

Item No.	Classification: Open *	Date: 27.01.09	Meeting Name: Executive
Report title:		Children's Services – summary of the Joint Area Review (JAR) and Annual Performance Assessment (APA) inspection report	
Ward(s) or groups affected:			
From:		Romi Bowen, Strategic Director of Children's Services	

RECOMMENDATION(S)

1. That the Executive note the key findings and recommendations results of the JAR and APA inspection reports
2. That the Executive agree to the implementation of the immediate and six monthly actions specified in the JAR report
3. Approve Inspection Action Plan

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

4. The JAR inspection assessed Children's Services in Southwark on the standard key lines of enquiry of Safeguarding, Looked After Children, Learning Difficulties, Service Management and Capacity to Improve. The inspection also assessed against two additional key lines of enquiry: the effectiveness of interagency cooperation in tackling youth crime and anti social behaviour; and the contribution of local services to support and challenge schools in raising attainment with particular reference to early years and primary stages.
5. Publication of the JAR was due in July 2008 but was delayed due to the inter dependency between it and the Corporate Performance Assessment's publication. The latter's publication was delayed as a result of a challenge by the Council. The challenge did not relate to the JAR.
6. Children's Services in Southwark scored:

Safeguarding	3 – Good
Looked After Children	3 – Good
Learning Difficulties	3 – Good
Service Management	3 – Good
Capacity to Improve	3 – Good
The effectiveness of interagency cooperation in tackling youth crime and anti social behaviour	Good
The contribution of local services to support and challenge schools in raising attainment with particular reference to early years and	Good

The JAR report detailed key findings, including major strengths and important weaknesses for each of the key lines of enquiry. These are set out as follows:

7. Safeguarding

The inspection found that Southwark's contribution to improving outcomes for children and young people at risk of or requiring safeguarding is **good**.

The major strengths of children's services in relation to safeguarding include well established inter-agency strategies, policies, procedures and standards, with an excellent implementation of the Integrated Children's System, a nationally used electronic case recording system. There is also a very good range of effective preventative provision in Southwark. The inspection found the children's workforce in Southwark is well trained and well-informed about safeguarding issues, including the appropriateness of thresholds. The responsiveness and capacity of the Children's Social Care Duty Team was found to be very effective.

The single area for development was to improve the robustness of auditing and safe recruitment processes, in the Youth Offending Team, where a small number of staff CRB checks had lapsed.

8. Looked After Children

The JAR report found that the contribution of local services to improving outcomes for looked after children and young people is **good**.

The inspection found the services for looked after children had many strengths. The JAR reported Southwark has an integrated, committed, skilled and well-led looked after children service, with good services to prevent children and young people becoming looked after. There is effective corporate parenting for looked after children, they are allocated to qualified social workers and live in safe placements and are well supported. Good inter-agency working has resulted in good quality care plans and there is good support for care leavers. There is effective support for children and young people's physical and emotional health, including participation in leisure activities. Children's services in Southwark encourage good participation in making individual decisions about their lives. The JAR also noted improving adoption rates and timescales.

Areas for future development were identified as the need for a written commissioning strategy and improvements in the coordination of the evaluation of initiatives. It was also found that the long-term stability of placements for looked after children had declined, although it is worth noting that performance was still in line with statistical neighbours. The partnership between Children's Services and the Youth Offending Team was judged as requiring further development by inspectors.

9. Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities

The contribution of local services in Southwark to improve outcomes for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) is **good**.

The inspection identified good partnership working in this area. There is good access to coordinated clinical services, including comprehensive child and adolescent mental health services. There is support for children with LDD in mainstream schools and good attainment by pupils with LDD at the end of Key Stage 2 and 4. There is good access to short-break care provision and good access to recreation and leisure activities for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, particularly those with complex needs. There are also good advocacy procedures in place in Southwark for those children and young people with LDD.

The JAR report found two areas for ongoing development, namely monitoring the framework for improving provision and attainment for children and young people with LDD and implementation of the Autism Spectrum Condition and communication strategies.

10. Attainment

The JAR report found that contribution of local services in Southwark to support and challenge schools in raising attainment, with particular reference to early years and primary stages, is **good**.

There is strong leadership that underpins effective collaborative working with schools. There is also good support and challenge for schools by the council at all stages to raise attainment and improve practice, which has resulted in improved attainment where the council has provided this support and challenge. There has been a good rate of improvement in attainment at Key Stages 2 and 3, which is well above national averages. Good contextual value has been added between Key Stages 2 and 4. Improved attainment amongst targeted groups, in particular Black Caribbean boys at key Stage 1 and 2, was also highlighted in the findings.

