

# REPORT FOR: **CABINET**

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<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	7 April 2011
<b>Subject:</b>	Children's Services: Ofsted Annual Performance Assessment and Inspection Results
<b>Key Decision:</b>	No
<b>Responsible Officer:</b>	Catherine Doran, Corporate Director Children's Services
<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	Councillor Mitzi Green, Portfolio Holder for Children's Services Councillor Brian Gate, Portfolio Holder for Schools and Colleges
<b>Exempt:</b>	No
<b>Decision subject to Call-in:</b>	No
<b>Enclosures:</b>	Attachment: Ofsted Annual Assessment letter 2009-10

## **Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations**

This report sets out the inspection results for Children's Services for the last year, including Ofsted's annual performance assessment.

### **Recommendations:**

Cabinet to note the annual performance assessment of 'performing well' for Harrow Children's Services and the improved service inspection results across the directorate. All Harrow Children's Services social care settings

and services are now graded 'good' or 'outstanding'.

**Reason: (For recommendation)**

Ofsted requires the Director of Children's Services to report the performance assessment to an open meeting of the relevant executive body. This also gives an opportunity to demonstrate the very high level of inspectorate activity and the strong results achieved by the service.

## **Section 2 – Report**

### **Introductory paragraph**

Children's Services across England are currently challenged with transforming local services to achieve improved outcomes for young people while being more efficient and locally accountable. Reports from central government, including the Schools White Paper, and key messages from the Social Work Reform Board and the Munro Review of child protection, set the agenda for this change. Harrow Children's Services have an ambitious transformation programme in place which will establish a new relationship with schools and greater accessibility and effectiveness of the range of local services through Integrated Targeted Services. Children's Centres and the Youth Service will continue to offer universal access and services.

Harrow Children's Services delivers good and improving results for children and young people, and this has been recognised in recent judgements from Ofsted. At the same time, value for money benchmarking from CIPFA demonstrates that strong performance sits alongside comparatively low spend<sup>1</sup>. (12 lowest of 15 statistical neighbours per capita spend 2009-10).

Harrow Children's Services experienced an intense level of inspection from Ofsted during 2010. This was not due to any identified risks or concerns on the part of Ofsted but was the combined effect of cyclical inspections becoming due and the introduction of Ofsted's new, more challenging inspection framework.

In addition to the Annual Performance Assessment of Children's Services, Harrow was visited by Ofsted for inspections of Fostering, Adoptions, children's residential units and received an unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements. In addition to this intense scrutiny of social care, Ofsted continued to implement the new schools

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<sup>1</sup> 12 lowest of 15 statistical neighbours per capita spend 2009-10, CIPFA statistical review

inspection framework and carried out inspections of other local settings including childminders.

## **Annual Performance Assessment of Children's Services**

The annual rating of Children's Services begins with a self assessment. Ofsted use this, alongside performance data, the results of service inspections and site visits, as necessary, to form an overall judgement of local children services.

In December 2010, Ofsted published a grading of 'performing well' for Harrow's Children's Services. Due to the timing of this publication it did not capture the recently improved inspection outcomes for the Fostering and Adoption Services which were identified as areas for improvement (see below). Overall however, the grade remained the same as the previous year and this can be considered as a strong result under the new, more challenging inspection framework that was introduced following the Laming report.

*Ofsted concluded that 'the majority of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or outstanding. The large majority do well at supporting learning and achievement and in keeping children and young people safe'.*

*'National measures of performance show the very large majority of outcomes are in line with or above those for similar areas or nationally, including all measures for educational attainment.'*

A number of areas for improvement were identified:

- *Improve child minders so that more are good or better and fostering and adoption services to at least good*
- *Close gaps in educational attainment, in particular for 11-year-olds from low income families.*
- *Increase numbers of low-income families taking up funding for childcare*

The full letter is appended and the areas for development are addressed later in this report.

## **Service inspections**

### ***Schools***

Ofsted introduced its new inspection framework for schools from September 2009. This provides a tougher challenge and greater focus on attainment. Under the new regime, the number of schools nationally achieving the highest grade of 'outstanding' dropped to 13% for the first year of inspections. This compares with 62% of Harrow schools achieving outstanding over the same period.

