

CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

22nd MAY 2008

**REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

Children & Young People – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Cunningham

JOINT AREA REVIEW (JAR) AND YOUTH SERVICE INSPECTION REPORTS

1. Summary

Attached are the final published reports from Ofsted following the Joint Area Review of services for children and young people in the Stockton area, and the linked inspection of the Council's Youth Service. All the services inspected have been rated as good or outstanding. The graded judgements are as follows, based on a 4 point scale, with grade 3 being 'good' and grade 4 'outstanding'.

Joint Area Review	Grade
Safeguarding	3
Looked after children	3
Learning difficulties and / or disabilities	4
Service management	3
Capacity to improve	4
Youth Service	
Standards of young people's achievement	3
Quality of youth work practice	3
Quality of curriculum and resources	3
Leadership and management	3

2. Recommendation

Cabinet are recommended to receive the reports and note the positive outcomes of the JAR and Youth Service inspections.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations/Decision(s)

These inspection reports are required to be published locally and a copy provided for all local partners.

4. Members' Interests

Members (including co-opted Members with voting rights) should consider whether they have a personal interest in the item as defined in the Council's code of conduct (**paragraph 8**) and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with paragraph 9 of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest in the item, he/she must then consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest (**paragraphs 10 and 11 of the code of conduct**).

A Member with a prejudicial interest in any matter must withdraw from the room where the meeting considering the business is being held -

- in a case where the Member is attending a meeting (including a meeting of a select committee) but only for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose whether under statutory right or otherwise, immediately after making representations, answering questions or giving evidence as the case may be;
- in any other case, whenever it becomes apparent that the business is being considered at the meeting;

and must not exercise executive functions in relation to the matter and not seek improperly to influence the decision about the matter (**paragraph 12 of the Code**).

Further to the above, it should be noted that any Member attending a meeting of Cabinet, Select Committee etc; whether or not they are a Member of the Cabinet or Select Committee concerned, must declare any personal interest which they have in the business being considered at the meeting (unless the interest arises solely from the Member's membership of, or position of control or management on any other body to which the Member was appointed or nominated by the Council, or on any other body exercising functions of a public nature, when the interest only needs to be declared if and when the Member speaks on the matter), and if their interest is prejudicial, they must also leave the meeting room, subject to and in accordance with the provisions referred to above.

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

22nd MAY 2008

**REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

JOINT AREA REVIEW (JAR) AND YOUTH SERVICE INSPECTION REPORTS

SUMMARY

Attached are the final published reports from Ofsted following the Joint Area Review of services for children and young people in the Stockton area, and the linked inspection of the Council's Youth Service. All the services inspected have been rated as good or outstanding. The graded judgements are as follows (based on a 4 point scale, with grade 3 being 'good' and grade 4 'outstanding'):

Joint Area Review	Grade
Safeguarding	3
Looked after children	3
Learning difficulties and / or disabilities	4
Service management	3
Capacity to improve	4
Youth Service	
Standards of young people's achievement	3
Quality of youth work practice	3
Quality of curriculum and resources	3
Leadership and management	3

RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet are recommended to receive the reports and note the positive outcomes of the JAR and Youth Service inspections.

DETAIL

1. The JAR was carried out by a multi-disciplinary team of inspectors from Ofsted, the Healthcare Commission and the Audit Commission. The review was linked to the corporate assessment of the council by the Audit Commission. The JAR findings, plus aspects of the most recent Annual Performance Assessment (APA) of the Council, are represented in the relevant part of the corporate assessment report.
2. The JAR reviewed outcomes achieved by children and young people growing up in Stockton-on-Tees and evaluated the way local services, taken together, contribute to their well-being. Together with the APA of children's services, joint area reviews focus on the extent to which children and young people are healthy, safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution, and are well prepared to secure economic well-being. The JAR framework explores these issues by focusing on children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, children who are

looked after, and children at risk or requiring safeguarding. The review included an additional area of investigation, into the impact of partners in improving the outcomes of diverse and hard-to-reach children and young people, with particular reference to those of black and minority ethnic origin.

