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Making Social Care  
Better for People



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**1 November 2006**

Dear Richard

**2006 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN WORCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

This letter summarises the findings of the 2006 annual performance assessment (APA) process for your local authority. We are grateful for the information which you provided to support this process and for the time made available by yourself and your colleagues to discuss relevant issues.

**Summary**

Areas for judgement	Grade awarded <sup>1</sup>
The contribution of <i>the local authority's children's services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people.	4
The council's overall <i>capacity to improve</i> its services for children and young people	4
The contribution of <i>the local authority's social care services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people	4

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<sup>1</sup> Grade	Service descriptors	Capacity to improve descriptors
4	A service that delivers well above minimum requirements for users	Excellent / outstanding
3	A service that consistently delivers above minimum requirements for users	Good
2	A service that delivers only minimum requirements for users	Adequate
1	A service that does not deliver minimum requirements for users	Inadequate

The contribution of the local authority towards children and young people being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and achieving economic well being is excellent. The council's management of its services for children and young people, including its capacity to improve is also excellent. The council knows its strengths and has a clear understanding of what it needs to do to improve further.

## **Being healthy**

The contribution of the local authority towards this area and the outcomes of its work are excellent. There is clear evidence of good progress over the last year. Effective partnership working has a positive impact for children and young people, for example, with the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). A range of specialist interventions is provided to all children and young people in targeted groups such as those with severe communication needs. Substance misuse services for young people are increasing, responsive and timely. There have been no drug-related deaths of children or young people under 18. Work is continuing to ensure that services recognise and meet the needs of children from black and minority ethnic heritages (BME) and hard to reach communities. Resources are targeted to high-risk groups and specialist services, for instance for young people with learning disabilities and young women from minority ethnic communities. Teenage pregnancy is continuing to decline although at a slower rate than nationally. A range of support is available for teenage parents. Of special note is the continually developing Integrated Support for looked after children (ISL) - a partnership between the key services that has made a significant difference to ensuring the health needs of looked after children are met effectively; health performance indicators exceed national averages and a number of designated doctors and nurses make a positive contribution to the looked after children team.

Schools provide a range of healthy lifestyle activities and services. The proportion of schools already participating in the National Healthy Schools Standards is high and there are high levels of participation in sports. The Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) includes the views of children on being healthy and identifies needs and priorities. Strong partnership working and joint planning in the emergence of a single Primary Care Trust is furthering the integration of children's services, including jointly funded senior posts. Planning to establish a fully integrated service to benefit children with disabilities is at an advanced stage.

## **Staying safe**

The contribution of the local authority towards this area and the outcomes of its work are excellent. The implementation of strategies is monitored consistently and rigorously. The local safeguarding board is established with broader membership and a wider remit than the former area child protection committee. Partners' recognition of the value of the board is shown by their increased contributions. The majority of social care child protection indicators remain very strong. The pattern of child protection activity is closely scrutinised and underpinned by a clear understanding of performance across the range of indicators, which drive continuous improvement. Multi-agency safeguarding training is well resourced and attended. Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) are fully in place.

There have been no serious case reviews. Child protection case conferences are chaired by independent reviewing officers and this promotes consistency and quality. The authority's clear referral systems and child centred approach enables effective identification of children at risk so that they can access services early. Children benefit from effective protocols and partnerships as evidenced by the excellent rates of completion of core (84%) and initial assessments (87%). Care plans are in place for all looked after children. All children on the Child Protection Register and almost all looked after children have an allocated qualified social worker; all reviews are carried out within statutory timeframes. Early intervention and increased preventative and support services have reduced the numbers of looked after children. The council is targeting work with black and minority ethnic heritage communities to improve take up of preventative services and has evidence of its increasing ability to meet specific needs.

