

Report to Communities Scrutiny Sub-Committee

6 December 2004



Performance Ratings for Social Services

Report of Debbie Jones, Acting Director for Social Care & Health

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To provide information relating to the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) Annual Performance Rating Assessment for Durham County Council and for other Local Authority Social Services Departments.

Background

- 2 On 18 November 2004 CSCI announced its performance ratings to councils responsible for Social Services in England. Ratings have been produced since November 2002 and aim to improve public information about current performance and to promote improvement at local, regional and national levels.
- 3 Overall "star ratings" are awarded but separate judgements are given for children's and adult's services respectively.
- 4 Star Ratings are a product of a wider performance assessment process, bringing CSCI and the councils into continuous contact throughout the year. Assessment includes evidence from inspections and reviews, monitoring and performance indicators, to form an overall picture of performance over time of both qualitative and quantitative aspects of performance. The assessment culminates in an annual review meeting with each council.

Star Rating 2003/04

- 5 Durham County Council received a 2 Star rating on 18 November 2004. Judgements for services were as follows.

	Serving People Well	Capacity to Improve
Children	Most	Promising
Adults	Most	Excellent

- 6 The judgement of serving 'most' people well for Children's Services was an improvement from 2003 and the judgement of 'excellent' in terms of capacity to improve was again, for adult services, an improvement from 2003.
- 7 Both judgements reflect the improvements made within the service during 2003/04 and place the service at the limit of a 2 Star rating. Any further improvement will move the service into 3 stars.
- 8 In their Annual Review of Performance Report CSCI commented upon the respective services as follows.

Children and Families General Assessment

"Good progress is being made overall, and the successful recruitment and retention strategy has ensured that vital social worker posts are now filled. The council recognised the need to improve structural arrangements for referral and initial assessment and is putting appropriate plans in place. There was a substantial increase in the number of younger children coming into the care system last year and the council needs to maintain its focus on preventative strategies this year. Performance monitoring and the engagement of young people remain strengths."

Services for Adults and Older People General Assessment

"The council is increasingly working in partnership with other agencies to ensure that people benefit from "joined up" services. There has been a good improvement in the number of people receiving Direct Payments, and an excellent reduction in the number of people leaving hospital who experience delayed transfers of care. The SSI Inspection of services for people with learning disabilities concluded that most people are being well served, and that there is an excellent capacity for improvement. Areas needing further work include the development of commissioning strategies with partners; developing a better understanding of how to meet the needs of people from black and ethnic minority communities; and, together with partners, meeting a number of Government targets for mental health services."

- 9 CSCI did identify a number of performance issues which need to be addressed as part of the Social Care and Health service improvement plan, they are:
 - a. Despite a reduction in the number of children over 12 being looked after, the overall number of looked after children has risen over the last two years. The council should continue its work to understand and reverse the trend of increasing numbers of younger children entering the care system.
 - b. The council should ensure that those children who are capable of academic success reach their full educational potential.
 - c. The council should improve the long terms stability of children's foster placements, for those children who have been looked after for four years.

