

Cabinet

25 January 2012



**Children and Young People's Services:
Ofsted Assessments and Inspections**

Report of Corporate Management Team

David Williams, Corporate Director, Children and Young People's Services

Councillor Claire Vasey, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People's Services

Purpose of the Report

1. The report provides Cabinet with the outcomes of the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills' (Ofsted) Annual Performance Assessment of services for children in County Durham, together with the outcomes of Ofsted inspection activity in a range of settings provided by the County Council.

Background

2. Ofsted publishes an annual assessment of services for children in each local authority area. Cabinet needs to be aware of two underlying aspects of this assessment. Firstly, the assessment does not relate simply to services provided directly by the County Council. It includes, for example, the work of Further Education colleges, childminders, independent residential children's homes, academy, voluntary and community schools as well as services directly provided by the local authority such as children's centres, residential children's homes, the fostering and adoption services and so on. Secondly, the rating is largely a summative judgement of the outcomes of individual inspections of all these providers of services. These inspections may be recent; but some are now in excess of three years old.
3. In addition to the annual assessment of services for children, there are a significant number of Ofsted inspections each year of a range of services provided directly by the County Council. The findings are, in the main, published by Ofsted. This report provides details of the headline judgements of those which have occurred over recent months.

Annual Assessment of Services for Children

4. The annual assessment was published in November 2011. Ofsted uses a four point scale to rate the services for children and young people in each local authority area. The scale goes from 1 (Performs poorly) to 4 (Performs excellently). The full assessment is attached at Appendix 2. Cabinet will note

that the overall assessment is a rating of 3, which means that Durham performs well.

5. Nationally, 28 authority areas are deemed to be performing excellently; 71 are performing well; 33 are adequate; and 15 are performing poorly. In the North East region the figures are: 0 poor; 2 adequate; 7 well; 2 excellent.
6. Cabinet will note the substantial strengths described in Appendix 2. These include:
 - Very young children make good progress in their development and the very large majority of nursery provision is good or outstanding
 - The large majority of primary schools are good or outstanding. Results for 11-year-olds have improved year on year and provisional Key Stage 2 results for 2011 show that standards have been maintained
 - The majority of secondary schools, including academies, are good or better and the 2011 provisional results for 16-year-olds show that GCSE results at grades A* to C including English and mathematics have improved significantly in some schools and in the county overall
 - The local authority provides good support for the very small number of schools that are, or have been, in Ofsted categories of concern
 - Specialist education provision, including the local authority special schools, the special school sixth forms, the independent special school and the pupil referral unit are of good quality overall
 - Three of the four colleges providing post-16 learning are good and one is outstanding. The proportion of young people achieving level 2 or level 3 qualifications by age 19 matches similar areas.
7. Areas identified for improvement include:
 - Half of the childminding provision is only satisfactory
 - Although improving, levels of development at the Early Years Foundation Stage for very young children from low-income families are below the average for such children in similar areas. The gap between them and the majority of children in the same age group in Durham is not closing. This is also the case for older young people. As overall results improve, the attainment gap between the majority of 16- and 19-year-olds and young people from a low-income background is slow to close.
8. It is important that we have the highest ambition for services for children in County Durham. There are two particular areas under the current assessment methodology which, if suitably improved, would boost our assessment rating to excellent, providing that our comparative performance in other factors is maintained. These are the improvement of the quality of childminding provision and improvement in quality of sixth forms in schools.
9. Officers in Children and Young People's Services will seek to influence and improve the quality of childminding provision over the coming months. In particular, we will:
 - Ensure that local authority data is correct, up to date and aligned with the Ofsted data used for the Performance Profile

- Ensure that support is offered to childminders in meeting and exceeding Ofsted registration and inspection requirements
 - Support childminders in the delivery of quality childcare and education in line with the guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage.
10. Education Development Service staff will work with our 11-18 schools to improve the range and quality of sixth form provision by:
- Providing in-school support and training for teaching and learning strategies related to Level 3 courses
 - Working with school leaders to develop understanding of school sixth form viability issues and their relationship to curriculum breadth
 - Developing understanding in schools of national success measures in relation to exam outcomes and destinations for students in order to ensure that school leaders have a realistic understanding of Ofsted expectations for post-16 provision.

It should, however, be noted that the new Ofsted framework for the inspection of schools does not have within it a separate judgement for sixth forms and so it is unclear how this aspect of the annual assessment will be judged in the future.

Ofsted Inspections of Local Authority Direct Provision for Children

11. In addition to the annual assessment, Ofsted undertakes a range of other inspections of services for children and young people that are directly provided by the County Council. The following paragraphs summarise the outcomes of recent inspection judgements.

Local Authority Residential Children's Homes

12. Ofsted has a duty to inspect residential children's homes twice a year – a full inspection followed by an interim inspection. The following table contains the overall judgements from the latest inspections of the Local Authority's residential children's homes. This shows that as at 31 December 2011, all 12 homes are rated good or better (11 good, 1 outstanding).

Aycliffe Secure Services

13. The Secure Unit at Aycliffe was last inspected in October 2011 and the overall effectiveness was judged to be 'Good'. The provision was rated 'Good' for all aspects of the inspection: Outcomes for children and young people; Quality of care; Keeping children and young people safe and feeling safe; Leadership and management; and Equality and diversity practice.

Local Authority Fostering and Adoption

14. The County Council's Fostering Service was last inspected in 2008 and the Adoption Service was inspected in 2010. Both services were judged to be 'Outstanding'.

Children's Centres

15. Inspections of Children's Centres began to be undertaken by Ofsted in 2010. The following table illustrates that, of the 14 Children's Centres that have been inspected to date, 11 (79%) were judged to be good.

