

COMPREHENSIVE AREA ASSESSMENT AND PERFORMANCE DIGEST – OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2008/2009

Report By: Director of Children's Services

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

1. To summarise the proposals for assessing children's services under the Comprehensive Area Assessment and to present the Performance Digest for Children's Services for the third quarter, October to December 2008. Key issues are highlighted, in particular performance in respect of the Local Area Agreement indicators.

Financial Implications

2. Remedial action in respect of the directorate's performance may require reallocation of resources within existing budgets. This is being addressed by the Directorate Leadership Team.

Background

3. From 1 April 2009, the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) will replace the current Comprehensive Performance Assessment. CAA will assess those outcomes delivered by councils working alone or in partnership. The starting point will be the locally agreed priorities in the Local Area Agreement (LAA) and the Herefordshire Sustainable Community Strategy. The CAA will assess the prospects for the future achievement of these priorities by the Council and its partners. Children and young people will be a key focus within the CAA and will have a rigorous inspection regime, detailed below.
4. The Performance Digest is already produced quarterly and is the mechanism for monitoring key performance indicators, covering service delivery captured in the LAA, the Children and Young People's Directorate and the Children and Young People's Plan. Copies of the digest for the third quarter have been issued to the Committee as a separate document and are available either on the web site or on request.

Considerations

Comprehensive Area Assessment

5. Ofsted has now published its proposals for assessing children's services under CAA. In summary, they are:
 - An annual rating for children's services to comply with the requirements of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 – this was formerly produced through the Annual Performance Assessment

- A new 'performance profile', updated quarterly, based on performance against indicators in the National Indicator Set and inspections of settings and schools
- A new three yearly programme of inspections of services for children in care and safeguarding
- Annual, unannounced safeguarding visits to local authority contact, referral and assessment centres

These are new requirements, replacing the Annual Performance Assessment and the Joint Area Review. They will present a challenging framework of assessment, focusing on partnership working as well as the core business of service delivery by the Council and schools.

Local Area Agreement

6. In addition to the statutory education targets, there are six children related indicators in the LAA. The Quarter 3 outturns for these indicators are highlighted below with the 2010/2011 target shown in brackets:
 - NI 19: Rate of proven re-offending – outturn 67 [*for the six months April to September 2008*] (113)
 - NI 51: Effectiveness of CAMHS – outturn 15 (16)
 - NI 56: Obesity among primary school children in Year 6 – outturn 16.7% (15.3%)
 - NI 57: Children's participation in high quality PE and sport – outturn 95% (96%)
 - NI 110: Young people's participation in positive activities – outturn 86.2% (94%)
 - NI 117: Percentage of 16-18 year olds who are not in education, employment or training [NEET] – outturn 5.9% (4.7%)
7. The one area where there remains concern about meeting the LAA target is in relation to NI 117. This has been impacted by the recession and general downturn in the economy where the percentage of young people who are NEET is higher than this quarter last year. Young people leaving school/college have not been able to access employment and young people who were in jobs are being made redundant. Limited post-16 NEET provision in the county over the last year, due to difficulties with contracting, has also impacted negatively. However, this provision has now come on stream.
8. Work is in progress with the Herefordshire Partnership to identify the risks to the achievement of all the indicators in the LAA and the measures needed to mitigate them.

Performance Digest

9. Aside from the LAA indicators, other key areas in each of the outcome areas, to which the Committee's attention should be drawn, are set out below. The risks to the achievement of all the other indicators are identified by the responsible officer as part of their service planning and escalated to the directorate risk register, and corporate risk register, as appropriate. Day to day management of risk is undertaken by responsible officers in conjunction with their Heads of Service.

Be Healthy

91% of children in care had a dental check and an annual health assessment in 2008 (PAF CF/C19), slightly ahead of the target of 90% and ahead of the statistical neighbour average for 2007/2008 of 87%. 700 young people had a Chlamydia screen in quarter 3 (NI 113b) but this is still well short of the target which is very challenging; engaging young people to be screened opportunistically when they have no symptoms is

particularly difficult. The prevalence of Chlamydia (NI 113a) is 6.71% which is below the national prevalence rate of 10%.

Staying Safe

The new social care system, Frameworki, went live on 10 November 2008. It has proved particularly difficult to extract data for a number of indicators for quarter 3, particularly for children in care. There has been previous good performance in relation to a number of these indicators and there is no reason to believe that performance has slipped. However, as with any new system, it will take time for new working practices to become embedded. The number of referrals (CH141) has risen in the quarter, as expected, because of the change to Frameworki with each child in a sibling group having a separate referral.

Repeat referrals (CH142) are reducing slightly at 21.9% but still above target of 18%. The percentage of initial assessments carried out within 7 working days of referral (NI 59) is still an area for significant concern at 48.4%. Although there is some caution regarding the reliability of the data, performance has been affected by the demands on staff to adapt to the newly introduced Integrated Children's System, alongside the change of ICT system, Frameworki. This has introduced a new and complex workflow system which will, in the long term, enhance performance. However, there have been 'glitches' in the system which have prevented timely completion of some episodes of assessments. The Directorate Leadership Team has taken action to strengthen the support of service delivery in this area by employing temporary Data Improvement Officers within each team, line managed by the Performance Improvement Manager. These posts will be filled for a three month period and will carry out both data input and data quality checking to ensure a consistency of approach across the whole service.

Enjoy and Achieve

Although 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, Key Stage 1 and achievement in the Early Year Foundation Stage remain key areas of focus, as previously reported. Educational attainment of children in care in the 2008 examinations has maintained previous high standards. 11 out of a cohort of 14 sat at least one GCSE or equivalent examination (DIS 1406) and 4 of the cohort achieved 5 A*-C GCSEs including English and Maths (NI 101). Attendance of children in care has also improved in both primary and secondary schools (HCS 35b and c). The percentage of children missing a total of at least 25 days (HCS 35a) has significantly improved from 2007/2008's outturn of 15.4% to 7%.

Make a Positive Contribution

The provisional outturn for final warnings, reprimands and convictions of children in care (PAF CF/18) shows improvement on last year and reflects the work undertaken by the Youth Offending Service and the multi-agency Prevent and Deter Group. The Youth Service is on track to achieve its target of young people gaining an accredited outcome (BV 221b) but is unlikely to achieve the target for young people gaining a recorded outcome (BV 221a).

Achieve Economic Wellbeing

The limited post-16 NEET provision referred to above has also impacted on young offenders' engagement in education, training and employment (NI 45) although it is anticipated that the target will be achieved. The number of families occupying bed and breakfast accommodation (CYP-AEW1) has achieved the target of zero for quarter 3. This is despite the increase in the number of families accepted as homeless.

Service Management

There has been a slight decrease in the social care expenditure indicators during quarter 3 due to a reduction in fostering numbers and the cost of agency placements. Vacancy rates in children's social care remain a concern. The percentage of posts that were vacant at the quarter end was 13.5%, considerably higher than the 2007/2008 outturn of 7.4%. Recruitment and retention of social workers remains a key area of focus for the directorate. The social worker establishment currently stands at 44.2 FTE against a target of 57 FTE. The number of working days lost to sickness absence per FTE across the directorate stands at 11.56 days, above the target of 8 days (HR02).

RECOMMENDATION

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

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- None identified