
CHILDREN'S SERVICES ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT 2007

**Responsible Cabinet Member - Cllr Chris McEwan, Children & Young People Portfolio
Responsible Director – Murray Rose, Director of Children's Services**

Purpose of Report

1. To inform Members of the outcome from the Annual Performance Assessment (APA) of Darlington Borough Council's Children's Services for 2007.

Information and Analysis

2. The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) is required by Section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 to undertake an annual review of each local authority's children's services and to award a performance rating for them. Annual Performance Assessment discharges these duties. The rating awarded is also used as the rating for the children and young people's block in the Audit Commission's comprehensive performance assessment of local authority services.
3. A full review of the process was undertaken in 2006 and as a result the following changes have been applied to the methodology this year:
 - (a) A shorter process with no separate self-assessment, but use of the Children and Young People's Plan Review instead
 - (b) No separate judgement or grade for children's social care; and
 - (c) Grades now awarded for each of the five outcomes for children and young people.
4. Attached at **Appendix A** is a letter from Ofsted that summarises the findings of the 2007 Annual Performance Assessment for Darlington. It should be noted that the data profile used to inform the APA judgements is the validated 2006 data, and not data from 2007. The inspectors note the positive trend of the (as yet) unvalidated 2007 data. The letter highlights both areas of strength and areas for development. Judgements are ranked from 1 to 4 (where 4 is the highest and 1 the lowest). The final judgement scores for Darlington's Annual Performance Assessment are as follows:

Areas for judgement	Grade awarded
Overall effectiveness of Children's Services	3
Being Healthy	4
Staying Safe	3
Enjoying and Achieving	2
Making a Positive Contribution	4
Achieving Economic Well-being	3
Capacity to improve, including the management of children's services	3

5. The table below provides a descriptor for each score.

Grade	Service descriptors	Capacity to improve descriptors
4	A service that delivers well above minimum requirements for users	outstanding
3	A service that consistently delivers above minimum requirements for users	Good
2	A service that delivers only minimum requirements for users	Adequate
1	A service that does not deliver minimum requirements for users	Inadequate

6. Areas of strength identified through the assessment include:

- (a) we know our services well
- (b) our improvement actions are all appropriate
- (c) our performance management
- (d) our ambitious plans to raise standards and to reduce exclusions and truancy
- (e) joint funded posts with the PCT to improve the delivery of health and well being
- (f) all schools wishing to achieve Healthy Schools status
- (g) support for young offenders misusing substances and/or requiring access to CAMHS provision
- (h) an excellent fostering service
- (i) street management, including lighting and cycle paths, to promote safety
- (j) support for schools causing concern
- (k) our strategy to empower young people to have a greater voice and influence over local decision making
- (l) strong partnership work to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour; and
- (m) increasing numbers of young people being accepted into higher education

7. Areas identified for development over the course of the next year include:

- (a) Accelerate plans to reduce further the number of decayed, missing and filled teeth in children aged 5 to 14
- (b) Closely monitor child protection activity to bring about improvement in deficit areas
- (c) Closely monitor progress on looked after children and young people's long-term stability to ensure improvement
- (d) Raise standards in Key Stage 1 and in secondary schools
- (e) Reduce the absence and exclusion rates
- (f) Help more schools to provide an outstanding education
- (g) Accelerate progress with all aspects of the 14-19 strategy
- (h) Agree and implement arrangements to assure the quality of education and workplace provision; and
- (i) Increase secondary schools' confidence in the authority's capacity to support them effectively.

These will be prioritised for action within the Children and Young People's Plan and the Service Plans of the Children's Services Department.

Outcome of Consultation

8. There has been no consultation in respect of the Children's Services APA rating. This is an external judgement of Darlington's Children's Services, subject to national moderation and inspection processes.

Legal Implications

9. This report has been considered by the Borough Solicitor for legal implications in accordance with the Council's approved procedures. There are no issues which the Borough Solicitor considers need to be brought to the specific attention of Members, other than those highlighted in the report.

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998

10. The contents of this report have been considered in the context of the requirements placed on the Council by Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, namely, the duty on the Council to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area. It is not considered that the contents of this report have any such effect.

Council Policy Framework

11. The issues contained within this report do not represent change to Council policy or the Council's policy framework.

Decision Deadline

12. For the purpose of the 'call-in' procedure this does not represent an urgent matter.

Recommendation

13. It is recommended that Members note the content of this report.

Reason

14. To inform Members of the current performance of Darlington Borough Council's Children's Services.

Murray Rose
Director of Children's Services

Background Papers

Annual Performance Self-Assessment 2007
Annual Performance Assessment Data Set

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