

PERFORMANCE DIGEST – APRIL-SEPTEMBER 2008/2009

Report By: Director of Children's Services

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

1. To present the Performance Digest for Children's Service for the half year April to September 2008, and to highlight any issues arising.

Financial Implications

2. Remedial action in respect of the directorate's performance may require reallocation of resources within existing budgets.

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.

Considerations

4. The Performance Digest for the period to the end of September 2008 is attached to this agenda, for Members' consideration. It is set out under the five outcomes of *Every Child Matters*, and service management, and includes a headline page for each outcome. A new National Indicator Set has been introduced for 2008/2009 which will eventually replace all existing Performance Assessment Framework (PAF) indicators and Best Value Performance Indicators.
5. 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

The percentage of children being breastfed at 6-8 weeks (NI 53) has remained constant for the first two quarters of 2008/2009 at around 50%. Many of the indicators in this outcome area rely on survey information – either from the nationally administered Tellus3 survey of children and young people or the local survey of children and young people. The results of the national Tellus3 survey have now been received but there was such a low response rate that a degree of caution will need to be exercised in interpreting the results. The number of Chlamydia screens being undertaken to meet the national target remains a concern although it is an issue nationally. However, the prevalence of Chlamydia in young people (NI 113) at 6.6% is below the national rate of 10%.

Staying Safe

In relation to the percentage of initial assessments for children's social care carried out within 7 working days of referral (NI 59), performance was on an upward trajectory for the first quarter of the year, against of a backdrop of continuing recruitment and retention difficulties. During the second quarter, there were a number of unforeseeable staffing difficulties within the Referral and Assessment Team which has impacted significantly on performance, giving a quarter end figure of 50.6%. This is being proactively and robustly managed and performance is expected to improve in Quarter 3. The percentage of core assessments that were carried out within 35 working days of commencement (NI 60) continues to increase, improving by 7 percentage points in Quarter 2 to 74%. This is on track to meet the year end target of 75%. Performance in relation to looked after children including placement stability, case reviews and allocations to social workers, remains strong. Although the number of referrals per 10,000 population (KIGS CH141) has stabilised at around 250, the percentage of repeat referrals (KIGS CH142) has risen to 24.2%. An audit is being undertaken to identify the reasons for the rising figure.

Enjoy and Achieve

Unvalidated results for Key Stage examinations are available but are still subject to change, prior to final figures being released in January 2009. Herefordshire's GCSE results are the best in the West Midlands. 69.4% of pupils achieved 5 or more A*-C GCSEs, a rise of 7.4% on 2007 and 3.7% above the national average. Those achieving 5 or more grade A*-Cs including English and Maths has risen by nearly 2% to 52.5%. Overall, boys' performance in Herefordshire has gone up by 7.1%. Key Stage 1 remains a key area of focus with results down again in 2008, as does achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Targeted work over the last two years is expected to deliver improvements for Key Stage 1 results in 2009. Achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage has been impacted by the high number of 'summer-born' children, an increase in the number of children with additional needs and those with English as an additional language. The targets for primary and secondary school absence (HCS 33 and 34) for the academic year 2007/2008 were not achieved although performance remained in line with the previous year's outturn at 5.19% and 7.4% respectively. Performance in relation to the percentage of statements of special educational needs prepared and issued within 18 weeks (BV 43a and b) remains strong at 100%.

Make a Positive Contribution

Work with young people through the Youth Service to gain recorded and accredited outcomes (BV 221a and b) remains on track to achieve national targets although performance dipped slightly during the summer. The percentage of young people in care communicating their views in reviews (PAF CF/63) remains strong. However, work is underway to improve the quality assurance and feedback mechanisms for young people in relation to their reviews.

Achieve Economic Wellbeing

The percentage of 16-18 year olds who are not in education, employment or training (NI 117) rose as at the end of Quarter 2 but this is expected as it includes all those young people leaving school and college at the end of the academic year. A more accurate picture will be available at the end of Quarter 3 when it is anticipated that the majority of these young people will have secured either further education, employment or training.

Service Management

The cost of services for looked after children (PAF CF/B8) has risen in the first half of the year as a result of an increase in the number of children and young people requiring placements to meet their specialist and/or complex needs, although the number of children and young people in care has fallen overall. The recruitment and retention of social workers remains a priority for the Council and is on track to have 55 full time

equivalent social workers in post by March 2009, just under the target of 57 set after the 2005 Joint Area Review.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Committee assess the levels of performance achieved for the first half of 2008/2009 and consider if further reports and/or action is judged to be necessary.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- None identified