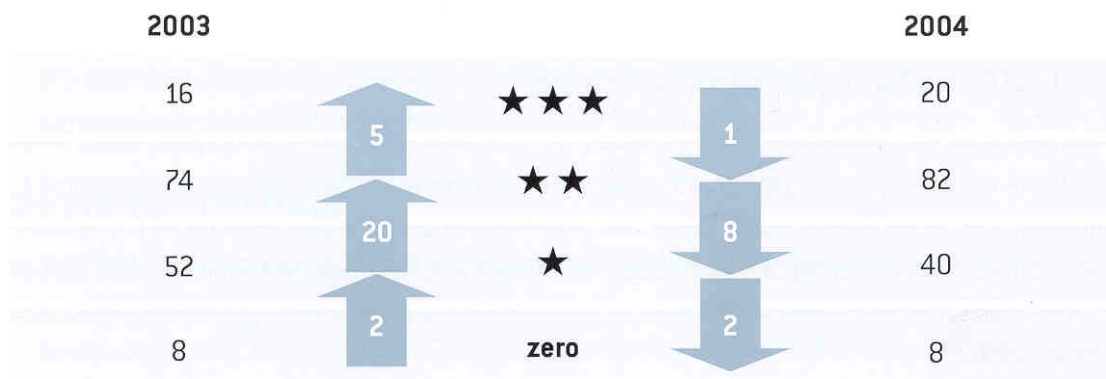
- d. The council should demonstrate its ability to identify and meet the needs of children from black and ethnic minorities.
 - e. The council and its partners should continue with its approach to planning for continuous improvement, despite the uncertainties created by the forthcoming referendum on regional and local government.
 - f. The council should continue to develop its partnership working with health and other organisations in order to improve the experience of older people who use services. This will be assisted by experience gained from a pilot scheme in one area of the county.
 - g. The council should ensure that the needs of all adults and older people who receive services should be appropriately reviewed.
 - h. The council should demonstrate its ability to identify and meet the needs of people from black and ethnic minorities.
 - i. The council and its partners should continue with its approach to planning for continuous improvement despite the uncertainties created by the forthcoming referendum on regional and local government.
- 10 However, these performance issues were balance with numerous references to improved performance, recognising the significant achievements of the service during 2003/04. Some of the improvements include:
- a. The implementation of Health Act flexibilities for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services and for children with physical disabilities and learning disabilities.
 - b. Child performance indicators show good and excellent performance.
 - c. Progress made in all areas identified in the Victoria Climbié audit.
 - d. There have been successful discussions with health partners to resolve disagreements about continuing care.
 - e. Performance indicators show excellent performance in relation to the numbers of people helped to live at home.
 - f. Staff sickness, turnover and vacancy level have reduced and are now compatible with levels in similar councils.
 - g. On balance performance indicators have improved again when compared to 2002/03.

How well are councils performing overall

- 11 Since last year, the star rating has changed for 25% of councils. Of these, 71% have improved and 29% have decreased. In population terms this means that, in the last year, social care performance has improved for councils containing fourteen per cent of the population. For councils serving nearly eighty per cent of the population, performance ratings have stayed the same, and for councils serving eight per cent of the population, performance has deteriorated.

Figure 2

Changes in Rating from 2003 to 2004



12 Children and Families

In judging the services against standards overall, using all the assessment evidence available, the ratings show the strongest gains in fair access to services, and in capacity to improve. The least improved aspects of service since last year are in effectiveness and quality.

Looking in more detail at the results, there is evidence that local service priorities are now better aligned with national priorities, and more effectively supported by the management of resources. Priorities for children’s services in 2003/04 included:

- a. Greater stability in the placements of looked after children. Here there is a mixed picture of improved initial stability, but some reduced stability in the longer term.
- b. Some further improvements in the educational attainment of looked after children. Performance has continued to increase in this area, but social services have failed to reach the national targets set out for previous years, and improvements are modest.
- c. Increasing the number of care-leavers in education, training or employment. Performance also improved here, though only 30% of councils achieved the 2003-04 national target level.

13 The sensitivity of the services to racial and cultural diversity in the population shows some improvement from last year’s ratings. The availability of key services on a twenty-four hour basis was considered a strength. Complaints were also seen to be well handled in many areas, supported by good publicity and user-friendly information’. Linked with this, strong performance was observed in safeguarding children from poor treatment whilst using services.

14 The least-well achieved areas of performance were in efficiency and value for money of children’s services, which showed the smallest gains over the last

year. Whereas high-level strategic partnership is reported as a strong feature of performance, the detailed reflection of this in joint financial arrangements with partners is judged still to be weak.

15 Services for Adults

The areas judged to be strongest were in aligning local and national priorities, such as:

- a. Improving the level of intensive support to people in their own homes and reducing the rate of admissions to care homes; improvements in both these areas were achieved.
- b. Increasing the level of direct payments, where the number of adults receiving direct payments to manage their own support services increased by 5,100 over the previous year.
- c. Reducing delayed discharge from hospitals, where the rates have dropped significantly.

16 This evidence suggests good performance also in establishing effective working partnerships with other local agencies. Fair access to services was also well rated, including the availability of 24-hour services and the fairness of eligibility and charging policies.

