

**THE COMPREHENSIVE AREA ASSESSMENT: ANNUAL RATING OF COUNCIL  
CHILDREN'S SERVICES FOR 2009**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. This report informs Members of Scrutiny of the new arrangements for grading children's services functions in a local authority area.

**Summary**

2. In May 2009, Ofsted published a series of documents detailing how its inspection of children's services will be conducted under the new Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA). The previous rating system for children's services was based on evidence of performance and outcomes in each of the 5 Every Child Matters criteria.
3. The new criteria will be based on 3 blocks of judgments
  - (a) The findings from regular and ongoing inspection (Block A) e.g. childminders, childcare, schools, post-16 education and social care.
  - (b) Findings from safeguarding and looked after children inspections (Block B) e.g. full inspections of safeguarding and looked after children, annual unannounced inspections of social care duty rooms, triggered inspections, serious case review findings.
  - (c) Performance against Every Child Matters indicators from the National Indicator Set (Block C).
4. The new system of inspection also includes a 'harder test' of services. For illustration, Ofsted will use fixed performance bands to determine the gradings of services, using a traffic light system. These are set out below.
5. Performance Bands

80% of services, settings and institutions judged good or better	Dark green
65–79% judged good or better	Light green
50–64% judged good or better	Amber
under 50% judged good or better	Red

6. The bands clearly indicate that an amber light is attached to any services where up to 64% are judged to be good or better.
7. The 'harder test' is demonstrated by the fact that a service which scores as 100% satisfactory would, under the new system, be marked red and deemed to be poorly performing.

### **Recommendation(s)**

8. It is recommended that:-
  - (a) It is recommended that Members note the contents of this report.

**Murray Rose,  
Director of Children's Services**

### **Background Papers**

Murray Rose Extension 2099

S17 Crime and Disorder	This report has no implications for crime and disorder
Health and Well Being	This report has no implications for Health and wellbeing
Sustainability	This report has no implications for sustainability
Diversity	This report has no implications for diversity
Wards Affected	All wards
Groups Affected	Children, Young people, Families and Carers
Budget and Policy Framework	This report has no implications for this area
Efficiency	This report has no implications for this area
Key Decision	This is not a key decision
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	The judgement awarded by Ofsted may affect our ability to deliver aspects of the Sustainable Community Strategy

## MAIN REPORT

### Information and Analysis

9. The Education Inspection Act 2006 requires Ofsted to provide an annual performance rating for each local authority children's services. Ofsted will provide this rating as one element of its contribution to the new joint inspectorate Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA).
10. Ofsted's annual performance rating of council children's services will contribute significantly to the managing performance theme of each council's CAA organisational assessment and therefore to the score of each council overall.
11. From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009 there is a greater focus on the findings from Ofsted inspection and regulation in the annual rating of Children's Services. This reflects the importance of good or better services in improving outcomes for children and young people.
12. The new annual rating will draw on findings from across Ofsted's inspection and regulation of the services and settings for which the council is strategically or operationally responsible, including safeguarding, and place less emphasis on other performance data.
13. It will be published each November as part of the CAA organisational assessment.
14. Evidence in the profile is arranged into three main blocks:
  - (a) The findings from regular and ongoing inspection (Block A) e.g. Early Years, schools, post-16 education and social care.
  - (b) Findings from safeguarding and looked after children inspections (Block B) e.g. full inspections of safeguarding and looked after children, annual unannounced inspections, JARs, triggered inspections, serious case review findings.
  - (c) Performance against Every Child Matters indicators from the NIS (Block C).
15. The performance profile uses a set of four fixed performance bands to summarise the performance of inspected and regulated services. The application of the four performance bands assists analysis and interpretation. The cut-off points for bands will be reviewed annually to ensure they are achievable but continue to drive improvement.
16. Performance Bands

80% of services, settings and institutions judged good or better	Dark green
65–79% judged good or better	Light green
50–64% judged good or better	Amber
under 50% judged good or better	Red

17. The profile also provides details of the proportion of settings or services judged as inadequate and the number of inspections undertaken.
18. The second section of the profile sets out the findings of the new unannounced inspections of safeguarding and services for looked after children; annual unannounced inspections; relevant joint area review inspection findings in relation to safeguarding and looked after children; findings from any triggered inspection; and serious case review evaluation findings.
19. The third part of the profile groups the relevant indicators from the National Indicator Set (NIS) under the five Every Child Matters headings. In 2009 performance against the NIS will be assessed as part of the Ofsted rating by comparing the performance of the council to that of similar areas and the national average. However, the suitability of applying fixed performance bands to indicators in future will be considered.
20. The performance profile will be updated quarterly to take account of new findings and will contain the most up to date available NIS indicators.
21. Ofsted will use the performance profile to arrive at the annual rating of council children's services, with the emphasis being on the first two sections. Ofsted will use indicators from the NIS to support its process for arriving at the annual rating.
22. The rating takes into account the following key elements of performance:
  - (a) the proportion of inspected and regulated services, settings and institutions across the designated categories judged good or better in their last inspection
  - (b) the proportion of inspected and regulated services, settings and institutions across the designated categories judged inadequate in their last inspection
  - (c) findings from the annual unannounced inspections of contact, assessment and referral for children in need or who may be in need of protection; and the findings from full safeguarding and looked after children inspections
  - (d) findings from any triggered inspections of council children's services (when available)
  - (e) joint area review inspection judgements on safeguarding and looked after children
  - (f) relevant findings from any serious case review evaluations that may have been conducted
  - (g) performance against Every Child Matters indicators from the NIS, including local performance against statistical neighbours and national figures
  - (h) trends over time (where available).
23. In considering the performance in Block A, Ofsted will take into account the number of inspection results included for each type of setting or service and the importance of the service or setting in serving children and young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable.

24. In Block B Ofsted will always take account of evidence where performance is strong and will also consider the quality of serious case reviews evaluated by Ofsted since April 2007.
25. A provisional view of performance will be formed using evidence in Block A and in Block B. This will then be subject to further tests using the evidence in block C before arriving at the final rating.
26. The first rating will be published at the end of November 2009 on the Ofsted website. At the same time, the joint inspectorate CAA report, incorporating the area assessment and organisational assessments will be published by the Audit Commission on behalf of the inspectorates.
27. The annual rating will use the joint inspectorate CAA scoring labels.

Performs excellently	An organisation that significantly exceeds minimum requirements
Performs well	An organisation that exceeds minimum requirements
Performs adequately	An organisation that meets only minimum requirements
Performs poorly	An organisation that does not meet minimum requirements

28. Where outcomes are not good enough or where they are not improving, and where not enough is being done to remedy this, inspectorates will challenge the effectiveness of partnerships such as Children's Trusts, including through the award of red flags, as set out in the joint inspectorate CAA framework.
29. The graded judgement for children's services have a significant bearing on the overall managing performance score and therefore on the council score as a whole.

### **Outcome of Consultation**

30. Not Applicable.