
Meeting of the Executive Members for Children's Services and Advisory Panel

6 December 2007

Report of the Director of Learning, Culture and Children's Services

ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT AND PREPARATION FOR THE JOINT AREA REVIEW

Summary

1. This report is presented to Executive Members and Advisory Panel to brief members on the outcome of York's Annual Performance Assessment for 2007 and to also describe the preparation underway for the Joint Area Review process in January/February 2008.

Background

2. To clarify, the **Annual Performance Assessment (APA)** is the nationally determined OFSTED process by which a judgement is made on the quality of local children and young people's services. The judgement formed contributes to the overall council rating for 2007 and also helps define the areas of specific and additional investigation to be undertaken in the February 2008 Joint Area Review. Feedback of the views of young people through the Tellus 2 survey is also available to the process. Through the APA process authorities receive a judgement on each of the 5 Outcomes, the contribution of the council's children's services in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people and finally the council's capacity to improve its services for children and young people
3. **Joint Area Reviews (JARs)** are also led by OFSTED and evaluate how local services work together to contribute to the achievements, progress and well-being of children and young people growing up in an area against the five outcomes identified in Every Child Matters. It incorporates the inspection of youth services and replaces the separate inspections of local education authorities, local authorities' social services, Connexions services and the provision for students aged 14-19. Normally, as is the case in York the JAR is carried out at the same time as the Audit Commission's corporate assessment of the council and where appropriate is aligned with the inspection of youth offending teams undertaken by HMI Probation. The services reviewed in the JAR include council services, health services, police and probation services, and publicly funded services provided by voluntary bodies. Evidence from other inspections, such as schools, further education colleges and residential settings contribute to the review. The JAR inspection

teams are multi-disciplinary and normally have inspectors from at least four inspectorates/commissions, including OFSTED, the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI), the Health Care Commission (HCC), the Audit Commission and, where appropriate, the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI). Inspectors spend 2/3 weeks in authorities analysing and investigating areas of practice across the spectrum of children's services.

4. In April 2007 OFSTED announced changes to the Annual Performance Assessment (APA) process with a removal of the separate self-evaluation documentation and a refresh of the statutory Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) being used to inform the APA discussion. As a result York produced such a refresh document in June 2007. There were in addition, changes introduced to the way that the final group of authorities subject to Joint Area Reviews (JARs) would be inspected. All authorities will have been through the JAR process by 2009 and it remains unclear at this stage as to what inspection regime will be introduced post 2009. City of York is to be subject to a JAR inspection in Jan/Feb 2008. The nature of the JAR inspection for York and all remaining authorities is being described as significantly different than what had gone before, with a more proportionate, targeted approach being adopted. It is anticipated that the inspection will as a result, involve less inspectors and less fieldwork time. The new approach clearly change the relationship between current arrangements. The JAR becomes more of the fieldwork for the APA process rather than the other way around. For all authorities in this last wave of inspections there will be a focus on the following core areas:
 - Safeguarding, including allegations against professionals
 - Children with learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD)
 - Looked after children
 - Service Management
 - Capacity to Improve

These first 3 service areas of investigation have been chosen by OFSTED based on evidence from inspections to date that they are the most challenging and the areas where improvement has been harder to recognise. In addition the inspectors will be able to select anything up to 4 additional areas of investigation and additional capacity will join the inspection team proportionate to and from a background reflective of the particular areas identified. At this stage any additional areas of investigation for York have not been named.

Consultation

5. As part of the APA process there was considerable consultation activity. OFSTED were armed with feedback from key organisations eg Government Office, National Strategies, Youth Justice Board etc. In addition they had undertaken Tellus2. Tellus is an on-line survey that gathers the views of children and young people. Until recently, the Tellus survey has been part of the joint area review process. However, in 2007, Ofsted extended to an

enhanced Tellus survey – called Tellus2 - as part of the annual performance assessment. The survey asks children and young people questions about their satisfaction with services (including aspects of their school life) and questions relating to the five Every Child Matters outcomes, including issues like healthy eating, participation in positive activities and safety. OFSTED believe the survey can offer statistically representative data, national benchmarks and statistical neighbour comparisons that other isolated local and/or qualitative approaches may not provide.

6. As part of the Joint Area Review process there will be considerable consultation with all stakeholders including children and young people. For example the inspectors have already been supplied with a list of key voluntary and community sector who will receive questionnaires in advance of the fieldwork. The inspectors will be looking for evidence on the extent to which voluntary and community organisations are engaged with other partners in decisions about the strategic development of provision, and how far appropriate action has been taken to build on the capacity of voluntary and community sector providers to provide high quality services that offer value for money

Options

7. This is not a paper which is able to provide members with specific options.

Analysis

8. The APA formal letter of feedback was not available at the time the papers for this meeting needed to be produced. We should be able to distribute copies at the meeting which on the basis of verbal feedback should make exceptionally positive reading. Staff within the service, across partners and young people themselves should be congratulated for their success in improving outcomes for the children and young people of York. The performance feedback received will ensure the best possible contribution from this area of activity to the overall performance rating of the council. Whilst comparative analysis is not available and the nature of the judgement areas differ from 2006 there appears little doubt that the performance places York in the top group of authorities in the country for our children and young peoples services.
9. In preparation for the Joint Area Review and on behalf of the YorOK Board a partnership reference group which developed the Children and Young Peoples Plan and the LAA block for children and young people has continued to meet. The meetings are chaired by the Director of LCCS and are well attended by partners. The group proved invaluable in assisting preparation for the APA process and is well placed to continue to oversee the preparation for the Joint Area Review. The key inspection dates are attached at **Annex 1**. *A presentation will be made as part of the EMAP meeting detailing both the nature of the inspection process and the preparation underway.*

Corporate Priorities

10. The feedback from the APA provides strong evidence of progress against corporate priorities as detailed in the corporate strategy. Specifically the feedback demonstrates progress to:
 - Improve the life chances of the most disadvantaged and disaffected children, young people and families in the city
 - Improve our focus on the needs of customers and residents in designing and providing services
 - Improve leadership at all levels to provide clear, consistent direction to the organisation
 - Improve the way the council and its partners work together to deliver better services for the people who live in York
 - Increase people's skills and knowledge to improve future employment prospects

Implications

11. Given the briefing nature of this report it does not carry specific financial, HR, equalities, legal, crime and disorder, IT or property implications.

Risk Management

12. Poor or deteriorating assessed performance as part of an inspection process carries with it considerable risks. It undermines the confidence of local people in accessing services or seeking advice, it demoralises the workforce and makes recruitment an even greater challenge and it weakens the overall reputation of the council. Good preparation for inspection will not override areas of weak provision but does ensure that the authority receives an assessment verdict that is more akin to its own self-assessment. As a consequence the inspection process does carry governance, strategic and operational risks which are only partly mitigated by performance to date and preparation.

Recommendations

- 13 The Executive Member with advisory panel is asked
 - to note and comment on the outcome of the 2007 Annual Performance Assessment of children and young peoples services in York and to note the preparations underway for the forthcoming Joint Area Review.

Reason: to provide members with Ofsted feedback of local services and to brief members on the forthcoming inspection of children and young peoples services

Contact Details

Author:

Peter Dwyer
Director
Learning, Culture and Children's
Services
01904 554200

Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

Peter Dwyer
Director of Learning, Culture and Children's Services

Report Approved Date 20 November 2007

Report Approved Date

Specialist Implications Officer(s)

None

Wards Affected: *List wards or tick box to indicate all*

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers

None

Annexes

Annex 1: Key Dates for Joint Area Review Process for York