



Making Social Care
Better for People



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Dear Mr Patterson

ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF WOKINGHAM DISTRICT COUNCIL'S EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE SERVICES 2005

This letter summarises the findings of the meeting held on 25 July 2005 to assess the performance of the education and social care services within your 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.

Being healthy

Outcomes in this area are good. Healthy lifestyles are effectively promoted through the Healthy Schools Programme, with just under half of the schools achieving the required status, in line with the Government's 2006 target. Teenage pregnancies have reduced by a quarter over the last five years and Wokingham now has the third lowest rate of teenage pregnancy in England. Support for teenage parents has been less effective, but this is being addressed by the authority through a detailed and well-targeted action plan. Half of the looked after children are placed outside the authority and, although this presents a challenge in ensuring that their health of these children is promoted effectively, the level of health checks is good.

Better access to advice for social workers and carers from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) has resulted in fewer children needing intensive CAMHS support. Ongoing accommodation and information technology issues are, however, impeding plans to develop CAMHS as a full multidisciplinary service. Where needed, access for looked after children to CAMHS is good.

Drug prevention work is mostly effective, with only a relatively small number of young people requiring support. The drugs advice service is shared with Reading and it is therefore a continuing challenge to ensure sufficient support is available to the young people in Wokingham who need it. As the authority has recognised, greater priority needs to be given to the screening of young offenders for drug/substance abuse, to complement the useful information and counselling being provided by the youth

offending team. Opportunities to participate in sport in schools are mostly good. Provision for leisure and recreation in the wider community is presently less effective in meeting young people's needs, but plans are in place to expand facilities over the next two years.

Staying safe

Outcomes in this area are adequate overall, but there are a few important areas where the welfare of children can be improved. Some of the most vulnerable looked after children have not experienced sufficiently settled care placements. The procedures for protecting children are mostly good. However, as the authority has acknowledged, those for identifying some children in need are not yet fully developed.

Actions to reduce bullying, discrimination and harassment and to promote pupil care, health and safety in schools are good. Reporting on racist incidents to the authority by schools is sound, although until recently nil returns were not required. Guidance on identifying and responding to racism is included in training programmes, for example for new headteachers, and incidents are covered in discussions with schools by improvement advisers.

The management of child protection is effective, with all cases on the register allocated to a social worker and all reviews carried out on time. Cases are effectively followed up by the education welfare service and all schools have designated child protection teachers, who have access to regular and ongoing training. Strong partnerships have been developed through the area child protection committee.

The authority has responded effectively to previous criticisms of its foster care service and this is now well-managed. However, some of the older looked after children have experienced too many changes in placements. This group of young people, some with complex needs, presents particular challenges for the authority, which recognises that provision of a greater number, and better support for, local foster carers should be given greater priority. The use of out-of-borough residential special schools is currently above average.

There has been an improvement in the timeliness of the completion of initial assessments of children and families in need and the more comprehensive assessments are completed promptly. There is a low level of referral of children in need relative to the overall population, but the authority has recognised that further analysis is needed to ensure that services provide equality of access to all groups of the community.

The council acknowledges that it needs to improve its procedure for identifying transient children. A particular challenge is the relatively high mobility of migrant East European workers and their families. The Travellers Service has good information on Traveller children, provides effective support and is increasingly sharing its expertise with other services.

Enjoying and achieving

Outcomes in this area are very good. The quality of early years provision is good and supports children well in meeting their early learning goals. Levels of achievement at all key stages are among the highest nationally and compare very favourably with similar authorities. The overall progress made by pupils is at least good at all key stages and the standards achieved are still improving. There are currently no Wokingham schools in formal categories of concern as identified by Ofsted. Schools identified by the authority as underperforming in any respect are quickly identified and receive well-targeted support.

In 2004, performance at Key Stages 1 and 2 showed good improvement from an already high base. At Key Stage 3, there was dramatic improvement in English, reflecting the work done by the authority in implementing the national strategy. At Key Stage 4, the proportion of pupils achieving five or more passes at GCSE grades A*-C remained high and the proportion of looked after children achieving this level was well above the national average. Children with special educational needs also achieved well, as evident from the high proportion of pupils achieving five or more passes at GCSE grades A*-G. The looked after children who also had special educational needs tended, however, not to achieve well.

At Key Stages 2 and 3 in English, among more able pupils, girls significantly outperform boys. Throughout the key stages, pupils from various minority ethnic groups tend to underachieve. At Key Stage 2, this is particularly evident among Black Caribbean and Pakistani heritage girls. At Key Stages 3 and 4, there is underachievement by black minority ethnic pupils. The authority has in place an appropriate range of strategies to address these issues, but these are still at an embryonic stage and are not yet impacting on raising standards. A few schools did not achieve their floor targets in 2004, but well-targeted support is being provided by the authority in order to secure improvement.

