



Joint Area Review

Self Assessment

Service Management

Overarching Statement

Service Management focuses on our ambition and vision for children and young people's services in Nottinghamshire. It looks to translate the vision of the Nottinghamshire Children and Young People's Partnership into clear priorities, based on a comprehensive assessment of needs, ensuring that we make a difference to outcomes for children and young people through improved performance. It has a particular emphasis in ensuring that we work together as a Partnership, including children, young people, families and their carers, so that we develop effective and responsive services to improve the life chances of Nottinghamshire children and young people.

For this aspect of our work we assess our performance to be at GRADE 3

Executive Summary

This self assessment reviews our progress throughout 2007 in relation to those aspects of service management which underpin and provide the infrastructure to implement the *Every Child Matters* agenda. It acknowledges that after a comparatively slow start we have made significant progress in recent months and that we now have a solid strategic approach with robust plans to deliver improved outcomes for children and young people in Nottinghamshire. It details the key areas where we need to prioritise our collective energies and resources across our Partnership so as to ensure successful outcomes.

Introduction

This self assessment takes account of the following:

- the quality of political control and corporate leadership
- the quality of strategic action planning, and especially the extent to which corporate policy and strategic planning defines and determines well focused actions
- the extent to which challenging but realistic targets for improvement are set
- the effectiveness of the use of resources, especially in supporting and sustaining improvement in a cost effective way
- the effectiveness of performance management arrangements and the use of evaluation and review to secure improvement
- the effectiveness of partnership working across services within and beyond the local authority, and the extent to which solutions to problems cut across traditional sector and area boundaries

- the extent to which children and young people are consulted and engaged in decision-making and in shaping the delivery of their services.

As a partnership, we have been extremely honest in our self assessment, recognising that we need to increase the pace of change towards integration of our services. Since the publication of the APA grade in November 2007, we have worked extremely hard to address our weaknesses and we feel optimistic that we are making progress, particularly now that we are under new leadership, which is focussed on the critical challenges with a renewed resolve to address them with energy and by using all of the resources of our partnership as effectively as possible.

This self assessment has a link to all other self assessments but particularly with capacity to improve. It also links with our draft performance management and medium term financial strategy.

Context & Data

Ambition and Prioritisation

- Children and Young People's Services and the Nottinghamshire Children and Young People's Partnership (our Children's Trust) now provide effective leadership for children's services in Nottinghamshire. There is a clear vision enshrined in the Children and Young People's Plan. The ambitions for children's services are realistic and are largely known and understood. (see Children and Young People's Plan and draft Plan Review).
- The Council has appointed a new Acting Director of Children and Young People's Services, recognising the need to respond decisively to the recent APA judgement and to accelerate the pace of change. The Acting Strategic Director has been appointed for one year (until December 2008) to prioritise the following areas:
 - Prepare for the JAR and 2008 APA
 - Establish our partnership with a clear, shared vision and single identity
 - Gain entry to Wave 6 of the BSF programme
 - Accelerate the integration of services
 - Establish a new relationship with schools based on an appropriate balance of support and challenge.
- Priorities have been set by the Partnership to improve outcomes for children and young people. These are shared with parents and carers and children and young people through consultation on the Children and Young People's Plan, the Plan Review and through the Local Area Agreement (LAA). Young people's views in relation to how safe they feel in school and in their local area (Tellus2 survey) have been taken account in our planning. In particular, bullying and the fear of bullying have been highlighted as a key priority in the Children and Young People's Plan and in the LAA through National Indicator 50- Emotional Health of Children.
- We have recently focussed on ensuring that all staff know and understand the Partnership's vision so that they can contribute to its practical implementation. To that end we have specifically targeted middle managers both in the Council and in key partnerships through participation in briefings and fora. We have also established a departmental Extended Leadership Team with a programme of activity over the next 12 months designed to facilitate joint working arrangements across services. This has improved communication and engagement in setting the strategic aims for the Department and has facilitated cross divisional working which is beginning to address cultural and practice differences. This complements the Council's Building Effective Leadership programme for third tier managers (Heads of Service) and the Leadership Forum for first and second tier (Chief Officers and Service Directors).
- A comprehensive Joint Strategic Needs Assessment has been developed with our Health Service partners, with a specific chapter on the needs of children and young people in Nottinghamshire. This has identified gaps in

existing service provision and is being used to prioritise actions and the allocation of resources in local areas. (see draft JSNA, Chapter 1 Children and Young People).

