

Report of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel

Children's Annual Performance Assessment Inquiry

July – August 2009

PANEL MEMBERSHIP

Councillor Fitzhenry (Chair)
Councillor Beckett
Councillor Cunio (Meetings 2 and 3)
Councillor Damani (Meeting 1)
Councillor Fitzgerald (Vice Chair)
Councillor Jones
Councillor Odgers
Councillor Stevens (Meetings 1 and 2)
Councillor Thomas (Meeting 3)
Mrs U Topp
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Mr T Blackshaw

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Children’s Annual Performance Assessment Inquiry

Introduction

1. The 2008 Ofsted Annual Performance Assessment (APA) for Southampton judged the services delivered to children and young people as ‘adequate’ (APA Grade 2).
2. The APA identified 23 strengths and 22 “important weaknesses and areas for development”. To ensure that the Ofsted judgement returns to ‘good’ in 2010 Southampton City Council and the Children and Young People’s Trust produced a 2 year Action Plan that details how improvements will be achieved in each of the 22 weaknesses and areas for development identified in the Children’s APA.
3. At its meeting on 18th June 2009 the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee approved the terms of reference for a scrutiny inquiry examining the Children’s APA, and requested that the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel conduct the inquiry and report back their findings to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee.
4. The approved objectives of the inquiry are:
 - To consider whether the actions in the plan are appropriate, achievable and will deliver the necessary improvements to overcome the weaknesses identified
 - To consider whether the plan can demonstrate sign up from key partners and partnerships including the Children and Young People’s Trust and the Governors’ Forum
 - To consider performance in these areas since the APA letter was received
 - To identify lessons learnt and how they can be reflected in assessments of performance to drive year on year improvement in key areas within Children’s Services and Learning activities
 - To identify any areas for more detailed investigation and support.

Consultation

5. The Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel undertook the inquiry over 3 meetings. The Scrutiny Panel consulted the following members and officers to develop the inquiry:

Date	Meeting Theme	Evidence Provided by
08/07/09	Discussion on the APA Action Plan with the lead officers accountable for delivering the actions identified within the Action Plan under each of the 5 key outcomes from Every Child matters, and the APA Link Officer for Southampton	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be Healthy – Stephanie Ramsey, Associate Director, NHS Southampton City• Stay Safe – Ruth Chiva, Head of Safeguarding, Children’s Services and Learning Directorate, Southampton City Council• Enjoy and Achieve – Paul Nugent, Head of School Standards, Children’s Services and Learning

		<p>Directorate, Southampton City Council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make a Positive Contribution & Achieve Economic Wellbeing – Alison Alexander, Head of Young People and Community Support, Children’s Services and Learning Directorate, Southampton City Council • APA Link Officer – Sue Allan, Head of Commissioning, Planning and Performance within the Children’s Services and Learning Directorate
30/07/09	Discussion on delivering the outcomes within the Action Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet Member for Children’s Services – Councillor Holmes • Cabinet Member for Safeguarding Children – Councillor Walker • APA Link Officer – Sue Allan
19/08/09	Agree final report	

Background to the Annual Performance Assessment

6. The Annual Performance Assessment is Ofsted’s judgement on the effectiveness of children’s services of all councils in England, published annually in November, between 2003-2008, including grades for:
 - The council’s children’s services overall effectiveness
 - The contribution that these services make towards improving each of the five Every Child Matters outcome areas (being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and achieving economic well-being)
 - The council’s capacity to improve these services further.

7. The 2008 APA will be the final APA because it has been superseded by Ofsted’s contribution to the Comprehensive Area Assessment through its evaluation of:
 - Inspected services e.g., schools, colleges, fostering / adoption
 - The National Indicator set
 - Unannounced inspections of contact, assessment and referral centres
 - Full inspection of safeguarding and services for looked after children – 3 yearly.

The results of the APA in Southampton in 2008

8. 23 strengths and 22 weaknesses were identified. The grades were:

Assessment judgement area	Grade 2007	Grade 2008
Overall effectiveness of children's services	3	2
Being healthy	3	2
Staying safe	2	2
Enjoying and achieving	3	2
Making a positive contribution	3	2
Achieving economic wellbeing	3	2
Capacity to improve, including the management of services for children and young people	3	2

9. Nationally the grade profile overall in 2008 was not quite as positive as in 2007 with the decline in performance between 2007 and 2008 most marked in both staying safe and enjoying and achieving, with more councils graded inadequate than in previous years.