The latest figures show that 83%<sup>2</sup> of Harrow's schools have achieved good or outstanding inspection results since September 2009. 100% of Harrow schools have achieved good or outstanding for both behaviour and safeguarding judgements (nationally 70% and 77% respectively 2009-10)<sup>3</sup>.

### ***Unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment***

This is a challenging annual inspection in which the inspectors arrive with no warning and immediately start reviewing case files, observing operational activity and scrutinising service records to assess the quality of social care at first contact and at the critical early stages of intervention. There is no grading for this inspection, however any report which contains no 'priority actions' is considered a good result. The unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements was introduced two years ago and the unannounced inspection in 2010 was the second such inspection of this kind locally.

Harrow's social care teams received a very positive report with no priority actions and a significant number of strengths were identified, including thorough management oversight of cases and a good system for complaints. In total 13 strengths were noted by the inspectors with 4 areas for improvement. The areas for improvement concerned pressure on the team managing the number and rate of new contacts and referrals and a lack of progress from the partnership about embedding the Common Assessment Framework.

Additional targeted resources and improved monitoring and support have been applied to the Duty and Assessment Team and practice relating to managing the pressures associated with processing the new contacts and referrals has improved. The January 2011 Local Safeguarding Children's Board meeting approved an Inter-Agency Common Assessment and Information Sharing tool to be used by all local agencies from 1 April 2011. This will cut down on paperwork and duplication of effort by front line staff and will improve the experience of children and families requiring a service.

### ***Fostering Service***

The Fostering Service was overdue a three-yearly inspection and was finally visited in January 2011. This gave a chance to demonstrate the major improvements to the service which had taken place since the 'satisfactory' judgement of 2007.

An improved result of 'good' overall was achieved, breaking down as follows:

Be healthy - "Good"  
Staying Safe - "Good"  
Enjoy and Achieve - "Good"  
Make a Positive Contribution - "Good"  
Achieve Economic Well-Being - "Good"  
Effectiveness of Organisation - "Good"

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<sup>2</sup> Harrow Ofsted Summary December 2010

<sup>3</sup> From report: Ofsted Inspection judgements 2009/10 for maintained schools

## ***Adoption Service***

The adoption service was inspected in November 2010. The previous result in 2008 of 'satisfactory' had been very disappointing and did not reflect the successful and innovative adoption partnership with Coram and the impressive outcomes that were being achieved for children and families.

An improved result of 'good' overall was achieved, breaking down as follows<sup>4</sup>:

Staying Safe - "Good"

Enjoy and Achieve - "Good"

Make a Positive Contribution - "Good"

Effectiveness of Organisation - "Good"

The adoption service was recently visited by Tim Loughton, Children's Minister who described the partnership as a "fantastic example of the success that can be achieved through imaginative thinking and innovative practice"<sup>5</sup>

## ***Residential Care***

Honeypot Lane, a residential care establishment for young people, was inspected twice during the year. It improved its grading from 'satisfactory' to 'good' at the first inspection and maintained this when revisited for an unannounced inspection in January 2011.

The Firs, a residential short break/respite care establishment for disabled children and young people, was visited once during 2010 and retained its 'outstanding' status.

The positive results in these inspections mean that **all Harrow social care settings and services are now graded 'good' or 'outstanding'**.

## **Priority areas for improvement**

The following priority areas for improvement were identified at the time of the 2009-10 self assessment:

- Improving provision and inspection ratings for childcare providers (low income families can only access funding on registered childcare)
- Ensuring that unannounced and announced inspections identify no serious safeguarding concerns
- Improving inspection results for in-house provision of fostering and adoption
- Continue to improve performance indicators to stay above average for all outcomes

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<sup>4</sup> 'Be Healthy' and 'Achieving Economic Wellbeing' outcomes were not assessed as part of this inspection

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.harrowtimes.co.uk/news/8822509.Government\\_minister\\_visits\\_adoption\\_service/](http://www.harrowtimes.co.uk/news/8822509.Government_minister_visits_adoption_service/)

- Continuing to work in partnership with our schools to narrow the achievement gap for vulnerable groups

There is strong progress against these priorities. Harrow continues to show above average results for indicators according to the Ofsted Performance Profile and the achievement gap is narrowing for key groups. Fostering and Adoption Services are now rated 'good'. The unannounced inspection identified no priority actions or serious concerns. Targeted support continues with childminders and organisations to improve inspection ratings for childcare providers. At the time of the last Ofsted summary report, 60% of childminders and 69% of non-domestic childcare providers were rated "good" or "outstanding", but further improvement is expected.

