

REPORT FOR DECISIONAgenda
Item

MEETING:	EXECUTIVE
DATE:	21 MARCH 2007
SUBJECT:	CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLES PLAN
REPORT FROM:	EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES
CONTACT OFFICER:	PAUL COOKE, HEAD OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & MANAGEMENT

TYPE OF DECISION: KEY DECISION**REPORT STATUS: FOR PUBLICATION**

PURPOSE/SUMMARY:

The Children's Act 2004 introduced a requirement for each Local Authority to produce a Children and Young People's Plan, setting out how the Local Authority, in collaboration with partners, will meet their respective responsibilities in respect of services to children and young people.

The plan is one of a number of statutory plans that the Local Authority must have in place, and it is a requirement of the statutory framework that the plan receives the approval of the Council.

The Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership published its first plan in March 2006 and this was formally adopted by the Local Authority on the 5 April 2006.

A plan for the three year period commencing 1 April 2007 has been drafted to reflect the priorities and ambitions of the Local Authority and its partners, and this was due to be approved by the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership at its meeting on the 6 February, to be endorsed by Executive at its meeting on the 21 March, for adoption by the Council at its meeting on the 28 March 2007.

On the 1 February 2007 draft revised guidance on the requirements and contents of Children and Young People's Plans was issued by the Department of Education and Skills, together with summary guidance on changes to the Annual Performance Assessment of Children's Services, and the Joint Area Review of Children's Services. As a result changes will need to be made to the draft plan.

Because of the statutory requirement for the Local Authority to have a plan in place, Executive is requested to approve the current draft, noting that changes will be made to reflect the new guidance.

A copy of the current draft plan is attached as an appendix to this report.

A summary of the changes contained in the revised guidance are outlined below.

OPTIONS AND RECOMMENDED OPTION (with reasons):

It is recommended that Members approve the draft Children and Young People’s plan, noting the revised guidance on the requirements of Children and Young People’s Plans, and delegating authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leaders of the three political parties, and the Executive Member for Children and Young People to approve revisions to the plan in accordance with that guidance, and for the amended Plan to be considered by Executive at a subsequent meeting.

IMPLICATIONS -	
Financial Implications and Risk Considerations	See Director of Finance and E-Government comment below
Corporate Aims/Policy Framework:	
Do the proposals accord with the Policy Framework? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Are there any legal implications? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> There is a statutory requirement for the Local Authority to have a plan in place.	
Considered by Monitoring Officer: Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	
Statement by Director of Finance and E-Government:	None directly arising directly from the report. The plan identifies key performance priorities the funding of which will need to be managed within the resources available to the Council and its partners. Over time there will need to be greater integration between allocation of financial resource and priorities, and this will be reflected in subsequent plans.
Staffing/ICT/Property:	None directly arising from the report
Wards Affected:	All
Scrutiny Interest:	Children and Young People

TRACKING/PROCESS

DIRECTOR:

Chief Executive/ Management Board	Executive Member/ Chair	Ward Members	Partners
	26 February		6 February
Scrutiny Panel	Executive	Committee	Council
	21 March		

1. BACKGROUND

The Children's Act 2004 introduced a requirement for each Local Authority to produce a Children and Young People's Plan, setting out how the Authority, in collaboration with partners, will meet their respective responsibilities in respect of services to children and relevant young people.

This annual plan, published for the first time in 2006, is a single, overarching plan covering all services provided to children and young people in Bury, from a range of agencies including the Local Authority; Primary Care Trust; Acute Care Trust; Police; Learning and Skills Council; Colleges, and others, including those in the voluntary sector, brought together to form the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership.

It is the document that sets out the collective vision of the partners in meeting the needs of all children and young people, but specifically the most vulnerable, through the integration of systems, processes and services; through better use of information and data; and more effective use of resources.

2. REVISED GUIDANCE – CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PLAN, ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT AND JOINT AREA REVIEW

Revised guidance has recently been issued by the Department for Education and Skills and Ofsted outlining changes to the requirements of the Children and Young People's Plan, the Annual Performance Assessment of the Local Authority's Children's Services, and the Joint Area Review of agencies providing services to children across the Borough.

