

**TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL**

**CABINET - 15 SEPTEMBER 2008**

**JOINT AREA REVIEW REPORT**

**REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

**1 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To present to Cabinet the Ofsted Joint Area Review Report for Telford & Wrekin Children's Services Authority Area and proposals to develop our response to the report.

**2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

**2.1 That Cabinet:**

- **notes the Joint Area Review Report;**
- **endorses the proposals to develop an action plan to take forward the recommendations**

**3 TELFORD & WREKIN JOINT AREA REVIEW**

- 3.1 In May 2008, Telford & Wrekin underwent a **Joint Area Review** (JAR) led by Ofsted to assess the contribution of local services in ensuring that children and young people:
- at risk, or requiring safeguarding are effectively cared for
  - who are looked after achieve the best possible outcomes
  - with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve the best possible outcomes
- 3.2 An additional investigation was also carried out to assess the quality of the partners' strategy for addressing teenage conception rates and providing support for young parents.
- 3.3 An **Enhanced Youth Inspection** (EYI) took place alongside the JAR and focused on 3 key aspects of youth service provision.
- 3.4 A concurrent joint inspection of the Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin **Youth Offending Service** took place in February 2008 and its findings were fed into the JAR.

- 3.5 The JAR focused primarily on the most vulnerable children and young people and used our 2007 annual performance assessment (APA) as a starting point for the inspection. The review covered publicly-funded services for children and young people in the borough, including those that are directly managed or commissioned by the council, as well as services provided by health and youth justice services. The review also covered the leadership and management of services for children and young people and, in particular, the way that our services work together to improve outcomes. The JAR evaluated how well all our services, when taken together, improve the well-being of children and young people in the borough.
- 3.6 The JAR involved an initial assessment week in April which focused on case file reviews, documentary evidence, APA data sets and our Children's Trust's Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP). This was followed in May by an on-site inspection fortnight involving interviews, focus groups and observations with members, officers, partner agencies, children and young people and their carers.

#### 4 INSPECTION FINDINGS

- 4.1 We have now received all three reports and they are available from the Education and Learning front page on our council Internet site. They can also be accessed directly from:

JAR	<a href="http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/oxcare_providers/la_download/(id)/4434/(as)/JAR/jar_2008_894_fr.pdf">http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/oxcare_providers/la_download/(id)/4434/(as)/JAR/jar_2008_894_fr.pdf</a>
EYI	<a href="http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/oxcare_providers/la_download/(id)/4435/(as)/JAR/jar_2008_894_ys.pdf">http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/oxcare_providers/la_download/(id)/4435/(as)/JAR/jar_2008_894_ys.pdf</a>
YOS	<a href="http://inspectors.homeoffice.gov.uk/hmiprobation/inspect_reports/yot-inspections.html/Shropshire_Telford_and_Wrek1.pdf?view=Binary">http://inspectors.homeoffice.gov.uk/hmiprobation/inspect_reports/yot-inspections.html/Shropshire_Telford_and_Wrek1.pdf?view=Binary</a>

- 4.2 The inspections were all judged as good with an overall rating of 3, making a significant contribution to the overall excellent Corporate Assessment score. Inspectors assessed that *'partnership working is excellent, including through Children's Trust arrangements but also across the wider agenda of regeneration, skills and economic development.'* They observed that *'capacity is enhanced by highly committed officers and staff who have developed effective relationships across the council and partner agencies at both strategic and operational levels, supported well by good training and professional development opportunities.'*

- 4.3 The inspectors rated our ambition for children and young people as *'outstanding'* and recognised the interweaving with ambitions for the wider community. They supported the localisation agenda being at the *'heart of strategic development, not only for children and young people but also for the wider citizenry of the borough.'* They confirmed that ambitions are well embedded and *'firmly owned at the highest levels of the council and partner organisations, including strong commitment from the Chief Executives of the council and the primary care trust.'*
- 4.4 The inspectors were very complimentary about the new CYPP which *'contains a clear vision, underpinned by an excellent and sustained focus on the Every Child Matters principles of early intervention and prevention, narrowing the gap, and delivery of multi-disciplinary, inter-agency services in localities'* and *'identifies a manageable number of key priorities, shared by all partners and based on very good knowledge of local need in clusters'*.
- 4.5 The inspectors praised our *'outstanding multi-agency preventative and family support services delivered through local clusters'* and reported that *'all child protection case conferences were held on time and within timescales.'* They assessed that there was *'effective partnership work to secure a comprehensive Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and that 'good arrangements promote physical and mental health, and secure education for those not at school.'* They also confirmed that we take *'effective action to identify and respond to risk.'*
- 4.6 The inspectors found that *'partners have a strong and effective commitment to looked after children'* and that there is *'strong participation of looked after children in service planning and delivery.'* They identified that there was a wide range of services to *'promote learning and personal development'* and that we have *'very good service and outcomes for care leavers.'*
- 4.7 The inspectors rated as *'good'* our *'health provision for children with physical disabilities in mainstream schools'* and confirmed that our *'Common Assessment Framework and Team Around the Child arrangements ensure cohesive and flexible support to families to keep children within the family.'* They also highlighted our *'good support services for children with visual and hearing impairment'* and our *'very good range of leisure and recreational opportunities.'*
- 4.8 Engagement with children and young people and their parents/carers was highly rated - *care leavers receive very good support ..... involvement of children and young people at both strategic and operational levels is very good, including hard to reach groups ..... parents and carers of young children with disabilities receive very good support ..... very good communication between health and social care agencies promotes a cohesive and responsive service to families.*

