

Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404045  
[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



Making Social Care  
Better for People



Ms Julie Jones  
Director of Children's Services  
Westminster City Council  
64 Victoria Street  
London  
SW1E 6QP

**1 November 2006**

Dear Ms Jones

## **2006 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN WESTMINSTER CITY 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**

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

1

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Service descriptors</b>	<b>Capacity to improve descriptors</b>
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 Westminster City Council provides a service that consistently delivers above the minimum requirements for its children and young people. All services demonstrate that they are improving the well-being of children and young people and there are good outcomes in all five areas of *Every Child Matters*. The council has a clear grasp of its strengths and weaknesses and the strategies it needs to make improvements. It has made improvements in most of the areas identified in last year's APA and there has been continued development in many of the services it provides. Within the council's services for children which were assessed, Westminster City Council has an excellent capacity to improve further.

## **Being healthy**

The services provided by the council make a good contribution to children being healthy and outcomes are good. Working relationships between the council and its partners are strong and collaborative working is having positive effects. The council has reached its target of 25 schools achieving full Healthy Schools status this year. Teenage conception rates have been substantially reduced and are well below the London average. The proportion of looked after children who have had health and dental checks is just below those in similar areas and the national average. Rates of childhood immunisation have increased but continued improvement in partnership with the NHS is still required. Partnership working and co-location of health and social care services for children with disabilities have speeded up service delivery. Following consultation with young people, the council is developing a new substance misuse service with an increased focus on the needs of children and young people. There is good progress on developing a comprehensive Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) but without further progress a consistent service for young people with complex needs will not be secured. The four CAMHS early intervention workers are providing schools with quicker access to services.

## **Staying safe**

The contribution of the council's children's services and social care services to ensure children's safety is good. Performance has improved in many areas in the last year through rigorous performance management and robust audit and scrutiny. All children in need of protection are allocated to social workers and their cases have been reviewed. There is improved planning to meet the care needs of children in need of protection, and more robust monitoring of the Child Protection Register (CPR). Numbers of re-registrations on the CPR have been reduced and are now at a good level. Duration on the CPR has been reduced and, whilst still too high last year, current evidence supports the council's expectation that this will continue to improve. Effective action has been taken following the conclusions of last year's serious case review, for instance to respond earlier and more actively to incidents of domestic violence.

There is a wide range of family support and prevention services which are working well with vulnerable children and their families. Whilst referral rates of children in need are lower, there are fewer repeat referrals, suggesting appropriate service responses. The council provides a high rate of core assessments which is intended to ensure it develops

detailed care plans for children with complex needs. The timeliness of completing initial assessments has improved and most core assessments are completed within timescales, assisted by a robust screening process. The assessment service is now fully staffed with permanent social workers.

The number of looked after children has been reduced and more of them are now in family placements. All looked after children have an allocated social worker and almost all reviews are held on time. Adoption rates remain high and most children are placed for adoption within 12 months of this decision being made. The stability of placements is good as a result of early planning. The council has scrutinised longer term stability and concluded that all longer term placements are appropriate. Although a lot of new placements were made in settings more than 20 miles from home, the council has shown that most of these children required specialist provision that was not available locally. The council is leading the commissioning of a residential project with three neighbouring authorities. Specialist foster parents have also been trained. Opportunities for further collaboration are being explored and these need to widen the availability of local specialist provision.

The transition and person planning process within the council is well coordinated and links well with learning difficulties and/or disabilities planning.

## **Enjoying and achieving**

The contribution of the council's children's services is good and the outcomes in this area are good. Multi-agency work between services is strong and has a positive impact on the enjoyment and achievement of children and young people. The council provides a wide range of opportunities and encourages parents to share in their children's learning. Examples include 17 play centres offering informal education activities and the recently launched 'Youth Passport' for 11 to 19 year olds offering a range of free or concessionary activities at leisure centres.

The quality of early year's provision is good overall. The council ensures that the provision of childcare places reflects local needs. Children's Centres provide good support for families and ensure children are prepared well in meeting the early learning goals. All early years settings have received advisory visits which are ensuring intervention and support where necessary. The council's plan for training in interpreting and using the Foundation Stage Profile is appropriate and will further enhance this provision.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 is above statistical neighbours and close to the national average. Attainment at Key Stage 2 in English and mathematics is above national average and in line with the national average for science. Progress between Key Stages 1 and 2 is very good and was the second highest nationally for 2005. At Key Stage 3, there have been significant improvements; attainment is above statistical neighbours for all three core subjects. English results are in line with the national average, while those in mathematics are below average and those in science below. The council is well aware that improvements in science are needed and this is a relative weakness across all key stages. The council has lacked its own science consultants for over a year and although schools

are supported by a consultant from a neighbouring authority, the negative impact on teaching and progress remains a concern. Results have improved from the previous year in Key Stage 4. However, the percentage of pupils achieving five or more grades A\* to C at GCSE is below statistical neighbours and well below national averages. Progress between Key Stages 3 and 4 is close to the national average. It has improved between Key Stages 2 to 4 but remains well below national average. Variation in performance between secondary schools still exists and two schools' results remain below the 2005 floor targets in one or more subjects.