Audits of the referrals of children in need demonstrate that the council and its partners are using safe and agreed threshold criteria; re-referrals of children in need remain low. Most children in care are placed in or near county boundaries and in family settings in which they have very stable placements. Life chances for looked after children are significantly improved by the range of services which are delivered through the ISL. The use of residential care placements increased slightly and the range of placements is expected to increase with the completion of the council's new residential home. There are not enough family placements to enable sufficient placement choice so the Council is taking effective action to increase the range of foster placements. Where return home is not possible prompt action is taken to secure permanency. The adoption service is good, with excellent regular monitoring of children and adopters by the local panel. A high number of young people are educated other than at school; full entitlement is available to all excluded children. Strong protocols, information sharing and analysis across children's services support early intervention and ensure that children who may be at risk are adequately tracked. A carers unit offers specialist and independent support to carers, all of whom are offered an assessment in their own right.

## **Enjoying and achieving**

The contribution of the local authority towards this area and the outcomes of its work are excellent. Early Years provision and nursery education form a strong basis for children's development. National test and examination results are consistently above the national average although below the performance of statistical neighbours. Rates of progress between Key Stages 1 and 4 are always at least satisfactory. The value added from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 is good and above the average. Students at age 16 perform well in GCSE examinations and the proportion that achieve five or more A\* to C grades is above national averages, although below the average of statistical neighbours. Support for school self-evaluation is good and intervention strategies for schools causing concern continue to improve and overall are effective. The number of schools in special measures has continued to fall dramatically and this year has reduced from seven to two. Four schools have been given a Notice to Improve (NTI); the proportion of NTI schools is slightly above the national average and that of statistical neighbours.

National test and examination results show a steady year-on-year improvement in attainment. Achievement in English and science continues to be stronger than in mathematics where the value added to pupils' progress is not high enough, particularly between Key Stage 1 and 2 and between Key Stage 3 and 4. Most schools meet or exceed their floor targets and overall performance is better than the national average and that of statistical neighbours. Good progress has been made to improve the performance of lower achieving pupils. The achievement of pupils from minority groups is generally average. Satisfactory progress has been made to raise the achievement of looked after children although not enough take GCSE examinations.

Attendance continues to rise. It is above national levels and the average for statistical neighbours. In children's homes it has risen from 70% to 76%. Inspection findings show that pupils' behaviour was good or outstanding in 94% of schools inspected and was never less than satisfactory. The numbers of fixed term and permanent exclusions continue to fall and compare favourably with national figures and those of statistical neighbours. Strategic planning of school reorganisation is effective and reducing surplus places.

Outcomes for vulnerable groups are generally good, with 90% of LAC who were supported by a mentor moving into a positive post-16 destination. Inspection findings show that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities always make satisfactory progress and in over 66% of schools inspected their progress was either good or outstanding. All pupils educated at home and registered on the local authority database receive 20 hours or more tuition each week, which is well above the national figure. School sports partnerships have been established in five out of six districts with 80% of young people benefiting from this provision. Leisure passes are available to looked after children and foster families to ensure that these vulnerable groups can access a range of leisure facilities provided by district councils.

### **Making a positive contribution**

The contribution of the local authority towards this area and the outcomes of its work are excellent. There are many effective initiatives that help the local authority fulfil its commitment to consultation with a wide range of young people who use different services. The contribution of young people to the CYPP was good. There is an emphasis on involving young people in improving services, and evidence of this in service design and delivery. There are very good examples of independent reviews commissioned to provide objective information that then help to shape future developments. One of the great strengths of children's services is the close partnership work across agencies and with voluntary organisations. Innovative examples of involving young people for example, young carers, and young people at risk of offending have been developed and continue to improve. Young people are increasingly involved including the setting up of a panel to review services including the safeguarding board.

A particular strength is the work enabling young people to help other young people. For example, members of the youth parliament work with disengaged young people, and provide peer mentoring.

A range of high quality services is commissioned from the voluntary sector to support young carers and positively improves their life chances. This excellent work is a very good basis for extending awareness and service referral of young carers across more schools and colleges.

Statutory visits to in-house residential services are consistently made by independent visitors. Reports are monitored at senior level and action taken as a result. Looked after children are encouraged to participate in events about improving services and clear action is taken as a result; for example, combining allowances to give more flexibility on spending. The involvement of looked after children in their reviews is excellent and a core principle of the service.