4.9 Youth work provision in Telford & Wrekin is '*flexible and responsive*', with young people's achievement among those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities rated as '*outstanding*'. Youth work is delivered by '*workers who are well qualified, motivated, experienced and respected by young people*' and the analysis of young people's needs is '*comprehensive and coherent*'.

4.10 A key purpose of the inspections is to assist us in identifying areas for further development. The inspectors recognised that improvements could be achieved around quality assurance and performance management arrangements, use of performance data, case file allocation and monitoring, social care capacity and further reduction in teenage conceptions.

4.11 The reports' main findings can be found at Appendices 1 to 3. The grades assessed for each inspection are:

Joint Area Review	Local services overall
Safeguarding	2
Looked after children	3
Learning difficulties and/or disabilities	3
Service management	3
Capacity to improve	3

Enhanced Youth Inspection key aspect		Grade
1	Standards of young people's achievement	3
	Quality of youth work practice	3
2	Quality of curriculum and resources	3
3	Leadership and management	3

Youth Offending Service Inspection criteria	Judgement
<b>Work in the courts</b>	3
<b>Work with children and young people in the community</b>	
Work with children and young people at risk of offending	3
Work with children and young people who have offended	3

Work with parents/carers	3
Outcomes of work with children and young people in the community	3
<b>Work with children and young people subject to custodial sentences</b>	3
<b>Victims and restorative justice</b>	3
<b>Management and leadership</b>	3

4: outstanding      3: good      2: adequate      1: inadequate

4.12 These results are an affirmation of the commitment of all partners to improving the well-being and outcomes for all children and young people in the borough and to securing continuous service improvement.

## **5 PROPOSALS TO DEVELOP AN ACTION PLAN TO TAKE FORWARD THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

5.1 We will circulate the report locally to our partners, the Local Safeguarding Children Board and the local media. The report will also be made available through our council website and copies will be sent to local services and service users.

5.2 We have seventy working days from the publication of the JAR and EYI reports on 9 September to consult with partners and draw up action plans to respond to findings and address recommendations in the reports. It is proposed that development, ratification, publication and monitoring of the action plans are carried out by our Children's Trust Board. Circulation of the plans will be as for the reports and also to Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills and the Secretary of State.

5.3 Following consultation with partners, an action plan arising from the Youth Offending Service inspection has already been drawn up and approved by the lead inspector. The Youth Justice Board Regional Manager has the responsibility for overseeing implementation of the plan and it is also being monitored by the Children's Trust Board.

5.4 A key requirement for us in the development of all action plans is to ensure that they integrate, where possible, with our existing consultation, planning and performance cycles to ensure that we monitor the outcomes in a timely and robust way.

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### JOINT AREA REVIEW – MAIN FINDINGS

The main findings of this joint area review are as follows:

- The contribution of local services to improving outcomes for children and young people at risk or requiring safeguarding is adequate. Outstanding family support services are delivered through five local integrated multi-agency cluster teams and aligned networks which provide effective early support for families. Good arrangements promote physical and mental health, and secure education for those not at school. Although appropriate action protects children at risk of harm, the quality of practice in social care services is variable which means that not all children receive timely and purposeful support.
- The contribution of local services to improving outcomes for looked after children and young people is good. Partners have a strong and effective commitment to looked after children. Regular consultation with young people helps shape and improve the services they receive. Care plans vary in quality but effective multi-agency collaboration ensures outcomes are good for most children and young people. GCSE results are in line with similar councils, however there are high levels of absence from school. Care leavers receive very good support.
- The contribution of local services to improving outcomes for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. Well-established partnership working provides responsive, local services for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their families. Specialist services are valued highly by schools and parents although access to support for autistic spectrum disorder is inconsistent. Whilst progress in school is often good, the council does not use borough-wide performance data well enough to evaluate the impact of its inclusion strategy.
- The quality of the partners' strategy for addressing teenage conception rates and providing support for young parents is adequate. Young people receive a good range of information, advice, and support around relationships and sexual health. Young parents are well supported. However, taken together, the work of partners has not had sufficient impact on reducing the high teenage pregnancy rate. It is too early to judge whether the significant but very recent reductions in the teenage pregnancy rate are part of a firm downward trend.
- Service management is good with good capacity to improve further. Commitment to fulfilling the ambitions for children and young people is strong at all levels of the council and partner organisations. The involvement of children and young people at both strategic and operational levels is very good. A new, more focused Children and Young People's Plan is in place to deliver key priorities, supported by very good partnership working which enhances capacity. Performance

management arrangements are adequate but with areas for improvement.