Harrow's schools are already high performing, but the 'Good to Outstanding' project is supporting them to improve further. Support to local schools is currently being renegotiated in the light of government policy and the changing relationship between the local authority and schools. The Harrow School Improvement Partnership has been approved by Cabinet and is being developed with primary schools. The new arrangements will be in place from September 2011, and it is anticipated that the local authority will maintain its role of supporting improvement in most of Harrow's schools. A group of high schools is currently exploring Academy status; schools rated 'outstanding' or 'good with outstanding features' are likely to be automatically approved should they apply.

Although Children's Services are performing well overall, there is always room for improvement. It is hoped that the new operating model will support improved outcomes for children and young people during this challenging time for local authorities with increasing financial constraints.

## **Future inspection activity**

Harrow Children's Services expects to continue to receive a high level of scrutiny of its local services and will strive for further improvement, addressing the issues identified in both service inspections and the most recent overall assessment.

The DfE and Ofsted are due to provide information on the new wider inspection framework for children's services in the first half of 2011. This framework will be influenced by the review of the child protection system by Professor Eileen Munro and the review of early years provision by Dame Clare Tickell. Although there is no longer a set of National Indicators across local government, there has been no reduction in scrutiny and data collection for Children's Services. Our regulators still require us to produce an exhaustive set of data returns from which a growing set of indicators are calculated.

It is likely that the next major inspection will be a full announced inspection of Safeguarding and Children Looked After, for which the authority and its partners will receive 10 days notice. Preparations for this are already underway. Ofsted will take into account the current judgements that all services supporting children are achieving good outcomes in planning this inspection.

## **Financial Implications**

With current financial constraints Harrow Children's Services may struggle to sustain the level of improvements that have been achieved to date. The costs of recent assessments were funded from existing budgets in comparison with the 2006 JAR, where the authority drafted in a full time consultant and administrator to co-ordinate preparations.

## **Performance Issues**

Performance issues are integral to this report and the targeted improvements will be monitored through the Council's Improvement Board process to ensure actions are on track and are delivering improved outcomes

## **Environmental Impact**

Although there is no direct environmental impact from this report, it should be noted that Schools account for 62% of the councils CRC emissions and this will initially cost the council £300k for 2011/12.

## **Risk Management Implications**

All related risks are recorded in the risk register. There is a significant reputational risk from a poor inspection of social care in particular and indeed any serious or untoward significant incident or death of a child. Preparations are in place to mitigate this risk.

## **Equalities implications**

In reaching their conclusions, Ofsted consider whether Children's Services promotes equality and diversity. Ofsted has raised no concerns in this area and strong performance is integral to the judgements given. Specific references were made as follows:

For the adoption inspection, Ofsted concluded that;

*'the promotion of equality and diversity is good. Matters of equality and diversity are fully embedded in all practice and attitudes, the staff team is multi-cultural and the approach to matching ensures that children's diverse needs can be met. The agency welcomes all members of the community and all staff are aware of the importance of promoting difference and anti-discriminatory practice'*

## Corporate Priorities

Supporting vulnerable people.

### Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Emma Stabler	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date: 16 February 2011		
Name: Sarah Wilson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Monitoring Officer
Date: 16 February 2011		

### Section 4 – Performance Officer Clearance

Name: Alex Dewsnap	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Divisional Director Partnership, Development and Performance
Date: 16 February 2011		

### Section 5 – Environmental Impact Officer Clearance

Name: Andrew Baker	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Divisional Director (Environmental Services)
Date: 16 February 2011		

### Section 6 - Contact Details and Background Papers

**Contact:** David Harrington 020 8420 9248

**Background Papers:** Ofsted Annual Judgement Letter 2009-10



**Call-In Waived by the  
Chairman of Overview  
and Scrutiny  
Committee**

**NOT APPLICABLE**

*[Decisions for noting are not  
subject to Call-In]*