Youth offending has reduced; there is very effective intervention when young people first offend. Well-targeted initiatives are making a difference, for instance a project raising parenting awareness in families of young offenders. Looked after children at risk of offending receive focused support, and as a result offending rates of looked after children have been reduced to 2.1%. The progress of individual looked after children is given priority when local inspectors visit schools. A new anti-bullying strategy has been developed across all children's services based on consultation with young people and all stakeholders. Considerable work has helped to ensure more children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities attend and contribute to their own reviews.

### **Achieving economic well-being**

The contribution of the local authority towards this area and the outcomes of its work are excellent. The 14–19 Strategy and action plan are making a positive impact on students' achievements and their life chances. The previous high proportion of young people in education, training and employment increased during the year by a further 2% to 94%. The quality of education in sixth forms is very good. College inspections show that success rates have improved, particularly for work based learners which are better than average. Fewer young people failed to achieve any GCSE passes than nationally. The local authority works well with the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and Connexions to ensure that young people have good advice and guidance at key transition points.

Collaborative working between all sectors involved in 14–19 provision is embedded across the county with consortia established in 80% of high schools, special schools, colleges and other providers. Local business communities are fully engaged through the Education Business Partnership. Good use is made of the European Social Fund to enhance post-16 provision in the labour market. Two thirds of the Year 11 students who took part in Young Apprenticeship Schemes received accreditation in a vocational qualification and a similar number achieved at least one GCSE A\* to G grade. A high proportion (86%) made a positive transition to further education and employment. All Key Stage 4 pupils undertake work experience. The extended schools locations are effectively linked to areas of high social exclusion and have a positive impact on children's and young people's achievements and self-esteem. They build on innovative work by individual schools some of which has been recognised by national awards.

The take up of direct payments by families of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is successfully promoted and supported. Most young people leaving care live in suitable accommodation and good strategies for improvement are being developed. The provision for vulnerable groups and children from disadvantaged communities is good. Participation rates in learning for 16–18 year-old mothers, care leavers and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are above national averages. The proportion of young people leaving care in employment, education and training is high. The number of youth offenders in employment, education and training has increased significantly from 60% to 76% and reflects the strong and improving partnership between the youth offending team and Connexions. The Council recognises that further strategic action is needed to promote increased opportunities for young offenders' access to employment, education and training and employment opportunities for young people.

### **The council's management of its services for children and young people, including its capacity to improve them further**

Children's services are very well managed and have excellent capacity to improve further. The Every Child Matters agenda is firmly embedded in the Council's drive for improvement and is at the heart of all initiatives. Strategic planning is well advanced towards establishing a Children's Services Authority (CSA) early in 2007.

There is an impressive and relentless focus on the impact of the council's (and its partners') actions to improve the life chances of children and young people. There is strong and visionary corporate leadership including effective discharge of corporate parenting responsibilities. Senior officers are well informed, and elected members have taken opportunities to increase their understanding and involvement. Corporate planning and resource allocation are good; the delivery of improved outcomes within tight financial boundaries indicates that the Council achieves good value for money. The Council is already delivering significant improvements in its effectiveness and efficiency. A single access call centre is established and a new client index system is being introduced enabling data sharing across agencies. Risk management is effective.

Senior and middle managers have an excellent grasp of performance, clear awareness of their roles in contributing to good outcomes for children and demonstrate a passionate belief that every child matters. This reflects the council's rigorous planning and the effectiveness of its change programme.

The views of parents, carers, children and young people have increasingly been taken into account in establishing priorities for development, which are now drawn together in the draft CYPP. An initial commissioning strategy based on needs analysis includes partnership commissioning with two nearby authorities and will be informed by the final CYPP.

Children's services have delivered almost all of their priorities, maintaining performance during a period of major change and the establishment of a Children's Services Directorate and new partnership board. The structure of the new directorate is being aligned to Every Child Matters outcomes and delivery of CYPP priorities. Partnership working is strongly embedded in the organisational culture. Its range and depth is impressive, for example the

safeguarding board, Children and Young People’s Forum, the investors in children and young people review panel; Children’s Fund, LSC, Voluntary Service Council, and youth strategy groups.