- With the support of external consultants, we are developing a children and young people's commissioning strategy, based on the East Midlands Commissioning Framework (see self assessment on commissioning).
- We have developed a robust multi-agency approach to integrated youth support, including an innovative solution to the new IAG arrangements (via an arms-length Connexions company, owned jointly by the City and County Councils) (see self assessment on integrated youth support).
- We are developing an Early Intervention and Prevention Framework to ensure that priority is given to providing a wide range of high quality preventive services for children and young people and that needs are addressed before problems become intractable. Key strands are delivered in and through children's centres, extended services in and around schools and our Joint Access Teams (see self assessment on early intervention).
- Services provided for children and young people take account of equality and diversity issues through equality impact assessments (known locally as service diversity reviews). We are beginning to pull together information across Children and Young People's Services to assess the impact of service diversity reviews in the planning, reviewing and commissioning of services. Throughout 2007 we undertook six service diversity reviews - in particular one on the Children and Young People's Plan highlighted the need to address issues around the needs of gay, lesbian, bi-sexual and trans-gender young people. As a result we have set up a group to progress work in this area. Although this process is not fully embedded currently the group will drive this agenda forward and ensure that the issues are integral to the development of integrated services across the Partnership. (see self assessment on equality and diversity).
- Consultation with children, young people, parents and carers, partners and stakeholders is making an impact on the shape of service delivery (see self assessment on participation). For example:
 - The Young Pioneers is a well established youth forum that is involved in shaping and informing service developments both locally and nationally. Young people are trained as inspectors and assess services for their accessibility, including the UK Youth headquarters and the Beth Shalom Holocaust Centre. This has resulted in young people being skilled to be able to question and challenge when they are not happy. At the Beth Shalom Centre, young people have been able to see and experience changes resulting from their assessment, whilst the Board of Directors at the UK Youth headquarters have completed an action plan and fed this back to the group. Young people have also been involved in allocating youth initiative grants and are currently informing our special educational needs strategy review, as well as advising the police on their experiences.
 - The Racial Equality Council's Youth Executive Forum acts as a shadow board of the main executive board. Although fairly recently established, the group's membership includes black and minority ethnic young people, multiple heritage young people, traveller young people, refugee and (often unaccompanied) asylum seeking young people and it is envisaged that eastern European migrant young people will also become involved. The group is currently accessing training that will enable it to play a role in the running of the REC, as well as applying for funding. The young people informed the 'challenging racism: making a difference' strategy.
 - Young people have been involved in two multiple heritage conferences for school students. They have acted on the steering group and genuinely informed the conference planning, as well as acting as youth facilitators on the day. The young people involved have taken actions back into their schools, met with senior management teams and started to make changes to the way their schools address issues

experienced by multiple heritage young people. This has empowered the young people involved and enabled them to become young leaders addressing community cohesion issues.

- Refugee and asylum seeking (R/AS) young people have talked about their experiences and this has been publicised through local news and will shortly be part of a BBC services programme. Additionally, films of young people are shown to prospective and current foster carers as part of their training, to improve their understanding of the issues for R/AS young people and thus the support they are able to give them.
- Looked after young people living in residential care are heavily involved in the current tendering process for private providers of residential care. Their involvement has included setting and assessing method statements, meeting potential providers at a provider event and interviewing potential providers. This involvement has not only been beneficial in terms of the young people's development but will improve the quality of residential care provision for future looked after young people.
- Young people accessing the Gedling, Broxtowe and Rushcliffe aftercare service have given their views about the service they have received through a DVD, which the service has committed to addressing.
- Young people attending the Nottinghamshire Learning Centre have been involved both in school improvement through creating a visual self evaluation form as well as being involved in a national HMI project looking at attendance and exclusion.
- Consultations undertaken with 100 young people by the Education Welfare Service through group work, questionnaires and interviews have established that young people prefer work with them to be proactive rather than reactive, that they enjoy group work, that they feel the relationship with the worker is important and they value mentoring. The service has responded by individualising pieces of work with young people and by sending positive postcards to children.
- Young people have been involved in several youth settings across the county in informing the opening hours, décor, activities on offer, how the budgets are allocated and which staff are appointed.
- At Clayfields House secure unit, young people are heavily involved in service management through daily residents meetings, Clayfields Council (a monthly forum for young people and staff members which has resulted in changes in décor, equipment and activities provided, the incentives policy, improved staffing levels, the 'welcome' process for new residents), in every recruitment process and in evaluating their time at Clayfields through an independent advocate.
- Young people accessing support through the Education to Employment (E2E) programme have contributed to service management in many ways, including identifying the need for equal access to IT provision across the county and planning celebration events. Concerns and issues raised in the student forums are fed through to the management team, who address the issues and respond and feedback to the student forums.
- Connexions Nottinghamshire involve young people in numerous ways including representation at board and local management committee levels, in policy writing, running events and peer education/peer support projects. Young people's participation underpins all aspects of the way Connexions work.
- Younger children accessing support through children's centres inform the activities on offer within the centres as well as the décor, through using photography and other creative methods.

