

Item No: 8.	Classification: Open *	Date: January 31 2008	Meeting Name: Corporate Parenting Committee
Report title:		Joint Area Review (JAR) Preparation	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Strategic Director of Children's Services	

RECOMMENDATION

1. To note the programme of preparation for the Joint Area Review (JAR) in Southwark which will take place between February and April 2008.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. The JAR is the single co-ordinated inspection of all publicly funded services for all children and young people within the local area.
3. The purpose of JAR is to evaluate how well Council services contribute collectively to improve the well being of specific groups of children and young people in the local area. It will examine the way in which these services work together to support children and young people.
4. It will look at how the priorities in the Children and Young People's Plan are being addressed, the quality of corporate leadership, strategic planning, effectiveness of resources and partnership working within and beyond the local authority.
5. Key aspects of the JAR process are:
 - **Self-Assessment** – how Southwark is doing and areas of improvement. The 2007 Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) Review, will be the basis for the self assessment.
 - **Case Tracking and Analysis** – 10 cases are selected from a 100 presented to the lead inspector. Cases are made up of Looked After Children (LAC), children subject to child protection plans and those known to education with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities. Any other files can be checked by the inspectors during the inspection process.
 - **Analysis Week** – This takes place between 25th and 29th February, when inspectors will review a wide range of evidence such as inspection reports, key documents and procedures, performance indicators, case files.
 - **Fieldwork Week** – inspectors will visit a variety of services to support findings of analysis week, and meet staff at all tiers in the organisation including focus groups with key stakeholders.
6. The JAR will focus on children looked after, safeguarding and children with learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD) in addition to the key lines of enquiry arising from the 2007 Annual Performance Assessment (APA). The findings of the JAR contribute to the score of the overall Corporate Assessment (CA). The JAR judgment is also the score for the Outcomes for Children and Young People. Hence the preparations and approach for the JAR and CA are interlinked.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Achievements and Areas for Development that may form Potential Lines of Enquiry for JAR

7. Southwark has made progress in addressing key performance challenges. The Annual Performance Assessment (APA) for Children's Services, which forms the basis for the JAR key lines of enquiry, was positive and the overall rating was good. Key areas of strength identified were:

'Strengths' from APA letter

- *Children's Services Department is well managed and management systems are sophisticated and well integrated*
- *Good and well integrated universal and targeted health provision*
- *Effective local safeguarding children's board and systematic good practice across social care*
- *Good schools rates of improvement and visionary and rigorous leadership and management in education provision*
- *Systematic approach to engaging young people in service development and comprehensive range of activities for young people*
- *Positive impact of extended services and regeneration programmes*

Key areas for focus relating to the LAC and related client groups were

- *Improve adoption rates further*
- *Higher than average length of time compared to neighbouring authorities for children on the CPR (now subject to child protection plans)*
- *Rising levels of instability around placements*
- *Improvements against comparators around LAC educational attainment*

8. At the JAR set up meeting on 18th January, the key lines of enquiry were agreed as:

- Children Looked After
- Safeguarding
- Children with learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD)
- Service Management
- The contribution of local services to support and challenge schools in raising attainment
- The effectiveness of inter-agency co-operation in tackling youth crime and anti-social behaviour

Management & Delivery

9. A JAR Project Board has been set up with membership including the Deputy Director of Children's Services (Chair), Director of Performance, Assistant Director of Specialist Children's Services & Safeguarding, Director of Nursing/Head of Commissioning, Head of Strategy and Change and Acting Head of Corporate Planning and Performance. The Assistant Director of Children's Specialist Services & Safeguarding chairs the multi-agency Case Tracking Group.

10. Key work areas are monitored by the JAR Project Board, the Modernisation Board and CSMT.

Communication

11. A JAR communication strategy and timetable has been created. A JAR leaflet has been produced and the website is in operation to ensure there is public access to the JAR process and findings. Briefings with business managers, Young Southwark, specific teams (Youth, Education etc) on the JAR process have been undertaken which will guarantee the involvement of the wider council.
www.southwark.gov.uk/jointareareview
12. Where appropriate, links will be made with Corporate Assessment’s Communication Plan, to engage with the wider organisational and external community, partners and key stakeholders.

Key Dates

13. The key milestones in the build up to the CA and JAR are set out below.

<p>26 November 2007</p> <p>APA letter received</p>
<p>10 December 2007</p> <p>JAR briefing pack received from OfSted</p>
<p>7 January /2008</p> <p>100 Cases Submitted, together with Third Sector list</p>
<p>18 January 2008</p> <p>JAR and CA set up Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Detail and explanation of key areas of the process - Answer any other initial queries - Details of specific investigations to be undertaken - Details of case files required for case tracking purposes
<p>W/c 18/02/2008</p> <p>YOT inspection commences</p>
<p>W/c 25 February 2008</p> <p>JAR and CA Analysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inspectors have meetings, discussions, focus groups and visits in Southwark - Documentation and systems in place
<p>W/c 31/03/2008 and w/c 07/04/2008</p> <p>JAR and CA Fieldwork</p> <p>Meetings with lead Council Members and members of bodies such as the police authority or PCT, community and voluntary sector representatives, service users, such as Speakerbox and senior managers, as well as group discussions with front-line staff.</p>

14. The draft JAR report is expected to be received mid May. Following a period of discussion on the draft, final publication is expected 22 July.

Policy implications

15. The JAR is a three-year programme running until December 2008 and all 150 local authority areas will have one joint area review during this time.
16. JARs explore the extent to which children and young people are healthy, safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution, and secure economic well-being. The JAR focuses specifically on children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, children who are looked after and children at risk or requiring safeguarding. The JAR evaluates the collective contribution made by all relevant children's services to outcomes for these groups. The outcome of the JAR contributes to the score of the Corporate Assessment (CA) with regard to the quality of outcomes for children and young people.

Community Impact Statement

17. Southwark has a network of effective multi-agency partnerships that work together to improve the outcomes for all children, young people and families in the borough. The JAR judges the contribution that the council and its partners in the local area are making to improve outcomes for children and young people.

Resource implications

18. There are no specific resource implications in relation to JAR preparation.

Consultation

19. The JAR Communications Strategy and Preparation Programme ensure that all key stakeholders are fully engaged.
20. As part of the Fieldwork phase of the JAR, discussions will take place with a range of stakeholders.

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

Director of Legal and Democratic Services

21. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Finance Director

22. There are no specific financial implications arising from this report.

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Romi Bowen, Strategic Director for Children's Services	
Report Author	Elaine Allegretti, Head of Strategic Planning & Change	
Version	Final	
Dated	January 22 2008	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / EXECUTIVE MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included
Director of Legal and Democratic Services	Yes	Yes
Director of Finance	Yes	Yes
Executive Member	Yes	Yes
Date final report sent to Constitutional/Community Council/Scrutiny Team	January 22 2008	