Attendance in schools is good and improving, although for looked after children it is below that in similar LEAs. The number of exclusions from secondary schools peaked during 2003-4 and is now falling. Twenty-five hours tuition is provided for all pupils excluded from schools and good support from the authority has recently helped several pupils to be re-integrated into mainstream schools following exclusion. Support for pupils with special educational needs is good, with a growing emphasis on early intervention and special school staff playing an important role in developing the expertise of colleagues in mainstream schools. There are no major issues regarding the provision of school places.

Although provision for voluntary learning in the community is presently quite limited (see also reference to 'leisure and recreation' under Being Healthy), the youth service provides a range of accredited learning opportunities, including through the Duke of

Edinburgh's and youth achievement awards. Plans to develop a number of extended schools are also being discussed.

Making a positive contribution

Outcomes in this area are good. Most children and young people are very well supported in coping with major transition points and responding to challenges in their lives. There is especially good support in early years settings and primary schools for personal, social and emotional development. The Wokingham Children's Fund is supporting a number of projects targeting young people at risk of exclusion and offending, and these are beginning to have an impact. A high proportion of looked after children contribute to their statutory reviews. There is good collaboration between the support team for looked after children and the youth offending team.

The integrated Children's Trust project ('Listen Up') has a range of strategies in place to increase the participation of children and young people in decision-making. Various events are held, including road-shows to publicise children's and young persons' services for black and other minority ethnic groups. A range of consultation conferences conducted across the district by the youth service are helpful in enabling children and young people to express their concerns and identify areas where further support might be needed. A Social Inclusion Officer is currently developing a range of publications to make these more accessible to children and young people from minority groups.

Much of the work of the youth offending team is focused on the Reading area. A governance review of the team has highlighted the need to strengthen the strategic management of the service across both authorities and this issue is now being addressed. The authority is concerned that offending rates among looked after children are increasing and has recently introduced plans to address the problem.

Achieving economic well-being

Outcomes in this area are very good. Many young people continue in education post-16 and achievements at GCE Advanced level are high. The number of young people aged 16-19 not in education, employment or training is well below national levels. There has been good expansion of the work-related curriculum for pupils at Key Stage 4 and most vulnerable groups of young people are well supported. The strategic partnership with the local Learning and Skills Council is good. However, there are a few important gaps in provision.

Overall, the quality of education provided in sixth-forms is good, but provision at entry Level and at Levels 1 and 2 is under-developed, limiting the opportunities available, for example, for pupils with special educational needs. At advanced level, the range and combination of subjects available are also somewhat restricted, with the effect that a minority of young people choose to continue their studies in neighbouring districts.

The local 14-19 strategy has recently been revised to address these weaknesses, by encouraging better collaboration among schools and with the two local colleges. There are also plans to develop a new 14-19 vocational centre.

The expansion of the work-related curriculum at Key Stage 4 has been rapid, due to a high take-up of the DfES Increased Flexibility Programme, which is provided through the colleges. The range of vocational areas offered is good, but demand for places currently exceeds supply and access to some specialist courses is very limited. The new 14-19 centre is intended to address this issue.

Some minority ethnic groups underachieve at 16+. However, this issue is being tackled as part of the wider strategy to raise the standards achieved by these groups across the key stages. The authority has recognised the value of promoting the continuing study and accreditation of foreign and community languages post-16 and there is scope to extend these opportunities further.

All looked after children have personal education plans and, by age 19, an increasing number of care leavers find their way into employment, education or training.

For children with special educational needs or disabilities, 14+ reviews are currently being piloted. The children are being encouraged to participate in the reviews and elected members are following the developments closely. There is a comparatively good level of service provision to children with disabilities and a system of direct payments to parents and carers of children with disabilities has been established.

SUMMARY

Strengths	Areas for Improvement
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • healthy schools programme • progress in reducing teenage pregnancies • health of looked after children • participation in sport in schools • support for good mental health. 	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support for teenage parents • the range of opportunities for leisure and recreation in the wider community.
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • action taken in schools to reduce bullying, discrimination and harassment • pupils' care, welfare, health and safety in schools • all and child protection cases have an allocated social worker • improvement in the management of the fostering team • improvement in the timeliness of initial assessments for children in need and good timeliness of core assessments. 	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • stability of placements for some older looked after children • the range of and support for local foster placements • the procedure for identifying transient children, particularly those of migrant workers.
<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • very high levels of achievement at all key stages, compared to national levels and similar authorities • continuing improvement in standards achieved, for example, at Key Stage 3 in English • good and improving attendance in schools • good quality early years education • no schools requiring special measures or identified as having serious weaknesses • above average achievement of care leavers gaining 5+ GCSE grades A*-C • above average achievement by pupils with special educational needs. 	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • some underachieving minority groups, e.g. looked after children with special educational needs and some minority ethnic pupils • attendance at school of looked after children.