3. The JAR was also enhanced to include a linked inspection, by Ofsted, of the Youth Service.
4. The review took place in two stages, consisting of an analysis stage in which a wide range of evidence was scrutinised, followed by a two-week fieldwork stage when inspectors met a number of children and young people, their parents / carers, and those who deliver services for them; together with a range of partners, stakeholders, members and officers.
5. The outcomes of the review are set out in the attached reports. The inspection grades awarded place Stockton-on-Tees as one of the higher performing areas in the country so far. The JAR findings have highlighted many strengths, including:
 - Most children and young people feel safe in their community and there are good arrangements for safeguarding them, led effectively by the Local Safeguarding Children Board
 - Looked-after children and care leavers are well supported, making good progress in education, employment and training.
 - Provision for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is outstanding, supported by strong multi-agency working.
 - There is effective promotion of equality and diversity with strong collaborative working to improve provision for vulnerable groups.
 - The Children's Trust Board is well established and has successfully brought together strategic planning, joint commissioning and integrated delivery of services for children and young people.
 - Value for money is very good.
 - The capacity of council services to improve is outstanding. Partners have clear ambitions, strategies and plans. There is strong leadership and management capacity, and the prospects for securing significant further improvement through the development of integrated area-based services are very good.
6. Key strengths highlighted in the Youth Service inspection report include:
 - The service effectively targets provision to meet the needs of vulnerable and minority groups and offers a good range of activities that contribute well to the authority's education leisure time provision.
 - Curriculum documents provide excellent guidance that is used effectively by youth workers to plan programmes and activities.
 - Full-time staff are fully qualified; a high quality training programme is enabling the majority of sessional workers to gain qualifications and it also promotes good practice.
 - Leadership and management are good at all levels.
 - Young people are influential in shaping youth work provision.
7. Each of the reports includes recommendations for action. The JAR report recommends that the local partnership should:
 - improve quality assurance to eliminate inconsistencies in practice and recording that exist in some services;
 - improve robustness of performance monitoring and challenge to secure more consistent improvement at Key Stage 3;
 - ensure there is a strategy to further improve educational performance by children and young people from Pakistani communities;

- take effective action to reduce re-offending rates and improve links with the youth offending service to ensure that looked after children receive effective support to prevent them receiving final warnings and convictions;
- ensure that processes are applied consistently to evaluate the effectiveness of all projects and initiatives targeted at vulnerable groups;
- ensure the effective delivery of the children's workforce strategy.

8. The Youth Service report identifies two areas for development:

- Partnerships with the voluntary sector are limited in scope and are not sufficiently strategic.
- Systematic monitoring, review and reporting of the quality of provision are not fully in place.

9. Action plans to address these recommendations are either already in place or being prepared, and will be embedded within the Children & Young People's Plan and the relevant partnership and service planning structures. Progress against the action plans will be reported as part of the performance frameworks for the Children's Trust Board and the Council.

10. In line with statutory requirements, the JAR report is being distributed to all local partners and copies made available publicly. The action plan to address the recommendations will be made available in the same way once it has been finalised.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

11. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. Resource issues to address areas for improvement will be managed through the annual cycle of service planning and review of the medium term financial plan.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

12. There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

RISK ASSESSMENT

13. Reporting on the outcomes of the JAR and Youth Service inspections is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

COMMUNITY STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS

14. The outcomes of the JAR and Youth Service inspections impact across the core theme of 'Children and Young People'. Addressing the recommendations identified in the reports will support progress in achievement of the key ambitions for this theme, and will contribute to progress in other themes, as identified in the Children & Young People's Plan.

CORPORATE PARENTING

15. The JAR report has identified a number of strengths in the way local services work together to improve outcomes for looked after children and young people, with an overall rating of 'good' for this theme. Issues identified for development within this theme are:

- The inconsistent quality of field social work practice and recording of some reviews.
- High rates of young looked after people receiving a final warning or conviction.

16. These issues will be addressed through action plans as referred to in paragraph 9 above and progress will be monitored through the Corporate Parenting Group.

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

17. Consultation was not relevant in relation to this report.

Name of Contact Officer: Simon Willson

Post Title: Head of Performance (Children, Education and Social Care)

Telephone No. 01642 527035

Email Address: simon.willson@stockton.gov.uk

Background Papers

- Joint Area Review of Stockton-on-Tees Children's Services Authority Area, published by Ofsted, 22nd April 2008.
- Stockton-on-Tees Youth Service, Stockton-on-Tees Children's Services Authority Area, published by Ofsted, 22nd April 2008.

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:

The JAR and Youth Service inspection reports are in the public domain and available to all Councillors for information.

Property

The report does not have implications in relation to the Council's property.