The excellent performance management arrangements in social care are being extended to multi-agency performance management of the delivery of all CYPP priorities. Value for money in the delivery of these services is excellent. Investment in prevention continues to increase resulting in a significant reduction in the number of children entering the care system. A number of budget streams are aligned to maximise their impact, for example, CAMHS and ISL. Self evaluation and data analysis are key strengths of the council’s approach.

Workforce strategies have been implemented for training, development and recruitment and retention. However, there remain challenges for recruitment and retention in some social care areas, for foster carers and adopters.

### Key strengths and areas for improvement

Key strengths	Key areas for improvement
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• impact of partnership working on healthy outcomes for children and young people</li> <li>• accessibility of CAMHS</li> <li>• range of activities and actions in schools to promote healthy lifestyles</li> <li>• access to substance misuse treatment.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• establish an integrated service for children with disabilities.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• clear and timely referral &amp; assessment processes</li> <li>• robust data and good use of analysis</li> <li>• increased preventative services</li> <li>• high levels of care and guidance as shown by school inspections.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• increase the supply and range of foster carers.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• consistently above average attainment in relation to national figures</li> <li>• steady year-on-year improvement in attainment</li> <li>• school attendance</li> <li>• attendance and attainment of looked after children</li> <li>• increased performance of lower ability pupils.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• increase the value added between each key stage</li> <li>• reduce gap between local authority attainment and that of statistical neighbours</li> <li>• reduce the proportion of NTI schools</li> <li>• increase the percentage of looked after children sitting 1 or more GCSE.</li> </ul>

<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• consultation with young people</li> <li>• acting upon children and young people's views</li> <li>• partnership work across agencies and with the voluntary sector</li> <li>• preventing youth offending</li> <li>• partnership arrangements which promote the well being and development of young carers.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• increase in schools awareness of young carers needs</li> <li>• full and consistent use of Pathway Planning.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the proportion of those in employment, education or training, including those leaving care, after the age of 16</li> <li>• breadth and depth of partnerships for 14–19 developments</li> <li>• increased use of direct payments by children with disabilities and their families.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• further strategic action to promote young offenders' access to education employment or training</li> <li>• strategic action to promote employment opportunities for young people</li> <li>• implementing housing strategy and increasing supply for those leaving care.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Management of children's services:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• excellent capacity</li> <li>• strong, visionary and purposeful leadership</li> <li>• highly effective, coherent planning and robust implementation</li> <li>• strong focus on improving children's life chances</li> <li>• senior staff embracing the culture change</li> <li>• Every Child Matters agenda at the heart of all initiatives.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Management of children's services:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• fully implement the CSA</li> <li>• further developing joint commissioning arrangements</li> <li>• raising achievement to increase value added between all key stages.</li> </ul>

**Aspects for focus in a future joint area review or the next APA**

**Being Healthy**

- Progress towards implementing the Healthy Schools Standard.

**Staying Safe**

- Range of placement choice including supply of foster placements.
- Successful development of more preventative services for children and families from black and minority ethnic communities and for families of children with disabilities.

### **Enjoying and Achieving**

- The extent to which there has been an increase in the value added to pupils' performance.
- The effectiveness of the local authority's intervention and challenge in eliminating schools from Ofsted categories of concern.
- Increasing the percentage of looked after children sitting 1 or more GCSE.

### **Positive Contribution**

- Extent to which schools are aware of the needs of young carers and those needs are met.
- Consistent use of Pathway Planning.

### **Economic Well-being**

- Effectiveness of strategic action in promoting employment opportunities for young people.

We confirm that the children's services grade will provide the score for the children and young people service block in the comprehensive performance assessment (CPA) and will be published to the Audit Commission. The social care judgement is for CSCI information only.

Yours sincerely



**FLO HADLEY**

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**JONATHAN PHILLIPS**

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