The inspection identified there has been recent decline in attainment at Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. While attainment at all stages is below national figures it is broadly in line with those of comparable councils. Additionally, the initiatives to support curriculum and staff development needed to become more strategic and coherent.

11. Youth Crime and ASB interagency cooperation

The effectiveness of inter-agency cooperation in tackling youth crime and anti-social behaviour is **good**.

There is a wide range of effective strategic and operational partnership groups which demonstrate good working relationships and commitment between partner agencies with good information and intelligence sharing. The JAR noted a good range of cross-agency innovative, preventative and diversionary activities. Locality-based provision is targeted at hot spots.

The JAR noted that further work needs to be done to stem the recent increase in first-time young offenders. Fear of crime and anti-social behaviour amongst young people remains a high priority for Southwark to address.

12. Service management and capacity to improve

The management of services for children and young people in Southwark is **good**.

The JAR identified there is strong managerial leadership and effective political support. Strong ambitions and clear priorities are supported by effective partnership arrangements and are based on local need. There are good and improving performance management arrangements across the partnership. Children's services in Southwark have the capacity to deliver sustained improvement.

The inspection found that more attention was needed to ensure value for money and ensuring a more systematic evaluation of initiatives.

13. Youth Inspection

The JAR found that overall the quality of youth work provision in Southwark is adequate.

Strategic managers are well informed about the progress and quality of service and provide good support. Young people gain a good range of knowledge and skills through volunteering and good facilities support young people's engagement in sports, physical activities, media and the arts. The provision of services targeted at young people with disabilities is good. Overall, equality and diversity are promoted well within Southwark.

Areas for development include continuing to implement the Young Southwark participation framework and improving further young people's involvement in planning and evaluating youth work. The needs assessment process should be improved to strengthen the link between local needs and resource allocation. There is further work to be done to improve the overall quality and condition of accommodation. The monitoring and support arrangements for voluntary organisations also need improving.

14. Youth Offending Team Inspection

The Youth Offending Team inspection provides separate grades for the different components of the inspection – it does not provide an overall grade. Southwark was graded:

Work in the courts	3
Work with children and young people in the community	
• Work with children and young people at risk of offending	2
• Work with children and young people who have offended	1
• Work with parents/carers	3
• Outcomes of work with C&YP in the community	2
Work with C&YP subject to custodial sentences	2

Victims and restorative justice	2
Management and leadership	2

The five borough project in South-East London the YOT is engaged with has been promoted as good practice by the Home Office. The inspection found a wide range of preventative initiatives are in place and engagement with parents was impressive. The work of the YOT in the Courts was found to be good; the remands to secure accommodation rates have been significantly reduced and actions to reduce remands and high levels in ETE have been successful. Diversity issues are embedded in practice in the YOT's work.

The JAR found that vulnerability; safeguarding and risk of harm issues were not addressed as effectively as they could be by the YOT. It was also recommended the development of a more integrated service delivery between the YOT and social care and that a more robust approach to enforcing statutory orders in the YOT should be developed. The inspection found that better use of aggregated and evaluated data should be used to inform future practice.

(Needs numbering) **Annual Performance Assessment (APA) 2008**
(published December 2008)

The APA is an annual bench-top evaluation by Ofsted through data analysis rather than site visits to assess the contribution made by the Council to the delivery of the Every Child Matters agenda. As a bench-top evaluation, the APA uses validated data only, whereas the JAR included consideration of unvalidated data and predictions from schools of performance in 2008. This has led to some discrepancies between the two reports; however, as the issues for action from both reports were broadly similar they are addressed in a single plan.

The APA found that Southwark Council provides services that consistently deliver above minimum requirements. It noted that within Children's Services there are areas of innovative and very effective practice, such as well co-ordinated provision for looked after children and for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities that leads to consistently good outcomes. The Council is found to be ambitious for its residents and service management and capacity to improve are good. Ratings for this year's APA are

Assessment judgement area	APA Grade
Overall effectiveness of children's services	3 – Good
Being healthy	3 – Good
Staying safe	3 – Good
Enjoying and achieving	2 – Adequate
Making a positive contribution	3 – Good
Achieving economic well-being	3 – Good
Capacity to improve, including the management of services for children and young people	3 - Good

Services in be healthy, stay safe, making a positive contribution and achieving economic well-being outcome areas continue to improve and remain good.

