



Executive
17th July 2006

**Report from the Director of
Children and Families**

For Action

Wards Affected:
ALL

**Outcome of Joint Area Review (JAR) inspection of
Children's Services**

Forward Plan Ref: C&F05/06-041

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 The Joint Area Review (JAR) inspection of Children's services in Brent took place during December 2005 and January 2006. The inspection report was published on 11th April 2006.
- 1.2 The JAR found that outcomes for most children and young people in Brent are good. Inspectors concluded that the capacity of the council and its partners to deliver better outcomes for children and young people is adequate and that the capacity to improve is good.
- 1.3 The inspectors made specific recommendations as a result of the inspection and an Action Plan has been devised to implement these recommendations.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 The Executive is asked to note the JAR report, agree the JAR Action Plan and note that full delivery is subject to appropriate resources being made available.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 The Children Act (2004), created an integrated inspection framework and established Joint Area Reviews (JAR) to assess the progress made by each area in improving outcomes for children and young people. Reviews are to be conducted in a three year cycle from September 2005, by a multi-disciplinary

inspection team using a common approach based on the *Framework for the Inspection of Children's Services*.

- 3.2 Joint Area Reviews take the place of separate inspections of council education and children's social care services and cover other services provided in the local area, particularly health services. The review is organised around 36 key judgements and four judgement areas in service management. The outcome of a JAR feed into the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) of the Council.
- 3.3 The Joint Area Review inspection of children's services in Brent took place during December 2005 and January 2006. The inspection report was published on 11th April 2006.
- 3.4 The report describes the outcomes achieved by children and young people in Brent and how local services, taken together, have contributed to their well-being. Inspectors particularly evaluated the quality of education, health and children's social care services provided by the council and its partners. The contribution of these services to improving outcomes for children and young people in Brent was assessed.
- 3.5 The JAR focussed 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. Particular attention was given to the quality of services provided for children and young people looked after by the council and those with disabilities.
- 3.6 The JAR was carried out by a multi disciplinary team of 9 inspectors from the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) , the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) , the Health Care Commission (CHAI) , the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) and the Audit Commission .
- 3.7 The review took place in two stages, initially focussing on an analysis of documentation followed by intensive fieldwork. The first stage was the JAR analysis week which took place in December 2005. The inspectors were on site and reviewed the JAR self assessment, which had been agreed by the Brent Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership Board. During this stage inspectors also examined 178 policy documents and over 100 files provided by health, education, social care and the voluntary sector relating to 10 young people, identified by the inspectors.
- 3.8 The second stage of the review was in January 2006 and entailed two weeks of inspection fieldwork. There were over 100 events, interviews and focus groups organised for inspectors during this period. The inspectors visited 7 schools, 3 children's centres, Northwick Park and Central Middlesex hospitals and the College of North West London. They met with over 400 adults including staff from the council, health, schools and voluntary agencies, parents, carers and Members. During the fieldwork inspectors met over 200 young people in Brent. There was a particular focus on activities for and the perceptions of children and young people, parents and professionals living and working in Church End.

Inspectors were shown around the neighbourhood by a group of young people who live in the area.

3.9 Services are judged according to grades on a scale of 1 to 4. Grade 1 is inadequate, 2 is adequate, 3 is good and 4 is excellent / outstanding. Table 1 below shows the grades that the inspectors awarded Brent

	The Impact of local services on outcomes	Council services	Health services
Being healthy	3		
Staying safe	2		
Enjoying and achieving	3		
Making a positive contribution	3		
Achieving economic well-being	3		
Service management	3		
Capacity to improve	3	3	
Children's services		3	
The education service		3	
The social care services for children		2	
The health service for children			3

Table 1

3.10 Along with Brent, a further 7 councils nationally were part of the JAR Block 3 inspection cycle (December 2005 and January 2006): Blackpool, Hounslow, Northamptonshire, Rutland, Salford, Trafford, Bristol City. Of these, the initial three authorities have appealed against the judgements made by the inspectors and the final reports have not been published. Of the Block 3 JAR reports published to date, Brent has been awarded the highest number of Grade 3 judgements. Since the inception of JAR's in September 2005, inspectors have not awarded a grade 4 to any authority under any of the criteria identified in Table 1.

Outcomes of the JAR for Brent

3.11 The JAR inspection concluded that outcomes for most children and young people in Brent are good. The inspectors found that the combined work of local services in securing the health of children and young people is good. The high priority given by the council and its partners to keeping children safe was recognised. The strong child- protection systems which keep children safe and

the work of all local services in keeping children and young people safe was assessed as adequate with some significant strengths.

- 3.12 The overall contribution of services in helping children and young people to enjoy and achieve was assessed as being good. The inspectors found that good information and guidance is available to support parents and that good quality support is given to schools and early years settings so that the needs of a broad range of children are met.
- 3.13 The combined work of all local services in helping children and young people to contribute to society was assessed as good. The inspectors found that local services are very effective at helping children and young people to develop socially and emotionally. Children and young people in Brent feel it is easy to have their say and make a difference to how things run both at school and in their local area. Preventative programmes set up to reduce young peoples involvement in anti- social behaviour and to support their re-engagement with education programmes, were assessed as being good.
- 3.14 The work of all local services in helping children and young people achieve economic well being was assessed as being good. The inspectors found that young people are adequately prepared for working life. There is good careers, education and guidance in schools and the number of young people continuing in education at 16 is higher than average. The strategies in place to regenerate the most deprived areas in Brent were assessed as good.
- 3.15 The management of services for children and young people in Brent was assessed as good. Inspectors concluded that the capacity of the council and its partners to deliver better outcomes for children and young people is adequate and that the capacity to improve is good.
- 3.16 The inspectors made specific recommendations as a result of the inspection and these are set out on page 10 of the full JAR report (Appendix 1). A JAR Action Plan (Appendix 2) has been devised to implement the recommendations of the inspection.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 There are a number of areas of service growth identified in the Action Plan for which additional budget provision will need to be approved, or corresponding efficiencies delivered, in order for the Action Plan to be fully implemented and the recommendations of the JAR achieved.
- 4.2 These growth items will be included in the information presented to Members for consideration as part of the 2007/08 budget process.

5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1 The Children Act 2004 at section 20 establishes the system of Joint Area Reviews. These are carried out by teams, led by the Chief Inspector of Schools (Ofsted), but also consisting of representatives of such bodies as the

Commission for Social Care Inspection, the Commission for Healthcare Audit and Inspection, the Audit Commission, the police , and the probation service.

- 5.2 The Joint Area Reviews are required to inspect and report on "children's services" which are defined widely in the Act and include services for education, training, recreation, physical and mental health and emotional well-being, protection from harm and neglect, and social and economic well-being.

6.0 Diversity Implications

- 6.1 The JAR Action Plan addresses issues of equality by ensuring it incorporates the needs of vulnerable, excluded and underrepresented groups such as children with disabilities, looked after children and excluded young people. Monitoring arrangements for each of the recommendations will help ensure the active promotion of the equalities agenda.

- 6.2 The Children and Families department has developed a high level Equalities Action Plan set against the six priorities identified in the Children and Young People's Plan. The recommendations identified in the JAR Action Plan align with these priorities.

7.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications (if appropriate)

- 7.1 There are no staffing or accommodation implications.

Background Papers (essential)

- i) Children Act 2004
- ii) Framework for Inspection of Children's Services May 2005

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