APA Action Plan – Meetings of the Scrutiny Panel

10. At the first meeting of the Children's APA Inquiry the Scrutiny Panel received a presentation on the Southampton APA Action Plan that had been developed by the outcome leads for the five Every Child Matters Steering Groups of the Children and Young People's Trust. A copy of the presentation is available from the Assistant Chief Executive (Strategy).
11. The Action Plan details how improvements will be achieved in each of the 22 areas identified by Ofsted as "important weaknesses and areas for development".
12. Each of the outcome leads for the five Every Child Matters Steering Groups of the Children and Young People's Trust were in attendance at the meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel to outline specific elements of the Action Plan, and to answer questions from the Scrutiny Panel.
13. At the second meeting of the Children's APA Inquiry the Cabinet Members for Children's Services and Safeguarding Children outlined to the Scrutiny Panel the mechanisms in place to ensure that, subject to exceptional circumstances, the outcomes in the Action Plan are delivered.

Summary of Findings / Outcomes

14. The following key findings regarding the APA Action Plan emerged from the Scrutiny Panel's discussions with the Cabinet Members and the outcome leads:
- The Southampton APA Action Plan has been endorsed by the Government Office of the South East (GOSE) who stated that:

“Overall, we think the plan is very thorough and comprehensive and do think that you have captured a significant amount of development work, and that if implemented will address the weaknesses identified by Ofsted.”

- Southampton’s Children and Young People’s Trust has approved the Action Plan.
- The Action Plan has been developed in collaboration with partners across the Trust.
- Performance has improved in a number of the areas identified by Ofsted as important weaknesses and areas for development since the APA Inspection letter was received in December 2008. For example:-
 - APA weakness 5 – The number of children with child protection plans completed within required timescales has improved from 91% in 07/08 to 100% in the first quarter of 2009/10.
 - APA weakness 13 – The number of first time entrants to the youth justice system has decreased and the target for 2008/09 was exceeded.
 - APA weakness 19 – The proportion of eligible looked after children with a pathway plan improved from 32.7% in 2007/08 to 81% in 2008/09.

Performance improvements have been driven by the hard work of employees across Southampton.

- A number of the desired outcomes in the Action Plan will be difficult to achieve and some areas identified as important weaknesses and areas for development have not seen improved levels of performance since the Ofsted APA letter was received. For example:-
 - APA weakness 6 – The percentage of core assessments that were completed within 35 working days of their commencement decreased from 68% in 2007/08 to 22% in the first quarter of 2009/10.
 - APA weakness 8 – Private fostering arrangements are judged to be inadequate. In 2008/09 the percentage of private fostering arrangements undertaken within timescales fell from 100% in 2007/08 to 50% in 2008/09 and the reporting levels of private fostering remains poor.
 - APA weakness 16 – The percentage of 16-19 year olds that are not in education, employment or training (NEET) has risen in Quarter 1 of 2009/10 to 12.1% from 10.4% in 2007/08.

Performance information relating to the APA Action Plan, that was shared with the Scrutiny Panel, is available from the Assistant Chief Executive (Strategy).

- The Scrutiny Panel were informed of the increased resources that have

been committed by the Council towards safeguarding children in the City.

- The progress against the outcomes in the Children's APA Action Plan will be reviewed on a quarterly basis. Progress will be reviewed at Cabinet Member Briefings, at meetings of the Children and Young People Trust Board and Steering Groups, and at Cabinet meetings through the monitoring of the Corporate Improvement Plan.
- The Cabinet Members identified raising the aspirations of children and young people in Southampton and leadership in schools as priorities. The Cabinet Members believe that by improving these areas it will result in better outcomes across a range of issues for children and young people in the City.
- The Scrutiny Panel welcomed these priorities and emphasised that these were two, of many factors, that impact on levels of child poverty within Southampton.
- Following the Cabinet Members statement relating to raising aspirations the Scrutiny Panel raised concerns about the lack of positive messages reaching children and young people highlighting the improving outcomes for children and young people in Southampton, and promoting examples of young people from Southampton who have achieved success.
- Following the Cabinet Members statement relating to leadership within schools, whilst appreciating the higher than average number of recognised 'outstanding' head teachers employed within Southampton schools, the Scrutiny Panel were concerned about the lack of long term funding to support initiatives designed to recruit, develop, promote and appoint strong school leaders and teachers in Southampton identified in the APA Action Plan. These initiatives are designed to address APA weakness 12 (Raising standards at key stages 2 and 3) within the APA Action Plan.
- The Scrutiny Panel concurred with GOSE who, in their response to the APA Action Plan, were concerned that there was a need to improve the way in which data was collected and analysed to make the improvements required on APA 21 (The use of data). GOSE have offered to provide an external challenge to help monitor the progress of the Children's APA Action Plan and this offer has been accepted.
- The Scrutiny Panel identified an inconsistent approach to tracking the development of children and young people in Southampton. This includes a lack of routine assessments of children's health, limited analysis of the links between housing and outcomes for children and young people, and different approaches used by secondary school to monitor progress.

