performance Assessment is important as it feeds into the overall judgements of the Council inspections. The process involves the review of the current Children's Plan with key partners and a self-evaluation process against the five outcome areas of Every Child matters, which is then tested by inspectors during a one-day visit to the Authority.
4. Following the JAR inspection in 2005 the Authority has been in formal intervention with GOWM and the APA process is keenly aligned to their overall judgement of performance.
5. The APA letter 2007 is attached as Appendix 1 for information.
6. The 2007 Annual Performance Assessment (APA) judged that:  
"Herefordshire Council delivers adequate services for children overall. Children's services are making good contributions to improving the educational achievement and health of children and young people. Provisions for safeguarding children, involving them in their community and equipping them for future prosperity are adequate."
7. A summary of the strengths and areas for development, by outcome, is shown below:

Outcome	Strengths	Areas for development
<b>Be Healthy</b> "The contribution of services to improving	All schools engaged in the Healthy Schools programme and 68% have achieved Healthy Schools Status. Very good progress on provision	Improve the oral health of children and young people

Further information on the subject of this report is available from Sharon Menghini, Director of Children's Services, Tel 01432 260039

outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good"	of a comprehensive Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). Very good access to, and services for, looked after children with health assessments being maintained at 90%.	
<b>Stay Safe</b> "The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is adequate"	Thresholds for service reviewed and understood across agencies Significant increase in numbers of referrals to social care services and proportion of referrals leading to initial assessments Very good compliance with requirements for allocating child protection cases and timeliness of reviews Good arrangements to support looked after children, good placement stability and good quality of care in foster placements	Some weaknesses remain in safeguarding arrangements Falling performance against timescales for initial and core assessments Delay in auditing of compliance with safe recruiting practices across agencies Need to improve provision to combat domestic violence
<b>Enjoy and Achieve</b> "The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good"	Substantial improvement in educational standards at Key Stage 4 since 2005 Good educational outcomes for looked after children, and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities Significant increase in the proportion of schools judged to be good or better	Decreasing standards at Key Stage 1, with writing the weaker of the three measures Recently increased unauthorised absence figures in the secondary sector, focused on specific schools Limited participation in out-of-school activities because of transport challenges and limited variety
<b>Positive Contribution</b> "The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is adequate"	Progress on improving coordination and provision of earlier intervention and preventative services through the development of a comprehensive family support strategy Good consultation processes for children and young people including the Youth Council, school councils, and Shadow Children and Young People Partnership Board	Family support strategy needs finalisation and implementation Need to effectively address the numbers of first-time entrants into the youth justice system, and the rate of recidivism Increase the proportion of young offenders aged 16 and above in education, employment and training
<b>Economic Wellbeing</b> "The contribution of services to improving	Good outcomes for young people in terms of basic qualifications and training Reduction in numbers of 16 to 18 years olds not in education, employment or training, to below	Slow progress towards developing an area-wide programme for 14–19 learning, although now improving More involvement with schools to provide a wider range of vocational opportunities

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outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is adequate, with several good features"	the national average Satisfactory outcomes for 16–19 year old learners and good for vulnerable young people Higher proportion of young apprentices complete their training than nationally	
<b>Service management</b> "The capacity to improve, including the management of children's services is adequate, with some good features"	Good partnerships between agencies to improve health and welfare for children and young people. Good leadership and effective participation by schools Good outcomes for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those looked after Sense of common purpose amongst service managers.	Performance management strengthened but needs to be embedded across all service areas. Downward pressure on resources because of falling rolls Challenge to ensure a sufficient proportion of local authority resources is allocated to children's services.

The overall recommendations from the APA were to:

- Improve dental health of children and young people.
  - Increase compliance with timescales for initial and core assessments.
  - Improve services to combat domestic violence.
  - Complete audit of compliance with safe recruitment practice across agencies.
  - Monitor Key Stage 1 standards to ensure the effectiveness of guided writing programmes.
  - Increase attendance by reducing unauthorised secondary school absence.
  - Complete and implement the family support strategy.
  - Reduce re-offending of young people.
  - Increase the proportion of young offenders in education, employment and training.
  - Deliver the revised strategy for a coherent area-wide 14–19 curriculum that provides access to a wider range of vocational courses.
  - Improve performance management across front-line services.
  - Strengthen the capacity for children's services to influence local priorities by ensuring children's services targets are integral to wider local authority plans.
8. Learning from the inspection process and these judgements the Children's Services Directorate will be working with key partners to ensure our new Children & Young People's Plan meets these priorities effectively. Consultation on this plan begins in January 2008 and will involve a separate report to Scrutiny as well as discussion with other partners and with Children and Young People.
9. Following the result of the APA, GOWM have formally confirmed that Children's Services are no longer in formal intervention and the Minister has approved this recommendation.

## RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Committee note the report.

### Appended Papers

- Appendix 1 - 2007 APA Letter
- Appendix 2 – 2005 JAR Inspection Report

### Background Papers

- None identified.