

REVIEW OF DIRECTORATE AND SERVICE PLAN / PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Report By: Director of Children's Services

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

1. To consider the Performance Digest covering the financial year 2007/08 and the Children and Young People's Directorate Plan 2008-2011.

Financial Implications

2. The Children and Young People's Directorate has an annual revenue budget of approximately £23m (excluding grants and Dedicated Schools Grant), with a capital programme for the Directorate of just under £12m. The Directorate Plan 2008-2011 covers activity funded in the context of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (broadly an assumption of nil growth, except for pay inflation; the budget outturn reports regarding revenue and capital (covered elsewhere in the Scrutiny Committee's agenda); Herefordshire's position as one of the lowest funded authorities in the country, and falling school rolls which will affect the level of Dedicated Schools Grant over the period.

Background

3. The Performance Digest is produced quarterly and is the mechanism for monitoring key performance indicators, both for the Children and Young People's Directorate and the wider Children's Trust. Some of the Year-End outturns for Performance Indicators are sourced from statutory Government returns due for submission in May/July 08. The outturns for these Performance Indicators are subject to change and will not be finalised until validation of these returns.
4. The Directorate Plan 2008-2011, included with the agenda for Members and available to the public on request, covers the Children and Young People's Directorate's contribution to support and deliver Herefordshire's Corporate Plan. The Directorate's Plan also contains the work of the Directorate to support the Children and Young People's Plan. Members will recall that the Children and Young People's Plan is a statutory requirement, covering Children's Trust activities across the Local Authority, partners and children and young people themselves. As part of the creation of the Directorate Plan, performance is assessed and objectives set to improve. The Directorate Plan is put into operation across the Directorate through individual team plans. This is the first year that the Directorate has adopted this approach. Team plans are used by managers to focus and drive activity to achieve the objectives set out in the plan (see pages 20 to 37 of the Directorate Plan).
5. The Performance Digest captures the National and local indicators the Directorate and partners are judged against. Performance indicates the experience of children

and young people in relation to services and contributes to the Annual Performance Assessment and the Corporate Area Assessment. Performance is therefore important for the service users and also for the reputation of the Council.

Digest Considerations

6. The Performance Digest 2007/2008 is included with this agenda, for Members' consideration. Copies are available to the public on request. The Digest is set out under the five outcomes of Every Child Matters, and service management, and provides a headline page for each outcome. Data, including comparative data, is set out in a graphical form for the Performance Assessment Framework (PAF) indicators and Best Value Performance Indicators.
7. In summary, key areas in each of the outcome areas, to which the Committee's attention should be drawn, are set out below:

Be Healthy

8. The number of schools achieving the Healthy Schools Standard (page 11 of 65) finished slightly below target, 74 compared to a target of 78. Quarter 3 data confirmed that 100% of young offenders received appropriate substance misuse assessments and interventions. Quarter 4 data is expected to maintain this position. Excellent performance has been achieved in relation to reducing the percentage of teenage pregnancies (-29.6% against the 1998 baseline). However, these are based on national figures which are 2 years out of date. The directorate is working with the PCT to provide more timely figures to target activity. Good performance has been maintained in the percentage of children who are looked after who had a dental check and an annual health check (90% compared to a target of 93%). The number of Common Assessment Framework (CAF) assessments completed in Phase 1 is probably under reported at 46. A central CAF registry has now been established as part of a countywide roll out and this will ensure a more accurate capture of information.

Staying Safe

9. Performance in relation to looked after children, specifically timeliness of reviews, percentage in foster care or placed for adoption, stability and long term stability of placements has been excellent, ahead of target. The percentage of adoptions has also significantly exceeded the target this year. The number and timescale for completion of core assessments has significantly improved, exceeding target and is probably more in line with statistical neighbours performance (data has yet to be released to verify this).
10. The Directorate experienced significant staff shortages in 2007/08, and this is being in part addressed through overseas recruitment. These shortages had a significant affect on some areas of performance, notably the timeliness of initial assessments which are substantially below the performance of statistical neighbours. The snapshot of percentage of children and young people on the child protection register who are not allocated a social worker (page 23 of 65) was also affected. Members will note that at the snapshot of 11 April 2008, 7.14% were unallocated. This reduced to 0% unallocated by 14 April.
11. The rate of referrals of children in need per 10,000 population aged under 18 (page 19 of 65) has levelled off during the year but is low compared to our statistical neighbours and the national level. The rate continues to be monitored closely by the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Board and the Directorate Management Team.

The number of referrals is linked to initial assessments (page 20 of 65) and the outturn of 52.1% is low compared to target (65%) and performance for the previous year (66%). There continues to be pressure on performance in this area because of the workload and staff shortages (including suitably qualified and experienced social workers) through the year. A recruitment and retention strategy has been put in place and the staffing situation is improving. The percentage of repeat referrals increased compared to 2006/07 (22.1% compared to 20.3%) and was higher than the target of 18%. Performance does compare favourably to statistical neighbours but the Directorate undertook benchmarking and audit work in relation to referrals and assessments, which has led to activity within the Directorate to improve practice.

Enjoy and Achieve

12. The 2007 exam results show improvement on previous year's outturns (pages 35-40 of 65). Excellent performance has been achieved regarding the percentage of young people leaving care with 5 or more GCSEs at A*-C or equivalent (20%) which is likely to be significantly higher than the performance of statistical neighbours and is a proud achievement for this vulnerable group of young people. Sustained excellent performance in relation to the provision of statements of Special Educational Needs was achieved throughout the year (page 39 of 65) with performance remaining at 100%. Absenteeism amongst looked after children, particularly in secondary schools, is an area of concern (pages 35 and 42 of 65). The numbers involved are small and an action plan is being implemented to address the causes.

Make a Positive Contribution

13. The percentage of looked after children who participated in their reviews (page 47 of 66) improved from last year, was ahead of target and continues to show good performance with Herefordshire ahead of its statistical neighbours and in the top performance band. The focus on enabling young people to gain recorded and accredited outcomes has resulted in significant achievement, with national targets exceeded (pg 48 of 65). The proportion of looked after children receiving a final warning, reprimand or conviction has increased in 2007/08, above target and above 2006/07 outturn. We are putting in place timely data capture to ensure a targeted and more immediate response for 2008/09.

Achieve Economic Wellbeing

14. The percentage of 16 -18 year olds not in education, employment or training shows sustained good performance, improving on last years performance by slightly more than the target (page 54 of 66). Performance is still on course to meet the DCSF 2010 target of 4.7%. The percentage of positive Year 11 destinations has increased over 2006/07 performance and exceeded the target. The percentage of 16-19 year olds with learning disabilities and difficulties in employment, education or training has increased from 81.5% to 86%, though the percentage of teenage mothers in Education, Employment & Training has decreased compared with 2006 (see page 52 of 65 for further details). The year end target for the number of families in bed and breakfast accommodation will not be met. There are signs however that the supply of suitable accommodation should improve in the first two quarters of 2008/09, which should improve the situation.

Service Management

15. The Digest contains provisional figures which indicate that there has been an increase in gross expenditure on services for children. There is a significant amount of detail contained in pages. 55 to 64. The increase is accounted for by the increase in expenditure on looked after children, preventative budgets and the increase in social work establishment.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Committee assess the levels of performance achieved in 2007/2008, alongside the Directorate Plan 2008-2011 and consider if further reports and/or actions should be recommended to improve outcomes for children and young people.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Children and Young People's Directorate: Directorate Plan 2008-2011
- Children and Young People's Performance Digest 2007-2008 Year End