The APA inspection praised the council for its persistent work to continue the culture change in the education service to redress longstanding deficiencies and underachievement in a number of schools. Considerable success has occurred in

redressing these deficiencies and the future direction of travel was deemed positive. However, because the outcomes for young people remain adequate, rather than good, the enjoy and achieve outcome area was scored to reflect this. It should be noted that whilst the JAR inspectors used validated attainment data from 2007 and emerging trends from 2008 to inform judgements, the APA drew on a combination of data from 2006 and 2007 which do not sufficiently reflect the rapid progress being made by Southwark schools.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

15. The JAR report recommended three actions to be implemented immediately. The actions for immediate action are:

- Disseminate findings of JAR
- Ensure staff and commissioned services have safe recruitment practices
- Improve integrated working across Looked After Children (LAC) and Youth Offending Team.

16. The report also recommended two actions to be implemented over the next six months. The actions for implementation over the next six months are:

- Robust analysis of reasons behind decline in LAC stability
- Develop a systematic approach to evaluating initiatives and particularly their value for money.

17. Action plans have been drawn up and have been part-implemented. The report and action plans will be presented to the Executive on 27 January 2009. Areas where action has led to progress since the JAR include:

- A review of the stability of Looked After Children, which is currently in line with the performance of similar London authorities
- Action to address key concerns regarding safer recruitment processes with continuous improvement of this area remaining central to our safeguarding developments and related actions in progress
- New joint working arrangements now in place between YOT and social care provision
- Embedding an approach for assessing value for money and impact in key business planning and commissioning processes, including links to corporate developments around policy and resourcing

18. The action plan for the YOT inspection has been submitted and accepted by HMIP, with progress being made to timescale.

19. Action plans for the JAR and Youth Inspection will be submitted to OfSTED within 60 working days JAR publication.

Policy implications

20. The recommendations and findings of the JAR will be key drivers for future policy and service reforms within the context of local and national children's services. This includes amongst others the national reforms for Children's Trusts, Youth Matters, Care Matters, and Aiming Higher for Disabled Children. Those changes known at present are detailed within respective action plans.
21. Any substantial changes to council provision arising from the JAR will be notified to the members in the appropriate form (IDM, key decisions etc)
22. Findings and recommendations of the JAR are supportive of local priorities as set out in the current Children and Young People's Plan and other key strategies impacting on the outcomes of children, young people and families.
23. Findings from the JAR will feed into future policy development such as the Children's and Young People's Plan and the work of the Corporate Parenting Committee.

Community Impact Statement

24. Key service developments arising from the inspections will be informed by the Equality Impact Assessment process of the council.
25. Delivering the recommendations of the JAR will result in improved outcomes for local children, young people and families. The investigations carried out during the JAR had a particular emphasis on more vulnerable groups such as those looked after, those at risk of offending, those at risk of under achievement, those requiring protection and those with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities. Recommendations and findings in some cases are specific to supporting improvements in equality and diversity of practice.
26. The recommendations and findings of the JAR will have a particular impact on children and young people, those with disabilities and key cohorts most affected by issues under investigation such as those of particular ethnicity or gender. Service development and commissioning of provision both generally and in relation to JAR recommendations is underpinned by needs assessment including considerations of equality and diversity.

Resource implications

27. Resource implications arising from JAR will be managed within the existing budget framework.
28. Any substantial changes to council finance, budget or staffing arising from the JAR will be notified to the members in the appropriate form (IDM, key decisions etc)

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
n/a	Title of department / unit Address	Name Phone number

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Joint Area Review Report – London Borough of Southwark
Appendix 2	Joint Area Review Action Plan
Appendix 3	Enhanced Youth Inspection Report
Appendix 4	Enhanced Youth Inspection Action Plan
Appendix 5	Youth Offending Team Inspection Report
Appendix 6	Youth Offending Team Action Plan

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Romi Bowen	
Report Author	Elaine Allegretti – Head of Strategy and Partnerships	
Version	Draft	
Dated	12/01/09	
Key Decision?	/No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / EXECUTIVE MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included
Strategic Director for Legal and Democratic Services	Yes/No	Yes/No
Finance Director	Yes/No	Yes/No
List other officers here		
Executive Member	Yes/No	Yes/No
Date final report sent to Constitutional/Community Council/Scrutiny Team	Month/date/year	