

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 15 January 2009

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director
Children and Young People

SUBJECT: OFSTED Annual Performance Assessment (APA) of Services to Children and Young People in Halton

WARDS: Borough Wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To formally report to the Executive Board the outcome of the statutory Annual Performance Assessment of Children's Services in Halton undertaken by OFSTED.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

(1) **Executive Board note the performance ratings arising from the Annual Performance Assessment of services to children and young people in Halton undertaken by OFSTED.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 OFSTED undertakes an Annual Performance Assessment (APA) of Children's Services in all council areas. This was published on the 17th December 2008 (see Appendix 1).

3.2 That APA draws on evidence from fieldwork undertaken by OFSTED including School Inspections; the Joint Area Review conducted in 2008; the Children and Young People's Plan; other inspectorates findings, along with the council's own self-assessment.

3.3 The Assessment grades the Council in seven key areas. The grades are 4 (outstanding); 3 (good), 2 (adequate) and 1 (inadequate).

3.4 In summary, the Council received the following gradings.

Assessment judgement area	APA grade
Overall effectiveness of children's services	3
Being healthy	3
Staying safe	4
Enjoying and achieving (Education and Learning)	4
Making a positive contribution	4
Achieving economic well-being	2
Capacity to improve, including the management of	4

4.0 The findings of the inspectors included the following issues:

4.1 Being Healthy

4.1.1 The contribution of services to improving Healthy outcomes for children and young people is good.

4.1.2 There are been outstanding improvement in performance in reducing child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Specialist and Non Specialist waiting times during the last year.

4.1.3 All schools are participating in National Healthy School Status.

4.1.4 Teenage conceptions and infant mortality remain as a challenge.

4.2 Staying Safe

4.2.1 Services are rated as outstanding by Ofsted. Safeguarding arrangements, policy and procedures are judged as outstanding.

4.3 Enjoying and Achieving

4.3.1 Services in the field of Education are judged outstanding. This is an improvement from 'good' in 2007. The proportion of Young People achieving 5 or more A* to C grades in GCSE has increased significantly to above the national average (2nd best nationally in terms of performance improvement) . Secondary Attendance improvement is also the second best nationally.

4.3.2 There has been a narrowing of the gap for vulnerable children.

4.3.3 Improvements at Key Stage 2 (end of Primary school) was the second best nationally.

4.4 Making a Positive Contribution

4.4.1 This area was judged outstanding; with rates of re-offending falling rapidly; access to Youth Services expanded and consultation and engagement of young people well founded.

4.5 Achieving Economic Well Being

4.5.1 This was judged to be adequate. There is a strong 14 – 19 partnership, with more young people moving on to Further Education. More children in Care are in employment, education and training.

4.5.2 There has also been a reduction in 3% in seventeen year olds not in employment, education and training.

4.5.3 More work is needed to increase numbers of young people in employment, education and training; and improve level 2 and level 3 qualifications.

4.6 **Capacity to improve / Service Management**

4.6.1 This is viewed as outstanding. Children's Services are described as well led and in a strong position to improve further. Management of these services is viewed as rigorous, with a drive for further improvement. Excellent partnership arrangements, and positive relationships are at the heart of the 'outstanding' rating.

4.7 **Conclusion:**

Halton's performance is particularly impressive in gaining four grades of 'outstanding' in Safeguarding; Enjoying and Achieving; Making a Positive Contribution; and Capacity to Improve. Halton is the only council in the Northwest to achieve this. However, given recent events of Haringey and specifically the circumstances surrounding the death of Baby P, it is imperative that the Council continues to develop its services, ensuring they remain fit for purpose, particularly in the field of child protection. With this in mind work is underway to review services for vulnerable children and young people and their families, and how we continue to best meet their needs. A report is being prepared for the Executive Board which will make recommendations for further improvements in working practices. This will be reported before March 2009.

5.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 None.

6.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 None.

7.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

'Narrowing the gap' for a range of vulnerable children is at the heart of the Council's activities, the APA confirms progress is being made in this regard.

8.0 **IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 **Children and Young People**

The APA demonstrates a high level of performance in delivering services to children and young people across the board.

8.2 Employment Learning and Skills

The APA shows the Council and it's partners need a determined effort to bring down NEET figures further.

8.3 A Healthy Halton

The judgement of the APA is 'good' in this area.

8.4 A Safer Halton

Safeguarding is judged as outstanding.

The work of the Safer Halton Partnership will be augmented by representation from the Halton Safeguarding Children Board.

8.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

The improvement in young people's experience of services and their attainment levels will assist Halton's continued economic renewal, and offer resilience for the turn down in the economy.

9.0 REASON FOR DECISION

Statutory reporting process.

10.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

Not applicable.

11.0 IMPLEMENTATION DATE

Immediate.

12.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document

Place of Inspection

Contact Officer