



Update

Joint Area Review: Staff Newsletter No. 1 The Inspectors Call

Just before Christmas Devon was judged a four-star, excellent local authority by the Audit Commission.

That put us in the top 20 per cent of local authorities nationally.

Now the inspectors are returning to stage a Joint Area Review of services for children and young people in Devon. Their findings will feed into the Audit Commission's next Comprehensive Performance Assessment of Devon County Council and will have a big influence on whether we retain our four-star rating.

This newsletter is the first of a series to provide an overview of the JAR process for CYPs staff and a link to the source of more detailed information.

It contains information you need to know because the inspectors will want to talk to members of staff from across the directorate. Your line manager will keep you up to date.

Every children's services authority will be inspected over the next three years. Devon's JAR will take place in **June this year**. It will be more wide-ranging than a traditional Ofsted inspection of the LEA - our last Ofsted was in 2000.

The JAR sets out to review all the publicly-funded provision for children and young people aged 0-19, including:

- universal services (for example, nursery education, schools, health clinics, youth centres);
- targeted services (for example, Education Welfare Services, support to gifted pupils, detached youth work);
- services for the most vulnerable children and young people (for example, support for children in public care, CAMHS and support for children with learning difficulties and disabilities).

The JAR will be an integrated inspection. In effect it will cover **all children, all services and all agencies**.

This means the inspectors will look at a range of services - education; health; youth offending; children's social care; voluntary services for children - and the members of the inspection team will be drawn from different inspectorates - Ofsted; the Commission for Social Care Inspection; the Healthcare Commission; the Audit Commission, and so on.

And the inspection is not just an inspection of Devon County Council services: instead, it's an examination of all the local services for children and of how well they are working together.

The JAR will focus on the key judgements for the five "Every Child Matters" outcomes - being healthy; staying safe; enjoying and achieving; making a positive contribution and achieving economic well-being. Some of the judgements will be based on a desk-top analysis of data and a self-assessment which we must submit in early May.

Other judgements will be based on inspection fieldwork during the fortnight commencing 12 June.

The fieldwork is very likely to focus on child protection procedures; on support to looked-after children; on partnership working, and on other aspects of our work which the inspectors decide to look at more closely.

In particular, the inspectors will study in depth one or two Devon neighbourhoods, to see how local policies are put into effect on the ground.

The outline timetable is:

27 March: we must provide an extensive list of policies, procedures and other documents

3 April: we will be notified of the neighbourhoods which the inspectors will visit, and receive a briefing about the programme for the fieldwork in June

8 May: we must return the self-assessment

22-26 May: the inspectors undertake an "analysis week" of data, case files and documents, and pose questions arising from their discussions

12-16 June: fieldwork - involving interviews, focus groups, work in the neighbourhoods.

No doubt the inspectors will raise further questions as the fortnight proceeds

by 10 August: a draft report is provided to us for comment: there will be the opportunity to comment on or challenge the factual basis of the report and the inspectors' conclusions

13 September: the final report will be presented to members and local partners

2 October: the report will be published.

There are several points at which you might be asked to help with the preparation of material, or during the inspection.

For example, you might be asked to suggest or provide evidence or data which helps the self-assessment, or answer a question posed by the inspectors, or join a focus group which the inspectors ask to be set up. Your line manager will keep you in touch with the position.

Your assistance in this will be very valuable - the outcome of the JAR is important in its own right, and will also be a component of Devon County Council's grading in the Corporate Performance Assessment (CPA), for which the inspection timetable runs alongside the JAR.

Our aim is to keep Devon's current FOUR-STAR grading.

Further newsletters will keep you up to date.

A JAR website has been set up to provide further information: the address is

www.devonjar.org.uk

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