The Scrutiny Panel noted the hard work being undertaken across the City Council and with local partners to improve the co-ordination of services for children and young people in Southampton. The Panel were of the belief that by further improving joined up working within the City Council and across partners within the Children and Young People's Trust it would result in improved outcomes for children and young people in the City.

Conclusions

15. The Scrutiny Panel have arrived at the following conclusions with regards to the APA Action Plan following the meetings of the Panel on 8th and 30th July 2009:
- Discussions with the outcome lead officers, and the endorsement from both GOSE and the Children and Young People's Trust, give the Scrutiny Panel confidence that the Southampton APA Action Plan is appropriate and can demonstrate sign up from key partners and partnerships.
 - Outcomes for children and young people in Southampton have improved in a number of areas identified as important weaknesses and areas for improvement since the Ofsted 2008 APA letter was received in December 2008.
 - For varying reasons a number of areas where improvement is required have seen limited progression or a decline in performance levels since the APA letter was received. It will be extremely challenging to achieve all the desired outcomes within the timescales indicated within the Action Plan.
 - To raise the aspirations of children and young people in the City there is a need to identify and promote positive role models from Southampton.
 - Long-term funding needs to be identified to support initiatives designed to recruit, develop, promote and appoint strong school leaders and teachers in Southampton.
 - The City Council, with partners within the Children and Young People Trust, need to improve data collection and how effectively data is used to help support performance improvement.
 - There needs to be improvements in the ability of the Council and other agencies to track the development of children and young people in Southampton. To improve this position there needs to be:
 - a) Regular health checks of children and young people in Southampton.
 - b) Greater consistency in the use of data by secondary school in the City.
 - c) Analysis of the relationship between housing, health and academic attainment.
 - The City Council and partners from within the Children and Young People's Trust need to continue to improve the co-ordination of services to maximise the improvements in outcomes for children and young people in Southampton.
 - In recognition of the hard work that has been put into achieving the improved performance against a number of outcomes for children and young people in Southampton, employees responsible for the improvements, and children and young people, should be congratulated for their efforts and achievements.

Recommendations

16.
 - a) To raise the aspirations of children and young people in Southampton it is recommended that partners from the Children and Young People's Trust develop ways of identifying and promoting the achievements of "successful" young people from Southampton so that they can act as role models to children and young people.
 - b) To support the drive to further improve school leaders and teachers within schools in Southampton long-term funding should be identified to support initiatives detailed in the APA Action Plan designed to recruit, develop, promote and appoint strong school leaders and teachers in Southampton.
 - c) To improve data collection and how effectively data is used to help support performance improvement it is recommended that:
 - I. In the short term the City Council and Children and Young People's Trust partners maximise the use of current corporate performance management systems with a view to improving integration with performance management systems used by the council and key partners.
 - II. The Children's Services and Learning Directorate rationalises performance data to ensure that the information obtained is appropriate and relevant.
 - d) To improve the ability to track the development of children and young people in Southampton it is recommended that:
 - I. NHS Southampton City undertakes regular health checks on children and young people in the City as they grow older, and shares appropriate information with Children and Young People's Trust partners through the use of the Council's performance management system.
 - II. Southampton City Council works with secondary schools in the City to encourage the use of best practice with regards to using data to identify the development of children and young people during their school career.
 - III. The City Council, in conjunction with Children and Young People's Trust partners, collects and reviews the information available on the property type that children live in (property type, tenure and ward area) to enable analysis to be undertaken of the relationship between housing, health and well-being and academic attainment. This analysis can then inform the actions needed to improve outcomes for children and young people in Southampton.
 - e) That Cabinet works with the Children and Young People's Trust to identify further opportunities to develop the co-ordination of services delivered to children and young people to ensure that all relevant services are focussed on improving outcomes identified in Every Child Matters.
 - f) That Southampton City Council's Executive congratulates:
 - I. Employees responsible for the improvements in outcomes for

children and young people in Southampton for their efforts and achievements.

II. Children and Young People in Southampton for their achievements.

- g) That Cabinet forwards this report to the Children and Young People's Trust and appropriate partnerships to facilitate collective ownership of the issues identified within this report.