<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • good support in early years settings and primary schools for personal, social and emotional development • moves to improve engagement of young people, eg The Listen Up Project, School Councils, Youth Forum and Youth Parliament • high percentage of looked after children involved in statutory reviews • joint working between the support team for looked after children and the youth offending team. 	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strategic management of the youth offending team • offending rates for looked after children rising against national trend.
<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high number of 16-19 year-olds in education, employment or training • high achievement post-16 at GCE Advanced level • increasing numbers of care leavers in education, employment or training at 19 • good promotion of foreign and community languages • all looked after children have personal education plans. 	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sixth forms not meeting the full range of needs • 14-19 strategy not yet fully implemented.

Service management

The council is in the process of creating a single children’s service to deliver its plans for children and young people. This has represented a considerable management challenge and the introduction of new mechanisms to drive development, together with an enhanced performance management system.

In the last two years, the authority has established a children’s trust board supported by a change team to drive forward the developments, and appointed a lead member for children services and a director of children services. It has also reviewed and repositioned the children and young people strategic partnership and undertaken development work in transforming the area child protection committee into a local safeguarding children board. The integration of senior management across education and social care to create a new children’s service has recently been completed and a new single members’ policy group is in place, chaired by the leader of the council.

The children’s trust board has developed a unified vision for children’s services. The trust completed a comprehensive analysis of need in 2004 and agreement has been

reached with other agencies on priorities. However, the council is aware that the needs analysis may not have been thorough enough to cover some minority groups, such as young people involved with drugs and substance abuse, transient/missing children and refugees/asylum seekers. The analysis of need has informed the children and young person's service plan 2005-6, but this plan tends to focus mainly on processes; its intended impact is not expressed in terms of measurable outcomes. It is currently being reviewed, pending the development of a new single children's service plan which is intended to address the shortcomings.

There is a strong drive to implement the 'every child matters' agenda, built around good collaboration with partners. Standards in education are very high and the education service is very effective in targeting its resources. For social care services, the picture is more varied, with too little progress evident in some key outcomes for looked after children. The authority struggles to meet the needs of a relatively small number of children with complex needs and young people with challenging behaviour. The costs of residential and foster placements are high and some of the older looked after children have experienced too much disruption to their lives.

Leadership and management of the authority by senior officers and elected members are strong. Members play a full role in monitoring and challenging the performance of officers and services. Staff vacancies and absence in social services are below national levels and good. Staff training needs, which have previously been given a lower priority, are now being addressed.

Areas for exploration in the joint area review

Being healthy

Healthy life-styles are promoted for children and young people:

- support for teenage parents.

Staying safe

The incidence of child abuse and neglect is minimised:

Looked after children live in safe environments and are protected from abuse and exploitation:

- stability of care arrangements, particularly for older looked after children
- development of local placement options for looked after children.

Enjoying and achieving

Action is taken to ensure that educational provision 5-16 is of good quality:

- achievement of minority ethnic groups.

All children and young people can access a range of recreational and voluntary learning provision:

- opportunities for recreation and voluntary learning.

Making a positive contribution

Action is taken to prevent offending and to reduce re-offending by children and young people:

- trends in youth offending.

Achieving economic well-being

Action is taken to ensure that 14-19 education and training is planned and delivered in a coordinated way, and to ensure that education and training (16-19) is of good quality:

- impact of the 14-19 strategy on broadening the range of education/training opportunities 16+.

Final judgements

Please see your final annual performance assessment judgements attached at the end of this letter.

Yours sincerely



FLO HADLEY

Divisional Manager
Office for Standards in Education



JONATHAN PHILLIPS

Director – Quality, Performance and Methods
Commission for Social Care Inspection

Cc: Corporate Head of Children's Services, Mr Mark Malloy

APA final judgements 2005: Wokingham District Council

Areas for judgement	Final judgements ¹
The contribution of <i>the local authority's social care services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people	2
The contribution of <i>local authority's education services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people.	4
The contribution of <i>the local authority's children's services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people.	3
The council's overall capacity to improve its services for children and young people	3

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Grade	Service descriptors	Capacity to improve descriptors
4	A service that delivers well above minimum requirements for users	Very good
3	A service that consistently delivers above minimum requirements for users	Good/promising
2	A service that delivers only minimum requirements for users	Adequate
1	A service that does not deliver minimum requirements for users	Inadequate