The revisions change the emphasis of the assessment and inspection of the Local Authority's Children's Services and its partners, the outcome of which will influence the outcome of the Joint Area Review and the Corporate Assessment of the Council in January 2008.

3. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PLAN

New statutory regulations will introduce changes to the requirements in respect of the Children and Young People's Plan to take effect from the 1 October 2007. However, because of the inter-relationship introduced between the Plan, the Annual Performance Assessment and the Joint Area Review, the required changes will need to be implemented earlier.

The key changes introduced by the new guidance are that the existing requirement to include a vision statement is replaced with a more specific statement of intent, and a requirement is introduced to consult schools, school forums and admission forums on the preparation of the plan. The Plan will also replace the self-assessment document that the Authority has been required to submit to Ofsted each year as part of the Annual Performance Assessment process.

Because of this latter change the Plan will in future need to consider not just the ambitions, objectives and priorities for future years, but also reflect on achievements to date, providing a detailed assessment of progress and improvement.

The Plan must be submitted to Ofsted by 14 June 2007 as part of the Annual Performance Assessment process.

4. ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

The Annual Performance Assessment will continue to focus on the Local Authority's Children's Services although it will consider the effectiveness of partnerships with other agencies.

Judgements will be made on the Local Authority's Children's Services; on the capacity of the Council to improve these services; and with a separate judgment for each of the five Child Matter outcomes. There will be no separate judgement for social care as was the case in 2006.

The outcome of the Assessment, including judgement grades and any areas for development will be announced in November. A fundamental change is that the Assessment judgment will directly inform the judgement grade in the Joint Area Review for universal services for children and young people. Therefore, the Annual Performance Assessment is critical to the outcome of the Joint Area Review, which in turn influences the Council's Corporate Assessment.

5. JOINT AREA REVIEW

Changes are to be introduced to the arrangements in respect of the Joint Area Review of Children's Services, including the linkage with the Corporate Assessment.

The Joint Area Review will focus primarily on the most vulnerable children and young people. It will examine the effectiveness of the Local Authority and its partners in providing services to vulnerable and underachieving groups. It will also look at leadership and management of services, and how well services/agencies work together.

The JAR will undertake specific investigations into:

- Areas that have been identified for development in the Annual Performance Assessment
- Groups most at risk to include; those requiring safeguarding; looked after children; children with learning disabilities; children with disabilities; children who are not achieving, or where there is insufficient information to know about outcomes

6. ISSUES

Whilst the revised regulations in respect of the Children and Young People's Plan do not come into force until October 2007, the Annual Performance Assessment requires a plan to be submitted by the 14 June 2007 that can serve the purpose outlined in the new regulations.

It is essential, given the important role that the Plan will now have in informing the Annual Performance Assessment and the Joint Area Review that an opportunity is taken to review the plan in line with the new guidance.

With agreement of the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership the Plan will be redrafted to meet the new requirements but, as a consequence it will not be possible for the partner organisations to formally adopt the Plan before the 1st April but it is anticipated that a revised draft will be considered by the Partnership in April, and then taken through for formal adoption by partners at the earliest opportunity thereafter.

7. CONCLUSION

The Children and Young People's Plan is an important part of the Council's Policy Framework, being one of a number of statutory plans. It sets out, the priorities of the Council, and of its partner agencies, in respect of the provision of services to children and young people.

The Plan will be used as the key document by Ofsted when carrying out the Annual Performance Assessment of the Local Authority's Children's Services.

The draft plan reflects the priorities of the Partnership but needs to be revised to reflect the new guidance. Given the absence of meetings of the Executive or the Council during April and early May, delegated authority is being requested to approve any changes made to the draft as presented with this report.

List of Background Papers:-

Children Act 2004

Draft Guidance on the requirements of a Children and Young People's Plan, Department for Education and Skills, 1 February 2007

Contact Details:-

Paul Cooke, Head of Strategic Planning and Management, Children's Services
0161 253 5674. p.cooke@bury.gov.uk