The performance of pupils from Black and minority ethnic groups at Key Stage 2 is good. There is an improving trend in the achievements of Bangladeshi pupils at Key Stages 2 to 4. Projects such as the Black Pupils' Achievement Project and academic mentoring schemes have contributed well towards this. Pupils are gaining at least one grade higher than the inner London average. The educational attainment of looked after children is in line with the national average. However, the council has ambitions to raise this further. Particularly effective is the programme of additional tuition offering bursary schemes and the training opportunities for foster parents on educational issues.

The provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has significantly improved. The percentage of pupils with statements is below the national average and assessments are completed within 18 weeks. The appointment of an inclusion consultant has enhanced this area by providing information, training and support for schools. This has had a positive impact on mapping provision, monitoring and evaluating pupils' progress. The progress for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities from Key Stages 1 to 2 is very good. From Key Stages 2 to 4, progress is in line with the national average.

Rates of unauthorised absence in primary and secondary schools are below the national rates. However, in primary schools performance is above statistical neighbours and in secondary schools is in line with statistical neighbours. A range of measures has begun to improve the attendance of looked after children but more remains to be done to further reduce absences. The percentage of permanent exclusions remains well above both national and inner London averages and is an area for improvement. However, the council has been particularly successful in rapidly referring permanently excluded pupils to the pupil referral units. Nearly 100% of excluded pupils are offered 20+ hours provision within 15 days.

The council ensures admissions are organised rigorously. There is a good range of schools and sufficient appropriate places. There are no schools in a category of concern. Support for school improvement is good and intervention strategies continue to be effective in helping schools to raise standards.

### **Making a positive contribution**

The Council's contribution to Children's Services and outcomes in this area is very good. The council has a strong commitment to consultation with children and young people. A communication and involvement group ensures that the views of children and young

people are central to service delivery. For example, the council has undertaken a City Survey to obtain children and young people's views as a baseline from which to measure improvements. The survey will be conducted annually with findings used to review provision. The council plans to publish a Children's Charter to feed back to children and young people the results of the consultations. Looked after children have good opportunities to present their views about the services provided for them. For instance, an annual user conference includes looked after children using art and drama to tell elected members and staff their views. Peer mentoring schemes encourage young care leavers to mentor younger more vulnerable looked after children.

All secondary schools have a school council and members have been involved in the appointment of head teachers. The youth service has elected a young person to the National Youth Parliament who has been consulted on a wide range of issues, such as the drugs strategy and the City Survey. The council's anti-bullying strategy has been broadened to relate to anti-social behaviour both in and out of school. A council consultant has been appointed to support schools in undertaking annual reviews involving children and young people, in disseminating good practice and using the Anti-Bullying Toolkit. This is having a positive impact on behaviour in the playground. Particularly noteworthy are the positive impact of learning mentors in schools and the workshops organised by the council in response to bullying concerns expressed by children and young people. All looked after children contribute to their reviews and all care leavers have pathway plans.

Close working relationships between Connexions, other council services and the Youth Service have been successful in preventing youth crime; the number of young people entering the criminal justice system has been reduced by 15% against a target of 2%. Preventative measures include regular truancy patrols and The Play Warden Summer Scheme which increased take up by hard to reach children and young people in disadvantaged areas. Further work is being undertaken by the council to contribute to pan London protocols and procedures. Overall levels of re-offending have risen to just above the national average and this requires close monitoring. However, rates of offending for looked after children are comparatively low.

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

The services provided by the council make a good contribution to the economic well-being of children and young people and outcomes are good. The council has ensured its strategy for childcare provision is informed by a comprehensive needs analysis and has recently refreshed its audit of provision. The authority has five Children's Centres with a further seven to be completed by March 2008. This will substantially increase the provision of family support. The council has maximised opportunities for employment and training. A good example of this is the partnership with Cool 2 Care which has created work placements in childcare for young men at an after school play centre. Holiday placements for Bengali children have enabled their mothers to continue training at a local Healthy Living Centre.

The council has successfully built on its experience as a former 14-19 Pathfinder and as a consequence collaboration is well established and strong. Although there has been a slight improvement in A-Level results the authority recognises that these are unsatisfactory and remain an area for further development. All schools have school based vocational programmes with one offering vocational courses at Key Stage 4 in six subjects. A sub group of head teachers from the sixth form collaborative has been established to focus on school performance. The council has also accepted an invitation from the DfES to be a 14-19 funding and organisational pilot and submitted a joint plan with a neighbouring authority.

