

PERFORMANCE UPDATE FOLLOWING THE JOINT AREA REVIEW AND THE ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF THE COUNCIL'S CHILDREN'S SERVICES

PROGRAMME AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY: CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

CABINET

16TH NOVEMBER, 2006

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

To advise Cabinet of the progress to date on performance and improvement.

Key Decision

This is not a Key Decision.

Recommendation

THAT Cabinet notes the progress and welcomes the Annual Performance Assessment (APA) outcome as the sound platform for further improvement.

Reasons

To ensure Cabinet has an up to date understanding of the position and priorities going forward.

Financial Implications

The allocated budget for JAR improvements is on track and has levered external advice and input to assist in the improvement delivered.

The recruitment of social workers and family support workers is giving a financial challenge in year (£120,000). However, the permanent recruitment position is alleviating spend on agency staff and where there are strong candidates we are recruiting above establishment. This has a link to the Corporate Plan paper considered by Cabinet on 26th October and the spend to mitigate proposals which were supported in principle only at this stage.

Considerations

1. Since the last report to Cabinet the arrangements for the GOWM Improvement Board for Herefordshire have been put into place, starting in August. The meetings are planned monthly up to March 2007.
2. There are to be 3 reports to the Minister for Children & Families in this period. The

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
Sue Fiennes, Director of Children's Services on 01432 260039

first one went at the end of September and advised that the programme was on track.

3. The success criteria for the work programme and, therefore, the reports to the Minister have been agreed. They are attached at Appendix 1.
4. The Children's Services Scrutiny Committee considered the JAR progress report at its meeting on 6th October, 2006. The Committee was pleased to note the progress and wanted to examine further the progress of looked after children in suitable housing and this will form a joint inquiry with the Adult Social Care and Strategic Housing Committee to be arranged in the next period.
5. The JAR summary progress report as of 30th October is attached at Appendix 2.

The highlights from this report are:

- The JAR inspection highlighted the low referral rate to the children's safeguarding and assessment service. The rate of referrals has steadily risen throughout this year from 175 per 10,000 children at the end of 2005/06 to 242 per 10,000 at the end of September 2006. This means that needs are being more promptly and effectively addressed. However, this increased workload is stretching the capacity of the service considerably.
- Many more assessments of children are being completed. 142 more initial assessments were completed in September than in April. All child protection referrals are prioritised for urgent completion. The Children's Disability Team has increased the number of assessments completed in the last 6 months by 150%. However, there is some distance to travel to ensure that the rate of initial assessments completed and completed on time reaches the target for the year. In terms of the ratio of initial assessments to referrals this is standing at 53.7% at the end of September compared with the year-end target for March 2007 of 60%. The employment of two additional Family Support workers is contributing to management of the additional workload.
- The current Social Worker establishment is 12.3 per 10,000 population, a total of 46.1 posts. The 'ideal' establishment, subject to available funding, is considered to be 15.3 per 10,000. There are 39.3 substantive Social Workers currently in post leaving a total of 6.8 vacancies, although some of these are covered by Agency staff. There are 4.5 Social Workers appointed and due to start within the next couple of months and we have recently received a further 4 applications, of which 2 may be suitable candidates. Alongside this, we are currently exploring the possibility of recruiting Social Workers from overseas (USA). A proposal will be brought forward for formal approval if this is considered to be viable following initial exploration.
- By comparison, the performance and outcomes for children with whom the Council is engaged are very positive as indicated by the PAF dataset with all except two of those PAF being banded within level 4 or 5 on the first CSCI cut for the 2005/06 outturn. The two exceptions – cost of services for children looked after (BVPI 51), final warnings/reprimands and convictions of children looked after – are both comfortably within band 3. The participation of children in their reviews has since been corrected and is now accepted as being in excess of 93%. The PAF banding sheet is attached at Appendix 3.
- The final IPC (Institute of Public Care) report on the development of performance

management in the Children & Young People's Directorate has been produced and presented to the GOWM Herefordshire Challenge and Support Board, with an initial implementation timetable. A further report with a detailed implementation timetable will be presented to the Board at its November meeting.

- The number of families housed in bed and breakfast accommodation has been reduced from 40 in April to 12 in September. The number of families housed in bed and breakfast accommodation for more than 6 weeks has fallen from 28 to 5 over the same period. This has also significantly reduced pressure on the homelessness budget.
 - Since the last report the purchase of a third additional unit of accommodation for care leavers has been completed and a care leaver has been housed there. There are 14 care leavers who by March 2007 will be 19 and require suitable accommodation; as a result of the recent progress, they are all expected to be in suitable accommodation.
 - The Occupational Therapy Team are continuing to meet their locally set assessment target and have appointed a Team Leader.
 - The Children & Young People's Forward Delivery Plan was approved by the Children & Young People's Partnership Board at its meeting on 11th September.
6. The overall performance in the Safeguarding & Assessment service is good as evidenced by Appendix 3. This has been recognised in the text of the APA letter.
7. The APA letter is attached at Appendix 4. This confirms the Council's self-assessment agreed by Cabinet in May 2006. This means that with satisfactory scores of 2, the Council has secured a position where there are no inadequate assessments on "Stay Safe" or "Service Management".

This gives a good position for further improvement and provides evidence for the GOWM Improvement Board and for reports to the Minister.

Alternative Options

There are no alternative options

Risk Management

The status of the JAR aspect of the overall Council Improvement Plan is AMBER. This reflects the ongoing workload pressure in Safeguarding & Assessment and the further need to demonstrate performance management progress via the GOWM Board.

However, in terms of targets and milestones in the JAR improvement plan the assessment is they are on track at GREEN.

Consultees

JAR Progress Team
Children & Young People's Partnership Board

Background Papers

Previous Cabinet reports.