

CABINET MEETING – 16 FEBRUARY 2011

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY SHEET – PART I

Title of Report:	
Annual Children's Services Assessment	
Author(s):	
Executive Director of Children's Services	
Purpose of Report:	
This report provides a summary of the outcomes from the Annual Children's Services Assessment published by Ofsted in December 2010.	
Description of Decision:	
Cabinet is asked to note the outcomes of the Annual Children's Services Assessment and to note the actions being taken to ensure that the key areas for further development are addressed.	
Is the decision consistent with the Budget/Policy Framework? Yes	
If not, Council approval is required to change the Budget/Policy Framework	
Suggested reason(s) for Decision:	
The report is presented to inform Cabinet of the inspection outcomes and to advise of the actions for improvement noted within the judgement.	
Alternative options to be considered and recommended to be rejected:	
This report is presented to Cabinet to provide an update on the outcomes from the Annual Children's Services Assessment, and as such there are no viable alternative options.	
Is this a "Key Decision" as defined in the Constitution?	Relevant Scrutiny Committee:
No	Children, Young People and Learning
Is it included in the Forward Plan?	
No	

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

ANNUAL CHILDREN'S SERVICES ASSESSMENT

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of the outcomes from the Annual Children's Services Assessment which was published by Ofsted in December 2010.

2 Description of the Decision

- 2.1 Cabinet is asked to note the outcomes of the Annual Children's Services Assessment and to note the actions being taken to ensure that the key areas for further development are addressed.

3 Background

- 3.1 The Education and Inspections Act 2006 charged Ofsted with the responsibility to assess annually the quality of children's services for each local authority. In 2009, Ofsted provided this assessment as one element of its contribution to the joint inspectorate's Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA). In May 2010, as part of the new Coalition's programme for government, CAA was abolished. However, Ofsted's statutory duty to provide a children's services assessment remains.
- 3.2 In July 2010, Ofsted published guidance which set out the arrangements for the children's services assessment in 2010 in terms of performance profile and principles that would be applied in determining the assessment. The scope of the assessment includes the full range of services, from universal such as education through to specialist services, for example those for looked after children.
- 3.3 The assessment is also derived from Ofsted's performance profile, which reports on the quality of services and outcomes for children and young people. This data comes from Ofsted inspections and data provided by the local authority. The rating relates to all key areas of children's services, including education and safeguarding.
- 3.4 The reporting of outcomes is in the form of a letter from Ofsted, which is in two parts, firstly setting out the overall children's services assessment, including a short explanatory text explaining the assessment based on the performance profile.

3.5 Secondly, the letter includes a wider commentary on the quality of services provided by the local authority and its partners, outcomes achieved by children and young people and prospects for improvement.

4 Current Position

4.1 On 3 December 2010, Children's Services received confirmation from Ofsted of the outcome from the annual assessment of children's services (attached at Appendix 1). Using the measures noted above, Sunderland's Children's Services was judged as **Performs Well (3): an organisation that exceeds minimum requirements**.

4.2 It should also be noted that whilst the number of local authorities who perform excellently (4) has doubled, there has also been an increase in the number of local authorities whose rating has been downgraded (12), as shown below:

Assessment Outcome	LA's in 2009	LA's in 2010
Performing excellently (4)	10	20
Performing well (3)	93	77
Performing adequately (2)	40	37
Performing poorly (1)	9	12

4.3 Although this is the same outcome as in 2009, this does not mean that there have been no improvements within Children's Services.

4.4 Direct comparisons between 2009 and 2010 summary profiles is restricted due to changes to the profile format, however there are notable improvements in 2010. The percentage of inspection judgements classed as good or outstanding for child minders, childcare and primary schools have improved this year along with improved children's homes judgements. All special school judgements remain at least Good.

4.5 Overall, Sunderland's inspection judgements across services places Sunderland firmly within the Performing Well category. 87% of Sunderland national indicators reported in the profile are classed as Above or In Line with relevant comparators. Seven national indicators are classed as significantly below, although three of these indicators have subsequently been deleted (Tellus Survey), two relate to 2009 data and have shown significant improvement since (breastfeeding and first time entrants to youth justice system), and two indicators have remained static (Key Stage 2 results and hospital admissions caused by injuries to children).

4.6 The report in particular highlights:

- Majority of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or better (inspections of schools, children's homes, early years settings)
- Unannounced inspection found that front-line child protection services are strong with no areas for improvement. It also highlighted the strong commitment from Sunderland City Council to fund children's safeguarding services in response to the increasing demands on social care services.
- Performance of the very large majority of outcomes for attainment show that the very large majority are at least in line with averages for England or for similar areas.
- Improved arrangements to encourage children and young people to live healthier lives, including services to meet mental and emotional health.
- Almost all measures for keeping children and young people safe are at least as good as in similar areas or England.
- The majority of nurseries and schools are good at helping children and young people to do well and enjoy their learning.
- The views of children and young people are used well to inform the planning and reviewing of services, including *Citizenship Week*, which began in October 2008.
- The local authority and its partners have been successful in improving outcomes for 16-19 year olds, and young people in Sunderland do as well as those in similar areas or nationally on all measures of performance.

5. Prospects for Improvement

5.1 It was noted that the local authority's review of its Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) (2009-2010) demonstrates a good understanding of what needs to improve, and that the 10 priorities take good account of the local context and resources are rightly directed where outcomes for children and young people are too low.

- 5.2 It was also noted that the CYPP is considered to reflect the local authority's key strategic issues well, particularly in tackling child poverty and unemployment over the next 10 years.
- 5.3 It was recognised that weaker schools were well supported by the local authority, to help them to develop the capacity to improve by themselves.

6. Key Areas for Further Development

- 6.1 Although the majority of the outcomes within the report were positive, there were a number of key areas for further development, as noted below. However, Cabinet are asked to note that the improvement of these areas is one of the core outcomes for Children's Services and as such, action plans are in place to ensure that outcomes for children and young people are continuously improved:
- Improve educational outcomes at age 11.
 - Improve educational outcomes for pupils with special educational needs.
 - Reduce the gap between the lowest achieving five year olds and all children at the end of reception year.
- 6.2 Detailed improvement plans were presented to the Children, Young People and Learning Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 10 February 2011.

7. A New Approach to Inspection of Children's Services

- 7.1 Within the context of the Coalition Government's commitment to replace the current top-down approach to managing the performance of local public services with stronger accountability to local people and communities, consultation is continuing in order to develop a better understanding of sector led and peer reviews, and it is anticipated that further details will be published in April 2011.

8. Reasons for the Decision

- 8.1 The report is presented to inform Cabinet of the inspection outcomes and to advise of the actions for improvement noted within the judgement.

9. Alternative options

- 9.1 This report is presented to Cabinet to provide an update on the outcomes from the Annual Children's Services Assessment, and as such there are no viable alternative options.

10. Relevant Considerations/Consultations

- 10.1 In reaching its judgement, Ofsted takes account of the users, children and young people, parents and carers in all its inspections. Through these inspections, Ofsted assesses the extent to which views about service satisfaction, in particular, are taken into account in reviewing and improving these services.

11. Appendices

- 11.1 Annual Children's Services Assessment letter

12. Background Papers

Ofsted: Children's services assessment for 2010. Arrangements and guidance for local authorities and their partners on Ofsted's annual assessment of children's services.