- Children with additional needs have influenced the support they receive through the transition from primary to secondary school in a number of schools in the county, through consulting other children around the issues relating to transition, putting this on a multi-media CD-ROM and distributing copies to feeder primary schools.
- Children and young people are informing the work of the Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children's Board in all aspects:
 - designing information for children and young people to receive about the child protection process
 - designing agendas for case conferences
 - influencing web resources
 - working with younger children in family centres to develop tools for children to help their understanding of child protection processes and plans.

- We have developed a Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) to enable us to take a longer term view to budget setting, help us link our resources to identify need and to identify gaps in service provision and capacity. This will enable us to address needs, prioritise where appropriate, align resources to the priorities in the Children and Young People's Plan and Local Area Agreement targets and facilitate the integration of services. This will also enable us to meet corporate expectations in respect of the efficiency and value for money agenda. Please see Appendix One for details of the Medium Term Strategy, with particular reference to the targeting of additional resources to priority areas.
- The Council has gained entry to Wave 6 of the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) project. As part of this process, £2.5 million has been set aside to meet preliminary set-up costs and a cross-departmental working group has been established to complete a financial plan to ensure that sufficient funds are available to successfully reach the procurement stage (estimated as up to 1% of the anticipated total spend of £750 million). Elected Members have embraced the fundamental principle of diversity of governance in order to provide choice to parents and young people and to raise standards. BSF will be used as a major vehicle to promote inclusion and integrate services in order to close the gap between advantaged and disadvantaged groups. (see self assessment for BSF)

Performance management

- Robust and systematic performance and monitoring processes are in place around the Children and Young People's Plan and the LAA. We have developed a performance management framework to support this. (see draft Performance Management Framework)
- The County Council has developed a corporate performance management framework which is complemented by our departmental reporting programme which looks specifically at our key areas of performance. This programme sets out a series of management information reports which will be shared with middle managers and Elected Members about key areas of performance.
- We are developing an outcomes based accountability approach to measuring our performance and have had a series of 'turning the curve' exercises, supported by consultants, to ensure that we are robustly focussing on new ways of working, understanding and analysing impact and evidencing improvements - these will be extended to all our middle managers prior to next year's business planning cycle. The Children's Services Executive Group has agreed to explore this approach as the basis to underpin the joint commissioning approach.

- Our robust and honest self-assessment, as part of our APA in 2007, has been used across the Partnership to review progress and redefine priorities. (see APA letter, November 2007).

Methodology

- We established our Children's Trust Board (the Nottinghamshire Children and Young People's Partnership) in February 2008 under the new leadership of the Acting Strategic Director. This Partnership encompasses all the agencies who support and provide services to children and young people in Nottinghamshire and is chaired by the Lead Member for Children and Young People's Services.
- We have established a Young People's Board. This new Board will link with the Integrated Youth Support and Development Board to ensure that young people effectively influence strategic decision making around young people's services. It will also link directly with the Council's Cabinet and the Children and Young People's Partnership Board to make real our commitment, set out in our Participation Strategy, to properly involve young people in high level decisions that impact upon their lives. The Board's initial work will involve managing the delivery of the £2.5m Youth Opportunity and Youth Capital Funds for Nottinghamshire for 2008/11. This Board ties together the wide range of consultative mechanisms which have been available to children and young people for many years (see self assessments for participation and integrated youth support).
- Our ongoing review of the Children and Young People's Plan 2007 will reinforce and refresh its priorities in consultation with partners, children and young people, and parents and carers. There is a multi-agency group which oversees the plan and its review and includes the chairs of the children and young people's sub-groups of the District Local Strategic Partnerships. The review of the plan has provided the opportunity to identify the key priorities, based on a shared understanding of need across the partnership, using our growing capacity for strategic needs assessment and improved self-awareness.
- The County Council has extended its effective leadership programme for the Council's middle managers (Building Effective Leadership). This programme focuses on leadership skills, values and behaviours and is also a forum for consulting middle managers on key corporate priorities and initiatives. This has enabled managers to engage with the development of the values and beliefs of the organisation and contribute to setting and endorsing strategic priorities for the Council.
- New terms of reference have been introduced for the Department's senior executive group, the Children and Young People's Leadership Team (CYPLT). This group is now complemented by the Extended Leadership Team, comprising of Heads of Service (ELT), which also has a clear terms of reference. ELT meets monthly and has a jointly (CYPLT/ELT) forward plan designed to accelerate the pace of integration, with a particular emphasis on cultural change and outcomes, based planning. This provides a significant opportunity to improve communication and participation in shaping the department and partnership priorities.
- We are working to embed our evolving new relationship with schools, setting up a Transformation Group and sub groups, with a view to supporting improvements in school performance and increase schools' confidence in local authority' services. The sub groups cover the key areas of Achievement and Participation, Integrated Services and Interdependence and Partnership. In terms of brokering our new relationships with schools, we have held a series of meetings with secondary head teachers and agreed a set of working principles to inform the approach both of schools and the Local Authority in addressing areas of mutual concern. We have also established a forum for Primary head teachers to complement the secondary phase arrangements (see self assessment for the new relationship with schools). This approach is already having an impact. For example, returns to this year's Tell Us 3 survey are currently running at 77% (and still counting) compared against a total return last year of 30%.

