

---

**Meeting:** Executive  
**Date:** 11 January 2011  
**Subject:** 2010 Annual Assessment of Children's Services  
**Report of:** Cllr Mrs Anita Lewis, Portfolio Holder for Children's Services  
**Summary:** The report presents the 2010 annual performance rating for Central Bedfordshire Children's Services

---

**Advising Officer:** Edwina Grant, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Children's Services  
**Contact Officer:** Sylvia Gibson, Interim Assistant Director, Learning and Strategic Commissioning  
**Public/Exempt:** Public  
**Wards Affected:** All  
**Function of:** Executive  
**Key Decision** Yes  
**Reason for urgency/ exemption from call-in (if appropriate)** Not applicable

## **CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

### **Council Priorities:**

The proposal supports the delivery of the following Council Priority:

- Educating, protecting and providing opportunities for children and young people

### **Financial:**

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. The improvement strategy is funded from existing resources. Any other financial implications related to the improvement strategy will be assessed as the strategy is being implemented and will be reported on accordingly.

### **Legal:**

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

### **Risk Management:**

No Comments.

### **Staffing (including Trades Unions):**

No Comments

**Equalities/Human Rights:**

The improvement strategy described in this report will take particular account of the needs of vulnerable groups.

**Community Safety:**

No Comments.

**Sustainability:**

No Comments.

**Summary of Overview and Scrutiny Comments:**

This report has not been subject to consideration by Overview and Scrutiny

**RECOMMENDATION(S):**

**that the Executive:**

- (a) Notes the 2010 annual performance rating for Central Bedfordshire Children's Services;**
- (b) Agrees the action to be taken to improve future outcomes.**

*Reason for Recommendation(s): To meet the requirement that this performance rating is reported formally to the Council's Executive.*

*To ensure that Central Bedfordshire Council meets its statutory duty as set out in the Children Act 2004 to improve outcomes for children and young people.*

**Executive Summary**

The 2010 annual performance assessment for Central Bedfordshire Children's Services was published by Ofsted on 9 December 2010. The assessment for Children's Services in Central Bedfordshire Council is "Performs adequately". The Executive is asked to note the 2010 assessment of Children's Services and endorse the action to improve future outcomes.

**Background**

1. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 requires Ofsted to provide an annual rating of performance for the Council's Children's Services. The Council has a lead role in providing services for children, and works with its partners, other agencies and the private and voluntary sectors to improve outcomes for children and young people.

2. To arrive at the performance rating, Ofsted draws together evidence from all inspections of regulated services for children and young people for which the Council has responsibilities, either alone or in partnership with others, together with indicators from the National Indicator Set and Ofsted's interpretation of the local context. Further Education colleges and services provided to children in the geographical area of the Council by the private, voluntary and independent sector are all included in the assessment whether or not the Council or its residents use the provision.
3. The annual rating uses the joint inspectorate 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

4. The Council's Children's Services rating was published on 9 December 2010 on the Ofsted website.

### **The 2010 Assessment**

5. The assessment for Central Bedfordshire Children's Services is "performs adequately". Ofsted concluded that the majority of services, settings and institutions are good or better and noted the increase in the proportion of good provision since the Authority was formed in 2009.
6. The recent unannounced inspection of front-line child protection services found strong practice and no areas for priority action. High staff morale, improved numbers of qualified social workers and good opportunities for workforce development were highlighted. The assessment identified particular strengths in the arrangements for supporting vulnerable families.
7. Positive judgements were made about early years and childcare settings, nursery, lower and special schools. Much of this provision was judged to be good. It was noted that young people receive good support in schools and colleges to gain the skills and qualifications needed for future jobs.
8. Improvements to the provision of mental health services were identified, and the emotional and behavioural health of children in care was judged to be good. Obesity levels among five- and 11-year-olds were judged to be low.
9. The Youth Offending Service was judged to perform well against the national indicators, with good capacity and capability to sustain and improve performance.

10. Fewer young people feel bullied in Central Bedfordshire than is the case in other areas. The report also notes the successful involvement of 4,000 children and young people in identifying key areas for improvement across services in Central Bedfordshire for the Children and Young People's Plan.
11. Good progress was judged to have been made in establishing strategic partnerships and in identifying priorities to improve outcomes for all children, young people and their families. The Children and Young People's Plan was deemed to reflect a good analysis of the strengths of local provision, with clear actions for further improvement and ambitious targets. This recognition of effective partnership working is of particular note given that Central Bedfordshire is a new Authority.
12. Overall, Central Bedfordshire's prospects for improvement are judged to be positive.

### **Areas for Improvement**

- 13 The report makes clear that the overall judgement of adequate for Children's Services is mainly attributable to the under performance of middle and upper schools. Inspectors concluded that there is a need to increase the number of good or better middle and upper schools. Less than half were judged to be good, and one middle school was judged to be inadequate.
- 14 Young people with special educational needs do not do as well in middle and upper schools as similar groups nationally. Inspectors also noted that whilst provision for post-16 students is satisfactory, only a third is good. Not as many nineteen year olds from low income families in Central Bedfordshire gain level 3 qualifications as those from similar areas.
- 15 Although national performance measures show that outcomes are in line with, or above, the averages for England and for similar areas, primary school children do not make progress at the expected rate. Inspectors also judged that middle schools, upper schools and colleges are not good enough at helping children and young people to do well and enjoy their learning, with about a third judged adequate.
- 16 Key areas for further development:
  - Improve secondary (middle and upper) and post-16 provision so that more are good or better.
  - Ensure more children make the expected two levels progress by the age of 11.
  - Increase the number of young people from low-income families who gain qualifications at the age of 19.

### **Improvement Strategy**

- 17 The Education Vision approved by the Executive at its meeting on 9 March 2010 underpins the approach to school improvement. A key focus within the strategy is to improve the use of data, particularly at the key transition points as children

move from one key stage to the next or from one school to the next. Discussions took place with headteachers during the autumn term on the effective use of data and the development of further data sets. This will be a continuing focus during the school year.

18. In order to accelerate the improvement of satisfactory schools during the 2010-2011 academic year, the School Improvement Strategy has been revised to provide a differentiated model for allocating support to schools. The successful improvement strategies used to raise standards in upper schools in the 2009-2010 academic year, which resulted in improved results at Key Stage 4 in 2010, will be extended to middle schools.
- 19 Support for improvements in outcomes and achievement will also be commissioned from outstanding schools with the capacity for system leadership, and from school trusts, networks, clusters or other agencies. Those schools, groups or agencies commissioned to deliver support for improvement will operate against clear and agreed targets.
- 20 Children's Services is working actively with schools to promote strategic partnership arrangements to create the necessary infrastructure for delivering improvements.

### **Conclusion and Next Steps**

21. Ofsted's rating and full explanatory narrative are attached at Appendix A.
- 22 Central Bedfordshire Executive Committee is asked to note the 2010 assessment of Children's Services and endorse the action to improve future outcomes.

### **Appendices:**

Appendix A – Central Bedfordshire Children's Services Assessment 2010

**Background Papers:** (open to public inspection)

Children's services assessment for 2010: Arrangements and guidance for local authorities and their partners on Ofsted's annual assessment of children's services - Ofsted

**Location of papers:** Priory House, Chicksands