17 The most significant improvements since the previous ratings were in improving access to services (including greater sensitivity to racial and cultural diversity), in establishing joint working and financial arrangements with partner organisations.

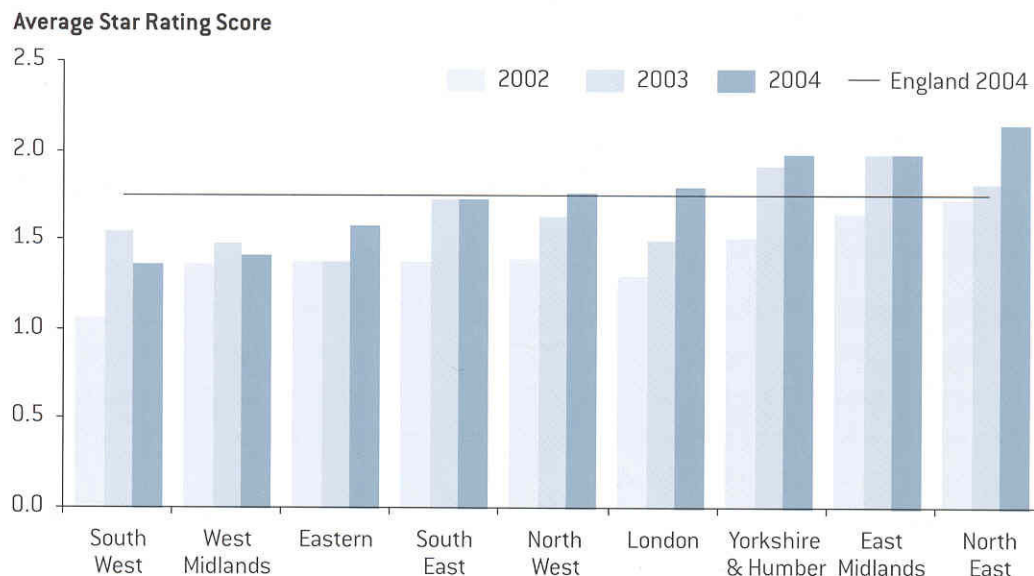
18 The least well-rated aspects included support services for carers, and this is reflected also in the indicator data on carers' assessments. The ratings also show relatively poor levels of performance in managing services efficiently, as well as less confidence that the range of services is sufficiently broad to meet the cultural and racial diversity present in the local population. Changes in judgements since last year suggest a lack of progress in providing safeguards against poor treatment whilst using services.

How does performance compare across different parts of the country?

19 The strongest performance is evident in the North East, East Midlands and Yorkshire and Humber regions. The North East and London, followed by the Eastern region, have seen the strongest rate of improvement over the last year.

Figure 5

Average Rating Scores Across Regions



How does performance compare across different types of council?

20 Performance was strongest, on average, in the inner London councils and Metropolitan Districts. Improvement has taken place in most types of council since last year with only Shire Counties showing a small fall. Improvement has been most pronounced across the London authorities.

Conclusion

21 Elected members may recall that the County Council received a disappointing 1 Star rating in November 2002. The “service” embarked upon an ambitious improvement plan augmented by a robust performance monitoring programme. In November 2003 the service received recognition of its achievements in terms of improved outcomes for service users through the award of a 2 star rating.

22 I am particularly pleased that not only have we consolidated our performance but improved both of our service judgements. Social Care & Health staff have achieved considerable success during 2003/04 in responding to higher quality standards, increased demand for services and the requirement to modernise services in line with service user expectations, government requirements and County Council objectives.

Recommendations

23 Members to receive the report.

Contact: Peter Appleton, Head of Quality & Performance

Appendix 1: Implications

Finance	Social Care & Health services throughout the county continue to face significant pressures in balancing the increased demand for services against finite and limited resources
Staffing	Effective Human Resource Management including recruiting and retaining high quality staff is a critical factor in consolidating and improving performance
Equal opportunities	N/A
Accommodation	N/A
Crime and disorder	N/A
Sustainability	N/A
Human rights	N/A
Localities	N/A
Young people	N/A
Consultation	N/A