### ENHANCED YOUTH INSPECTION – MAIN FINDINGS

Youth work provision in Telford and Wrekin is good, and the local authority sufficiently secures its provision. The integration of youth and Connexions services in 2007 has progressed quickly and effectively, producing a more coherent service for young people. Their achievement is good, especially in vulnerable groups. The outcomes of well-targeted project work are very positive and, for young people with learning difficulties and disabilities, outstanding. However, the narrow range and restricted availability of accreditation are denying a significant proportion of young people the opportunity formally to recognise their achievements. Youth work practice is strong, and workers typically enjoy good relationships with young people. There is a good mix of qualifications and experience, which is well deployed and supplemented by expertise from partner organisations. Young people's needs are thoroughly analysed at all levels, and responsive programmes are developed by youth workers to meet them. Youth work provision is dynamic and flexible, and, for target groups, is inclusive and well differentiated. Access to provision is variable, and in some locations there is a significant lack of suitable accommodation. Access to information and communications technology (ICT) is also too limited. Leadership and management are good. The business plan is clear and consistent with those of partners. Partnerships are very strong and varied. Management information and quality assurance of practice are barely adequate, although a single quality assurance system for C4Y is beginning to enhance sessional youth work assessments with the assessment of individual practice.

### YOUTH OFFENDING SERVICE INSPECTION – MAIN FINDINGS

#### Work in the courts

- The YOS had staff who undertook specific court roles using its clearly defined court procedures. Two experienced staff members acted as mentors to new staff and students.
- Pre-sentence report writers proof-read reports and passed them to their relevant manager for a further review. All reports were checked by court staff before being presented to the court.
- In all the cases seen in the inspection pre-sentence reports differentiated between the likelihood of reoffending and the Risk of Harm to others.

#### Work with children and young people in the community

- Both local authorities were trailblazers and held beacon status in developing integrated children's services in line with the Every Child Matters agenda.
- The Youth Inclusion Support Panel linked to the Common Assessment Framework, the Team Around the Child and lead professional model.
- In the three years preceding the inspection, the YOS had developed a risk led approach. This helped to ensure that resources were targeted at children and young people with the highest Risk of Harm, likelihood of reoffending and safeguarding concerns.
- Employment, training and education staff were notified of all children and young people not in full-time provision. They liaised with key employment, training and education stakeholders on behalf of the YOS, with the aim of achieving alternative education provision for individual children and young people.
- Over three-quarters of cases had evidence that the active engagement of parents/carers had been facilitated by the work of the YOS.
- Progress against the first priority criminogenic factor was noted in 70% of cases involving children and young people who had offended.
- Few Risk of Harm assessments addressed victims' issues.
- Records did not adequately address safeguarding work in almost half of the relevant cases.

#### Work with children and young people subject to custodial sentences

- In three-quarters of the relevant cases the link social worker attended the final review meeting in the secure establishment. Vulnerability action plans had been completed in the same proportion of cases.
- Effective action on compliance had been taken in two-thirds of cases.
- Three-quarters of cases showed that the learning outcomes achieved by the children and young people had been applied in their daily lives.
- Few cases could show that the escalation processes, in which staff brought to the attention of managers problems in accessing relevant

health or education services, had helped practitioners to access the required resources.

### **Victims and restorative justice**

- A comprehensive restorative justice strategy and a clear action plan were evident. The YOS's performance in this area compared favourably with its YJB defined family and the West Midlands area as a whole.
- Children and young people subject to final warnings, who were not offered an intervention programme, were asked to write a letter of apology/explanation where appropriate.
- Almost all of the cases had evidence to show that victims' needs had been sufficiently assessed.
- Whilst the numbers had been increasing, at the time of the inspection only half of the cases showed that children and young people had been involved in reparation work.

### **Management and leadership**

- The YOS had adapted to the differing needs of the two local authorities to ensure that services were provided through locally available structures.
- Performance was monitored by exception reporting. Action plans were driven by the performance manager through reports to team managers. Disaggregated reports to the two individual authorities were provided and performance information was shared with the whole staff group.
- YOS staff used the Common Assessment Framework to collect and share information and the Team Around the Child to enable staff to work in partnership.
- The risk led approach helped the YOS to focus on Risk of Harm, likelihood of offending and safeguarding. Through restructuring the service and the introduction of risk led national standards, the YOS had organised itself on the principle of resources following risk.
- YOS staff received regular supervision. All managers had undertaken an effective supervision course and had completed all the essential corporate management training.
- There was insufficient evidence of outcome data being used to drive forward developments in the organisation. The YOS was not confident about the accuracy of first-time entrants and reoffending rate data.
- The financial contribution of the National Health Service Trusts did not meet the Youth Justice Board guidance, and formal agreements between the YOS and health services did not encompass the comprehensive provision of physical and mental health services.