- Through the Children Services Executive Group (CSEG - the executive arm of the Partnership) we have begun joint commissioning activity. In particular, we have made joint decisions about commissioning new services and strengthening existing ones where a gap has been identified and is a key priority – for example:
 - * we established two posts, jointly funded with the voluntary sector to increase strategic capacity
 - * we agreed to fund two children and young people's participation posts
 - * we agreed to jointly fund and manage a post to support emotional health and wellbeing
 - * we have commissioned the new Connexions company to delivery our new advice, information and guidance service.
- We have successfully negotiated the key priorities in the children's theme of the LAA with the Government Office for the East Midlands. We have ensured that we have made the appropriate links with the priorities in the Children and Young People's Plan and that the national indicators for LAA reflect children and young people's priorities and our local focus. At the same time, we have strengthened our representation on the key governance groups of the LAA with the Acting Strategic Director now playing a key role.
- Additionally, the Children's Services Executive Group undertakes a performance and monitoring role on behalf of the Partnership and receives performance reports twice a year about progress against the Children and Young People's Plan priorities for improvement. CSEG will also be the performance monitoring group for the LAA children and young people's theme. (see draft Performance Management Framework)

Conclusion

We have acknowledged through our APA 2007 that many aspects of our service management arrangements are developing. However, after a comparatively slow start, our partnership is under new leadership and we have made considerable progress in all of the key areas since the APA. At the same time, our capacity for joint needs assessment and our vastly increased level of self awareness mean that our strategic planning has improved – a position which is reflected in the sharpness of our plan review. Through the review of our plan, we focus our attention on those areas we need to improve most and we have refreshed our targets to ensure that they are suitably robust, realistic and challenging.

We have a new, shared understanding of the areas we need to develop and have either taken action to address these or have plans in place. We have done this in consultation and have a shared commitment from our partnership to drive the improvements required. We feel optimistic about our service management.

Recommendations

- Ensure that the vision of the Nottinghamshire Children and Young People's Partnership continues to be promoted, through a refreshed and improved communication strategy. This should include a proactive approach to highlight areas of good practice and innovation.
- Strengthen all aspects of participation and consultation, building on the good work completed to date. In particular, we must strengthen and increase capacity in the Parenting Participation Network, and establish systems and processes to enable us to demonstrate the outcomes of consultative and participative processes.
- Strengthen management arrangements in the Youth Offending Service particularly in respect of its relationship to the Partnership and the contribution of partner agencies to the criminal justice agenda.

- Continue to embed the process of service diversity reviews to ensure that appropriate account is taken of the service and individual needs of vulnerable and minority groups and children and young people from black and minority ethnic groups.
- Ensure that Building Schools for the Future enhances the development of integrated services and locality working.
- As part of Children and Young People's Plan review and the development of the new plan for 2010, establish and embed a shared partnership risk assessment process.
- Work with our Elected Members to enable them to have a comprehensive, informed overview of the children and young people's services agenda and build upon the shared understanding which has developed as a result of the JAR process. This work should continue to include increased Member engagement in the development of integrated locality based services.
- Accelerate the implementation of a commissioning strategy and the development of a commissioning plan which reflects the needs of children and young people in Nottinghamshire. The plan should address any differential outcomes in service, outcome area or geographically.
- Adopt an outcomes based approach to planning and the management of performance. This approach should be reflected in business planning at all level and in the new Children and Young People's Plan, and aligned with the new medium term financial strategy.