A high percentage of young people, including looked after children and those with disabilities continue in education, training or employment after the age of 16; however, the target for young offenders has not been met and remains an area for improvement. The information and guidance given to young people from the Connexions service has been effective in preparing young people for the world of work. For instance, there have been high numbers of individual contacts with Year 11 students about careers guidance and an increase of 23% for group work sessions.

The proportion of care leavers who were living in suitable accommodation at age 19 is in line with the national average. The council provided satisfactory explanations for the circumstances of the remaining four young people.

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

The council consulted widely on its Children's and Young People's Plan (CYPP), which sets out a strategic vision for children's services and a challenging agenda for change. The plan is based on an analysis of need, identifies gaps in provision and sets clear and ambitious targets for all phases. Feedback to young people will be through the publication in the autumn of a Children's Charter. The self-assessment undertaken for the APA demonstrates very well that the council has a full understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and the strategies required to implement further improvements. The council is committed to developing children's services as demonstrated through its budget allocation and decision to structure many of its Local Area Agreement targets around improving services for children and young people.

The senior team is well established and there is a shared vision and commitment to improving further the services for children and young people and meeting the challenging targets of the CYPP. Plans are now being taken forward to establish a freestanding Children's Department to better enable the development of Children's Trust arrangements with a focus on neighbourhood service delivery. The reorganisation will inevitably create some turbulence but the robustness of the council's performance management culture gives confidence that this will not result in any drop in performance.

New developments are underway in key areas of provision, such as five new Children's Centres in place with seven more planned and three new academies. The Local Safeguarding Board is well established and has collaborated to widen its priorities to include children moving from primary to secondary education.

A new information technology system to aid the recording and sharing of data about children and their backgrounds is currently being implemented. The Common Assessment Framework has been successfully piloted and is now being extended to other areas.

A joint workforce strategy is being implemented for children's services which emphasises co-location and multi-disciplinary working.

The strong collaborative working arrangements with a range of partners from the public, voluntary and independent sectors have continued this year. Joint commissioning is well developed across a range of services, alongside pooled budgets. There are clear plans and current developments to strengthen the already well embedded partnerships.

The performance of the council's services is monitored through frequent management meetings and the children's services department undergoes monthly performance and financial monitoring. Budgets are well managed and there is considerable attention paid to demonstrating value for money in service delivery. Most of the issues identified in last year's APA have been addressed and the authority is working effectively towards ensuring the others are met. There has been considerable improvement in a number of areas, for example:

- teenage conceptions
- ensuring the safety of children and young people
- robust referral and review of children in need
- foster parent placements and stability for looked after children
- all children looked after participating in their reviews
- attainment at Key Stage 3
- continued success at Key Stages 1 and 2
- involving young people and acting upon their views
- promoting the life chances of disabled children.

Working collaboratively with its partners, the council has an excellent capacity to make further improvements to the services it provides for children and young people.

## 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>• good promotion of healthy lifestyles through partnership working</li> <li>• sustained reductions in teenage conception rates.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the implementation of substance misuse development plans</li> <li>• the engagement of schools not in Healthy Schools programme</li> <li>• CAMHS development to cover consistently young people with complex needs.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• availability of family support and prevention services</li> <li>• improved care planning in child protection</li> <li>• low rate of re-registrations on CPR</li> <li>• reduced numbers of looked after children</li> <li>• increased availability of family placements</li> <li>• more placement stability</li> <li>• transition planning for disabled children.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• duration on the CPR.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provision and quality of care in early years</li> <li>• attainment at Key Stages 1 and 2</li> <li>• effective consultation and involvement of children and young people in decision making</li> <li>• quality of provision and outcomes for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• attainment in science at Key Stages 3 and 4</li> <li>• support for low performing schools, particularly below floor targets</li> <li>• high rate of exclusions within secondary phase</li> <li>• high rates of absence from school for looked after children.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• effective anti-bullying strategy</li> <li>• good rate of participation of looked after children in their reviews</li> <li>• effective multi-agency working</li> <li>• comprehensive pathway planning for care leavers.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• none identified.</li> </ul>

<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• high proportion of young people in education, employment or training post-16</li> <li>• good range of work-based vocational provision</li> <li>• good 14-19 strategy with a coherent strategic partnership in place</li> <li>• high proportion of care leavers in employment, education or training.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• continued low proportion of youth offenders in education, employment or training consistently 16+</li> <li>• weak performance at GCE advanced level.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Management of children's services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• clear strategic vision and agenda for change in CYPP</li> <li>• challenging targets for improvement</li> <li>• strong commitment to children's services</li> <li>• strong, collaborative working arrangements with a range of partners</li> <li>• effective budget planning and control.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Management of children's services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• none identified.</li> </ul>

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

- CAMHS developments to provide a consistent service for young people with complex needs.
- Attainment in science and recruitment of staff in this subject.
- Reducing exclusions within secondary phase.
- Youth offenders in education, employment or training.
- Performance at GCE Advanced Level.

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**

Divisional Manager  
Office for Standards in Education



**JONATHAN PHILLIPS**

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