Children's Centre	Inspection Date	Grade
Blackhall	20/10/2010	Good
Chilton	06/04/2011	Good
Coundon	24/01/2011	Good
Dean Bank	09/03/2011	Good
Evenwood & Ramshaw	09/03/2011	Good
Haswell	24/02/2011	Good
Howletch	12/04/2011	Good
Kelloe	17/03/2011	Satisfactory
Middleton-in-Teesdale	09/03/2011	Good
Seaham	17/11/2010	Satisfactory
Seascape	21/02/2011	Good
Weardale	09/03/2011	Good
Wheatley Hill	16/03/2011	Good
Wingate	04/04/2011	Satisfactory

16. 48 inspections have been conducted in relation to our Statistical Neighbours. 6 were judged outstanding, 33 good, 8 satisfactory and 1 inadequate. Action plans are being developed and implemented locally to enable further improvement.

Summary

17. The inspection data in this report shows that, of the provision inspected that is the direct responsibility of the County Council, none is currently deemed inadequate; some is satisfactory; but the vast majority is either good or outstanding. Such results, in a large authority with a significant amount of direct provision, is a significant achievement and an indicator of the quality and commitment of very many staff across Children and Young People's Services. Overall, Ofsted judges that services for children within County Durham are performing well.

Recommendations and reasons

18. Cabinet is asked to note the report.

Background papers

Ofsted inspection reports of all provision named in the report (all available on Ofsted website www.ofsted.gov.uk)

Appendix 1: Implications

Finance - None – report for information only

Staffing - None – report for information only

Risk - None – report for information only

Equality and Diversity - None – report for information only

Accommodation - None – report for information only

Crime and Disorder - None – report for information only

Human Rights - None – report for information only

Consultation - Not applicable

Procurement - None – report for information only

Disability Discrimination Act - None – report for information only

Legal Implications - None – report for information only

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4 November 2011

Mr David Williams
 Corporate Director, Children and Young People's Services
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 Durham
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Dear Mr Williams

Annual children's services assessment

Ofsted guidance published in April 2011 explains that the annual assessment of children's services is derived from the performance profile of the quality of services for children and young people in each local area. This performance profile includes findings from across Ofsted's inspection and regulation of services and settings for which the local authority has strategic or operational responsibilities, either alone or in partnership with others, together with other published data.

In reaching the assessment of children's services, Ofsted has taken account of inspection outcomes including the arrangements for making sure children are safe and stay safe and performance against similar authorities and/or national measures. More weight has been given to the outcomes of Ofsted's inspections and regulatory visits (Blocks A and B in the performance profile).

The annual assessment derives from a four point scale:

4	Performs excellently	An organisation that significantly exceeds minimum requirements
3	Performs well	An organisation that exceeds minimum requirements
2	Performs adequately	An organisation that meets only minimum requirements
1	Performs poorly	An organisation that does not meet minimum requirements

Within each level there will be differing standards of provision. For example, an assessment of 'performs excellently' does not mean all aspects of provision are perfect. Similarly, an assessment of 'performs poorly' does not mean there are no adequate or even good aspects. As in 2010, while the performance profile remains

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central to Ofsted's assessment, meeting or not meeting the minimum requirements alone does not define the grade. The assessment has involved the application of inspector judgement.

Durham County Council children's services assessment 2011

Children's services assessment	Performs well (3)
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Children's services in Durham County Council perform well. This year's higher grade recognises the improvements made in the overall quality of some settings with very little being inadequate. The very large majority of inspected services, settings and institutions help children and young people stay safe and learn well. The inspection judgements of schools that are now academies have been taken into account in making this assessment.

The inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements for children in need and children who may be in need of protection which took place in March 2011 found that all the areas for development identified in 2010 had been addressed. There are no areas for priority action and few areas for development.

Strengths

- Very young children make good progress in their development and, over the past four years, outcomes in the Early Years Foundation Stage have improved faster than nationally. As last year, the very large majority of nursery provision is good or outstanding. Most of the children's centres inspected are good.
- The good quality of primary schools has been maintained and the large majority are good or outstanding. Results for 11-year-olds have improved year on year. They are slightly above the national average and match the average in similar areas. Provisional Key Stage 2 results for 2011 show that standards have been maintained.
- The majority of secondary schools, including academies, are good or better and none are now inadequate. This is an improvement on 2010. However, as reported in last year's assessment, a minority of local authority schools, including over half of the sixth forms, are only satisfactory. The 2011 provisional results for 16-year-olds show that GCSE results at grades A* to C including English and mathematics have improved significantly in some schools and in the county overall. Over the past four years, results have improved at a faster rate than nationally.
- The local authority provides good support for the very small number of schools that are, or have been, in Ofsted categories of concern. Monitoring visits show that support to bring about improvement is effective.

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- Specialist education provision, including the local authority special schools, the special school sixth forms, the independent special school and the pupil referral unit are of good quality overall as they were last year.
- Three of the four colleges providing post-16 learning are good and one is outstanding as reported in last year's assessment. The proportion of young people achieving level 2 or level 3 qualifications by the age of 19 matches similar areas.
- For looked after children, adoption and fostering services, including those that are privately run, are mostly outstanding. The large majority of the local authority children's homes are also good or better and this is an improvement on last year.

Areas for further improvement

- Half of the childminding provision is only satisfactory as reported in 2010.
- Although improving, levels of development at the Early Years Foundation Stage for very young children from low-income families are below the average for such children in similar areas. The gap between them and the majority of children in the same age group in Durham is not closing. This is also the case for older young people. As overall results improve, the attainment gap between the majority of 16- and 19-year-olds and young people from a low-income background is slow to close.

This children's services assessment is provided in accordance with section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

Yours sincerely

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